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## world briefs

### AFRICA

AIDS will dramatically reduce life expectancy in sub-Saharan Africa, according to a new report from the U.S. National Academy of Science's National Research Council.

By 2010, the average life span in Zambia will have dropped from 66 to 33 years, in Zimbabwe from 70 to 40, in Kenya from 68 to 40, and in Uganda from 59 to 31, the report said.

Other countries hard hit by the pandemic include Botswana, Burundi, Malawi, Rwanda and Tanzania.

Of HIV infections in the region, 80 percent are due to heterosexual sex and 20 percent to male-male sex, the researchers said.

### ARGENTINA

The activist group Lesbianas a la Vista staged three outdoor lesbian puppet shows in Buenos Aires' historic San Telmo neighborhood on Dec. 3.

"The public reacted mostly with surprise, interest and respect," the women reported. "A few people were indifferent, but nobody was aggressive."



"Our two objectives—to bring lesbian-created lesbian images to the streets for everyone to see and to raise the public's awareness about the rights we do not enjoy as couples—were widely reached," the group said.

Meanwhile, the group marched in the annual Resistance March in mid-December, which honors the citizens who "disappeared" under the military dictatorship that ruled the country from 1976 to 1983.

Members carried a portable jail "with a dozen dolls portraying all the murderers and torturers that are freely walking through Buenos Aires' streets," the group said in a press release.

### AUSTRALIA

Tourism Victoria, a state agency in Melbourne, has become the first governmental body to join the Australian Gay and Lesbian Tourism Authority, reported the *Melbourne Star Observer*.

Organizers staged a mid-December news conference to launch the 1996 Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, a monthlong festival that includes a parade, theater, literary readings, music and community events.

The activities run Feb. 2 to March 2. The parade, which was inaugurated in 1978, is believed to be the second largest in the world, after that of the Rio de Janeiro Mardi Gras.

Sydney Mardi Gras attracts thousands of international gay visitors and pumped \$8.7 million (U.S.) into the city's economy last year.

### BELGIUM

The Catholic University of Leuven has sparked controversy by installing condom dispensers on campus.

Student Relations spokesman Professor Dirk van Gerven called the move a responsible approach to AIDS, but others have noted that Catholic doctrine forbids any sex act that is not open to the possibility of pregnancy.

### BRITAIN

Gay activist Peter Tatchell of the London gay and lesbian-rights activist group OutRage! nailed a document entitled "Four Theses Against Church

Homophobia" to the door of Westminster Abbey in early December during the Anglican Church General Synod.

The action recalled a similar one in 1517, when Martin Luther nailed "Ninety-Five Theses" to the door of a Catholic cathedral in Wittenberg, Germany, launching the Protestant Reformation.

"What's needed is a new Reformation to eradicate homophobia from the Church of England," Tatchell said. "Anglican endorsement of anti-gay discrimination is a corruption of morality and a violation of the dignity of lesbian and gay people."

There was no immediate response to the action from the Church of England.

### COSTA RICA

Costa Rica's Radioperiodico Reloj news network bashed gays on World AIDS Day.

"Hardly any government, institution or group has condemned the spread of homosexuality as the main cause of [AIDS] contagion," the network said in an editorial. "The truth is that homosexuality is against human nature. The only way to prevent this evil is to promote a higher morality.... The campaign for the use of condoms, so widely promoted across all social layers worldwide, is a solution that seeks to justify deviant behavior in human relationships."

Costa Rica's Asociación de Lucha por el Respeto a la Diversidad Sexual (Association for the Fight for Respect for Sexual Diversity) urges gays in other countries to protest the editorial and demand that gays be given radio time to respond.

### CYBERSPACE

The Hong Kong gay group Horizons, which runs a telephone hot line, has joined the Internet and is seeking assistance from abroad.

The group is headed up by Daniel Kong, co-author of the recently published book *The Coming Out of Queers in Hong Kong*.

Write to Horizons, GPO Box 6837, Hong Kong; e-mail: dan15844@vol.net.

Transgendered people have a new place to gather on the Internet—a Usenet newsgroup called alt.personals.transgendered.

Usenet is available on all Internet systems and on America Online.

If your Internet provider does not carry a particular group, you can send a message to the news administrator requesting that it be added.

Many Internet services carry only a portion of the more than 15,500 Usenet groups.

A new Internet World Wide Web site devoted to gay and lesbian Southeast Asia offers information on travel, AIDS and women's issues. Other features include a message center and an art gallery. The address is <http://www.best.com/~utopia>.

### CZECH REPUBLIC

The government has deleted a proposed same-sex partnership law from the latest draft of family-law legislation, calling same-sex couplings "an inferior form of marriage" and noting that "only three European countries recognize this right demanded by the homosexual minority."

### PORTUGAL

Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Guterres, a Socialist, recently told reporters that he has no problem with the concept of same-sex marriage and that legalizing it "is not out of the question."

In other news, Portugal's first gay newspaper is scheduled to appear in January, independent of any gay organization.

Meanwhile, the Portuguese Quilt Movement has been launched—headed up by Jorge Almeida, whose lover died of AIDS. To contact the group, phone 011-351-1-291-0265 between 2200 and 2400 hours Greenwich Mean Time.

Compiled by Rex Wockner