Briefly. . .
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A EUROPEAN COMMISSION for Human Right's unanimous decision on November 7 may result in ending corporal punishment of children in Europe, even by their parents. In an appeal by a 12-year-old British boy caned by his stepfather, the commission ruled the boy's punishment was "degrading" and had violated Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights--that no one shall be subjected to torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The decision, when formally confirmed by the European Court, will not outlaw all corporal punishment, but it will make legal beating by parents much more rare, and it will virtually ban caning in schools.

ACCESS TO AMARNATH CAVE will be much easier next year if the Jammu and Kashmir government opens the Baltal route from Srinagar. Instead of trekking 46 km at heights up to 14,000 feet, pilgrims will be able to drive to within seven kilometers of the holy site. Security considerations in this war-torn region may yet thwart the plan.

KERALA'S COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT has taken over the Sivagiri Math and affiliated institutions after a decade-long dispute over the monastery's management [Hinduism Today, Jan. 1997]. Supporters of this central institution of Narayana Guru (1856-1928) had thought matters settled in 1995 when

state police forceably took the place from supporters of Swami Saswatheekananda and installed Swami Prakashananda as the president of the trust. Swami Prakashananda blames political intrigue on the part of his predecessor for the latest move. Not only do the math's control and finances come under the government, but the sannyasin monks attached to the monastery have even been asked to turn any gifts of cash or kind received over to the government office.

HINDUS IN MARYLAND, near the US capital, were blessed by the visit of Sri Sugunendra Theertha Swamiji, 35. He is abbot of Sri Putige Math, one of the eight famed monasteries of Udupi, Kerala, founded by the great dualist philosopher, Madhvacharya, 700 years ago. Sugundendra has held the post since 1974, when at age 12, he was selected from among 500 candidates. His visit was reported in some detail by the famed Washington Post newspaper.

THE WORLDWIDE FUND for Nature's "Alliance for Religion and Conservation" is an attempt by the WWF to enlist the help of religious organizations in projects of ecological restoration. WWF India is especially pleased with its cooperative project in Vrindavan, India, birthplace of Lord Krishna, to restore the area's forests. They are working to duplicate this effort across India. Address: Worldwide Fund for Nature, Avenue du Mont Blac, 1196 Gland, Switzerland.

OTHER RELIGIONS, TOO, are taking a serious interest in ecology. Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, spiritual leader of 300 million Eastern Orthodox Christians, has made the environment a "spiritual and moral issue" and excessive

pollution almost a formal sin. He has promised to have 1,000 "green priests" especially trained in ecological concerns by the year 2000.

DELHI'S BJP GOVERNMENT is making yoga and naturopathy a compulsory school subject. Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi said at an October function promoting drugless therapies, "A majority of the diseases like cancer, diabetes and ulcers are caused by stress, which is nothing but a negative state of mind. An equilibrium can be established only through yoga and traditional remedies prescribed by ayurveda."

AMERICA IS REACTING to 30 years of easy divorce laws. Some states are creating "covenant marriages" which are much harder to end. Those seeking divorces under them must first undergo counseling and long waiting periods. Recent research is demonstrating the long-lasting damage to children caused by divorce. Catholic and Episcopal churches in Louisiana, where the first such law was created, are considering giving church weddings only for couples who enter into a covenant marriage.

FIRST IT WAS THE "SITA garbage company." Now it is "Vishnu sandals" and "Krishna boots" that have British Hindus up in arms. The Hindu Religious and Cultural Society in Leicester took umbrage at the shoe name because "to associate footwear and leather with our Gods causes huge offense and insult," said Mahesh Prasher, the society's secretary. Clarks, one of the country's largest shoemakers, has ordered its staff to cover up the name of the shoes, which appears only on the boxes. In 1992, a French garbage company had to remove its

initials, SITA, from the side of their trucks as a result of similar protests.

"GOD LIVED WITH THEM" is the latest production of Swami Chetanananda of the Vedanta Society of St. Louis. This prolific author engagingly tells the story in detailed narrative form of sixteen of Sri Ramakrishna's monastic disciples. One learns of their training under Ramakrishna and, after his passing, the challenges and triumphs under Swami Vivekananda. This is a companion volume to his earlier They Lived with God on 28 lay disciples of Ramakrishna. Address: 205 South Skinker Boulevard, Saint Louis, Missouri 63105 USA.

KING BIRENDRA OF NEPAL attended an October meeting of more than 100,000 persons at an all-India Hindu conference in Haridwar. The three-day event was jointly sponsored by Sri Shankaracharya Jayendra Saraswati, the World Hindu Federation of Nepal and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad. It was the first time the king had come to India to attend a Hindu religious meeting. In his speech, he called for the "protection of the Hindu way of life" and for Hindus to integrate traditional values into the reality of present-day life. Delegates unanimously condemned the Tehri Dam project on the Ganges river.

SMOG-CHOKED MUMBAI RESIDENTS will bless Honda Motor Company and its new super-clean gasoline engine. Honda claims it is so clean the emissions from the tailpipe can be less polluted than the surrounding air. The remarkable engine is relatively easy to build and relies upon a powerful computer to control combustion timing. Production is expected in two

years, and could herald welcome relief to polluted cities worldwide.