

Men in skirts' events in Taiwan go viral as government legalises same-sex marriage

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Taiwan's parliament voted to legalise same-sex marriage on Friday, becoming the first in Asia to do so.

Lawmakers had a two-year window to make a decision after Taiwan's constitutional court ruled that same-sex couples had a right to marry in 2017.

Tens of thousands of supporters waiting outside the Legislative Yuan in Taipei in the rain burst into celebration after the vote was announced.

[Embedded video]

Glenn Lio

@GlennLio

The gay marriage bill is being voted in the Taiwanese Parliament right now! 40,000 supporters have showed up in the rally to support the bill! #MarriageEquality #Taiwan #🏳️748

"#LoveWon," President Tsai Ing-wen tweeted. "We took a big step towards true equality, and made Taiwan a better country."

The weeks leading up to the vote were marked in part by student-led "men in skirts" events that went viral. At New Taipei Banqiao High School, students organised a week-long event in early May encouraging male classmates to wear skirts to support gender equality and challenge societal norms of what men and women should wear.

Teachers at the school joined in as well. In a video posted to the New Taipei Banqiao High School student union Facebook page, principal Lai Chunjin said the event aimed to "smash gender stereotypes."

Photos of the campaign went viral on Weibo, China's version of Twitter, with supporters commending the students for their work and writing that people were free to wear what they liked.

The success of the event drew the attention of students at National Taiwan University, who launched their own "Men in Skirts" day on May 13.

"We need to upend gender stereotypes"

Lin Huichu, a first-year political science student who helped organise the event, said she and several classmates from her reading group were inspired by the high school students and wanted to create a safe space for people to express themselves freely.

I thought to myself, if high school students are taking a stance like this, then we should be doing

even more at a university to promote individual freedom and accept whatever it is that people want to wear.

Society can't change that quickly, so we need to start by upending stereotypes, and show people that dresses, which can often limit women's bodies and movements, aren't just for women. We wanted to create a safe space for people who might feel like it's not acceptable for them to wear dresses, and tell them, 'Wear what you want, and no one will look at you strangely or laugh at you, and you can be happy.'

Around 50 to 70 people participated in the event. People stopped by to hear us talk on their way to class. We provided some skirts and dresses, some of which were from old high school uniforms. But a lot of guys came with their own dresses and wore them all day.

I received a lot of photos and videos from people who had participated. One of my friends said he didn't want to wear a dress just to school, but to a movie, and wanted to see how society would react. People are happy that the dress, which is a very gendered symbol, is now starting to blur the lines between men and women.

I hope Taiwan will become the first in Asia to legalise same-sex marriage. We have to protect gender equality, and if Taiwan upholds these values and embraces these people, then in the future we can similarly embrace other people who might seem different from us.

Many social media users showed their support for the high schoolers' campaign and shared photos of themselves wearing skirts.

The bill will take effect on May 24 after Tsai signs it into law.

Jenny Che (@jsyche).

• Observers France 24:

<https://observers.france24.com/en/20190517-taiwan-gay-marriage-men-skirts-day-students>

Taiwan legalises same-sex marriage in first for Asia

On International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia on Friday (May 17), Taiwan has become the first country in Asia to legalise same-sex marriage.

Legislators voted for a government-backed bill that would define a union between a same-sex couple as a marriage. Conservative opponents had proposed rival bills that would define partnerships as "same-sex unions" or "same-sex familial relationships."

Taiwan president Tsai Ing-wen's Democratic Progressive Party pushed through its law in a vote on Friday.

Prior to the vote, Tsai tweeted: "Good morning #Taiwan. Today, we have a chance to make history & show the world that progressive values can take root in an East Asian society.

Today, we can show the world that #LoveWins."

Friday's vote comes two years after Taiwan's top court ruled that defining marriage as being between only a man and a woman was unconstitutional.

Taiwan's supreme court set a two-year deadline for the East Asian country to introduce legislation for same-sex marriage. Friday's vote met the requirement a week before the supreme court's May 24 deadline.

Taiwan split over same-sex marriage vote

Legislators voted between three separate bills on Friday, but ultimately pushed ahead with the DPP's law defining same-sex unions as marriages. The bill was considered the most progressive of the three.

Bloomberg reports that Tsai's DPP government "ordered its lawmakers to vote in favour of the bill drafted by Taiwan's cabinet."

The other two bills limited the definition of marriage to that between a man and a woman and sought to create a new type of union for same-sex couples. One bill proposed calling marriage a "same-sex familial relationship," with partners being called "same-sex family members." The other bill sought to call same-sex marriage a "same-sex union" with partners referred to as "domestic partners."

The DPP's bill will recognise unions as marriages, the same as heterosexual couples, and define partners as spouses.

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The bill will also allow same-sex couples to adopt each other's biological children, but not adopt non-biological children.

Over 70 percent of Taiwan opposed to same-sex marriage

In a referendum last November, 72 percent of Taiwan voted against same-sex marriage, showing the opposition towards LGBT+ rights that still persists in the region.

The referendum, which did not impact the supreme court decision to legalise same-sex marriage, favoured defining marriage as between a man and a woman.

However, Friday's vote is a momentous victory for Taiwan's LGBT+ community.

Around 40,000 people took to the streets of Taipei to show support for the legalisation of same-sex marriage on Friday.

According to Taiwan's Apple Daily, more than 200 couples in Taipei have registered to marry on May 24, the day same-sex marriages begin being performed.

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