



Vishav(World) Sikh News



Volume 2, Number 7/8, July/August 1998

Monthly Newsletter of Vishav (World) Sikh Council - USA

A Representative Body of Sikh Institutions of America under the Patronage of Siri Akal Takhat Sahib

6863 Cloister Road, Toledo, Ohio 43617, USA

E-mail address: vsc-usa@unforgettable.com



Member Institutions

Sikh Missionary Center, Phoenix, AZ
Gurdwara Sahib Fremont, Fremont, CA
Guru Nanak Sikh Mission, Livingston, CA
Sikh Gurdwara of LA, North Hollywood, CA
Center of Sikh Studies, Santa Anna, CA
Colorado Singh Sabha, Englewood, CO
Guru Singh Sabha of Augusta, Augusta, GA
Sikh Religious Society of Chicago, Palatine, IL
Sikhs Serving America, Topeka, KS
Sikh Society of South, New Orleans, LA
New England Sikh Study Circle, Boston, MA
Guru Gobind Singh Foundation, Rockville, MD
Sikh Gurdwara of Michigan, Rochester Hills, MI
*Sikh Research and Educational Center,
Chesterfield, MO*
Sikh Gurdwara of North Carolina, Durham, NC
Garden State Sikh Association, Warren, NJ
Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Glenrock, NJ
Sikh Cultural Society Inc., Richmond Hills, NY
*Sikh Cultural & Educational Society of Western
New York, Williamsville, NY*
Sikh Forum of Long Island, Long Island, NY
*Sikh Youth Federation of North America, White
Plains, NY*
*Sikh Educational & Religious Foundation,
Dublin, OH*
Sikh Youth Federation of USA, Toledo, OH
Sikh Religious Society of Dayton, Dayton, OH
Guru Gobind Singh Society, Bedford, OH
*Guru Nanak Foundation of Greater Cleveland,
Richfield, OH*
Tristate Sikh Cultural Society, Monroeville, PA
Academy of Guru Granth Studies, Arlington, TX
Sikh Center of Gulf Coast, Houston, TX
*Gurdwara Singh Sabha of North Texas, Balch
Springs, TX*

AN APPEAL TO SUPPORT PEOPLE'S COMMISSION

The People's Commission, consisting of three reputed judges under the Chairmanship of retired Supreme Court of India Justice K.J. Reddy, was set up by the World Sikh Council on April 10, 1998. The commission will soon be starting their work of investigating human rights violations in Punjab. To support this project funds close to \$50,000 are required.

Vishav (World) Sikh Council – USA, the American region of the World Sikh Council, has set up a Human Rights Fund for this purpose. We would like to urge all the Sikhs living abroad to contribute generously by making their checks payable to Vishav Sikh Council – USA and mailing to 6863 Cloister Road, Toledo, Ohio 43617. The entire amount of this contribution will be sent to the World Sikh Council and will be spent solely for this worthwhile cause.

We would like to bring to your kind notice that Vishav Sikh Council – USA is the only organization authorized to collect funds on behalf of the World Sikh Council for this purpose. Brigadier Gurdip Singh, Secretary General of the World Sikh Council, has issued a warning to be ware of “some individuals/organizations who have on their own issued appeals to the Sikhs abroad for contributions in the name of the World Sikh Council.” These individuals / organizations are not authorized by the World Sikh Council to collect funds and that they will be dealt with severely by Sri Akal Takhat Sahib, he said.



Human Rights Conference Held in Washington

A Sikh Conference on human rights and education of Sikh children was held on the lawns of Guru Nanak Foundation Gurdwara Sahib on July 11, 1998. Sardar Inderjit Singh Jaijee, a reputed human rights activist and author of the book "Politics of Genocide," who was specially invited to address the gathering, gave details of many human rights violations in Punjab. Nearly 200,000 people have been killed, tortured and disappeared since the Operation Bluestar of 1984, according to Sardar Jaijee. He also brought to the notice of the participants the cases of suicides committed in the villages of Punjab due to indebtedness. Dr. Cynthia Keppley Mehmood, Professor of Anthropology at University of Maine and author of book "Fighting of Faith and Nation," appealed to Sikhs to get organized and oppose the worst kind of human rights violations by the Indian Government. Sardar Kuldeep Singh, President of Vishav Sikh Council – USA, emphasized the need for creating a good support system for the youth in order to keep Sikh spirit infused in them. He called upon the Sangat not to forget the sacrifices of innumerable martyrs of the Khalsa Panth, which directs us to move towards our goal. Two of the youth that spoke on the need to look after the problems of Sikh youths, stressed the need to establish a Sikh School. Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, President of Council of Khalistan spoke towards the end of the event. He criticized the present Akali Government for betraying the trust of Sikhs. They proved to be worse than the Congress Party governments of Harcharan Singh Brar and Rajinder Kaur Bhattal, he said. He emphasized that there is no other choice before the Sikhs but to work for the freedom of Khalistan. Sardarni Surinder Kaur Brar, President of Guru Nanak Foundation of America, thanked the organizers of the conference for their untiring efforts and the *pandal* full of enthusiastic audience for their patient hearing.

Report of Meetings with US Gurdwaras

Sardar Kuldeep Singh, President of Vishav Sikh Council-USA spent the entire month of July in meetings with committee members of the following Gurdwara Sahibs:

- Guru Nanak Foundation, MD
- Guru Gobind Singh Fndn., MD
- Sikh Forum Gurdwara, NY
- Glen Rock Gurdwara, NJ
- Freemont Gurdwara, CA
- El Sobrante Gurdwara, CA
- San Jose Gurdwara, CA
- Yuba City and Live Oak Gurdwaras, CA

Separate meetings were held with representatives of Sikh Youth of America, Babbar Khalsa, North America Akali Dal and Gurmat Chetna Lehar of California.

They were all requested to join Vishav Sikh Council and participate in strengthening this world organization. All of them promised to extend their full support for this Panthic cause. There was a serious concern about the Sava Lakh Sikh March that is being organized in Washington D.C. They were all of the opinion that the march should be organized with the support and active participation of all Sikh organizations of USA and that the organizing committee for the event must be selected by all the Gurdwaras of USA. They suggested that Vishav Sikh Council of America should do the co-ordination for the march.

Human Rights Seminar Organized at Columbia University

A well-planned seminar on Human Rights was held at Columbia University on July 18, 1998. Ms. Mary Pike, who has been defending Sardar Ranjit Singh Gill and Sardar Sukhmander Singh Sandhu for the past 12 years, gave some of the details of the case against her clients and did a superb job at conducting the Seminar. Dr. Ami Laws of Stanford University, California showed picture slides and gave details of tortures that have occurred in Punjab during the past few years. She gave an eye witness account which she gathered

during her trip of April 1997. Sardar Amar Singh Chahal, President of Lawyers for Human Rights, who came especially for the seminar, spoke on "Response of Indian Judiciary to Human Rights Violations in Punjab." He described how it is being made nearly impossible for the poor families of the victims to defend themselves as their cases are transferred to far off places. Sardar Inderjit Singh Jaijee, a well known human rights activist, spoke on the politics of genocide giving facts and figures to support his findings. Dr. Cynthia Keppley Mehmood, Professor of Anthropology, spoke about the Punjab conflict in context of human rights issues. Mr. Ram Narayan Kumar producer of documentary "Disappearances in Punjab" gave evidence of extra-judicial killings in Punjab: political background, bid for impunity and the campaign for the restitution of right to life. The meeting ended with concluding remarks by Dr. Gurcharan Singh of Marymount College, New York.

Pennsylvania Gurdwara Sahib Participates in Walk America 1998

More than 40 members of the Tri-State Sikh Cultural Society of Monroeville, PA participated in Walk America on April 26, 1998. The Tri-State Sikh Cultural Society is a member of Vishav (World) Sikh Council – USA.

Members of Congress Ask President Clinton to Protect Sikhs from Nuclear Holocaust

A bipartisan group of influential members of the US Congress, wrote a joint signed letter to President Bill Clinton on May 29, strongly supporting the President's action of imposing sanctions against India in response to its nuclear weapon tests. The letter signed by 19 members of the US Congress said, "*America has an obligation to do whatever it can to prevent India from sacrificing millions of Sikh lives in pursuit of its own ambitions. The only way to bring long term peace and stability to South Asia, and to maintain the sanctions, is*

to expose the Indian government's miserable record of ethnic cleansing against the Sikhs, Christians, Muslims, low cast and outcaste Hindus. America is also obligated under international law and by our own commitment to global democracy to support the peaceful, democratic, non-violent struggle for freedom and justice in Punjab, Khalistan. National self-determination in the Sikh homeland can serve as a buffer between India and Pakistan. We urge you to support an internationally-supervised plebiscite in Punjab, Khalistan so that its political future can be decided in a free and fair vote, the democratic way. We urge you to take these steps today to bring democracy, peace and stability to all people of South Asia."

Signers of the letter to the President included lead sponsor Representative Edolphus Towns (D-N.Y.), Government Operations Committee Chairman Dan Burton (R-Ind.), Rules Committee Chairman Gerald Solomon (R-N.Y.), Rep. Carlos Romero-Barcelo (D-Puerto Rico), Rep. John Doolittle (R-Cal.), Rep. Richard Pombo (R-Cal.), Rep. Dana Rohrabacher (R-Cal.), Rep. Cynthia McKinney (D-Ga.), Rep. Pete Stark (D-Cal.), Rep. Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R-Fla.), Rep. Peter King (R-N.Y.), Rep. Randy "Duke" Cunningham (R-Cal.), Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.), Rep. Philip M. Crane (R-Ill.), Rep. Roscoe Bartlett (R-Md.), Rep. Gregory Meeks (D-N.Y.), Rep. Bernard Sanders (I-Vt.), Rep. Silvestre Reyes (D-Tex.), and Rep. John Christensen (R-Neb.)

US Sikhs Respond to Nuclear Tests

The Fresno Bee (6/7/98) published a letter to the editor from the Sikh Council of Central California in which the Council denounced the Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests and called upon both nations not to embark on the road to nuclear catastrophe. The Council's letter said that "the nuclear arms race between India and Pakistan would spell disaster for the Indian sub-continent, especially the border states like Punjab, the Sikh homeland, and Kashmir (a predominantly Muslim

state), which would bear the brunt of any nuclear war. The people of Punjab suffered the most at the time of India's partition and the subsequent three wars fought between India and Pakistan since independence in 1947."

Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, President of Council of Khalistan, appeared on the Kay Henry Show on KWUN Radio One in Salt Lake City, UT on June 16 to discuss India's recent nuclear tests and its genocidal role against the Sikhs.

The Khalistan Affairs Center in Washington, DC issued three press releases relating to the nuclear tests. The Center issued an open letter to Dr. Henry Kissinger informing him of the concerns of Sikhs of Punjab. The Center also issued two press releases asking for tough economic sanctions against India for conducting nuclear tests.

The Hartford Courant (5/29/98) published an article in response to the recent nuclear tests by India and Pakistan. The article quoted Dr. Amarjit Singh Buttar of Connecticut as, "Pakistan has the right to do it. They have to develop ways to protect themselves from their archenemy (India)." Dr. Buttar also accused the current Indian government of repressing its nation's minority groups.

The San Francisco Chronicle (6/10/98) published a letter to the editor from Sardar Gurdial Singh of Vallejo criticizing the atomic tests by India and Pakistan. In the published letter, Sardar Gurdial Singh contends, "There is a political solution available. The USA leadership and the international community can exert influence and create a third sovereign state on the Indian subcontinent. The state of Punjab, populated by a majority of Sikhs in the middle of India and Pakistan, is such a possibility. Historically the Sikh nation was denied its rightful freedom by the British at the time of the division of British India in 1947. The Sikhs have no desire to live with India and they are already fighting for

freedom. The establishment of a sovereign Sikh state is a guarantee of peace and stability in that region."

Cartoon on Nuclear Tests Degrades Sikhs

The Columbus Dispatch, published from Columbus, Ohio printed a cartoon on May 29 depicting the recent nuclear test confrontation between India and Pakistan. The cartoon shows an Indian and a Pakistani each holding snake baskets with nuclear cobras snakes coming out of the baskets. Although Sikhs are only 2% of India's population and Sikhs have responded worldwide by protesting against the nuclear tests, yet the cartoon shows the Indian as a Sikh man. Such unfair characterization is demeaning to Sikhs who largely support nuclear non-proliferation and oppose nuclear testing.

Article Highlights Repression of Sikhs in India

Insight on the News (6/22/98) published an article analyzing the recent nuclear tests by India. The article written by Mr. James P. Lucier highlighted the problems being faced by minority nations within India. The article said, "India meanwhile has conducted ruthless repression against the Sikhs in Punjab, keeping that territory under a bitter martial law that has a long history of official murder, torture and disappearance of its enemies." Referring to Operation Bluestar, the article says, "It is as though Mussolini had blown up St. Peter's Basilica and burnt the Vatican library on the grounds that the Swiss Guards were an obstacle to the security of fascism." Further, the article contends that "India knows that in Punjab, the majority is Sikh and the majority Sikhs would want to resurrect the late 18th century empire of Sarkar-e-Khalsa as a nation called Khalistan."

Syndicated Columnist Recognizes Sikh Freedom Movement

In a widely published editorial titled "The Proliferation of Nations," nationally-syndicated columnist and ABC News commentator George F. Will wrote that "Indian Sikhs on the

border with Pakistan seek an independent Khalistan. There is Gorkha secessionism in the Himalayan foothills and Islamic separatism in Kashmir.” The article was published in the following newspapers:

- The Washington Post, 6/25/98
- The Times Union, Albany, NY, 6/25/98
- The Post and Courier, Charleston, 6/25/98
- The Times-Picayune, 6/25/98
- The Plain Dealer, 6/25/98
- The New York Post, 6/25/98
- International Herald Tribune, France, 6/25/98
- The Houston Chronicle, 6/25/98
- The Fresno Bee, 6/25/98
- The Chattanooga Times, 6/25/98
- The Baltimore Sun, 6/25/98
- The Arkansas Democrat, 6/25/98
- The Buffalo News, 6/26/98
- Chicago-Sun Times, 6/27/98
- The Augusta Chronicle, 6/28/98
- The Commercial Appeal, Memphis, 6/28/98
- Sacramento Bee, 6/28/98

The Council of Khalistan issued a press release on June 29 expressing appreciation for a prominent journalist like George Will having taken notice of the Sikh nation’s struggle for a free, democratic, and sovereign Khalistan. The New York Post dated July 4, 1998 published a letter-to-the-editor by Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, President of Council of Khalistan, thanking George Will for mentioning the Sikh struggle to liberate Khalistan in his widely published editorial.

Protest Demonstrations on

Anniversary of Operation Bluestar
Several demonstrations by Sikhs have been reported from the US, Canada, Europe, Australia and Asia, on the 14th anniversary of Operation Bluestar. Over 20,000 Sikhs are said to have been murdered by Indian security forces in the June 1984 brutal attack on more than 38 Gurdwaras throughout Punjab.

The Council of Khalistan organized a protest rally on June 6 in Washington, DC. The demonstration started from Lafayette Park (across from the White

House) and the protestors marched to the Indian Embassy. The demonstration was covered by CNN. Sikh demonstrators from Washington suburbs, North Carolina, Florida, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey and Mississippi participated in the protest rally. The Council of Khalistan is leading the peaceful democratic and non-violent struggle to liberate Khalistan from Indian occupation. More information on the activities of the Council is available at <http://www.khalistan.com>

The Sikh Sangat of California organized its annual protest gathering in front of the Indian Consulate in San Francisco, California on June 5.

The Sikh community of Toronto, Canada organized a protest rally on June 7 at Nathan Philip Square in Toronto.

A protest demonstration was held by the Sikh community of England on June 7 at Hyde Park, London. The protestors marched to the Indian High Commission.

NPR Hosts Radio Program on Partition of Punjab

On May 31, National Public Radio broadcast a program dealing with the survivors of the 1947 partition of Punjab during its All Things Considered program. Sardarni Harcharan Singh of Amritsar presented the Sikh perspective.

Sikh Wins Landmark Discrimination Case Against US Postal Service

According to news report published in Federal Human Resources Week (5/18/98), U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has decided a discrimination case in favor of Sardar Agyakar Singh Kochhar. The appellant had contended he had been discriminated by the US Postal Service because of his turban (religious) and Punjabi/Indian (national) origin because the agency hired individuals with lower test scores on at least four occasions between May 1990 and September 1993. The EEO Commission found the discrimination complaint valid

and ordered the US Postal Service to retroactively place the appellant in the first position for which he would have been selected after the first interview with full seniority, appropriate back pay and benefits. The Commission directed the US Postal Service to provide the responsible agency managers with EEO training and to post a notice of the discrimination.

Sikh Plays in NCAA Golf Championship

The Washington Post (5/28/98) reported that Sardar Hardeep Singh, a Sikh born in Kenya and a student in Texas-Arlington, made it to the leader board with a 4-under-par-68 in the first round of the NCAA golf championships in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Amritdhari Sikh Not to be Charged for Carrying Kripaan

The Alameda County district attorney’s office has decided not to prosecute Sardar Anand-Gurdas Singh, a 35-year old Amritdhari Sikh, who was forcibly detained at the Oakland Amtrak station in California on April 1 and his Kripaan forcibly removed. According to a report published in the San Francisco Chronicle (6/5/98), Oakland police spokesman Arturo Bautista said that the department is investigating whether the officer followed proper procedure. The spokesperson said, “we encourage officers to enforce the letter of the law, but we also encourage them to enforce the spirit of the law.” The victim’s lawyer, Robert Carrow was quoted as saying, “It’s not even a close issue. There’s a First Amendment right to practice religion.”

Articles relating to this incident were published by San Francisco Chronicle (6/2/98, 6/5/98).

This tragic incident further highlights the necessity of a nationwide campaign by Sikhs for an exemption for the *Kripaan* in the laws and codes under which law enforcement agencies operate.

Sikh Driver Leads NY Cab Association

Sardar Balvinder Singh, a Sikh who had fled to the US due to persecution in India to become a cab driver in New York city and has now become one of the top leaders of United Yellow Cab Drivers Association in New York, was profiled in the New York Times dated 6/9/98. The article contends that in the last decade, the turban has become a symbol of the New York city taxicab driver, just as a Brooklyn accent was four decades ago. According the New York Times, Balvinder Singh had fled India following the 1984 Delhi massacres by Hindu mobs in which five of his cousins had been brutally murdered.

Newspaper Highlights Milwaukee Sikh Couple

Sardarni Kanwaljit Kaur and Sardar Harbhajan Singh of Milwaukee were profiled as successful Sikh immigrants in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel dated 6/23/98. The couple owns and operates a gas station and convenience store in the city. According to Swaranjit Singh Arora, Professor of Economics at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Sikhs own and operate about 125 gas stations in the Milwaukee County and half of these are located in the city of Milwaukee. The Sikh population of the city is about 700, which is approximately 20% of the area's Asian population. A spokesperson for the African-American Chamber of Commerce, Mileka Aljuwani said, "blacks have fewer problems with Sikh merchants because they've done a better job at race relations than other groups." "They don't seem to harbor the same notions about African-Americans. They make more of an attempt to enter into a situation in a positive manner." The newspaper reported that blacks who were interviewed outside a Sikh owned Citgo gas station said that they did not have any conflicts with the station's owner's or its employees.

Interfaith Activities

The following inter-religious activities, events and newspaper articles have been reported recently:

- Pope John Paul II has called for a meeting of leaders of world religions in Rome next year in preparation for the year 2000.
- The Christian Science Monitor published a news article on 6/18/98 about the establishment of world faiths in the US. Several interfaith organizations which have developed in the last years were profiled.
- Chicago Tribune (6/19/98) profiled the Metropolitan Chicago Inter-religious Initiative which was launched in Fall of 1996 with the cooperation of 12 faith including the Sikh faith. The Sikh community of Palatine is an active member of the group. The article quotes Caryl Derenfeld, a member of a Reform Jewish Congregation Temple Chai, saying that "she knew virtually nothing about the Sikh faith before the program began. Now she sees a parallel between the historical persecution faced by the Sikhs and that faced by the Jewish people."
- According to a news report published in the Desert News (6/9/98), many religious and interfaith organizations including the National Sikh Center, have joined a coalition supporting a new religious freedom bill being introduced by Senator Orrin Hatch, R-Utah. The proposed bill aims to restore much of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which Senator Hatch had earlier written and passed – but was overturned by the court last year. The new bill would allow government to interfere with religion only when it has an overriding, compelling reason – such as to protect health and safety – but then to do so only in the least restrictive manner possible.
- An interfaith array of religious leaders extolled the family as the fundamental element of world peace at the Madison Square Garden on June 13 at a marriage rededication ceremony for million of couples, many watching by satellite worldwide. The event was titled "Blessing'98" and was sponsored by the Family Federation for World Peace. Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh and Jewish faiths were represented at the event. (Washington Times, 6/14/98)
- The 13th International Peace Prayer Day organized by Sikh Dharma International was held on June 20 at Ram Das Puri in the Jemez Mountains. According to Santa Fe New Mexico (6/21/98) about 1,000 people attended the event. Members of several faiths including Sikhs, Native Americans, Hindus, Jews and Christians attended the event.
- The Los Angeles Times (6/21/98, 6/22/98) published a two part article in which it detailed the diverse faith traditions that have taken roots in the US. The article quoted Paul Griffiths, Professor of philosophy of religions at the University of Chicago as, "more religions are being practiced in the United States than any place else," noting that more than 200 denominations coexist in the US. The article quoted Sardar Kirtan Singh Khalsa of West Los Angeles who gave up his Italian Catholic faith to become a Sikh.
- The Interfaith Alliance of Central California celebrated US Independence day on July 4 at California State University, Fresno by organizing an interfaith pancake breakfast. People from many faiths, including Sikhs, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims and Christians, attended the event. (Fresno Bee, 7/3/98)
- The Council of Churches of Greater Ohio organized and sponsored an interfaith symposium on June 18 as a part of its Great Decisions Series. Sikh, Christian and Islam faiths were represented at the symposium. The Sikh perspective was presented by Sardar Ravinder Singh of Westerville, Ohio.

US Sikh Population

Recently several US newspapers published articles relating to different faith traditions in the US. Many of these articles estimated the population of Sikhs in the US as follows:

- The Los Angeles Times (6/21/98), Sacramento Bee (6/28/98), Columbus Dispatch (7/2/98) reported that the US Sikh population had increased from about 1,000 in 1970 to approximately 220,000 today. By the year 2000, the Sikh population in the US is projected to be 0.22 percent of the total US population.

- The Christian Science Monitor (6/18/98) contended that although the US census does not record religious affiliations, but some 1996 estimates count 363,000 Sikhs.

Annual Meeting of ASP

The 14th Annual Meeting of Association of Sikh Professionals (ASP) was held in June in Los Angeles, CA. Grants were approved for Sikh Education Aid Fund, Fateh Group, Travel Expense for Camps, Sikh Foundation (Museum Project), SMART Group, Sardar Jaideep Singh (role of Sikhs in W.W.II). More

information on the activities of ASP can be accessed at

<http://www.maboli.com/asp>

Sikh Scientist Profiled

Sardar Gurdev Singh Khush, Head of the Plant Breeding, Genetics and Biochemistry Division of the International Rice Research Institute was profiled in the June 29 international issue of Business Week. His goal: "to feed all of Asia's poor so they have a chance to look beyond their rice bowls." Gurdev had won the prestigious World Food Prize in 1996.

NEWS FROM PUNJAB (HOMELAND OF THE SIKHS)

Terms of Reference for People's Commission

The terms of reference of the three member People's Commission, set up by the World Sikh Council in cooperation with the Committee for Coordination on Disappearances in Punjab, were released to the press on July 12. The commission would examine complaints of violations, including illegal abductions, custodial deaths and illegal cremations from 1979 to 1997 and whether state agencies or individuals have prima facie committed any offense under the law of the land or international law. According to Indian Express (6/13/98), the commission will also take up cases of alleged human right violations in states neighboring Punjab including Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi. The first sitting of the commission is tentatively scheduled for the first week of August in Chandigarh.

Anti-Nuclear Protest Rally by Sikhs

About 2,000 Sikhs marched through the streets of Delhi on July 6 to protest the recent nuclear tests by India. The rally was organized by Shromani Akali Dal (Mann) party and was reported by The Associated Press (7/6/98) to be the biggest nuclear protest in India since the May nuclear weapon tests. The protestors consisting of men, women and children, marched from a Delhi Gurdwara Sahib saying that their

frontier homeland of Punjab would turn into a "nuclear battlefield" if there were a war between India and Pakistan. Protestors carried placards with slogans, "Sikhs condemn Hindu Bombs," "Please do not kill our children," and "Don't turn the green fields of Punjab into killing fields." Several marchers were reported to have declared that they were Sikhs not Indians. Simranjit Singh Mann, President of Akali Dal (Amritsar) said in a speech to the protestors, "we don't want Punjab state to be another Hiroshima." A memorandum was submitted to the United Nations in which Mann contended, "Sikhs have been long exposed to the belligerent stands of the Indian state on all issues affecting their rights. Since 1947, the Sikhs have witnessed a multitude of attempts to destroy the identity of the Sikh people. Today, while we are living as a colonial people subjugated by India, the Sikh spirit is still alive and responsive to the repressive measures of the India state." Coverage of the march was provided by the Associated Press (7/6/98), United Press International (7/6/98), and Agence France Presse (7/6/98).

Sikh League Opposes N-Arms Race

A seminar organized by the Sikh League in Jalandhar on June 7 called on India and Pakistan to recognize the dangers of the recent nuclear tests in the sub-continent and called for a consecrated effort to oppose the arms

race. Details of the seminar titled "Nuclear test and Sikhs" were published by Indian Express dated 6/8/98. The League also criticized the Akali government led by Prakash Singh Badal in what it called "acquiescing in the central government's dangerous decision to conduct nuclear tests." The Sikh League President was reported to have said that the survival of Sikhs was in danger due to the current policies of the Akali government in Punjab.

Akali Dal Badal Supports N-Tests

Punjab Chief Minister Prakash Singh Badal and his son Sukhbir Singh Badal, a Minister of State for Industries in the central government, are reported to have declared that the Akali Dal Badal party supports the recent nuclear tests conducted by India under orders from the BJP led central government. The Akali Dal Badal party is an ally of the BJP government in Punjab as well as the center. Both the Badals denied any inner-party dissensions on the issue. These remarks were published in Times of India dated 5/22/98 and 6/7/98.

Tohra Exonerated of Violating Hukamnaama

The Jathedar of Siri Akal Takhat Sahib along with four other Singh Sahibs exonerated Sardar Gurharan Singh Tohra, President of SGPC, of the charges of violating the

Hukamnaama against Nirankaris. The decision was taken on June 25 in Amritsar. According to Times of India (6/26/98), the five Jathedars held that the photograph and its negative, showing Tohra at a Nirankari meeting in Patiala, submitted by Sardar Amrinder Singh were "false." According to Indian Express (6/29/98), Singh Sahib Bhai Ranjit Singh, Jathedar of Siri Akal Takhat Sahib, said that no case was made out against Congress leader Amrinder Singh for attempting to mislead the five Singh Sahibs by producing fabricated evidence.

Following the April 13, 1978 killing of 18 unarmed Sikh protesters by Nirankaris, a Hukamnaama had been issued from Siri Akal Takhat Sahib directing Sikhs not to have any social interaction with Nirankaris for their blasphemous activities towards the Sikh religion.

Sikh Historian Passes Away

Professor Harbans Singh, an eminent Sikh historian, died on May 30. He was cremated with full state honors on June 1 at Patiala.

Sikh Artist Profiled

Devender Singh, an artist who specializes in transforming Sikh history into delightful compositions on pastels was profiled in the Indian Express dated 6/22/98. His paintings are exhibited in Sikh museums at Anandpur Sahib, Amritsar and Paonta Sahib. Devender has been approached by many Sikhs from around the world to display his art work. Devender's pastels became popular with the calendars of his art work published earlier by Punjab and Sind Bank and Markfed.

All Punjab Loans Waived: Minister Punjab Finance Minister Kanwaljit Singh has said that the entire special term loan granted to Punjab had been waived. He said that the state was not expected to repay the principal or the interest on it. These remarks were published in Indian Express dated 6/19/98 in response to the Union Finance Minister's statement in the Rajya Sabha that though former PM Gujral had announced the loan

waiver, he had not specified the amount.

Pre-Natal Tests Continue in Punjab

Women Against Oppression, a non-governmental organization has filed a public interest petition before the Punjab Human Rights Commission, claiming that sex determination tests and subsequent extermination of female fetus continue to be practiced on a large scale in Punjab in violation of the law banning it. Expressing concern at the alarming trend in favor of male children, the petition points out that of the 10 Indian districts with the lowest female child ratio, three -- Bhatinda, Faridkot and Amritsar -- are in Punjab. (Times of India, 6/20/98)

Badal Resents Advani's Stand on Chandigarh

Prakash Singh Badal, Chief Minister of Punjab, is reported to have taken serious note of the statement of India's Home Minister L.K. Advani that Chandigarh would continue to remain a Union Territory. According to Indian Express (6/11/98), Badal asserted that it was high time that Punjab, as a matter of right, was restored independent charge of its capital so as to undo the injustice done to it by successive governments.

Record Low Polling in Tarn Taran

The parliamentary elections in Tarn Taran district in June 3 showed lowest ever voter turnout of only 40 percent. According to Indian Express dated 6/4/98, certain villages had en block abstained from polling in protest against the failure of the ruling party to fulfill their promises. The newspaper reporter visited at least two villages (Sultanwind and Dau) where the voters boycotted the elections. The Akali Dal (Badal) candidate, Tarlochan Singh Tur, won the Tarn Taran re-election. The Tarn Taran parliamentary re-election was necessitated after ruling Akali Dal MP Prem Singh Lalpura refused to take oath following his differences with Badal.

Pillion Riding Sikh Women in Delhi Still Required to Wear Helmets

According to Times of India dated 6/3/98, the Delhi traffic police is

enforcing the mandatory helmet rule for all two-wheeler pillion riders including Sikh women. Although the Home Minister of India as well as city government officials have repeatedly proclaimed that Sikh women are exempted from the helmet rule, yet a traffic police official was quoted by the newspaper as "we have received no such advice or order. We are still committed to the high court order which makes helmets mandatory for pillion riders."

Punjab DGP Admits Police Atrocities

Mr. P.C. Dogra, Director General of Punjab police, in a report published in Indian Express (6/2/98) is reported to have admitted that 35 cases of alleged police atrocities had been brought to the notice of the government in the last two months (April & May of 1998). He further disclosed that cases were registered against police officials in three cases while two officers faced departmental action. He also said that a case had been registered against D.S. Mohi, a retired police officer, from whom an AK-47 rifle had been recovered.

CBI Probe Sought into Murder of Jathedar Kaunke

The Committee for Coordination on Disappearances in Punjab demanded an inquiry by the CBI into the torturous murder by Punjab police of Singh Sahib Bhai Gurdev Singh Kaunke, ex-Jathedar of Siri Akal Takhat Sahib. According to Indian Express (6/6/98), a deputation of the committee met with Chief Minister Prakash Singh Badal and submitted a memorandum making this demand.

The Punjab government is reported to have declined to let CBI investigate the matter but instead ordered an inquiry by Mr. B.P. Tewari, an ADP of Punjab police.

It is alleged that Jathedar Kaunke was illegally picked up by Jagraon police officials from his village in Jagraon subdivision of Ludhiana on December 25, 1992. The police authorities are reported to have tortured him up to January 1, 1993. Later the police authorities claimed that Singh Sahib

had escaped from police custody on January 2, 1993. This false claim of the police was widely condemned. Singh Sahib is reported to have been tortured to death while in custody of the police and the escape story fabricated by Punjab police to cover up his extra-judicial murder.

Compensation for 1992

Disappearance of Sikh Journalist

In a significant development, India's National Human Rights Commission has recommended a CBI inquiry into the 1992 disappearance by Punjab police of Avtar Singh Mander, a Sikh journalist of Punjabi newspaper Ajit, and has asked the state of Punjab to pay Rs. 5 lakhs to the victims 76-year-old father as immediate interim relief. The commission has expressed dissatisfaction over the investigations by Punjab police. The victim is alleged to have been picked up by Punjab police officials in 1992 and is feared to have been tortured to death or killed in a faked encounter by police because he supported the Sikh freedom movement in some of his published newspaper articles.

Eye-Witness Details Killing of Brother of Bhai Panjwar

According to a published news report in Des Pardes (7/10/98), SPO Kuldip Singh, an eyewitness in the infamous Khalra murder case, has detailed to CBI the disappearance of Sardar Rajwinder Singh, brother of Bhai Paramjit Singh Panjwar. The victim is alleged to have been picked up by SHO Chabbal and tortured at the local police station. He was then handed over to SHO of Tarn Taran Sadar police station who in turn handed him over to SHO of Kang police station after which the whereabouts of the victim are unknown.

Times Publishes Disturbing Article on Apostasy among Sikh Youth

The Times Magazine (6/13/98) published an article detailing the recent trend in Punjab of Sikh youth cutting their *Kes*. Time correspondent Christopher Thomas reported, "the beard and turban are disappearing among many young people brought up on rock music, television and videos, to the despair of parents lamenting

the betrayal of Guru Gobind Singh's 300-year old dictum against hair cutting. The Guru wanted Sikhs to look distinctive so they would not be subsumed by Hinduism, from which they sprang. Now many turbanless Sardarjis, as Sikhs are known locally, look the same as Hindus – to an outside eye anyway, since Punjabis swear they can distinguish one another with or without a turban."

Suicides by Sikh Farmers Continue

Indian Express dated 6/17/98 published a news report in which it highlighted several recent cases of suicide by Sikh farmers:

- Karnail Singh of village Gill Kurd in Bathinda owed Rs. 6 lakhs to moneylenders and banks. Two weeks after failing to sell his 11 acres land, he committed suicide by consuming insecticide on May 30.
- On May 14, Kuljit Singh, a farmer of Sangrur district, hacked his wife and minor son to death and swallowed Celphos tablets because he could not repay a Rs. 8 lakhs loan.
- On May 15, Mohan Singh of village Teona near Bathinda threw himself before a running train and died. He had borrowed Rs. 1.5 lakhs from a bank and arthitya but his crops had failed.
- On May 20, Jasbhakar Singh, also a resident of village Teona, died by consuming Celphos tablets due to mounting debt and interest.
- On June 11, successive crop failures and unpaid loans drove Kirpal Singh of village Langowal to take Celphos tablets. Soon after his funeral, his wife administered poison to their infant son and herself and both of them died.
- Karam Singh, a resident of village Theh Bhudha, Amritsar, is reported to have committed suicide after slitting the throats of his two daughters. Karam Singh is reported to have been under severe debt.
- Two Sikh brothers of village Jodhpur near Sangrur, Gurtej Singh (30) and Naib Singh (18),

committed suicide due to financial hardship by consuming celphos tablets during the last week of June (Des Pardes, 7/17/98).

A study on rural credit conducted by the Institute of Development and Communications was reported in Vishav Sikh News (Vol. 2, # 4, April, 1998). That report had found that 90 percent of farmers in the state of Punjab -- mostly Sikhs -- had taken short-term loans to carry out agricultural operations; the total indebtedness of the state's farmers was Rs. 5,700 crores; and 46 percent of these loans were taken at interest rates ranging from 24% to 36%.

More Imposters Arrested for Extorting Money in Name of Babbar Khalsa

The Delhi police is reported to have arrested two persons on charges of writing fake letters of ransom to two Delhi businessmen on behalf of Babbar Khalsa International. According to Indian Express dated 7/2/98, those accused include Gurmukh Singh and Gurdev Singh.

Many other such groups have been active in Punjab extorting money in the name of Khalistan with the alleged direct and indirect help of the state government and the police. Earlier incidents of such fake extortions in the name of Khalistani organizations have been reported. According to Des Pares (4/17/98) Punjab police had recently arrested two persons in the last week of April for extorting money using fake letterheads of Babbar Khalsa. Also, Jora Singh of Almoha had been arrested as a KCF imposter. Earlier, Nirvail Singh Naval, a fake KCF activist and a close confidant of Youth Congress leader Maninder Singh Bitta, had been arrested on 6/17/97. All these incidents have been reported in the past issues of Vishav Sikh News.

"Unidentified Dead Bodies" are Speaking

The June 1998 issue of Spokesman published an editorial about the recent revelations regarding the alleged

faked encounter death of thousands of Sikh youths and the illegal cremation of their dead bodies as “unidentified” by Punjab police. The editorial remarked “the process of hiding the truth behind black clouds of falsehood is still continuing as it did in 1984, and the task of reversing it, which the Akali government had pledged to undertake, will now have to be accomplished by the people themselves.”

Police Concocts Jail Escape Attempt: Implicates Sikh HR Workers

The Committee for Coordination of Disappearances in Punjab is reported to have submitted a memorandum to Chief Minister of Punjab, in which the Committee has questioned the authenticity of the Punjab police claim of having thwarted an attempt by militants to free the prime accused in ex-Chief Minister Beant Singh’s murder. According to Hindustan Times (7/7/98), Justice (retired) Ajit Singh Bains and senior advocate Navkiran Singh alleged that the Punjab police claim was false. They alleged that the police had implicated human rights activists in the false case to demoralize them. The committee alleged that Punjab police had unlawfully abducted, tortured and implicated innocent youths who were helping the committee to get on record the cases of police atrocities before the People’s Commission. They alleged that several of the Burail accused were held in illegal custody days before their arrest was officially shown in the FIR. Giving the example of Satnam Singh, the committee alleged that he had been picked up by police at least four days prior to his formal arrest on July 12. The committee alleged that the reason behind this false police exercise was to demoralize human right activists who were actively pursuing the case of disappearances of Sikh youths in Punjab. Navkiran Singh said, “the police is falsely creating a fear of psychosis of terrorism revival only to ensure that their extraordinary powers are not withdrawn.” According to Indian Express (7/24/98), the Committee had demanded a high level inquiry by the Punjab Human

Rights Commission into the recent arrest of a number of Sikhs and human right workers for allegedly reviving militancy in the state.

Lawyers for Human Rights (LHR) has also alleged that the police story of the escape attempt at Burail jail was concocted.

Punjab Human Rights Commission has asked the state government to submit a report regarding the alleged torture and wrongful detention of suspected co-conspirators in the Burail-jail break attempt. Lawyers for Social Action had approached the commission to investigate the matter.

On June 11, Punjab police claimed to have busted a gang of militants, who they allege, had planned to help hardcore terrorists escape from Burail jail near Chandigarh. Those arrested in the case included: Satnam Singh of village Salimpur near Morinda, Baljit Singh, Manmohan Singh (Ropar district), Paramdeep Singh (Ropar district), Balwinder Singh (Ropar district), Rajinder Singh Neeta (Ropar district), Jaswant Singh (Fatehgarh Sahib district) and Kanwaljit Singh Dhami (Gurdaspur). According to Times of India (6/20/98), Punjab police DGP P.C. Dogra has said that a local advocate Daljit Singh Rajput, chairman of the Human Rights Democratic Front Jaspal Singh Dhillon, SGPC member Amrinder Singh, Kulbir Kaur wife of Kanwaljit Singh Dhami and some of the relatives of militants involved in the jail-break case were likely to be arrested soon.

Police Harasses Sikh Villagers of Ropar District

According to Indian Express (6/19/98), in response to the Burail jail escape case, Punjab police officials are reported to have started harassing Sikh villagers in Ropar district. According to the newspaper, “a cloud of fear has enveloped the villages in Rupnagar district.... life comes to standstill by 8 PM as the villagers, particularly youngsters, avoid going out at night, fearing arrest, or harassment.” A farmer near village Goslan was quoted by the

newspaper as saying, “the sight of a car with a red light sends a shiver down our spine.”

Police Harassment of Sikh Teacher

Sardanri Kulbir Kaur, the wife of Kanwaljit Singh Dhami of Gurdaspur, has alleged that she is being harassed by Punjab police officials since her husband was arrested in the false Burail jail-break case. According to Indian Express (6/22/98), Kulbir has already spent three and a half years in jail and demanded a written guarantee from Punjab CM that she would not be arrested or harassed by the police. However, according to latest news reports, Punjab police arrested the Sikh lady while she was staging protest outside the residence of Punjab Chief Minister.

Infamous Police Officer Accused of Disrobing Sikh Widow Arrested for Torturing Another Sikh Family

Inspector Budh Singh, who was earlier accused of disrobing a Sikh widow in front of her son on 8/21/97 in Bathinda, is now alleged to have tortured a Sikh family of village Ubha near Mansa. The police official was arrested on June 23 for the torture of retired Sikh army officer Gurnam Singh and his two sons, Gurinder Singh and Saroop Singh (Des Pardes, 7/3/98).

Police Lawlessness Against Sikhs Continues in Punjab

- Sardar Naib Singh, a Sikh farmer, is reported to have been picked up by Ferozapore police officials, who tortured him and burnt the left side of his moustache to humiliate him. The incident which occurred on March 16 near Abohar was reported by Indian Express dated 6/6/98. The matter was brought to the attention of Punjab Human Rights Commission by Lawyers for Social Reforms. The commission has taken cognizance of the offence and issued a notice to the state of Punjab, along with police officials.
- Devinder Singh, a lecturer of Psychology at Guru Nanak Dev University in Amritsar, is

reported to have been forcibly picked up by Punjab police officials on June 16, thrown into a police vehicle and taken away. The victim had been forcibly taken to Ropar by the police with regard to some clarifications. According to Indian Express (6/28/98), the university teacher's union had protested the alleged police abduction and said that "it was a serious matter as police should have approached the Vice Chancellor before rounding up the lecturer."

- Baljit Singh, Senior Vice-President of Sector 40 Gurdwara Sahib in Chandigarh, has alleged that on June 9 he was picked up from his residence by police officials in civilian clothes. His clothes were removed, hands tied to a chair and hair fastened before electric shocks were administered to him. The victim has alleged that during his torture, senior police officials were present in the room. The victim was tortured for trying to defend the case of an alleged militant Sardar Balwinder Singh Jattana.
- Gurdarshan Singh Nama, a Sikh resident of Samana, Bathinda is reported to have been picked up by Samana police officials on June 14. The victim has alleged that he was kept in illegal police custody and tortured. He was freed on June 17 on the intervention of the local legislator Jagtar Singh Rajla.
- Piara Lal, Assistant Sub-Inspector of Kapurthala CIA, is reported to have beaten up two youths who had a minor scuffle with his two children in June 8. According to Indian Express (6/10/98) Piara Lal mercilessly beat the youths resulting in injuries. The youths have been admitted to the local Civil hospital while the police official has been suspended temporarily.
- The son of Chandigarh DSP, S.C. Abrol and the police guard of a senior Punjab police official are reported to have created an atmosphere of fear at the

dormitories of Punjab Engineering College, Chandigarh. According to Indian Express (6/10/98), on June 8 the two accused are alleged to have beat up a fellow student with rifle butts and a helmet. The college authorities are conducting an inquiry into the incidents.

- Punjab police is reported to have arrested the following Sikhs recently for being "militants / terrorists":
 - ✓ Gurmej Singh of village of Bhasan near Kapurthala was arrested on May 10.
 - ✓ Paramjit Singh was arrested on May 28 in Mohali for being a "suspected terrorist."
 - ✓ Surinderpal Singh, of village Bhagi Bander near Bathinda, was arrested on June 2 in Calcutta by Punjab police. According to Indian Express (6/3/98), Punjab DGP P.C. Dogra said that Surinderpal was a "dreaded terrorist."
 - ✓ The following Sikhs are reported to have been arrested with regard to the Buraill jail-break story concocted by Punjab police: Satnam Singh of village Salimpur near Morinda, Baljit Singh, Manmohan Singh (Ropar district), Paramdeep Singh (Ropar district), Balwinder Singh (Ropar district), Rajinder Singh Neeta (Ropar district), Jaswant Singh (Fatehgarh Sahib district) and Kanwaljit Singh Dhami (Gurdaspur).
- Bhoop Singh, a laborer of village Sahomajra near Ropar, is reported to have been attacked by an ASI of Ghanauli police station and some other Punjab police officials on March 24 and evicted from a farm. According to Indian Express (6/6/98), the Punjab Human Rights Commission has ordered an inquiry into the incident.
- Four Sikh youths (Hargurpreet Singh, Kulbir Singh, Rashwinder Singh and Sukhbir Singh), visiting Bathinda to attend tutoring classes for competitive

examinations, are reported to have been attacked and beaten by a group of Punjab police officials on May 14. Rajiv Ahir, SHO Bathinda Kotwali police station, led the police party. An inquiry has been ordered into the incident.

- Baljit Singh, a resident of Buraj Dhillwan (Mansa) is reported to have died in custody due to torture by Punjab police on July 21. A magisterial inquiry has been ordered and the NHRC has been informed on the incident (Indian Express, 7/24/98).

Conviction Set Aside for Police Officials Guilty of Custody Killing of Bagicha Singh

A Division Bench of the High Court has set aside the conviction order and sentence, passed by the Additional Sessions Judge of Hoshiarpur, against Inspector Lakha Singh and 8 other police officials for the illegal custody death of an alleged Sikh militant, Bagicha Singh. The High Court observed that it was difficult to believe that it had been established that Bagicha Singh was eliminated by the accused. The judge said that the appellants were entitled to benefit of the doubt.

Inquiry into 1993 Disappearance of Ropar Lawyer

The Additional District and Session Judge of Chandigarh will begin investigating the alleged 1993 disappearance of Ropar based Sikh lawyer Sardar Kulwant Singh, his wife and two year old son. The family is alleged to have been abducted by Punjab police, tortured and liquidated in illegal custody. To cover up the crime, the police initiated a fake case against Sardar Harpreet Singh. A CBI inquiry found that Harpreet Singh had been falsely implicated in the case and it held three police officials responsible for fabrication of evidence. (Indian Express, 6/9/98)

3 Senior Police Officials on Trial for 1990 Disappearance of Sikh Youth

Three senior Punjab police officials (including the SSP of Amritsar, SP-

Vigilance, and SHO Kathunangal), are on trial in the court of the Jalandhar Session Judge for the 1990 disappearance of Sardar Sukhvinder Singh Neetu (20 year old). The accused are alleged to have picked up Sukhvinder, a resident of village Chawinda Devi near Kathu Nangal, on July 22, 1990 in full view of the public. The victim was seen at the Majtiha police station on July 23. He is alleged to have vanished soon after. It is feared that Sukhvinder Singh was either tortured to death or killed in a faked encounter by police officials.

Eye-Witness Testifies to 1992 Cold Blooded Murder of 6 Sikh Youths

Sardar Surinder Singh, a retired Sikh officer and resident of village Fatehabad near Tarn Taran, is reported to have testified that he was an eye-witness to the 1992 faked murder of 6 Sikh youths by Punjab police. According to the witness, he along with 6 other Sikhs were made to stand blindfolded in a line on the banks of river Beas and shot at point blank range by a group of 20 Punjab policemen. Surinder ducked just before the guns were fired and was saved while the others six were killed. The witness said that the drunk

policemen started dancing after the murderous firing and raided slogans praising the then police chief K.P.S. Gill. The witness is currently under the protection of CRPF. According to Des Pardes (5/29/98), Surinder Singh has registered his statement with CBI.

Alarming Increase in Custodial Deaths in India

The Times of India (6/28/98) published a news report in which it quoted statistics released by Ministry of Home Affairs, which indicated doubling of custodial killings in India from 444 in 1996 to 888 in 1997. The National Human Rights Commission of India has suggested that compensation to the victims of custodial deaths be deducted from the salary of guilty police officials.

NHRC Urges Government to Accept UN Convention against Torture

India's National Human Rights Commission is reported (Indian Express, 6/26/98) to have strongly recommended to the Government of India to accede to the 1984 UN Convention against Torture and others Forms of Cruel, Inhuman and degrading Treatment or Punishment.

Amnesty International as well as other international, national, state and local human right organizations have alleged that torture in police custody is pervasive throughout India.

Panel to Review Human Rights Act
India's National Human Rights Commission has set up an advisory committee to consider and recommend changes to the Protection of Human Rights Act of 1993. According to Time of India (6/10/98), A.M. Ahmedi, former Supreme Court Chief Justice, has been requested to head the panel. The panel will consider equipping itself with contempt of commission powers since currently police authorities largely ignore summons issued by the commission.

NHRC Issues Statistics

India's National Human Rights Commission issued statistics for 1996-97 which showed a 100% increase in human right violation complaints of approximately 20,000. The commission reported 384 violations from the state of Punjab.

Sikh Exhibition to Commemorate 300th Anniversary of Khalsa

The Victoria and Albert Museum in London is organizing a Sikh art exhibition to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the founding of the Khalsa by Siri Guru Gobind Singh Sahib. The exhibition will include calligraphic works, miniature paintings and artifacts such as royal insignia, jewelry and coins. Sikh Durbar paintings by notable European artists such as August Schoefft, G.T. Vigne and Emily Eden will be displayed. Ms. Susan Strong is curating the exhibition. The exhibition will run for six months after which it will travel to the Smithsonian Institute and to the Asia Society in the US. The Leicester Mercury News dated 5/29/98 published an article on the upcoming Sikh exhibition.

Sikhs Veterans Attend Convention

Many Sikh veterans living in UK are reported to have attended the 13th Annual Convention of Veterans of Undivided India on July 11. The Convention was held at the Dominion Center in Southall.

UK Sikhs Attend Reception by Queen Elizabeth

Several young Sikh youths attended a reception, held on June 1 in London, organized by The Queen of England and the Duke of Edinburgh to recognize young adults who had made achievements in particular fields, business or volunteer/community sector. The meeting was attended by more than 6 Sikh youths who had excelled in many different areas - best neighborhood watch scheme; successful recruitment agency; community health center for Asian community; racial equality schemes etc.

Sikhs Respond to Nuclear Tests

Anti-nuclear demonstrations, letters to the editor and articles by Sikhs deploring the nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan have recently been published. Demonstrations by

large number of Sikhs have been held in India, USA, Canada, Europe, UK and Asia. The following were reported in the media:

- The Independent (London) on 5/23/98 published an article written by Sardar Indarjit Singh, editor of the Sikh Messenger titled "Faith & Reason: How to turn religious beliefs into a nuclear explosion."
- Sardar Iqbal Singh of Punjabi Human Rights Internet, Reading wrote a letter to the editor of The Guardian (London) in which the organization strongly condemned the nuclear tests by India and Pakistan. The letter was published on 6/30/98 in which it was stated that "the deployment of nuclear-capable missiles in the subcontinent has made the disputed Punjab region an unthinkable dangerous place."
- The Sikh Missionary Society organized an anti-nuclear protest in Toronto on June 7. About 50 people attended the demonstration.
- The Toronto Star published an article titled "The mythology of India's nuclear destiny" by Sardar T. Sher Singh on 6/15/98.

Indian Pilgrims Face Wrath of Pakistani Protestors

Indian pilgrims visiting Sikh shrines in Pakistan following the nuclear tests by India are reported to have been harassed by protesting Pakistanis. Details of the protests were published by Times of India (5/31/98), Hindustan Times (5/31/98) and Rediff on the Net (1/1/98).

6 Canadians Excommunicated from Khalsa Panth

According to published news reports in Times of India and The Hindu (7/26/98), a Hukamnaama was issued from Siri Akal Takhat Sahib on July 25 excommunicating six Vancouver based leaders. Those excommunicated from the Panth include:

- Harkirat Singh, former head Granthi of Ross Street Gurdwara Sahib, Vancouver
- Balwant Singh Gill, President of Guru Nanak Gurdwara Sahib in Surrey
- Jarnail Singh, Senior - Vice President of Khalsa Diwan Society, Vancouver
- Ratan Singh, President of Akali Singh Sikh Society, Vancouver
- Kashmir Singh, Record Secretary of Khalsa Diwan Society, Vancouver.
- Tara Singh Hayer, Editor of Indo-Canadian Times, Surrey

The Hukamnaama directs Sikhs for a social, religious, economic and political boycott of these individuals. The Hukamnaama also asked Sikhs all over the world not to purchase or read Indo-Canadian Times, the newspaper published by Tara Singh Hayer from Vancouver.

These individuals have been excommunicated because of their refusal to follow the April 20, 1998 Hukamnaama issued from Siri Akal Takhat Sahib prohibiting the entire Sikh community worldwide from taking *Langar* on dining tables.

Canadian Centennial Conference

The Canadian Sikh Students Association organized a Canadian Sikh Centennial Conference on July 3-4 at the University of Toronto at Mississauga. The event was organized in memory of Canadian Sikh pioneers who sacrificed their lives for the future generation of Sikhs.

New Gurdwara Sahib in Montreal

The Toronto Star (5/23/98) reported that the Sikh community of Montreal organized ground - breaking ceremonies for a new Gurdwara Sahib in LaSalle, Montreal. The new Gurdwara Sahib will replace a former Church in Lachine, where seating capacity of about 670 was often exceeded by several hundred worshippers. The building of the new building should be completed by the

end of 1998. The population of Sikhs in Montreal has increased sharply since the 1991 census put the Sikh population in Quebec at approximately 4,500.

Kirtan Samaagam Held in Toronto

The Akhand Kirtani Jatha held an Akhand Kirtan Samaagam from June 26 to July 5 in Toronto, Canada. The program included Amrit Sanchar on July 4.

RCMP Wraps Up 1985 Air India Crash Probe

According to Toronto Star (7/22/98), the Canadian Mounted Police has submitted to the Crown an initial summary of evidence gathered during the 13-year probe of the bombing of Air India Flight 182 over Ireland. The initial summary is a prelude to a full brief on the case, after which crown lawyers in British Columbia will have to decide if the 20 investigators on the case have gathered enough evidence to secure convictions. RCMP had set up an Internet web site as a part of its continuing worldwide appeal for information regarding the 1985 Air India Crash. The web site can be accessed at

<http://www.airindia.istar.ca/>

Sikh Mother Honored in Malaysia

The Tampin's M-team, a social organization of Sikh and South Asian mothers of Tampin, Malaysia, is reported to have honored a 70-year old Sikh lady, Sardarni Harbans Kaur, as the Tampin Mother of the Year. According to New Straits Times-Management Times (6/3/98), Sardarni Harbans Kaur devoted a major part of her life to carrying out charity work.

Sikh Population in Hong Kong

The Xinhua News Agency published a news report on 6/30/98 in which it estimated the population statistics of many religions practiced in Hong Kong. The Sikh population at the end of 1997 stood at approximately 12,000.

Interfaith Activities

The following interfaith activities have been reported recently:

- The Darlington Memorial Hospital in North-East England is reported to have opened a multi-faith prayer room. The multi-faith prayer room was established to complement the

hospital chapel so that persons of non-Christian faiths could also pray in quiet while in the hospital. According to the hospital's chief executive, "The hospital services a multi-faith community, which includes members of the Sikh, Muslim, Hindu and Jewish communities." (The Northern Echo, 6/9/98).

- Representatives of many faith traditions, including Sikhs, attended a multi-faith service on May 31 at London's Methodist Central Hall, honoring the life and work of Mother Teresa who died in September of 1997. (Leicester Mercury News, 6/1/98)
- A multi-faith exhibition was organized at Hinckley (England) town center Church from June 1 to June 13. The exhibition contained photographs and information about the major world faiths that are practiced in Leicester.

Gurpurabs for July & August 1998

Actual Dates

July 7 Prakash Divas of Siri Guru Harkrishan Sahib (1656)
August 11 Gur Gaddi Divas of Siri Guru Tegh Bahaadar Sahib (1664)

Observed Dates

July 17 Prakash Divas of Siri Guru Harkrishan Sahib (1656)
August 24 Gur Gaddi Divas of Siri Guru Arjan Sahib (1581)
August 25 Joti Jot Divas of Siri Guru Ram Das Sahib (1581)

(Information provided by Sardar Baldev Singh of Austin, Texas)

Vishav Sikh Council - USA publishes this newsletter with assistance from Sikh Educational and Religious Foundation. Its distribution is limited to existing or potential members of Vishav Sikh Council - USA, Sikh Educational and Religious Foundation, and to certain other interested individual Sikhs and Sikh organizations. The news items published in this newsletter, which are not directly related to the activities of VSC-USA, do not necessarily reflect the views of VSC-USA. If you would like to send a news item for possible publication in the newsletter, please e-mail it by the 15th of the preceding month to vsc-usa@unforgettable.com or send it to VSC-USA Newsletter, PO Box 1553, Dublin, Ohio 43017.

Vishav Sikh Council - USA
6863 Cloister Road
Toledo, OH 43617



@

@