

WORLD news

sexuality as a pretended family relationship." It was repealed in November 2003.

Tens of thousands of queers also marched July 3 in Cologne, Germany.

MALTA

The European island nation of Malta, which is located south of Sicily and east of Tunisia, saw its first Gay Pride parade July 22. A "relatively small" number of marchers walked down Republic Street in the capital, Valletta, said *The Malta Independent* daily newspaper.

"We are here.... We are visible now, and we have a right to be ourselves just like any other taxpaying citizen," co-organizer Sandro Mangion told the paper.

Prominent attendees included Malta Labor Party MPs Evarist Bartolo and Helena Dalli, Education Minister Louis Galea and representatives from the Alternattiva Demokratika, Alpha and Moviment Graffiti political parties. "I am here because the parade is lobbying for a fundamental human right," Bartolo told the *Independent*.

VENEZUELA

More than 300 people marched in the Gay Pride parade July 11 in Caracas.

They carried balloons, rainbow flags and signs denouncing mistreatment of queers by police and television broadcasters. Jesús Medina of the organizing group Lambda said activists also seek access to marriage and want a "national advocate" for homosexuals within the office of the People's Advocate.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THREE DOGS ENTERTAINMENT



Singapore banned the Taiwanese film *Formula 17* because it "creates an illusion of a homosexual utopia"

SINGAPORE

Singapore's Film Appeals Committee upheld July 22 a ban on the gay-themed *Formula 17*—Taiwan's top-grossing movie this year.

The teen-age romantic comedy encourages homosexuality, the committee said: "[It] creates an illusion of a homosexual utopia, where everyone, including passersby, is homosexual and no ills or problems are reflected.... It conveys the message that homosexuality is normal and a natural progression of society."

THAILAND

The 15 transvestites at the Chiang Mai Technology School in Thailand have been given their own toilet because they didn't feel welcome in the men's or women's restrooms. The "Pink Lotus Bathroom" has intertwined male and female symbols on the door, four stalls and no urinals.

"They don't get teased in the bathroom any-

more," the school's registrar, Posaporn Promprakai, told *The Associated Press*. "They're much happier."

SWEDEN

A Pentecostal Movement preacher in Borgholm was jailed for one month June 29 for making anti-gay statements.

Åke Green was found guilty of agitating against an ethnic minority for saying that homosexuality results from "evil powers" and violates the Bible's story of creation, that gays are a tumor on society and that AIDS is caused by gay sex. The Kalmar district court ruled that the right of gays to be protected from such language outweighed Green's right to make homophobic statements in the name of religion, the *Aftonbladet* daily newspaper said.

Sweden's National Federation for Sexual Equality commented: "Freedom of religion should never imply agitation against persons. It is this type of agitation that foments hate crimes against homosexual, bisexual and transgender persons."

THE BAHAMAS

Rosie O'Donnell's cruise for gay families and their kids was met by about 100 Christian fundamentalist protesters when it docked July 16 in Nassau.

They carried signs reading, "Gay ways are not God's ways" and "If you are openly gay, stay away." Police prevented the demonstrators from getting too close to the gay families.

In a statement, the local U.S. embassy defended the right of queer Americans to visit the Bahamas unmolested.

JAMAICA

Buju Banton, one of several Jamaican dancehall music stars whose lyrics urge listeners to kill gays, will be questioned in connection with a violent attack on several gay men, Britain's *The Guardian* reported July 17. Several witnesses identified him as part of a group of armed men who broke into a house June 24 in the Jamaican capital of Kingston and beat up the occupants while hurling homophobic verbal abuse.



Buju Banton

Jamaica is considered to be one of the world's most overtly anti-gay nations. The country's most prominent gay activist, Brian Williamson, was knifed to death June 9 at his apartment in an apparent hate crime.

The campaign by the British gay group Out-Rage! to halt concerts by Jamaican dancehall music stars who advocate the murder of gay people is escalating across Europe.

Bounty Killer's September performance at the Krakrock Festival in Avelgem, Belgium, has been canceled because of the artist's violent anti-gay lyrics. "Hateful people are not welcome at the festival," organizer Bert Breda said.

In late June, Beenie Man and Capleton were allowed to perform at Brussels' Couleur Café Festival only after they promised not to use homophobic lyrics. Both singers were threatened with arrest under Belgium's hate crime laws if they broke their vows.



Christian fundamentalists in the Bahamas protested a cruise for gay families arranged by Rosie O'Donnell (right, with spouse Kelli)

Beenie Man's June 24 concert at the London nightclub Ocean was canceled after club owners expressed "concerns for public safety following discussions with Metropolitan Police" about the artist's lyrics.

INDIA

Dozens of gays, lesbians and "gender activists" protested June 30 in New Delhi against the nation's ban on gay sex, the *Hindustan Times* and *New Kerala* newspapers reported. They marched around the Jantar Mantar observatory waving banners and shouting slogans.

Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code reads, "Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal shall be punished with imprisonment for life or with imprisonment...for a term which may extend to 10 years and shall also be liable to fine." Jaya Sharma of Voices Against 377 told the *Times*, "At a time when even a country like China has removed the criminal tag from homosexuality, India continues to adhere to the Victorian prohibitions."

A survey by the Humsafar Trust and the Indian Market Research Bureau has found that 17 percent to 20 percent of men who have sex with men in Mumbai (Bombay) are HIV-positive. The survey of 240 men also found that 27 percent of those questioned are married to a woman and that 47 percent had sex with a woman in the past month.

The men reported an average of four sexual partners a month, down from 11 in a similar survey conducted in 2000. About 92 percent meet male sex partners at cruising locations, 81 percent at railroad stations, 69 percent in public toilets and 56 percent through friends.

NEPAL

Police beat gays protesting outside the prime minister's office in Kathmandu, *The Himalayan Times* reported July 6. Members of the gay Blue Diamond Society were protesting "police atrocity" and "human rights violation."


"The police beat them up and ordered [them] to leave the place, saying staging protests around Singha Durbar was banned," the paper said. Blue Diamond called for an "immediate end of sexual oppression and assault on sexual minorities from the police and society." □

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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