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VEDIC HIGH-TECH--no, it's not an oxymoron. Studies of ancient Sanskrit shastras preserved on palm leaves are yielding "a complete compendium of formulas for manufacturing super-alloys, with properties unknown in modern times," reports Nexus. C.S.R. Prabhu, Technical Director of India's National Informatics Centre, says among the alloys being tested are tamogarbha loha, a lead alloy of unusual properties, pancha loha, a blend of lead, copper and zinc which had unusual corrosion resistance to salt water for a copper alloy, chapala grahaka, a high-quality ceramic and bhandhira loha, a soundproof alloy. India's aerospace and defense industries are both said to be interested.

PRISON DIETS IN INDIA, called "woefully inadequate" by the India's National Human Rights Commission, are now going veggie. Having considered regional differences and requirements, and based on advice from the National Institute of Nutrition in Hyderabad, "We recommend only a vegetarian diet, and its cost comes to about us\$0.50 per day," said NHRC chairman Justice Ranganath Misra.

SPEAKING OF SOUND SCIENCE... Tom Kenyon, Director of Research and Development at Acoustic Brain Research, writes, "The Vedic rishis of ancient India coined a term that conveys their experience of the world as vibratory in nature. The term nada brahman means literally 'the world is sound.' And modern quantum physics would agree with the basic tenet." Kenyon is studying the affect of mantras, chanting and rhythmic drumming on brain processes and physiology. He finds a reduction in stress hormones, slower heart and breath rates and EEG changes, including increases in alpha and theta activity.

POLITICS ASIDE, it seems God's blessings are a common desire. The Hindustan Times reports "almost all VIP leaders of the major political parties in the country made a beeline to the Tirumala, Andhra Pradesh, Sri Venkateshwar Temple in 1996 to pray for political success in the elections."

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S MISSION to America included the 1893 World Parliament of Religions in Chicago. His triumphant return to India was in 1897, and a centenary re-enactment was planned for January 26 to February 6. Monks of the Ramakrishna Math and tens of thousands of devotees were to

retrace Swami's route from Pamban, Rameswaram, to Chennai in honor of Swami's crowning achievement. A huge portrait taken at the Parliament needs three vehicles to transport in the parade. The Ramakrishna Math has appealed to the state for possession of the 155-year-old Vivekananda Illam, where Swami stayed for nine days upon returning from the West.

SRI LANKA IS SUPPORTING UN observance of two Islamic holidays. Eid-ul Fitr and Eid-ul-Adha, the end of Ramadan and the Hajj, which fall on different dates each year according to the Islamic calendar, will now join Christian Good Friday and Christmas as the only religious festivals observed by the United Nations. There is no indication that other world religions will receive the same recognition.

ANONG, THE FLOATING NUN, is attracting thousands of tourists each day to her temple in Kanchanaburi, 70-miles west of Bangkok, Thailand. Ten times daily the Buddhist nun, wearing her white habit, enters the temple pond, raising her arms and crossing her legs in poses of the Buddha and Hindu Deities. But as reported by the AP, "though she never treads water or touches bottom, her face never falls below the surface. Anong says total concentration and the pond spirits enable her to float serenely."

BUDDHISM IS BURGEONING in France, where Religion Watch indicates 15 percent of the French express an interest in Buddhism. Two million people describe it as "the religion they like the best," and over 200 Zen, Tibetan and other Buddhist meditation centers have opened since the late '60s. Most of France's 600,000 Buddhists are of Asian origin, "but millions

are influenced by Buddhism, particularly in professional and intellectual circles," said the report.

HINDU STRENGTH REMAINS a target for Christian evangelicals. In fact, the Global Prayer Digest keeps profiles of specific Hindu communities--perhaps even yours. Mauritian Hindus are profiled, as are the "Chettier" of Tamil Nadu. "Like most peoples with a well-entrenched religious system, the Chettier are not responsive to the gospel," the Digest reports, noting only "25 of the 10,000 Chettier have responded to Christ. They are offered reading lessons, food and jobs by the churches. But the Chettier rarely accept Christ unless they are in a desperate situation."

DHARMA CALLS US ALL: Cambodia's Prince Norodom Ranariddh, his head and eyebrows ceremoniously shaved, preserved a long royal family tradition by entering a Buddhist monastery for one week. "I became a monk to learn the teachings of Buddhism and to clear my mind in order to have good character and show gratitude to my parents and compatriots," said the prince. The largest, albeit inactive, Hindu temple in the world is Angkor Wat in Cambodia. It is a common tradition in Southeast Asia for young men to spend a certain number of months as monks.

CONSTABLES CAN'T WORSHIP KALI anymore--at least not in the precincts of Tripura. Such annual worship is customary but, as Press Trust of India reports, "in a bid to dissociate government machinery from all kinds of religious activity, the government in Tripura has directed the state police to stop performing worship of Deities inside the premises of police

stations." "PARAMPARA," an annual five-day festival celebrating the "Indianness underlying various aspects of Mauritian culture," as Indian High Commissioner Shyam Saran described it, was held in the island nation's capital of Port Louis. Featuring classical dance and music, more than 150 artists--all Mauritian--participated in the unique themes for each day, including "The Mystic Yogi," "The Legends of Shiva and Parvati," and "The Divine Lovers--Radha and Krishna." Mauritian President Casam Uteem paid tribute at the November event to his nation's forefathers for maintaining their cultural identity.

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Briefly is compiled from press, TV and wire-service reports and edited by Ravi Peruman, award-winning radio journalist at KGO in San Francisco.