



Palestinian youths from the village of Deir Nizam, northwest of Ramallah in the occupied West Bank, clash with Israeli soldiers yesterday, after removing cement blocks set-up by the army at the village entrance.

PHOTO: AFP

## Pope Francis sides with traditionalists on priest celibacy

AFP, Vatican City

In quashing the idea of married priests in the Amazon, Pope Francis has appeased traditionalists while disappointing progressives who had hoped for a historic turning point in the Catholic church.

In his “apostolic exhortation” on the Amazon basin published Wednesday, Francis slammed the door on a progressive proposal offered by the region’s bishops during a synod on the region in October.

The synod had suggested that the way to solve a shortage of priests in the remote and inaccessible area was to allow married indigenous men to become priests.

Without even mentioning that proposal, Francis instead argued for more missionary priests in the Amazon and for women and lay people to take on larger roles, falling short of another synod idea to ordain women as deacons in the region.

The Argentine pontiff’s thoughts, coming after months of speculation and hand-wringing within the Vatican, were welcomed by some, including a vocal opponent of Francis, German Cardinal Gerhard Mueller.

## Google mulls

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ads alongside their news articles, including “snippets” in search results.

Contacted by AFP Friday, Google indicated it is seeking new ways to help publishers.

“We want to help people find quality journalism -- it’s important to informed democracy and helps support a sustainable news industry,” Google vice president of news Richard Gingras said in a statement.

“We care deeply about this and are talking with partners and looking at more ways to expand our ongoing work with publishers, building on programs like our Google News Initiative.”

The Wall Street Journal reported earlier Friday Google was considering deals for a “premium” news product.

The California tech giant has remained steadfast about not paying for news article links displayed in search results and is not changing that position, people familiar with the matter told AFP.

It has argued that it drives traffic to news websites and thereby helps those publishers get ad revenues.

Google’s News Initiative works with publishers to encourage readership and paid subscriptions to their offerings.

Facebook, which has been hit with similar criticism, last year launched a dedicated “news tab” with professionally-produced content -- a move by the social network to promote journalism and shed its reputation as a platform for misinformation.

Facebook was expected to pay some of the news organizations, reportedly millions of dollars in some cases.

The move by Google comes amid pressure to comply with a European copyright directive on content in search results.

Google said last year it would not pay European media outlets for using their articles, pictures and videos in its searches in France, the first country to ratify the copyright directive, raising the prospect of legal action against the internet titan.

The tech giant said it would only display content in its search engine results and on Google News from media groups who had given their permission for it to be used for free.

## ‘No complacency’

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them to be vigilant against the machinations of provocateurs and conspirators, and work unitedly as disciplined soldiers to defend the integrity of the country and maintain law and order.

The freedom fighters must not become complacent after the liberation of the country. They should work with dedication and courage for the preservation of the hard-won freedom, he adds.

**TALKS WITH PAK ONLY AFTER RECOGNITION**

In reply to Indonesia’s offer of holding peace talks between Bangladesh and Pakistan, the Mujib government has reiterated its stance that any talks between the two must be preceded by Rawalpindi recognising Bangladesh as an independent sovereign state.

Dr Adam Malik, foreign minister of Indonesia, had recently offered Jakarta, or any other place in

Indonesia, to the governments of Bangladesh and Pakistan as a venue for ‘peace talks.’

**SOVIET YOUTH TEAM CALLS ON MUJIB**

A four-member Soviet youth delegation calls on Bangabandhu at the Prime Minister’s official residence. The leader of the delegation, Gafur Janov, requests Bangabandhu to visit Uzbekistan during his forthcoming visit to the Soviet Union.

**JAPAN OFFERS TO HOST SUMMIT**

Japanese PM Eisaku Sato offers to host a summit meeting between Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman of Bangladesh and President Bhutto of Pakistan. The offer was made during a discussion between Sato and Bangladesh’s special envoy MM Panni.

The Japan Red Cross Society decides to send USD 3,14,000 worth of relief goods to Bangladesh.

A four-member Japanese delegation, on behalf of the Asian

Parliamentary Union, calls on Bangabandhu today at his official residence. The Japanese delegation has come here to assess the economic situation in Bangladesh and examine where Japan can assist Bangladesh in her reconstruction work.

**3 MORE RECOGNITIONS FOR BANGLADESH**

Thailand, Singapore and the Central African Republic recognise Bangladesh. With the three countries announcing their decisions today, Bangladesh has now won recognition by 42 countries.

**SOVIET, INDIAN ENVOYS PRESENT CREDENTIALS**

Indian Ambassador Subimal Dutt and Soviet Ambassador VF Popov present their credentials to Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury, president of Bangladesh.

**SOURCES:** February 17, 1972 issues of Dainik Bangla, The Daily Ittefaq, Azad, Morning News, The Bangladesh Observer and Purbodesh.

## Drop charges

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of expression under the draconian Digital Security Act (DSA).“

Nur, the owner of the Guardian Publications, was arrested on February 10, 2020 for “associating with” Enamul Haque Moni, who was arrested in 2018 for spreading “fake news and propaganda” about Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her son Sajeeb Wazed, and committing digital fraud, the rights body said.

Sarker has been in prison for over a month on charges of “hurting religious sentiments” after he criticised Muslim clerics who oppose singing, it added.

“The government has the responsibility to protect the right to speech and expression, not use its internet laws as an excuse to go after singers who criticize clerics or anyone who criticises the prime minister or her family,” said Brad Adams, Asia director at the HRW.

“The ruling Awami League should not be silencing its critics,” he said.

Nur could face a sentence up to life in prison for charges under section 25 of the DSA, which criminalises publishing any content with the intention of “tarnishing the image of

the nation.”

He has also been charged under section 31, which criminalises publishing or broadcasting any content that “destroys communal harmony” or “deteriorates or threatens to deteriorate the law and order” which carries up to 10 years in prison.

These terms are so vague and broad that the authorities can essentially arrest critics at will, effectively chilling free speech, HRW observed.

The DSA was also used against the Shariat, for accusing Islamic clerics of misinterpreting the Quran to forbid music and for reportedly saying “Our great Prophet Muhammad was an ardent fan of music and went to sleep at night after listening to music.”

If convicted, Sarker could face 10 years in prison.

The Bangladesh government has ignored repeated calls from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United States, the European Union, journalists within Bangladesh and many others to bring the law in line with Bangladesh’s commitments under international law, said the HRW.

## Chinese, Vatican foreign ministers hold first meeting

AFP, Beijing

The foreign ministers of China and the Vatican have met in the first high-level encounter between the sides -- a new sign of improving relations between two states with no diplomatic ties.

The talks between China’s Wang Yi and Archbishop Paul Gallagher in the German city of Munich on Friday come as relations steadily improve following a landmark agreement on the appointment of bishops in 2018.

“Today is the first meeting between the Chinese and Vatican foreign ministers,” Wang said, according to the People’s Daily newspaper, a Communist Party mouthpiece.

“This is a continuation of the exchanges between China and the Vatican for a period of time. It will open up more space for the future exchanges between the two sides,” he said.

Wang, who met Gallagher on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference, called the 2018 agreement “groundbreaking”, adding that it “has achieved positive results”.



Russia riot police officers detains an opposition activist during a protest rally against constitutional reforms in Saint Petersburg, yesterday. Last month Russian parliament’s lower house unanimously approved the constitutional reform bill, after less than two hours of debate.

PHOTO: AFP

# Police think

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the three from their flat in a five-storey building. A hammer was recovered from near the woman’s body.

Talking to this newspaper, Mashiur Rahman, deputy commissioner of DB (north), said, “The note recovered by police suggested some possible hints that Raquib was facing some financial problems due to having taken a huge loan.

“We will look into if there was any familial crisis due to the loan.”

Police were yet to trace Raquib, an official of Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Limited (BTCL).

“We will see why a BTCL official like him is burdened with a huge loan,” the DB official said.

Police sources said the note suggested that Raquib killed the trio so that none would have to take their responsibility after his demise and it also added where Raquib could be found.

Meanwhile, after conducting autopsies on the victims, doctors confirmed that the woman, Munni Rahman, 37, was beaten to death with a hammer, while the two children -- Farhan Uddin, 12, and Layeeva Bhuiyan, 3 -- were strangled.

“The upper side of the three bodies were more decomposed. There were injury marks on the backside of the woman’s head and her two children were strangled,” Dr AKM Moinuddin, lecturer of the forensic medicine department of Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, told reporters after conducting the autopsy around 4:00pm.

Doctor said they have collected viscera and blood samples from the three bodies for further reports.

Hafizur Rahman, additional deputy commissioner of Uttara Division, said he had learnt about the note recovered from the house and the matter is being investigated by Dakshinkhan Police.

“We are investigating the incident using all possible clues,” he said.

The woman’s brother Munna Rahman will file a murder case in this connection soon, police said.

The detective branch of police is also investigating the murder beside local police.

The family had been living in the flat since 2011. Raquib was recently transferred to the BTCL’s Uttara office from Gulshan.

The deceased were buried at Banani graveyard yesterday.

**PHARMACIST KILLING: CASE FILED AGAINST TWO DIRECTORS; NO ARREST YET**

Family members of victim Mobarak Karim, 26, filed a murder case against two directors of Friendship Specialised

Hospital and Digital Diagnostic Centre, which is situated in Matuail of Dhaka.

The accused are: Jamal Hossain, 52, and Akhter Hossain Mamun, 39.

Mobarak worked as a pharmacist at Proactive Medical College Hospital, a private hospital in Narayanganj.

Family members alleged that Mobarak was murdered by the accused over money-related issues.

Mobarak’s body was found hanging from the window bar of Jamal’s room. He had injuries to the legs and the neck, autopsy reports show.

The family, however, referring to pictures of Mobarak point out that he was also grievously wounded on his back and midriff.

Victim’s brother Ruhul Amin filed the murder case with Demra Police Station on Friday night. Police are yet to arrest any of the accused.

Hailing from Lalmohon of Bhola, Mobarak used to live in the capital’s Kadamtali area with his wife.

On Thursday, Mobarak went to Jamal’s office at the hospital’s third floor around 3:00pm. There, he had a talk with Mamun over some monetary matters, according to the case statement.

Family members tried to reach Mobarak over phone from 9:00pm to 2:30am, but he didn’t pick up the calls. Later the next morning around 11:30am, they got the news of Mobarak’s death.

The victim’s family has also alleged that police initially refused to take a murder case, but finally relented after the intervention of a local political leader.

Denying the claim of negligence by police, Nasir Uddin, a sub-inspector of Demra Police Station, who is investigating the case, said both the accused are on the run.

“We have raided four addresses of the accused, but could not trace them yet,” the IO said, adding that drive is on to arrest the duo.

## Repression

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appealed to the government for Khaleda’s proper treatment and release as she was extremely sick.

Khaleda has been behind bars since February 8, 2018, when she was convicted in the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case.

Later that year, she was found guilty in another graft case. However, her party claims both cases are politically motivated.

The BNP chief has been receiving treatment at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) since April 1 last year.

## Polls system

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candidates remain proactive and they put extra effort to make their relatives and friends cast votes for them, he added.

“So, the [average] voter turnout of national elections can in no way surpass that of municipality polls,” he further said.

Akbar also said the EC should examine the turnout at each polling centre before declaring the election result.

If the turnout is 100 percent, 98 percent or even 95 percent, they should immediately suspend the voting on the grounds of “false votes”, he said.

If the EC can monitor voting results this way, then many irregularities will be found, he added.

On the use of electronic voting machines, he said it seems effective considering the technology.

However, there are controversies in many countries regarding the EVMs and it is necessary to be cautious about their use in Bangladesh, he added.

Ganosamhati Andolon Chief Coordinator Zonayed Saki said at present the countrymen are experiencing an “authoritarian electoral system”, adding that vote rigging had taken place in different elections. But people were unable to unearth the secret behind it because various confusions have risen.

He alleged that under the present situation, voters found it difficult to go to the polling centres.

Even if they could reach, there were “helpers” to stamp on the ballot paper or push the button on electronic voting machines, he added.

Terming election as the “first effective step” of democracy, Shujan Secretary and good governance campaigner Badiul Alam Majumdar said if polls are not held in fair manner then the overall democratic system will collapse.

Election is the only way to transit power in a peaceful manner. If that peace is obstructed, the country’s future will face uncertainty, he said.

At the programme, Shujan, as part of its council manifesto, placed a 20-point proposal to bring reforms in the country’s political arena.

One of the points is to bring changes in the country’s electoral system by introducing a “proportional representation” electoral system and make required amendments to the related laws to “regain people’s trust” regarding elections.

Shujan President and former

caretaker government adviser M Hafizuddin Khan said polls is a major component to ensure good governance but the country’s electoral system is now being marred.

“There is doubt whether we will see any free and fair election in the future,” he said, adding that, if needed, the countrymen have to work hard to re-establish a fair polls atmosphere in the country.

Former cabinet secretary Ali Imam Majumdar said making public polls candidates’ affidavits is a major reform in the country’s electoral system and Shujan’s campaign was significant behind it.

Referring to low voter turnouts, Supreme Court lawyer Advocate Rana Dasgupta said the country’s political parties should take people’s lack of enthusiasm in exercising voting rights into consideration with importance and find the reasons behind it.

Leftist politician Comrade Khalequzzaman of Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal and Mohammad Nazrul Islam of Bangladesh Kalyan Party also spoke at the programme.

## US Border Patrol to send Tactical Unit officers to ‘sanctuary cities’

REUTERS, Washington

The Trump administration is deploying highly trained officers to boost arrests of unauthorized immigrants in a number of cities, including Los Angeles, Chicago and New York, the latest move in a battle against localities that adopt “sanctuary” policies to protect them from deportation.

Members of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection’s (CBP) Border Patrol Tactical Unit will be among the officers deployed to cities to assist Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE. They will also be sent to San Francisco, Atlanta, Houston, Boston, New Orleans, Detroit and Newark, New Jersey, CBP spokesman Lawrence Payne said in a statement on Friday.

The Tactical Unit’s members undergo a “grueling” training program designed to “mirror aspects” of U.S. Special Operation Forces courses, according to details about the program published on the CBP website. The unit was launched in 1984 in response to rioting at immigration detention facilities.