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The most Hindu city in Europe is Leicester, England, where Hindu holidays such as Divali shut down the city center. That is the claim of the largest concentration of Gujaratis in Britain, who support a dozen temples and mandirs. But, says Narayan Adatya, manager of the Ram Mandir, "They are not enough. We need another four or five temples. On Hindu holidays people can't enter a temple."

Many of India's dams are unsafe according to a new World Bank report. None of the 25 dams surveyed by the Bank's India Dam Safety Project was considered able to withstand projected flood levels. According to Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA), which opposes the giant dam projects. In two cases the true flood discharge values are seven times those used for the original design. NBA says such a failure would be a disaster beyond description. The report has slowed, but not stopped, the projects.

India's businessmen are looking to the beyond for data on which to base mega-buck decisions. "I can tell from the transition of the start that stock markets will boom from May to July," said astrologer/palmist Gita Sen. Also booming: building and office layout decisions based on Vastu Shastra, the ancient mystical treatise on architecture. V.N.G. Rao of Madras credits a five-fold increase in business to an advisor who uses jyotisha, numerology, Sri Chakra, ESP and Vastu Shastra.

Was Ramakrishna a Hindu? That question recently went to India's Supreme Court. Ramakrishna Mission claims the Paramahansa and his disciple, Swami Vivekananda, founded a minority religion called "Ramakrishnaism" or "neo-Vedantism." The Mission teachers hope minority religion status will help to avoid application of certain West Bengal laws which would effectively confiscate all of the RK Mission schools. But in a previous decision, Justice Gajendra Gadkar found

that Ramakrishna and Vivekananda both believed in (and propagated belief in) the Vedas, moksha and reincarnation resulting in a "flowering of Hinduism." His decree: both were Hindus.

Sri Ma Anandamayi's devotees are celebrating the great Indian woman saint's birth centenary with spiritual, social, cultural and charitable programs all over India and abroad. Contact: Shree Anandamayee Sangha, Kalkaji Ashram, New Delhi, 110 019, Bharat.

Centenary birth celebrations are likewise planned worldwide for Srila Bhakti Raksak Sridhar dev Goswami Maharaj of the Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math in Bengal. This brother monk to ISKCON founder Srila Prabhupada, was a great exponent of Chaitanya Sampradaya. Contact: SCSM, Kolerganj, PO Navadwip, Dt. Nadia, West Bengal 741302, Bharat.

The chief priest of the Sabarimala Ayyappa Temple was suspended after offering prayers for communal harmony at a controversial Christian church in Nilakkal, Kerala. The Nilakkal church has been under bitter dispute ever since it was built near a Hindu holy site. Christians "discovered" a cross there, claimed to be placed by Saint Thomas 2,000 years ago.

The Ayodhya clash may be replayed, but this time at the Kashi Vishwanath temple in Banares. As reported in News Time, Hyderabad, "One of the oft-heard slogans during the Ayodhya agitation was, 'This is just a trailer, Mathura and Kashi are still to come.' In the course of the Ayodhya agitation the VHP succeeded in drawing Vaishnavites into its fold. By picking on the Kashi temple issue, the RSS clan is trying to reach out to Saivites, who dominate the southern parts of the country."

Holi, Hinduism's "festival of colors," was observed at (of all places) the Trump Taj hotel and gambling casino in Atlantic City, New Jersey. A spokesman for the glitzy hotel said Holi would be observed "In response to an increasing Indian patronage." The Taj holi was touted to include two fashion shows, live music and two disk jockeys.

Spoken Sanskrit is a growing reality thanks to Aksharam, the Samskrita Vibhag of Hindu Seva Pratishthana of Bangalore. A fifteen-hour correspondence course entitled Simple Sanskrit Conversational Technique is offered, along with songs, rhymes, a monthly magazine, Sandesha and a cartoon strip, Chandamama, all in Sanskrit. Contact: Aksharam, 8th Cross, II Phase, Girinagar, Bangalore, 560085, India.

Traffic Accidents in Delhi should come to a halt, along with all the traffic, in about five years. By then the present 2.2 million vehicles on the roads will double to 5 million plus, more than will fit on the streets at one time. The exhaust pollution alone should be sufficient to put the entire city in one massive coma. There is a call for a ban on private vehicles in the capital.

Hinduism pops up on American TV more these days. In the popular show "Northern Exposure" one character thought a girl was his reincarnated uncle. The mother said her priest didn't believe in reincarnation. The actor replied, "There are a billion Hindus in the world who would beg to differ with you." Another, "X-Files," worked holy ash into one mystery plot. Puzzled by a mysterious white ash at a crime scene, the FBI hero takes it to a specialist who says, "Wow, I haven't seen this for a while, not since India 1979. It's vibhuthi." The specialist then offers that "it materializes out of thin air." Challenged as to how anything could do come out of nothing, he replies, "In 1979 I saw a guru named Sai Baba create a whole feast out of thin air." Hmm.

Veda Agama Sudha is a bi-monthly publication offering insights and analysis of Agama-related spirituality. A rare resource founded in 1993 by Shri Kumaraswamy Dikshitar. Contact: P.O. Box 11365, Loudonville, New York, 12211, USA.

Fiji's opposition leader, Jai Ram Reddy, is calling for some distance between government and religion and tougher legislation against religious intolerance. Faith is "close to a man's heart," says Reddy. "If you insult his religion, you inflict deep pain upon him. Yet you hear all too frequently of temples broken into and places of worship desecrated. It is incumbent on us," Reddy told Fiji's Lower House, "to condemn this in the most unequivocal language."

Ten Christian evangelists from the USA and Singapore were arrested and jailed

on charges of inciting a riot and holding a rally without a permit in the Gajapati district of Orissa. The group was sponsored by a Texas-based (Houston) missionary group. Their arrests followed a melee at a "faith healing rally" aimed at converting thousands of Orissa's tribesmen. The Eastern state's 600,000 indigenous people are a favorite target, but missionaries are now finding more opposition from Hindus. The evangelists were released on bail and their passports confiscated, however under pressure the state has dropped all charges and they left the area.

While Tobacco use grows overseas, in the USA it's becoming harder and harder to take a puff. America's largest city, New York City is now enforcing one of the USA's strictest anti-smoking laws. Smoking is forbidden in most restaurants, and the ban will soon outlaw smoking in offices, theatres, even outdoor stadiums. At issue is the harmful effects of "second-hand smoke. [See Healing, pg. 7 this issue]. In April the American Medical Association called for an immediate government crackdown on tobacco and that it should make tobacco "known as the deadly drug it really is."

A trend to avoid: 40-percent of children in the USA live "in homes in which their fathers do not live." David Blankenhorn, author of the National Fatherhood Initiative, writes "Fatherlessness is the most harmful demographic trend of this generation. It is the engine driving our most urgent social problems, from crime to adolescent pregnancy to domestic violence."

A victory for vegetarians was won at the University of California, Berkeley. A successful petition campaign revealed that 15% of students living in campus dormitories are vegetarian, 5% of them strict vegans. The University has since agreed to serve at least one vegan entree per meal, and to offer other foods free of meat, eggs, dairy products and honey.