

Islamic court convicts Christian cleric



An Islamic court in Kashmir has convicted a Protestant pastor of converting Muslims to Christianity, while another pastor and a Catholic priest have been indicted on similar charges.

Rev CM Thomas of the All Saints' Church was convicted on Wednesday for allegedly insulting the Prophet Mohammed, creating tension within communities and immoral activities, according to the Kashmir Observer newspaper.

Also on Wednesday, the shariat court summoned Church of North India pastor Rev C M Khanna to answer charges of converting Muslims through "allurement."

The same court had summoned Father Jim Borst in early December. However, the Dutch Mill Hill missionary ignored the summons.

Reverend Khanna alleged the shariat court forced him to sign documents written in Urdu.

The court has reportedly said it would announce its verdicts against the accused soon.

The reports also said the pastor was shown footage showing him baptizing people and that during interrogation he had made "some startling revelations" and confessed that he had lured people to change religion.

Reverend Khanna said today the allegations were fabricated.

He said he does baptize adults since it was his "ministerial duty" to do so for people who "freely choose" to become Christian.

"There was no forced conversion or allurement. We do not offer money or jobs to those who come to our Church," he asserted.

Reverend Khanna said the Islamic court should laud Christian contributions to the state instead of harassing people like him.

He said his Church works for peace and harmony in the troubled state but some people fail to

recognize its efforts.

Catholic Bishop Peter Celestine Elampassery of Jammu-Srinagar said the charges against Fr Borst were also fabricated.

He regretted that such allegations are made despite the Church's efforts to serve society as a whole "through health, social and educational apostates."

Jessy Joseph - UCA