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world briefs

AUSTRALIA

In her maiden speech to the Western Australia state Legislative Council, Greens member of Parliament Giz Watson thanked her lover for her support and called for an end to discrimination based on sexual orientation, *Capital Q* reported in early July.

Watson said she will take a keen interest in environmental policies and push for laws to ban discrimination against gay men and lesbians in housing, education and services. She also called for the age-of-consent for gay sex to be equalized with that for straight sex.

Watson is Western Australia's first out lesbian member of Parliament.

BRITAIN

Hospitals in London, Birmingham and Coventry, England, "are being inundated" with HIV-positive people who were denied treatment by the public health services in smaller cities, reports *Positive Nation*, a British AIDS magazine.

At least 45 people from all parts of the country have been denied drugs, viral-load tests, CD4 counts and even treatment for Kaposi's sarcoma, the magazine said. Britain is supposed to have universal, government-provided health care.

The facilities that withheld treatment have cited a shortage of funds.

ECUADOR

Forty gay men marched through Cuenca on July 3 demanding legalization of homosexuality.

The march was spurred by police raids of gay bars in preceding days. Ecuador is one of three Latin American nations that ban gay sex, along with Chile and Nicaragua. The penalty is four to eight years in prison.

Nicaragua recriminalized homosexuality after the Sandinistas were ousted from power in 1990.

GERMANY

Two hundred fifty representatives of the 300 organizations that make up the International Lesbian and Gay Association staged the group's 18th World Conference from June 29 to July 5 in Cologne. Delegates came from 48 nations, including Algeria, Guatemala, Kazakhstan, Tanzania, Turkey and Zimbabwe.

On July 1, German Parliament Vice President Antje Vollmer met with a group of conferees from Argentina, Belgium, Israel, Lebanon, the Philippines, Romania, South Africa, Spain and Venezuela.

Among other matters, she asked whether anti-gay bias in areas formerly colonized by Europeans is the result of "imperialism" or pre-existing traditions. Activist Simon Nkoli responded that homophobia is indigenous to his native South Africa and to most other nations.

The delegates approved a new Constitution that creates an executive board to manage ILGA between conferences, reduces the majority vote needed to make decisions at conferences from 80 to 50 percent, and inserts the aims of the bisexual and transgender movements into ILGA's mission. The executive board consists of one man and one woman from each of the world's major regions.

THE NETHERLANDS

A registered-partnership measure that will grant registered gay and straight couples every right of matrimony except access to adoption and artificial insemination has passed both chambers of the Dutch Parliament and is set to take effect Jan. 1.

Meanwhile, plans to open up regular marriage to same-sex couples continue to move forward. Parliament has instructed the government to prepare preliminary legislation and a special committee is working to determine what being the world's first gay-marriage country would mean for Holland's international agreements and relationships.

MEXICO

A lesbian activist won election to Mexico's Congress on July 6. Patria Jiménez takes her seat in the Chamber of Deputies on Sept. 1 as a representative of the left-wing Democratic Revolution Party (PRD).

She will be one of 200 legislators in the 500-member body who are selected by political parties rather than direct voting. Each party gets to appoint a certain number of specially listed candidates to represent a several-state region, based on the percentage of the vote the party received in the region.

In Jiménez's case, the PRD needed 16 percent of the vote in the states around Mexico City to put her in office. To everyone's surprise, the PRD captured about 36 percent of the vote in those states and even snagged the mayor's seat in Mexico City, stunning the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party, which has clung to power for 68 years amid routine allegations of electoral fraud.

Jiménez said she will fight for institutionalization of gay-community spaces and improved treatment for people with HIV, among other things.

As far as can be determined, Jiménez will become the first openly gay or lesbian member of any Latin American federal legislative body.

A second openly gay candidate, activist Francisco Robles Manning, lost his congressional race in Mexico City's gay Zona Rosa neighborhood.

SINGAPORE

Singapore's Ministry of Information and the Arts has renewed the business license of the entertainment magazine *IS* after its publisher dropped phone-sex ads as well as the entire personals section.

In initially refusing to renew the license, officials had objected in particular to gay ads. Homosexuality is illegal in Singapore, and the media is prohibited from encouraging "undesirable lifestyles and behavior which would erode moral values and the traditional concept of the family."

SOUTH AFRICA

The chair of the South African Human Rights Commission, Barney Pityana, an Anglican priest, says churches should accept the "reality of homosexuality" and stop trying to wish it away.

"It is important to affirm the humanity of others and recognize the full expression of that humanity," Pityana said in a prepared statement.

"There can be no church without the difference and diversity that is provided by God as riches in race and gender and ethnicity, in male and female, in diversities of sexual orientation, in black, white and others," Pityana added in a recent speech.

Pityana's comments came after Pretoria City Council refused to let a local gay group display its "Gay is OK" ad campaign on city buses and the group filed a complaint with the commission.

TURKEY

Turkish transsexual gay leader Demet Demir, a winner of this year's International Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission award for outstanding contributions to the movement, was taken into custody by Istanbul police July 12.

The arresting officers said Demir had "insulted the police."

A spokesman for the group Lambda Istanbul said the arrest was probably related to a July 7 television program during which Demir complained of police mistreatment of transvestites and transsexuals.

Compiled by Rex Wockner

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