

# Interesting Times

A NEWSLETTER BY  EAGLE BROADCASTING CORPORATION

EAGLENEWS.PH

“WE LIVE IN INTERESTING TIMES”

Volume 1 - Issue No. - 3 JANUARY 2018

## Highlights of the 30-minute fireworks display at the PHL Arena welcoming Year 2018



Some of the highlights during the 30-minute fireworks display at the Philippine Arena in Ciudad de Victoria in Bocaue, Bulacan that signaled the start of the new year, 2018. (Eagle News Service)

### Thousands troop to Philippine Arena for year-end celebration



Photo grab from Net 25 - eagle news update

(Eagle News) - Thousands trooped to the annual New Year's Countdown in the Philippine Arena, eager to welcome 2018 with a bang.

Families and friends took to the venue in Bulacan, home to attractions that catered to the old and young alike.

The Garden housed a variety of flowers, plants and even animals which delighted visitors who took photos and even selfies during their visit.

The carousel was also a magnet for children and even the young at heart looking for fun and relaxation. (Eagle News Service)



**SEC revokes Rappler's certificate of incorporation; says it violated laws against foreign ownership of media**

▶ See Page 3



**Death toll from California mudslides rises to 20**

▶ See Page 6



**Ahead of pope's Chile visit, priests accused of child sex abuse**

▶ See Page 8



## One dead, 800 injured in Philippine Catholic parade



A devotee who collapsed is carried by the crowd during the annual religious Black Nazarene procession in Manila on January 9, 2018. / AFP / Noel Celis/

One devotee died and more than 800 people were injured in the Philippine capital when millions joined a Catholic procession, officials said on Wednesday, January 10.

The annual feast of the Black Nazarene, one of the world's largest Catholic festivals, drew 3.5 million barefoot devotees on Tuesday, January

9 in what police described as a "generally peaceful" event despite crowds jostling to touch the icon.

However a former jail officer died of a heart attack after joining the scramble to climb onto the carriage bearing an image of what Catholics call the Black Nazarene on Tuesday morning, city officials and police said.

Catholics risk life and limb to kiss or touch the icon with towels, believing the icon to possess miraculous powers.

Two people died during the 2016 event.

More than 800 people were hurt in this year's procession, including one who sustained a suspected neck and spine injury in a fall, according to the Philippine Red

Cross.

The procession began before dawn on Tuesday and ended after midnight, some 22 hours later.

During the parade, police shut down mobile phone signals in many areas of Manila to prevent potential terror attacks on the procession. (Agence France-Presse)

## SC orders several gov't officials to answer Dengvaxia petition



This file photo taken on September 9, 2016 shows the dengue vaccine Dengvaxia developed by Sanofi Pasteur. / AFP / Yuri Cortez /

The Supreme Court on Wednesday, January 10 asked several government officials to comment on the petition seeking to compel them to address the health risks attributed to Dengvaxia.

In a press conference, SC Spokesperson Theodore Te said the respondents—Health Secretary Francisco Duque III, Department of the Interior and Local Government officer-in-charge Catalino Cuy, Education Secretary Leonor Briones, Food and Drug Administration Director General Nela Charade Puno, and program director of the Department of Health-National Center for Disease Prevention and Control Dr. Lyndon Lee Suy—were given ten days to submit their comment.

In the petition filed by Gabriela and 70 parents and their children who were administered the anti-dengue vaccine, among others, the petitioners sought to compel these agencies to provide "free medical services" to those who experience side-effects from the vaccine, or those who suffer from severe dengue.

The petitioners argued that the services should continue "until it would have been determined and declared by competent and medical and/or scientific experts that the threat/s brought about by the Dengvaxia vaccine have been minimized or eliminated."

The petitioners also asked the SC to compel the Department of Health to probe whether it was safe to use Dengvaxia in the first place.

They said the results of such a review should be made public but should also be subjected to review by "independent and competent medical experts."

Over 800,000 schoolchildren were administered Dengvaxia under the government's national immunization program since it was procured during the term of then-President Benigno Aquino III.

The program was suspended after Sanofi Pasteur admitted its vaccine could cause "severe cases" in those who have not had dengue beforehand. (With a report from Moira Encina, Eagle News Service)

## Diokno says Duterte admin plan to increase public school teachers' pay "not a priority" so far

Public school teachers will experience another hike in pay under E.O. 21, he assures

(Eagle News) — President Rodrigo Duterte's promise to increase public school teachers' pay may have to wait.

Budget Secretary Benjamin Diokno on Wednesday, January 10 said that increasing their salaries was "not a priority" as of this time, given the focus on the "Build, Build, Build" program of the government and "social protection."

"I think we have to study that very carefully," Diokno said, a day after Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque



(Photo grab from Net25, Mata ng Agila)

revealed Duterte's plan for the teachers.

He said he would talk to the President about the matter. According to the budget chief, even without the increase, the salaries of public school teachers would still increase under Executive Order No. 21, which said that civilian government personnel would be given four tranches of pay increases until 2019.

He said the third tranche of increase was already implemented this year. (Eagle News Service)

## SC sets oral arguments on petitions vs. one-year extension of martial law in Mindanao



SC spokesperson Theodore Te (Photo grab from Net25, Mata ng Agila)

By Moira Encina  
Eagle News Service

The Supreme Court has set oral arguments in connection with the petitions filed against the one-year extension of martial law in Mindanao.

In a press conference on Wednesday, January 10 SC spokesperson Theodore Te said these were scheduled on January 16 at 2 p.m., and on January 17 at 10 a.m.

"The parties were direct-

ed to submit their respective memoranda on January 20, on Saturday, not later than 5 p.m.," Te said.

The Supreme Court also ordered the consolidation of the two petitions challenging the one-year extension of martial law in Mindanao.

It, however, asked Malacanang to comment on the second petition filed by militant lawmakers not later than January 13, 2018, Saturday, 5 p.m.

The first petition—filed

on December 27, 2017—was lodged by six opposition congressmen led by Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman.

In seeking for an injunction, both petitions argued there was "no factual basis" for the extension, which was approved by Congress in December upon President Rodrigo Duterte's request last year.

They argued that there was no "actual rebellion," a constitutional requirement for such a declaration to be made. (Eagle News Service)

## Roque: President Duterte to ask Congress to enact law banning firecrackers, pyrotechnics



(Photo grab from Net25, Mata ng Agila)

(Eagle News) — President Rodrigo Duterte will push for Congress to enact a law that will ban all firecrackers and pyrotechnics.

This is according to Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque, who spoke in a press conference on Tuesday.

According to Roque, the topic was among those discussed during a Cabinet meeting on Monday afternoon, January 8.

"(The President) wants Congress to enact this law at the soonest time possible so that the public debate on the banning of fireworks and pyrotechnics could begin as early as possible," Roque said.

As for the around 75,000 who are expected to be displaced by the firecracker ban, Roque said that the President has already asked the Department of Trade and Industry to look for other livelihood options for them.

On June 20, Duterte signed Executive Order No. 28 that limits the use of firecrackers to that of a "community fireworks display."

The Department of Health attributed the overall 27 percent decrease in firecracker-related injuries to the issuance of the executive order, among others. (Eagle News Service)

# SEC revokes Rappler's certificate of incorporation; says it violated laws against foreign ownership of media

(Eagle News) – The Securities and Exchange Commission has directed the revocation of the Certificate of Incorporation of the online news site Rappler, and its holding firm, Rappler Holdings Corporation, saying it violated the Constitution that barred foreign ownership of media.

In a decision dated January 11, 2018, the SEC said that both companies violated Philippine laws, specifically the Foreign Equity Restriction under the Philippine Constitution.

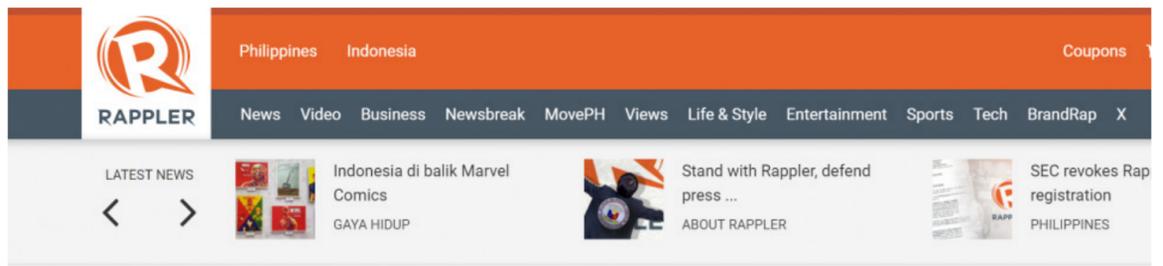
The SEC said that Rappler, Inc. and Rappler Holdings Corporation were “liable for violating the constitutional and statutory Foreign Equity Restrictions in Mass Media enforceable through rules and laws within the mandate of the Commission.”

“Revocation of Certificate of Incorporation on each respondent—Rappler Inc. being the mass media entity that sold control to foreigners, and Rappler Holdings Corporation being its alter ego, existing for no other purpose than to effect a deceptive scheme to circumvent the Constitution,” the SEC’s 29-page decision read.

Rappler said it would exhaust all legal means to contest the decision.

In its own news item about the issue, Rappler called the ruling “a blow to press freedom.”

“We intend to not only contest this through all legal processes available to us, but also to fight for our freedom to do journalism and for your right to be heard through an independent platform like Rappler,” Rappler said in a separate statement posted on its website. (Eagle News Service)



## NEWS

Breaking stories on current events, the latest on movers and shakers, images and features on latest developments in the Philippines :



A screenshot of Rappler's top story on the Securities and Exchange Commission's decision to revoke its certificate of incorporation, essentially revoking its license to operate. (Screenshot of Rappler website/Courtesy Rappler)

## Bongbong Marcos rules out possibility of running for a Senate seat in 2019



Former Senator Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. (Photo by: Noel CELIS / AFP)

Former Senator Ferdinand Marcos on Wednesday, January 10 ruled out the possibility of running for a seat in the Senate in 2019.

In a forum in Manila, Marcos said he was “determined to finish” his electoral protest against Vice President Leni Robredo instead.

“Bakit ako tatakbo ng senador e nanalo na ako ng bise presidente?...Hindi ko titigilan ito,” he said.

According to Marcos, “what is at stake” after all, “is not only my candidacy, not only the result of the vice presidential election, but what is also at stake here is the electoral process.”

“At ang mga tao kailangang malaman kung ano ba talaga ang resulta,” he said.

In the May 2016 elections, Marcos lost to Robredo by only 263,473 votes.

Marcos—who said the polls were marred by fraud—has asked for a recount, which is expected to start this February.

The recount covers Iloilo, Camarines Sur, and Negros Oriental.

### Bongbong Marcos accuses PET of being biased vs him

Meanwhile, Former Senator Bongbong Marcos on Wednesday accused the Supreme Court, sitting as the Presidential Electoral Tribunal, of

being “biased against” him in the electoral case he filed against Vice President Leni Robredo.

Marcos said he was contemplating as such to ask that Associate Justice Alfredo Benjamin Caguioa be changed as chair of the tribunal as he said it was “obvious” he was siding with the vice president, whose camp he has accused of cheating in the 2016 elections.

Caguioa is an appointee of former President Benigno Aquino III, Robredo’s party-mate.

According to Marcos, recent decisions of the PET were “unfair and unjust.”

For instance, he said the tribunal ordered Marcos to pay P2,974,075 that represents the cost of decryption and printing of ballot images from pilot provinces, while Robredo was given soft copies of reports from the SD cards from Iloilo, Camarines Sur and Negros Oriental without her paying for anything.

“We should definitely do something para maging pantay at matapos na ito,” Marcos said.

Marcos lost to Robredo by 263,473 votes. (Eagle News Service)

## Robredo camp slams Bongbong Marcos for statement he won the vice presidency



Vice President Leni Robredo

The camp of Vice President Leni Robredo on Wednesday, January 10 slammed former Senator Bongbong Marcos for saying he won the vice presidency, noting that it was “too presumptuous” of him to make the statement.

“Or he is just dreaming. If he won as vice president, why is it that it was Robredo who was proclaimed by Congress as winner?” Romulo Macalintal said.

According to Macalintal, Marcos’ reaction was “the usual reaction of an election loser who cannot accept defeat in good grace.”

He said he was “merely trying to preempt the coming results of the recount of ballots where his ridiculous and frivolous claim of massive election cheating will be proven false and a mere imagined victory..”

“For the results of the recount will just tally with the results generated by the vote counting machines from the automated election system, which Marcos himself admitted to be credible and for which his first cause of action questioning the system was dismissed by the Presidential Electoral Tribunal,” Macalintal said.

Marcos has ruled out the possibility of running for a Senate seat in 2019, saying that he did not see the need to do this since he already won the vice presidency in the 2016 elections.

He also accused the PET, where he has lodged an electoral protest against Robredo, of being biased against him.

Marcos criticized the tribunal’s magistrate officer in charge, Associate Justice Alfredo Caguioa, in particular.

In the 2016 elections, Marcos was declared as having lost to Robredo by 263,473 votes. (Eagle News Service)

## Martin Diño named DILG undersecretary

(Eagle News) - Martin Diño is now undersecretary of the Department of the Interior and Local Government.

President Rodrigo Duterte himself made the appointment, months after he was asked to give up his post as chair of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority chair “in the name of public interest.”

The President then appointed lawyer Wilma Eisma, then the SBMA administrator, in Diño’s place.

The chief executive did this after issuing Executive Order 42 that effectively repealed a previous executive order that separated the powers and duties of the SBMA chairperson and administrator. (Eagle News Service)



Martin Diño

## PHL to continue to be “fastest-growing economy” in ASEAN

(Eagle News) - The Philippines will continue to be the “fastest-growing economy” in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in the next three years.

This is according to the World Bank’s January 2018 Global Economic Prospects report released on Wednesday.

According to the WB, the country’s Gross Domestic Product was expected to grow 6.7 percent in 2018 and 2019.

In 2020, the growth rate is expected to be 6.5 percent.

The WB said the forecast was “despite some stabilization of investment growth.”

## DOJ reopens Castillo case to allow for admission of suspect-turned-witness' statement



Larawan ay kuha mula sa Agila Balita

(Eagle News) — The Department of Justice said it has reopened the investigation into the death of hazing victim Horacio Castillo III to allow for the formal admission of the sworn statement of Aegis Juris member Marc Ventura.

The DOJ said the statement of Ventura—who has been admitted to the Witness Protection

Program—was received only on January 3.

Last year, the case was submitted for resolution.

“We can’t resolve the case if the evidence is incomplete,” Assistant Prosecutor Wendel Bendoval, a member of the panel of prosecutors handling the case, told reporters.

Castillo, a University

of Sto. Tomas law freshman, is believed to have been killed during initiation rites conducted by the Aegis Juris fraternity in September.

Several people—including the alleged fraternity leader Arvin Balag—have been charged in connection with his death. (Eagle News Service)

## DOTr, tiniyak na walang taas-pasahe hangga’t hindi naisasaayos ang serbisyo sa MRT



Larawan ay kuha mula sa Agila Balita

Hindi tataas ang pamasaha sa Metro Rail Transit (MRT) hangga’t hindi nararamdaman ang improvements nito.

Ito ang naging pagtitiyak ng Department of Transportation (DOTr) sa publiko.

Ayon kay DOTr Undersecretary TJ Batan, walang dagdag-singil sa MRT hanggang hindi nararam-

dan ng mga pasahero ang mas maayos na serbisyo, partikular sa convenience, availability at reliability sa operasyon ng MRT-3.

Pagtitiyak din ni Batan na bukod sa MRT-3 ay wala ring planong magtaas ng pamasaha sa ibang rail system sa bansa, kabilang na ang Light Rail Transit (LRT) at Philippine National Railways (PNR).

Kaugnay nito, dumating na ang 48 bagong bagon mula sa isang kumpanya sa China. Gayunman, hindi pa muna ito gagamitin para sa MRT.

Isasailalim muna sa audit assessment ang mga ito para malaman kung tatanggapin o hindi ng DOTr ang mga bagon. (Eagle News Service)

## Isang commercial-residential area sa Pasig City, nasunog



Larawan ay kuha mula sa Agila Balita

(Eagle News) — Nasunog ang isang commercial-residential area sa Pasig City noong Miyerkules, Enero 11, pasado alas-nuebe ng umaga.

Ayon kay Barangay Captain Bien Daryl Legazpi ng Kapasigan sa Pasig City, iniakyat sa ikaapat na alarma ang sunog sa Blumentritt Street.

Ayon kay Legazpi, mabilis na kumalat ang apoy dahil pawang gawa sa light materials ang mga bahay.

Tinatayang walumpu hanggang isandaang pamilya ang naapektuhan ng sunog.

Matapos ang halos dalawang oras na sunog, idineklara namang fire-out na ng Bureau of Fire Protection-Pasig ang naturang insidente.

## 3 Chinese who allegedly abducted, detained Taiwanese national arrested in Parañaque



Photos from Eagle News Service

(Eagle News) — Authorities on Wednesday, January 10 arrested three Chinese nationals for allegedly abducting and detaining a Taiwanese national against her will after she failed to pay her P100,000 debt to a casino financier.

Cai Xing Bao, Tia Xao Lin, and Zhao Xu were arrested in a condotel in Baclaran, Parañaque, following a tip to the police by the Taiwanese Economic Cultural Office.

The victim’s kin had earlier sought the help of TECO.

The three Chinese are facing charges for serious illegal detention.

## TNCs agree to mandatory opening of passengers’ packages

Transport Network Companies on Wednesday, January 10 agreed to the mandatory opening of the packages of their passengers to ensure they do not contain any contraband.

Grab, Uber, and U-Hop also agreed to ask their passengers for any identification, based on a memorandum of agreement the companies signed with the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency.

“It’s mandatory, kahit anong klaseng package ‘yan dapat buksan...lo-open nung driver sa harapan ng sender... Bago niya open, please give me your identification,” PDEA chief Director General Aaron Aquino said in a press confer-



ence.

He said if the sender refused to show any identification or open the package, the TNC driver would refuse to send the item.

Intel

Under the agreement, TNCs would also be required to report any intelligence information to authorities.

Aquino said this would be a big help to law enforcers, who are waging a war against drugs, based on a directive by President Rodrigo Duterte.

The agreement between the TNCs and PDEA was signed following reports of their vehicles being used as drug couriers. (Eagle News Service)

# Ombudsman seeks re-arrest, detention of former Palawan Governor Reyes this time for graft

(Eagle News) — After being cleared by the Court of Appeals of any involvement in the killing of Gerry Ortega and being released from detention, state prosecutors moved for former Palawan Governor Joel Reyes to be re-arrested and detained, this time in connection with a graft case.

In a three-page omnibus motion, the Ombudsman asked the Sandiganbayan to reconsider its decision to grant bail to Reyes while his appeal over his conviction for violation of the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act was still pending.

The case stems from what the Ombudsman said was Reyes' renewal of the small-scale mining permit of Olympic Mines and Development Corp., even if the company violated small-scale mining laws and had already gone beyond the annual maximum extraction limit of 50,000 dry metric tons of ore.

After being found guilty in August last year, the Sandiganbayan sentenced Reyes to six



to eight years in prison, but he was allowed to post a P60,000 bail pending his appeal.

According to the Ombuds-

man, the "cancellation" of the bail of Reyes, who is facing separate charges in connection with the Malampaya and

fertilizer fund scams, and his "immediate commitment to prison are warranted" given his "previous record."

The anti-graft prosecutors noted that "accused Reyes was a fugitive," emphasizing that the former governor

fled the country with his brother, former Coron Mayor Mario Reyes, after they were indicted for Ortega's killing in 2012.

"Had it not been for the intervention of Thai authorities, accused Reyes would not have been deported to face the criminal charges against him," the prosecution argued.

But in a statement, Reyes' lawyer said "it would be absurd to even think" that this client would be a flight risk "considering that he has just scored a very significant legal victory at the Court of Appeals."

"Why would he mitigate the value of this victory by fleeing?" Custodio said.

Reyes was freed from detention after the CA ruled that the Puerto Princesa Regional Trial Court had no basis to hold him for trial over Ortega's murder.

The CA also nullified the finding of probable cause and the local court's issuance of an arrest warrant against him. (Eagle News Service)

## Court grants prosecution's bid to allow suspect in Jee Ick Joo's abduction to turn state witness

(Eagle News) — After being cleared by the Court of Appeals of any involvement in the killing of Gerry Ortega and being released from detention, state prosecutors moved for former Palawan Governor Joel Reyes to be re-arrested and detained, this time in connection with a graft case.

In a three-page omnibus motion, the Ombudsman asked the Sandiganbayan to reconsider its decision to grant bail to Reyes while his appeal over his conviction for violation of the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act was still pending.

The case stems from what the Ombudsman said was Reyes' renewal of the small-scale mining permit of Olympic Mines and Development Corp., even if the company violated small-scale mining laws and had already gone beyond the annual maximum extraction limit of 50,000 dry metric tons of ore.

After being found guilty in August last year, the Sandiganbayan sentenced Reyes to six to eight years in prison, but he was allowed to post a P60,000 bail pending his appeal.

According to the Ombudsman, the "cancellation" of the bail of Reyes, who is facing



A South Korean mourner is overcome with emotion as he speaks during a memorial service for South Korean businessman Jee Ick-Joo who was allegedly killed by policemen, inside the police headquarters in Manila on February 6, 2017. / AFP / Ted Aljibe/

separate charges in connection with the Malampaya and fertilizer fund scams, and his "immediate commitment to prison are warranted" given his "previous record."

The anti-graft prosecutors noted that "accused Reyes was a fugitive," emphasizing that the former governor fled the country with his brother, former Coron Mayor Mario Reyes, after they were indicted for Ortega's killing in 2012.

"Had it not been for the intervention of Thai authorities, accused Reyes would not have been deported to face the criminal charges against him," the prosecution argued.

But in a statement, Reyes' lawyer said "it would be absurd to even think" that this client would be a flight risk "considering that he has just scored a very significant legal victory at the Court of Appeals."

"Why would he mitigate the value of this victory by fleeing?" Custodio said.

Reyes was freed from detention after the CA ruled that the Puerto Princesa Regional Trial Court had no basis to hold him for trial over Ortega's murder.

The CA also nullified the finding of probable cause and the local court's issuance of an arrest warrant against him. (Eagle News Service)

## 10 dead in gunfight between BIFF, military in Maguindanao



(Eagle News)– Nine Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters and a member of the Philippine military died on Saturday night, January 6 in a gunfight in Maguindanao, the Philippine Army reported on Sunday.

Capt. Arvin Encinas, spokesman for the Army's 6th Infantry Division, said the gunfight ensued in Barangay Maitu-maig, Datu Unsay, at 7:23 p.m. on Saturday.

The military also launched airstrikes to deter the around 50 BIFF under the leadership of Imam Karialan who initiated the gunfight.

Pursuit operations are ongoing. (Eagle News Service)

## PAO to file criminal, civil, administrative charges over Dengvaxia mess

(Eagle News) — The Public Attorney's Office on Monday, January 8 said that it would file criminal, civil and administrative charges in February in connection with the Dengvaxia mess.

PAO chief Persida Acosta did not say exactly against whom the charges would be filed.

She, however, said that in the civil case, included were those who "had something to do with allowing" the implementation of the immunization program.

She said said that almost 300 families whose children were given doses of the dengue vaccine expressed willingness to file



the charges, which were apart from the plunder charges the Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption would file, if they

planned to do so. The Dengvaxia snafu started when Sanofi Pasteur, the vaccine manufacturer, admitted the

substance could cause "severe cases" in those who have not had dengue before.

In its defense, the com-

pany said the information came to light only recently.

Over 800,000 school-children were vaccinated

with Dengvaxia under the government's immunization program that started during then-President Benigno Aquino III's time.

# Death toll from California mudslides rises to 20

LOS ANGELES, United States (AFP) – Search and rescue teams combed the aftermath of a deadly mudslide in southern California on Sunday, January 14, as authorities confirmed another death, raising the number of fatalities to 20, officials said.

Four people remained missing after the mudslides, according to an update posted on Santa Barbara County's website, which warned that the figure could "fluctuate significantly."

"The unstable environment remains a critical threat to civilians and responders. The large amounts of mud and debris are making access and progress challenging," the joint statement from several state and local agencies said.

"Search and rescue remains the highest priority."

The slide left 28 people injured and destroyed 65 homes and eight businesses

in Montecito, a community just east of the city of Santa Barbara. Many more buildings were damaged or threatened.

Heavy rain on Tuesday, which followed 10 months of drought, sent rivers of mud and debris flowing down the hills into Montecito.

Massive wildfires in the area forced evacuations in December, and the mudslides struck just two weeks after people returned.

The fires burned most vegetation, leaving perfect conditions for the latest disaster to unfold.

On Tuesday, January 14, authorities said the first 13 bodies recovered were discovered in mud and debris during rescue operations in Montecito, northwest of Los Angeles.

"We are saddened to report that this incident so far has resulted in 13 confirmed fatalities, as result of the storm that came through our area last night," Santa Barbara County Sheriff Bill Brown

told a news conference, warning that he expected the death toll to increase.

The Santa Barbara County Fire Department said on its Twitter feed it was using dogs to look for victims where multiple homes once stood in Montecito following heavy rain, with more than 20 people reported missing.

The department posted pictures of rivers of waist-high mud flowing through neighborhoods and roads rendered impassable by fallen trees.

"Firefighters successfully rescued a 14-yr-old girl after she was trapped for hours inside a destroyed home in Montecito," it added.

Roads were clogged throughout the region with mudflows shutting down more than 30 miles (50 kilometers) of the 101 Freeway and knocking a number of homes from their foundations.

Pounding rain weakened south-facing slopes above Montecito and flooded a creek,



This file photo taken on January 10, 2018 shows a Cal Fire inmate crew hiking down a creek while leaving debris to aid in the search for survivors of a massive mudflow in Montecito, California. Search and rescue teams combed the aftermath of a deadly mudslide in southern California on January 14, 2018 as authorities confirmed another death, raising the number of fatalities to 20, officials said. Four people remained missing after the mudslides, according to an update posted on Santa Barbara County's website, which warned that the figure could "fluctuate significantly."

sending mud and huge rocks rolling into housing areas.

Emergency services told reporters at least "two dozen" people were missing with "several dozen" homes damaged or destroyed. They said they had rescued scores of residents, including 50 airlifted by hoist.

The highest rainfall total

was recorded at five inches (13 centimeters) in Ventura County, according to the National Weather Service Los Angeles.

Much of the affected area is land scorched by the massive Thomas fire last month, where there is no vegetation to soak up the excess water.

A evacuation order was

issued in a section of the Los Angeles suburb of Burbank, which was hit by a mudslide that pulled cars out of driveways and carried them downstream.

The slide also caused a "significant" gas leak, and repair efforts left homes on the street with no gas, electricity or water. (AFP)

## Tournament of Roses Parade 2018 wows fans worldwide



The Parade Royal Court 2018 (The Rose Queen and her princesses (Photo by: Eliza Manglicmot)

By Allen and Eva Basallaje  
Eagle News, US Bureau

On the very first day of 2018, picturesque Pasadena, California welcomed the year with 53-degree-fahrenheit weather celebrating the 129th Tournament of Roses Parade.

Every year, over 70 million people worldwide view the Rose Parade. In 2017, an estimated 700,000 spectators crowded the streets of Pasadena to witness this floral festival that inarguably has become a national tradition.

An event of this magnitude requires tens of thousands of hours of manpower, brigades of volunteers, and a whole lot of planning.

Tournament official Stephen Macala, a self-confessed long-time fan of the parade, said while growing up in Ohio he admired from afar the floral exhibition so being in Pasadena during this year's Tournament of Roses is a dream come true.

"I was one of the people who have watched the



Vegetable patch float reflecting this year's theme: Making A Difference (Photo by: Eliza Manglicmot)

Rose Parade, watched the Rose Bowl game, sitting in my basement with 3-feet of snow outside," Stephen recalled, "I have always dreamed of coming to Pasadena. It's a beautiful city and the involvement in the city is amazing!"

Marching bands from across the United States are a big part of the event. However, what makes the Rose Parade more global in scope is band participation from other countries. Joining the list of marching bands this year are Ontario, Canada's Burlington

Team Tour Band; South Wales, Australia's Marching Koalas; Republic of Panama's Banda De MusicaHerberto Lopez; and Japan's Kyoto Tachibana High School Green Band.

And what's a parade without a court? Members of this year's Parade Royal Court agree how huge of a deal this annual celebration is. Royal Princess Savannah Bradley said it is quite a big deal for her and her family.

"Being part of the parade has been astounding," said Bradley.

Isabella Marez, admitted how proud she is to be the 100th Rose Queen.

"There were 99 women before me and I am so honored to keep the tradition and to represent Pasadena," the crowned Rose Queen said.

This year's floats reflected the theme: Making A Difference, recognizing those whose actions, big or small made a profound impact on people's lives.

Tijuana's International Float spoke the loudest message: Racing to save the children. (Eagle News Service)



Tijuana's International Float Racing for the Children (Photo by: Eliza Manglicmot)

## Nearly 100,000 displaced by fighting in northwest Syria: UN



Displaced Syrians who fled the fighting in Idlib province's southeastern town of Sinjar drive on a road in a rebel-held area near the city of Saraqib on January 7, 2018. /AFP/

BEIRUT, Lebanon (AFP) — Nearly 100,000 people have been displaced since early December by fighting in northwestern Syria, where the regime is waging an offensive against jihadists, the United Nations said on Wednesday, January 10.

Russian-backed regime forces launched an offensive at the end of 2017 on the edge of Idlib province, the last in the country still fully outside the government's control.

Idlib province is almost entirely controlled by a jihadist outfit known as Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) consisting mostly of fighters from a former Al-Qaeda affiliate.

The fighting has seen 99,569 civilians flee southern Idlib as well as north and north-eastern parts of neighboring Hama province between December 1 and January 9, said the UN's humanitarian

coordination office UNOCHA.

"Heavy bombardment on many communities in southern and southeastern rural Idlib continued unabated, causing casualties and displacement among civilians and destruction of vital infrastructure," UNOCHA said in a statement.

The UN agency said the situation in Idlib was "extremely chaotic" with newly displaced people reportedly scattered across open areas.

"Due to the large numbers of people moving, many are left with no shelter, which could expose them to various risks, especially as the winter temperatures continue to drop," it added.

Ninety-six civilians, including 27 children, have been killed in Syrian or Russian air strikes on Idlib province since the start of the offensive, said the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

The regime's goal is to retake the southeast

of Idlib province in order to secure a route between Damascus and second city Aleppo, both under its control, according to the Observatory.

Its forces are now close to the military air base of Abu Duhur, their next target, the war monitor said.

More than 340,000 people are estimated to have been killed in the Syrian war, which began in 2011 as the regime brutally crushed anti-government protests. Millions have been displaced.

On his first visit to Syria, UN humanitarian chief Mark Lowcock met with Syrian authorities and travelled to the central city of Homs on Wednesday to see the impact of the conflict on civilians for himself.

"In 2017, the United Nations, through our appeal, raised \$1.7 billion to help meet the needs of people all over Syria," he told reporters in Homs. (AFP)

# North and South Korea agree to first talks in two years

by Park Chan-Kyong  
Agence France Presse

SEOUL, South Korea (AFP) — North and South Korea agreed on Friday, January 12 to hold their first talks in more than two years, hours after Seoul and Washington decided to defer joint military exercises which always infuriate Pyongyang until after the Winter Olympics.

The meeting, the first since December 2015, will take place in Panmunjom, the truce village in the heavily fortified Demilitarized Zone that divides the peninsula.

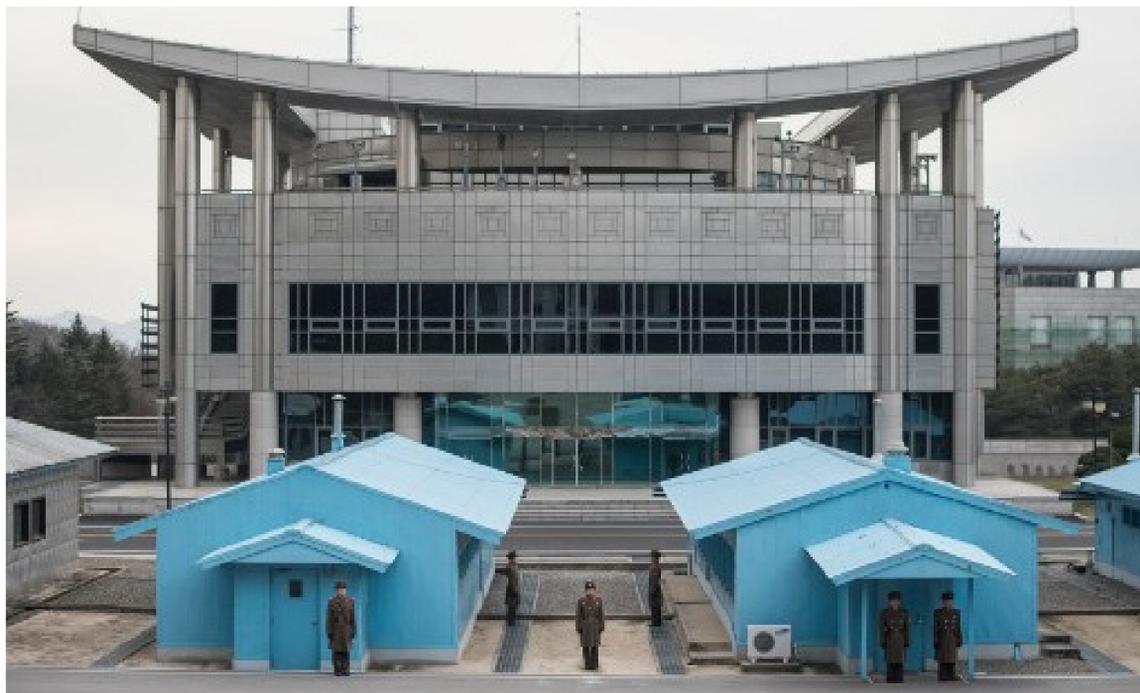
South Korean President Moon Jae-In said that “overly optimistic expectations” were “undesirable” but added: “We will do our best to make the Pyeongchang Olympics an Olympics for peace and settle the nuclear issue peacefully.”

Tensions have been high after the North carried out multiple missile launches in 2017, including a number of ICBMs, and its sixth atomic test, by far its most powerful to date.

The tentative rapprochement comes after the North’s leader Kim Jong-Un warned in his New Year speech that he had a nuclear button on his desk, but at the same time offered Seoul an olive branch, saying Pyongyang could send a team to next month’s Games in the South.

Seoul responded with an offer of talks and earlier this week the hotline between them was restored after being suspended for almost two years.

Late Thursday, Moon and his US counterpart Donald Trump agreed to delay the giant Foal Eagle and Key



In a photo taken on November 30, 2016 North Korean People's Army (KPA) soldiers stands guard before the military demarcation line and 'Peace House', proposed as the venue of upcoming talks between North and South Korea, at the truce village of Panmunjom in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between North and South Korea. Nuclear-armed North Korea on January 5, 2018 accepted the South's offer of talks next week, said Seoul's Unification ministry, which oversees relations with Pyongyang. The meeting will take place in Panmunjom, the truce village in the heavily fortified Demilitarized Zone that divides the peninsula. / AFP PHOTO / Ed JONES

Resolve joint military drills until after the Winter Olympics, which begin in Pyeongchang on February 9.

That announcement came hours after Trump said high-level talks between North and South would be “a good thing” — although the US has long insisted that it will not negotiate with Pyongyang unless it first takes concrete steps towards disarmament.

Seoul’s unification ministry said it had received a fax from Ri Son-Gwon, head of the North’s Committee for Peaceful Reunification of Korea, a state agency handling inter-Korean affairs, saying: “We will come to the Peace House at Panmunjom on January 9.”

The Peace House is a South Korean-built building

on the southern side of Panmunjom, where troops from the two sides face off against each other across a concrete dividing line.

Ministry spokesman Baek Tae-Hyun told journalists that the size and composition of the delegations would be settled by fax.

“I understand the North is also going to have talks with the International Olympic Committee next week,” he added.

#### 'Peace Olympics'

Last year saw fears of conflict spike, with Kim and Trump trading personal insults and threats of war, and the US president responded to Kim’s New Year message with a Tweet that his nuclear button was “much bigger and more

powerful”, prompting scorn and alarm from analysts.

Concerns over North Korea have overshadowed the Winter Games, which Seoul and the organizers have proclaimed a “peace Olympics”, urging Pyongyang to participate, unlike the 1988 Summer Olympics in the South, which it boycotted.

Tensions always rise during the annual drills, which Pyongyang condemns as preparations for invasion and often responds to with provocations. Beijing and Moscow both see the exercises as adding to regional tensions.

But recent days have seen a rare softening of tone on both sides.

Announcing the delay to the drills, the White House

said in a statement: “The two leaders agreed to de-conflict the Olympics and our military exercises so that United States and Republic of Korea forces can focus on ensuring the security of the Games.”

US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis later said the drills would take place some time after the Paralympics, which end on March 18.

He insisted the postponement was for practical rather than political reasons, citing the importance of the Olympics for South Korea’s tourist industry, and added that Washington would not lower pressure on Pyongyang in other areas.

And the US ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley said earlier this week:

“We won’t take any of the talks seriously if they don’t do something to ban all nuclear weapons in North Korea.”

#### Mass rally

Jon Wolfsthal, former director of arms control at the National Security Council under president Barack Obama, warned that Seoul and Washington were diverging in their approach.

“US has all but forced ROK (South Korea) and President Moon to forge his own path,” he said on Twitter. “Easy pickings for KJU to play the charm offensive and divide the alliance. Critical US and ROK get on same side, Trump team has to adjust.”

North Korea’s young leader has shrugged off multiple sets of new United Nations Security Council sanctions — including restrictions on coal sales and petroleum imports — and heightened rhetoric from Washington as his regime drives forward with its weapons programs, which it says are intended to defend against US aggression.

Authorities in Pyongyang gathered thousands of citizens in Kim Il Sung Square on Thursday in a show of support for the leadership.

South Korean opposition parties struck a cautious note, warning against making concessions to the North to secure its Olympic participation.

Kim Sung-Tae, parliamentary leader of the main opposition Liberty Korea party, said a meeting about the Games without discussing denuclearization would be “meaningless”. (Agence France-Presse)

## Global warming will expose millions more to floods



A general view of the flooded municipality of Kabacan, North Cotabato, on the southern island of Mindanao on December 23, 2017, after Tropical Storm Tembin dumped torrential rains across the island. / AFP

MIAMI, United States (AFP) — Global warming is expected to unleash more rain, exposing millions more people to river flooding particularly in the United States and parts of Asia, Africa and central Europe, researchers said Wednesday, January 10.

The study in the journal Science Advances calculates how much more flood protection will be needed to keep the risks of high-end floods constant in the next 25 years.

Unless actions are taken — such as enhancing dikes, boosting building standards, relocating settlements and managing rivers — the number of people affected by devastating floods could skyrocket, warns the report, based on models that are 10 times more precise than commonly used climate computer simulations.

Asia — the continent with the largest historical high-end flood risk — would get hit the hardest, with the number of people affected by river flood-

ing projected to go from 70 to 156 million by 2040, it said.

For instance, Pakistan, already prone to flooding, “will observe almost a doubling in high-end flood risk,” with 11 million people at risk of floods unless protective measures are taken by 2040.

“In South America the number of people affected by flooding risks will likely increase from six to 12 million, in Africa from 25 to 34 million,” it added.

In Germany the number of people affected is projected to rise sevenfold, from 100,000 to 700,000.

In North America, it could rise from 100,000 to one million.

“More than half of the United States must at least double their protection level within the next two decades if they want to avoid a dramatic increase in river flood risks,” said lead author Sven Willner from the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research

(PIK).

The increase in river flood risks over the next few decades is being driven by the amount of greenhouse gases already emitted into the atmosphere by the burning of fossil fuels.

When more heat-trapping pollutants surround the Earth, more moisture is held in the air, leading to more rainfall.

Cutting these emissions is crucial to reducing flood risks for future generations.

“It is clear that without limiting human-caused warming to well below two degrees Celsius (36 Fahrenheit), river flood risks in our century will increase in many regions to a level that we cannot adapt to,” said Anders Levermann, a researcher at Columbia University’s Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory in New York.

“The findings should be a warning to decision-makers,” added Levermann.

“Doing nothing will be dangerous.” (AFP)

## Vatican takes over scandal-hit Catholic group in Peru



Pope Francis (C) attends the funeral mass for US cardinal Bernard Law on December 21, 2017 at St Peter's basilica in Vatican. Cardinal Bernard Law, one of the most influential Catholic prelates in the United States until he resigned in disgrace for covering up decades of sexual abuse, died on December 20, 2017 in Rome. He had moved there after his 2002 resignation as the abuse scandal unleashed a major crisis in the Catholic Church that continues to reverberate around the world. / AFP PHOTO / Andreas SOLARO

VATICAN CITY (AFP) — The Vatican has taken control of a Catholic movement in Peru whose founder is accused of sexual abuse, just days before the pontiff visits the country.

Pope Francis has been “following with concern” developments at the Sodalitium Christianae Vitae (SCV) and the investigation into its scandal-hit founder Luis Fernando Figari, the Vatican said Wednesday, January 10.

Figari and several other high-ranking figures in the lay organisation have been accused of the psychological and sexual abuse of minors

and young adults between 1975 and 2002. In December Peruvian prosecutors called for them to be thrown in jail.

An internal SCV investigation found at least five of the top brass had “sexually abused 19 minors and 10 adults”. One of those accused has since died.

“The pope has been particularly attentive to the gravity of the information about the internal governance, formation and the management of economic-financial affairs” at the SCV, the statement said.

Francis has appointed Colombian bishop Noel Antonio Londono Buitrago to take over the movement, which

boasts some 20,000 members and has spread to Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Italy and the United States.

The move comes a week before Francis heads to Latin America to visit Chile and Peru.

The scandal came to light in an investigative book published in 2015 by two journalists.

Figari, 70, founded the movement in 1971 with the aim of transforming teenagers into “soldiers of Christ”. He currently lives in a retirement home in Rome and is forbidden by a Vatican decree from returning to Peru.

# Ahead of pope's Chile visit, priests accused of child sex abuse

by Giovanna Fleitas  
Agence France-Presse

SANTIAGO, Chile (AFP) — Almost 80 Roman Catholic clergies have been accused of sexually abusing children in Chile since 2000, a US-based monitoring group said Wednesday ahead of a visit to the country next week by Pope Francis.

Francis, the first Latin American pontiff, has spoken out against such abuse, which has rocked the church for years but has faced calls to improve accountability and transparency.

BishopAccountability.org compiled its database of clergy publicly accused of sex abuse against minors using court and media records.

The group said the list represented a "fraction of the total number of accused clerics who would be

known if Chile's church leaders were required to report to law enforcement, if its legal system allowed victims more time to bring criminal and civil charges, or if dioceses and religious orders were investigated by prosecutors or state commissions."

The list includes Chilean priest Fernando Karadima, accused of abusing children in 2010 and convicted by the Vatican, but not Chile.

Foreign-born clergy members on the list included Irishman Jeremiah Healy, American Jesuit H. Cornell Bradley, and Filipino Reverend Richard Joey Aguinaldo.

The group said it hoped the timing would push the pontiff to take action needed to stem the tide of abuse.

Protesters are expected along the pope's parade route during his visit next week to Chile, a largely Catholic and socially conservative country.

The pontiff will then travel on to Peru. (Agence France-Presse)



Catholic Pope Francis salutes Italy's Guardia di Finanza police members during a weekly general audience at the Paul VI hall on January 10, 2018 at the Vatican. / AFP / Alberto Pizzoli/

## Catholic Pope Francis mum about Chile clergy sex abuse scandals in video message ahead of visit



A screenshot of Catholic Pope Francis as he is delivering his video message ahead of his scheduled visit to Chile and Peru. (Photo grabbed from Vatican News video released on January 9, 2017)

(Eagle News) — Catholic Church's Pope Francis did not address directly the controversial sex abuse scandals confronting at least 80 priests in Chile, in his recent video message released by the Vatican ahead of his scheduled visit in Chile and Peru.

Francis, the first Latin American pontiff, said that he would be conveying his message of peace and hope to both countries, which had been rocked by sexual abuse scandals involving Catholic priests and lay leaders.

"Brothers and sisters of Chile and Peru, as my journey to your countries draws near, I greet you with affection. I will visit you as a pilgrim of the joy of the Gospel to share the peace of the Lord with all and to confirm you in the same hope,"

Francis said in his video message in Spanish released by the Vatican on January 9.

"Peace and hope shared among all," he added.

His entire video message did not make any mention of the sexual abuse of children in Chile done by Catholic priests for years.

-At least 80 Catholic priests accused of sex abuse against minors in Chile-

A US-based monitoring group on Wednesday, January 10, accused almost 80 Roman Catholic priests of sexually abusing children in Chile since 2000.

BishopAccountability.org compiled its database of clergy publicly accused of sex abuse against minors using court and media records.

The group said the list represented a "fraction of the total number of accused clerics who would be known

if Chile's church leaders were required to report to law enforcement, if its legal system allowed victims more time to bring criminal and civil charges, or if dioceses and religious orders were investigated by prosecutors or state commissions."

The list includes Chilean priest Fernando Karadima, accused of abusing children in 2010 and convicted by the Vatican, but not Chile.

Foreign-born clergy members on the list included Irishman Jeremiah Healy, American Jesuit H. Cornell Bradley, and Filipino Reverend Richard Joey Aguinaldo.

The group said it hoped the timing would push the pontiff to take action needed to stem the tide of abuse.

Protesters are expected along the pope's parade route during his visit next week to Chile, a largely Catholic and

socially conservative country. Sexual abuse scandals that had rocked the Catholic Church for years elicited calls for Francis and the Vatican to improve accountability and transparency.

But in his video message, the Catholic Pope steered clear of these controversial sex abuse scandals.

The theme of Francis' visit in Chile is "I Give You My Peace," while that of Peru is "United by Hope."

Francis aired his video message just days ahead of his departure for Chile and Peru, where he will be from January 15 to 22.

### No mention of sex abuse scandals after death of Boston cardinal

Last December, after the death of US Cardinal Bernard Law, the Pope and the Vatican also did not

## Clouds lift as North Korea boosts Pyeongchang Olympics



In a photo taken on January 10, 2018 members of the South Korean air force Black Eagle perform above the ski jump venue of the Pyeongchang 2018 winter Olympics, in Pyeongchang. / AFP/

SEOUL, South Korea (AFP) — Pyeongchang Winter Olympics organizers are entering their final preparations with renewed confidence after neighboring North Korea ended months of speculation by confirming its attendance, immediately easing fears over security and ticket sales.

With one month to go, the outlook is suddenly much brighter for the "Peace Olympics," which had been rocked by the drugs ban on Russia's team and concerns over potential disruption by the nuclear-armed North.

North Korea, which boycotted the 1988 Seoul Summer Games, this week agreed to attend its first Olympics in the South during talks which defused soaring tensions over its nuclear program and missile tests.

France, Germany and Austria had all voiced fears about competing in Pyeongchang during the stand-off with North Korea, which lies just 80 kilometers (50 miles) away from the Olympic site across a heavily fortified border.

"Security concerns over the North's nuclear threats during the Pyeongchang Olympics have evaporated at a stroke," Park Sung-Bae, a sports industry expert from South Korea's Hanyang University, told AFP.

"No-one would now think the North could lob nuclear bombs over the heads of its own athletes."

'Army of beauties'  
The North Korean delegation is expected to run into the hundreds, even though only two North Korean athletes have so far qualified to compete, figure skaters Ryom Tae-Ok and Kim Ju-Sik.

But Olympic officials have said they will consider offering wildcards to athletes from the country. Cross-country skiers and speed skaters are understood to be among those who could benefit.

According to reports, the North Koreans — including its "army of beauties" female cheering squad — could be accommodated on a cruise ship off the nearby coastal city of Sokcho.

"There has been plenty of speculation on whether North Korea would participate or not, but now that it's been confirmed, we'll have to be prepared that much more," said Lee Hee-Beom, head of the organizing committee, according to Yonhap news agency.

"Accommodation for athletes and other officials is all ready. Since the cheering and performing squads will also make their way, we'll have to make our preparations accordingly." (Agence France-Presse)

mention the sex abuse scandal that forced the once-influential church figure to resign.

"I raise prayers for the repose of his soul," Francis said in a telegram after Law, 86, died in Rome on December 20, 2017.

The former Boston cardinal had fallen from grace after he allegedly shielded priests involved in a wide-reaching sexual abuse scandal that shook the Roman Catholic Church and eclipsed his long and at

one-time venerated career. It is traditional for the pope to issue a message of condolence and prayer after the death of the red-hatted church seniors.

But the telegram then made no reference to the pedophilia scandal, and neither did the official biography issued by the Vatican. (Eagle News Service with reports from Agence France Presse)