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INDIA: BENGAL REGIONAL COMMUNICATION COMMISSION MEET

The Bengal Regional Communication Commission held its third meeting at the Bishop's House in Krishnagar July 7 under the chairmanship of Bishop Joseph Suren Gomes of Krishnagar. The aim was to draw an action plan for the dioceses of Bengal in the next six months. Bishop Gomes urged the representatives to suggest strategies to create a "Communicating Church." Aside from continuing media training programs and audio-visual productions, the secretary of the commission, Jesuit Father P.J. Joseph, proposed a website to provide updated information on the activities of the dioceses of Bengal. Other participants proposed media training for youth, teachers, clergy and religious. (SAR NEWS)

HONG KONG: CATHOLIC PAPERS AND BOOKS USEFUL FOR HOSPITAL PASTORAL CARE

Catholic newspapers and books are very useful in hospital pastoral work, says Sr. Antonietta d'Onotrio, coordinator of the pastoral department at the Northern District Catholic Hospital in Hong Kong. "Catholic publications help patients reflect on the Christian meaning of life and death. They also make the communication between patient and pastoral worker easier," the nun said. Many people involved in hospital pastoral care agree with Sr. Antonietta's views and suggest that the diocese give more space to health information in its publications. (FIDES)

KOREA: RELIGIOUS MESSAGES VIA MOBILE PHONE

The Imudong parish council launched an SMS message service with a Sunday message for the week, daily spiritual thoughts, and information about parish events and activities. The service was devised after a research on the extent of mobile phone use among parishioners. Because of the success of the initial launch, the parish leaders decided to extend the service features to include blessings and inspiring thoughts for non-Catholics in the parish. (FIDES)

SRI LANKA: JOURNALISM TRAINING COURSE FOR PEACE

The India Catholic Press Association (ICPA) and South Asian Religious (SAR) News organized a five-day Basic Journalism Training Course at the Archdiocesan Social Communications Centre in Colombo July 19-23. The aim is to promote communal harmony and peace as well as build a society based on social justice, the participants said. Some 30 Catholic participants from 11 dioceses of Sri Lanka joined the course co-organized by the National Catholic Writers' Association (NCWA) of Sri Lanka. Archbishop Oswald Gomis, NCWA founder and chairman of the Sri Lanka Bishops' social communication commission, was one of 8 resource persons who stressed the role of Catholic journalists in building a "culture of peace," and discussed the different aspects of journalism. (SAR NEWS)

BANGLADESH: CHRISTIAN WRITERS URGED TO PARTICIPATE IN NATIONAL MEDIA

The editorial board of "Samabarta" (balanced message), the bi-monthly Bengali publication of the Christian Cooperative Credit Union Limited-Dhaka organized a one-day news writing workshop in Dhaka on July 22. The credit union Secretary General and "Samabarta" columnist, Nirmal Rozario, urged the 37 Catholic writers present to reach beyond Church publications by writing about social and political issues for the national print media. Rozario said Christians must participate in the national debate by speaking out against injustice and discrimination. (UCAN)

INDONESIA: RELIGIOUS LEADERS AGREE TO PROMOTE INCLUSION OF INTERRELIGIOUS STUDIES IN CURRICULA

Participants of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in Denpasar, Bali province July 21-22 agreed to encourage governments of ASEM member countries to include interreligious studies in post-elementary curricula. The 134 ASEM religious representatives, mostly leaders of Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam and Orthodoxy, pointed to the need to educate society to accept and deal with diversity and to prevent the emergence of religious extremism and prejudice. The resolution, however, calls to maintain sensitivity to the individual characteristics of each country. Governments should also integrate religion-based education institutions into national educational systems and goals, the participants said. Among the Asian participants were Archbishop Malcolm Ranjith, apostolic nuncio to Indonesia; Bishop Cornelius Sim of Brunei; and Philippine Dominican Father Vicente Cajilig, executive secretary of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences – Office of Education and Student Chaplaincy. (UCAN)

PAKISTAN: BROADCASTER TURNED RECTOR OF MAJOR SEMINARY

Father Khalid Yusuf of Faisalabad diocese and six years coordinator of Radio Veritas Asia – Urdu Service, has been appointed Rector of St. Francis Xavier major seminary for philosophy in Lahore. The appointment was made by Cardinal Crescenzo Sepe, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, on July 1, 2005.

HONG KONG: CATHOLIC STAND AT BOOK SHOW

The Catholic stand at the July 20-25 Book Show in Hong Kong was titled "Fuel of the Heart." On the July 20 opening the vicar general of Hong Kong diocese, Monsignor Dominic Chang, said the stand hopes to serve the visitors' longing for "salvation, truth, goodness, charity and beauty." The stand featured books and religious articles produced by the Catholic Truth Society, the diocesan bulletin "Kung Kao Po," the diocesan Communications Office, and other Catholic organizations in the diocese. (FIDES)

VIETNAM: CHURCH LEADERS ADMIT NEED FOR IMPROVED COMMUNICATIONS

A Catholic bishop of Vietnam admitted that the Church there “does not have an official newspaper or broadcasting station yet.” He admitted that “Hiep Thong” (communion), the bi-monthly publication of the Vietnam Bishops’ Conference, which has a circulation of 2,000, cannot meet Catholics’ need for information. Another bishop from central Vietnam said he often accesses the Vatican website to update himself on Church developments and pass them on to his parishioners. Admitting that his oral communication has many limitations, the bishop said it is high time the local Church used mass media to preach the Gospel. Meanwhile, the bishops’ conference secretary acknowledged that the Church has given media little attention. “So far, the local Church has not appointed a bishop to be in charge of media nor has established a social communications office to meet the requirements of the Holy See,” Father Antoine Nguyen Ngoc Son said. He suggested the Vietnamese religious and lay Catholics should study media related subjects to learn about conveying Gospel values to others. Father Son said traditional arts forms like poems and songs as well as video clips would make catechism lessons more interesting. (UCAN)

PAKISTAN: POLICE RAID CATHOLIC BOOKSTORE

The June 12 report of “Nawa-I-Waqt” newspaper denouncing the open sale of Christian audio and video tapes, some of which were alleged to discredit Islamic religious figures, has triggered a June 13 police raid and closure of a Pauline bookstore in Saddar near Karachi. The Archbishop of Karachi, Evaristo Pinto, condemned the assault calling it a grave matter, which should be taken up with Pakistan’s interior minister. In an issued statement the archbishop said the “unfounded news of a small Urdu-language newspaper has deeply hurt the feelings of Pakistani Christians and damages the cause of dialogue and solidarity between Christians and Muslims in the country.” The bookstore re-opened on June 25. About 95% of Pakistan’s 155 million inhabitants are Muslims. Christians comprise 2.5% of the population. (ZENIT)

Building on the basic principle of love taught by every religion, we need to create a culture of dialogue in action, caring for the poor and the oppressed, and seeking to assure justice for all everywhere.

-- *Orientations #4, BISCOM V on “Interreligious Dialogue as Communication”*



MALAYSIA: CATHOLIC ORCHESTRA HOLDS FIRST MEETING

Several musicians came together for the first time at the Catholic Pastoral Centre in Penampang May 10 with the intention of forming a Catholic Orchestra. The idea came when some musicians observed the increasing number of Catholic musicians playing for various groups and orchestra in and around Kota Kinabalu. The local Bishop John Lee encouraged the idea and helped form the group which aims to support diocesan events, raise funds through concerts, evangelize through music, and hone musical talents especially among the young. The first performance of the group is scheduled on Christmas Eve at Stella Maris Church. (CATHOLIC SABAH)

INDIA: CHITRABANI PRESENTS DOCUMENTARY ON GODHRA

The film “Godhra Tak: The Terror Trail” documenting the 2002 Godhra incident was screened at the Chitrabani auditorium in Kolkata on June 22 and 23. The film is an investigative documentation of the barbaric incident on February 27, 2002 when coach S6 of Sabermati Express was burnt at Godhra in Gujarat, India. Fifty-nine people died in that fire. The film tries to find out what actually happened at Godhra railway station on that day and how far the allegation of a conspiracy is true. Although the film is generally acclaimed as unbiased and balanced in presenting facts, film director Shubradeep Chakravorthy says he was “harassed and suppressed all through” by some elements. (TNL)

MALAYSIA: CATHOLIC COMMUNICATORS MEET IN KL

The Regional Commission for Social Communications (RCSC) of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei held their annual meeting on June 27 and 28 in Kuala Lumpur. Delegates discussed social communications activities in the various dioceses and screened projects to be submitted to Signis Asia for funding. Kuala Lumpur Archbishop and Chairman for Social Communications of Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei Bishops’ Conference, Murphy Pakiam, encouraged the delegates to initiate media awareness programs at all levels in their dioceses to counter the negative influence of commercialized mass media. He expressed concern over the drifting away from wholesome family values especially among the young. (CN)

HONG KONG: WORLD COMMUNICATIONS DAY CELEBRATED

Some 100 Church and secular media workers gathered on June 4, eve of the diocese’s Communications Sunday, to celebrate the Vatican-instituted worldwide event. Present were Hong Kong Bishop Joseph Zen Ze-kiun and Auxiliary Bishop John Tong Hon, chairperson of the Hong Kong Catholic Board of Communications. This is the first time Catholic communicators met with their non-Catholic counterparts in a Church celebration which also featured a film show. In the past, the local Church marked World Communications Day with a second collection at Sunday Mass to raise funds for the communications apostolate. This year, the thrust is to build better relations with the media and to show gratitude to media workers who covered news about the late Pope John Paul II in the period leading up to and following his death on April 12. (THE HERALD)