

WORLDnews



This ad campaign for Ra-Re clothing is causing controversy in Italy.

SPANISH OPPOSITION WANTS TO UNDO MARRIAGE LAW

Spain's main opposition party, the Partido Popular, plans to file a Constitutional Court case to attempt to undo the nation's legalization of same-sex marriage.

Party leader Mariano Rajoy believes the Spanish Constitution restricts marriage to opposite-sex pairings. The move is opposed by the president of the party's Madrid region, Esperanza Aguirre, who said it would be perceived as gay-bashing.

The Congress of Deputies legalized same-sex marriage June 30 in a 187-147 vote with four abstentions.

"Today, Spanish society is responding to a group of people who for years have been humiliated, whose rights have been ignored, their dignity offended, their identity denied and their freedom restricted," Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero said. "Today, Spanish society grants them the respect they deserve, recognizes their rights, restores their dignity, affirms their identity and restores their liberty."

Full marriage also is available to same-sex couples in Belgium, Canada, the Netherlands and Massachusetts.



Spain's main opposition party leader, Mariano Rajoy, believes the Spanish Constitution prevents marriages between same-sex couples.

HOSPITAL MUST ACCEPT GAY BLOOD

Italian Health Minister Francesco Storace ordered Milan's Policlinico hospital to stop banning gays from donating blood Sept. 21, according to the ANSA news agency.

The facility was told to "eliminate all references to homosexuality as a screening factor." Storace called the ban "grave and offensive discrimination."

The situation came to light when Paolo Pedone, a staffer at the gay magazine *Pride*, was turned away from the donation center "because young gay males pose a high risk of having AIDS."

ASIA/PACIFIC

POLICE ATTACK NEPALESE GAYS

Nepalese police have attacked gays and metis (transgender women) again, assaulting a group

Sept. 24 in Kathmandu, reported the British gay rights group OutRage and Nepal's gay Blue Diamond Society.

The attack began with plainclothes policemen sexually harassing several metis who were socializing outside the Himalayan Java Café. One officer, Nava Raj Adhikari, allegedly stuck a lit cigarette onto the hand of a meti and demanded she have sex with him. When she refused, he reportedly pulled her hair and slapped her.

Adhikari later returned with other cops who beat several metis with sticks and rocks, kicked them with heavy boots, then arrested at least one of them, the gay organizations said.

The Blue Diamond Society said it asked the National Human Rights Commission and Human Rights Cell of the Nepal Police to investigate the incident, but they refused, claiming it was merely a fight between a "meti gang" and a "police gang."

"These assaults are a continuation of a long history of homophobic abuse and violence by sections of the Nepali police," said Peter Tatchell of OutRage. "We are concerned that LGBT people in Nepal have no legal redress against state violence and that they get little support from mainstream human rights groups and political parties."

MALAYSIAN OUTING LEADS TO LAWSUIT

Former Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim says he is suing former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad for nearly \$27 million for calling him gay.

Mahathir has outed Anwar repeatedly for several years—and did so again last month, saying he fired Anwar in 1998 to prevent Malaysia from ending up with a homosexual leader.

"I cannot have a person who is like that in my Cabinet who may succeed and become the prime minister," Mahathir said in late September. "Imagine having a gay prime minister. Nobody would be safe."

Anwar was jailed for nine years in 2000 for allegedly engaging in same-sex sodomy, but he was released in 2004 after the Federal Court ruled the evidence against him had been unreliable. He and human rights groups have said that the charges were bogus and that he was framed because Mahathir feared that Anwar was scheming to replace him.

Anwar called Mahathir's latest comments "defamatory" and noted that he recently won \$1.55 million in a court case against publishers of a book that repeated the sodomy allegations.

"I will not allow this lie and slander to continue," he said. "From the very beginning, I have stressed that my sacking from the government [was] part of a high-level political conspiracy."

The maximum punishment for having gay sex in Malaysia is 20 years in jail and a flogging.

NEW ZEALAND P.M. WON'T SUPPORT GAY MARRIAGE

New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark said Sept. 14 that she doesn't plan to support legalization of same-sex marriage, GayNZ.com reported.

She made the remark in response to a question at a meeting with the senior citizens organization Grey Power. Clark reportedly acknowledged that the Marriage Act discriminates against gay and lesbian couples but said the people of New Zealand support that.

A comprehensive civil union law took effect in April. It grants registered same-sex couples all rights and responsibilities of matrimony.

NEW ZEALAND GETS FIVE GAY MPs

New Zealand's 122-member Parliament now has five openly gay members, *The Sydney Star Observer* reported.

Labour MPs Tim Barnett and Chris Carter were re-elected in last month's elections, as was transsexual Labour MP Georgina Beyer. Labour MP Maryan Street and National Party MP Christopher Finlayson were elected for the first time.

"It will have some impact on Parliament as a whole, because having an openly gay MP in your party allows you to see and understand some of the issues that affect LGBT people," activist Calum Bennachie told the paper.

LESBIAN SELECTED FOR NEW SOUTH WALES PARLIAMENT

A lesbian was elected to the Parliament of the Australian state of New South Wales in late September.

Penny Sharpe, 34, was chosen by Parliament to fill a vacancy in the Legislative Council.

"Yes, I am gay," Sharpe told reporters. "Yes, I have two children.... Beyond saying that I have been in a relationship for 12 years and I have two children, I am not saying anything. No other parliamentarians are asked about their families and how their children are conceived, and I don't see why I have to. I have children to protect, and I don't want to go into it."

AMERICAS

CANADA UPS METH PENALTIES

Canada has increased the penalty for producing, trafficking or selling crystal methamphetamine to a maximum of life in prison, *Xtra! West* reports.

Use of the especially harmful drug is believed to have reached epidemic levels in some North American gay enclaves, where it has been blamed for rising rates of HIV transmission.

"We have taken action to bring the penalties for methamphetamine offenses in line with those substances that pose a comparable level of risk to health and safety," said Health Minister Ujjal Dosanjh.

PANAMANIAN GAYS PRESENT ANTI-DISCRIMINATION MEASURE

Panama's New Men and Women's Association has presented a bill to the National Assembly that would criminalize discrimination, stigmatization and physical and verbal abuse based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

"We want them to prohibit and penalize discrimination in the workplace, schools and public services, along with the commission, instigation or promotion of hate crimes based on these two categories," said Ricardo Beteta, president of the organization.

The proposed punishment is six months to one year in prison and a fine of 50 to 100 days' salary.

CUBA STAGES GAY FILM FESTIVAL

The Cuban government staged a gay film festival last month. The five-day event was sponsored by the Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry and the National Center for Prevention of Sexually Transmitted Infections and HIV/AIDS.

The festival kicked off with Neil Jordan's *The Crying Game*. As patrons entered the theater, employees of the center handed them condoms and safe-sex pamphlets and posters. **JO**

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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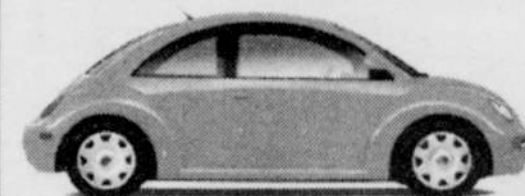
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