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KOREA: CBCK PLANNING DEPARTMENT FOR SOCIAL COMMUNICATION APPROVED

The Permanent Council of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea (CBCK) approved on February 20 the plan to establish a Planning department for Social Communications within the CBCK. As a representative structure of the Church, the department will focus on spreading Catholic ideas through the mass media in cooperation with existing Catholic media organizations. At an earlier meeting on February 15, the CBCK Committee for Social Communications agreed to intensify the social communication function of the Church. Committee President Bishop Paul Choi said, "we should effectively communicate the opinions of the Church to society." (CBCK NEWSLETTER)

BANGLADESH: DIOCESE SPONSORS SEMINAR TO ENCOURAGE ETHNIC WRITERS

The Catholic biweekly publication "Christabda," in cooperation with the Garo Student Union (GASU), organized a seminar for 25 ethnic Garo college and university students from Mymensingh diocese to develop their writing skills. The seminar was held March 15 in Bhatikisor Catholic Church in Mymensingh, 122 kilometers north of Dhaka. The program included a basic writing session followed by an open forum where the participants discussed questions about specific areas of writing. (UCANEWS)

INDIA: CHURCH'S AIDS MOVIE FLOPS

The first commercial Hindi-language movie funded by the Church has failed at the box office. The movie "Aisa Kyon Hota Hai" (why does this happen?) was released on February 17 in 30 theaters in northern India, Bangalore and Hyderabad in southern India, and Kolkata in the east. But most theaters reported low turnout and that the movie only ran for a week. Delhi archdiocese's social-service organization, Chetanalaya (abode of consciousness), produced the movie, and overseas agencies donated production funds. Divine Word Father Dominic Emmanuel, head of Delhi archdiocese's communication and information department, managed the project. The film was re-released in the third week of April. (UCANEWS)

KOREA: NEW SECRETARY GENERAL OF BISHOPS' CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS RELATIONS WITH MEDIA

The newly appointed secretary general of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea (CBCK), Fr Peter Pai Young-ho, sees the importance of Church-media relations. Fr Pai said he "understands that as CBCK secretary general, he should play a role in effectively channeling news and information within the local Church as well as to the Churches in Asia and the world." "I will humbly listen to media people's suggestions," he added. Fr Pai, 50, was appointed to the position for a three-year term during the March 20-23 CBCK plenary assembly. He has taught philosophy at Suwon Catholic University since 1989. (UCANEWS)

CHURCH COMMUNICATORS MOURN DEATH OF FATHER MICHAEL TRABER

Christian communicators mourned the passing of Swiss priest, Fr Michael Traber, on March 25 after a long battle with cancer. Fr. Traber, 77, died at Missionshaus Bethlehem, Immensee, Switzerland. Fr Traber's half-century work in communications and media ethics has guided many scholars and students in Asia and elsewhere. As a young missionary of the Catholic missionary society "Bethlehem Mission," he served as editor of "Moto" Catholic weekly newspaper in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). In 1974, he was deported and the weekly was banned. But he returned to Africa and served as senior lecturer in journalism in Zambia (1973-1976). In later years, he undertook extensive surveys of Catholic media activities in various parts of Asia and his recommendations vastly improved the quality of Church communications in countries like Indonesia. Fr Traber regularly taught media ethics at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. For the past 10 years, he also taught communications and practical journalism at United Theological College in Bangalore, India. Fr Traber strongly advocated systematic study of the interconnections between theology and communication, and co-edited a series of monographs on "Communication and Human Values." In 1985, he drafted the "Christian Principles of Communication" which was formally adopted by the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) in 1986. Fr Traber was member of WACC from 1976 to 1995. On March 11, 2006 WACC presented him with an Honorary Life Membership in a special ceremony in Immensee where FABC-OSC was also present. On several occasions, Fr Traber helped FABC-OSC meetings as resource person. (UCANEWS)

INDIA: MEDIA EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS EMPHASIZED

The Karnataka regional center for social communications, Sandesha, organized a two-day workshop on Media Education and Media in Education. Bishop Aloysius D'Souza of Mangalore inaugurated the workshop saying that by educating students to be critical and intelligent consumers of media, "we will be doing great service to the nation." Bishop D'Souza is chairman of Sandesha Foundation and the Karnataka Regional Commission for Social Communications, Sandesha's overseeing body. (SAR NEWS)

PAKISTAN: WAVE STUDIO PRODUCES NEW CASSETTEE FOR LENT 2006

"Lord of Life" is the title of a new religious music cassette produced for Lent 2006 by WAVE Studios in Lahore. The cassette is a collection of 11 hymns in Urdu and Punjabi on the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. A few Muslims helped in the production making it a collaboration with "profound theological texts" and a means to promote peace in the world, reports say. WAVE Studios operates under the social communications commission of Lahore archdiocese. (FIDES)

INDIA: NORTH-EAST REGION COMMENDS DRAFT OF COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Participants of a three-day consultation organized by North East Social Communications (NESCOM) in Guwahati, Assam March 22-24 commended the Pastoral Plan for Social Communications for North East India was made by NESCOM team with help from Fr Henry D'Souza, executive secretary of the Indian Bishops' Media Office. The resource book "Called to be a Communicating Church: A National Pastoral Plan for Social Communications" published by CBCI in 2004 was taken as the model. The consultation was attended by NESCOM Chairman, Salesian Bishop Joseph Aind of Dibrugarh. (THE HERALD)

MONGOLIA: CATHOLICS CRAM INTO VILLAGE FOR SACRED MUSIC FESTIVAL

Members of all three Catholic parishes in Mongolia braved wintry travel conditions to catch their annual Festival of Sacred Music held on January 15 this year in Shuwuu village, 45 kilometers west of Ulaanbaatar. It took them more than an hour over ice-covered roads to reach the village, where seven choirs and more than 20 soloists competed for medals offered by the Catholic mission. The event was held at the community center of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (ICM) sisters in Shuwuu. Filipino Bishop Wenceslao Padilla, now apostolic prefect of Ulaanbaatar, said the music festival shows the "Catholic Church in Mongolia is becoming a strong community." (TNL)

BANGLADESH: SIGNIS AT THE DHAKA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Signis, the Catholic organization for Catholic communication, gave its first award at the 9th edition of the Dhaka International Film Festival January 17-25. The Signis Award was given to the Indian film "Krantikaal" (critical encounter) by Director Shekhar Das, who studied at the Jesuits' Chitrabani Communication Center in Kolkata. Signis officials helped Festival Director Ahmed Mustapha Zamal with the selection of the films. Former Signis-World President, Fr Peter Malone, also chaired the festival's Independent Films Jury. Signis' presence at the film festival was an opportunity to foster intercultural and inter-religious collaboration and dialogue. (SIGNIS)

THAILAND: DIOCESE TAKES LENTEN CAMPAIGN ON COMMERCIAL RADIO

Ubon Ratchathani diocese's social development center ran "Communicate Love" broadcasts from Ash Wednesday, April 1, till April 12 every noontime over FM 102 station to tell people, mostly Buddhists, about Lent and the need to care for the poor. Fr Jaturong Sarakun, the center's director, co-anchored the broadcasts always urging listeners to take an interest in and assist poor people and to reconcile with others. Ubon Ratchathani, 630 kilometers northeast of Bangkok, covers seven provinces and has 25,184 Catholics in a population of about 7.8 million people. (THE HERALD)

INDIA: BRONZE STATUE OF POPE UNVEILED IN CHENNAI

A 22-feet tall statue of Pope John Paul II was unveiled in Chennai on April 2 to mark the first death anniversary of the late Pope. Bearing the inscription "The Third Step - St John Paul II," the statue is said to be the first one erected after the People's Pope died. It was made as a "personal tribute" of sculptor Shihan Hussaini. While the Tamil Nadu government decides where to place the statue, it will remain at the Sculpture Mission, Besant Nagar, Chennai. (THE HERALD)

KOREA: BUDDHISTS, CATHOLICS WORRY THAT 'PROTESTANT TV' MIGHT DISRUPT RELIGIOUS HARMONY

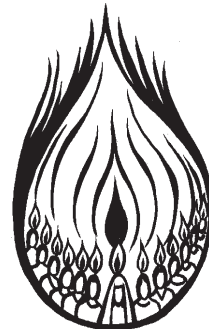
The Korea Buddhist Order Association and Incheon diocese issued separate statements objecting to the possibility of Christian Broadcasting System (CBS) taking over the former Incheon Television (ITV), which broadcasts to Incheon city and surrounding Gyeonggi province. In a March 29 statement, the association of 27 Buddhist orders, including the Jogye Order, the nation's largest, said with this, "the regional TV station becomes a means for Church mission and therefore it goes against ... equal access to broadcasting media (for all religions), which causes serious interreligious tension and conflict." Incheon diocese said in a March 23 statement that it does not want a new television station controlled by any religion, maintaining that TV broadcasting should provide a "general" service to all people in the region. CBS, meanwhile, issued a press release on April 3 in which it denies it would take the initiative in managing the TV station. The new TV station would be "general" in its broadcasting scope, the release said. (UCANEWS)

INDIA: GOVERNMENT ISSUES POSTAGE STAMP ON DON BOSCO

The Government of India issued a stamp to commemorate 100 years of Don Bosco in India 1906-2006. The stamp was released by Union Minister for Communications and Information Technology, Shri Dayanidhi Maran, during a special function at Don Bosco Matriculation School in Chennai. Archbishop A.M. Chinnappa, sdb, of Madras-Mylapore received the first stamp from the Minister who is also a past pupil of Don Bosco. The Rs 5.00 denomination stamp carries a reproduction of an original photograph of Don Bosco with the inscription "Don Bosco Salesians in India 100 years." (THE HERALD)

UZBEKISTAN: NEW LECTORS, THEATRICAL PLAY BRING CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS TO A CLOSE

The commissioning of nine women lectors and a traditional play on Epiphany Sunday January 8 concluded Christmas celebrations at Sacred Heart Church in Tashkent. The commissioning of the lectors followed a two-year preparation course including modules on Church history, world religions, lives of saints and the Second Vatican Council. The parish now has 17 lectors, of which 15 are women. After the Epiphany Mass, youth of the parish staged a traditional Christmas play in the St. Anthony Hall. A Muslim visitor, who had never seen a Christmas play or even visited a Christian venue, said the visit is "out of respect for Mary, Jesus and the Lord, who is the father of all of us." Uzbekistan has about 500 local Catholics spread in five parishes and two mission areas. Muslims form 88 percent of the country's 26 million people, while members of the Russian Orthodox Church, the second largest group, account for 9 percent. (UCANEWS)



"I learned early on in life that public communication, at least in Africa and Asia, ought to be ecumenical in principle. I consider the churches' public communication not primarily as a service to the churches but more comprehensively, as an action centered on furthering the Kingdom of God."

- Michael Traber (1929-2006)