

world briefs

AUSTRALIA

The upper house of parliament in the state of Tasmania voted June 19 to retain the state's laws banning male-male sex, the only remaining such laws in the nation.

Gay activists responded with a promise to pursue decriminalization through the federal courts.

The lower house had voted recently to repeal the laws, which allow for a 21-year prison sentence.

The ban has been widely denounced in recent years, by such entities as the United Nations, Amnesty International, the Anglican Church and the Australian federal parliament.

BRITAIN

A recent British survey of bisexual men found that 33 percent have told their female partners that they have sex with men and 5 percent have told their male partners they have sex with women.

On average, the men reported three male and three female partners yearly. Ten percent reported unprotected anal sex in the past year.

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Britain's *Sunday Times* reported on June 16 that the surviving half of a gay couple can qualify for a survivor's pension following Inland Revenue's redefining of "dependent."

"A homosexual could receive part of his partner's pension if he died," an IR spokesman told the newspaper.

CANADA

Canada's Scotiabank will pay pension benefits to partners of its lesbian and gay employees following settlement of two Canadian Human Rights Commission complaints, reported the Vancouver newspaper *Xtra! West*.

Since the Income Tax Act does not allow registered pension plans to pay same-sex partners, the bank will have to pay from its general revenues.

Scotiabank also agreed to sponsor annual public events reflecting the diversity of its workforce and customers, the newspaper said.

FRANCE

France's Socialist Party will present parliament with a measure to legalize a type of same-sex marriage.

The "contract of civil union" would offer "a legal framework for all those wishing to unite their destinies in a shared life, notably gays and lesbians," the party said on June 20.

The contract would grant same-sex couples equality in social and fiscal matters and housing and inheritance, the party said.

GERMANY

More than 100 riot-gear-clad police officers raided the gay bar Zoom in the east German city of Halle on June 5, according to several reports.

The 70 patrons were handcuffed and forced to lie on the floor for up to two hours. Some were clubbed when they did not drop to the floor fast enough.

Many of the patrons were strip-searched and a few tablets of the illegal drug Ecstasy were confiscated.

Police recorded the raid on videotape and took down personal data on all the customers.

Local gay leaders called the raid "a major provocation" and speculated that it was a response to the city's first gay-pride events.

HONG KONG

Hong Kong gay men and lesbians planned to rally on July 7 for passage of an antidiscrimination bill that is pending in parliament.

Activists hope the bill will pass before China takes over Hong Kong on July 1, 1997.

ICELAND

Two gay male couples and a lesbian couple got married at the Reykjavik registry office on June 27, the day Iceland's same-sex registered-partnership law came into effect.

Following the weddings, a large reception was held in the lobby of the Reykjavik City Theater with none other than Icelandic President Vigdis Finnbogadottir as the guest of honor.

Celebrations continued into the night at Iceland's one gay club.

INDIA

Members of the Indian lesbian collective Stree Sangam recently made a presentation on domestic-partnership laws to a government conference on marriage and family law.

It was "perhaps the first time that a lesbian/gay group [attempted] to create public opinion on the issues in such a forum," the group said in a letter to the Asian gay and lesbian magazine *Trikone*.

MEXICO

Two lesbians who were removed from a Mexicana Airlines flight in Guadalajara for holding hands are unhappy with Mexicana's response to their complaints.

In a letter to the Oakland, Calif., couple, Mexicana spokesperson Reni Soukup said another passenger had complained that "the intimacy shown was not appropriate for public conveyance" and that the captain had a "responsibility to secure the aircraft and assure the comfort and security of all the passengers."



Livit Callentine and Holly Babe Faust are continuing to call for a gay and lesbian boycott of the carrier and urge supporters to write Mexicana.

Letters can be sent to Reni Soukup, Manager, Customer Services Department, Mexicana Airlines, 9841 Airport Blvd. Suite 200, Los Angeles, CA 90045; fax: (310) 646-0433; phone 1-800-353-8245. Fax a copy to Mexicana Airlines President Fernando Flores at the Mexico City fax number 011-52-5-687-8786.

PHILIPPINES

About 500 gay men and lesbians staged a pride march through Manila on June 22.

The Reuters news agency said the parade was viewed by "a large number of curious onlookers."

SWITZERLAND

Switzerland's National Council has ordered the government to present a same-sex partnership law. The vote was 68-61.

Legislators should get a chance to vote on the measure within two years, according to activist reports.

TAIWAN

The government of Taipei launched a two-hour daily gay and lesbian radio program on July 1.

It is hosted by open gay men and lesbians and invites listeners to call in.

A city official told Reuters the program "has been made possible because our society no longer considers homosexuality a taboo topic."

The island's first lesbian and gay magazine was launched in June.

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