

● youth

Projects on track in education, sport, scriptures

# New network aims for Hindu unity

TENESHIA NAIDOO

A NEW Hindu youth group has been formed to root out intolerance towards subreligions within the faith.

The Hindu Youth Network (HYN), which was launched in Chatsworth yesterday, is the brainchild of Pragasen Pillay.

Pillay said the aim of the group was to groom future religious leaders. He believed such a national body would help unite Hindu youth irrespective of differences in their rituals or linguistic and cultural outlook.

"The different subgroups within Hinduism are not united. Hindi-, Tamil-, Telugu- and Gujarati-speaking people are all working towards their own goals."

Several Hindu youth groups around the country have joined.

Pillay, 32, said if they formed one body they could more effectively address issues affecting the youth such as drugs, HIV and violence.

He said religious organisations had not invested in developing the youth and as a result there was a lack of young Hindu leaders.

The organisation aims to address intolerance within Hinduism and the way people view different subreligions such as Sai and Hare Krishna organisations.



ONE FAITH: There is a call for Hinduism to be more inclusive of groups like the Hare Krishna movement and for tolerance to be taught from an early age

Picture: JACKIE CLAUSEN

Pillay added they were taking in members as young as five years old. He said if the organisation could teach a person to respect and appreciate different sectors within Hinduism from an early age, they could eventually become a guiding

light and root out intolerance.

"When a child becomes a teenager, he has already developed his character and societal thinking has affected him.

"I have previously worked with youth from all ages. I found in our

religious groups it's hard to mould the youth when they are teenagers but at five it's easier," said Pillay.

The HYN, which will target people between the ages of five and 35, will initiate projects in education, health, sport,



The biggest part of why we formed is the unity factor. Different subgroups within Hinduism are not united. They are all working towards their own goals

spirituality, the environment, the scriptures and philosophy.

Pillay said there were "bigger battles" to fight in the community and urged local temples to come up with innovative ideas for activities which involved young people.

"It's a real battle but I think if you can unite the youth it will be a guiding light for the leadership and (other) organisations, who will realise that if we can come together and propagate the right values through community initiatives, then why not them?"

SA Hindu Maha Sabha president Ashwin Trikamjee said the organisation welcomed efforts to bring about Hindu awareness and unity.

"We will be happy to assist them in whatever way we can. The Maha Sabha has a youth wing but it is still evolving," he said.