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Religious freedom laws in Russia have been amended. In what some call a reaction by the Russian Orthodox Church to the conversion efforts of American-based Christians and eastern religious organizations, Russia's parliament has voted to restrict the activities of foreign religious groups, banning foreign nationals and religious organizations from engaging in missionary work, publishing, advertising and propaganda without receiving special state accreditation. Evangelists are fighting the law.

Meanwhile Moscow hosted an international yoga conference in August, themed "East and West: Traditions and New Approaches, Unity in Yoga," designed to consider "meditation and yoga as a way to overcome cultural, religious, national and racial prejudices."

Two of the "dot-busters" have avoided retrial. Just three days before a second trial, Federal prosecutors dropped civil rights violation charges against two men charged in the 1987 beating of Dr. Kaushal Sharan in Jersey City, New Jersey. Prosecutors contended the baseball bat attack was one of several racially motivated attacks against Indian Americans by a group calling themselves the "dot-busters." A third defendant was acquitted in May. None may be re-tried.

A Japanese Buddhist monk, Sasai, is vowing to "liberate" the Mahabodhi temple in Bodh Gaya, Bihar. The 60-year-old monk wants the temple handed over to Buddhists, and says without government intervention "there is a possibility of a re-enactment of Ayodhya here." Asks the monk, "When Muslims manage their mosques, Hindus their temples and Sikhs their gurdwaras, why can't the Buddhists manage their most hallowed house of prayer?" It is, however, not true that Hindus manage their own temples; virtually all Hindu temples are under government ownership. The movement for Buddhist control of Mahabodhi, where Buddha

attained enlightenment 2,500 years ago, boasts support from 18 countries.

Cambodia's 1,000-year-old Preah Vihear complex, said to be the largest temple-sanctuary dedicated to Shiva outside of India, has been closed to visitors again. A pilgrimage site for thousands after being opened by the government last year, the sandstone ruins on the edge of the mountain range separating Cambodia and Thailand now house an artillery base for battles against the Khmer Rouge.

Trinidadians are "reverse migrating" from Canada and Britain, according to government officials who credit the trend to bland economic conditions and high unemployment overseas, and brighter prospects in Trinidad.

Hindus in New Zealand have complained to television stations about an offensive commercial featuring a mountaintop guru-like character sitting in a yoga position on a can of beer. "We believe it is in bad taste and humiliating to our community," said Jagdish Prasad, spokesman for the Wellington Ramayan Mandali. "The advertisement is also demeaning in trying to make a caricature of a yogi," he said. The advertiser pulled the ad and said no offense was intended.

The Shri Bhaktinidhi Trust, Inc. and the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) have joined forces to file a civil rights complaint against the Borough of Sayerville, New Jersey, the city's Planning Board and four Board members. The Trust had agreed to buy and establish a Hindu temple at the former YMCA facility, but the Planning Board rejected their application, halting the \$500,000 sale. The lawsuit charges violation of federal civil rights of the Trust, including freedom of religion as guaranteed by the First Amendment.

The Jagannath temple at Puri, Orissa, is structurally stronger now, thanks to a \$625,000 restoration by the Archeological Survey of India. A two-ton corbel (bracket or support) stone broke loose and fell inside the 12th-century temple's sanctum sanctorum last year, narrowly missing temple idols as it crashed to the floor--the eighth time in 118 years that stones had fallen, according to temple records. One-hundred-fifty-seven weak or defective stones (average thickness over 17 feet) were replaced, and liquid polymer-modified cement was injected to bind loose stones together.

Swami Narayan Tirtha Math has been founded in Bayville, New York, by Swami Sada Shiva Tirtha. "The ashram has always offered a spiritual foundation in all its programs. Now we will be properly honoring Swami Narayan Tirtha, since all of our results are possible only through his blessings." The Math is already well known for its Ayurvedic Holistic Center, which offers certification in ayurveda and jyotish and consultations in English and Spanish--including free examinations on summer Sundays at the Bronx Public Market. And the Center's first graduated medical doctor, Dr. Alex Guervaz, plans to open a similar Ayurvedic Center in his home country, the Dominican Republic.

A hundred years and two Parliaments of Religion later, Swami Vivekananda will be a permanent part of the city of Chicago, Illinois, after a promise from the city's Mayor to erect a statue in honor of the Hindu monk.

India's economy is now the world's sixth largest, thanks to new methods of ranking economies adopted by the International Monetary Fund. Based on the purchasing power of its own currency at home, India's economy is US\$996 billion, over three times its previous level, ranked only behind USA, Japan, China, Germany and France. Annual per capita income jumps from \$330 to \$1,150.

A 25-hour singing marathon has landed Pandit Girishkumara a record for the world's longest live solo vocal performance. During a June program entitled "Geet Gata Chal," the highly-regarded Gujarati singer-composer sang bhajans, ghazals and classical songs in several languages. His 186-song list has been submitted to the Guinness Book of World Records. Other recent records to note: Lakhbir Singh Tuli's for the world's largest fax machine, and Milind Deshmuk's for walking nearly 65 miles in 20 hours and 43 minutes with a milk bottle on his head to prove his belief that "there is no mysterious, divine force that helps man," and to beat the record of Sri Chinmoy devotee, Ashrita Furman.

"Listen to the guru" is enlightenment software, a program for IBM PC-compatible computers. "The guru takes the reader for a walk along the banks of the river Kaveri. He explains, discourses, guides and goads the reader toward a more meaningful life. The guru teaches the reader to understand and be one with the world around with all its sorrows, joys and yearnings," write the developers. Contact: Datasophy, 7 Temple Glade, 41 Beach Road, Kalakshetra Colony, Madras-600 090, India.

Worldwatch Institute's annual report has good news and bad news. According to Vital Signs 1993: The Trends That Are Shaping Our Future, infant mortality and smoking are down, wind power and bicycle popularity are up. The bad news is that if the world's food was distributed equally, each person would have less to eat today than four years ago. It means world population growth is outpacing food production. The population of 5.5 billion is expected to double by 2030.

Vedic University of America, now in its seventh year, reports 900 students enrolled learning Hindi, Sanskrit and Hinduism. Among its offerings: the names of God for chanting, Satyam, a monthly audio-cassette magazine explaining Vedic mantras, Vedic philosophy, Ramayana, & Bhagavad Gita, etc., and a computer program for Hindi. Contact: 15735 Blaine Ave. #4, Bellflower, California, 90706, USA.

Meat consumption IS DOWN in the USA, so the US\$28 billion per year beef industry is setting its sights on another market: Asia. Following similar patterns of sending products shunned by Americans to Third World nations, (such as DDT, cigarettes and toxic waste) the U.S. Meat Export Federation goes so far as to say the future health of the United State's beef industry is in China's hands, where beef imports from the USA are rising at a rate of 2.3 million tons a year.