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## **'ASIAN RESEARCH CENTER FOR RELIGION AND SOCIAL COMMUNICATION' (ARC) HAS A NEW DIRECTOR**

The "Asian Research Center for Religion and Social Communication" (ARC) in Bangkok, Thailand has a new executive director. Divine Word Father Franz-Josef Eilers was elected by the ARC Board of Trustees (BOT) to head the research facility in its general meeting early this year. Fr. Eilers succeeds Dr. Chainarong Monthienvichienchai, president of Bangkok-based Saint John's University, in the post while remaining a member of the ARC BOT. Established in 1999, ARC aims to promote and support academic research on religion and social communication. It maintains a library with more than 4,000 titles. ARC is housed in Saint John's University Bangkok.

## **JAPAN: MOTHER TERESA FILM FESTIVAL HELD**

A month-long film festival commemorating the centenary of the birth of Mother Teresa was held at the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography from mid-January to February. The event showcased seven films, drawing an estimated crowd of 15,000 some were reported to have come from as far as Shizuoka. Catholic and non-Catholic audiences were inspired by the saint's life and work. Some have expressed hope to live the same spirit in their own lives. An encore of the screenings was held in late March and will be repeated in Nagoya, Osaka, Kawasaki, Yokohama, Okayama, and Gunma Prefectures. (JCN)

## **BANGLADESH: USERS REJECT FACEBOOK BAN**

Following Pakistan's lead, the Bangladesh government told the country's two Internet service providers to block access to Facebook on May 29, after satirical images of political leaders were posted there. Pro-Islamic groups had also demonstrated in Dhaka the day before, urging a permanent ban on the site after contents deemed insulting to Prophet Muhammad were uploaded. Dhaka University students responded by holding a demonstration on May 30, protesting the government decision. A ban on Facebook is a violation of free speech, the students said. Many Bangladeshi Facebook users expressed disappointment at the government's act, calling it undemocratic. They said it was ironic that a government which envisioned a "Digital Bangladesh" by 2021 should resort to such an act. (UCANEWS)

## **BANGLADESH: YOUTH PASSION PLAY**

Young people of Khulna diocese performed for the first time a Passion Play in a special Lenten program organized by Christ the King Church on March 26. About 550 parishioners attended the program, some were moved to tears because of the touching story of Jesus' Passion and the student's acting. A spectator said it was a "faith strengthening experience" realizing the extent of Jesus' suffering. The parish had been organizing Passion plays yearly but this was the first time that students acted in it. They were guided by their Assistant Parish Priest, Fr. Taposh Halder. Christ the King parish has about 3,000 Catholics. (UCANEWS)

## **PAKISTAN: FACEBOOK PROPHET PLAN BLOCKED**

The social networking website Facebook was blocked in the country for hosting a competition inviting users to draw caricatures of Prophet Muhammad. The competition, called "Draw Mohammed Day," was announced on Facebook on April 20 and was scheduled to be held on May 20. Media reports say there are 45 million users of Facebook in Pakistan. A text message campaign to launch an "attack on Facebook" is presently underway. The message contains instructions to Internet users on how to block the Facebook server. Protests have also been organized in several cities against the competition. On May 19, more than a thousand women held a demonstration, blocking three kilometers of road near the tomb of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, in Karachi. Jamate-Islami, a religio-political party, organized the protest. Protesters demanded a permanent ban of Facebook and chanted slogans against the website operators. Catholic leaders have also condemned the Facebook competition. (UCANEWS)

## **JAPAN: ECUMENICAL NETWORK JOINTLY PROMOTES SERVICES**

KC-NET, a group of Christian churches in Tokyo's Koganei district jointly promotes its member-churches' liturgical services through leaflets and newspaper inserts. In December 2009, the eleven member-churches distributed a common leaflet listing their respective Christmas Masses and services. Some were inserted in newspapers, while others were delivered to homes. An estimated 32,000 families received the leaflet. The leaflet included a map of the churches, and pictures of pastors and their contact details. In January, the Roman Catholic Church in Koganei hosted the first-ever KC-NET ecumenical service. Some 150 people from nine churches took part in the event. KC-Net includes the Catholic Church, Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Japan Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Tokyo Free Methodists, Japan Alliance Church, Nippon Sei Ko Kai (Anglican), Japan Holiness Church, United Church of Christ in Japan and the Mennonite Church. (JCN)

## **KOREA: CATHOLIC MEDIA AWARDS**

The CBCK Committee for Social Communications (President: Bishop Thaddeus Cho Hwan-kil) held the 19th Catholic Mass Communications Awards ceremony on December 2, 2009 at Coste Hall of Myeongdong Cathedral of Seoul with about 200 participants including the awardees and their families, Archbishop Osvaldo Padilla, Apostolic Nuncio in Korea, and those working in Mass Communications. Four people had the honor of being awarded respectively in the sectors of Broadcasting, Newspaper, Press and Film. Special award were given to Msgr. Paul Jeong Ui-chaе who leads the translation of Summa Theologiae of St. Thomas Aquinas and to Mr. An Byeong-jin, producer of Kyungin Broadcasting, for his documentary about foreign workers in Korea. (CBCK NEWSLETTER)

#### **UCIP ANNOUNCES JOURNALISM AWARDS FOR 2010**

The Swiss-based International Catholic Union of the Press (UCIP) has announced this year's recipients of UCIP Awards. Out of 44 names, eight awardees in different categories are Asians or work-based in Asia. They include Columban Father Jose Rebelo, editor-in-chief of "World Mission Magazine," and UCA (Union of Catholic Asia) News correspondents Wolfgang Rollik and Paul Pati. UCIP, the world forum of professionals and institutions in secular and religious media, will confer the award at its September 2010 World Congress to be held at Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. For details, log on to <www.ucip.ch>

#### **TAIWAN: FILIPINOS CELEBRATE MAY FLOWER FESTIVAL**

About 600 Filipino migrant workers in Taipei celebrated Flower Festival on May 29, a traditional event in the Philippines that falls on the last Sunday of May. It is a "brave witness of faith" to take a procession to the streets, Archbishop John Hung Shan-chuan of Taipei told participants as he gave them his blessing. A 90-minute procession passed through five downtown streets starting from St. Christopher's Church, which houses a center for migrant workers. Participants gave roses to spectators while singing and beating drums along the route. Chen Yeh-shin, director of Taipei's labor department, which sponsored the event, told participants that respecting the religious faith of migrant workers has always been a major policy of the department. (UCANEWS)

#### **INDIA: ANDHRA PRADESH REGION LAUNCHES WEBSITE**

The Andhra Pradesh Bishops' Council (APBC) has launched a website <www.apbc.in> on March 16. APBC President, Bishop Gali Bali of Guntur, inaugurated the site during the annual meeting of APBC held at St John's Regional Seminary, Hyderabad. Apart from bishops, the regional secretaries of the APBC commissions were also present. The administrator of the website Fr Anthoniraj Thumma, Deputy Secretary of APBC, presented the website which is expected to serve as a window to the Catholic Church in Andhra Pradesh. (CBCI)

#### **MALAYSIA: CANING SENTENCE 'A SIGN OF TALIBANIZATION'**

The caning sentence given in July 2009 to Muslim woman, Kartika Sari Dewi Shukarno, for drinking beer at a bar was a sign of the slow 'talibanization' of Malay society, says Professor Shad Saleen Faruqi. The Islam expert was one of a three-member panel who shared their views after the screening of a documentary titled "Mencari Kartika" (In Search of Kartika) on May 26. Instead of justice, whipping has become the symbol of Islam, sociologist professor Noraini Othman, another panelist, told the audience. Surveys conducted last year showed that more than 70 percent of respondents supported the caning sentence. A majority of Muslims supported the caning while the majority of non-Muslims disagreed, the survey also said. Kartika is the first Malaysian Muslim woman to be given the caning sentence. (UCANEWS)

#### **VIETNAM: MARIAN PROCESSION REVIVED**

The parish of Cai Mon, Ben Tre province celebrated the Marian month of May by reviving the traditional house-to-house procession of the statue of Mary. This was banned by the government since 1975. The parish's Catholic Mother Association was behind the initiative. At first only eight people attended the procession, but now there are over 40, and more than 20 families received the statue in their homes, a member said. Marian processions will be held again in October, the month traditionally dedicated to the Holy Rosary. (UCANEWS)

#### **INDONESIA: RELIGIOUS PUPPET SHOW REVIVED**

Fr Augustine Handi Setyanto Pr of Purwokerto diocese in Central Java has revived the practise of Gospel proclamation through shadow puppet shows. Three decades after the last Church-run puppet show, the priest and his team staged a show about Revelation (Wayang Wahyu) in Sacred Heart parish, Kroy, Cilacap in December 2009. On May 28, they have staged another show this time on the profession of faith of the Virgin Mary. Bishop Julianus Sunarka SJ of Purwokerto has since then invited the group to perform in remote areas of the diocese. The first Javanese shadow theatre narrating episodes of the Gospel was staged by Brother Timotius Wignjosoebroto on February 2, 1960 in Surakarta in Central Java. Fr. Wijono Pr continued the art until the early 80s. (ASIANEWS)

#### **VIETNAM: NO MORE BORING HOMILIES FOR THE 'LISTENING BISHOP'**

Boring homilies are a turn-off and bishops need to spend longer time listening to parishioners, Da Nang Bishop Joseph Chau Ngoc Tri says. He is putting his words into action by personally welcoming and listening to pilgrims to the cathedral of his central Vietnam diocese for the Jubilee Year 2010. Each Sunday he stands in front of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Cathedral with a welcoming smile. "I shake their hands and talk with them," Bishop Tri, 53, said. He also provides meals for people who live far away. Last year, Pope Benedict XVI announced the Vietnamese Church's Jubilee Year to be observed from November 24, 2009 to January 2, 2011. The special year marks the 350th anniversary of the establishment of the first two apostolic vicariates and the 50th anniversary of the setting up of the Catholic hierarchy in the country. (UCANEWS)

#### **INDONESIA: PRIEST USES INTERNET FOR MISSION**

Father William Pau Pr has always believed in the potential of the Internet to achieve the missionary task. Through the network, Fr. William publishes reflections and meditations, along with Gospel stories on YouTube. "My mission is to help my congregation to be a means of the Church in announcing the Good News," he said. He has also opened the website <www.klikkatolik.com> (already defunct), and a blog. Fr. William is the pastor of St. Joseph Church in Bintaran suburb of Yogyakarta. He was head of the Commission for Social Communication of Semarang archdiocese from 1998 to 2008. (ASIANEWS)

#### **INDIA: PRIEST GETS MULTIMEDIA AWARD**

Father C.M. Paul, 56, was given the "Multimedia in the Service of the Gospel Award 2010" at the solemn Mass inaugurating the silver jubilee of the International Catholic Film Festival at Niepokalanow, Poland May 27. The priest belongs to the Calcutta province of the Salesian Society of Don Bosco. He is former Editor of "The Herald." Two prizes are offered in this category "for outstanding achievements both in Poland and abroad." This is the seventh year of the award dedicated to Polish film director, cameraman, author of over 100 films, as well as president for the Warsaw Branch of Polish Association of Scientific Film, Julian Kulenty (1922 - 2000). (CBCI)

