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International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

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Why in News

Every year, **21st March**, is observed as **International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination**.

The day calls for **solidarity against racism and racial discrimination**.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - The **United Nation General Assembly** in October 1966 proclaimed **21st March** as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, to be commemorated annually.
 - On that day, in **1960, police opened fire and killed 69 people** at a peaceful demonstration in Sharpeville, South Africa, **against the apartheid pass laws.**
 - **Apartheid:**
 - It was a policy which governed **relations between South Africa's white minority and non-white majority.**
 - It **sanctioned racial segregation**, political and economic discrimination against non-whites.
 - Proclaiming the Day in **1966** which signifies the struggle to **end the policy of apartheid in South Africa.**
- **2021 Theme:**

'Youth standing up against racism'
- **Significance:**

Racial discrimination, beyond being a breach of **human rights**, has harmful effects on human health and well-being, and risks wider disruptions to social cohesion.

Racism

About:

- Racism, also called racialism, the belief that **humans may be divided into separate and exclusive biological entities** called “**rac**es”; that there is a causal **link between inherited physical traits and traits of personality, intellect, morality, and other cultural and behavioral features**; and that some races are innately superior to others.
- The term is also applied to political, economic, or legal institutions and systems that engage in or perpetuate discrimination on the basis of race or otherwise reinforce racial inequalities in wealth and income, education, health care, civil rights, and other areas.

Note

Xenophobia and Racism mostly overlap, but the stark difference is **racism is discrimination based on physical characteristics** whereas **xenophobia is discrimination based on the perception that someone is foreign** or originating from another community or nation.

The word Xenophobia originates from the Greek word Xeno.

WORKING DEFINITION

Racism is the individual and systemic manifestation of the uneven distribution of power and prejudice related to culturally defined ideas of “race.”

TYPES OF RACISM

Defined by Shelly Tochluk

INTERNALIZED RACISM

- Lies within individuals
- Private beliefs and biases about race and racism, influenced by our culture
- May be unconscious or psychologically rooted. Often reflects historic, intergenerational trauma

INTERPERSONAL RACISM:

- Occurs between individuals, anecdotal
- Biases that occur when individuals interact with others and their private racial beliefs affect their public interactions

INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

- Occurs within institutions and systems of power
- Unfair policies and discriminatory practices of institutions (schools, workplaces, etc.) that routinely produce racially inequitable outcomes for people of color and advantages for white people

STRUCTURAL RACISM

- Racial bias among institutions and across society
- Cumulative and compounding effects of an array of societal factors including the history, culture, ideology, and interactions of institutions and policies

- **Current Prevalence:**

- The **anonymity of the Internet** has allowed **racist stereotypes** and inaccurate information to spread online.
 - At the onset of the **pandemic**, traffic to hate sites and specific posts against Asians **grew by 200% in the US**.
 - In India and in Sri Lanka, social media groups and messaging platforms were used to call for **social and economic boycotts of religious minorities**, amid false information accusing them of spreading the virus.
- Structural forms of discrimination, including **micro-aggressions** and everyday indignities, remain widespread.
- The **use of new technologies and artificial intelligence in security raise the spectre of ‘techno-racism’**, as facial recognition programmes can misidentify and target racialized communities.
- Prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory acts, whether subtle or overt, aggravate existing inequalities in societies.
 - A study published by The Lancet drew attention to the social dimension of the **Covid-19 pandemic** and the greater vulnerability of ethnic minorities, who have been disproportionately affected.
 - The **World Health Organization** has cautioned on the dangers of profiling and stigmatising communities that can lead to fear and the subsequent concealment of cases and delays in detection.

- **Other Initiatives Against Racism:**

- **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO)** actions against racism through education, the sciences, culture, and communication offer an example of a way forward.

The **International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities** of UNESCO provides an additional platform for city-level planning and a laboratory for good practices in the fight against racism.
- UNESCO’s headquarters in Paris hosted a **Global Forum against Racism and Discrimination** on 22nd March 2021, in partnership with the Republic of Korea. The Forum gathered policymakers, academics, and partners to initiate a new multi-stakeholder partnership on anti-racism.
- In January 2021 the **World Economic Forum** launched a **coalition of organizations** committed to **improving racial and ethnic justice in the workplace**.
- The **‘Black Lives Matter’** protests gained momentum in not only the United States but the whole world. People, as well as many governments across different countries, came forth against the prevalence of racial discrimination worldwide.

- **Provisions Against Racial Discrimination in India:**
 - **Article 15, Article 16 and Article 29** of the Constitution of India prohibit discrimination on grounds of “race”.
 - Section 153A of the **Indian Penal Code (IPC)** also refers to “race”.
 - India also ratified the **International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)** in 1968.

Way Forward

- Through **new approaches to intercultural dialogue and learning, youth and communities** can be equipped with skills to eradicate harmful stereotypes and foster tolerance.
- Recent and new manifestations of racism and discrimination call for renewed commitments to mobilise for equality. Racism will not be overcome with mere professions of good faith but **must be combatted with anti-racist action.**
- **A global culture of tolerance, equality and anti-discrimination** should be built first and foremost in the minds of women and men.

Source:TH