
**Weekly Report of
Studies in Inter-Religious Relations in Plural Societies (SRP) Programme**

Religious Conflict

1. In Indonesia, minorities under threat from Muslim hardliners

Following the destruction of several small churches in Indonesia's conservative Aceh province, analysts linked the hesitation of the Indonesian authorities to act decisively with fear of the political costs resulting from being branded as "anti-Islam". Indonesian authorities had been hesitant to take action against such radicals, therefore "allowing" religious intolerance to thrive and undermining the constitutional right of freedom of religion for all Indonesians.

Keywords: Indonesia, Muslim, Radicals, Minorities

2. Change ruling class, prevent Muslim 'occupation', says hardline Myanmar monk lobby

A state leader of the Ma Ba Tha (Patriotic Association of Myanmar) in Rakhine state, a hardline Buddhist nationalist group, has urged the people of the state to vote against the incumbent ruling class in the November 8 elections. As with previous Ma Ba Tha movements, he called for the people to prevent the spread of Islam within the state by the Rohingyas, which the group believes is an identity that the Bengalis from Bangladesh have taken on to spread Islam in Myanmar.

Keywords: Myanmar, Ma Ba Tha, Rakhine, Rohingya, Buddhism, Islam

Religious Controversies

1. A Secular Publisher Is the Latest Bangladeshi Killed By Suspected Islamist Radicals

Two secular publishers who had published the works of slain secular writer and blogger Avijit Roy were attacked in Dhaka on Saturday. One died and the other was in critical condition. The latest attacks follow the killings of four secular writers and bloggers by religious fundamentalists. The Bangladeshi government had been criticised for its inability prevent such attacks.

Keywords: Bangladesh, Secular writers, Islam

2. Review policy to check Muslim, Christian population: RSS resolution

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS, National Volunteer Organisation), a Hindu nationalist group, has passed a resolution to urge the government to “reformulate” its population policy to counter the “religious imbalance” of the population brought about by “infiltration” and “conversion” especially in the border states. The RSS based its resolution on the rate of growth of each religion in India.

Keywords: India, Hindu nationalist, RSS

3. German Protestant church’s scandalous idea rocks evangelical community

The Evangelical Church in the Rhineland sparked uproar within Christian groups in Germany when it published a paper stating that the passage in the Gospel of Matthew known as the Great Commission did not mean that it was a must for Christians to convert others to their faith. This issue is especially sensitive now that many Protestant missionaries see the influx of Muslim refugees into Germany as a great opportunity to spread their faith further.

Keywords: Germany, Evangelism, Islam, Protestant, Catholic, Refugees

Secularism, Religious Freedom and New Religious Movements

1. Praying coach's suspension opens split on religion in school

A High School Assistant Football Coach, in the U.S., has been placed on paid administrative leave for praying publicly in the field after games and the suspension will only cease if he obeys rules on not praying publicly after games. The suspension has sparked a debate on whether the coach’s rights to religious freedom had been infringed or whether his public display of religious practices had undermined secularism in the school activities.

Keywords: Bremerton, Public display of religious activities

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2. Push to make Buddhism state religion

Several Buddhist groups are lobbying for Buddhism to be made the state religion of Thailand after their previous failure in 2007. The groups seek to eradicate non-purist elements of the religion and prevent its decline. However, there are concerns that the state's secularism and citizens' right to religious freedom would be adversely affected if the move is successful.

Keywords: Thailand, Buddhism, State religion, Secularism

Peace, Reconciliation and Interfaith Dialogue

1. Peace advocate in Zamboanga calls for unity

Several Muslim peace advocates in the Southern Philippines have called for unity between different religious and tribal communities to help the country progress. They proposed for the government to initiate a national reconciliation programme and are looking to organise a “Tri-people” summit to initiate dialogue between the Muslims, Christians and Lumads for peace and progress.

Keywords: Southern Philippines, Islam, Reconciliation