

SIGNIS INDIA

National Assembly 2018

Don Bosco Institute, Guwahati – Northeastern Region

Theme - “Media: Current Trends and Emerging Challenges”

The SIGNIS INDIA National Assembly 2018 (SINA 2018) was held from 21 to 24 February at Don Bosco Institute, Guwahati. Signis North East Region were the Local Host. 120 delegates from all over India participated in the event. The Assembly themed, “Media: Current Trends & Emerging Challenges” A very official welcome was rendered to all the members of SINA National Assembly on this day as yellow *Gamchas* were reverently placed around our necks

The inaugural Mass was presided by Most Rev. P.K. George, Bishop of Miao Diocese Concelebrated by Most Rev. Stephen Rotulanga, Bishop of Aizwal and the members of Signis India. In his homily Bp George invited the group “to move outward after the deep reflection inward”. On the second and third day, we had Archbishop of Guwahati, Most Rev. John Moolachira and Most Rev. Domnic Jala, Archbishop of Shillong and President of CBCNE respectively, celebrating the Eucharist and also inspiring us with their reflections. On the First day the Keynote address was delivered by Mr R. S. Mooshahary, Former Governor of Meghalaya, who humoured us with his anecdotes and true life experiences..

The study days Feb 21 and 22, kicked off, with the Welcome address by Fr. Johnson SDB, Director of DBI and President of Signis North East Region. Spearheading the highlights of the Assembly the participants have witnessed four main speakers namely Ms. Charu Soni (*Media Landscape in India Today: Truth, Secularism versus Political Patronage and Silencing Dissent*), Archbishop Thomas Menampampil (*Social & Political Responsibility & Quest for Truth*), Dr. J. Alexander IAS Office, (*Has the political ideologies and vested interests hijacked media space? A review of current media scenario in India*) Smt. Reshma NC Shah (*Media in India today: Commercialization, Political allegiance Visa-vis Public service and RTI*) and Dr. Fr. George Plathottam SDB, Former Secretary of CBCI Office of Social Communications, (*Challenges to Christian communicatioes in India today*) besides the Panel Discussions where, Ms. Iban Mawrie, (Fake News), Fr. C. M. Paul (Social Media), Dr Neha Gupta (Internet Trolling & Dark web) and Mr Michael Peria (Cyber Crimes). The Group Discussion on the first study day which was coordinated by Fr. Amalaraj set the participants into quite a different mood, of sharing the views and reflections with their group members. Four questions related to the day’s topics were reflected upon and reported as well. On the second day, after the talks by the eminent speakers, selected speakers from every Region gave a perspective and present socio-political issues disturbing the Region. They also spoke of the positive breakthrough thanks to the communication mission carried out by Signis Members in the Region. Mr. Magimai Pragasan, Dr John Paul SVD, Mr Allen Brooks and Fr Ashok Vaghela treated the South, North, Northeast and Western Regions respectively. By noon of the second Study Day a summary by Sr Joeyanna D’Souza FSP, Secretary – Treasurer of the Western Region indicated the close of the Study Days. This was followed by the Valedictory function where all the Speakers and secretaries were presented with an Assamese *Gamcha* (shawl) and a one-horned Rhino carved from Assam wood.

BUSINESS SESSION – Report

22 February 2018 at 2.30 pm

The Business Session began with an opening prayer led by Fr. John Edapilly CMI. This was followed by the roll call and presentation of voting slips to the voting members. Out of 79 voting members 71 members were present.

Firstly, the Assembly saw the Accreditation and Acceptance of New members from the following regions: Bijhan, Karnataka, Northern, Odisha, Northeast, Tamilnadu, Western, Aspirants from Kerala and Karnataka. Soon after Fr. Victor Vijay Lobo SIGNIS India Secretary confirmed the timetable to which Fr. Stanley proposed and was seconded by Mr. Allen Brooks. The house unanimously accepted the timetable for the business days.

Addressing the gathering Mr. Sunil Lucas, President applauded the logistics, expert resource persons and overall arrangements of SIGNIS Northeast under the able-guidance of Fr. Johnson Parackal SDB, President and Executive Director Don Bosco Institute, Guwahati. He shared the happy news of SIGNIS India being registered as Trust, procurement of PAN Card and Tax exemption 12A certificate. He also highlighted the various ways of streamlining the organization and visibility of the same. It was also noteworthy to mention that board meetings were held regularly namely twice a year. Through proper dialogues and interaction the annual fees of World SIGNIS Membership was Brought down from € 1000 to € 300. Some more significant intervention shared by the President was that Project timeline is reduced to one year and no longer two years in earlier times, the Screening expenditures have come down because it is being done just before the National Assembly and more importantly the President testified to the revitalization of three regions namely Northeast in March 2017, Western October 2017 and Odisha in January 2018 where he was present in all three meetings. The National team also made great effort in ensuring greater number of representation at International meetings by reducing the cost from the individuals and allocating funds for the participation. It was for the first that SIGNIS India nominated members for the Elections to Asia Board. Application for Training of Social Media Trainers was diligently dealt with wherein three members were selected and sent to Sri Lanka for the same. In conclusion the President said, “We have made baby steps in this thousand miles”.

This was followed by the presentation of SINA 2017 minutes. With some minor suggestions from Mr. M D Vincent such as consistency of names, Dr. Magimai clarified upon saving money and only President could attend meetings and Fr. George Plathottam to put the theme and members present, the minutes was proposed to be passed by Fr. John Edapilly and Fr. John Paul seconded and was unanimously passed. At this point of time Fr. Saji and Fr. Alphonso joined, hence raising the number of voters to 73. Fr. Victor Vijay Lobo, Secretary, presented the financial reports to which Fr. John Edapilly clarified about the expenditure on World Youth Day to which a clear explanation was given on the participation of Ms. Jeralene and Mr Stanley who are SIGNIS members who shouldered responsibilities are VJs and was partially funded by SIGNIS INDIA. Dr. Magimai Pragasam requested for hardcopies of the accounts for better comprehension. Mr. Victor Francis proposed to be passed and was seconded by Mr. Frank and the reports were unanimously passed. Later the accounts till 15 February 2018 was presented. Mr. Sunil Lucas, President placed on record the hardwork done by Fr. Vijay. The Budget for the following financial year was presented and which was proposed to be passed by Fr. Jolly Vadakkan and seconded by Fr. Jose Muricken.

Following this was the presentation of Regional Reports by the following Regions

1. UPUKRAJ
2. Andhra and Telengana
3. BIJHAN Region
4. Bengal Region
5. Karnataka Region
6. Kerala Region
7. M.P & CG Region
8. Northern
9. Northeast
10. Tamilnadu
11. Western
12. Odisha

Also the National Members presented their reports, Fr. Vara Prasad CBCI OSC Secretary presented that of OSC CBCI, NISCORT by Fr. Jose Muricken, Fr. Joaquim Fernandes SDB of BOSCOM and Fr. Ashok Vaghela SJ of JESCOM. After all the presentation of reports the gathering dissolved for the day.

23 February 2018

The day began with a Prayer led by Fr. John Edapilly followed by Roll Call in which 72 voting members were present.

The day's session began with the agenda on the Amendments to the Signis India Constitution. The floor was opened for the discussion on Article 5.2.1.3 which deals with membership and its Representation at the AGM..

*5.2.1.3. Diocesan Commissions and Centres for Social Communication within the Region **represented by the Secretary, Director or Executive Head of the same.***

*5.2.1.4. Religious Communication Institutions within the Region, functioning at local or provincial level **represented by the Secretary, Director or Executive Head of the same.***

*5.2.1.5. Regional Commission and Centre for Social Communications **represented by the Secretary, Director or Executive Head of the same.***

Some were for it and some were against it. While some suggested to reframe the wordings so finally after giving ample time for considering the best option Fr. Stanley suggested that amendment is not required to which the floor consented unanimously.

Another Article that was discussed was 6.1.1.: (application for membership)

*6.1.1. The application for Regional membership shall be addressed to the Regional President, at least three months prior to a Regional Assembly, supported by the recommendation of two active Regional Members. ~~(and of the Bishop of the place where the applicant is located.)~~ **(Replace this with** The application must be recommended by Regional Chairman for Regional Centres and Diocesan Bishop for Diocesan Centres and individual diocesans, Major Religious Superior for Religious Centres and individual ~~Religious. and local bishop for all other professional bodies and individuals.)~~*

Members unanimously agreed to make changes in the constitution as well as in the application form. Accordingly following changes were made in the constitution.

Proposal	Amendment
<p>6.1.1. The application for Regional membership shall be addressed to the Regional President, at least three months prior to a Regional Assembly, supported by the recommendation of two active Regional Members. (and of the Bishop of the place where the applicant is located.) (Replace this with The application must be recommended by Regional Chairman for Regional Centres and Diocesan Bishop for Diocesan Centres and individual diocesans, Major Religious Superior for Religious Centres and individual –Religious. and local bishop for all other professional bodies and individuals.)</p>	<p>6.1.1. The application for Regional membership shall be addressed to the Regional President, at least three months prior to a Regional Assembly, supported by the recommendation of two active Regional Members.</p> <p>The application must be recommended by Regional Chairman for Regional Centres and Diocesan Bishop for Diocesan Centres and individual diocesans, Major Religious Superior for Religious Centres and individual Religious</p>

After this the assembly had tea break

Resuming the session, the floor had 77 Voting members and the discussion was on the amendment of Article 7.1.1, which speaks of Suspension of members and the representation of the Institution at the AGM.

The proposal was to add on the eligibility of the representative to contest for the election at the AGM. After much discussion the proposal was accepted unanimously and the amendment was passed.

Proposal	Amendment
<p>7.1.1. With or without leave from the Regional President, does not attend three consecutive Regional Annual Assemblies. Representation by proxy is also considered equivalent to absence for this rule. An Institutional Member may be represented in the Regional Assembly by any member of that Institution.</p> <p>(Add</p> <p>However, that representative is not eligible to contest for election. Only head of the Institution, can contest for the Election.)</p>	<p>7.1.1. With or without leave from the Regional President, does not attend three consecutive Regional Annual Assemblies. Representation by proxy is also considered equivalent to absence for this rule. An Institutional Member may be represented in the Regional Assembly by any member of that Institution. However, that representative is not eligible to contest for election. Only head of the Institution, can contest for the Election.</p>

Proceeding further Article 15.7.1.14. was brought for discussion. It specified that SIGNIS India would elect candidates for elections to the SIGNIS Asia Board.

Proposal	Amendment
<p><i>15.7.1.14. Elects candidates for elections to the SIGNIS Asia Board (SAB) and SIGNIS Asia Screening Committee, in the SIGNIS India National Assembly preceding the SIGNIS Asia Board elections. These Office Bearers are eligible for re-election for one consecutive term only, for the same office. To be eligible for these offices, the Regional or National Members need not be Regional or National Delegates with voting right at the National level. Any Active Member at the Regional or National level is eligible for these offices.</i></p>	<p><i>15.7.1.14. Elects candidates for elections to the SIGNIS Asia Board (SAB) and SIGNIS Asia Screening Committee, in the SIGNIS India National Assembly preceding the SIGNIS Asia Board elections. These Office Bearers are eligible for re-election for one consecutive term only, for the same office. To be eligible for these offices, the Regional or National Members need not be Regional or National Delegates with voting right at the National level. Any Active Member at the Regional or National level is eligible for these offices.</i></p>

The decision was put to vote in which Green – 59, Red – 10 and 2 Abstaining. Hence the Amendment was passed.

Proposal	Amendment
<p><i>New Article: 7.4.1. An Active Member is engaged in activities that are contrary to the aims of the Association, or are detrimental to the Association. Any person contesting against the official SIGNIS India candidate/s as per Article 15.7.1.14, shall be deemed grounds for termination.</i></p>	<p><i>Not Accepted</i></p> <p>In the case of Article 7.4.1 on Automatic termination, the Amendment was not accepted</p>

In the case of Article 7.4.1 on Automatic termination, the Amendment stands deleted

The Next proposal was on *EX-OFFICIO*: *At present the term of office for National Executives are 4 years. In my opinion, it is a long term. During this time a lot of work goes on, in all fronts by the leaders. However, after 4 years, when a new team is elected, it sure will take a long time for the new team to fit into their grooves and settle with responsibilities. Hence, with the aim for a smooth and faster transition:*

I propose that the outgoing President and or Secretary, CONTINUE AS EX-OFFICIO FOR A PERIOD OF ONE YEAR. Their rights & responsibilities can be:

- (a) Attend all Executive / Governing Board meeting.*
- (b) They will have a right for Voice only.*
- (c) Can claim travel assistance for all meetings.*
- (d) Any other rights suggested/voted during the National Assembly.*

After discussion this proposal of Ex-Officio the was dropped. Thus the discussion on the amendments of articles came to a close.

At this point of time the Project Screening Committee Members were called to the dais for the screening of the Projects. 66 projects were submitted. It was made clear that TV channels is not the primary objective as stated by Fr. Faustine Lobo who represents PMS India at the Screening Board. There was also a cry that the Laity are not encouraged to write projects, to which Mr. Sunil Lucas, President clarified that as per the directives received from Signis General Secretary, Individual persons project cannot be recommended but it should be within the framework of the Region.

Post lunch assembly witnessed the most awaited moment of the Election of the Office Bearers to the National Team. Roll call was taken and 79 Voting members were recorded present. Mr. Sunil Lucas, President invited Mr. Allen Brooks to preside over the Election Procedures and the later called upon a team of four people who were non-voting members to assist during the election are as follows:

Returning Officer: Mr. Allen Brooks

Team:

1. Fr. Felix Anthony
2. Fr. Rijesh Sebastian Kalliath
3. Sr. Teresa Kamsuan
4. Ms. Grena Christian

Firstly, the President's post was put for election wherein Dr. Magimai Pragasam proposed Fr. Stanley Kozhichira and was seconded by Fr. Rafi. There was no more proposal for the said post even after few times of invitation from the Returning Officer so Fr. Stanley was unanimously elected.

The second was the post of the Vice President; here Fr. Balashoury proposed Fr. Norbert Herman and was seconded by Mr. Leo Paul. Sr. Joeyanna D'Souza proposed another contestant Mr. Nirmal Raj and was seconded by Fr. Milton. This was put to vote and Fr. Norbert Herman came up with 40 votes while Mr. Nirmal with 39 votes. Hence, Fr. Norbert Herman SVD was elected to the post of Vice President.

Thirdly was for the post of the Secretary, Fr. Innocent was proposed by Fr. John Edapilly and seconded by Fr. Stephen Francis. Sr. Euginia Laloo proposed Fr. Victor Vijay Lobo and seconded by Fr. Antony Vibin.

This was put to vote and votes numbering 51 went to Fr. Vijay while Fr. Innocent got 28 votes. Hence Fr. Victor Vijay Lobo was elected to the post of Secretary.

Later election for two screening committee members was held separately.

NOMINATIONS FOR THE FIRST SCREENING COMMITTEE MEMBER

NAME	VOTES	PROPOSED	SECONDED
	06	MR. VICTOR FRANCIS	FR. ALEX TIRKEY
2. FR. JUSTY	03	FR. SAJI	FR. MATHEW
3. MR. SUNIL LUCAS	09	SR. JOEYANNA	FR. ANAND
4. FR. INNOCENT	16	FR. STEPHEN	FR. GOPI

5. MR. NIRMAL	22	FR. JOACHIM	FR. JOLLY
6. FR. SUNIL DAMOR	08	FR. MARTIN	FR. SAJI ORISSA
7. FR. RICHARD DSOUZA	05	FR. MOSES	FR. EDWARD
8. SR. JOEYANNA	10	FR. FRANCIS	MS. CHANDANA
FR. INNOCENT	Mr. NIRMAL		
18	61		

Mr Nirmal Raj secured 61 votes and Innocent secured 18 Votes. Mr Nirmal Raj was declared the first Screening Committee member.

NOMINATIONS FOR THE SECOND SCREENING COMMITTEE MEMBER

NAME	VOTES	PROPOSED	SECONDED
1. SR. JOEYANNA	29	FR. ANAND	SR. EUGINIA
2. FR. SUNIL DAMOR	17	FR. SAJI	FR. MARTIN
3. FR. BALASHOWRY	13	FR. DAVID	MR. AMURIT
4. MR. FRANK	10	FR. ALEX	FR. CYPRIAN
5. FR. GEORGE P	06	FR. ALFONSO	FR. SAJI P
6. FR. ASHOK	04	MR. ANTONY	FR. JOHNPAUL

SR. JOEYANNA D'SOUZA	FR. SUNIL DAMOR
56	22

Sr Joeyanna FSP got 56 votes and Fr Sunil Damor SVD got 22 Votes. Sr Joeyanna was declared the Second Screening Committee member.

Hence the National Executives for a Four-year tenure (2018 – 2022 are the following:

President: Fr. Stanley Kozhichira

Vice- President: Dr. Fr. Norbert Herman SVD

Secretary and Treasurer: Fr. Victor Vijay Lobo

Screening committee Members:

1. Mr. Nirmal Raj
2. Sr. Joeyanna D'Souza FSP

After the tea break, the host region screened an audio-visual recap of the event SINA 2018. This was followed by Felicitations of Regional Presidents by the old team and handing over of Office to the new team.

The new National executives were called on the dais and the new President; Fr. Stanley Kozhichira gave his first Presidential address. In his address, he said that he would go back home with a heavy burden of the work that his predecessors have done and the entire group effort of the previous executives. He also commented on the fact that it was the first time for the unanimous election of President and a women representation to the National Body. Coming down to a humble gesture the President asked forgiveness for the past mistakes and experiences and promised to care for each member. He profusely thanked the members for the trust placed on him and applauded on the former

President's professionalism in taking SIGNIS India to what it is at present. Fr. Stanley also thanked Fr. Ashok Vaghela for his constant support and guidance. Commenting on Fr. Victor Vijay Lobo, the President said that the re-election to the post of Secretary is just because of the hardwork and transparency seen by the members of SIGNIS India. Turning to Fr. Norbert Herman, Fr. Stanley said he is an age-old SIGNIS member who is always there with his systematic intervention and he also welcomed him to the new chair as Vice-President. The President envisions a SIGNIS India, which is strong, active, hi-tech savvy and united. He also put forth his expectation for cooperation, freedom to be his own normal spontaneity, building up better Public Relations, healing of wounds and be people of Prayer. Above all he exhorted everyone present to be excited about life and celebrate life.

Some feedback and Evaluation of the event:

- Fr. Jose Muricken was appreciative the study days and commented on Regional Reports not given ample moment for sharing and learning.
- Fr. George Plathottam suggested that Reports could be presented in text and power-point and pointed out that report on World Communications Day absent in all regions.
- Fr. Anand IMS suggested that we need to work a little more on the spiritual dimension of the being media people for example having prayer moments apart from the Holy Eucharist and also within the theme of the event to have a spiritual dimension.
- Mr. MD Vincent said it was well-organized, oriented and thought-provoking insights through the competent resource personnel.
- Fr. John Edapilly proposed to award the best report presentation of the regions in order to inculcate better reporting and learning from one another.
- Fr. Joseph Manickathan appreciated the input sessions, resource persons, food and accommodation.
- Mr. Frank Krishner said that SINA 2018 without doubt was one of the most significant and wonderful meetings. Commenting on the reports he said it could be handed over for sharing and learning of good practices.
- Fr. Ashok Vaghela congratulated the team of Northeast. He suggested that reporting order should be interchanged not only alphabetical order and above all Spiritual aspects to be enhanced.
- Fr. Anand Joby reminded about e-policy for SIGNIS India.
- Fr. U. Balashoury congratulated NE, suggested better clarification on who can get and who can't get projects and he also looks forward to the work that members do for inspiration.
- Fr. George GP commented on the encouraging number of participation and voiced out a great thank you for the success of SINA 2018.
- Dr. Magimai Pragasam offered hearty congratulations to the newly elected team, conveyed regards and warm wishes from the Asia Board. He complimented the presidential address, noting the resource persons like Archbishop Thomas Menaparampil, the keynote address of Shri R. R. Mooshahary, Former Governor of Meghalaya. He appreciated above all the Salesian hospitality of Fr. Johnson Parackal and team. He also commented that there could be more interaction, resource materials to be put in a file action plan to be chalked out at the close of the event.
- Mr. Michael Peria put forth before the floor on how we as SIGNIS members could intervene in some burning issue in India. He suggested a campaign on social media and posters carrying one topic per day which could also be an opportunity for image building.
- Mr. Austin Crasta pointed out that the Business Day should focus on the work we do, reporting format, concrete networking, knowing member's expertise and coming up with a Directory.

- Fr. Maria Stephen underscored that the benefit of group discussion was not significant, action Plan was not made, details of the participants was not given and a statement was not made after the study days.

After an in depth evaluation, the gathering was open for the proposal of SINA 2019 to which MP and CG region opted to host it in Indore sometime in the month of February and the host region would also propose the theme for the same.

Before proposing the Vote of Thanks, Fr. Victor Vijay Lobo thanked the members for the trust bestowed on him and he request everyone to continue to support him in his mission for the good of the Association. He also appealed the different regions to share News reports to SIGNIS email in order to highlight the activities through the website. He then thanked everyone who made SINA 2018 a meaningful and successful one. In a special way he expressed his gratitude to Fr. Johnson Parackal SDB, President of Signis NE Region and the NESCOM Team headed by Fr. Alfonso Elengikal SSP for all the trouble taken to host SINA 2018 and make it comfortable for us. He also noted that SINA 2018 till date has the highest number participants at the National Assembly.

Fr. Johnson Parackal, President Northeast Region too voiced out his words of gratitude and highlighted the team effort of the members. He also took the opportunity to share very briefly on the activities and mission of Don Bosco Institute (DBI) and announced the timetable for the Outing to Bhutan the following day.

On 24th outing to the Kingdom of Bhutan, arranged by the hosts also took us to ‘another world’ completely different from the Indian situation, specially with regard to the cleanliness and the religious ethos. There too, the Salesians under the guidance of Fr M. C. George SDB took good care of us at Shashipur sub-centre of Kumarikata parish and school near the border of Bhutan.

Thus the curtain of SINA 2018 came down with s sense of gratitude for all that has been and the members were ready to embark on a journey to face the current trends and emerging challenges in the field of media.

Fr Victor Vijay Lobo
Secretary and Treasurer
Signis India