

Transsexualism is against Islamic teachings, and men who have sex-change operations will not be recognized as female, Malaysia's government declared July 23.

About 50,000 people nationwide have had sexual-reassignment surgery, according to the *Star*, a Kuala Lumpur daily. Officials said transsexuals will be offered counseling instead.

CANADA

A case challenging the constitutionality of Canada's ban on same-sex marriage arrived July 23 at the British Columbia Supreme Court.

The plaintiffs are eight couples to whom the province refused to issue marriage licenses. They argue the ban violates the equal treatment provisions of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the nation's bill of rights.

"We are less than full citizens, and I want full citizenship," plaintiff Murray Warren told the Canadian Press wire service. Whichever way the British Columbia court rules, the case is expected to advance to the Supreme Court.

HUNGARY

Budapest District III Mayor Istvan Tarlos and organizers of Hungary's weeklong Pepsi Island Festival agreed in writing that homosexual groups would not be allowed to participate in the event, but gay groups went to court and beat the ban. Two gay-themed tents were staffed as the fair got under way Aug. 2.

"The Habeas Corpus Working Group, Hatter Support Society for Gays and Lesbians, Labriz Lesbian Association and NANE Women Against Violence...are holding human rights educational workshops on discrimination against sexual minorities and on rape and domestic violence against women and children," Habeas Corpus spokesman Gabor Kuszing said. "Discussions include homophobia workshops that aim to sensitize participants to the hatred, violence, discrimination, humiliation and other problems faced by sexual minorities in Hungary."

Kuszing said the court ruling was "a major victory of the human rights movement of sexual minorities in Hungary, since this is the first time that the collective rights of sexual minorities have been protected by the state. The injunction is also unique because for the first time it directly interprets the Hungarian Constitution as defending the rights of sexual minorities."

Judge Judit Vida of the Districts II and III court ruled that Tarlos "had no right to sign an agreement that...strengthens society's prejudices against sexual minorities."

SIBERIA

About 1 percent of girls between 11 and 16 in the Kuzbass region of Siberia have asked doctors for a sex-change operation, *Pravda* and the local *Vyorsty* newspaper reported July 30. The region's macho culture was blamed for the unusually high statistic.

THE NETHERLANDS

A total of 386 Dutch gay couples got married during the month after the Netherlands became the first country to let same-sex couples marry under the regular marriage laws.

According to the Central Statistics Office, 1 1/2 times as many male couples as female couples tied the knot in April. Researchers expect about 10,000 gay weddings will occur during the first year.

Gay couples from other nations can marry in the Netherlands as long as one of the individuals has lived there for at least four months. Readers of *De Gay Krant* magazine are assisting foreign couples in establishing residency.

"These foreigners have to prove that they are

using the Amsterdam address for at least four months," publisher Henk Krol said. "During these months it is possible that the City Hall will ask them to come by. If this is asked, they have to show up within three weeks. American citizens need a permit to stay that long in the Netherlands, but it is rather easy for Americans to get that permit."

For more information, e-mail h.krol@gaykrant.nl.



Murray Warren

INDIA

Several employees of the Lucknow AIDS organizations Bharosa Trust and Naz Foundation International remain jailed, charged with conspiracy to commit "unnatural sexual acts" and possession of obscene material. The agencies were raided July 7.

A judge refused the arrestees' bail requests July 11, accusing them of "polluting the entire society by encouraging the young persons and abetting them to committing the offense of sodomy." The AIDS work of both organizations has been supported by the Uttar Pradesh State AIDS Control Society and India's National AIDS Control Organization.

The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission denounced the arrests July 25. "The use of police force to raid agencies and arrest staff engaging in government-sanctioned HIV/AIDS prevention activities—the conflation of this educational activity with abetting, spreading and conspiring to commit sodomy—reflects ignorance and prejudice masquerading as enforcement of the law," the group said.

Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code punishes sodomy with up to 10 years in prison.

UNITED KINGDOM

The British Home Office has offered a settlement of about \$22,000 each to seven men convicted of violating a law banning gay sex in private between more than two people, the *Guardian* reported July 27.

The government hopes to avert an embarrassing defeat before the European Court of Human Rights, where five of the men filed suit, the newspaper said. The men were prosecuted in 1998 under the 1967 Sexual Offenses Act after a private videotape of their escapades emerged.



Co-workers congratulate *Big Brother* victor Brian Dowling

A gay flight attendant emerged victorious in British television's second *Big Brother* reality series July 27. Brian Dowling, 23, won about \$100,000 after spending 64 days locked in a house with other contestants who were voted out one by one.

His laid-back humor was a decisive factor, reports said. Dowling received 4.2 million viewer votes, 1.6 million more than the second-place finisher.

The Channel 4 network program scored very high ratings. [E]

Compiled by REX WOCKNER, who has reported for the gay press since 1985. He has a bachelor's degree in journalism from Drake University and started his career as a radio reporter.

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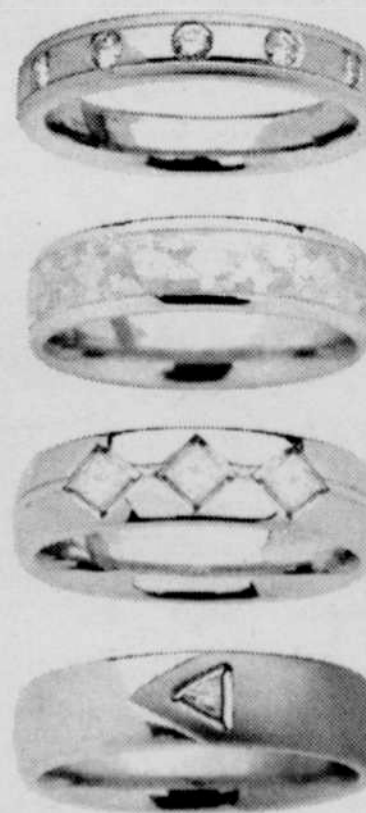
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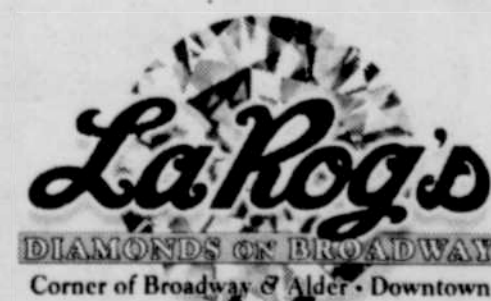


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