diaspora
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PORTUGAL

New Hindu Facilities in Portugal

The ageless, indomitable vigor and resilience of Sanatana Dharma has manifested itself in Lisbon, Portugal. Hindus migrated to that city after the decolonization of Mozambique, when Portugal held parts of Gujarat. In 1975 they formed the Comunidade Hindu de Portugal (www.comunidadehindu.org), beginning with cultural activities and later forming a non-profit organization. Now 9,000 strong, Lisbon's Hindu community has created an inspiring model for Hindus worldwide. In 1998 they officially inaugurated a huge Radha-Krishna temple and social center to serve the surrounding community. Covering 15,610 square meters (3.86 acres), the complex offers a school of Gujarati, a nursery, a home for the aged, a library, an infirmary and a vegetarian restaurant, as well as workshops, music rooms, game rooms and exhibits.

Use AltaVista's Babel Fish to translate the history

section of the site for the full, inspiring story--and be sure to visit and join the pujas on your next trip to Europe!

USA

Diwali Passes US Senate

Senate resolution 299, recognizing the "religious and historical significance of the festival of Diwali, " passed unanimously on November 14, 2007 in the US Senate. Nearly identical to Resolution 747 that passed in the House of Representatives on October 29, 2007, the Senate resolution was introduced by Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ) and co-sponsored by Senators Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), Carl Levin (D-MI), Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Robert Casey (D-PA). The two resolutions, written with the input of the Hindu American Foundation, recognized Diwali as a popular festival celebrated by Hindus, Jains and Sikhs.

THE CARIBBEAN

Rare Event in Guadeloupe

On December 22, 2007, the Chingan family officially installed five murtis in a small, new temple in Le Moule, Guadeloupe. After a two-mile procession in chariots on a flower-strewn road, each of the five Deities received a puja by a different priest. In this beautiful five-island nation of under half a million, and just 9 percent ethnic Indians, the event was a sign of hope and strength for dharma. Where Hinduism has had a very narrow foothold amidst centuries of French European culture--and now modernization and tourism--the charming shrine offers a new anchor for the next generation.

INDONESIA

Bali Climate Conference Is a Success

Ten thousand participants, including representatives of over 180 countries and observers from intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations,

converged in Bali from December 3 to 15, 2007, for the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP-13). After two weeks of wrangling and bitter controversy, the principals finally signed the "Bali Roadmap, " an agreement to proceed with future negotiations. Up until December 14 the US had deadlocked negotiations, demanding that developing nations commit to reducing their greenhouse gas emissions. Members of G-77, a 130-member bloc of developing countries spanning Africa, Asia and Latin America, were angered by those demands, in view of the notorious lack of progress--or even commitment--by the US itself. Today the G-77 countries bear the burden of global warming caused by rich countries. In the US, the per capita emission of CO_2 from fuel combustion is roughly 20 tonnes per year, compared to 6 12 tonnes for most European countries, 4 tonnes in China and just 1.1 tonnes in India.

On the 15th, the European Union and US finally agreed to drop their demands for binding targets and signed the agreement. Environmental groups and some delegates have criticized the agreement as weak, while others consider it an historic achievement. Stay tuned for the next conference in Copenhagen, 2009.

What you can you do? Plant trees--they consume CO_2!

And become a vegetarian, if you are not already. The demand for pasture and grain for meat animals is the primary force driving the destruction of old-growth forests. It takes 16 pounds of edible grain and soybeans to produce one pound of beef. Get involved. Download the Bali roadmap from the United Nations site: http:/unfccc.int/meetings/cop_13/items/4049.php

NORWAY

Nobel Prize Winners Voice Hindu Wisdom

The 2007 nobel peace prize was jointly awarded to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and Al Gore. The IPCC was credited for its definitive research on the issues and dangerous impact of climate change. Former US Vice President, Al Gore, was honored for single-handedly bringing the crisis to the forefront of world attention. In the December 10, 2007, Nobel lectures, Hindus were proud to hear quotes from our spiritual traditions. IPCC chairman R. K. Pachauri invoked the Vedas, "The philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, which means 'the whole universe is one family,' must dominate global efforts to protect the global commons." And Al Gore reminded us that,

"Mahatma Gandhi awakened the largest democracy on Earth and forged a shared resolve with what he called satyagraha, or 'truth force.' In every land, the truth--once known--has the power to set us free." These were not mere acceptance speeches; they conveyed startling information on vital issues. Be informed. Visit: http:/nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2007

SCIENCE

Meditation--From India to U.S. Labs

A November 2007 issue of Newsweek magazine lauded the Beatles as being instrumental in bringing the Hindu teachings of meditation to the West through the promotion of Mahesh Yogi's Transcendental Meditation (TM). Many Buddhist monks and other Hindu swamis were also instrumental in bringing meditation to the mainstream. The point of the story: after several decades, the scientific study of meditation and its benefits is no longer a fringe affair tainted with the reputation of pseudo-science. It has evolved into a rigorous exploration of the mind of man in some of the best labs in the country. The bottom line: meditation does change your brain. The practice is now medically

prescribed for pain, depression and other disorders.

THAILAND

Churning the Ocean At Bangkok Airport

For unexpected wonders of Hindu imagery in a modern context, it would be hard to top the 70-foot-long sculptural display of "Churning the Milk Ocean " story from the Ramayana at Suvarnabhoomi airport in Bangkok. An awesome surprise for visitors, exquisitely executed life-sized devas and asuras hold the serpent that spins the churning Mt. Mandara and tortoise with Lord Vishnu on top. The display is a striking reminder of how deeply Hindu culture permeates the nations of South Asia.

BRIEFLY...

Dow Jones has launched new "dharma indexes " to

track the stocks of companies that observe the values of dharma-based religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism. Dharma Investments, a private faith-based Indian firm, partnered with Dow Jones to create the indexes.

Google Executive Dr. Larry Brilliant (Subramanyam) says his guru, renowned siddha Neem Karoli Baba, gave him the spark to make a difference. After several decades of work in various humanitarian capacities, Dr. Brilliant has been chosen to coordinate Google.org's philanthropic initiatives, using one percent of the firm's equity, annual profits and employees' time.

Thirty percent of Americans now opt for cremation--up from next to none 30 years ago. A 2003 Harris poll reported that 40% of people aged 25 to 29 believe they will reincarnate after they die. Stephen Prothero, a religion professor at Boston University, correlates the trend to a waning of belief in physical resurrection among Christians. He says, "Americans are becoming more Hindu."

The end of the last Hindu kingdom is imminent, with the

December 2007 vote of Nepal's provisional parliament to abolish the monarchy and turn Nepal into a federal democratic republican state.

Christian institutions topped the list of NGOs operating in India in 2007. India's Ministry of Home Affairs annual report, "Receipt of Foreign Contributions by Voluntary Associations, " shows that of the 15 top agencies who received a total of US$336,218,421 sent to India, eight are Christian, with $21 million for maintenance of Christian clergy and staff. Seven are secular and none are Hindu.