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THE DALAI LAMA was in the Caribbean recently where he told people in Trinidad & Tobago to work for peace and harmony. "We are gathered here in all kinds of dress. It is like a fashion show," he quipped. "I am also dressed differently. This is a clear indication that we represent different cultures and different backgrounds, which makes it all the more apt that the conference, 'Harmony in Diversity,' be held in Trinidad. Without diversity there can be no progress, and if there is no harmony then even more difficulties will be created." Calling selfishness "old-fashioned," the Dalai Lama told the international conference, "we cannot survive without harmony."

A GANDHI PEACE PRIZE, modeled after the Nobel Prize, will be launched in India, said Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao on the 126th anniversary of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi. The US\$300,000 prize will be awarded for outstanding contributions to social transformation through Gandhian ways.

6,000,000 AMERICANS are doing yoga these days, according to Newsweek; "more than are doing cross-country skiing or skateboarding." And the latest trend is "yogaerobics," combining focus and meditation within an aerobic workout. Now even an exercise bike can take you on a journey within.

70,000 PILGRIMS TO AMARNATH ignored the ban imposed by the militant separatists and braved the arduous yatra from

Jammu to Pahalgam and on to Kashmir's beloved cave of the Ice Lingam. Hotels and shops were closed too, as locals were warned not to help anyone during the annual pilgrimage. A security force of over 40,000 was deployed to protect the 235-mile route. "I am not afraid of the ban. If I have to die, there cannot be any other more sacred place that at the feet of Shiva," said yatri Ram Niwas.

CHAI, THAT SWEET, MILKY, spiced tea so common to India, is quickly becoming a favorite among specialty coffee and tea drinkers in the USA. "Santa Cruz [California] sells more chai than coffee," says that city's original chaiwallah, Rafael Reuben. Entrepreneurs in Colorado and Oregon are even packaging chai with a one-year shelf-life.

INDIAN-AMERICANS PROVIDE a substantial portion of the USA's health care. The National Bureau of Economic Research says among self-employed Indian-Americans, 31.2% work in the health sector--over five times the national average and the highest concentration of any ethnic group in any profession.

PROSECUTION OF THE CASE against the Hare Krishna temple at Bhaktivedanta Manor has been moved out of Hertfordshire, England, to the town of Luton. The counsel for ISKCON, who requested the move, cited the case's extensive publicity, the prejudice of local residents and the potential of not receiving a fair trial.

AUSTRALIA'S SHRI SHIVAMandir, recently "on the brink of being liquidated," has now "reached a point where construction can commence" on its Educational Centre and temple in Minto, New South Wales. They are actively raising funds to complete their long-delayed project. To help contact: Mandir, 201 Eagleview Road, Minto, New South Wales, 2560, Australia.

SAVE PLANET EARTH is a profoundly compelling publication by

WWF, India, and the Rotary Club of Madras East. The 6-by-8.5-inch booklet contains full-page color photographs and messages like "Where man passes, Nature trembles;" and "Nature provides for man's need. Technology provides for his greed and increases his need." Though a powerful promotion of environmentalism and social activism, the booklet is for private circulation only, not for sale.

BOVINE GROWTH HORMONE(BST), designed to increase milk production in dairy cows, is being blamed for deaths, deformities and illness in 806 complaints filed with the United States Food & Drug Administration, but the FDA denies BST is the cause. Dozens of farming experts recommend against use of BST, and others want an outright ban. An FDA evaluation now underway is expected in 1997.

THE 75TH BIRTHDAYcelebration of Pramukh Swami Maharaj of the Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Sanstha includes a 37-day Amrut Mahotsav in Bombay starting in early December. The huge festival/carnival transformed 100-acres into "a cultural wonderland, a spiritual township ..." bringing to life "...the sights, sounds, music, rhythm, vision and wisdom of Indian values," said organizer Rajendra Rathod. 25,000 of Swamishri's devotees volunteered their services for the Bombay birthday fete.

INDIA'S ORIGINAL SACREDcows are threatened with extinction because of cross-breeding in the name of higher milk production. "The sanctity of the cow as the pivot of livelihood, security and agricultural prosperity was somehow lost with the advent of modern technology," writes Devinder Sharma. "Indiscriminate crossbreeding threatens with extinction many of the 26 well-defined indigenous breeds of Indian cattle."

PUNDIT KRISHNA MAHARAJ, Dharmacharya of the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha, has declined nomination for the Trinity

Cross, the highest award conferred by the government of Trinidad & Tobago, saying it is inappropriate to have a cross of any kind placed around his neck. The Maha Sabha has objected to the award's name for 15-years. "The word 'cross' is symbolic to Christianity and we feel the word should be changed," said the 71-year-old priest. His bold decision is widely supported by other Hindu leaders in Trinidad & Tobago.

A TEMPLE TAX IS BEING proposed by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad. Similar to taxes for religious purposes levied in some Muslim and Christian countries, the Hindu temple tax would "involve engagement of people in charitable activities promoted by religious institutions and help in the spread of Hindutva," said VHP secretary-general Ashok Singhal. The VHP is also in the midst of its second Ekatmata Yatra in which 150 million people are expected to participate in mind-boggling 45,000 public meetings and other events.

RICKSHAWS AND PEDICABS are becoming popular in the USA. One brave businessman plans to operate 19 pedicabs in New York City. A Washington, D.C. rickshaw driver by night is an investment broker by day. He said fares are steep, \$15 to \$22 dollars usually, and that can be confusing to Asians used to much cheaper rides. "One tourist from India, accustomed to far lower fares, is said to have offered a perplexed U.S. driver five cents for a \$10 ride."

CONTROL OF INDIGENOUS tribes of the Amazon was manipulated by introducing Christianity and the Bible, according to Gerard Colby and Charlotte Dennett, authors of *Thy Will Be Done*. The book alleges Wycliffe Bible Translators and the Summer Institute of Linguistics--with backing by former U.S. Vice-President Nelson Rockefeller and the Central Intelligence Agency--purposely used religious manipulation to inflict "degradation, ethnocide and even extinction" to "pacify" the tribes and open the way for exploitation of rain forest

resources. The charges are being taken serious by the American Christian community.

SRIMATI GAYATRI DEVI of Ananda Ashram in California and the Vedanta Center in Massachusetts, attained Mahasamadhi in September [see November issue]. Her spiritual successor is Sudha Shrager, a sannyasini, whom she designated ten years ago. The two ashrams are run by separate boards comprised of lay followers, "consecrated workers" and monastics.

JAGANNATH'S LAST devadasis are refusing to adopt a child and continue their tradition at the famous Vaishnavite temple in Puri. They complain of a lifetime of neglect, abuse and low pay from the temple administration and refuse to subject another to it. Devadasis who sang and danced for the Lord were for years an important part of the temple rituals here, especially during festivals. Dancing was forbidden 80 years ago. The last devadasi to sing in the inner sanctum died in 1993. The remaining pair, Parasmani, 55, and Shashimani, 75, belong to a group allowed to sing outside the temple precincts. Neither is willing to adopt and train a girl child--the only way the tradition is transmitted.

The ancient, effulgent being, the indwelling Spirit, subtle, deep, hidden in the lotus of the heart, is hard to know. But the wise man, following the path of meditation, knows Him, and is freed alike from pleasure and from pain. -- Katha Upanishad