

God will punish drug dealers

Says Pope

AP, Guaratingueta, Brazil

Pope Benedict XVI warned drug traffickers yesterday that they would face divine justice for the scourge of illegal narcotics across Latin America, telling them that, "God will call you to account for your deeds."

Speaking before a crowd of 6,000 at a drug treatment center, Benedict urged "the drug-dealers to reflect on the grave harm they are inflicting on countless young people and on adults from every level of society."

Brazil is the second-largest consumer of cocaine after the United States, according to the US State Department, and big cities across Latin America's largest nation are plagued by drug violence.

Driven by gangs that control street-corner dealing, the problem is particularly acute in the teeming slums of Rio de Janeiro, where gangs lure children into lives of violence and engage in near-daily shootouts with police that kill innocent bystanders.

"Human dignity cannot be trampled upon in this way," the pope said.

The treatment center where the pope spoke was founded by a Franciscan friar and claims an 80 percent success rate, giving addicts spiritual guidance as they milk cows, tend apple orchards and work as beekeepers.

It is just a short distance away from the shrine city of Aparecida, where Benedict on Sunday will open a conference of Latin American and Caribbean bishops aimed at finding ways to reverse the erosion of the church in the region.

Addicts who listened to the pontiff said his visit was important because Brazilian drug users are often ostracized and left to beg on the streets for drug money.

"We are excluded from society, but we are the ones the pope is coming to see," said Diego Cleto, a 19-year-old who started taking drugs at age 13.

The Guaratingueta treatment center in a remote hilly region at the end of a dirt road was founded by Friar Hanz Stapel in 1983. There are

now 31 similar farm/treatment centers in Brazil and 10 more in countries such as Russia, Mexico and Mozambique.

Before traveling from Sao Paulo Friday night to the hallowed Catholic religious site of Aparecida, Benedict lamented "difficult times for the church" in Brazil amid "aggressive proselytizing" by born-again Protestant congregations.

Fresh case filed

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Islam alias Makhan, Fazlu, Sudhir Barman, Sadir, Faisal, Chan Miah, Billal and Nurul Islam.

The complainant Mohammad Mainuddin said during the last BNP-led government Hannan Shah received lease of a part of Ghorshab river by misusing his power. He said Hannan Shah had false cases filed against the locals living on the riverbanks in order to drive them away. His men took possession of around 50 fishing boats of the locals, the complainant added.

In the case Mainuddin said Azharul, manager of the fish farm built on the leased part of the river, took him to the farm office and beat him up with iron rods on April 10, 2006 with the help of others. He said they put salt on his body and poked him hundreds of times with syringes until he lost consciousness.

He regained consciousness two days later at Shitalakhya General Hospital after his wife and her two brothers rescued him and took him to the hospital. Mainuddin and his family moved to Narsingdi, as Azharul was trying to abduct him, the complainant said.

Earlier, Kapasia Awami League General Secretary Ruhul Amin filed a case with the same police station against 96 BNP leaders and activists including Hannan Shah.

Wolfowitz

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But they are inclined to adopt a resolution saying they have lost confidence in him, hoping that will persuade him to resign, the report said.

Wolfowitz has said he granted Shaha Riza a pay raise and promotion on advice from an ethics board at the bank, and his attorney, Robert Bennett, declined to say what Wolfowitz would do, The Post said.

Wolfowitz was completing a written response to the accusations against him, the paper said. He has been invited to appear before the board Tuesday, and the no-confidence vote could come soon after.

Bank officials said the resolution will probably assert that Wolfowitz's continued tenure jeopardizes the bank's ability to raise funds for its campaign to eradicate poverty, according to the report.

Bank members are betting that a strong expression of dissatisfaction will persuade the US administration to withdraw its support and urge Wolfowitz to step down, The Post said.

CG's reform

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current government could not be called 'unconstitutional'.

Speaking at the event, former foreign secretary Walur Rahman said democracy cannot work in a country without a government based on political parties.

Dilara Chowdhury, professor of government and politics at Jahangirnagar University, said, "Of course democracy will suffer if the current government stays in power for a long period of time."

Replying to a question about reforming political parties, both the AL and BNP leaders agreed in principle that they will accept any good proposal from the Election Commission and the caretaker government regarding the matter.

"If their recommendations are good for the country, then we have to implement those, but where the people reject us," said Hamid of AL.

"If we get any specific, acceptable and good recommendation, we must accept those," said Ashraf of BNP.

BBC Bangla Service in conjunction with BBC World Service Trust organised the discussion. BBC's Walur Rahman Miraj and Masud Hasan Khan produced and moderated the event respectively.

Walur and Dilara also stressed the need for bringing reforms to political parties to make the country's democracy stronger and to establish internal democracy within the parties.

The leaders of AL and BNP however claimed that democratic practices already exist in both the parties.

About arresting corrupt former army officials, the speakers said the caretaker government should take actions against any corrupt individual. They also said the government should take effective measures to check the price hike of essentials.

Worker's death

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Rayerbagh at 7:45am while she was crossing the road.

Doctors at Dhaka Medical College Hospital declared Nasima dead after she was taken to the hospital.

Traffic on the highway remained snapped for about half an hour, sources said.

Two units of fire brigade doused the fire while police seized the bus. A case was filed with Jatrabari Police Station.

Manpower export

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press after the meeting at the CA's office.

Even though half a million Bangladeshi workers are currently working in the UAE, Bangladesh does not have any official arrangement with the country regarding their safety, health and other facilities.

The MoU will also take initiatives to explore new areas of cooperation and regulation on the matter, especially for creating more job opportunities for Bangladeshi workers.

Besides, the government also decided not to compensate landowners while acquiring land for the Padma Multipurpose Bridge if it is found that structures have been deliberately built on the land overnight for the specific purpose of receiving compensation.

The council approved the Padma Multipurpose Bridge Project Land Acquisition Ordinance 2007 in this regard, where it states that the deputy commissioner (DC) will decide on the eligibility of receiving compensation under the Land Acquisition Act, 1982. Those notified for removing their illegal structures will be given a deadline of 24 hours.

The press secretary said that the decision has been taken following the experience during the land-acquisition drive for the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge, where many structures were set up overnight solely for getting compensation.

The meeting also approved in principle an Islamic University Second Amendment Ordinance, 2007 for assigning particular authorities for the 2006-2007 Fazil-Kamil examinations.

The examinations of the Fazil-Kamil students from the three-year session will be held under the Islamic University while the two-year session's students will sit for their exams under the Madrasa Education Board.

ODI series

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to a respectable position.

Wicketkeeper batsman Mushfiqur Rahim, who had a terrible day with the gloves, scored 35 in a workmanlike knock that spanned 43 deliveries.

But he needlessly gave his wicket away to Yuvraj Singh, who took two for 40 as did premier fast bowler Zaheer Khan, who took two for 32.

But the total was a little too much for the hosts as they were chasing the game right from the beginning.

Gambhir, who began his innings with a lovely flick through mid-wicket off Mashrafe in the first over, was the more aggressive of the two openers as Virender Sehwag struck a boundary and a six in his 26-ball 21. His innings ended when he hauled out to Javed Omar at mid-off of the bowling of left-armers Syed Raseel.

Mashrafe showed glimpses of his brilliance but was evidently half-cooked as he missed the first game due to a back strain.

Mahendra Dhoni was kept at number three but his was an uncharacteristically slow knock as he faced 54 balls to score 36 runs. Gambhir was taking charge but the other end as the two shared 83 runs for the second wicket, the highest

partnership of the match.

Yuvraj Singh chipped in with 24 before tamely returning a simple chance to Mohammad Rafique who took three wickets in the day.

In between, Delhi-born Gambhir, who got a life when he was on 95 after Shakib Al Hasan failed to hold on to a return catch, reached his hundred in the 37th over. He fell soon after as he missed a straight Raseel delivery on 101. He faced 113 balls and struck eleven sweetly-timed boundaries.

"It was important to rotate the strike in the middle," said the 25-year-old batsman who is also making a comeback after having been left out of the World Cup side.

"To score a hundred that helps your team win is the most special part," said Gambhir.

Bangladesh struggled in the field as throws from the deep went haywire and there was some elementary mistakes by wicketkeeper Rahim.

Dravid rallied the lower order as he hustled to score 42 off 47 balls but the rest just faded away as veteran left-armers Rafique, along with Mashrafe and fellow left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak pegged back the Indians in the slog overs as they approached 300-plus runs. Razzak and Raseel took two wickets each while Mashrafe got one.

UN offers help

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Department of Political Affairs, Vijay Nambiar, chef de cabinet of the secretary general, Hafiz Pasha, assistant administrator of the UNDP, Craig Jenness, director, UN Electoral Assistance Division, and Sergey Karev, deputy executive director of UN Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate.

During the meetings, the special envoy said the Bangladesh government will welcome UN support in recovery and repatriation of the money siphoned out of the country in the past.

He informed the UN officials that an excellent team of civilians is running the caretaker government, which is fully committed to good governance.

The special envoy also briefed the UN officials on the recent crackdown on corruption and said the government would welcome the world body's support for recovery and repatriation of money transferred abroad.

The UN officials put on record their gratitude to Bangladesh for her significant role in UN peace-keeping operation.

US security team

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a recent letter to Bush upon returning home after a protracted visit to Bangladesh last month.

The five-member delegation last month visited Bangladesh and held a series of high-level meetings with senior government leaders, civil and military officials and businessmen.

The delegation comprised US Congressman Curt Weldon, former deputy assistance secretary of defence W Bruce Weinrod, retired US Air Force major general Ronald Bath, retired US Army colonel Timothy D Ringgold, and retired US Coast Guard commander Michael D Kearney.

They came to Bangladesh to develop the framework for a major conference on homeland security issues to be held in Bangladesh later this year.

By making Bangladesh a priority the US could help "ensure a democratic and pro-Western nation, and prevent the emergence of another highly unstable Islamic nation vulnerable to extremism", the letter said.

It warned that given the economic underdevelopment in that national along with political instability in recent years, "Bangladesh is vulnerable to extremist efforts to impose a violently anti-US regime on that nation".

Although Bangladesh is the world's third largest Muslim majority country, "the Bangladeshi form of Islam is generally moderate and tolerant and has co-existed comfortably with a secular government since its independence", the letter said.

But Bangladesh can be "a strong member of a moderate Islamic coalition that rejects fanaticism and terrorism", it added.

"Bangladesh's positive role and potential makes it all the more important that the US take a proactive role in assisting Bangladesh to improve its political and economic situation so that Bangladesh will not provide fertile ground for extremist fanaticism."

The delegation observed that Bangladesh is now in a period of "political and economic transition" when key leaders are seeking to strengthen and deepen the national democratic political system and also crack down on "endemic" corruption.

"This is truly a historic moment in Bangladesh. A successful outcome is crucial to the future stability and political orientation of that nation," the delegation said.

Given the importance of the present moment for the future, they suggested that the US strengthen further its support for Bangladesh "by making every effort to support those far-sighted leaders who are working towards a genuine and

election commissioner have announced that the elections will be held before the end of 2008, he said.

"Every effort will be made to hold the elections as soon as possible subject to the completion of the preparatory process," the envoy told the UN executives.

Sobhan mentioned that the Anti-Corruption Commission has become fully functional and truly independent while the separation of the judiciary from the executive is at final stage.

Besides, he said, the Public Service Commission has been overhauled and independence of the media ensured.

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PDB

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buy vehicles for the project. Allocation for this was Tk 1.35 crore but the PDB spent 3.43 crore.

"The project authorities did not seek approval for buying additional vehicles for the project," the report said.

At least three jeeps were bought without approval in the name of the project but those were used by the Prime Minister's Office, Power Division and the PDB chairman in gross violation of project guidelines.

The project started in FY98 and FY99 with an allocation of Tk 70 crore for two years.

In FY 2000-2001, the PDB spent Tk 55 crore instead of allocated Tk 30 crore and in FY 2001-2002, it spent Tk 103 crore while allocation was Tk 60 crore. It spent Tk 83 crore in FY 2002-2003 while only Tk 27 crore was allocated, and Tk 147 crore was spent instead of allocated Tk 73 crore in FY 2003-2004.

Neither the PDB nor the project director informed the power division, planning commission or the IMED about the additional spending, the enquiry report said.

Even the PDB's internal reports published during the period did not object to the extra spending and largely ignored the big gap between the approved funds and the amount spent, the report mentioned.

Fishermen

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rice and so I could not comply with the government's decision," Nurunnabi, a fisherman of Bhola, said adding that they need training to pursue an alternative job for survival.

The fishermen at the discussion said they use current net to catch fish as it is less costly than thread net and also because smaller fish can be caught with it.

But in doing so, they face repression by the law enforcers, they said.

Since March 10 this year, current nets worth Tk 93.14 crore were burnt, which was Tk 56.79 crore more than that of last year, the study said, adding that the number of affected fishermen this year is less than that of 2006, but the amount of loss is greater.

Most of the fishermen families are debt-ridden, while the average loan stands at Tk 25, 836 and 40.7 per cent of them take loan from different non-government organisations, it said.

The study recommended taking development programmes for the fishermen through their active participation, ensuring government services and proper training in different small businesses, and providing permanent settlement of khas land for their livelihoods.

The recommendations also include reaching the government orders and regulations to the fishermen through upazila fisheries office, ending production and distribution of current nets, training the concerned law enforcers including the taskforce members and providing identity cards for the fishermen and licences for the fishing boats.

Fisheries and Livestock Adviser Dr CS Karim, who attended the programme as the chief guest, said the fishermen's requirements should be determined by analysing the real picture of their lives and they should be provided help considering their skill.

Head of News of Channel i Shykh Shiraj, acting Editor of the Saptahik 2000 Golam Morteja, Interim Country Director of Actionaid Shoyeb Siddiqui also spoke, among others.

Hannan Shah

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residence yesterday.

He said Khaleda herself conveyed this message to him over phone.

Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Syed Fahim Munaim, on the other hand, told a news briefing yesterday that the government has no plans to send Khaleda abroad and there are no restrictions on her movement.

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed on Wednesday also told the BBC that the government had no plans to send her overseas, but Khaleda herself had been planning to go to Saudi Arabia on a religious trip for some time.

Hannan has already come under fire from senior BNP leaders including Dhaka city Mayor Sadek Hossain Khoka, who on Friday questioned Hannan's authority to speak for the BNP chairperson.

Meanwhile, Hannan accused the government of double standards in dealing with the political parties.

While BNP Senior Joint Secretary General and Khaleda's son Tarique Rahman was arrested on corruption charges, a leader of another political party, who has also been charged with extortion, has not been arrested, he said, adding that the biggest achievement of this government has been to arrest a lot of people.

TIB investigation

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shipping lines are planning to declare the Chittagong port as a dangerous one following the desperate act of the daredevils.

The TIB report revealed that in the changed situation, after the take-over by the present caretaker government, ships are forced to pay Tk 10,000 to officials for berthing at the port jetty or anchoring at the outer anchorage.

But, in case of over-drafting vessels, this rate sometimes crosses Tk 100,000 through "understanding", the TIB said, adding that the rate of bribing was almost similar in 2004 and 2006. In some particular cases, the rate was raised in 2006.

It was found in the TIB investigation that the extortion and irregularities have been "institutionalised" at the seaport-country's commercial lifeline.

The TIB put forward some recommendations for elevating the country's prime port to a modern and efficient one.

These include amendment to Port Authority Act 1976, introducing online system in customs clearance, imposing ban on all kinds of political activities on the port premises and introducing a zero-tolerance policy in dealing with irregularities and corruption.

Speaking at the roundtable, the leaders of the Chittagong Chamber urged the government to turn the port into a public limited company.

Chamber President Safuzzaman Chowdhury, former BGMEA president SM Fazlul Haque and FBCCI Director Amirul Haque were, among others, took part in the discussion.

UNDP official killed

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Police said a gang of eight armed robbers in the guise of passengers took the driver and the supervisor of the Dhaka-bound night coach from Rangpur hostage around 8:30pm.

The robbers stabbed four people including UNDP Programme Officer Soumitra Kumar Dev, 35, when they tried to resist the robbers.

After looting the bus passengers at gunpoint, the robbers got down at Karatia Bypass and went towards Delduar through Tangail town in a microbus.

Soumitra, Mujibur Rahman, 32, bus driver Jhikrul Haque, 38, and supervisor of the bus Pathik alias Faruque, 26, were rushed to Mirzapur Kumudini Hospital where Soumitra succumbed to his injuries.

Being informed a police team chased the microbus and finally caught up with it at Bhurbhuria in Delduar upazila around 10:00pm.

Locals captured three of the robbers and beat them up as they were trying to flee getting down from the microbus. One robber died instantly while the other two critically injured in the beating died around midnight.

The dead robbers were identified as Salim, 32, Guljar Hossain alias Rabiul, 45, and Aslam, 30.

Police later arrested four out of the five remaining robbers in a paddy field in the area.

The arrested robbers are Azizul Ali, 20, Milon Haoladar, 30, Abdus Subahan, 42, and Selim Sheikh, 32.

Police seized the microbus and recovered all looted valuables.

Bodies of the three dead robbers were sent to Tangail General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Police sources said the arrested robbers told police during interrogation that they rented the microbus from a car rental company in the capital on Thursday and went to Rangpur the same day.

30 killed ahead

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Black smoke billowed over the volatile commercial hub as mobs armed with assault rifles and shotguns fought pitched battles in the streets, opened fire on a private television studio and torched dozens of buses and cars.

"At least 30 people died and more than 100 were injured in the violence," Sindh province interior minister Waseem Akhtar told AFP.

"The chief justice is responsible for these deaths, no one else is responsible, no political party is responsible," added Akhtar, a minister for the pro-Musharraf Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM) party.

A senior security official said most of the dead were from the Pakistan People's Party of exiled former premier Benazir Bhutto. Other officials said a policeman and a paramedic were among the victims.

The president, a key US ally, dismissed Chaudhry on March 9 over allegations that he had abused his power, turning the judge into a symbol of defiance and unleashing the most serious crisis of the president's eight-year rule since he seized power in a bloodless coup.

Opponents say army chief Musharraf acted unconstitutionally in a bid to neuter the judiciary and make it easier to be re-elected as president by the current parliament before his five-year term runs out in November.

New York-based Human Rights Watch said Musharraf's government and its allies had apparently "deliberately sought to foment violence in Karachi," adding that police stood by as "silent spectators".

An AFP photographer at the scene of the biggest clash said

workers from the pro-Musharraf Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM) exchanged gunfire for an hour with activists from Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party.

Private Aaj television, which has come under pressure from the government for its allegedly pro-chief justice stance, showed footage of gunmen firing at its office in Karachi and of its correspondents diving for cover.

Justice Chaudhry spent most of the day stranded at Karachi airport because government supporters used trucks with deflated tyres to block all main roads, including those leading to the airport.

"I wanted to address the bar association. But they (the government) want my lawyers to go back and I wanted to go back with my team of lawyers," lawyer Imdad Awan quoted Chaudhry as saying at Karachi airport before flying home.

The MQM -- historically an ethnic party for people who migrated from India after partition in 1947 and which has been implicated in violence here during the 1990s -- held a large counter-demonstration in Karachi to rival Chaudhry's.

Musharraf meanwhile was finally set to make his own show of strength with a rally late Saturday in Islamabad.

Several thousand government supporters, many bussed in from around the country, had gathered outside parliament, although there were far fewer than the 400,000 that the government had predicted.

Musharraf was earlier quoted as saying by the state-run Associated Press of Pakistan that there was "absolutely no requirement and absolutely no environment" for declaring a state of emergency after rumours swept the country.

5 GIs killed

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the dead were all US soldiers or whether the Iraqi interpreter was among those killed.

"At the time of the attack, a nearby unit heard explosions and attempted to establish communications, but without success," he said in a statement.

"Coalition forces arrived within an hour, secured the site, and immediately initiated a search. The names of the soldiers are being withheld pending final identification and notification of next of kin," he said.

"Make no mistake -- we will never stop looking for our soldiers until their status is definitively determined, and we continue to pray for their safe return," he added.

Mahmudiya lies 30km south of Baghdad in an area known for a strong insurgent presence and is nicknamed the "triangle of death."

Earlier, US marines on patrol on a road west of Baghdad near the restive city of Fallujah told an AFP reporter travelling with them that they had been told that the missing soldiers were thought to have been captured.

"We got word about 0900 (0500 GMT) that three soldiers were missing. Last we heard was that they were headed in this direction, presumed captured," said Gunner Sergeant James Curtis of the US Marines 2nd Battalion 6th Regiment.

Curtis's patrol threw up a checkpoint on a stretch of road on the eastern edge of Fallujah in a bid to intercept the abductors if they attempted to take their captives there from western Baghdad.

Some of the trucks and cars arriving at the roadblock were marked as having been searched, showing that other military checkpoints had been set up on the road, which connects the western Baghdad suburb of Abu Ghraib to Fallujah.