

March protests legislation

HONG KONG (CNS) — On the sixth anniversary of Hong Kong's reversion to China, some 500,000 citizens from all walks of life protested the pending National Security Bill.

The marchers demanded a halt to the legislation, expected to become law July 9, fearing it will limit freedom of the press, freedom of speech and freedom of association, reported UCA News, an Asian church news agency based in Thailand.

During the July 1 protest, marchers also expressed discontent with the administration of Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa, whose six years of governance has been blamed for an economic malaise and other problems in the territory.

The protest was Hong Kong's largest since the 1989 rallies supporting the pro-democracy movement in Beijing, UCA News reported.

Before the protest, some 10,000 Christians, mostly Catholics, assembled for a prayer gathering led by Bishop Joseph Zen Ze-kiun of Hong Kong and the Rev. Eric So Shing-yit, general secretary of the Protestant Hong Kong Christian Council.

"We are forced to protest because

our views have been ignored. We have to be true to our conscience and be able to face our next generation," said Bishop Zen.

The bishop told the crowd at Victoria Park, where the protest march began, "If we see injustices happening, we must express our anger."

Rev. So, in his address, said Christians have a duty to bring liberty and justice to people in order to build the kingdom of God on earth.

After the event, Bishop Zen went to a nearby church to pray and did not join the march.

May Lee Siu-ling, a Catholic at the prayer gathering, said she had never taken part in any protest or demonstration before but decided to respond to Bishop Zen's call because the proposed legislation and the government's push to pass it were "unacceptable."

Meng Kwong-wing, another Catholic who joined the protest, told UCA News he felt angry that the government was trying to rush the legislation without heeding public opinion.

Randy Lai Ming-cheong of Sts. Cosmas and Damian Parish said: "We are very rational in calling for more

consultation before passing the law. We are not misled by anybody. Why doesn't the government hear (us)?"

Because of the large crowd, the march to the central government offices lasted from 3 to 9:30 p.m. Normally, the walk would take an hour.

Hours before the protest began, Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jibei ended his three-day visit timed to coincide with the anniversary. Before he left, he reassured Hong Kong citizens that the legislation would not undermine their freedom and rights.

The National Security Bill is based on Article 23 of the Basic Law of Hong Kong, the miniconstitution that took effect when Hong Kong reverted from Britain to China July 1, 1997.

It states that the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region shall enact its own laws to prohibit theft of national secrets or any act of treason, secession, sedition or subversion against China's central government.

The article prohibits foreign political organizations from conducting political activities in Hong Kong and forbids political organizations in Hong Kong from establishing ties with foreign political organizations.



Reuters/CNS

Thousands of protesters march through the shopping district in Hong Kong July 1 against government plans to enact an anti-subversion law and demanded the right to elect their own leaders.

Courier launches revised Web site

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

Several significant features are part of the new-look *Catholic Courier* Web site launched July 1. This is the first time the site (www.catholiccourier.com) has undergone a significant revision since the *Courier* began publishing electronically in 1997.

"I think it just generally looks

better, feels better. People will be happy with it," said Karen M. Franz, the *Courier's* general manager and editor.

Logisoft Corp. developed the new site, led by project manager Mark Spall and programmer Bill Lamy. "They have really done a phenomenal job with this," said Franz. She and Graphics Manager Kim Parks worked closely with Spall and Lamy on the redesign.

According to Franz, the Web site update concludes the first of two phases of Internet-publishing enhancements envisioned in the *Catholic Courier's* strategic plan. Further changes to the Web site are expected to occur in April 2004, in conjunction with the *Courier's* plan to adopt a larger, monthly format for its primary mailed publication, supplemented by weekly inserts in parish bulletins.

Among the Web site's new and enhanced features are:

- Faster loading with more attractive graphics.
- Easier navigation facilitated by a horizontal bar of tabs for the site's five main sections, plus additional subcategories available in a left-hand column.
- Daily posting of one wire story and multiple news briefs from Catholic News Service (previous updates had been weekly).
- The ability to search through all Bishop Matthew H. Clark's columns from 2003 (previous years' columns are being added over the summer).
- Movie reviews — currently 185 of them — from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Office of Film and Broadcasting.
- A graphical events calendar.
- Availability of new *Courier* articles as early as Tuesdays — as



much as two days sooner than before.

- The opportunity for parishes that don't already have their own Web sites to create and maintain free sites through the *Courier* site.
- Revision and republication of the entire "Parish Profile" series, which ran in the print edition between 1993 and 2001. The *Courier* staff is currently updating the profiles, which are being posted to the site as they become available.

Features planned for next spring are:

- Daily local-news updates.
- Access to all stories that run in the print edition plus some Web-only material.
- A commentary section including discussion boards, plus columns and letters to the editor.
- A glossary of Catholic terms.
- Online access to the *Courier* archives as well as the Diocesan Directory. Franz said these two offerings would involve a fee, however.

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