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africa

Zambia Reaches for India

Zambia, located in the cool high plateaus of south central Africa, is one of the world's remaining centers of pristine beauty and wildlife and home for 25,000 Hindus. Zambia achieved independence in 1964. In the infancy of development, leadership faces serious challenges, but holds on to a strong democracy and forward vision. In April, President Mwanawasa signed trade cooperation agreements with India. And, first Lady Maureen Mwanawasa hosted Indian dancers in Lusaka's Hindu Hall, saying, "If you love culture, then you need to support programs like this which bring two different peoples together." She thanked the Hindu Association of Zambia for its second, 50-ton food donation for famine stricken districts.

international

Religion Is Hot in India; Warm in US

The pew global attitudes project surveyed 44 nations in 2002 to determine the personal importance of religion. The big news was that six-in-ten people (59%) in the US say that religion plays a very important role in their lives. As expected, India was near the top of the list, with 92% declaring religion important. The US results contradict the secular and Marxist anti-Hindu dogma that India must abandon religion to advance herself.

The poll shows stark regional divides. Africa tops all regions with eight-in-ten faithful. Europe and the Orient (surprise!) are at the bottom. In Poland, the Popes'

homeland, only 36% said religion is very important. Italy, Great Britain, Canada, Slovakia, Korea, Vietnam and Germany rated even lower, at 20 to 33%. France, a Catholic homeland, ranked near the bottom, along with Russia, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and Japan, with 86 to 89% of the populations who could hardly care less about religion. China abstained from the poll by barring investigators from asking the question.

international

Armani, "Khadi Will Rule"

Khadi is haute and happening, reports the the Hindustan Times, quoting the famed fashion king, Giorgio Armani who praised India's hand-woven cotton at the Singapore Fashion Week, "The khadi made in India is among the most skin-friendly fabrics we know. The day isn't far when khadi-based designs will rule the world." Used by Mahatma Gandhi to make a strong statement of patriotism and self-reliance, hand-spun, hand-woven khadi is suddenly the toast of fashion houses in France and Italy."It was a Herculean task repackaging khadi for Indian and European tastes. Designers abroad were completely unaware that a quintessentially Indian material could be used for making Western clothes. Today after two years of rigorous effort, khadi has finally been accepted in the international markets. We now cater to front-line couturiers like Donna Karen, Gucci and Giorgio Armani," says J. Nagarajan, advisor to the Sarvoday Ashram, New Delhi. The ashram provides over eighty percent of Europe's requirement of khadi. Once a dull, coarse material, today khadi is a multicolored wonder fabric with weaves as fine as muslin.

education

Deathless Dissection

May 5, 2003: the university of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Senate voted to adopt a dissection alternatives policy, the first of its kind at a major US university. General education courses that require students to engage in animal dissection must now make alternatives available to all students who request them. It was a victory for

the two-year campaign waged by SILA (Students Improving the Lives of Animals). Still, many other conscientious objectors find themselves forced to kill animals -- 6 million toxic, formaldehyde-laden vertebrates a year in US high schools alone -- for biology credits needed to meet career goals. Some students now have a life-respecting alternative.

for more information go to: http://www.dissectionchoice.org/resources.html

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trinidad

85-Foot Hanuman

On june 3, 2003, param Poojya Sri Ganapati Sachchidananda Swamji consecrated an 85-foot tall Lord Shri Karya Siddhi Hanuman Murti (photo, right) at his Dattatreya Yoga Centre and Satchidananda Ashram in Trinidad. Our correspondent, Paras Ramoutar, described it as an exhilarating day, with over 10,000 attending the function. Head of the Yoga Centre, Attorney-at-Law Ramesh Persad Maharaj, noted that the murti represents the hopes and aspirations of the Hindu Community and of Hinduism. It was the first such massive statue built in the nation since the arrival of East Indians from Uttar Pradesh and Birhar in 1845 to cultivate sugar. The concrete and steel statue was constructed by 20 silpis led by Subramaniyam Sthapati. It took two years to complete the murthi and renovate the Lord Dattatreya Temple along Dravidian architectural lines. Resident Bala Swamiji said, "We plan to have a primary and secondary school on site, a play park and garden with a beautiful landscape to bring peace to all who visit." The mandir complex, which is expected to become a tourist attraction as well, has been described as a part of a divine gift from Swami Ganapati to Trinidad and Tobago which will, said Bala Swamiji, "boost the psyche of the Hindus and non-Hindus and bring spiritual elevation to all."

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controversy

AHAD Wins Again!

Hindus are bewildered and angry over Western companies' continuing abuse of

images of Hindu Deities. American Eagle Outfitters (AEO) made the latest blunder by putting Ganesha on sandals and on a bag saying "Get Nuts," also adorned with an upside down aum. The American Hindus Against Defamation, AHAD, coalition mounted an effective protest, eliciting 8,000 online signatures and a flood of phone calls, faxes and e-mails to AEO's offices within 48 hours. AEO promptly apologized and pulled the sandals from the market. But the bag remains on the shelves.

Prakash Ashwani, an engineer working in an Edison, NJ firm, said it well in an interview with the India Tribune, "This act of sacrilege, though maybe unintentional, is a refection of how shallow and callous is the American mainstream in understanding other nations' culture and symbols. Anything Indian is mere ethnic chic, open to be used anywhere, be it on toilet seats or footware." When companies with deep resources for marketing research miss the mark, Hindus are left wondering why these companies don't bring religious and cultural sensibilities to their design strategies.

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usa

Lunch Box Morphs

Besides the concept of zero and the transcendent wisdom of the Vedas, India's heritage includes numerous down-to-earth practical gems. A recent fun example appeared in the Lee Valley Fine Woodworking Tools Catalog. It shamelessly markets "an Asian lunch box.... ideal for small parts storage....Perfect for organizing screws by type or size...made from 22 guage polished stainless steel...four stacking containers 4-1/2" in diameter by 2-1/2" deep....Measures 12-5/8" tall. An excellent storage system, and not a bad idea for a four-course lunch either." Want a cool tiffin carrier? Live in the US, far from India or Indian stores? Order from www.leevalley.com, search "container systems." Just $9.95 a set!

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publications

Sikh Victory For Peace

Overcoming ethnic stereotyping in the white Anglo-Saxon world has always been a big challenge for those of other colors and religions. Since 9/11, Sikhs have been the subjects of suspicion and attacks by those who wrongly see them as terroists. The Boy With Long Hair is an example of the Sikh religion's proactive initiatives in response to the problem. This coloring and activity book is being distributed in schools by the California Teachers' Association under the auspices of Lt. Governor Cruz M. Bustamante's Commission for One California. Bustamante said the book is meant to "educate children about cultural diversity and help promote an understanding and acceptance of our differences." The author and illustrator, Pushpinder Singh, hopes the work will help make the peers of Sikh children at school treat them with greater understanding and friendliness. The initiative is a real-world model for Hindus facing similar challenges in countries outside of India.

BRIEFLY...

THE FAMED TEMPLE OF TIRUPATI has established a dress code at Tirumala, India, for sponsors of rituals. Men cannot participate in any rituals unless they are wearing a dhoti and anga-vastram and women should be wearing sari or salwar kameez. Presently, the dress code, prompted by complaints, does not apply to those just visiting for darshan. But it may be extended to all visitors later.

A MAY BREAK-IN AT THE OLOSAR a Hindu Temple in Sigatoka, Fiji, has inspired a public plea to toughen Fiji's penalties for vandalism. Police report that over the past two years 44 Hindu temples, 19 churches and 10 mosques were broken into by vandals, and holy books and items of worship were destroyed.

THE ORISSA GOVERNMENT brought a ray of hope to poverty-stricken temples and priests in India whose endowment lands have been usurped. The government canceled temple land leases whose income was as little as $3,800 but valued at several million dollars. After re-evaluation, the leases will be put up for public auction.

SWAMI CHINMAYANAND , a sannyasin, was appointed by the Vajpayee government as Minister of State for Home Affairs in India. The only sadhu in the Vaypayee

administration, he will report directly to Advani.

THE FIRST CASES OF "MAD COW " disease in North America came to light in Canada in May. The discovery has led to fretful scrutiny of the legal but horrific practice of feeding animal remains (including restaurant leftovers, chicken litter, out-of-date pet food and cows' blood) to cows. That burger could be made from a cow who ate ground up plate scrapings from your local steak house and bar!

THE SINGAPORE ARMY HAS introduced personal computer gaming to hone the fighting skills of its solders. It is yet another chilling confirmation of the dangers video games pose for society, making it easier for children to kill by desensitizing them to violence.

THE UDUPI ZILLA VILLAGE council president, B. Bhujanga Shetty, has directed the heads of schools in the district to make yoga, moral education and the activities of the Seva Dal (a group committed to social service) compulsory in the district's government and private schools for at least two school periods each week.

DESPITE THE 10-MILLION DOLLAR settlement by McDonald's for misleading vegetarians, nothing much has changed. The fries still contain "natural flavor (beef source) " and eggs pop up across the menu e.g., in "Creamy Herb Sauce."

THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAS raised the age at which a spouse can be brought to Britain from outside the European Union to 18 in an attempt to combat forced marriages of young girls, mostly taking place among Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslims.

MERRILL LYNCH REPORTS that there are 200,000 millionaires of Indian origin in the US. That's a combined wealth of a mind boggling $200 trillion.