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DIASPORA

USA

Chinmaya's New England Estate

Andover, Massachusetts, will soon be the site of the Chinmaya Mission Boston. Objections to the construction were few and red tape was minimal due to a touch of legal grace: a state law that exempts religious or educational structures from most zoning requirements, as well as recent federal legislation making it more difficult for communities to limit religious buildings. Boston followers of Swami Chinmayananda eagerly await the groundbreaking planned for April and the grand opening to follow,

ENGLAND

An Oxford Conundrum

Why should 1.8 million pounds (US\$2,636,713), donated by the government of India to Oxford University for the endowment of the Faculty of Oriental Studies--a very good thing for India--kick up so much dust in angry controversy among UK Indians? Big money spent for such an obviously worthy cause could hardly seem negative under any circumstances. But it was the Indian scholars themselves making the fuss, expressing concern that research institutes back in Bharat were and are being starved of much-needed funds. When External Affairs minister Jaswant Singh travelled to Oxford to hand over a check to launch a professorship for the study of Indian history and culture, he said it had always been his dream to establish such a chair. Now his dream has come true, and there can be no doubt that Oxford is the better for i

INDIA

751 Ganeshas

It's the Eka Pancha Saptha Sathi Ganapathy Pooja Mahothsav. What's that? Seven hundred and fifty-one Ganesha murtis (statues)--all in one room, or cave rather. Actually, it's a cave-like structure in Bangalore. All these Ganeshas are created with flair, flash, humor and a touch of modern art, compliments of Sri Sathya Ganapathi Sangha in a late celebration of Ganesha Chaturthi. Some found several nontraditional poses--such as the "Jesus Ganesha"--objectionable.

WORLD

Pricey Burgers!

Is the whole world going bananas? Could be. There are more reasons now than ever to go veggie. One is money. Meat is costly. There are others as well, according to an article in Time magazine. Here is what it takes to make a four-ounce hamburger: Two pounds of feed grain, 55 square feet of grazing land (which depletes rain forests in tropical regions) and 210 gallons of water. The making of one burger also creates twelve pounds of manure and other organic pollutants. The world is fast coming to the realization that the increased mass-production of cattle, poultry, pigs, sheep and fish to feed a fast-growing, meat-eating public may soon be impossible to sustain. Other reasons to kick meat include higher rates of heart ailments and deadly braindiseases like CJD.

AFRICA/INDIA

Sidis: Indians From Africa

There lives deep in the Gir forest of Gujarat, India, a community of African descent. Long before the first slave ships supplied labor to the cotton plantations of the American South and many centuries before the first Africans were brought ashore to the sugar estates of Brazil and the Caribbean, Africans were being sold as slave soldiers to India. Their descendants are the least visible portion of the huge African diaspora.

They are known as the Sidis, and, according to a BBC report, they number in the tens of thousands. Although the Sidis have lost touch with their African origins, they have managed to maintain a last cultural link through their music and dance, which has gained recent attention. They are now struggling in the margins of Indian society and live in appalling poverty. Researchers are trying to trace their origins in Africa.

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Sikh Temple Groundbreaking

Construction of the new \$300,000 gurdwara saheb of Trinidad and Tobago commenced with an official groundbreaking ceremony on November 12, 2000, in the town of Tunapuna, Trinidad. The date of the grand event coincided with the 531st birthday of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, according to a report from Paras Ramoutar. To mark the occasion, the Saheb elected an interim committee to facilitate its incorporation as a legal body in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Devendra Singh Duggal, president of that committee (third from left in photo above) explained that the new gurdwara (temple/cultural center) was much needed in Trinidad to accommodate the expanding Sikh community there. Completion is

expected by December 2001.

USA

Yoga Therapy

They are called "at risk" adolescents. Many are juvenile offenders, somebody else's kids, suffering mostly from a lack of love. Krishna Kaur is a yoga instructor who believes that there are no "throw-away people," according to a story by Marcela Rojas in Westside Weekly. Kaur's West Los Angeles program, Yoga for Youth,

takes her to juvenile detention halls, community youth centers and schools throughout L.A., teaching yoga and spreading her special brand of compassion. She most often works with kids between the ages of 13 and 18. "It didn't appeal to me at first," said one student, Kenneth, 17. "But now I never miss a session. I am constantly stressing about staying out of trouble. Yoga relieves that stress." Typical sessions begin with a discussion of yoga and its application in daily life, then 45 minutes of hatha yoga, ten minutes of deep relaxation and ten minutes of meditation. At the end of the class, Krishna Kaur sings a closing prayer: "May the long-time sun shine upon you, all of love surround you, and the pure light within you guide your way on."

TELEVISION AND VIDEO GAMES are linked to the development of aggression in children, according to a recent Stanford University study. Although previous studies have put forward this same conclusion, the Stanford research also showed "that the effects of televised violence in kids are reversible."

WHAT DO CURRY AND CANCER have in common? The former may help prevent the latter. A company in London has produced a curry pill whose main constituent is the beloved herb turmeric. This pill, known as P54 by the company researching its benefits, has been

tested on patients with colon cancer. Proven to help prevent the disease, it will be on sale later this year as a food supplement.

NEW TUNES FOR TAGORE MAY BE in store if the Visva Bharati Trust, to which Tagore willed all his words, has its way. According to Trust chairman Dilip Kumar Sinha, the verses would be well suited to Western pop, rock, jazz and even blues music. Anyone can put any of Tagore's more than 2,300 lyrical verses to music with, of course, permission from the Trust. Sinha feels the works are in danger of being lost and forgotten and insists

that Tagore would have no objection to his works being sung to Western music.

PAINTING ELEPHANTS? YES, that's right. But not painting on elephants--elephants that paint. Art patrons bought up Christie's collection of 60 paintings created by elephants, including works by Sao (a former log hauler for the Thailand timber industry), whose style was likened by Yale art historian Mia Fineman to the art of Paul Gauguin.

A MEATLESS MILITARY IN INDIA
could be a feature of the future of Bharat. The armed forces for Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Goa have been issued orders from Army headquarters, Southern Command, to go meatless, but just for one day. That's 1,100,000 veggie soldiers!

BALI

Peace Award

International peaceleader Sri Chinmoy met with Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on January 13 at the Indian Premier's hotel in Bali, Indonesia, to present him with the prestigious U Thant Peace Award in recognition of his lifetime of service to Mother India. The honor is named for the late Secretary-General of the UN and has also been presented to such world luminaries as Pope John Paul II, President Mikhail Gorbachev and President Nelson Mandela. Hinduism Today Publisher Sivaya Subramuniaswami also received the award in New York in August,

2000. Sri Chinmoy was in Bali, accompanied by 360 of his students from all over the globe as part of his annual two-month peace, goodwill visits around the world.

TRINIDAD

The Gita Oath

The first hindu to hold the reigns of government in Trinidad and Tobago has just been elected to a second term as Prime Minister, according to a report from Paras Ramoutar. The swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister Basdeo Panday was distinctive for Hindus in another way as well. At the auspicious moment, his hand was placed not on the Bible, but on the Bhagavad Gita.

clockwise from top left:

westside weekly, sri chinmoy
centres international, office of
the prime minister