News in Brief
Category : September 1994
Published by Anonymous on Sep. 01, 1994

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AIDS not a problem in India! That's what India's Health Minister, B. Shankarananda, stated at the national convention of the American Association of Physicians from India held in Atlanta, Georgia, USA on July 2. The attending Indian American medical community and AIDS experts were left shocked and unbelieving by his inaccurate assesment. US Congressman James McDermott, Chairman of the International AIDS Task Force, stated that half the AIDS cases worldwide are projected to be in India and Brazil. Dr. Raj Bothra, Chairman of the AAPI AIDS Committee, told those attending his seminar that there may be up to 2 million people in India infected with the HIV. Bothra responded, "The minister is clearly misleading people...To say (this) to an elite medical audience is an insult. Please, Shankaranandji, if you cannot help the cause of preventing AIDS, don't hurt it."

Kashmir Pilgrims in danger as a Moslem Kashmiri militant group threatened in July to prevent pilgrimage to Siva's sacred Amarnath cave, unless the Indian security force bunkers around the most sacred Islamic shrine in Kashmir, Hazratbal mosque, in Srinagar, were removed. The bunkers were set up last year during a seige of the mosque by the Indian forces to quell a militant group held up there. Thousands of Hindus are expected to make the pilgrimage, starting in August.

Roach Killer insecticide is routinely sprayed over airline passengers arriving in 24 countries, including India, Mauritius, Kenya and Trinidad and Tobago. The spraying has resulted in one death and many illnesses. Twenty-four countries require the spraying in an attempt to prevent the spread of disease and insects. In 1979, the US Centers for Disease Control determined such spraying was ineffective and the US stopped all spraying on domestic flights.

Police and priests have met at Calcutta's 185-year-old Kalighat temple after an incident between the pandas (priests) and a women devotee. The young college

student said she was hit with a jar by a priest and pushed to the ground after she refused to pay an extra fee for having the customary pottu applied to her forehead by the priest. She argued that she was entitled to the priests' service as a devotee and that she had already paid a stipend. The temple committee, council of priests and local police are searching for resolution, which may include ID cards and a code of conduct for the priests.

Radio is in the AIR in India. All India Radio (AIR) has a rather astounding list of broadcasting achievements. They transmit in 224 languages and 146 dialects, with 257 stations running 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. That's 2,251,320 hours of programming every year! They estimate 100 million radio receivers around India, reaching 96 percent of the population and 83 percent of India's land area.

The prenatal Diagnostic Techniques Act, passed by the Indian government in July, now bans gender-determination tests. The act is a deterrent to the selective abortions of female fetuses-a growing concern in India. Legislators pleaded that the Indian people show female children, born and unborn, the compassion and humanity they deserve and called upon the government to cancel the licenses of doctors involved in such tests. It's now against the law to screen for gender.

Vegetarians are more likely to die of cupcakes than non-vegetarians. That is, a study by John Moore's University in Liverpool, England, concluded that young vegetarians in the UK ate more junk food than their friends who were non-vegetarian. While vegetarians are now reputed to be less likely to die of cancer and heart-disease than meat-eaters, without a complete, balanced and restrained diet, the many benefits of vegetarianism may be diminished by a donut.

Free wall-hangings and calendars are being offered by Rev. Madan Lal Gupta of the Vedic Dharma Samaj in Bellflower, California, USA. The colorful scrolls depict various aspects of Hindu ethics, such as Honoring One's Parents. Write to: 140 North 4th Street #B, Alhambra, California 91801, USA.

The University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka, is searching for professors. Posts are available in Marine Biology, Agronomy, Agricultural Economics, Agricultural Chemistry (Soil Science), Animal Science, Agricultural Biology, Agricultural Engineering, Economics, Commerce, Business Administration, Fine Arts, History,

Saiva Siddhanta (Endowment Chair). They appeal to the Sri Landan community outside of Sri Lanka for help. Contact the Registrar, University of Jaffna, P.O. Box 57, Thirunelvely, Jaffna, Sri Lanka.

Sacred rock sculptures are deteriorating in Ajanta, Ellora and Aurangabad caves. A study indicated the main cause to be geological factors caused by uncontrolled industrialization within each area. Seventeen panels in Ajanta, one-hundred and seventeen in Ellora and four at Aurangabad have suffered severe weathering, joints opening and joint blocks falling.

Katanji's Mandir of Dinajpur, Bangladesh, still attracts up to 100,000 Hindu worshipers yearly. Built in 1452ce by the Hindu king Premanath and completed by his son, Ramanatha, the temple is well known for the terra cotta images covering the walls. Each image portrays a specific aspect of the Hindu religious teaching, mythology and culture. Mehrab Ali, a historian, ventures, "If one studies the images one by one, he will be able to know several centuries of Indian history. They explain everything." Some of the images have been damaged by weather and neglect, and Ali is urging the Archeology Department to protect them.

Religious education and Sri Lanka's children are suffering, according to the Hindu Council of Sri Lanka. A memorandum to the Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs lists nine shortcomings in Hindu education. Among them, "In some schools...no provision is made to teach Hinduism, and Hindu students are constrained to study other religions. Some Hinduism teachers are not adequately qualified, and some do not even belong to the Hindu faith. There is a shortage of about one thousand Hinduism teachers, and the teaching of Hinduism suffers to this large extent."

New syllabuses proposed for UK schools will stress Christianity. The impetus for the new guidelines is to significantly increase religious education, which was considered by religious leaders to be at a bare minimum level. Under the new proposal, students are expected to study Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism, but Christianity would be the primary focus and main course. While representatives of the six major religions in England were in approval, for some, allowing other religions to be taught was a mistake. The evangelical Christian Institute called the proposal to teach more than one religion an "educational impossibility."

Reversing conversion is a trend being observed in South Africa's Hindu community. From 1940 to 1960 mass conversions to Christianity decreased the Hindu population from 80 percent to 60. Recent polls show the Indian community consists of Hindus at 64%, Muslims at 20%, Christians at 13%, and others at 3%. The youth are at the forefront of the resurgence. South African youths of all religions are eagerly and actively working to preserve and enliven their faith. They regularly take part in temple programs, satsangas, discourses and other religious events.

The Raga Research Institute and the Karnataka Sangeetha Sabha in Madras, India, are exploring the use of ragas to help heroine and cocaine addicts through that painful, life-changing period of drug addiction withdrawal. Sabha Secretary R. Mahadevan states that the positive effects of the raga on people and animals is already well known.

Virtual Yoga may be the next step in the field of virtual reality and computer-bio-feedback (cyber) systems. Cyberyoga is the catch-phrase. Spiritual cyber-theorists imagine pilgrimaging to India without leaving your couch and an interactive yoga class with an electro-sensitive lycra body suit. Sounds good, but we'll hold out for cyber-samadhi.