

Vatican to consider married priests for Amazon region

Church may appoint 'men of proven character' to deal with shortage of clergy

REUTERS
VATICAN CITY

A Vatican document on Monday said the Church should consider ordaining older married men as priests in remote areas of the Amazon, a historic shift which some say could pave the way for their use in other areas where clergy are scarce.

The recommendation, contained in a working document prepared by the Vati-

can for a synod of bishops from the Amazon scheduled for October, also called for some kind of "official ministry" for women in the area, although it did not elaborate.

It was the most direct mention ever in a Vatican document of the possibility of a married priesthood, albeit limited, and a greater Ministerial role for women in one area of the world.

The document spoke of



Historic shift: A file photo of Pope Francis with members of indigenous communities of the Amazon basin. *AFP

the possibility of ordaining what are known as viri probati - Latin for men of pro-

ven character - to deal with the shortage of priests. Such men would be elderly, out-

standing members of the local Catholic community and with grown-up families.

"While affirming that celibacy is a gift for the Church, there have been requests that, for the most remote areas of the region, (the Church) studies the possibility of conferring priestly ordination on elderly men, preferably indigenous, respected and accepted members of their communities," the document said.

It said such men could be ordained "even if they already have an established and

stable family, in order to guarantee the sacraments that accompany and sustain Christian life."

Only priests can say Mass or hear confessions, meaning that Catholics in isolated communities in the Amazon can go for many months without participating in either of the sacraments.

Some Catholic scholars have said the approval of *viri probati* in the Amazon may eventually pave the way for their use elsewhere in the world as a response to the shortage of priests.

Bitcoin use causing huge CO₂ emissions, says study

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BERLIN

The use of cryptocurrency Bitcoin emits 22 megatonnes of carbon dioxide annually, comparable to the emissions of cities such as Las Vegas and Vienna, says a study.

Researchers in Germany carried out the most detailed calculation of the carbon footprint of the Bitcoin system to date. For a Bitcoin transfer to be executed and validated, a mathematical puzzle must be solved by an

arbitrary computer in the global Bitcoin network. The network, which anyone can join, rewards the puzzle solvers in Bitcoin.

The computing capacity used in this process - known as Bitcoin mining - has increased rapidly in recent years.

Statistics show that it quadrupled in 2018 alone.

Consequently, the Bitcoin boom raises the question of whether the cryptocurrency is imposing an additional burden on the climate.

Visually challenged musicians strike a chord in Meghalaya

Election commission hired the band for its pre-poll campaigns

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SHILLONG

A troupe of visually challenged musicians is hitting the right notes in this hill State, with night club owners and event managers lining up to hire them, more so after the State election department recently engaged them for pre-poll campaigns.

'Light After Dark', a musical band of five performers in their 20s, has been receiving rave reviews for its shows, not just in Meghalaya, but elsewhere in the region too. Zoma Sailo, a music teacher and the group's mentor, said.

"The band had played during the Cherry Blossom festival last year, also at the La-tomatina fest by the scenic Umiam Lake, and IIT's TedX show at Guwahati. Everywhere the response has been overwhelming," he said.

Mr. Sailo, who teaches



The Light After Dark band during a practice session. *YOUTUBE

music at the government-run centre here, also maintained that he had to blindfold himself on occasions to get a feel of how the troupe members perceive the musical notes.

"The boys, who initially played for a school band, would visit my place often to practice rock, reggae and Hindi music. They got together in 2013 to form the band with four members - Wanlamphrang as the vocalist, Rimiki Pajuh as lead guitarist, Dilbertstar Lyngdoh as bassist and Hilter Khongshai as drummer," he said.

The fifth member, Plamiki Lapasam, joined the band as vocalist and guitarist earlier this year.

"The big break came when the State election department hired the band for its pre-poll campaigns. That became the turning point of their lives and there was no looking back for them," he said. Mr. Wanlamphrang, who leads the band, said his disability never came in the way of his performances.

"The band can play almost anything, from rock and reggae to traditional Khasi numbers," he added.

IN BRIEF



Facebook to unveil cryptocurrency today

LONDON Facebook is set to unveil a bid to bring cryptocurrency payments into the mainstream on Tuesday, reportedly with the endorsement of governments and financial giants. The world's biggest social network is expected to outline details of a virtual currency launching next year that it hopes to avoid the rollercoaster volatility of "blockchain" technologies such as bitcoin. AFP



French billionaire to buy Sotheby's in \$3.7 bn deal

PARIS French telecoms and media mogul Patrick Drahi is acquiring Sotheby's auction house, one of the world's biggest art brokers, in a \$3.7 billion deal. Mr. Drahi, the founder of the Altice empire which owns SFR telecoms company, is paying \$57 per share to acquire Sotheby's.

EU leaders to debate push for zero emissions

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BRUSSELS

EU leaders will this week discuss setting a target of zero net greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, European officials said on Monday, following elections that highlighted climate change fears.

European Union leaders meeting on Thursday and Friday in Brussels will debate the 2050 target of "climate neutrality" that the environmental group WWF says now has the support of 16 of the EU's 28 countries. "We urgently need to step up our action to manage this existential threat," a draft of the EU's strategic agenda for the next six years says.

"The EU must lead the way, by engaging in an in-depth transformation of its own economy and society to achieve climate neutrality," according to the draft.

The draft contained a footnote, saying the wording may be adjusted to reflect the results of the summit debate, which an EU source said would focus on the 2050 target. The source said that a number of EU countries want more debate on financing the shift from an economy running on fossil fuels, especially those in eastern Europe, to one driven

by clean energy.

The growing stress on climate action comes after May 23-26 elections to the European Parliament where Green parties made substantial gains.

Sixteen 'on board'

The World Wildlife Fund said Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Britain are "on board" for the 2050 goal.

The British government last week presented draft legislation to reduce carbon emissions to net zero by 2050.

The WWF said Austria and Ireland appeared increasingly likely to support the target. Still uncertain or hesitant, it added, are Belgium, Croatia, Estonia, Lithuania and Slovakia, though they are "unlikely to block" it. It said Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Hungary remain "strongly opposed," but Hungary and Romania could overcome opposition to a deal.

Under the 2015 Paris climate change treaty, the EU pledged to reduce its carbon emissions by 40% below 1990 levels by 2030.

'Virtual biopsy' device can non-invasively detect skin tumours

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW YORK

Scientists have developed a "virtual biopsy" device that can quickly and non-invasively determine whether a skin tumour is cancerous and needs to be removed surgically.

Using sound vibrations and pulses of near-infrared light, the device can determine a skin lesion's depth and potential malignancy without using a scalpel, according to the researchers from a Rutgers University in the U.S.

The ability to analyse a skin tumour non-invasively could make biopsies much less risky and distressing to patients.

Currently, physicians who perform surgical biopsies often do not know the extent of a lesion - and whether it will be necessary to refer the patient to a specialist for extensive tissue removal or

plastic surgery - until surgery has already begun.

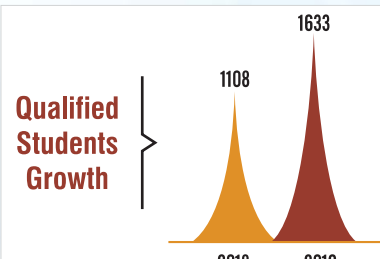
The first-of-its-kind experimental procedure, called vibrational optical coherence tomography (VOCT), creates a 3D map of the lesion's width and depth under the skin with a tiny laser diode.

The procedure also makes use of soundwaves to test the lesion's density and stiffness since cancer cells are stiffer than healthy cells.

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