

national briefs

BRAZIL

The legislator who authored Brazil's gay-partnership bill says Congress will vote on the measure in April and she is urgently requesting lobbying from abroad.

"The bill assures rights to inheritance, succession, welfare benefits, joint-income declaration, right to nationality in case of a foreign partner and joint income in order to buy a house," said Workers Party Deputy Marta Suplicy.

The measure passed a Senate committee in December by a vote of 11-5.

For a long list of legislators to lobby, e-mail Suplicy at msuplicy@solar.com.br. To join a simple and free group response, e-mail skolander@bahnhof.se.

BRITAIN

Homosexuals can now be Boy Scouts and Scout leaders in Britain.

The organization said in March it will not discriminate based on sexuality, gender, marital status or ethnicity.

Atheists will still be barred, however.

Betty Clay, 79, daughter of Scouts founder Lord Robert Baden-Powell, was aghast at the news. "He was against any exceptionally unnatural ways of living," she told United Press International.

However, according to Patrick Higgins' 1993 book *A Queer Reader*: "In recent years two authors have suggested that Baden-Powell may have been homosexual. Neither offered any evidence, and both based their supposition entirely upon a shared suspicion that his relationship with [his longtime friend] Kenneth McLaren might have been a physical one."



HIV treatment services in Bristol, England, are in crisis as more than 80 people wait for the new combination therapies and others are having their treatment halted against their will, reported the British magazine *Positive Nation*.

One woman has been taken off protease inhibitors and two other people were told there will be no more drugs when their supply runs out.

AIDS agencies expressed shock at the news, since missing even a day's dose of a protease inhibitor can let the virus mutate in a given patient, rendering inhibitors useless in the future.

Officials blame the disaster on a lack of funding.

CANADA

An Alberta lesbian who has foster-parented over 70 children has received a letter from the provincial Social Services Department informing her that no more children will be placed with "non-traditional families."

The woman, who does not want to be named for fear her children will suffer discrimination, plans to file a lawsuit over the matter.

CHINA

Police raided the only gay club in Guangzhou on March 22, according to firsthand reports posted on line.

At least 10 local cops stormed into Nanfangzhiye (Southern Nights) and ordered the patrons who were dancing to squat on the dance floor, the reports said. The officers then interrogated several of the customers on videotape.

"After a long show of force with police strutting around the crowds, a few obviously foreign-looking patrons in the disco were singled out and



told to leave," one report said. "When they insisted on staying with their Chinese friends the police relented. Immediately thereafter the raiding party left as suddenly as they had come."

The police took about 20 customers with them—"those who had been dancing, or who were wearing colorful clothes," one patron said.

"Unconfirmed reports indicate these people will be detained for 15 days on charges of hooliganism," one of the cyberposts said. "For a gay community which had grown comfortable with a harassment-free police policy in the past few years, so long as you were not overtly 'out,' the Saturday-night incident came as a shocking reminder that life in China is still very repressive and quixotic."



Beijing has a new gay hot line offering information on the scene as well as counseling.

Initially it will be staffed Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 7 pm to 10 pm and Saturdays from noon to 6 pm Beijing time. The direct-dial number is 011-86-10-6833-8800.

MEXICO

Mexico has a history of activist superheros, and the newest one, SuperGay, is making quite a splash in Mexico City.

Sporting a black suit with pink trim and a pink-triangle shield on his chest, he promises to lead marches, enliven meetings and negotiate with authorities.

"I will try to unite the gay community," he told the IPS news agency. "We must keep together in order to end homophobia. I will not rest in the fight to defend our community and the cause of justice."

In real life, he says, SuperGay is a 27-year-old office worker.

POLAND

Poland's new constitution, which passed Parliament 461-31 on March 22, bans same-gender marriage, reports The Associated Press.

As recently as last September, a draft of the constitution also banned discrimination based on sexual orientation—something only South Africa has done constitutionally.

The AP did not say what became of the anti-discrimination clause.

The constitution must be reviewed by President Aleksander Kwasniewski and then faces a public vote May 25.

SPAIN

Spain's Congress of Deputies voted 163-161 against two same-gender partnership bills on March 18, but only after two 161-161 tie votes.

The "no" votes were cast by MPs from the ruling Partido Popular, the Catalan Party and, in the final vote, by the two MPs from the Canary Islands' Canarian Party, who missed the earlier votes.

The measures were supported by the Socialists and the United Left—a coalition of communists and other leftists.

Following the measures' defeat, the Partido Popular introduced a bill, which passed, creating a commission to study the issue of same-gender partnerships. The commission will report back on June 30, the day parliament closes for the summer.

The day after the votes, the Socialists and United Left re-introduced their partnership bills. A new vote is expected in a few months.

SWAZILAND

Prime Minister Sibusiso Dlamini said on March 13 that the newly formed Gay and Lesbian Association of Swaziland will not receive government recognition.

Dlamini said the government will not condone homosexuality until a majority of citizens believe it is normal and acceptable.

Compiled by Rex Wockner

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