

**news notes**

from around the nation & globe

**International >**

**Real lover was a gay Nazi**

LONDON, England — He is one of the great romantic heroes. In Michael Ondaatje's book "The English Patient," Laszlo Almasi is a once-dashing count who lies bandaged in a hospital bed tormented by severe burns and the memory of his dead lover. That is the fiction. A book to be published will detail the real life of Laszlo, played by Ralph Fiennes in the film based on the novel, who was a very different character. He was not a count and he did not have an affair with a beautiful married Englishwoman. His true lover did die tragically but he was a Nazi soldier killed by a landmine. The real story of Almasi has been fascinating people since Ondaatje's Booker prize-winning novel was published in 1992. Interest was intensified by Anthony Minghella's Oscar-winning film, in which Almasi steals society beauty Katharine Clifton, played by Kristin Scott Thomas, from her husband, played by Colin Firth.



Laszlo Almasi

**Taiwan's first gay minister**

TAIPEI, Taiwan — A Presbyterian

priest has become Taiwan's first openly gay Christian minister. Tseng Shumin was ordained a minister in the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. "We should give him blessings and encouragement," ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) parliamentarian Hsiao Bi-khim told reporters before she participated in the ceremony. "Hopefully basic human rights would be respected here in Taiwan." Domestic gay groups welcomed the event, which Chan Mingchou from the Taiwan Gay and Lesbian Association described as a "milestone" in the improvement of human rights on the island. The DPP government has been pressing for the enactment of a Human Rights Basic Law which enshrines the right of homosexual couples to adopt children, among other provisions, including abolishing the death penalty.

**Gay marriage laws strengthened**

BERLIN, Germany — Germany's so-called gay marriage laws have been strengthened following a ruling by the nation's federal labour court. In handing down its judgment, the court said that public employers must pay the same location allowances to homosexuals registered in a life partnership (officially known as an 'Eingetragenelebensgemeinschaft') as married. In their ruling, the judges indicated that they did not see a difference between a registered life partnership and marriage when it came to remuneration in the public service with the court accepting that a 'Eingetragenelebensgemeinschaft'

also meant family status. A leading member of the parliamentary Green Party, Volker Beck hailed the judgement as a "big breakthrough." The judgement followed a case brought by a male nurse who claimed the higher location allowances paid to his married colleagues. Conservative lawmakers in parliament have refused to accept provisions of the gay marriage law, so that it falls short of equality with heterosexuals in some major areas, notably taxation. The law is also important for gay foreigners who wish to live in Germany. A piece of paper saying you are a part of an 'Eingetragenelebensgemeinschaft' can guarantee an unlimited residence permit (unbefristete Aufenthaltserlaubnis) and help with arranging a work permit.

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