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

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NEWS LETTER

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Dear Friends,

I wish you all a very happy, prosperous and a peaceful New Year.

This past year has gone rather quickly. During the last quarter we have taken part in a number of multi-faith activities, as follows:

- Dr Raj Maheshwari represented the Hindu Youth group in the Regional Youth Interfaith Forum in Perth, hosted by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade;
- Mrs Madhu Singhal attended the annual General meeting of the Australian Women's Coalition on behalf of the Hindu Women's Council of Australia;
- Mr Bachan Sharma presented a talk on Domestic Violence at the Marrickville Roundtable Forum.

A brief outline of these presentations is enclosed in this newsletter.

We have issued a Press release to protest against the demolition of Hindu Temples and persecution of minority Hindu community in Malaysia. We have requested the Australian government to exercise diplomatic pressure on the Malaysian government to safe guard human rights of the law-abiding and peaceful Hindu minority community in Malaysia.

We are going to participate with Vishva Hindu Parishad - Australian chapter and some other Hindu organisations to organise the first Hindu conference in Australia. See details of the proposed conference in this newsletter. I would like to encourage you to participate actively in this conference to make it a grand success.

We will also be participating with the Holi Sabha of NSW in celebrating the Holi Mela at the Fairfield Showground on 23rd March 2008 (Easter Sunday).

We have also decided on the date for the Deepavali Fair for 2008 to be 19th Oct. 2008. Please take a note of this date. We want all Hindu, Sikh and Jain organisations to join with us in celebrating Deepavali at a yet bigger scale in 2008.

I look forward to your continued help and cooperation.

Regards,

Dr. A. Balasubramaniam
Chairman.

FIRST HINDU CONFERENCE IN AUSTRALIA

This will be a historic event for the Hindu community in Australia. It will be a community conference and will be held in Sydney on April 19-20.

The theme of the conference is "*The contribution of Hindu community in strengthening Australia*". It will cover the economic, health, environmental, social and cultural aspects. This conference provides a platform for all the Hindu organizations/ temples/ like-minded groups to showcase their contributions to the Australian society in general and Hindu society in particular. The participating organizations are expected to make posters - they will be displayed during the conference. Also, there will be an exhibition on 'Contributions of Hindus to the world of science and technology'.

Conference programme will have both paper presentation sessions and workshops. The workshops will focus on issues, which are common to all Hindu organizations, and also to the wider community, such as "Health and well-being", "Education and culture" and

“Social beliefs and family”. All the conference papers and workshop deliberations will be published and the copies will be available to the government agencies and community workers, and also to all participants of the conference.

Please note that the number of delegates to the conference is limited. We have confirmed participation from various government agencies, professionals, university staff, business leaders, Australian aboriginal community and youth leaders.

If you are interested (i) in being on the organizing committee; (ii) to speak at the conference, (iii) to chair any sessions and (iv) to help with other arrangements, please send a short CV to Mr Brij Pal Singh (brij_pal_singh@hotmail.com) with a copy to Dr Guna Magesan (gunamagesan@gmail.com), if possible.

This conference is organized by Vishva Hindu Parishad of Australia (World Hindu Council - Australia chapter), in association with various organizations including Hindu Council of Australia, Sewa International, Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of Australia, Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh and many like-minded organizations.

First Hindu Conference in Australia
The conference will have seminars, workshops on the following: If you are interested in presenting papers, please let us know as soon as possible.

1. Hindu contribution

- (a) The history of Hindu settlers in Australia
- (b) Hindu contribution in the field of education, health and economy
- (c) Hindu thought to bring out peace within and outside Australian society

2. Hindu culture, identity and role

- (a) Impact of culture and identity on settling into Australia
- (b) Role of temples as a center of social and cultural development
- (c) Role of Hindu organizations in Australia in strengthening social fabric
- (d) Hindu social believe and family
- (e) Experience and difficulty faced by Hindu mother in Australia

3. Hindu perspective of well-being

- (a) Hindu perspective on mental health service
- (b) Improving of mental health and well being within Hindu community in particular and Australian community in general.

4. Hindu education seminar

- (a) Hindu education in Australian school curriculum

5. Hindu Youth seminar (conducted by Hindu Students Council)

- (a) Youth and leadership in Hindu community in Australia

6. Hindu Social Service Seminar

- (a) Providing social service for betterment of Hindu community
- (b) Social issues in Hindu community in Australia - What we can do to overcome them.

7. Working with Government agencies

- (a) Working with the Police department
- (b) Working with education department
- (c) Working with the department of ethnic affair
- (d) Working with health Board & Hospitals
- (e) Working with the department of social services

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PRESS RELEASE

PROTEST AGAINST DEMOLITION OF HINDU TEMPLES AND PERSECUTION OF HINDU MINORITY COMMUNITY IN MALAYSIA

The Muslim majority in Malaysia has been regularly demolishing Hindu temples, many of which have historical value. The temples had been constructed before Malaysia got independence from British in 1957. Malaysia had formerly been under the Hindu rule of the Sri Vijay Empire until the 14th century, when the rule of the Muslim Mughals took over, only to be subsequently conquered by the British.

The local Councils and the State authorities in Malaysia has been making the lives of the Hindu minority miserable by denying them their constitutional right to freedom of worship. Over 70 temples have thus far been demolished, including the destruction of the over 100- years old MAHA MARIAMAN temple at Pendang Java. The Malaysian government has been violating Hindu human and religious rights as accorded under article 2 of the United Nations charter of universal human rights.

Having suffered continuous persecution, the Hindu Rights Action Force was formed to raise the voice of the persecuted minority against the human injustice meted out to them. On 26 November 2007 a peaceful protest was organised by the Hindu Rights Action Group in Kuala Lumpur. To stop the protesters the Malaysian authorities had fired tear-gas and water cannons and beat them with batons and made many arrests. This high-handed

treatment of peaceful demonstration is deplorable.

Since independence from the British in 1957, Malaysia, a Muslim majority country, has been systematically persecuting the minority Hindu community. Laws were made to deny this community jobs and any economic benefits which were exclusively reserved for Muslims.

The Hindu Council of Australia strongly protests against the inhuman treatment of the peaceful Hindu minority community in Malaysia, which has contributed economically and culturally for the prosperity of the country over the years.

We request the Australian government to put diplomatic pressure on the Malaysian Government to stop immediately the demolition of Hindu temples and the persecution of its Hindu minority community.

Dr. A. Balasubramaniam
Chairman 20 December 2007

Australian Women's Coalition Annual Conference in Sydney

AWC held its annual general conference in Sydney on Nov. 18-19, 2007, which was attended by Mrs Madhu Singhal on behalf of the Hindu Women's Council of Australia. Julia Burns, the Head of the Office for Women briefed the members of the progress on a number of projects funded by the Australian government, which included, amongst others:

- o Democratic rights of women in Australia
- o More representation of women in local government
- o Women's awareness of corporate knowledge
- o Women's Leadership skills
- o Women's Health
- o Good communications skills,

Regional Youth Interfaith Forum

The inaugural Regional Youth Interfaith Forum was co-hosted by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the European Commission in Perth, on 4-7 Dec'07.

The theme of the forum was "Embracing Diversity - Delivering messages of Understanding". The participants included the young leaders of the prominent faith and religious backgrounds from Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, East Timor, European Union, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam; 40 delegates participated from 12 different countries.

It was attended by Dr Raj Maheshwari on behalf of the Hindu Youth Council of Australia. Other faiths represented in the Australian delegation were Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and Buddhism.

The three day conference was opened with the address by Mr Woolcott (First Assistant Secretary, SE division, DFAT) and Mr Julien (Ambassador of the EU to Australia and New Zealand). They emphasized the important role of the young leaders of different faiths in spreading the message of harmony, understanding, and peace among their communities.

The main programme included presentations by various religious leaders, Mr Razak from the Singapore Harmony Centre, Mr Dunn, co-producer of the documentary Swapping Lives, and Mr Khao Do, film producer and Young Australian of the Year 2005. There were four discussion sessions over two days deliberating on the role of government, new media (internet), and youth in promoting the interfaith understanding.

The final statement at the end of the conference affirmed the commitment of the young people of diverse faiths, religions, and beliefs, to the values (which are unique to the cultures and contexts) of peace, compassion, love, and respect for human rights.

In addition to being a unique experience of learning and sharing experiences with the dynamic young leaders from different countries, it provided a rare opportunity to get to know the local representatives of different faiths. The Australian delegation had our own meeting on the last day, and everyone expressed interest in planning interfaith projects to promote understanding and communication in our local communities. Some of the ideas discussed were the use of sports for peace, interfaith encounters, interfaith camps, writing articles for the local media, art projects, open interfaith days at the religious centres, and interfaith activities as part of school curriculum.

BIRTH OF JESUS

The story about the slaughter of infants of Bethlehem in the second chapter of the *Gospel of Matthew* is not known from other sources, but it would have been totally in character for King Herod to commit such a terrible act. We usually think of the shepherds and the wise men arriving moments apart. Matthew tells us they went first to Jerusalem for a meeting with King Herod. King Herod, after meeting the wise men, ordered the slaughter of all male infants in Bethlehem.

Bible scholar, Dr Ben Witherington says there's no record of the slaughter simply because it was a minor event by the standards of the time. "From what we can tell from the archaeological ruins of first century Bethlehem, a few hundred people lived there. I think we're talking between six and ten children max," he says.

Don't we see here a remarkable similarity with the story of the birth of Shri Krishna and the killing of infants of Devaki at the hands of King Kamsa.

History repeats itself, doesn't it?



UK Prime Minister Praise Diwali Festival

LONDON, UK, November 9, 2007: British Prime Minister Gordon Brown described Diwali as "a wonderful inclusive festival" as thousands of enthusiastic Hindus and Sikhs in Britain celebrated the Indian festival of light last night. In a message telecast on different channels on Friday night, Brown said "I am delighted to send my warmest greetings to everyone in our Hindu and Sikh communities on the auspicious occasion of Diwali." He said "Diwali is such a wonderful inclusive festival, which reaches beyond your communities to people of many backgrounds all over the world. The symbolic lighting of lamps, representing life, hope and new beginnings sends a powerful message of unity and peace to us all. "I know that Diwali is a special time for families, who come together to celebrate and reflect on the year gone by. " "And it also gives me an opportunity to recognize and reflect on the huge contribution made by British Hindu and Sikh communities to our country's prosperity and our culture. Your involvement in every sphere of our national life is something we can all immensely be proud of," he added. "Once again, my very best wishes for a joyous occasion. Happy Diwali."

HOLI MELA 2008

Holi Mela this year will be celebrated at the Fairfield Show Ground, Preriewood on Sunday, 23rd March 2008 (Easter Sunday) by the Indian Arts and Cultural Association of Australia, in association with the Hindu Council of Australia and a number of other Indian associations, including UIA, Hindi Samaaj, Shri Sanatan Dharma Pratinidhi Sabha of NSW, together with several media and business groups.

Marrickville Multi-faith Roundtable Forum on Domestic Violence

A multi-faith religious perspective was presented in the Multi-faith Roundtable Forum on 20 Oct 2007 at Petersham Town Hall by all the major faiths in Australia. Mr Bachan Sharma presented the Hindu perspective on this serious domestic problem confronting the modern society we live in.

Hindu Dharma is like a boundless ocean teeming with priceless gems. The deeper you dive, the more treasures you find.
Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948)