

WORLD news

ZANZIBARIAN CLERICS STRESSED ABOUT INCREASED HOMOSEXUALITY

Muslim clerics on the island of Zanzibar, which is part of the nation of Tanzania, are upset about an alleged increase in homosexuality among young people. Dozens of imams met May 27 to denounce the alleged trend.

"The youths involved in gay and lesbian business have been increasing in coastal areas such as Mombasa, Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar," said cleric Maalim Mziwanda Ahmed. "The government in collaboration with the mufti's office must do something."

The clerics blamed the supposed trend on Western tourists allegedly enticing Zanzibarian youth.

Last year, Zanzibar enacted its own gay sex ban, on top of Tanzania's ban. Gay male sex is punished with up to 25 years in prison and lesbian sex with up to seven years in prison.

that has occurred so far only in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. Mayor José Serra attended the festivities and spoke at a post-parade concert that featured several of Brazil's best-known singers.

COSTA RICAN CATHOLIC HIERARCHY SUPPORTS PARTNER BENEFITS

Costa Rica's Catholic Church Episcopal Conference has come out in support of legislation to grant gay couples many of the rights and obligations of marriage.



Monsignor Patrick Jacquin was injured during a scrap between activists and security at Notre Dame Cathedral.

"If at the juridical level there are certain rights granted to other persons and these also can be granted to them [gays], I don't see any problem with that," said conference President Monsignor Francisco Ulloa.

Areas covered by the proposal include inheritance, health insurance and property rights. The bill, drafted by the Center for Investigation and

Promotion of Human Rights in Central America, was presented May 26 to the Legislative Assembly.

"Discrimination is present in the succession processes where, in case of a death without a will, real estate passes to blood relatives," the center noted. "This lack of legal recognition also impedes obtaining other benefits such as pensions and immigration status."

AMERICAS

PANAMANIANS PLAN FIRST PRIDE

Panama will see its first Gay Pride parade June 25.

Organized by the New Men and Women Association of Panama, the 3 p.m. Parade for Sexual Diversity will depart from the intersection of Vía España and Vía Argentina and head to Andrés Bello Park. The march has received financial support from two gay bars, a Web site, a gay tchotchke shop, Spain's Triangle Foundation and Grupo FSM, a corporation that owns the trendy Madrid nightclub Cool.

"Knowing that most marches of this type always start small—and then grow into carnival-type parties—we chose a very short path for our march, and we are not planning on having floats or anything like that," said Javier Rodríguez of the organizing group. "We hope that many hetero friends and family will show up. We are inviting everyone. Hence the 'sexual diversity' character of the march."

After a rally at the park, the marchers will release 600 helium-filled balloons, 100 for each color in the rainbow flag. They are still looking for about \$400 in donations to pay for the balloons. For more information, e-mail ahmnp@yahoo.com.

2 MILLION ATTEND SÃO PAULO PRIDE

Around 2 million people turned out for the ninth Gay Pride parade May 30 in São Paulo, Brazil, making it the world's largest Gay Pride celebration. Police, organizers and media outlets agreed on the attendance figure.

The parade traversed eight-lane, skyscraper-lined Avenida Paulista and featured drag queens, go-go boys, giant rainbow flags and trucks blasting music.

"With this many people...the parade is a major step to strike people's prejudice against gays," Pedro Almeida of the Brazilian Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Pride Parade Association told The Associated Press.

Marchers demanded passage of laws creating civil unions for same-sex couples—something



George Iacobescu of Accept, a gay rights group, was involved with Romania's first GayFest Parade.

TORONTO UNVEILS GAY STATUE

Several hundred people turned out in Toronto's gay neighborhood May 28 for the unveiling of a statue of openly gay 19th century city magistrate Alexander Wood.

"We wanted to do a public art project," Dennis O'Connor of the Church-Wellesley Village Business Improvement Area told the Canadian Press news service. "We chose him because he has a connection to our community and [to] this particular spot."

In 1827, Wood, who is considered one of Toronto's founding fathers, purchased the land around Church and Alexander streets, where the 2.5-meter statue now stands.

"People who have lived in this neighborhood have known and heard about him over the years...but it's never been mainstream," City Councillor Kyle Rae told the CP. "This now becomes part of all of everyone's knowledge."

Wood was mockingly known as "Molly," a derogatory term for homosexuals. In 1810, he got ensnared in a gay sex scandal and fled to Scotland for two years to avoid sodomy charges. He returned to Toronto in 1812, once the fuss had died down, and continued his work without any trouble.

ASIA/PACIFIC

400 MARCH IN SEOUL

About 400 queers marched in the Gay Pride parade June 7 in Seoul, South Korea. The march was the centerpiece of the 15-day Queer Culture Rainbow Festival 2005, *JoongAng Daily* reported.

"Stereotypes against sexual minorities in Korea have almost disappeared," said parade organizer Han Chae-yun of the Korean Sexual-Minority Culture & Rights Center. "This event was to help sexual minorities become confident and to protest against social prejudice." **J**



London Mayor Ken Livingstone called councilors banning the rainbow flag "Neanderthals."

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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