

Pope sees 'nothing positive' from Iraq

AP, Vatican City

In an Easter litany of the world's suffering, Pope Benedict XVI lamented that "nothing positive" is happening in Iraq and decried the unrest in Afghanistan and bloodshed in Africa and Asia.

"How many wounds, how much suffering there is in the world," the pontiff told tens of thousands gathered Sunday at St. Peter's Square on what is Christianity's most joyful feast day.

Benedict, delivering his traditional "Urbi et Orbi" Easter address from the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica, read out a long list of troubling current events, saying he was thinking of the "terrorism and kidnapping of people, of the thousand faces of violence which some people attempt to justify in the name of religion, of contempt for life, of the violation of human rights and the exploitation of persons."

"Afghanistan is marked by growing unrest and instability," Benedict said. "In the Middle East, besides some signs of hope in the dialogue between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, nothing positive comes from Iraq, torn apart by continual slaughter as the civil population flees."

He singled out what he called the "catastrophic, and sad to say, underestimated humanitarian situation" in Darfur as well as other African places of suffering, including violence and looting in Congo, fighting in Somalia which, he said, drove away the prospect of peace and the "grievous crisis" in Zimbabwe, marked by crackdowns on dissidents, a disastrous economy and severe corruption.

Benedict called for a negotiated solution to end the drawn-out, bloody conflict in Sri Lanka, and said East Timor needs reconciliation ahead of elections.

Earlier he celebrated Easter Mass on the steps of St. Peter's Basilica under hazy sunshine.

National ID, voter list

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Talking to reporters at his office yesterday, Election Commissioner Brig Gen (ret'd) M Sakhawat Hossain said it is not possible to implement the voter list project in less than 18 months.

About the pilot project, the election commissioner said the EC has planned to launch the pilot project at the end of this month or early in May. "A tentative timeframe for implementing the voter list project and possible difficulties will be identified in this process," he said.

Meanwhile a delegation of Bangladesh Army on Saturday morning made a multimedia presentation at the EC Secretariat conference room on the process of implementing the voter list project.

"Experts of Bangladesh Army will provide all sorts of technological assistance and build public opinion for the task. The Election Commission officials will prepare the voter list," Election Commissioner Sakhawat said.

The CEC on last Thursday however said the army would be given responsibilities to implement the massive voter list scheme.

Ex-health minister

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In his complaint, Abul Hossain, a distributor of multi-level marketing company Destiny 2000 Pvt Ltd, said Mosharraf had long been bearing a grudge against him, as he (complainant) is an AL activist and had worked for the party in the last general election.

The ex-minister's accomplices took him to the BNP office at Paltan as he got out of his Kakrail office at around 5:00pm on June 15 last year. They gave him a severe beating and demanded Tk 50,000.

Abul's brothers Hasan and Jahangir gave the gang Tk 15,000. But Mosharraf's men told them they would have to pay Tk 10,000 a month if they were to run businesses in the area.

The complainant was even denied treatment at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) on orders from the then health minister.

He did not file any case against them for fear of retribution, Abul Hossain said.

Advocate Shamsul Haq Rintu appeared for the complainant. **EXTORTION CHARGES AGAINST SALAHUDDIN**

Another Dhaka court yesterday framed charges against detained former BNP lawmaker from Demra Salahuddin Ahmed and seven others in two extortion cases.

The cases were filed under the Speedy Trial (Law and Order Disruption) Act with Jatrabari and Demra Police Stations on February 14 and 18.

The other accused are Abul Hashem, Salu, Bareq, Nurul Haq, Joynd Abedin, Jamaluddin Tutul and Mithu. Of them, Salahuddin and Mithu are now in jail while the rest are still at

Referring to the army's presentation, Election Commissioner Sahul Hossain said, "They showed how the project would be implemented. It may require 10 minutes to prepare an identity card after taking one's photograph."

Required number of committees will be formed comprising army personnel, chairmen and members of union parishes and nearest contestants of last election to the bodies. They will visit door to door with digital cameras and other instruments to simultaneously prepare voter list with photographs and national identity cards, Election Commissioner Sakhawat said.

The identity cards would contain a set of information about the cardholders, he added.

Govt extends time

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from previous rate of Tk 15.25. In the district towns, 10 dealers, instead of four, will sell rice from now on.

The government has decided to sell 2.51 lakh metric tons of rice across the country under the OMS programme to cool down the wayward market.

Pietersen

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Tait's pace while dragging a ball into his stumps while trying to cut a ball square.

Glenn McGrath replaced Tait after an impressive four-over burst and was immediately greeted by an expansive Bell who advanced to the first ball then launched the third over mid-off.

Bell continued to flourish, putting McGrath out of the attack with three fours in four balls, then Pietersen launched Michael Clarke, surprisingly brought rather early, for a straight four and an even better six over long-on.

The fifty-stand came off 55 balls and the onslaught made Potts move to spin in the form of Brad Hogg and medium pace from Andrew Symonds.

The England pair milked them with sweeps, drives and nudges. Pietersen's fifty came off 49 balls and Bell's followed two balls off 69 deliveries. A huge moment followed when Ponting who did great to get near the ball but spilled a horizontal attempt to catch Pietersen.

The third-wicket pair survived and brought up a hundred runs in 18 overs.

Biotechnology

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sector to the government.

Prof Ahmed A Azad, Prof AS Islam, Prof Jamilur Reza Choudhury, Prof Naiyuum Choudhury, Prof Haseena Khan, Dr Firdausi Qadri, Dr Shah M Faruque and Prof Zeba I Seraj spoke at the press conference among others.

The speakers stressed coordination in biotechnological sector and in its research.

Prof Azad, who read out the recommendations, urged the government to form an international scientific advisory committee with expatriate and local experts to review the scientific, technological and innovative activities of NIB to ensure that the institute's scientific activities conform with the international trends and practices in the field of biotechnology.

He also said NIB should cooperate and facilitate research activities in modern biotechnology, which are being carried out in different organisations and should act as a centre for human resource development and technology transfer in this field.

"The existing National Institute of Biotechnology should be an autonomous 'research flagship' of a national commission for biotechnology and play complementary role in the development of biotechnology research in Bangladesh as the national resource and training centre," he said.

The experts viewed that a national commission for biotechnology should be the focal point for coordination and promotion of biotechnology through liaison with relevant government departments, academic and research institutions, the private sector and the funding agencies.

Prof Jamilur Reza Choudhury hoped that the present government would take initiative so that biotechnological research can flourish. He said biotechnology has the potentiality to develop various sectors and, therefore, meet the challenges that we are facing now.

Expressing disappointment over the output in biotechnology sector, Prof Jamilur Reza Choudhury hoped that within the next few years biotechnology would be able to give some output that can be used for the welfare of this nation.

He also said bio-informatics (combination of biotechnology and information technology) could significantly contribute to the development of Bangladesh, if the young professionals in this sector could be properly trained.

Zeba I Seraj said, "Biotechnology is a multidisciplinary subject," adding, "Coordination is necessary to bring success in this field."

"Several significant works have been done in biotechnological sector including tissue culture," she added.

Prof AS Islam said biotechnological research on health, medicine and nutrition should be given preference.

CONCLUDING DAY ACTIVITIES

During the final day of the conference, 37 experts presented their research papers on various sub-sectors of biotechnology.

The papers were on agricultural biotechnology, pharmaceutical biotechnology, waste and salinity management, etc.

Pioneer of biotechnology education in Bangladesh Prof AS Islam presented his "Draft Position Paper" yesterday focusing on the status of biotechnology research in Bangladesh.

Saying that a nation without science is lost, the chair of the final session of the conference The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam lamented that a thrust on science in general is missing in Bangladesh.

Fare of CNG

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charge would be Tk 0.75 per minute, which is Tk 0.50 per minute at present.

The drivers will have to pay Tk 450 instead of the present Tk 300 to the CNG auto rickshaw owners as the daily deposit.

At the meeting, the adviser stressed the need for strict monitoring of the CNG three-wheeler operation to oblige the drivers to go to any distance on passengers' demand and to check metre tempering.

If any auto rickshaw driver tries to charge extra fare or refuses to go to any destination, his license would be cancelled and the auto rickshaw owner would be fined, Matin warned.

Bangladesh party

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the abridged version of the game.

"Bangladesh reach for the sky," was how The Daily Jugantor described the Tigers' win. Samakal read: "Tigers win like Tigers."

While the country was over the moon, the hero Ashraful was relieved at finally bridging the gap between potential and performance with his half-century that could have easily been a hundred had he got a few more overs to bat.

"It's a great feeling because South Africa are number one in the world," Ashraful told AFP after the match.

"I played good cricket and I was thinking that if I stay at the wicket then I have a good chance of scoring big. I played some improvised shots because I like these shots and have practised them a lot back home."

"I can realise the mood in Bangladesh. They love cricket and it will be an unbelievable feeling for them."

Bangladesh captain Habibul Bashar said that the victory gives his team an outside chance of reaching the semifinals.

"Yes, we do but we need to work very hard in the remaining three matches."

Bangladesh will play England (April 11), Ireland (April 15) and hosts West Indies (April 19) in their last three Super Eight matches.

"This game was important for us because we were a bit laidback. It (the win) has brought a bit of our toughness back. We have a chance now. If we had lost, we would have absolutely no chance. We do have a chance now, but we have to work really hard."

"This is a big win for Bangladesh. It is more important because it shows that we are in the Super Eights not just to participate, but to show the world we are capable of pulling off big surprises."

Asked by AFP if Bangladesh had finally shed their minnows' tag after wins over India and South Africa, he said: "I leave it for the people to decide. "Our job is to play the game in the right manner. If we can keep doing like this, keep playing good cricket, I leave it to the people what they call us."

The defeat was hard to swallow for South African captain Graeme Smith.

"It's difficult to come up with answers after the Bangladesh defeat. We didn't do the basics well and gave them an opportunity. They grabbed it with both hands," said Smith after the match.

He also praised man-of-the-match Ashraful.

"His innings changed things, he set it well, worked the field well and kept us under pressure through the 50 overs from when he came into bat."

There was however little praise back in South Africa.

"Proteas humiliated" read the headline in the Sunday Times which said the hopes of glory for the team ranked number one in the world in one-day cricket had "suffered a severe setback" as a result of their "dismal performance".

"The defeat plunged South Africa from being among the favourites to reach the semi-finals to possibly needing to win all three of their remaining matches against the West Indies, England and New Zealand," the paper added.

Former South African captain Kepler Wessels said Graeme Smith's team had been guilty of underestimat-

ing a Bangladesh side which has already accounted for India in the first round of the tournament in the Caribbean.

"We probably turned up and thought it was a walk in the park, something we could take for granted," he said on the Supersport cable network.

"We left the spinner out but where are we? Sometimes we have to think on our feet," said former chairman of selectors Omar Henry Henry, himself a left-arm spinner.

"We have gone in with a very one-dimensional approach," agreed Wessels.

"We do not have the bowling options. We were exposed, badly exposed."

LEADERS GREET CRICKET TEAM

President Prof Iajuddin Ahmed, Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, Speaker M Jamiruddin Sircar, Awami League President Sheikh Hasina and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia have congratulated Bangladesh cricket team on their stunning victory over South Africa in the World Cup Cricket at Guyana Saturday night, reports UNB.

In a message, the president hoped that the national cricket team would be able to build on their success in the days ahead by showing their skill and efficiency.

The chief adviser in a message lauded the Bangladeshi players, coach and the other officials of the cricket team and said the countrymen are exalted at the victory. "This victory has elevated Bangladesh to a higher position in the world cricket arena."

The Awami League president in her message said: "victory of our young cricketers against the top class teams of the cricket world one after another proved that at present, Bangladesh is name of a new power in the cricket world."

The BNP chairperson in her message said this historic victory is the fruit of long endeavour and this trend of success would continue in future too.

Food price hike

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consumed by poor people, rose by 18 percent.

In last one year, wheat prices went up by about 31 percent while soybean oil prices increased by 41.49 percent.

According to the TCB data, onion prices shot up by 12.82 percent in the last one month while the rate was 91.30 percent in the last one year.

Banking sector sources said at present there is no scarcity in production of commodities in the country and import is also adequate.

However, the central bank officials predict further rise in the inflation rate in April due to the recent hike of petroleum prices between 16 and 21 percent.

Sources said the hike would cause more inflation hike if the government fails to check irrational climb of transport costs.

"The government will have to work hard for smooth agricultural production to halt further rise of inflation rates," a source viewed.

Zero-duty item list

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be settled through existing mechanisms between the two neighbours.

The adviser said a foreign secretary-level meeting between the two countries would be held soon to deal with the longstanding problems.

He denied a report broadcast by an Indian TV channel on anti-Indian insurgent camps in Bangladesh and reaffirmed that Bangladesh would not allow its territory to be used by any insurgents against India or any other country.

About the chief adviser's meeting with Nepalese Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, the adviser said the problem of direct trade between Bangladesh and Nepal was discussed. He said both Dhaka and Kathmandu would request Delhi to help remove the obstacles to direct trade through Phulbari and Banglabandh.

"Given the friendly relations with India, we hope the problem will be solved," he said, adding that Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal could enhance their trade relations by resolving the problems.

About the CA's meeting with Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, the adviser said Islamabad would give wheat worth \$10 million to Bangladesh as a "token of friendship".

Direct air link between Dhaka and Colombo came up during the CA's meeting with Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa, he said.

Describing the outcome of the Saarc Summit as "superb", the adviser said Bangladesh's proposals relating to steps to deal with adverse impacts of climate change, telephone-tariff reduction and development of tourism were incorporated in the Delhi Declaration.

Saarc Youth Camp will be held in Bangladesh this year. Besides, as per Bangladesh's proposal, the main campus of the South Asian University will be established in India while satellite campus will be set up in other member-countries, he said.

Indian FM

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The truck driver apparently lost control when a tire burst as Mukherjee's convoy was driving past in the opposite lane, Kanooja said.

Mukherjee was first taken to a village clinic near the site of the accident, about 130km north of Kolkata, where he was "given stitches in his head and oxygen and saline to stabilise his condition," PTI reported, quoting a doctor.

He was then transferred to a hospital in a nearby town where a team of army doctors and neurosurgeons rushed to meet him.

Mukherjee is close to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Congress party leader Sonia Gandhi. He was first named defence minister after Congress returned to power in 2004, and became foreign minister in an October Cabinet reshuffle.

Two West Bengal state politicians were also hurt in the accident, along with Mukherjee's driver and security guard, both whom were reportedly in serious condition.

Nor'wester kills 3

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sadar upazila early Sunday morning and left one person dead.

The dead was identified as Abdul Khaleq, 40, from Shimanatpur village of Rashidabad union.

At around 1:00am, the storm hit Kishoreganj municipal area, Rashidabad, Binnati, Boulai and Barui unions. Crops including paddy, maize and vegetables were destroyed by the storm.

Abdul Khaleq was critically injured during the storm inside his shop at Latipur bazar. The doctor on duty declared him dead after he was taken to Kishoreganj Sadar Hospital.

8-yr-old boy

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Baghghona in Lalkhan Bazar area of Chittagong on Saturday.

The mother of the victim Shahnaz Begum filed the case against Pappu, whose parents are her neighbours, on Saturday with Khulshi Police Station.

In the case the complainant alleged that Pappu raped her daughter on February 24 when the two children were playing near a hill close to their home.

The victim was admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) on February 27 due to excessive bleeding.

Pappu's mother, however, claimed that the case was fabricated against Pappu with the intention to harass her family.

Meanwhile, the case raised doubts among locals since the victim was hospitalised three days after the incident allegedly took place, the case was filed over a month after the alleged incident and the accused was too young.

Repeated attempts were made to have the comments of the investigation officer of the case Sub-inspector Sharafat Ullah but he could not be reached.

Fake admissions

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necessary measures to identify the syndicate involved with it," Prof Yusuf Haider said.

The probe committee on Wednesday gave a list of 30 identified fake students to the police. It also sent show cause notices to the students concerned asking them to reply within 15 days why their admissions will not be cancelled.

"We have information that some consultancy firms, mainly located in Panthapath area of the city, are involved in the forgery," a member of the committee said.

DU authorities on April 4 formed a five-member committee, comprising the dean of social science faculty and the chairmen of different departments in the faculty, to investigate if there were anomalies in the faculty's admission process.

Sources said committees should also be formed to review the admission process of the faculties of business studies and science.

Meanwhile, the 11 departments of the social science faculty held a meeting on Wednesday to review the progress of its probe into the fake admission.

The meeting was told that fake admissions in the faculty took place in the name of re-admission and under the quota system.

Sources said the meeting suspected that an office assistant of the public administration department is involved in the forgery of documents.

The official has long remained absent on the ground of ill health. The department asked him to join on Thursday otherwise departmental proceedings would be taken against him.

US, UK

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possible timetable, the spokesman said Bangladesh has to determine it.

"We are consistently urging the caretaker government, in our engagement with them, to create conditions conducive to early and credible elections that can sustain democracy in Bangladesh," said the spokesman.

Meanwhile, British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury met Foreign Affairs Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury at the foreign ministry yesterday afternoon.

Rajshahi mayor

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complaint are former deputy commissioner (DC) of Rajshahi Aziz Hasan and then Rajshahi superintendent of police (SP) Masud Miah (dismissed in 2006).

Advocate Moazzem Hossain from Mollahpara of Rajshahi city lodged the complaint with Rajpara Police Station in Rajshahi at 4:00pm.

Police officially received the complaint at 7:00pm and sent it for home ministry's recommendation as to whether the complaint can be filed as a regular case.

The complaint has many components for it to be filed as a sedition case, said a senior police official.

This is the first complaint filed against mayor Minu implicating him with JMB.

In his complaint, advocate Moazzem said on May 23, 2004, assisted by the accused four -- mayor Minu, barrister Aminul, DC Hasan and SP Masud -- JMB leaders Prof Lutfar Rahman, Mahtab Khamarui, Abdus Sattar, Jalil Amin, Natib Lutfar and others gathered around 2,000 militant activists from Rajshahi and its adjacent areas and marched toward Rajshahi city.

The militants paraded different city streets and chanted various anti-state slogans that

included declaring a war against Bangladesh and vows to form an Islamic jihad group in their bid to establishing an Islamic state in the country.

The JMB militants from the procession also submitted memorandums to the then DC and SP.

Later, the JMB militants held a street rally in front of Rajshahi Court. In the rally, many militant leaders boasted that mayor Minu, barrister Aminul, DC Hasan and SP Masud had assured them (JMB) of extending full cooperation and support in JMB's bid to establishing an Islamic state.

Militant leaders also declared that they were pledged to "change the map of the country" and both Minu and Aminul would help JMB strengthen by providing the necessary financial and administrative assistance.

Moreover, the JMB leaders announced that they would kill leaders of different political parties as well as journalists who stood in their way.

The militants delivered similar speeches from another rally organised later at zero point of Saheb Bazar, the complainant added.

Iraq attack kills 23

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The unrest provided a grim backdrop for Iraq's dwindling Christian minority who donned their Sunday best for traditional Easter Church services before retiring to quiet celebrations at home.

In his Easter blessing, Pope Benedict XVI lamented that "nothing positive comes from Iraq" -- home to one of the world's oldest Christian communities.

Insurgents continue to stage attacks -- mainly bombings -- despite a massive US and Iraqi security operation launched eight weeks ago to quell bloodshed in Baghdad that has killed thousands in the past year alone.

US and Iraqi military officials insist that execution-style killings were falling in the city since the crackdown began on February 14.

US military spokesman Major General William Caldwell said they were down 60 percent in the fortnight covered by "the last week of March and first (week of) April" compared to the similar period the months before.

For the whole of March, he said, such killings fell by 26 percent compared to February.

"It is not a trend but we continue to see that it has stayed lower. We are encouraged by the positive sign," Caldwell said, but did not offer any actual figures to substantiate his analysis.

Iraqi Brigadier General Qassim Atta Mussawi, spokesman for Operation Fardh al-Qanoon (Imposing Law) launched in Baghdad, also insisted that fewer bodies of unidentified men were now being found on the streets of the capital.

"Such bodies do not exceed eight on a daily basis. And that is not a large number," said Mussawi at a joint news conference with Caldwell.

Before the crackdown began, dozens of bodies of handcuffed and blindfolded men riddled with bullets were found daily in Baghdad.

South of Baghdad, fighting was continuing for a third day in the central Shia city of Diwaniyah between militiamen and US and Iraqi troops.

Doctor Hamid Gaati said that

over the past three days in the city the hospital had recorded nine dead and 25 wounded. Wards were running short of medicine and medical staff faced difficulties getting to work.

"So far, we have achieved great success fighting the terrorists," said Major General Othman Faroud, commander of the 8th Iraqi army division in the city.

Iraq's radical Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr on Sunday urged his militiamen and security forces to end the fight in Diwaniyah, saying it was a "trap" by US-led forces.

"Iraq has had enough bloodshed. The occupation forces led by the biggest evil, America, is working to sow dissent either directly or through its agents," said a statement stamped and issued by his office in Najaf.

Sadr has repeatedly called for foreign troops to leave Iraq, while the US military accuse his militia of killing Sunni Arabs.

On Sunday, thousands of Shias were gathering in Najaf for a massive anti-US rally being held on Monday's fourth anniversary of the fall of Baghdad, police said.

Hundreds of Iraqi flags were raised over government buildings in Najaf and in public squares, an AFP journalist reported.

"It will be an Iraqi demonstration in the name of all Iraqis. We will raise the Iraqi flag and also banners demanding that the occupation leave," a representative of Sadr in his Najaf office told AFP on condition of anonymity.

On March 30, Sheikh Abdul Hadi al-Muhamadawi, speaking on behalf of Sadr in Kufa, urged Iraqis to protest on April 9, the fourth anniversary of the fall of Baghdad and the overthrow of Saddam.

Joynd Hazari

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police-BDR joint raid on his home on March 17, 2001.