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PHILIPPINES: BISHOPS-ULAMA CONFERENCE ON MEDIA

Some 21 Catholic, Protestant and Muslim media professionals attended a two-day Bishops-Ulama Conference (BUC) on Media Sept 29-30 in Davao City, Mindanao. The conference, themed "Peace and Development Through Dialogue," proposed a "partnership" between BUC and the media in the former's peace and development advocacy. It also endorsed a journalism and mass communications department at Mindanao State University to strengthen the school's role in unity building. BUC is a "dialogue forum of Catholic bishops of Mindanao, Muslim Religious Leaders and Bishops of the Philippine National Council of Church who, in the spirit of interreligious dialogue, affirm their common commitment to the peace process." The first dialogue of Mindanao Bishops and Ulama was held in Cebu City on Nov 26, 1996. (MB/ BUF)

HONG KONG: DIOCESE HOLDS STUDY DAY ON MEDIA

The diocese of Hong Kong organized a one-day study day for priests, religious and seminarians entitled "Dance with the Media" Sept 28. The objective was to devise a media strategy and introduce "Catholic Newslines," an online database, and "Religious DVD," a library service. Both services are available by subscription at the Hong Kong Diocesan Audio-Visual Center's website <www.davc.com>. Hong Kong's Auxiliary Bishop John Tong Hon said the religious of today will have to keep up with the times in spreading the Gospel. This requires a good knowledge of the media so that the Church message will not be misrepresented. (SE)

INDONESIA: 'NEWSROOM 68H,' FIRST RADIO STATION IN INDONESIAN PAPUA

The independent radio station "Newsroom 68H" opened in Irian Jaya province, Indonesia recently. The radio project was first considered impossible because the area is largely undeveloped. But it took off after the construction of a small hydroelectric plant which provided electricity to homes, a school and church in the province. The new radio plans to air programs promoting human rights and development. The province's 2.6 million population is 80 percent Protestant, and 15 percent Catholic. Small groups of Muslims and Animists are also present. For years, Irian Jaya's central highland area has been the scene of fighting between the Indonesian army and separatist movements. (FIDES)

BANGLADESH: ARCHBISHOP AIMS TO BOOST MEDIA EXPOSURE, IMPROVE ECUMENICAL LINKS

After two years as head of Dhaka archdiocese, Archbishop Paulinus Costa says better use of mass media to highlight Church work and better relations with Protestant Churches are his main goals. The president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Bangladesh said he will hold more press conferences and build stronger relations with media. He also plans to push a "more active" ecumenism within the wider Christian community. Protestant Church leaders joined some 300 Catholics including five bishops in celebrating the archbishop's second anniversary as archbishop of Dhaka on Sept 9. (UCANEWS)

THEME FOR WORLD COMMUNICATIONS DAY 2008 ANNOUNCED

"The media: at the Crossroads between activism and service. Seeking the Truth in order to share it with others," is the theme chosen by Pope Benedict XVI for the 42nd World Communications Day (WCD). Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli, president of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications (PCSC), said such a theme "calls on us to reflect on the role played by the media and especially the increasing risk of their becoming self-absorbed and no longer tools at the service of truth - something which is meant to be sought and shared." WCD next year will be celebrated on the Sunday before Pentecost, May 8. The Pope's message will be made public on January 24, feast of St Francis de Sales, patron saint of journalists. The PCSC, meanwhile, will prepare the commentary and liturgical support on the theme. Log on to <www.pccs.it> for the Holy Father's past WCD Messages. (FIDES)

SRI LANKA: VIDEOS, CDs ATTRACT YOUNG PEOPLE

The ninth annual Colombo International Book Fair Sept 8-16 saw many young Christians flocking to stalls run by Catholic Book Depot, Claretian Publications and Ceylon Bible Society in search of "hi-tech" spirit-boosting aids. Sherine Attala, Catholic Book Depot's manager said "Spiritual films depicting Bible stories, life stories of saints and spiritual music all on compact discs sold like hotcakes," and video compact discs (VCDs) and regular audio CDs proved a "great seller" with the youths. The Book Publishers Association of Sri Lanka organizes the annual event. This year's 352 stalls included 43 run by publishers from Britain, India, New Zealand, Singapore and the United States. Christians form about 7 percent of Sri Lanka's mainly Buddhist population. (UCANEWS)

INDIA: ETERNAL WORD TV NETWORK AIRS IN MANGALORE DIOCESE

The communications office of Mangalore diocese signed an agreement with cable TV supplier "V-4" to allow broadcast of a variety of programs, including those of the U.S. based "Eternal Word Television Network" of Mother Angelica, in southern India. Diocesan communications officer, Fr Victor Vijay Lobo, said "this window on the world of Catholicism will strengthen our faith and enable not only Catholics to deepen their understanding of the truths of the faith." (FIDES)

MALAYSIA: GOV'T CENSURES NEWSPAPER FOR PUBLISHING BLASPHEMOUS CARTOON OF JESUS

The government has censured "akkal Osai Tamil," a widely read Tamil newspaper, for publishing Aug 21 a cartoon of Jesus Christ drinking beer and smoking a cigarette. Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi, a devout Muslim, has condemned the gesture saying that this was "unacceptable in a multi racial society." A similar ban was placed last year on two papers for having printed a cartoon of prophet Muhammad. (CN)

PHILIPPINES: YOUTH DIRECTOR EXPRESS CONCERN ABOUT ONLINE PORN

Fr Malvin Anay, parish priest of Christ the Eucharistic King in Tagum City, expressed concern about pornography on the Internet which is accessible to youth. He said technology has become a “bane” for the youth, with the Internet introducing them to sex “too early, with appalling results.” “Misuse” of sex, he added can lead to unwanted pregnancy, abortion, divorce, disease and other “problems.” For Genelo Galindo, who heads Tagum diocese’s youth apostolate, meanwhile said Internet pornography is “corruption of morality in the highest degree.” He said parents should monitor their children’s media use. Governments, meanwhile, should regulate the operations of Internet cafes where young people usually access porn sites. (UCANEWS)

INDIA: CATHOLIC COMMUNICATORS PLEDGE TO ADOPT NEW WAYS OF COMMUNICATION

About 100 priests, laypeople and bishops gathered in a national conference of diocesan communication directors Aug 23-26 in Mangalore southern India. In a draft resolution, the participants resolved to master the modern tools of information technology to create a just society. They also proposed to use journalism to educate people on social justice, civil liberties and human dignity. Participants said they will network with media enterprises and maintain cordial relations with other religious groups. Fr Henry D’Souza, secretary of the commission for social communications of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India (CBCI) organized the event which explored the theme “Communicating in a New Way in the Media Age.” He said the conference aimed to educate diocesan communication directors on the need to use news ways of communication in the information technology age. (UCANEWS)

PHILIPPINES: ALLIANCE AGAINST ONLINE PORN

Last Sept 15, an alliance of NGO, government and faith-based groups, including the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines, and UNICEF (United Nations Children’s Fund) launched in Manila the nationwide “Batingaw” (bell) network to oppose child pornography in cybersex dens and Internet cafes with pornographic cubicles. The network is leading the commemoration of “National Day of Awareness and Unity Against Child Pornography” it called for Sept 28. (UCANEWS)

INDIA: ‘GO AND PROCLAIM FROM LAPTOPS’

A one-day seminar organized by Bosco Information Service (BIS) for its correspondents from Chennai Salesian houses stressed the need to use the Internet for mission. “In bygone ages, people shouted from housetops the news they had to share. Today, we do it from laptops using the Internet,” said the seminar’s main message. Speakers of the seminar included Fr Dominic Mathews, national webmaster Fr Poruthur Joseph, the national editor of “Don Bosco Magazine” Fr Glorious Stephen and senior lecturer of Madras University Mr Leo. (BIS)

KOREA: MIGRANT WORKERS DISPLAY ARTISTIC TALENT

The Pastoral Commission for Labor of Seoul archdiocese and the Korea Labor Culture Art Association (KLCA) jointly sponsored the “Seoul Fine Art Exhibition with Foreign Workers” which ran Aug 30-Sept 3 at the Seoul Metro Art Center. The main objective according to KLCA Seoul branch president, Yoon Man-joong, was to recognize migrant workers in society. KLCA promotes cultural and artistic activities of workers, and exhibits their artwork annually. (UCANEWS)

INDIA: NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ‘REPORTING RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSIES’

The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India’s Commission for Social Communications and Oxford Centre for Religion and Public Life organized a national conference on “Reporting Religious Controversies” Sept 8 in New Delhi. Addressing the participants, Professor Obeid Siddique of Jamia University said media personnel must be well informed of religious terms in order to avoid conflict between religious communities. Fr Adolf Washington, president of the Indian Catholic Press Association (ICPA), said stories of individual struggles may foster more concern and social action than animosity and hatred. The Delhi News Bureau chief of “The Week” English magazine, meanwhile, said the trend of “splashing” religious controversies in front pages must be changed. They must be defused throughout the newspaper or magazine. “Authenticity and truth should be the hallmarks of reporting religious controversies,” said human rights activist Fr Cedric Prakash. Finally, the Union Minister for Tribal Affairs P.R. Kyndiah lashed at media enterprises indulging in sensationalism to maximize profits and popularity. This is against the spirit of journalism. The media must reflect a strong sense of social responsibility by giving voice to the voiceless and a forum for the public to express themselves, the minister added. (SAR NEWS)

PHILIPPINES: CBCP LAUNCHES ONLINE NEWS SERVICE

The media office of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) launched its online news service, “CBCPNews,” at the CBCP Media Office, Manila on July 5. The mission is to help “spread the Gospel through contemporary technologies of communication by re-telling in news reports and features how it is witnessed in the daily events and lives of people.” Present were the CBCP press corps and CBCP President Archbishop Angel Lagdameo who explained that the online news service will mainly serve the cause of evangelization. It will be available via CBCP’s online facility <www.cbcnews.com>, via email subscription and the “CBCP Monitor.” (CBCP MONITOR)

CAMBODIA: JESUIT SERVICE USES STORYTELLING TO FOSTER LOVE OF LEARNING

Jesuit Services Cambodia (JSC) runs storytelling programs for schoolchildren in 21 villages in Kandal, Kompong Chnang and Kompong Speu provinces. The program started in 2005 from the Jesuits’ village-library project, under which libraries for schoolchildren have been set up in the 21 villages. That project, which started in 1996, involves JSC staff writing storybooks for these libraries. The storytelling sessions take place in homes and under trees as well as inside school classrooms. The goal is to further develop children’s intellectual skills and deepen their appreciation of the Khmer language. (UCANEWS)

PHILIPPINES: SALESIANS ON ‘DIGITAL JOURNALISM’

Some 27 priest- and lay correspondents of the Salesian Information Agency, ANS, from 14 countries took part in a conference on “Digital Journalism” in Cebu City October 18-21. Experts discussed issues on newsroom management and news reporting in the age of Internet. Fr Franz-Josef Eilers, svd, executive secretary of the FABC-Office of Social Communication, gave an input on communication theology and “communicative sense” in ministry. The participants also discussed practical aspects of the ANS network as well as plans for the future. The conference was organized by the Salesian Department of Social Communications, Rome. (BIS NEWS)