

UNITED KINGDOM

The European Court of Justice said Jan. 7 that transsexuals must have equal access to marriage and pension rights. The court was responding to a request for advice from Britain's Court of Appeal in a case where a woman is contesting her partner's ineligibility to apply for a widower's pension.

The case now faces further consideration in England but could soon become irrelevant there, because legislation to allow transsexuals to sue over their birth certificates and marry is moving through the House of Lords. The Euro court's opinion applies to the other 14 European Union nations as well.

In 2002, the European Court of Human Rights—the court of final appeal for citizens of the 45 nations that make up the Council of Europe—also ruled in favor of transsexuals' right to marry.

Britain's Sky TV will reportedly pay about \$925,000 each to six men who threatened to sue over their participation in a reality show in which they did not know the woman they were courting was a transsexual.

The program, *There's Something About Miriam*, was postponed after the men issued their threat but now reportedly will be aired. The suitors said they were traumatized and devastated upon learning they had kissed and cuddled a woman who used to be a man.

They alleged breach of contract, deceit, personal injury and sexual assault.

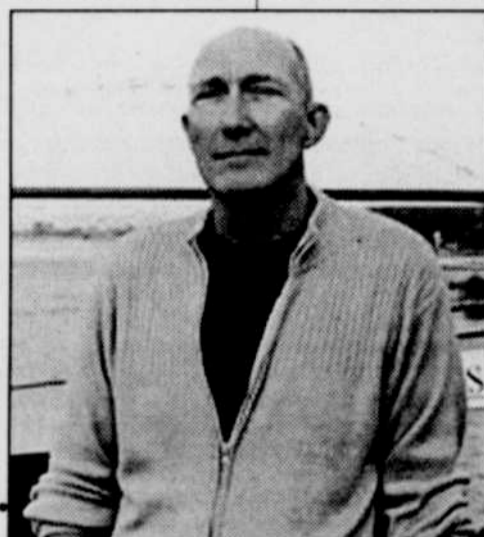
The chairman of the United Kingdom's Gay Police Association, Inspector Paul Cahill, was named a Member of the Order of the British Empire in Queen Elizabeth II's new year's honors list. The award recognizes his "services to diversity in the police and the wider community."

Another MBE went to Anne Patrizio, 63, who runs the Parents Enquiry Scotland hot line for people with gay, lesbian, bi or trans children.

THE NETHERLANDS

The Netherlands' national gay organization, COC, says police and local officials have stepped up harassment of men who frequent public cruising areas. Expat.com reported Jan. 7. Some have been fined for various violations of the law.

"The police are no longer your best friend," COC chairman Henk Beerten said. He suggested the crackdown will make men who have sex with men in parks and nature areas less likely to report anti-gay attacks in those locations.



Dutch activist Henk Beerten fears a cruising crackdown will discourage gay men from reporting hate crimes

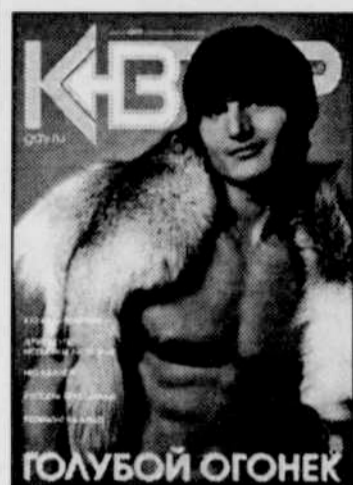
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

The Caribbean nation of Trinidad and Tobago, which bans male-male sex, has nonetheless passed a bill that protects gay and transgender people, *Trinidad & Tobago Newsday* reported Jan. 11.

The House of Representatives included "gender or sexual preference" among the protected categories in a measure that restricts when someone can be extradited to another nation to face criminal charges. The law would apply to crimes in other nations that are punished with death or imprisonment for more than one year.

The measure amends the Extradition Act "to prevent an accused person's return to a declared commonwealth territory or a declared foreign territory if it is determined that the request for

his return is based on his sex, gender or sexual preference," according to the official notes attached to it. The bill now moves to the Senate.



Russia's new gay magazine, *Kvir (Queer)*, is struggling financially

RUSSIA

Russia has a new gay magazine, *Kvir (Queer)*.

It launched in August and distributes 15,000 copies in clubs, saunas and bookstores from Moscow to Vladivostok. All of Russia's other gay magazines had gone out of business.

Advertisers include dentists as well as travel, hair-removal and security companies, but the publication is still losing money, *The Moscow Times* reported. Surveys indicate that the typical *Kvir* reader is between 30 and 35, has an above-average income and is 20 percent more likely than the average Russian to have a car, apartment and credit card.

The magazine emerged from the Gay.ru Web site founded by Ed Mishin, who also has set up a small gay center.

"When people come to [the center's] support group, they often say in the feedback session that the most important thing that they got out of the group was the realization that it's possible to be gay and normal," he told the *Times*. "They say, 'I saw normal people, and it just astounded me.'"

CHINA

The first person in China to have a sex-reassignment operation was legally married Dec. 30.

"A-gang," 29, who used to be a woman but is now a man, married "Xiaoli" in the southwestern city of Chengdu, *The Chengdu Commercial Daily* reported.

The couple have lived together for three years, and A-gang underwent surgery last May in Shenzhen. He received a new identity card and residence record, reflecting his new gender, shortly thereafter.

"All these years, I've yearned for love but never imagined I would taste it," he told the *Daily*. "And when I finally met Xiaoli, I didn't dare think about marriage. I'm at a loss for words now that I've finally fulfilled both my wishes."

INDONESIA

A movie that shows oral sex in a public toilet and a passionate gay kiss made it past Indonesian censors and has become a box office hit. *Arisan!* is a satirical comedy that mocks the lifestyles of Jakarta's rich professionals.

"It is a breakthrough," gay activist Dede Oetomo said in interviews with *The Associated Press* and Reuters. "The urban young are now willing to accept gays. There is a sense of freedom to talk about it now."

Director Nia diNata confessed: "I was a bit nervous but was elated when the censor boards [OK'd the kiss]. I and my friends wanted to break new ground." ■

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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