

## **Religion becoming extinct in NZ - study**

19 AUG - A study has reportedly found that religion is set for extinction in nine countries.

Presented at an American Physical Society meeting in Dallas (Texas, USA), this study reportedly listed these countries as: Australia, Austria, Canada, Czech Republic, Finland, Ireland, Netherlands, New Zealand and Switzerland.

This study titled "*Modeling the Decline of Religion*," by Richard Wiener (University of Arizona, USA), Haley Yaple (Northwestern University, USA), and Daniel Abrams (Northwestern University), points out that societies in which the perceived utility of not adhering is greater than the utility of adhering, religion will be driven toward extinction. People claiming no religious affiliation constitute the fastest growing religious minority in many countries throughout the world. It is said that in Czech Republic, about 60% identify themselves as non-affiliated to religion.

Hindu statesman Rajan Zed, in a statement in Nevada (USA) today, suggested to organizations and leaders of various world religions and denominations to make religion more vibrant, attractive and engaging if they wanted to keep their people in God's fold.

Zed, who is president of Universal Society of Hinduism, said that people with religion were increasing and we (religious leaders and organizations) were responsible for their alienation. Our efforts at social control, judgmentalism, stagnant approach, etc., might be turning them away resulting in many of them questioning belief in God, equating religion with fear, etc. Some of them, who still believed in God, were bypassing religion to reach God questioning the linkage between man made religions and God. "I just do good, I should be fine", many of them argued.

Rajan Zed pointed out that life was getting complex and distractions were increasing, so religion was slipping away from the priority list of many. Conventional style of dealing with spirituality and religion did not appear to be effectively working, especially with today's youth. Make it more exciting and challenging, Zed suggested.

We as religious leaders should live exemplary lives to add credibility to our preaching. Give them fresh answers without any religious stigma attached. Listen to what the people have to say before giving your opinion to them. Accept the people who and as they are. Make religion lively and not stagnant, Zed says.

If religious leaders and organizations do not attend to this challenge more effectively in this consumerist society, we can lose our youth to the other marketplace players, which are more powerful, attractive and vocal than religion and spirituality. Many youth appear to be bored from religion. Serving God does not have to be dull. For youth, make religion and do not force anything on them, Rajan Zed argues.

Zed stresses that youth is not hostile to religion. Religious leaders and organizations need rethinking and reflection and come up with creative and new practices, norms, and ideas to make their product more competitive.

A spiritual world will be a better place to live than a non-spiritual world, Rajan Zed adds.

The American Physical Society, headquartered in College Park (Maryland, USA) and founded in 1899 strives to be the leading voice for physics and an authoritative source of physics information for the advancement of physics and the benefit of humanity.