



# Vishav(World) Sikh News



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## Monthly Newsletter of Vishav (World) Sikh Council - USA

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

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### 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*

### FUTURE OF VISHAV SIKH COUNCIL-USA

You are well aware of the situation that developed as a result of the announcement of names, of members of the Regional committee for USA, by the head office of the World Sikh Council. These names were altogether different from the ones elected by our member institutions and submitted by us. After faxing a letter on May 12, 1998 requesting the head office to withdraw these names, I followed it up by a telephone call on May 14, 1998 to the Jathedar Sahib of Sri Akal Takhat Sahib as well as to the President of the World Sikh Council, Justice Kuldip Singh Ji.

Jathedar Sahib informed me that they have already deleted the name of Dr. Amarjit Singh Marwaha from the list. Singh Sahib wanted me to fax him the addresses of the executive members selected by us for communication purposes. The addresses were faxed to them promptly on May 25, 1998. Justice Kuldip Singh Ji informed me that all the appointment letters are being held back and assured me further that all the names submitted by me will be accommodated. I requested him to issue a letter to that effect and fax it to me.

I haven't heard from them till today. Our executive committee has recently decided to send them a reminder indicating the necessity to follow our constitution and to wait for their reply. I would request all our members to bear with us till we resolve this issue. If, for any reason, we fail in our venture, we will again come back to you to seek your help in making a decision about the future of our organization. We would like to assure you that our decision would be based upon your consensus.

- Kuldeep Singh



**New Members Join VSC-USA**

The Gurdwara Singh Sabha of North Texas (Balch Springs, Texas) and Academy of Guru Granth Studies (Arlington, Texas) have formally joined Vishav Sikh Council - USA. Other Gurdwaras and Sikh institutions are encouraged to join the Council so that we can all work together for the Charhdi Kala of the Panth.

**Amritdhari Sikh Harassed by Police**

Sardar Anand-Gurdas Singh of California, a Sikh who recently took *Khande da Pahul*, is said to have been manhandled and harassed by police at the Oakland Amtrak station in California on April 1. The train conductor questioned him about his *Kripaan*. A city of Oakland police officer later boarded the train and asked the Sikh to leave. On declining to do so, the officer asked the Sikh to remove his *Kripaan*, which he refused to do. The officer then told the Sikh that he would have to leave the train or be arrested. Then the officer is said to have rushed upon the Sikh without any warning and jammed up the victim's right wrist behind his back and handcuffed him. The officer pulled out the *Kripaan* worn by the Sikh and shoved the victim down the train stairwell and across the lot with increasing pressure on the arm. The victim was held in a police cruiser for an indeterminate amount of time during which one of the police officers said, "we can remove the rest of your religious symbols and put you in jail." The victim was then escorted by police to the Amtrak station for a refund and left there. Examination of the injury at Natividad Emergency Room in Salinas revealed a shoulder that had been partially pulled out of its socket. The doctor advised surgery to correct the injury. The *Kripaan* of the Sikh has been confiscated and he has been charged with "carrying a weapon" and "disturbing the peace on a public train." 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.

**Lohgarh Sikh Youth Camp**

The sixth Lohgarh Sikh youth camp will be held from June 27 to July 11 at Lohgarh Retreat in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. The camp is intended for youths of ages 9 through 22. The theme of this year's camp will be the behavior expected of a Sikh. The camp is sponsored by Lohgarh Sikh Education Foundation. Applications forms, reports and photo-albums of past camps can be obtained on the Internet at <http://www.maboli.com/seva/lohgarh>

**Sikh Gurmat Camp**

The Sikh Youth Federation (a member of VSC-USA) will organize a Sikh Gurmat Camp for children from June 27 to July 24 at Camp Nahelu, Ortonville, Michigan. The camp is being held in cooperation with Sikh Society of Michigan and Sikh Gurdwara at Rochester Hill, Michigan (member VSC-USA). More information on the camp can be obtained from <http://syf.jaj.com> or by e-mailing [sikhs@accesstoledo.com](mailto:sikhs@accesstoledo.com)

**Essay/Lecture Competition for Youth**

The Khalsa School Fremont is organizing an essay / lecture contest, sponsored by MET LIFE. The contest is not limited to students of the school and is for youths from 10 to 25 years. The topics are – Future of Sikhs and Sikhism (15 to 25 years) and Practice of Sikhism in American Society (10-14 years). Essays can be in English or Panjabi. Authors of selected essays will make oral presentations on June 7 at Gurdwara Sahib Fremont (member of VSC-USA). Written essays are due May 30. More information can be obtained by calling Sardar Manjit Singh at (510) 567-9770.

**Interfaith Activities**

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

- The Interfaith Association of Central Ohio held a forum on "Sacred

Silence in Faith Traditions" on May 16 in Columbus, Ohio.

- The Chicago Tribune dated 4/27/98 published a list of Internet web sites for many different religious faith traditions.
- The Advocate of Baton Rouge, Louisiana dated 5/2/98 and the Orlando Sentinel Tribune dated 5/14/98 published articles on the Golden Rule from several faith traditions including the Sikh faith.

**Judge Stays Extradition of Sikh**

A federal magisterial judge of Fresno has stayed extradition proceedings against Kulbir Singh, who is seeking political asylum in the US. The government of India accuses him of murdering 52 people in Punjab, which he denies, and wants to extradite him to India. He is being held by the US government in a cell at the Lerdo detention facility near Bakersfield while seeking asylum from a nation he says he fled because of political torture. Kulbir reportedly fears that returning to India would subject him to persecution for his religious and political beliefs. The US district judge and the 9th Circuit have overturned his application for asylum that had earlier been denied by an immigration judge and Board of Immigration Appeals. The Fresno Bee dated May 6 and May 14 published an article on the case and reported that the Kulbir has won overwhelming support from the local Sikh community.

**Fresno Sikhs Participate in Asian Festival**

The Sikh community in Fresno, California is reported to have participated in a festival, celebrating National Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, on May 2. The Fresno Bee dated May 3 reported that one of the most captivating acts was the *Gatka* display performed by members of the *Kalgidar Gatka Dal*. The Sikh performers used traditional Sikh weapons during the performance. The newspaper published a photograph of a Sikh doing *Gatka* display.

### **Sikh Day Parade in NY**

Over 20,000 Sikhs are reported to have attended the 11<sup>th</sup> annual Sikh Day Parade in New York City on April 25. US Congressman John Doolittle and Sardar Gurmit Singh Aulakh, President of Council of Khalistan addressed the parade. Articles and photographs on the parade were published in *Newsday* (4/26/98), *Daily News* (4/26/98) and *The Village Voice* (5/5/98).

### **Senator Applauds Formation of People's Commission**

Senator Edolphus Towns addressed the US House of Representatives on May 16 to inform House members of the formation of a People's Commission in Punjab. The Senator congratulated Justice (retired) Kuldip Singh, President of World Sikh Council, for providing the impetus for the commission. Senator Towns urged "other minorities under Indian rule to create similar commissions to bring out the truth about India's treatment of them as well."

### **Sikh Profiled in Internet Magazine**

Sardar Pritpal Singh, a principal with Singh Associates of New York, was profiled in *Internet World*, Volume 4, No. 19, May 18, 1998. Sardar Pritpal Singh was featured in the *Intranet Advisor* column along with a picture of him with full *Kes* and turban. Questions and complements can be sent to Pritpal Singh at [advisor@iw.com](mailto:advisor@iw.com). Singh Associates specializes in Internet/Intranet and client-server development.

### **US Sikhs Respond to India's Nuclear Tests**

Sikhs of California held a demonstration outside the Indian Consulate in San Francisco on May 22. According to *Hindustan Times* (5/25/98), "the consulate staff hid behind closed doors and shutters looking weary and dismayed as Sikhs shouted slogans such as 'Don't trust India', 'Hindu bombs spell disaster', and 'Sacred cow makes Nuclear Bomb.'

The Council of Khalistan has strongly condemned the nuclear weapon explosions by India and on May 11

the Council appealed to President Clinton to impose tough economic sanctions on India. The Council issued a press release on May 13 stating that India's nukes put 18 million Sikhs in India at risk because the Sikh homeland of Punjab would be the staging area for a nuclear holocaust. The Council also issued an open letter to the Sikh nation on May 14 in which it contended that the recent nuclear tests put the Sikh nation on the sacrificial altar of Hindu nationalism. The Council said that the Akali leadership in Punjab was leading Sikhs to the slaughter. Letters to the editor from The Council of Khalistan, protesting nuclear tests and educating Americans about its devastating effect on minorities in India particularly Sikhs, were published by several newspapers. These newspapers include *Washington Times* (5/14/98), *Philadelphia Inquirer* (5/15/98), *Edmonton Journal* (5/15/98), and *Baltimore Sun* (5/19/98).

The Khalistan Affairs Center issued a press release on May 20 condemning India's nuclear tests. The press release commended the anti-nuclear stand taken by US Senator Jesse Helms.

Dr. Iqbal Singh, a retired Brigadier of the Indian Army was a guest speaker invited by Channel 5 of the Raleigh-Durham-Cary Research Triangle Park area to give a commentary on the nuclear tests in India.

### **House Passes Bill on Religious Persecution**

The US House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed a bill on May 14 that would use economic sanctions on countries that persecute citizens because of religious beliefs. The bill also would set up an Office of Religious Persecution Monitoring within the State Department. The bill links foreign policy closely with religious persecution. The Clinton administration opposes sanctions against such countries and is expected to veto the bill. The administration is concerned that branding a country as a religious persecutor would make it more difficult for the US to pursue

other goals with it, such as arms control and trade negotiations. Supporters of the bill include B'nai B'rith, the Salvation Army, and Southern Baptist Convention. Opponents include National Council of Churches, Human Rights Watch, US Chamber of Commerce, and the Heritage Foundation.

### **US Committee for Refugees Launches Web Site**

The United States Committee for Refugees (USCR) recently launched a new web site that provides up-to-date information on refugee crises throughout the world as well as latest USCR national and international efforts to respond to the need of refugees. The site can be accessed at <http://www.refugees.org>

### **Anti-Asian Violence Audit**

The Asian Law Caucus, which is compiling data on anti-Asian hate violence for the 1997 National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium Audit, has initiated a campaign to collect information on anti-Asian hate incidents that occurred in 1997. Without centralized law enforcement efforts to track anti-Asian violence, such community efforts provide the only statistical information regarding such issues. If you have experienced or know of any anti-Asian hate violence (beatings, robberies, rapes etc.) or harassment (hate mail, verbal harassment etc.), please call the Asian Law Caucus at (415) 391-1655, ext. 31 or e-mail the information to [wmlhwang@hotmail.com](mailto:wmlhwang@hotmail.com)

**Hukamnaama Issued on Publication of Siri Guru Granth Sahib**

Siri Akal Takhat Sahib, Amritsar issued a Hukamnaama on May 9, 1998 directing a ban on the publication of Siri Guru Granth Sahib by anybody other than the Shromani Gurdwara Prabhandak Committee (SGPC). The Hukamnaama was issued after taking exception to the manner in which Messrs Chattar Singh and Jiwan Singh, a private publishing house for over 70 years, had been showing disrespect to Guru Sahib by disposing of its copies as *raddi* (waste paper) and setting them on fire. The Times of India (5/10/98) said that according to the Hukamnaama, no other Sikh organization or person would henceforth be entitled to publish Siri Guru Granth Sahib anywhere in the world.

**Jathedar of Akal Takhat Warns Against Misuse of Siri Guru Granth Sahib**

Singh Sahib Bhai Ranjit Singh, Jathedar of Siri Akal Takhat Sahib, is reported to have taken cognizance of the misuse of Siri Guru Granth Sahib by vested interests for land grabbing. On May 4 Jathedar Sahib warned against such practices in the future. In an interview with Indian Express (5/5/98), Jathedar Sahib said that he would deal with such unscrupulous elements for misusing the Holy Scripture to achieve selfish motives. Jathedar Sahib also stated that a weekly Khalsa Darbar dealing with religious matters has been started at Siri Akal Takhat Sahib every Sunday evening. The Khalsa Darbar is receiving an overwhelming response.

**Protests Against Hindi Movie Salaakhen**

The Sikh community in Punjab has condemned and expressed strong protests against the Hindi movie *Salaakhen*, which is reported to contain a distorted version of a verse from Siri Guru Granth Sahib, for hurting Sikh sentiments. Sikhs all over the world accept Siri Guru

Granth Sahib as the word of God and the eternal Guru. Singh Sahib Bhai Ranjit Singh, Jathedar of Siri Akal Takhat Sahib, demanded on May 13 that the producer and director of the movie stop screening the film immediately. As per The Times of India (5/15/98), Jathedar Sahib warned of serious consequences if the offensive dialogues were not deleted and asked the director to tender an apology for making "fun of Gurbani." The All India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF) has also warned of "strict action" if the screening of the movie is not stopped. According to Indian Express (5/15/98), a press release was issued by AISSF Secretary General which said that the federation would not tolerate any acts of disrespect to Gurbani. The secretary of SGPC (Indian Express 5/15/98) has also demanded a ban on the film.

**Jathedar Kaunke was Tortured to Death**

The Coordination Committee for Disappearances in Punjab (CCDP) met with media persons in Chandigarh on May 19 to detail the 1992-93 police abduction, torture and murder of Singh Sahib Bhai Gurdev Singh Kaunke, ex-Jathedar of Siri Akal Takhat Sahib. Justice (retired) Kuldip Singh, President of World Sikh Council (WSC), attended the meeting. According to Indian Express dated 5/20/98, a signed press release was issued by the Committee that said, "*A team specially appointed by the committee has been conducting investigations to determine the true facts of the case. Investigation conducted by this team conclusively prove inhuman torture of Bhai Gurdev Singh Kaunke, first at the Sardar police station of Jagraon and then at CIA interrogation center, from December 25, 1992 to January 1, 1993. The team has also acquired irrefutable evidence to establish that the former Jathedar of the Akal Takhat was killed in torture.*" Darshan Singh, a former police constable from Jagraon and a key witness in the case was also present at

the press conference. The committee has asked the Badal government to register a case against police officials and demanded that CBI investigate the matter. Punjab police illegally arrested Singh Sahib 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.

On May 20, the Chief Secretary of Punjab government is reported to have refused to conduct an inquiry into the arrest and killing of Singh Sahib Bhai Gurdev Singh Kaunke, ex-Jathedar of Siri Akal Takhat Sahib.

**Interview by Eyewitness in Khalra Case**

Kuldip Singh, a Special Police Officer and a key eyewitness in the Khalra murder case who has already recorded his statement with CBI on March 1, is reported to have been interviewed by Sukhbir Singh Osan of Burning Punjab on May 7. According to the interview report, Jaswant Singh Khalra, an Akali Dal human rights activist, was killed by Punjab police officials around 8 PM on October 27, 1995 at the Chabbal police station in Amritsar district and his body was thrown into the Harike canal. The eyewitness narrated the incident as follows: *He was made to stand, thrashed and pushed onto the ground. His legs were stretched apart, more than 180 degrees. Seven policemen kicked him in the abdomen and chest. Save me. Please give me some water, he cried. As I was about to fetch some water, I heard two shots. I ran back to the room and found him bleeding profusely. He had stopped breathing.*

Kuldip Singh said that Deputy SP Jaspal Singh supervised the entire operation at the Chabbal police station where Khalra had been kept after being kidnapped by the police under orders from SSP Ajit Singh Sandhu. According to Kuldip Singh there were six policemen on the spot when Khalra was shot dead. These included Jaspal Singh, Arvinder Singh, Surinderjit Singh, Jasbir Singh, Pirthpal Singh and Balwinder Singh Ghora. After disposing of the body, they all went to Harike Rest House where Ajit Singh Sandhu was waiting. Kuldip Singh said that the murder was celebrated there with drinks till midnight.

The witness also said that Ajit Singh Sandhu had personally interrogated Khalra, who was collecting affidavits of mass cremations by the police in the border areas. Kuldip Singh said, "Sandhu tore off his clothes, jumped on his thighs and kicked him" and remarked "I had conveyed to you from Ropar not to collect affidavits against me." Kuldip Singh also alleged that on October 17 or 18, Khalra was taken to Sandhu's home in Maanawala village where then DGP K.P.S. Gill also met him. Later Khalra was shifted to Kang police station for a few days where another witness Kikkar Singh too saw him on October 24.

Jaswant Singh Khalra had investigated the disappearance of Sikh youths and mass cremations of unidentified bodies by police in Punjab. He found that in three cremation grounds -- Durgiana Mandir, Patti and Tarn Taran – at least 2,200 such unidentified youths were cremated. Punjab police picked up Khalra in the end of 1995. He was tortured by the police and shot to death under alleged orders of then Punjab police chief K.P.S. Gill.

#### **Developments in Khalra Murder Case**

As per Indian Express (5/3/98), Punjab police authorities are in a spot over the unilateral decision to withdraw a false FIR case against Sardarni Paramjit Kaur Khalra, the wife of slain Akali Dal human rights

activist Sardar Jaswant Singh Khalra. The Punjab DGP said in a statement that the matter was investigated by the crime branch, which found the case untenable. Sardarni Khalra has now demanded to know how Punjab police procured Rs. 50,000 that she was alleged to have offered to Special Police Officer, Kuldip Singh. The FIR had listed the numbers and marks on the notes reportedly seized by the police.

Kuldip Singh, then a Special Police Officer, is reported to have been a key witness to the crime. CBI has already recorded the statement of the witness. As per Indian Express (5/20/98), Kuldip Singh claims that K.P.S. Gill met with Khalra at the residence of Ajit Singh Sandhu, former SSP of Tarn Taran, a few days before Khalra was shot dead. He said that he had accompanied Khalra along with Satnam Singh, SHO of Chabbal police station. Kuldip Singh said that while returning from Sandhu's residence, he overheard Satnam Singh telling Khalra, "if you agree to Gill, you will be spared and we will also be saved."

Currently Kuldip Singh is under protection of CRPF at his home because he fears liquidation by officials of Punjab police.

The Khalra murder case took a new turn recently when the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) moved a petition in court seeking custody of all eight police officers accused in the murder case.

#### **Gill Should be Booked for Khalra Murder: HR Group**

The Coordination Committee for Disappearances in Punjab, a human rights group from Punjab, has demanded that CBI file a charge sheet against the former Punjab Director General of Police K.P.S. Gill for the disappearance of Jaswant Singh Khalra. The demand was made in light of the startling disclosures made by Kuldip Singh, an eye-witness in the Khalra case, that K.P.S. Gill was involved with the Khalra abduction, illegal confinement and subsequent liquidation in illegal police custody.

#### **Amnesty International Issues Report & Media Advisory on Khalra Case**

*A Mockery of Justice: The disappearance of Jaswant Singh Khalra* - a media advisory and report was issued by Amnesty International on April 27. As per the report – "A human rights defender, Khalra had been part of a campaign to highlight the plight of hundreds of people (Sikhs) who disappeared after being arrested by the Punjab police during the 1980's and early 1990s. Those who now seek to defend his rights are being threatened and witnesses are being intimidated." Jaswant Singh Khalra is one of the Sikh human rights defender featured in Amnesty International's campaign to promote the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Amnesty International press release can be accessed at <http://www.amnesty.org/news/1998/32000898.htm>

Several human rights groups in Punjab are reported to have expressed a "lack of faith" in the Punjab Chief Minister and Director General of Police for not taking action against accused police officers involved in the Khalra case.

#### **Khushwant Singh Supported Extra-Judicial Killing of Sikhs in Punjab**

In Hindustan Times dated 5/16/98, Khushwant Singh wrote in "Malice Towards One and All.." regarding faked encounter killings of Sikhs in Punjab that "I supported police in its extra-judicial killings." He contended that "The police was left with no option but to take the law in its own hands. When it was convinced that a man they had apprehended was in fact a terrorist, they did not bother to frame charges against him or put him up for trial before a magistrate. They simply took him to a deserted spot, shot him dead and recorded that he was killed in an encounter or while trying to escape. At the time it was the law of the jungle that pervaded. Without resorting to such extra-legal methods, the police would never have got the better of terrorists. I supported the police in its extra-judicial killings."

Khushwant Singh further wrote in the article that "a couple of years ago when young lady lawyer involved in human right activities showed me evidence of large scale cremations of unidentified bodies in Punjab, I dismissed her contention as bias against the Punjab police." The article on the extra-judicial killings ended with "Jaswant Singh Khalra's case should rouse the conscience of all right-minded citizens of the country."

Thousands of Sikh youth in Punjab are alleged to have been declared as terrorists by the Punjab police, arrested illegally, tortured to death, shot dead in faked encounters and their bodies cremated as unidentified. This policy of the Indian government and its security forces is said to have had the widespread approval of many citizens of India.

#### **Punjab Police Official Sentenced to Life for Murdering Sarabjit Singh**

Sita Ram, a Sub-Inspector of the Punjab Police, is reported to have been convicted by the Additional Session Judge at Amritsar, for the abduction and murder of Sardar Surjit Singh alias Sarabjit Singh in the infamous Valtaha. The police officer has been sentenced to life imprisonment. In 1993, the Supreme Court judges of India presiding over the infamous "Killed once, twice" case of Sarabjit Singh had said, "If the allegations in the news item are correct then it is the most heinous offence against the penal laws of the country as well as humanity."

Amnesty International's report titled Deaths in custody in 1993 (AI INDEX : ASA 20/02/94) published in 1994 elaborated on the case: On 30 October 1993 police from Valtaha brought two men to the mortuary of the Civic Hospital, Amritsar, for post-mortem examinations. However, the examining doctor found that one of the men was still alive. When he regained consciousness he gave his name as Sarabjit Singh, son of Harbhajan Singh, Valhota. The doctor immediately sent a message to his family informing them that

*Sarabjit Singh was alive and in the hospital. However, when the family came to visit Sarabjit Singh, they saw him being bundled into the back of a police van. Two to three hours later his dead body was brought back to the hospital and cremated without the family being allowed to see the body. Police had taken Sarabjit Singh from the house of a friend on 15 October 1993. A relative met him in Bhikiwind police station on 23 October. Police first falsely claimed that Sarabjit Singh had been killed on 30 October 1993 in an armed "encounter" with police. They took him to Civic Hospital, Patti. But when doctors found that he was in fact still alive, police took him away. They then claimed that Sarabjit Singh had died later as they took him from Civic Hospital, Patti to Civic Hospital, Amritsar due to the serious condition of his health. However, no record of this was made in the police daily diary. The Supreme Court passed an order on 1 November 1993, on the basis of a newspaper article which was brought to their attention by a former political leader. The Supreme Court ordered that Mr. Sita Ram, the Station House Officer (SHO), be suspended from duty and that the Central Bureau of Investigation investigate the case and submit a progress report to the court within six weeks. The Judges presiding over the case said that: "If the allegations in the news item are correct then it is the most heinous offence against the penal laws of the country as well as humanity." On 16 March 1994 the CBI arrested the SHO. They also named the Senior Superintendents of Police of Amritsar and Tarn Taran police districts in the First Information Report (the first report of an incident which is filed with the police).*

Human rights groups and Sikh organizations have accused the security forces in Punjab of killings thousands of Sikh youth in faked encounters. However, the police and several intellectuals supporting India's policy of eliminating Sikhs, had routinely called these accusations propaganda against the police.

#### **1997 UN Human Rights Report**

Human Rights International and Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade recently published and put online its 1997 UN Human Rights System Report on India. The report includes information on treaties signed by India, its response to these treaty bodies, and thematic reports. The report claims that *India has declined the request from the Working Group (WG) on Disappearances for permission to visit the country.* Further the report states that: *In considering the situation in Punjab, the report (Disappearances: Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary, E/CN.4/ 1997/34) observes that information received indicates that the police act with impunity, do not respond to writs of habeas corpus, fail to produce detainees in court, and deny their detention. The report includes the further allegation that the police have secretly cremated hundreds of bodies of individuals who had disappeared following their arrest, and have harassed and threatened those who file complaints against them in the Supreme Court and High Court.* The online report includes hyperlinks to all UN documents mentioned in the report. The report can be accessed at <http://www.hri.ca/fortherecord1997/vol3/india.htm>

#### **Religious Discrimination Against Sikh Officer of Indian Air Force**

Lawyers for Human Rights has accused the Indian Air Force of religious discrimination against Harvinder Singh, a 22 year old Gursikh serving in the Indian Air Force. Harvinder is being shunted out from the Air Force base in Ozar because of his insistence of keeping a full uncut beard according to Sikh religious traditions. Harvinder had joined the Air Force on October 13, 1992 when he was young and had not grown a beard at the age of 16. As he matured, he grew a beard. Starting November 1996, the Commanding Officer objected to his flowing beard and started ill-treating him. On many occasions Harvinder is alleged to have been threatened and even humiliated. The victim alleges that he was

declared a mental case, transferred to a difficult area and detained in an Air Force cell. Harvinder said, "on one occasion I was even manhandled by his officer, on the instructions of the Air Officer Commanding. I was all along pressurized either to tie or trim my beard to which I did not yield." According to *Des Pardes* (5/1/98), Lawyers for Human Rights has filed a petition on behalf of the victim to Jathedar of Siri Akal Takhat Sahib, President, Prime Minister and Defense Minister of India, Chief Minister of Punjab, United Nations Subcommittee on Religious and Ethnic Discrimination, and SGPC.

#### **Imposters Arrested for Extorting Money in Name of Babbar Khalsa**

The Bathinda police are reported to have arrested two persons on charges of writing fake letter of ransom on behalf of Babbar Khalsa. According to *Des Pardes* (4/17/98) those arrested include Hardiyal Singh of Dayalpura and Mirza Haal Abad of Tungwali. Their accomplice Baldev Singh of Tungwali managed to escape. The accused were arrested in the last week of April when they came to collect ransom money from Brij Lal, a rich owner of a prosperous firm, in the name of Babbar Khalsa.

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. They include Jora Singh of Almoha who was arrested recently as a KCF imposter and the 6/17/97 arrest of Nirvail Singh Naval, a fake KCF activist and a close confidant of Youth Congress leader Maninder Singh Bitta. Both these incidents were reported in *Vishav Sikh News* of May 1998.

#### **India Explodes 5 Nuclear Test Bombs**

India detonated three nuclear test bombs at Pokhran, Rajasthan on May 11. A second round of two nuclear explosions was held on May 13 at the same location. The state of Rajasthan

shares its borders with Punjab (homeland of Sikhs) and Pakistan.

#### **Hindu Nationalists Celebrate Nuclear Explosions**

Hindu nationalists all over India celebrated the recent nuclear explosions by the BJP government as a matter of Hindu pride. According to *Agence France Press* (5/16/98) and *Times of India* (5/17/98) hundreds of Hindu nationalists feted the nuclear explosions by bursting firecrackers at street parties in New Delhi and shouting slogans hailing the pro-Hindu government. More than 100 such festivities were reported from the city. The BJP headquarters in the heart of the city was illuminated. The BJP celebrated a "national day of pride" on May 16 with firecrackers, sweets, candles and speeches.

Hindu religious leaders are reported by *Agence France Press* (5/17/98) and *Indian Express* (5/21/98) to have decided to build a Hindu memorial temple near the Pokhran nuclear explosion site. Vishav Hindu Parishad Chief Ashok Singhal said that the memorial would mark India's rise as a nuclear power and would be "consecrated by holy water." According to *Indian Express*, the temple will be called "Shakti Peeth" in dedication to Shakti, the Hindu deity of power and strength.

Vishav Hindu Parishad has congratulated India's Prime Minister for projecting the five nuclear tests in Pokhran as a display of Hindu might (*Indian Express*, 5/18/98). The Organizer, mouthpiece of pro-Hindu RSS organization, printed a special supplement on 24 years of Pokhran 1974 which coincided with the latest nuclear tests.

Bal Thackrey, leader of the militant Shiv Sena, said, "we have to prove that we are not eunuchs... we should not sit quiet when we know that the enemy is around us. We are a more powerful nation now." (*Reuters*, 5/12/98)

The Bajrang Dal has congratulated the successful firing of nuclear missiles and called it a historical move for India.

#### **Buddhists Resent Portrayal of Nuclear Testing**

Several Buddhist organizations in India have protested the portrayal of the nuclear tests at Pokhran as "Buddha has smiled again." The test held in May of 1974 at Pokhran and those held on May 11 and 13, 1998 were held on days that were close to the religious observance of Buddha Jayanti. On this day, Lord Buddha is believed to have been born, attained enlightenment and passed away. The use of the name of "an apostle for peace" to denote nuclear tests has upset many Buddhists, particularly the Bengal Buddhists Association. They are upset over the use of 'the Lords' name with destruction (*Indian Express*, 5/17/98). The *Times of India* (5/16/98) reported that The Dalia Lama, the exiled leader of Tibetan Buddhists, was saddened to hear about the series of nuclear tests conducted by India.

#### **Indians Oppose Nuclear Testing**

Internal opposition to the May 11 and 13 nuclear tests by India has gained momentum. Several newspapers are reported to have started questioning the wisdom of the decision of Indian government and the BJP party on this issue. The *Times of India* editorial on May 16 said that Vajpayee's government "had played the nuclear card, gambling with national interests for partisan ends." Former Prime Minister I.K. Gujral urged the Prime Minister to rein in the street celebrations being conducted by government supporters over the nuclear tests.

According to *Hindustan Times* (5/21/98), a public meeting called by the Center for Education and Development at Bungler to protest the nuclear tests, and attended by scientists and academicians, was disrupted by members of RSS, VHP and Hindu Jagrana Vedike, who stormed into the meeting hall. The activists shouted, "You are all anti-national, there is no difference between you, the Pakistanis and the Chinese." After storming into the meeting, the organizers of the public meeting asked the leader of the disrupting group to join them in the

meeting and express whatever opinions they had on the issue. But no one from the demonstrators agreed to join in the public debate. At the meeting scientists like Amulya Ganguli, Sanjay Biswas, and Professor Sengupta of The Indian Institute of Science were of the view that there was no point in pursuing nuclear technology as it would never be put to use. Scientists from Bombay and Chennai have also come out against the nuclear tests.

As per CCN Interactive (5/6/98), an anti-nuclear demonstration was held in New Delhi, capital of India, on May 16. The anti-nuclear demonstrators were joined by members of India's poor low castes who complained that "the government should not be spending money on nuclear weapons when people are starving and dying in the streets." One sign read, "Before we go nuclear, let us feed the poor." Police are reported to have surrounded the marchers fearing attacks from Hindu extremists supporting the BJP government. On of the participant said that he was deeply disturbed at the projection of the nuclear device as the work of the Sangh Parivar (Hindu fundamentalist organization) and pointed to the heightened sense of insecurity being faced by Muslims and Christians.

Greenpeace International spokesman in New Delhi, Nityanand Jayaram told Reuters (5/12/98), "it has created tremendous tension in the region."

Several eminent Indians have mounted a signature campaign condemning the nuclear blasts by their country. According to Rediff of the Net (5/16/98), the statement reads "*We strongly condemn India's recent nuclear tests, the aggressive jingoism unleashed by it, and the insecurity caused by it in the region. Nuclear weapons cause transgenerational and large-scale destruction... it is shameful that we should celebrate an achievement that announces to the world that India is now capable of killing millions of people.*" Dr. Rajni Kothari, Kudlip Nayyar, Medha Patkar, Praful Bidwai, Achin

Vinayak, Bittu Sahgal, Ravi Aggarwal and Nitinand Jayaram have already signed the statement.

Organizations like Indian Doctors for Peace and Development (IDPD) and All India Peace and Solidarity Organization (AIPSO) have expressed concerns over the nuclear explosions. Indian Express (5/15/8)

### **Sikhs in India Respond to Nuclear Tests**

Shromani Akali Dal (Mann) has condemned the recent nuclear tests by India and declared it as a step towards race for nuclear armament. A spokesperson of the party told Indian Express (5/14/98) that India had always been a preacher of peace and disarmament in the world but had done contrary to its reputation. He said that Punjab was already under the threat of missile attack with the deployment of Agni and Prithvi missiles at Bathinda and Jalandhar respectively. Addressing a news conference in Ludhiana on May 14, Simranjit Singh Mann urged the United Nations and Security Council to impose tight economic sanctions against India. He asked the UN to deal with nuclear missiles, weaponry, storage places and firing sites in India in the same fashion as that of dismantling the Iraqi nuclear facilities. (Indian Express, 5/15/98)

The *Ajit* newspaper, the leading Punjabi daily and a mouthpiece for Akalis, published a signed editorial in which it severely criticized the BJP government and Indian PM Vajpayee for the tests. The article described the nuclear tests as the "most deplorable act" and said that this was done to strengthen the shaky chairs of Mr. Vajpayee and his colleagues. The editorial questioned the immediate provocation and threat that made the newly-formed government to go for the nuclear option and said that since there was no immediate threat to India's security the tests should have not been conducted at all. It maintained that instead of finding solutions to problems like poverty and unemployment, "we are building national pride by making a nuclear bomb." The editorial criticized the

government policy on nuclear weapons saying, "we have to decide whether our priority is nuclear tests or to feed the millions of people in the country who also do not have a piece of cloth on their bodies." The editor of *Ajit*, Sardar Barjinder Singh Hamdard, is a known Akali ideologue, considered to be a think-tank of Shromani Akali Dal (Badal) and a close advisor of Prakash Singh Badal, Chief Minister of Punjab.

However, on May 22 Times of India reported that Badal has denied that he had any reservations on the nuclear blasts carried out by the federal government and "fully endorsed" the federal government's action. The Akali Dal (Badal) broke its silence on the issue of nuclear blasts on May 16 and supported the tests conducted by India. The remarks were made by Surjit Singh Barnala, Minister for Fertilizer and Chemicals in the BJP coalition federal government. He described the tests as a remarkable achievement by scientists. Barnala said that the tests were "very timely" and that the quick succession in which they were conducted boosted the morale of the people.

The Hindustan Times (5/25/98) reported that the ruling Akali Dal (Badal) party in Punjab is now in a tight spot with "war cries" from BJP leaders and Sikh protests at Indian consulates in USA, Canada and UK. A senior Akali leader told the newspaper, "we are concerned because we have borne the brunt of the two wars."

### **Tarn Taran Parliamentary Elections**

Re-elections for the Tarn Taran parliamentary seat will be held in the month of June. The seat fell vacant following the refusal of Prem Singh Lalpura, MLA to vacate his Punjab Vidhan Sabha seat and take oath a member of the Lok Sabha. The upcoming election contest will be between Trilochan Singh Tur (Akali Dal – Badal) and Dilbagh Singh Daleke (Congress).

### **UP Sikhs Oppose Uttrakhand**

Members of the Sikh community living in the Terai region, particularly those settled in the Udham Singh Nagar district near Rudarpur, oppose the formation of the Hill State of Uttrakhand. They have staged several demonstrations against the inclusion of the Terai belt in the proposed state. A Sikh delegation met with Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee on April 27 and presented him with memorandum, in which they pointed out that 90 percent of the elected members and chiefs of the 300 *Gram Panchayats* (village governing bodies) had expressed their desire for non-inclusion of Udham Singh Nagar in Uttrakhand. The Sikhs want to remain in Uttar Pradesh because they were settled in that region following Partition of India and Pakistan. According to Indian Express (4/25/98) supporters of Uttrakhand do not want to lose the Terai region because of its high quality rice grown by Sikh farmers which fetches foreign revenue. The Terai region is also home to all major factories. Sikh concerns opposing the inclusion of the Terai region in Uttrakhand were reported by Indian Express (4/25/98, 4/28/98,4/29/98), Times of India (5/5/98), and The Hindu (5/15/98).

### **SGPC Given Control of 37 More Gurdwaras**

The Indian Ministry of Home Affairs issued a notification on April 28 transferring 37 major Gurdwaras -- most of them in Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh -- to the Shromani Gurdwara Prabhandhak Committee (SGPC). As per Indian Express (4/30/98, 5/8/98), the notification transferred the administration and management of these Gurdwaras to the SGPC, increasing by nearly Rs. 7.4 crores its annual revenues of more than Rs. 100 crores. SGPC members have welcomed the notification.

### **Akali Dal (Badal) to Admit Hindus into Party**

The Shromani Akali Dal (Badal) is reported to have decided to spread its wings and admit Hindus into the party in large numbers. Party President and Chief Minister of Punjab, Prakash Singh Badal, is reported to have asked

his senior aides and party colleagues to search for senior leaders from the Hindu community who could be accommodated in senior positions. A senior Akali leader reportedly said, "He wants to appoint at least two Hindus either as General Secretaries or Vice-Presidents."

### **Sexual Discrimination in Punjab**

Rediiff on The Net dated February 23 published a news story in which it reported that Oxfam programme has found that though the state of Punjab was the richest in India, yet women were worse off there than anywhere else in the country. A public policy analyst remarked that South Asia is the only region in the world where men outnumber women. The global ratio of females to males is 106 to 100 while in South Asia it is 94 to 100. In Punjab the ratio of women to men is only 86 to 100. On International Women's day, Oxfam pledged to evolve a South Asian perspective in its programmes and work with community-based and non-governmental organizations to promote the interests of women and the girl child. As a part of its new regional perspective, Oxfam plans to focus on issues relating to the empowerment of women through political participation and attainment of basic human rights.

On May 15 Tota Singh, Education Minister of Punjab, expressed concern over the increasing trend of pre-natal tests and killings of female fetuses. (Indian Express 5/18/98)

### **Punjab Farmers Committing Suicides**

The Movement Against State Repression (MASR), a Punjab based human rights organization, has alleged that about 6,000 farmers in Punjab, mainly Sikhs, have committed suicides in the last year due to indebtedness. The Hindu (April 21 and 23) published news reports on the recent increase in suicides in Punjab by farmers under debt. The newspaper contended that the case of more than 80 farmers and agricultural laborers, mostly Sikhs, committing suicide in five villages of Sangrur district in the last four to five years, is

only the "tip of the iceberg." The problem is rooted deep in the sense of frustration coupled with humiliation arising out of the ever-increasing *Aarhtia* (moneylender) debt in rural areas, which has been caused due to crop failures, unemployment, exploitation by *Aarhtias* and a low sale price of agricultural products like wheat and rice. Sardar Inderjit Singh Jaijee and others conducted the MASR study. In Sangrur district, the report uncovered 24 farmer suicides in village Chotian, 26 in village Baleran, 12 in village Bakhora Kalan, 10 in village Chural Kalan and 15 cases in Bangan during the last four years. According to Jarnail Singh, a former *Sarpanch* (village chief) of village Baleran, 33 persons committed suicide. Not one of the 80 cases of suicide from the five villages of Sangrur was reported to the police in the last 4-5 years. The families and friends of the suicide victims prefer to cremate their dead ones rather than calling for the Punjab police for investigations. The family members fear harassment and torture at the hands of Punjab police. The Hindu reported that elders in the village prefer to dispose of the bodies before the police come to know about the incident. Later the cause of death is given as an accident, fever or snakebite. The April 21 article highlighted the case of a bedridden paralytic 60-year old Sikh widow, Ram Kaur, whose 20-year-old son Manga Singh was kidnapped along with his tractor by moneylenders a year and a half ago. Manga Singh committed suicide soon after the incident by drinking pesticide. Similarly, a few years ago a young Satpal Singh hanged himself from a tree (The Hindu, 4/23/98).

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 rates ranging from 24% to 36%.

### **Sikh Farmer under Debt Kills Family, Commits Suicide**

Kuljit Singh, a Sikh farmer of Sangrur district, is reported to have killed his wife Baljit Kaur (40) and son Manpreet Singh (12) and then committed suicide on the morning of May 14. The Indian Express (5/15/98) published a news report on this latest suicide by Sikh farmers in Punjab. Kuljit Singh was reported to have taken a loan of about Rs. 8 lakhs from an *Aarhtia* (moneylender) and a cooperative bank, which he could not repay. The victim had decided to sell three acres of his land to repay some of the debt and the deal had been finalized through property dealer Nirmal Singh. On May 14 when the property dealer visited Kuljit's residence, he learnt about the tragedy.

### **Many Minors Abducted by Relatives in Amritsar**

The Times of India (5/19/98) published a news story in which it detailed the involvement of close relatives in the abduction and ransom of several minors in Amritsar City in the last few months. The report cited at least 5 such recent cases in Amritsar. The children ranged from age four to seven years old. The newspaper also contended that many such kidnappings of minors in the past had been blamed on Sikh militants. Till a few years ago, the practice of falsely blaming Sikhs of kidnapping minors for ransom, was commonly employed by Indian police and Punjab intelligence agencies to defame the Sikh independence movement in Punjab.

### **Punjab CPI Accuses WSC President of Promoting Militancy**

Dr. Joginder Dayal, State Secretary of Punjab State Council of CPI has alleged that retired Justice Kuldeep Singh, who now heads the World Sikh Council, was also "helping the cause of terrorists." These remarks were published by Hindustan Times dated 5/1/98. He further alleged that "Mr. Kuldeep Singh has now joined the bandwagon of those who are making money at the cost of thousands of

innocent people." He stated that his party would have nothing to do with the people's commission announced recently by World Sikh Council to go into the cause of terrorism in the state. The Times of India (5/1/98) and The Hindu (5/1/98) also carried the statements of the CPI leader. The Hindu stated that the CPI leader charged that the stance of Mr. Justice Kuldeep Singh, after his retirement from the bench of the Supreme Court, was overtly "pro-militant."

According to Indian Express dated 5/20/98, Justice (retired) Kuldeep Singh responded to the statement of the CPI leader saying, "It's a highly irresponsible statement. In fact, it is naked abuse born out of frustration." Responding to another charge that he had joined those trying to revive terrorism, he said, "We at the World Sikh Council are dead against all forms of terrorism. We want peace and rule of law in Punjab." He also said that he had no political ambitions.

### **No Trial in Sight for 47 Sikhs Charged in 1985 Transistor Blasts**

The formal trail of 47 Sikhs accused by the police of Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana of the 1985 transistor bomb blasts, is nowhere in sight. Even after 13 years of harassment and torture by the police and several police inquiries, the case has not gone to trial. Recently, the Times of India reported on 5/2/98 that the police file for the case is missing. Of the 49 person's accused of masterminding the ghastly crimes, two have already died. The Times of India reported that "incidentally it was in the aftermath of the transistor blasts in north India that the Terrorist And Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA) was enacted on May 20, 1985, to tackle terrorism. The Act lapsed in 1996." However, the Sikhs accused of the blasts are still suffering and awaiting trial. In the past, the police are known to have framed false charges of terrorism against Sikhs supporting the Sikh independence movement in Punjab. It is believed that the police have falsely charged the 49 Sikhs accused in the 1985 transistor blasts.

### **Human Right Violation Cases Rising in Punjab: HR Groups**

Two human rights groups of Punjab have alleged that incidents of illegal confinement, torture and custodial death in Punjab by the state police were increasing and demanded that committees of responsible citizens be constituted and asked to visit police stations. Punjab Human Rights Organization (PHRO) and Movement Against State Repression (MASR) issued a joint signed statement to this effect on May 3.

### **CPI Says Punjab Law Situation Gone "Bad to Worse"**

The Punjab State Council of the CPI is reported to have accused the state government of failing to check the increasing police excesses in the state (The Hindu, 5/1/98). The party has demanded a visit to Punjab by a central team, to assess the deteriorating law and order situation in wake of the increased number of cases of police excesses, particularly on women and *dalits* in the past few months. The party's State secretary, Joginder Dayal, was quoted in The Hindustan Times (5/1/98) saying that recently the law and order situation in Punjab had gone from "bad to worse." CPI has also demanded the immediate removal of Punjab DGP P.C. Dogra, holding him responsible for the police atrocities recently reported by Punjab newspapers. The state unit of CPI had decided to organize a state-level protest at Chandigarh on May 8 against "police excesses" in Punjab.

### **Punjab DGP Asks Police Officials to Behave**

P.C. Dogra, the Director General of Punjab police, perturbed and embarrassed over published newspaper reports during the last two weeks of torture, sodomy, atrocities and other human right violations by police officials on Sikhs, is reported to have told the police in general and officers in particular to behave. The police chief was quoted in Indian Express dated 5/2/98 saying, "I am really upset over the image of the police." On May 3, the police chief is also reported to have asked serving police officers to "give due respect to law abiding citizens to improve the

overall image of the force.” These remarks of the police chief were reported by Indian Express dated 5/4/98.

### Police Lawlessness Against Sikhs Continues in Punjab

- Jagroop Singh, a 13 year old Sikh boy of village Sudhar near Jagraon, was sodomized by three Punjab police officials on March 27. The three police constables accused of this horrific act on a Sikh minor include Om Prakash, Malkiat Singh and Amarjit Singh. The victim sustained serious injuries and was treated at the Sudgar Civil Hospital and later shifted to Ludhiana Civil Hospital. Medical report of the victim has confirmed the injuries.
- Ranjit Singh, a 14 year old Sikh boy, is reported to have been kidnapped and sodomized at gun point by the Kotkapura Additional Station House Officer and an accomplice on May 4. As per Indian Express (5/6/98), this is the second such incident reported from Punjab in the first week of May. The victim is reported to have been threatened with death if he disclosed the incident to anybody. However, the boy narrated the incident next morning to members of the local truck union who informed the local police station. A written complaint has been filed with the National Human Rights Commission. Pal Singh, father of the victim told the Indian Express (5/6/98) that his son was still in a state of shock. As per the newspaper, medical examinations of the victim and the accused have confirmed this humiliating experience. The Indian Express (5/12/98) published another news report in which it has been alleged that influential people having clout within the ruling party were threatening the victim and his parents to cover up the crime and not pursue the case against the accused. Both the accused persons are well known Punjab state sportsmen.
- Indian Express dated May 7, 1998 published a news report in which it detailed several cases of human right violations in Punjab from the last 10 days. The newspaper reported that “the beast in the policemen appears to have unleashed itself during the last 10 days, bringing the Punjab Government in poor light.” The incidents reported are from Barnala, Jagraon, Moga and Ropar, and include the following:

- ✓ Ranjit Kaur, a Sikh widow and mother of two from Haibowal near Ludhiana, seeking to recover her money was stripped, detained by police on April 7, tortured for 17 days, and framed in an opium case by the police in Barnala. Her two children and brother -in-law Aman Singh were also kept in custody. The victim alleged, “I was disrobed in the presence of my brother-in-law and the policemen kicked me and beat me with lathis all over the body.” On April 23, the police let her off along with her kids. Aman Singh is still in custody of the police and Ranjit fears that he will be bodily harmed in the illegal custody of the Barnala police.
- ✓ A head constable of Moga CIA wanting to serve court summons on a businessman at Ludhiana abused and slapped his father, an eye-specialist, who died. The incident occurred on 4/25/98. (Indian Express 4/27/98)
- ✓ More than 20 police officials of Sidhwan Bet Thana (Jagraon) beat up and bundled a widow Autan Bai and her five daughters at Tehara village near Ludhiana, on April 25, in order to evict them from their own agricultural property. According to Paramjit Singh, the 19-year-old son of Autan Bai who was working in the fields when the incident happened said, “ The cops beat them all up. Two of my sisters were kicked and caned until they fell unconscious and were thrown out in the field by the raiding party. What’s more, none was allowed to move out of the village, not even medical check-up.” Later, the injured family received medical treatment at Jagraon. The injured sisters include Sukhpal Kaur (19) and Swaran Kaur (17). According to Indian Express (5/2/98), the Punjab Khet Mazdoor Sabha has condemned the police action. The Jagraon police SSP has denied the beating up of the family.
- ✓ Sher Singh alias Gogi, a 26 year old Sikh youth of village Jodhpur Ramana near Bathinda was picked up by Ghanouli police (Sadar Thana Ropar) on February 22. He was tortured for 10 days with rifle butts and

tied with rope. During the torture sessions, the police officials are alleged to have pierced his both thighs with hot rods and inscribed his name “Gogi” on his thighs. The case came to light when, Tarlochan Singh, another person in police custody wrote a letter to India’s National Human Rights Organization, and Punjab State Human Rights Organization about Sher Singh’s torture. Jail authorities have confirmed that when Punjab police officials brought Sher Singh to the jail on March 16, he had Gogi inscribed on both his thighs. The victim showed his injuries to reporters at the jail. The victim told reporters, “They took me to the Ghanouli police post. There I was kept for ten days during which I was beaten up mercilessly and tortured. My legs were torn apart, I was hung from the ceiling with both hands tied at my back and assaulted with rifle butts. One night, I was given some intoxicant in tea and in the morning I woke up to find both my thighs bleeding profusely. They (police) had burnt my flesh with hot iron rods and tattooed Gogi in Punjabi. An ASI of Ghanouli police station has been suspended and transferred.

- Amar Singh, a resident of Moga, is alleged to have been formally arrested by Kapurthala police under alleged false charges of conspiracy to revive violence in Punjab. As per The Hindu (4/1/98), The Director General of Police, P.C. Dogra, recently announced his arrest/surrender.
- Two newspaper reporters, including one of The Indian Express, are reported to have been illegally detained by Punjab police DSP Asa Nand within the Chandigarh district court premises on May 2. According to Indian Express (5/4/98, 5/5/98), an inquiry has been ordered into the illegal confinement and intimidation of the scribes.
- The Kapurthala police have registered a case against ASI Paramjit Singh and his wife on charges of kidnapping Gurdip Singh Sethi. The victim is alleged to have been related to the accused and was abducted on May 2 at village Ibrahimwala by the ASI, his wife and four others. The Indian Express

(5/5/98) reported that the victim was allegedly beaten with blunt objects.

- Rajinder Singh, a truck driver transporting vegetables, is reported to have been stopped and harassed by four police officials of Chandigarh on May 10. The four police constables have been suspended and they include Pawan Kumar, Dharam Dev, Hari Singh and Suresh Chand (Indian Express 5/16/98).
- A group of about 15-20 Punjab police officials are reported to have attacked the Sector 29-D *Rehri* (Stall) market in Chandigarh, beat up at least five persons and ransacked the market. The incident occurred on the night of April 10. A cover up by the police to protect the accused officials has also come to light. A Sub-Inspector and an Assistant Sub-Inspector of India Reserve Battalion from Punjab have been placed under suspension after they allegedly facilitated five of the accused policemen to proceed on "furlough" after the incident. The accused fled from Chandigarh the day after the incident as they were apprehending arrest. Five other Punjab police constables have already been arrested in the case including Karnail Singh, Daljit Singh, Jaswant Singh, Raghbir Singh and Satnam Singh.
- Lt. Col Kuldip Singh, a serving Sikh officer of the Indian Army, was attacked by Punjab police officials at a *dhaba* (roadside restaurant) near Phagwara. The police officers beat the army officer and are alleged to have fractured his arm. The officer was tied using a rope and taken to a police station in Phagwara. The army authorities are perturbed over the tying of an officer by the police and have taken up the case with higher police authorities.
- A retired Sikh police official, Milkha Singh and his three sons are alleged to have been illegally picked up by Raja Sansi police on April 29. The victims were kept in illegal detention by the police for 2 days. An inquiry has been ordered into the case.
- A large number of residents of village Attewali near Fatehgarh Sahib have filed a harassment complaint against local Punjab police officials with Justice M.L. Gupta of the Punjab and Haryana High court during a surprise visit to inspect judicial courts at Fatehgarh Sahib. The villagers presented a written memorandum in which they alleged that on May 3 the luggage of Sardar Labh Singh was forcibly thrown out

of his house, his cattle freed and his house forcibly occupied by 60-70 police officials of Fatehgarh Sahib police station. Those who opposed the police action were put behind bars. Swaran Kaur, wife of Labh Singh, said, "The police took me to the police station and where I was mercilessly tortured. When I fainted, I was admitted to the civil hospital Fatehgarh Sahib, where I was treated." She alleged that the police was harassing her at the behest of a close friend of a top Akali leader. When newspaper reporters visited the occupied house in Attewali, they saw that the police had cordoned off the land and the house of Labh Singh and a large number of policemen were sitting there with household items.

- Punjab police are reported to have begun harassing the aged parents of Sardarni Ravinder Kaur, a pregnant Sikh lady who was arrested by police on March 30 from Rudarpur, UP. Punjab police accuses the pregnant lady of being a human bomb. Her brother, Amarjit Singh, met with reporters at a news conference called by Punjab Human Rights Organization in Chandigarh. He said that his family living at Sibal Camp, Jammu was being harassed regularly by Punjab police visits. He also accused the police of illegally arresting his mother Nanaki Kaur, a 65-year-old Sikh lady, and keeping her in illegal detention for 19 days during October of 1997. (*Des Pardes*, 424/98)
- The Human Rights and Democratic Forum chairperson Jaspal Singh Dhillon has brought to light a recent case of harassment by Punjab police. It is alleged that officials of Jhander police station near Amritsar have been regularly visiting and harassing the aged parents of Satnam Singh Chinna for several months. Punjab police killed Satnam Singh in a faked encounter and continue to harass his parents. When Surjit Singh, a family member filed a petition in the High Court against the harassment, two of his male Sikh cousins are alleged to have illegally detained by police officers at the Amritsar Bus Station. The Forum alleged that Punjab police continues to harass and torture the families of Sikh youths killed in the illegal custody of police in faked encounters.
- Balwinder Singh Lali, the Senior Vice-President of All India Sikh Students Federation Fatehgarh Sahib

District Unit, is reported to have been publicly beaten by 4 drunk Chandigarh police officials at Sector 38 in Chandigarh on the night of March 4. The victim was seriously injured and fainted on the street. Around 3 AM in the morning, some residents discovered his half-dead body and took it to the Sector 16 general hospital. According to Ajit (4/26/98), the victim is being pressurized at the hospital by the police to withdraw his complaint against the errant police officers.

### **Sikh Newspaper Owner Detained at Delhi Airport, Not Allowed to Enter India**

Sardar Rajinder Singh Purewal, the owner of UK weekly Punjab Times International, is reported to have been detained for 36 hours for interrogation at Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi, refused entry into India and returned back to UK. Rajinder had arrived into the airport at Delhi on April 3 from England, with a valid visa for India that he had obtained from the Indian Embassy in London. At New Delhi airport, he was told that his name was on a list of persons not to be allowed to enter India. According to *Des Pardes* dated 4/17/98, the newspaper owner was asked by interrogation officers to help them arrest 2-3 Sikhs in false cases and then they would let him enter India. Rajinder Singh refused to do so. He contacted Prakash Singh Badal, Gurcharan Singh Tohra, Surjit Singh Barnala and several other Akali leaders but none of them could help him. He was told that the immigration and federal agencies had agreed to allow him into the country but Punjab police had refused permission. Rajinder was sent back to UK on April 5 from Delhi airport.

### **Judicial Inquiry into Torture of Sikh Farm Union Leader**

The Punjab and Haryana High Court has ordered a judicial inquiry into the illegal confinement and torture of Sardar Nirbhai Singh Dudekae by Punjab police officials. The victim is alleged to have been tortured from May 13 to 15, 1997 and then handcuffed while in the civil hospital from May 16 to 18. According to Ajit (4/30/98), the accused police officers

include Inspector Gurmel Singh, and Interrogation Officer Tehal Singh of Moga police.

#### **Notice to Police for Harassing Sikh**

The Punjab and Haryana High Court has issued a notice of motion to the S.A.S. Nagar police station for the alleged harassment of a Sikh at the hands of the Superintendent of Police. The victim, Bahadur Singh Baidwan, a taxi operator and owner in Phase 7 taxi stand, has alleged that the SP impounded his two taxis without any reason. As per Indian Express (5/2/98), when he complained to the Punjab police about it, they framed him in a false case of theft involving small amount of money. The victim was arrested by the police and later released on bail.

#### **Punjab Police Harasses UP Sikhs**

Punjab police officials are reported to have harassed the Sikh residents of village Bahaadar Nagar near Saharanpur and illegally arrested six Sikh youths. According to *Des Pardes* (4/17/98) those picked up illegally by the police include Kashmir Singh, Gurdip Singh Chinder, Rana Singh, Kripal Singh, Mahinder Singh, Pappu Singh. The Punjab police is reported to be harassing Sikhs in the Saharanpur area due to the murder of a family in the Gangoh area near Saharanpur on March 2. In that case, the local police have not presented any evidence but continue to say that Sikhs committed the crime. A search campaign of illegal detention, torture and harassment of local Sikhs was initiated by the police. The local Sikhs have protested this treatment by the police and *gheroed* (surrounded) the Gangoh police station.

#### **Another Police Custody Death Case Goes to Trial**

The Central Bureau of Investigation, which on orders from Supreme Court of India had been investigated the May 1995 police custody death of Amrik Singh, has forwarded the case for trial to a session judge. According to Ajit (4/30/98), CBI approved that a case of illegal confinement and death due to torture be registered against several Punjab police officials and that they be tried for the crime. The

accused police officials include Inspector Jaspal Singh, SI Gurdev Singh, Head Constable Suchittar Singh Prakash, Constable Jai Lal, Home Guard Constable Rohi, Constable Lakhwinder Singh and Homeguard Mitha Ram.

#### **Acquitted Sikh's Dismissal Upheld**

The Supreme Court of India has upheld the dismissal of former police sub-inspector Balbir Singh. He had been accused by the police of plotting to kill India's ex-Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in November 1984. Balbir had been twice ordered a death sentence by lower courts but was acquitted of all charges by the Supreme Court of India after 11 years of incarceration. According to Indian Express and Times of India both dated 5/7/98, he had been dismissed from service by the President of India in 1985 on the basis of highly "confidential" Intelligence Bureau files regarding proof of certain activities which was described as "prejudicial to security of the state." He appealed to the Central Administrative Tribunal, which in 1995 quashed his dismissal order by the President of India. The Union Government of India then filed a petition in the Supreme Court challenging the order of the tribunal.

#### **CBI Registers Case Against Police Officials for Torturing Sikh Family**

India's Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has filed charges against several Punjab police officials with regard to the 1 1/2 year old case of harassment and torture of Sardar Gurmit Singh, a resident of Gurusar, Giddarbaha (Muktsar), and his family. The police officers are accused of torturing the family from January to June of 1996. According to Ajit (4/30/98), on June 22, 1996 the police officers are alleged to have illegally abducted Gurmit Singh, his 70-year-old mother and 20 year old sister-in-law. They are alleged to have been kept at various police stations in Punjab and tortured repeatedly. The accused police officers include SHO Gurmit Singh, SHO Teja Singh of Giddarbaha, ASI Naib Singh, and Constable Kuldip Kaur.

#### **Acquittal and Compensation for TADA Victim**

As per Indian Express dated 5/13/98, in another glaring case of misuse of TADA, the Supreme Court of India has acquitted a victim of TADA of prolonged incarceration due to fabricated charges by Delhi police. In March 1990, the victim was falsely charged with having a country-made pistol and charged under TADA. The court ordered the Delhi government to pay a compensation of Rs. 50,000 to the victim. An inquiry has also been ordered into the commission of offences against Gopi Chand (Inspector), Chander Bhan (Sub Inspector) and Balbir Singh (Head Constable). The name of the victim was not released. Since 1985, thousands of Sikh youth are reported to have been detained under TADA throughout India on false charges of being "terrorists." Although the TADA law expired in 1996, yet hundreds of innocent Sikh youth are still languishing in Indian jails under the expired law.

#### **CP Encounter Case Begins**

More than a year after ten city policemen of Delhi gunned down two innocent businessmen in Connaught Place, the court case against the ten accused police officials has now begun. The infamous case involved the March 3, 1997 indiscriminate firing without provocation by Delhi police officials at Connaught Place, in which two innocent businessmen, including a Sikh Sardar Jagjit Singh, were brutally shot to death on the mere suspect of being terrorists. According to The Times of India (5/16/98), all the accused are in judicial custody and they are: S.S. Rathi (Assistant Commissioner of Police), Anil Kumar (Inspector), Ashok Kumar Rana (Sub-Inspector), Shiv Kumar (Head Constable), Tejpal Singh (Head Constable), Mahavir Singh (Head Constable), Sumer Singh (Constable), Subhash Chand (Constable), Sunil Kumar (Constable) and Kothari Ram (Constable). As per the Hindustan Times dated 4/11/98 and reported earlier in Vishav Sikh News (Vol. 2, # 5, May 1998), "the police officers said, it was the lure of out-of-turn promotions that led the

police officers to open fire on two innocent businessmen.”

### **Sikh Mother Seeks CBI Probe Into Death of Son**

Sardarni Sukhwant Kaur, a resident of Gali Navin Haveli in Amritsar, has demanded a CBI inquiry into the murder of her son Lakhwinder Singh. She alleged that three persons, including a Punjab police official, killed her son on October 30, 1997. She alleged that the accused police officer was trying to hush up the case.

### **Warrants Issued for Arrest of SHO**

The Judicial Magistrate at Ferozepore has issued non-bailable warrants for the arrest of Punjab police SHO Beant Singh of Kot Bhai Ke police station near Giddarbaha. According to *Des Pardes* dated 4/17/98, the magistrate issued the order on the complaint of Sardar Gursahib Singh who alleged that the police official tortured him.

### **38,000 Right Violations Reported to NHRC in Past Months**

According to The Times of India (5/12/98), the Chairman of India's National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), Justice M.N. Venkatchaliah, has declared that NHRC has received as many as 38,000 cases of human right violations all over India just in the past few months. The NHRC chief also strongly objected to international human rights organizations such as Amnesty International, Asia Watch and others not being allowed to visit troubled parts of India by the central government.

### **Criminal Justice Should be Victim-Oriented**

Participants at the National Seminar on Victimology, held on May 12 at Punjab Police Academy in Phillaur, were of the unanimous view that the highly “offender-oriented” criminal justice delivery system in India should be changed to become “victim-oriented.” (The Times of India, 5/15/98)

### **India in Oxfam list of Conflict Nations**

Oxfam, an international organization, recently issued a report in which it included India among 38 other

nations as “suffering from high level of violent conflict.” The state terrorism in Kashmir is reported to be the main reason for declaring India as a conflict nation. The Hindustan Times dated 5/9/98 published an article on the Oxfam report.

### **India's 2001 Census Likely on Basis of Caste**

The Indian Express dated April 25, 1998 published a news report on the data user's conference held recently in New Delhi. L.K. Advani (BJP), Home Minister of India, presented the inaugural address of the conference. The census will most probably be held on the basis of castes. It is expected that for the first time, caste would become the single most important factor of the census.

### **Mann Opposes Vande Matram in Punjab Schools**

Simranjit Singh Mann, President of Akali Dal (Mann), has voiced opposition to the reported proposal of the Punjab government to introduce singing of *vande mataram* at the opening of schools in the state.

### **Book on Experiences of Women During Partition**

Authors Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin recently published a feminist historiography of the Partition in a book titled “Borders and Boundaries.” The book deals with the life experiences of women during the 1947 partition of India and Pakistan. It is based mainly on interviews, and women's stories are presented in their own words. These stories are interwoven with available historical records, official and otherwise. The stories show the varying impact Partition had on women: some were shattered, while others “spread their wings.” A review of the book was published by India Today dated April 27, 1998.

### **Sikh Lady Leads Indian Hockey Team**

Sandeep Kaur, a Sikh athlete from Punjab, will lead the 16-member Indian women's hockey team to the ninth women's World Cup Hockey Championships to be held at Utrecht, Netherlands from May 20 to 31.

### **Army Drill for School Children at Amritsar**

The Indian Express (5/15/98) and Times of India (5/15/98) published news reports about a live army drill and show put on by the army for students in Amritsar on May 14. The show for children projected hatred for the neighboring state of Pakistan. In reference to the recent nuclear explosions conducted by India, Major General Avtar Singh, general officer commanding of Panthers Division is reported to have told the crowd, “No, this is not to threaten Pakistan, they have already had had enough.” An enthusiastic army officer told a curious looking group of children, “This 130 mm gun can hit the target in Lahore right from here only.” The newspaper also reported that “children climbed on to Arjun ... rotating the barrel of tank in Pakistan Direction.” The Panther Major General said, “I personally feel that interaction with school children should be encouraged to make them aware of their responsibilities towards the defense of the country....”

### **VHP Quietly Working for Ram Temple**

The Hindustan Times dated May 16 and 19, published news reports that the Vishav Hindu Parishad (VHP) was working quietly on massive preparations for constructing a Ram temple at the Babri Masjid site in Ayodhya. Hinduvata activists are reported to be in an upbeat mood and plan to complete construction work on the Ram Temple in the next couple of years. The May 16 article interviewed several stone carvers of villages Kojra, Ajari and Pindwara near Sirohi, Rajasthan who admitted that they were carving the pillars for the Ram Temple under orders from VHP Supremo Ashok Singhal. The pillars and other materials are crafted in Rajasthan under security provided by the local police. The pillars are then sent to Ayodhya where they are stocked in a five-acre area protected from all sides. According to Kana Ram Ghachi, the incharge of the three workshops, work on about 150 pillars is already complete and there will be total of about 212 pillars. He is quoted by the newspaper saying “There are

about four trips to Ayodhya every month. The various parts are assembled in Ayodhya.” Rajesh Rajwal, a stone cutting worker told the Hindustan Times reporter by pointing at the policemen forming a circle around his workshop saying “We are getting help from all

quarters. The Government is also very encouraging. We do not think of it as political work. For us, it is a totally religious duty. We are devoted to our religion and culture and will do everything possible to build the temple.”

Acharya Kishore, the general secretary of Vishav Hindu Parishad, told Indian Express 5/21/98, “we demolished it (Babri Masjid) in one day without notice. We will construct it (Ram Temple) similarly.”

## NEWS FROM OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD

### **Worldwide Protests by Sikhs**

Protest demonstrations by large number of Sikhs have been held in USA, Canada, Europe, UK and Asia.

A group of Sikh protestors demonstrated in front of the G-8 conference center in Birmingham, UK on May 15. The group called for sanctions against India. The International Sikh Youth Federation in UK issued a press release on May 17 asking for economic sanctions against India.

The Hindustan Times (5/25/98) reported a large Sikh demonstration in San Francisco, USA. The newspaper said that “the consulate staff hid behind closed doors and shutters looking weary and dismayed as Sikhs shouted slogans such as ‘Don’t trust India’, ‘Hindu bombs spell disaster’, and ‘Sacred cow makes Nuclear Bomb.’

Sikhs in Australia gathered outside the Indian High Commission on May 15 to protest India’s program of nuclear proliferation. The protestors called on the Indian government to feed its people before spending money on nuclear tests. The protesting Sikhs agreed to mount a letter writing campaign soon and will start working closely with Greenpeace and anti-nuclear groups. (The Canberra Times, 5/16/98)

### **UN Council Responds to Indian Nuclear Blasts**

The United Nations Security Council strongly deplored the five underground nuclear weapon tests that India recently conducted. The condemnation statement of the Council came on May 14. The Council strongly urged India to

refrain from carrying out any more nuclear weapon tests.

U.N. Chief Kofi Anan is reported to have expressed “deep regret” and said that the nuclear trials violated a “de facto moratorium” on such tests set by CTBT in 1996. (Reuters, 5/12/98)

### **Toronto Sikhs Organize Interfaith Memorial Service**

About 200 people representing more than a dozen faith traditions, including Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Baha’is, Jains, Buddhists, Zoroastrians and Aborigines, gathered at the Middlefield Road Gurdwara Sahib in the Toronto for an interfaith memorial service and to ponder over the question “Who is my neighbor?” The event was organized by the Gursikh Sabha Canada in collaboration with the Scarborough Foreign Mission Society, a Roman Catholic community organization. The event was held in memory of the November 12, 1997 brutal murder of Alberta Khan, a Filipino Catholic woman. The victim who had been active in interfaith work ran the Markham variety store near the Gurdwara Sahib. The event was attended by Sikhs, Christians, Jews, Muslims, Jains, Buddhists, Hindus, Baha’is, Zoroastrians and Aborigines. Many speakers emphasized that everyone is a child of God. Others said all living creatures deserve love and respect. After the faith representatives spoke, audience members broke up in small groups to discuss the question of neighbor. The meeting ended with *Guru ka Langar* that was partaken by the attendees sitting on the floor in long rows facing each other. The Toronto Star dated May 9 called it a “family getting together.”

### **When Jews Wore Turbans**

Professor Eliezer Segal, of the Department of Religious Studies at University of Calgary has put online an article that explores the historical Jewish tradition of wearing turbans. The article was originally published in The Jewish Star dated April 6, 1990, in response to the famous turban case in Canada. In that case, the courts upheld the right of Sikhs to wear a turban while serving in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The complete article can be accessed at [http://acs6.acs.ucalgary.ca/~elsegal/S\\_hokel/900406\\_Turbans.html](http://acs6.acs.ucalgary.ca/~elsegal/S_hokel/900406_Turbans.html)

### **Vaisakhi Parade in Ottawa**

The Sikh community of Ottawa, Canada organized its first-ever Sikh parade to celebrate the 299<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Khalsa. The parade attracted visitors from Toronto and Montreal. A six-piece Canadian Dixieland band led the parade. The President of Ottawa Sikh’s community, Sardar Ramsarup Singh, used the occasion to voice his disgust with India’s recent nuclear tests. The Sikh parade was reported in The Ottawa Citizen dated 5/18/98.

### **Sikhs Help Toronto Food Bank**

The Toronto Daily Bread Food Bank is reported to have topped last year’s food donations with the help of many volunteers including the local Sikh community. The Toronto Star dated May 3, 1998 reported Sue Cox, executive director of the food bank, saying that the largest group collection was organized by members of Toronto’s Sikh community, who collected over 15,000 pounds of food in three days.

### **Sikh Refugees Denied Indian Passports in Canada**

Over 3,000 Sikhs who claim to have sought refuge in Canada after Operation Bluestar, have been refused passports by the Indian Embassy. A spokesman for the office of Consulate General of India said, "we don't provide consulate services to Indian refugees... We neither issue nor renew passports to Indian refugees. There is a government order which cannot be made public." The spokesman further said that those who defamed and deserted India for one reason or another could not be allowed to have Indian passports.

### **Sikhs Participate in WWII Memorial Service in Holland**

Several Sikhs participated in the march past the National Monument in Holland on May 4, to pay homage to the victims of World War II and remember the sacrifices of their ancestors for the freedom of mankind. A Dutch lady thanked the Sikhs, since Sikh soldiers in WWII had rescued her family in Indonesia. On May 5, Sikhs distributed literature near the National Monument, on the Sikh faith and role of Sikhs in the World Wars.

### **Burma War Memorial**

A memorial was unveiled on a clifftop at Portscatho in Cornwall UK in

tribute to the 26,380 men killed in Burma between 1942 and 1945 who have no known graves. Major Allan, an 85 year old veteran of the Burma war, reported in the Western Morning News (5/8/98) that "I have wanted to do this for years because my battalion, in the 26<sup>th</sup> Indian Division, comprised Gurkhas, Sikhs, Rajputs and Punjabis. So many of them died with no grave." Members of the Burma Star Association and the Royal British Legion attended the dedication ceremony.

### **UK Sikhs Celebrate Gurburab**

The Sikh community in Leicester celebrated the 419<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Prakash Divas of Siri Guru Amardaas Sahib, the third Nanak. *Bhog* of *Akhand Paath* was held on May 10. Member of Parliament for Leicester South, Mr. Jim Marshall, was the principal guest. An exhibition of Sikh religious artifacts was organized by Sardar Channan Singh. The Leicester Mercury News (5/13/98) published an article on the celebrations.

### **Sikh Mothers Honored in Malaysia**

The Sikh Welfare Society of Malaysia organized its 10<sup>th</sup> annual Mother's Day festival and dinner at Shagri-La Kuala Lumpur. Over 700 women attended the event. Five Sikh mothers were named "Mothers of the Year" on

the basis of nominations received from their daughters and granddaughters. Those honored included Kartar Kaur (81), Jess Kaur (79), Jaswand Kaur (67), Gurnam Kaur (70) and Sushil Kaur (65). According to the New Straits-Management Times (5/09/98), the funds collected during the event will be distributed among 14 needy families in Malaysia through the Welfare Department.

### **Germany Grants Asylum to Panjwar Family**

The German government is reported to have granted asylum to the family members of Sardar Paramjit Singh Panjwar, Chief of Khalistan Commando Force. The family members given asylum include his wife Panwar Kaur (31) and sons Shahbaz Singh (6) and Manbir Singh (2).

### **Pakistan Sees Tourist Potential**

The Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation has announced plans to attract foreign tourists to ancient and modern religious sites in the country. As per AAP Newsfeed (4/30/98) a niche marketing drive is currently underway to attract people to ancient sites of Buddhism, Sikh religion, and Sufi mysticism.

## Gurpurabs for June 1998

### Actual Dates

**June 14** Gur Gaddi Divas of Siri Guru Angad Sahib (1539)  
**June 14** Prakash Divas of Siri Guru Hargobind Sahib (1595)

### Observed Dates

**June 11** Prakash Divas of Siri Guru Hargobind Sahib (1595)

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

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