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### **Timor-Leste celebrates as pope names archbishop a cardinal**

(30-5-22) Timor-Leste is celebrating the appointment of Salesian Archbishop Dom Virgilio do Carmo da Silva of Dili as the Catholic-majority country's first-ever cardinal.

The 54-year-old archbishop was one of 21 new cardinals announced by Pope Francis on May 29 and will receive the red hat on Aug. 27. He is one of six new cardinals from Asia — five archbishops and one bishop.

President Jose Ramos-Horta, as well as Catholic and other government officials, congratulated Archbishop Da Silva on his appointment, calling it an honour for Timor-Leste, a country that is 97 percent Catholic out of a population of 1.3 million.

### **Indian Catholics jubilant as two sons of the soil are raised to the rank of Cardinals.**

Archbishop Filipe Neri Antonio Sebastao di Rosario Ferrao of Goa and Daman, born on Jan. 20, 1953, is the metropolitan archbishop of Goa and Daman and the patriarch *ad honorem* of the East Indies.

Archbishop Antony Poola's elevation comes after decades of protests by Dalit Catholic groups seeking the appointment of their community people to "greater servanthood." There was also a demand for an Indian Dalit rite in the Catholic Church.

Archbishop Poola of Hyderabad will be the first Dalit and also "the first Telugu [native of Andhra Pradesh state] in the history of the Catholic Church to be appointed as cardinal, the second biggest title after pope," Father S. Bernard, vicar general of Hyderabad, was quoted as saying by the *Hindustan Times* on May 30.

There are four more Cardinals in India, Cardinal Oswald Gracias of Bombay, Cardinal George Alencherry, the head of the Syro Malabar Church, Cardinal Basilios Cleemis Catholicos of Trivandrum, the head of the Syro-Malankara Church and Cardinal Telesphore Toppo, former archbishop of Ranchi.

### **Sri Lankan Catholics hoping for divine deliverance**

(30-5-22) Catholics in Sri Lanka trust that God will show the way out of the crisis engulfing the island nation, which observed the 50th day of a peaceful protest against the government.

"I believe that God will soon give us the freedom, liberation, happiness and change that we seek," said Father Roshan Silva, the Oblates' provincial of Colombo, on May 28. He was joined by fellow priests and nuns along with other religious leaders at Galle Face Green to mark the protest anniversary as they reiterated their demand for the immediate resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and his government.

### **Church destroyed as Myanmar junta continues onslaught**

(30-5-22) The Johnson Memorial Baptist Church and 10 civilian houses were destroyed in a junta attack in the deserted town of Thantlang in western Myanmar's Christian-majority Chin state, according to media reports.

Chin Human Rights Organization said it was the 29th arson attack in the town and nine church buildings have been destroyed so far.

At least 300 houses have been destroyed in the town and more than 10,000 residents have fled as a result of indiscriminate shooting and shelling by the military since September 2021.

St. Nicholas Catholic Church was completely burned down by the junta on Nov. 27, 2021.

Chin state has been at the forefront of resistance to military rule and has witnessed fierce attacks including airstrikes, heavy artillery and indiscriminate attacks on civilians. Hundreds have been arbitrarily detained and dozens killed.

### **Singapore Catholics welcome prelate's elevation to cardinal**

(30-5-22) Pope Francis has nominated Archbishop William Goh of Singapore among 21 new cardinals to be invested in August in a move which the archdiocese said shows the global Church's recognition of the missionary Church in the multicultural city-state.

"Archbishop William is conscious that this honour and new responsibility conferred on him is also a recognition of the contribution of the faithful in the archdiocese for helping him to build a vibrant, evangelizing and missionary Church," the archdiocese said.

Archbishop Goh, 64, heads the Catholic community of some 300,000 in the city of 5.6 million which includes Christians, Buddhists, Taoists, Muslims and Hindus, besides some 18 percent who follows no religion.

### **Bangladeshi religious, laypeople want greater empowerment**

(30-5-22) Catholic religious and laypeople in Bangladesh have called on church leaders to ensure their participation and empowerment as they joined clergy to mark the 50th anniversary of the country's bishops' conference.

The golden jubilee of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Bangladesh (CBCB) was celebrated with events in capital Dhaka on May 27. Church should ensure participation of laypeople and women in decisions, speakers said.

31-5-22

### **Film on murdered Franciscan Clarist nun released in India**

(31-5-22) A short film on the life and mission of Blessed Rani Maria, a Franciscan Clarist nun who was murdered in 1995, has been released in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh.

The 42-minute film titled *Sr Maria, a story of forgiveness*, produced by the Franciscan Clarist Congregation (FCC), Amala Province, Bhopal, with technical assistance from Atmadarshan Television, an online channel run by the Diocese of Indore, was premiered at the Prerna Sadan in Indore city on May 27. Bishop Chacko Thottumarickal of Indore was present and recalled the contributions of the nun as a missionary and social reformer.

Known as Sister Rani, she was stabbed to death by a hired killer on a bus in Madhya Pradesh's Dewas district on Feb. 25, 1995. Her work among poor landless people had upset some landlords and money lenders, leading to the nun's murder at the age of 41 while on her way home to Kerala in southern India.

"The film definitely reminds us that our social welfare work among the poor and the needy, unlike in the past, is going to cost more, like in the case of Blessed Maria and other dedicated persons, not only from Christianity but from all religions," Father Babu Joseph, Divine Word priest said.

Since its release, some 30,000 people have watched the film. The Franciscan Clarist nun was declared blessed on Nov. 4, 2017.

### **Sri Lankan religious leaders decry arrest of activists**

(31-5-22) Sri Lankan police have arrested several rights activists including Buddhist monks who participated in anti-government protests.

Demonstrations have been held in the capital Colombo and other main cities demanding the resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and his government amid Sri Lanka's worst economic crisis since independence in 1948. Protesters accuse the government of mismanaging the economy and creating a foreign exchange crisis that has led to a shortage of food, cooking gas, medicines and fuel. Ven. Handugala Rathanapala Thera, head of the National Bhikkhu Front, said police have arrested several Buddhist monks and activists.

### **State, church leaders greet fourth Korean cardinal**

(31-5-22) South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol has joined Catholic leaders to greet the fourth Korean cardinal.

Pope Francis named Archbishop Lazarus You Heung-sik as one of 21 new cardinals on May 29. He is one of six new cardinals from Asia.

Archbishop You, 70, former bishop of Daejeon Diocese, is the prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for the Clergy, which oversees diocesan priests and deacons around the world. Pope Francis appointed him to the post on June 11 last year and elevated him to the post of archbishop.

President Yoon made a phone call to Archbishop You to congratulate him after the news broke about his elevation to cardinal, the president's office said, according to Yonhap news agency.

### **Nigerian cardinal inducts 60 "ambassadors" to build peace, tolerance**

(31-5-22) The Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace (COFP) non-governmental organization has inducted 60 peace-ambassadors to build and strengthen the processes of social change in Nigeria and Africa. "We can only resolve conflict through meaningful dialogue" Cardinal John Onaiyekan, retired Archbishop of Abuja Archdiocese, told participants at a graduation ceremony of the peace-ambassadors in Abuja, the nation's capital, recently. "Our faith in God also inspires and empowers us to launch into action to do all we can for the good of our human environment, working with all men and women of goodwill, especially women and men of all faiths," he said. The Foundation helps resolve conflicts by ensuring that governance structures are both ethical and just.

1-6-22

### **Catholic priest found hanging in southern India**

(1-6-22) The body of Father Sunny Arackal, who was attached to the Latin Diocese of Allepey (Alappuzha), was found by parishioners around 4.30pm on May 31.

The 65-year-old priest was the vicar of St. Paul's Church in Kalath in Alappuzha district. He had served the parish for the past five years and was due to transfer to another place on June 5. Police recovered a suicide note in which the deceased priest cited a financial crisis for taking the extreme step.

The deceased priest's colleagues and family were waiting for the police probe to reveal the truth.

### **Pakistani Christian singer trolled for praying for Indian rapper**

(1-6-22) Pakistani Christian singer Shae Gill had to reveal her religious identity after being trolled on social media for praying for a murdered Indian rapper.

Gill, who rose to fame with the super hit song *Pasoori* (Conflict) in *Cook Studio Season 14*, was embroiled in controversy after sending condolences to the family of Sidhu Moose Wala in an Instagram story.

Thousands of people gathered outside the slain Sikh rapper's home in his village, Moosa in Punjab's Mansa district, to attend his cremation on May 31. He was killed by unidentified assailants when he was hit by 24 bullets as he traveled home in his car on May 29.

"Heartbroken. May his soul rest in peace and may his family and friends have the strength to bear this loss," said Gill, whose music video surpassed 165 million views in three months. However, many netizens criticized her for sending prayers to the Sikh singer.

"As a Muslim, you are not allowed to make *dua* [prayer] for non-Muslims when they die," stated a social media user whose screenshot was posted by the Lahore-based star.

The 23-year-old singer took to the same platform to address the hatred. "I've been getting a lot of such messages. Just wanted to inform everyone that I am not a Muslim. I am a Christian and belong to a Christian family and can make prayers for people from different religions," she replied. Christian activists and Catholic leaders lauded Gill for publicly proclaiming her faith.

### **Vietnam bishops warn people against banned exorcists**

(1-6-22) Bishops in Vietnam have called on people to avoid a banned group of exorcists led by laypeople, saying their practice goes against Catholic teaching.

Bishop John Do Van Ngan, head of the Episcopal Commission for Doctrine of the Faith, said that since 2015 a group of Catholics have mistakenly believed that they are "directly revealed" by the Father, chosen as "secretaries for him" and given a privilege of exorcism. They also attract some priests and religious, making other people blindly follow their wrong path. Bishop Ngan accused the exorcists of showing open disobedience to the ordinary of the diocese, damaging the unity of the local church.

### **Indonesian Christians want army protection from extremists**

(1-6-22) Christians have urged the Indonesian army to take strict action against any group trying to sow discord and create divisions in society after a video of a large motorcycle rally by Muslim extremists calling for an Islamic caliphate went viral on social media.

The call by Christians came in a May 31 meeting between Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI) chairman Reverend Gomar Gultom and the army's chief of staff General Dudung Abdurachman at the PGI's offices in Jakarta. Abdurachman was paying a visit as part of efforts to win the support of religious leaders in dealing with problems causing disunity in society.

In the video, dozens of motorcyclists in green uniforms carried placards with messages that read "Welcome the Awakening of the Islamic Caliphate". They also distributed leaflets containing extremist content on the streets of Jakarta at the weekend. A similar rally took place in Brebes district of Central Java province, security officials said.

### **Myanmar military accused of 'new wave of war crimes'**

(1-6-22) Myanmar's junta has been systematically committing widespread atrocities including unlawfully killing, arbitrarily detaining and forcibly displacing civilians in two Christian-majority regions, Amnesty International said in a new report.

The report, "Bullets rained from the sky: War crimes and displacement in eastern Myanmar," released on June 1, found Myanmar's military had subjected Karen and Kayah civilians to collective punishment via widespread aerial and ground attacks, arbitrary detentions that often resulted in torture or extrajudicial executions, and the systematic looting and burning of villages.

It said the violence in Kayah and Kayah states had reignited in the wake of last year's military coup and escalated from December 2021 to March 2022, killing hundreds of civilians and displacing more than 150,000.

The rights group documented 24 attacks by artillery or mortar fire between December 2021 and March 2022 that killed or injured civilians or that caused destruction to civilian homes, schools, health facilities, churches and monasteries. At least 10 churches including eight Catholic ones have been destroyed by artillery shelling or airstrikes between May 2021 and March 2022.

### **Vietnam Cursillistas live out spirit of synodality**

(1-6-22) Vietnamese members of an international apostolic movement have resumed their activities by sharing practices of synodality in the Church.

Sixty members of the Cursillo Movement in Hue Archdiocese, joined by priests and religious, made a pilgrimage to the national Marian Shrine of Our Lady of La Vang in Quang Tri province on May 28.

Father Joseph Ho Thu, rector of Xuan Bich Major Seminary, called on Cursillistas to live the spirit of synodality by bringing God's love to people around them through their daily life.

2-6-22

### **Crime Branch to probe Indian pastor, wife for forced conversion**

(2-6-22) Police investigations into an alleged case of forcible religious conversion against a Protestant pastor and his wife in the western Indian state of Goa have been handed over to the Crime Branch.

The tiny state, which was once a Portuguese colony, is a hub of Christianity with some 500,000 of its 1.8 million residents identifying as Catholics.

The handing over of the investigations on June 1 to the Crime Branch, which handles serious crimes, came close on the heels of Chief Minister Pramod Sawant commending the state police for cracking down on forced conversions. "There should be no religious conversion by inducement," he warned on May 28. The chief minister, who belongs to the pro-Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), said the state may bring in an anti-conversion bill in the monsoon session of the state assembly beginning July 11. Pastor Dominic D'Souza and his wife Joan were booked on May 27 for allegedly luring two people to convert to Christianity by offering money and gifts. The pastor was arrested and released on bail the same day. Police said the couple run the Five Pillars Church from Siolim village in North Goa district. They have seized the CCTV footage and record books from its premises as part of the investigations.

### **India's indigenous Society of Pilar ordains 19 priests**

(2-6-22) An indigenous missionary congregation in India has set a record by ordaining 19 deacons as priests this year.

The Society of the Missionaries of St. Francis Xavier, founded by Father Jose Mariano Clemete Bento Martins in 1887 in the western state of Goa, is popularly known as the Society of Pilar.

Father Fernandes, who serves as its media secretary, said on June 2 that among the 19 priests, five are the only sons of their parents, "indicating a changing trend in the vocation to priesthood."

A delighted Father Eric Mascarenhas, the only son of his parents, who was ordained on May 11, said that for him priesthood "is a treasure in earthen pots."

The only son of his parents, the young priest said he was deeply grateful to God for choosing and consecrating him. "As I go forth in my maiden mission venture, I pray that I may constantly experience his presence and share his love with others," he added. The 19 new priests includes those from Goa, Andaman and Nicobar, Jharkhand and Karnataka.

### **Singapore PM congratulates Cardinal-elect William Goh**

(2-6-22) Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong has congratulated Archbishop William Goh on his appointment as a new cardinal by Pope Francis.

"Congratulations to Archbishop William Goh who will be created a cardinal by Pope Francis in August. He will be the first Singaporean cardinal, a rank second only to the pope in the church hierarchy. This is especially significant to our Catholic community, who marked their bicentennial [anniversary] just last year," PM Lee wrote on his official Facebook page on June 1. Lee hailed the Archbishop for promoting harmony and supporting the progress of Singapore since 2013.

### **Indonesian leader honours Catholics with Flores visit**

(2-6-22) Indonesian President Joko Widodo paid tribute to the country's Catholics on June 1 by celebrating the 77th anniversary of the introduction of the national ideology on Flores island in predominantly Catholic East Nusa Tenggara province.

The annual ceremony in the city of Ende was the first time it had been held there since Pancasila, or the Five Principles, was introduced by the first Indonesian president, Sukarno, on June 1, 1945.

Widodo chose to celebrate the occasion in Ende because it is known as "The City of Pancasila" after the ideology was drawn up by Sukarno when he was exiled there by Dutch colonial rulers between 1934 and 1938.

### **Four killed, 14 injured as earthquakes hit southwest China**

(2-6-22) At least four people are dead and 14 others injured after two earthquakes hit southwestern China on June 1, state media reported.

A shallow 6.1-magnitude quake hit a sparsely populated area in Sichuan province about 100 kilometers west of provincial capital Chengdu. It was followed three minutes later by a second quake of magnitude 4.5 in a nearby county where the deaths and injuries occurred, according to CCTV.

3-6-22

### **Late Indian Jesuit honored with rights 'Nobel Prize' 3**

Father Stan Swamy, the late Indian Jesuit priest and tribal rights activist, has been posthumously awarded the Martin Ennals Award, regarded as the Nobel Prize for human rights defenders. Eighty-four-year-old Father Swamy, who was arrested in the Bhima Koregaon case and died in custody in July 2021, was accorded the honour by the Martin Ennals Foundation based in Geneva, Switzerland.

Though the award was presented posthumously, the priest was chosen for it while he was still alive. The jury wished to shine a light on the priest's many contributions to human rights, which "cannot be eclipsed by his unjust incarceration by Indian authorities," said Hans Thoolen, chair of the award jury. Father Xavier Soreng, a social activist and colleague of the late Jesuit, accepted the award in Geneva on June 2. Three other rights activists — Dr. Daouda Diallo from Burkina Faso, Pham Doan Trang from Vietnam and Abdul Hadi Al-Khawaja from Bahrain — were also honoured.

Father Soreng said: "The indigenous people were uprooted from their habitat for coal-mining projects without even paying them compensation. Those opposing it were termed as [left-wing] Maoists or anti-nationals and put behind bars." Father Swamy believed in educating tribal people, helping them raise their voices and defending themselves against their oppressors through democratic and legal means. "But still Father Swamy was arrested on Oct. 8, 2020, under a stringent anti-terror law and jailed," recalled Father Soreng, who is also a Jesuit and rights activist in Jharkhand. He described how Father Swamy, who suffered from Parkinson's disease, was denied proper medical care in prison, causing his health to deteriorate. The High Court refused to grant him bail and it was too late when he was shifted to a hospital where he died on July 5, 2021.

### **Korean Church honours women who defied Japanese oppression**

(3-6-22) A Catholic diocese in South Korea has unveiled a monument to honour three female Catholic patriots who stood up to oppressive Japanese colonial rule more than a century ago. Bishop Moon Chang-woo of Jeju Diocese, which covers South Korea's largest island of Jeju, inaugurated the monument at a Catholic cemetery on May 28, reported *Catholic Times of Korea*. Kang Pyeong-guk, Ko Su-seon and Choe Jeong-suk joined the anti-colonial March First Movement that began on March 1, 1919. The movement, also known as Samil Independence Movement, organized protests against the imposition of the Japanese way of life in occupied, undivided Korea. They have been hailed for their pioneering role in fighting Japanese oppression, contributing to the empowerment of women, ensuring human rights and helping to eradicate illiteracy and poverty among marginalized communities through education and social services.