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Praise for Indonesia At WHF Meeting

The Nepal-based World Hindu Federation met in January in the holy city of Banares, India, to discuss the status of Hindus worldwide. Delegates praised Indonesia as an Islamic country that has given Hindus their rights and achieved and maintained cordial relations between the two communities.

Delegates decided to send a mission to the UN and various human-rights organizations to register their concern for attacks against Hindus in Bangladesh, and the failure of many Middle East countries to grant resident Hindus the right to perform religious ceremonies, construct temples and cremate their dead. Contact: World Hindu Federation, P.O. Box 405, Pashupati Kshetra, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Foreign Publications Want into India

Court cases and government orders have created a confusing scenario for several newspapers and magazines including London's Financial Times and the US newsweekly Time magazine, who want government permission to print in India. While publications such as the US-produced Reader's Digest have published in India

for years, there is a law on the books since 1955 which forbids foreign-owned newspapers from being published in India. The 40-year-old law was made at a time when, according to India Monitor, "India believed that the sole aim of western media was to praise western civilizations and rundown the Third World"-a charge not without a basis in fact.

The obvious comparison being made is to the sudden electronic introduction of Star TV and the BBC-delivered by satellite and without government control. Is it practical to maintain one standard for the print media and another for TV? is the question being raised.

Indian magazines and newspapers are concerned about possible competition for advertising dollars and reader loyalty. Time magazine already has 20,000 subscribers who pay a premium for the Singapore-printed edition. An edition with a lower price could be much more successful. India has the world's third-largest English-speaking population, after the USA and Britain, and is an attractive market for many western publications.

At the moment, an Allahabad court order has stopped some of the attempts to print foreign papers in India, but the matter is in constant flux and awaits further government decisions.

The Vast Empire of The RK Mission

Though every Hindu is familiar with the Ramakrishna Mission, few may grasp its truly vast collective programs. The well-known RK Mission was founded in 1897 by Swami Vivekananda. It had grown by the 1990's to include 130 branches in 13 countries, including 97 in India. Here is a summary from their 1991 General Report

for the year 1990-1991.

On the medical front, the Mission ran 14 hospitals to treat 60,000 in-patients and two million out-patients, 84 out-patient dispensaries treating two and one-half million patients and 22 mobile dispensaries which treated another million, mostly in rural and tribal areas. They trained 500 nurses at five training centers. Total medical expenditures were US\$2.5 million.

Outlay for education was \$7 million for 800 schools and colleges with 110,000 students. Programs for rural and tribal welfare work cost \$700,000 in 1990. These programs taught sanitation and cleanliness awareness, agriculture methods, literacy and more.

The audited balance sheet provided for Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math, which appears to include all the Indian centers, lists total assets as \$24 million. The 1990 income of \$12 million came 10% from donations, 41% from government grants for schools and the balance from fees, investments, sales, etc. Education consumed 64% of the income, medical 17%, rural development 6% and 13% "general."

In a desperate legal move in 1985, the RK Mission invoked protective clauses of the Indian constitution by declaring themselves to be a non-Hindu, minority religion. This prevented the takeover of their West Bengal schools by the state's communist government. Such a takeover, had it happened across India, would have eliminated almost half of their income and more than half of their activities. In fact, most of the members and 900-plus monastics acknowledge with pride their Hinduness and teach it with vigor.

Electronic Device to Measure Breath

T.R. Ramachandran of Madras has proposed the creation of an electronic device to detect and analyze the human breath according to the ancient yogic system. This complex system categorizes the in-breath and out-breath through the nostrils according to the time of day, day of week, phase of the moon and "velocity," meaning the distance the air is expelled from the nose.

According to Mr. Ramachandran, The breath is expelled from one nostril, then the other in a four-hour cycle. For example, the first two hours of the day the breath comes out through the right nostril, then from the left for two hours. During each two-hour period the natural elements influence the breath in the order of ether, air, fire, water and earth for varying amounts of time. For example, the earth element is predominant the last 36 minutes. The velocity of the earth breath is twelve inches, it is golden in color with a sweet taste in the throat.

He recommends the creation of an electronic wrist watch programmed with the date and time, new and full moon, sunrise and sunset. The object of the system is to set off an alarm when the breath is not following the natural order of elements, timings or nostril which leads to emotional, physical and spiritual difficulties. Control of these same factors is the object of the pranayama practiced by yogis. Address: 50, Sannathi Street, Kaladipet, Madras, 600 019, India.

1993 Interfaith Conference Staged at Bangalore, India

Some 600 people participated in the Sarva-Dharma-Sammelana conference at Bangalore, India, in August, 1993. It was not a gathering for speeches, but a meeting of those actively involved in interfaith work, locally or nationally. There were too few Muslims and Jews, only a handful from Eastern Europe, Latin America and Africa; but particularly good support came from Japan and Korea. Everyone came together for morning and evening prayer and for the opening and closing ceremonies. It was significant of the seriousness with which the times of prayer and

meditation were taken that most people came on time. During the days, participants divided into three programs: 1) intense group discussion to assess present global interfaith work; 2) visiting many places of worship to learn and experience the spirituality practiced by them; 3) workshops on specific problem areas, and human rights and 'the global ethic.'

In the weeks after the destruction of the Muslim memorial at Ayodhya, some said it was pointless and dangerous to hold an interfaith conference in India. In fact, it helped to demonstrate that the great majority of both the leaders and the faithful of all communities in India reject violence and extremism and seek to live in harmony.

Some people were surprised that there was no closing declaration, but awareness of religion's checkered record encouraged a mood of penitence and humility. At the closing ceremony, time was given for each participant to make a new personal commitment. It is by sharing the experience of friendships which cross boundaries and by inviting others to make that experience their own that the sense of human unity which the conference proclaimed will become a reality.

By Rev. Marcus Braybrooke, England, Chair of the World Congress of Faiths

Trends to Watch: Human Devastation of 2nd Most Intelligent Species

The systematic murder of two million whales and seven million dolphins for human consumption since 1950 is a secret shame. Next to homo sapiens, cetaceans (whales, dolphins, porpoises) are Earth's most intelligent species, and in many ways its most sensory sensitive. The majority of cetaceans talk through a wide range of sounds and whales communicate over oceanic distances through long, song-like vocalizations. The black-and-white orca killer whales (actually, they are dolphins) so

popular at Sea World parks are accustomed to a continual bath of richly textured sound. Yet, in captivity at Sea World, the orcas swim in acoustical vacuums in small pools, are routinely deprived of food as a means of control, and most have developed ulcers. Over half of Sea World's fleet of 28 orcas have died in captivity. They normally live one hundred years.

With captivity as a cruel, short life, and the oceans a vast hunting ground, another science-engineered force is about to terrorize the helpless cetaceans: sound. Two speakers dropped deep off of central California and Kauai, Hawaii, will generate low frequency blasts at 200 decibels for 20 minutes every 4 1/2 hours over several years. Human hearing is damaged at over 120 decibels. Logarithmically, 200 decibels is 10 million times the force of 120 decibels. Imagine being in an auditorium with 10 trillion violas playing the lowest pa string. Instant brain melt down. The 70-Hz (humans can hear down to 20 Hz) screams rip 12,000 miles through entire oceans, and are supposed to measure global ocean warming (sound travels faster in warmer water). The sound booms will especially impact deep-diving whales. No studies were done on the project's hazards to cetaceans. The project scientists say they will conduct studies during the program, but environmental experts state even the first blast could reduce hearing or entirely deafen whales for which no hearing data exists. The blasts could also disrupt the whales' long-range acoustic communication network. Many climatologists question how well this measuring method will work.

Fiji: Nadi's \$1,000,000 Temple

A stunning Agamic temple is soon to open in Nadi, Fiji. The gigantic edifice undertaken by the India Sanmarga Ikya Sangam is a replacement for the Society's first rustic temple built in 1926. The temple has received support both locally and globally, including international donations and free services. Ten priests from India will perform the temple-empowering rituals.

Hong Kong: Big Buddha

The 112-foot high Buddha was completed 3 years ago, but its opening ceremonies were just held, as a road for busloads of the Buddhist faithful had to be completed to access it. Costing US\$8.8 million, the icon is made of 202 bronze plates cast in China and weighs 250 tons. The statue was planned 20 years ago for Hong Kong's then remote Lantau island. But now the completed Buddha looks down upon the sprawling construction site of the city's new airport on Lantau.

India: Tamil Saint Succumbs

Renowned as a modern Tamil saint, Thirumuruga Kirupananda Variyar attained mahasamadhi on November 7, 1993 while on board an airplane flying back to India. Variyar, born in 1906, had memorized over ten thousand songs by the time he reached age 13. In his teens he learned Sanskrit and assiduously assimilated Meykandar's pluralistic Saiva Siddhanta philosophy. By age 17 he was already giving public speeches. The Muruga bhaktar enchanted audiences with fluid oration and homespun explanations. He benefited many temple renovation and building projects.