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Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः ॐ May Everybody Be Happy

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NEWS LETTER

Vol.18 Apr - Jun 2009

Dear Friends,

The **Hindu Council of Australia** was set up in 1998 as a national umbrella organisation for the purpose of bringing together various Hindu Associations to have a unified voice for all Australian Hindus, living in the multi-faith, multicultural community of Australia.

I am very pleased to inform you that the Hindu Council has fulfilled that aim admirably under the able stewardship of its first Chairman, Dr A. Balasubramaiam. On behalf of the new Executive Committee that was elected last month I want to put on record the appreciation of the whole Australian Hindu community for the contributions and hard work put in by Dr Bala and other members of the previous Executive Committee. Due to their efforts the Hindu Council of Australia today is well recognised as the premier Hindu organisation by all levels of Australian government and other government and non-government organisations.

The members of the new Executive Committee are listed in the next column. They have a task ahead to continue with the good work and to take the Hindu Council forward to meet the challenges of an increasing Hindu community in Australia due to new migrants and the Hindu youth growing here in Australia.

I am very pleased to inform that a motion recognising **Deepavali**, as a major festival of the Hindu, Sikh and Jain communities living in Australia was passed by the Australian Senate on 16 October 2008. The motion was put by the Hon. Senator Chris Ellison, Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship. This came about as a result of the meeting Dr Bala had with the former Opposition Leader, Dr Brendon Nelson. The motion is reproduced in this Newsletter.

The representation of Australian Hindus in the multi-faith Australian community functions and conferences is one of the most important activities of the Hindu Council. Listed elsewhere are the various meetings and functions attended by executive members of the Hindu Council during the previous quarter.

I am also very happy to welcome **Hindu Mandir Association of Qld Inc** as the newest member organisation of the Hindu Council of Australia. They have a beautiful Temple in Brisbane and have been serving the Hindu community for a number of years.

I look forward to your continued support. Please forward your suggestions and the news items of your organisation that you want to share with other member organisations and the Australian Hindu community in general for publication in the next issue of this quarterly Newsletter.

With my best wishes of the season

Prof. Nihal Singh Agar
Chairman

New Executive Committee

Chairman	Prof Nihal Singh Agar
Vice Chairman	Mr Kanti Jinna (Canberra)
Treasurer	Mr Surinder Jain
Secretary	Mr Sanjiv Bhakri
Jt Secretary	Mr Ashwani Sharma
Public Relations	Mr Kapil Bajaj
Executive Member	Mr Sri Ganeshwaran
Executive Member	Prof Raja Jayaraman
Executive Member	Pt Parasram Maharaj
Executive Member	Mrs Anita Bachan Sharma

Executive Member Dr Raj Maheshwari
Executive Member Mr Vijai Singhal

Inter-Faith Activities

Inter-Faith Summit for Peace and Harmony in Australia and the Asia-Pacific Region - a four day conference jointly organised by the Griffith University, Multi-Faith Centre and the Pure Land Learning College during 18-21 Feb. 2009 was attended by more than 300 delegates representing various Faith communities in Australia, New Zealand and the Asia-Pacific countries. Mr Vijai Singhal attended the conference on behalf of the Hindu Council and delivered a talk at the Plenary session on the topic: "One Humanity, Many Faiths: Role of Hindu Faith in building Peace and Harmony in Australia and the Asia-Pacific Region. Also Mr Anil Verma, Secretary of the Hindu Mandir Association of Qld delivered a talk on "Hinduism Caring for Mother Earth and the Environment in the concurrent Plenary session on: "Overcoming the Ecological Crisis, Building Sustainable Future".

National Women's Alliances February Round Table Conference - the conference was held at the Australian National University campus on 24th Feb 2009 and was attended by Mrs Anita (Bachan) Sharma on behalf of the Hindu Women's Council of Australia. The conference was addressed by the Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP Minister for Housing and Minister for the Status of Women. The Minister outlined the vision for the advocacy for equality for women; providing a platform for the diverse groups of women, including aboriginal, new migrant and young women and women with disabilities; and building network to explore opportunities for advancement of women.

Ethics-based Option to Scriptures in Primary Schools – discussions were held with Ms. Coleen MacKinnen of the St. James Ethics Centre to develop a secular, ethics-based course to serve as an option to scriptures for those students who either opt out of Special Religious Education (SRE), commonly known as 'scripture' or they belong to a religious group that has not been able to provide scripture teachers to cater for these children's scripture classes due to lack of resources. In such cases the children are denied any education on ethical values in the society affecting their mental development and behaviour in the society. The Hindu Council extended its support in developing such a course.

Certificate in Ecumenics and Interreligious Dialogue - a PowerPoint presentation was made by Mr Vijai Singhal on the basis of Hinduism and Hinduism in Australia on 14th March 2009 at the Institute for Mission at Blacktown to a class of about 40 elderly students.

A Practical Reference to Religious Diversity for Operational Police and Emergency Services - ANZPAA (Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency) approached the Hindu Council to contribute to the development of a document to help the members of police force and emergency services to perform policing duties with sensitivity to different religious communities with respect norms of behaviour in entering places of worship and also about religious rites at the time of accidental death etc.

Interfaith and Inclusion: Harmony Through Dialogue - on the invitation of the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Council of Australia, Mr Vijai Singhal submitted an article for publication on "Unity in Diversity: a Hindu Perspective" in the March 2009 issue of the Australian Mosaic magazine published quarterly by the Federation.

Interfaith Dialogue: Turning to Faith - Prof. Nihal Agar, Chairman, Hindu Council of Australia made a presentation on 22 April 2009 at Islamic Centre in Lidcombe.

Second Australian Hindu Conference

The 2nd Australian Hindu Conference was held on the April 11-12 at UWS, Parramatta, Sydney. The conference was organised by Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) of Australia. The theme of the conference was "**Sustaining Australia through strengthening bonds amongst Communities**" and was presided over by Rev Swami Dayananda Saraswati, who also delivered the keynote address emphasising the universal message of *Ahimsa*, non-violence in thoughts, deeds and actions.

An Aboriginal elder, Uncle Max Harrison welcomed the delegates with aboriginal blessings. Prayers were sung by religious representatives of Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh and Jain faiths. Federal parliamentarians, the Hon. Laurie Ferguson, Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and the Hon Philip Ruddock addressed the conference, which was well attended by over 200 delegates.

One of the highlights of the conference was the powerful dance of the "Purusha Suktam and

Aboriginal Dreamtime Spirituality” choreographed by adopted Aboriginal Elders, Kumaran and Jennifer Pather representing the Goomeroi Aboriginal Community of Toomelah.

As a way forward, four new divisions of VHP Australia have been formed to address the key issues facing the Australian Hindu community:

1. **Vidya Vihar** - to develop a holistic personality development educational programme.
2. **Hindu Youth Australia** - to strengthen, unite and develop leadership amongst Hindu youth.
3. **Hindu Elders Foundation** - to be run by elders to cater for the elders.
4. **Hindu Social Service Foundation** - to work with the community and the government agencies to provide social service to the community.

The first Australian Hindu Youth Conference with the theme “ Dynamic Spirit of Youth” to be held in April 2010 was also announced.

First New Zealand Hindu Youth Conference

The Hindu Youth Foundation, a division of the Hindu Council of New Zealand Inc, organised the 1st NZ Hindu Youth Conference at the Hindu Heritage Centre, Mangere, Auckland on 2nd May 2009. The theme of the conference was “Living in Modern New Zealand with Traditional Values”.

More than 130 delegates participated in the conference. Several parliamentarians including Hon.Pansy Wong, Minister for Ethnic Affairs and the Minister of Women’s Affairs addressed the delegates. The conference was designed to be informative. The topics of discussion during the workshops were Bullying; Mental health and wellbeing of Hindu youth; Youth Leadership; and Integration of Hindu and New Zealand cultures.

The conference was of interest to people from all walks of life, particularly youth, agencies and organisations that work with youth, parents of young adolescents, academics and researchers, policy makers and social workers. The discussion panel during the conference provided an opportunity for the youth to network, and discuss their concerns/issues directly with a number of government agencies and other service providers that participated in the conference.

Tax-deductible Donations

The financial year end is approaching. It is that time of the year when we start to get lots of requests from various charities to make a tax-deductible donation for a worthwhile cause. In this context it becomes our moral duty not to forget the debt we owe to India, our motherland which provided us the basic education that has enabled us to progress in life.

While India has made commendable progress in the recent years still its literacy rate is less than 30% in the poor tribal regions. **The Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation** is a charitable trust that initiates, supports, and runs non-formal one-teacher schools (popularly known as Ekal Vidyalayas) all over the country. With the participation of numerous non-profit trusts and organizations. You can make a tax-deductible donation to sponsor a school by contacting: Mr Jay Shah on (02) 9614 4924 or via email: evfaustralia@hotmail.com.

Another organisation where you can send your tax-deductible donations to help a well deserving cause in India is **the Divine Life Society of Australia Inc.** to their “Overseas Aid Fund”, which provides help to people suffering with leprosy or to poor people by providing free eye treatment. Please contact Mr Guntant Vaghela, Phone: (02) 9688 3312 for further details.

Red Meat, Enemy to Good Health

Eating red meat increases the chances of dying prematurely, according to a large federal study that offers powerful new evidence that a diet that regularly includes steaks, burgers and pork chops is hazardous to your health.

The study of more than 500,000 middle-age and elderly Americans found that those who consumed the equivalent of about a small hamburger every day were more than 30 percent more likely to die during the 10 years they were followed, mostly from heart disease and cancer. Sausage, cold cuts and other processed meats also increased the risk.

Previous research had found a link between red meat and an increased risk of heart disease and cancer, particularly colorectal cancer, but the new study is the first large examination of the relationship between eating meat and overall mortality. Processed meats contain substances known as nitrosamines, which have been linked to cancer.

By Rob Stein
Washington Post (March 23, 2009)



DEEPAVALI

Recognition by the Australian Senate

On 16 October 2008, the Hon. Senator Chris Ellison, the then Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship and the Leader of Opposition Business in Senate moved the following general business notice of motion no. 184 in the Senate pursuant to notice of motion not objected to as a formal motion,

–That the Senate–

(a) notes that:

- (i) in 2008, Deepavali will be celebrated on 28 October,
- (ii) Deepavali is of great significance to the Hindu, Sikh, Jain and Buddhist community,
- (iii) 'Diwali' is a shortened version of the Sanskrit term 'Deepavali', which means 'a row of lamps',
- (iv) Diwali is celebrated by lighting small oil lamps called Diyas; which symbolises the lifting of spiritual darkness and the renewal of life, a time to pray for health, knowledge and peace,
- (v) Diwali is an annual celebration, falling on the last day of the month in the lunar calendar and is celebrated as a day of thanksgiving and the beginning of a new year for many Hindus, and for Hindus is a celebration of the victory of good over evil,
- (vi) for Sikhs, Diwali is feted as the day that the sixth founding Sikh Guru, or revered teacher, Guru Hargobind ji, was released from the ruling Mughal Emperor, and
- (vii) for Jains, Diwali marks the anniversary of the attainment of moksha or liberation by Mahavira, the last of the Tirthankaras, who were the great teachers of Jain dharma, at the end of his life in 527 BC,
- (viii) in 2008, Deepavali will be celebrated by many Australians including members of Australia's over 600,000 strong Hindu, Sikh, Jain and Buddhist community,
- (ix) the Hindu, Sikh, Jain and Buddhist communities have a long and strong



heritage in Australia, beginning in the 19th century, and

- (x) today the Hindu, Sikh, Jain and Buddhist communities are strong and vibrant communities that continue to make a significant contribution to Australia's economic and social prosperity; and

(b) sends its best wishes to all members of our Hindu, Sikh, Jain and Buddhist communities celebrating Deepavali in 2008.

Question put and passed.

Tirupati Temple Receives More Visitors Than the Vatican

The Tirumala Venkateswara Temple has overtaken the Vatican as world's most visited place of worship. With more than 60,000 daily visitors and an average of 19 million visitors a year, it attracts almost double the estimated number of people visiting Vatican City. The numbers are so large that every visitor is given a bar-coded wristband which will indicate the time of his or her 'dharshan' – the *puja* time with the deity.

The historic and sacred temple of Sri Venkateswara is located on the seventh peak of the Tirupati Hill. The temple is the most visited Hindu place of worship and is the world's second richest in terms of the offerings made by pilgrims to God.

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Eat food, not too much, mostly plant
Prof Michael Pollan, UC Berkeley, USA