

# PRESS ARTICLES

The logo is a circular emblem. The left half is a golden shield with a white cross and a white circle. The right half is a golden harp with a sunburst at the top. A blue wave is at the bottom. A horizontal arrow with a feathered tail passes through the center.

UKZN  
Gandhi-Luthuli  
Documentation  
Centre



**Bond of Love** - With the celebration of *Raksha Bandan* this week, the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha has made a call on all Hindus to display a commitment towards the reconstruction of the new South Africa and forge links with other communities, by tying a *Rakhee* for members of different race groups. Displaying the initiative is little Smriti Rambilass (10) seen above tying the sacred thread on her 'brother' Emmanuel Mngadi (12). *Photo: Yunus Bayat.*

## Call for Hindus to 'thread' boldly

**Leader Reporter**

THIS year Raksha Bandhan attains another significance with Hindu school children tying the sacred thread around the wrists of children from other races.

Calling it a commitment to the new South Africa, the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha (APS), who made the appeal to parents of all school children on

Monday, said they were trying to promote the message of sister/brotherhood across the barriers of colour and race.

Meanwhile the APS affiliates in Tongaat, Isipingo, Clare Estate and Pietermaritzburg will be tying *rakhee* for dwellers in informal settlements in their localities.

According to Dr Bishram Rambilass, Deputy President of the APS, "The tying of this sacred thread strengthens the bond that ex-

ists between brothers and sisters.

"Ideally, members of society ought to be looking upon one another as brothers and sisters, thereby fostering the concept of the universal family (*vasudhaiva kutumbakam*).

"Encourage your children to use this opportunity to explain the significance of this festival, thereby initiating a bond and understanding between our communities."

# APS HOSTS SOCIAL REFORMER

**Leader Reporter**

Treasurers: Mr L Gunpath and Mr S Rugbeer

THE internationally acclaimed leader of the Bonded Labour Liberation Front and Anti-Child Labour Organisation Swami Agnivesh will be the chief guest at the 70th anniversary celebration of the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha which will be held on July 11 at the Durban City Hall.

This was revealed at the APS's annual meeting which was held in Durban last Sunday.

It was also reported at the meeting that the religious publication of the Veda Niketan (APS standing committee) was being printed in the States for distribution in USA and Canada.

The following officials were voted into office: President: Mr S Rambaros, Vice-president: Dr B Rambilass, Hon. secretaries: Pt. M Poltan, Mr S Bhooshun and Mr JP Rambilass;

THE LEADER, 16 JUNE 1995

# Call for extension of Indological studies

**Leader Reporter**

THE establishment of a department of Indology at the University of Durban-Westville (UDW) has been mooted.

The proposal is made by the Indological Society of Southern Africa (ISSA), in its submission to the National Commission on Higher Education at Tertiary level.

ISSA has also suggested that modules of Indological studies be offered at the undergraduate level in the University of Natal, Durban, as well as the technikons and colleges of education as it is unique to the region.

It suggests "that the impact of Indological influences upon the national consciousness be acknowledged and respected and that this be reflected in the teaching of the history of this country."

ISSA emphasises that the spirit of the RDP document "enshrines in large measure the right of the individual cultural groupings towards their self-determination, as distinct from the "separate development" philosophies from the past."

And it says in its submission that: "In terms



**Dr Bisram Rambilass - mooted idea.**

of university education, whilst other universities offer aspects of Indological studies (e.g Buddhism in the Dept. of Religious Studies) UDW is unique in its position as the university best suited for teaching Indology.

"Apart from the Documentation Centre, there are fully fledged departments of Indian languages, Islamic Studies, Hindi Studies, Indian Philosophy, Arabic, Urdu and Persian.

"Elements of Indological concern also emerge in the offerings of the Departments of Science of Religion, Fine Art, Music, Drama, History, Political Science and Law.

"Indology is therefore a decided 'niche' area of study that contributes to the unique character of UDW,"

says ISSA's document. According to Dr B Rambilass, Chairperson, ISSA, they are not demanding the opening of full fledged departments at UND or the technikons.

The submission explains it "could lead to inter-institutional cooperation in the offering of joint courses, sharing of lecturers, etc and this could be explored as a future possibility within the Regional Institutional Cooperation Project (RICP) initiative."

ISSA has also asked for the right of access to training in Indian languages and requested adequate funding for it.

## CHARACTER

And that exposure to artefacts of the Indian cultural paradigm be incorporated within the ambit of formative educational training.

The submission further proposes that the cultural artefacts (Fine arts, Music, Dance and Drama) within the Indocentric paradigm afford a unique character to a region such as KwaZulu-Natal and that such characterisation along with the products of other cultures could be exploited by the tourist industry.

THE LEADER, 7 JULY 1995

# Bid to entrench Hindus' rights

## Leader Reporter

IN a strong bid to get their voice heard, the Hindu community has submitted a memorandum to the Constitution Committee raising wide-ranging issues for incorporation in the new constitution.

The document submitted by the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha an affiliate of the South African Hindu Maha Sabha, among other issues asks for the recognition of Diwali as a holiday for Hindus and that Hindu religious education be offered at schools.

It asks for equal status and recognition for all Indian languages in terms of syllabus and curriculum and the inclusion of contributions made by Indians to the social, political and economic development of South Africa in the general history syllabus at all schools.

### TEACHING

It is also proposed that the Department of Education and Culture make funds available to community based organisations for the teaching of Indian music and dance.

It asks for an increase in the time allocated for Indian programmes on television and radio, 60% of which the proposal suggests, should be presented in the Indian languages.

The memorandum also suggests that private enterprise in the form of commercial radio stations or purchase of air time on State services be al-

## MEMO TO CONSTITUTION BODY

lowed.

In matters pertaining to customary and traditional law, they propose that the authority of Hindu priests be recognised as marriage officers.

Established priest academics be recognised by the relevant Government departments and the Hindu marriage ceremonies performed by the aforesaid priests enjoy

legal recognition.

It concludes that where within democratic structures it is not feasible for the Indian minority group too be catered for on a national level, that funding be made available for community based initiatives that address these issues.

Dr B Rambilass, chairperson of the committee responsible for drafting the docu-

ment on behalf of the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, said the community had felt a growing need for its recognition in the eyes of the new constitution.

"The issue was raised at a convention of the Arya Youth League last month where it also met the approval of the SA Hindu Maha Sabha," who gave them the go-ahead, added Dr Rambilass.

THE LEADER, 28 APRIL 1995



# APS members witness child right's victory

By Jaspreet Kindra

"FOR that moment I lived what our forefathers and the indentured labourers must have experienced when they were lured by British colonists to countries such as South Africa, Trinidad, Guiana and Fiji," said Dr Bisram Rambilass, Deputy President of the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha (APS) of South Africa.

Dr Rambilass was amongst the 12 members of the APS who witnessed four bonded child labourers walk to their freedom in India last month.

The APS were guests of Swami Agnivesh, president of the Bandhua Mazdoor Mukti Morcha (Bonded Labour Liberation Front) in the state of Haryana.

"It was a very moving emotional experience for me, when two of the boys' father Mayan Mathoo, broke into Bhojpur to give me the details as to how the children were lured from the village," said Dr Rambilass.

The boys - Ajay Pasvan, 9, Mahendra Rajapathi (Jati-Kumar), 0, Basant Kumar Mehta (Jati-Kori), 12 and Ajay Mehta (Jati-Kori), 16, were originally from a village called Olagatherwa in Bihar.

"The boys were in a miserable state and had

a horrifying tale to tell. They were dressed in rags and had bruises all over their bodies, which they told us were as a result of being beaten up by a *sirka* (a thin metal rod with sharp edges).

"They were given a dry roti each with salt twice a day, a bit of dal was thrown in sometimes as a 'big favour'."

He added, the boys who were the last batch of children to have been freed from that particular factory were not allowed to see the "light of the day" and were forced to sleep on the premises.

The children found their way to the factory and their present predicament when a tout from the carpet weaving factory came to their village three years ago.

He told the villagers that his factory wanted to teach the youngsters some skills, which would then enable them to send back a monthly income to their respective families.

## DESPERATION

Adds Dr Rambilass, "The father told me that out of sheer desperation he decided to leave two of his sons at the factory in Haryana.

"But when he didn't hear from his sons for almost a year, he started making enquiries. He wasn't allowed to meet them.

"When trips to the police station and the various government agencies proved futile, he got in touch with one

of the social activists from the Morcha."

Since then, the Morcha had been trying to get the factory to release the boys.

"And that was a difficult task, for one had to prove that the boys were indeed in bonded labour.

But the activists were persistent and they kept at it for two years, until they were freed last month.

"For each child that is freed, the Government of India provides the family with some financial aid to invest in an income generating source such as a rickshaw or a buffalo," explained Dr Rambilass.

## SADDENED

What really struck him and the other members of the APS was the fact that the practice is still alive in India even after more than 150 years and the fact that other Indians are responsible for it.

"It saddens one's heart. I would like to appeal to all the Indians in South Africa to help to eradicate this problem in India, I think we owe it to them."

South Africa incidentally is also battling with problems arising out of the huge number of street children that inhabit its roadsides.

There have been a number of instances when these children have been subject to exploitation and maltreatment which often forces them to make a career in crime, adding to the nation's already burgeoning problem.

# HINDU STUDIES INTRODUCED INTO NATAL CURRICULUM

## Leader Reporter

AT least ten schools in Durban will be offering Hindu studies by the end of this month, as part of a pilot project to give pupils an opportunity to explore their religion.

According to Nagoor Bissetty, PRO for the province's Education and Culture Department, depending on the success of the project, the subject would be introduced in all the schools by next year.

The department had set up an eight-member committee to formulate the syllabus for the subject at the beginning of this year.

The committee comprised Dr Tillayvel Naidu, Department of Religious Studies, University of Durban-Westville (UDW), Dr Bisram Rambilass, Dept of Indian Languages, UDW, Mrs Ushaben Desai, Soorat Hindu Association, Mrs Dhanlila Narsi, Gujarati subject ad-

visor, Mr M B Reddy, Telegu subject advisor, Dr Varijakshi Prabhakaran, Dept of Indian Languages, UDW, Mr Archie Hirasen, South African Tamil Federation and Mr M R Ramkaran, International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON).

The syllabus applicable for standards

from I to V is based on the Hindu scriptures and includes interpretations by various saints and scholars of the faith.

The aim is to make the pupils aware of Hinduism in respect of its history, scripture, teachings, leaders and organisations which would enable them to appreciate its con-

tribution to the world in spiritual and secular terms.

The syllabus comprises a basic introduction to Hinduism, modes of worship, forms of God, the Hindu ethos, besides covering the basic principles, festivals, important saints and scholars and literature on the subject.

THE LEADER, 11 AUGUST 1995

