



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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Sikh Gurdwara of LA, North Hollywood, CA
Center of Sikh Studies, Santa Anna, CA
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Guru Gobind Singh Society, Bedford, OH
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US News

Peoples Commission to Investigate Human Right Violations in Punjab

The World Sikh Council in cooperation with the Coordination Committee for Disappearances in Punjab has appointed a Peoples Commission to probe and fix responsibility for the large scale human rights violations that took place in Punjab from 1978-1994. The formation of the commission was announced by Justice (retired) Kuldip Singh, President of World Sikh Council on April 26 at Jalandhar. The three member Commission will be headed by retired Supreme Court of India judge and former Chairman of the Law Commission, Justice K.J. Reddy. The other members of the commission are Justice D.S. Tewatia, former Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court and Justice H. Suresh, former Judge of the Bombay High Court. The commission will investigate violations against individuals, groups or classes including religious minorities, their causes and identify those responsible for the excesses. The exact terms of reference of the commission will be finalized at its first meeting to be held in May. All aggrieved parties, including individuals or groups, would be free to present their cases, while various human rights organizations would be involved in furnishing the required evidence. The Commission is not expected to receive cooperation from the state government, civil and police administration in Punjab. The Peoples commission has been formed because the ruling Shromani Akali Dal (Badal) had backed out of its electoral promise made to the people of Punjab in its Assembly poll manifesto. Justice Kuldip Singh was quoted in the press saying that "we do not believe in burying the past. We want to analyze the reasons for the turmoil in the State."

Vishav Sikh Council-USA has welcomed the appointment of the Commission and will extend full support for this noble cause. A committee to assist the Commission will be appointed in the near future. Groups which have been active in the field of freedom, justice and protection of human rights will be requested to join this effort. Individuals or groups wishing to participate should contact Sardar Ranbir Singh at 614-764-8015 or Sardar Kuldeep Singh at 419-841-7178.

New Orleans Gurdwara Sahib Joins VSC-USA

The Sikh Society of South in New Orleans, Louisiana has 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.



VSC-USA Denounces Formation of Parallel Shatabadi Committee

Vishav Sikh Council - USA issued a press release on March 30 denouncing the appointment of a parallel Shatabadi committee to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the Khalsa in the US. Indo Canadian Times dated March 5-11, reported that a Committee led by Darshan Singh Dhaliwal of Milwaukee was announced by Sardar Gurcharan Singh Tohra, President of SGPC. VSC-USA considers the committee to be redundant because VSC-USA already has created a national level structure to celebrate the anniversary in the form of a Sava Lakh Sikh March in Washington in April 1999. The Council believed that the President of SGPC had been misinformed and called upon him to abolish the redundant Shatabadi committee and advise all Sikhs to support the initiatives already put in place through the efforts of VSC-USA which is a Regional unit of World Sikh Council and operates under the patronage of Siri Akal Takhat Sahib. The World Sikh Council has been informed of this development.

VSC-USA Executive Committee

The Board of Directors of Vishav (World) Sikh Council - USA have selected the following individuals to serve as members of the Executive Committee:

- Sardar Jasbir Singh, Los Angeles, CA
- Sardar Amarjit Singh, Vernon, CT
- Sardar Amarjit Singh, Buffalo, NY
- Sardar Ranbir Singh, Dublin, OH
- Sardar Ujagar Singh, White Plains, NY
- Sardar Kuldeep Singh, Toledo, OH

The Executive Committee is currently in the process of finalizing the office bearers of VSC-USA. It should be noted that this committee is an interim one. When additional members have joined the VSC-USA, additions to the Board of Trustees and changes in the Executive Committee can be made by the Council.

Vaisaakhi Celebrations

The 299th anniversary of the formation of the Khalsa by Siri Guru

Gobind Singh Sahib, the Tenth Nanak was celebrated all over the US and the rest of the world. Over 20,000 Sikhs are reported to have attended the annual Sikh parade in New York City on April 25. The parade was addressed by US Congressman John Doolittle and Sardar Gurmit Singh Aulakh, President of Council of Khalistan. News reports relating to religious celebrations of Vaisaakhi by Sikhs were published by Los Angeles Times (4/11/98), Star Tribune Minneapolis (4/11/98), The Fresno Bee (4/11/98 & 4/12/98), The Washington Post (4/13/98), The Toronto Star (4/13/98), The News York Times (4/24/98), Newsday (4/26/98), The Times of India (4/13/98), The News International Pakistan (4/27/98), New Strait Times Malaysia (4/11/98, 4/14/98, 4/18/98, 4/21/98), South China Morning Post (4/14/98) and AAP Newsfeed Australia (4/9/98).

Interfaith Activities

The following interfaith activities, events and newspaper articles have recently been reported:

- Gayle White, the religion writer for Atlanta Journal-Constitution has published a new book titled "Believers and Beliefs: A Practical Guide to Religious Etiquette for Business and Social Occasions" (Berkley, \$12). The book covers many religions including the Sikh faith. A review of the book was published by The Fort Worth Star-Telegram dated 4/18/98.
- The Los Angeles Times dated 4/6/98 published a news story on some of the workplace guidelines relating to religious expression by persons on different faiths. The article remarked that "companies must make an effort to accommodate their employees' religious practices such as wearing a turban or a cross or reading religious texts." The article mentioned that an official policy that restricts all religious slogans on T-shirts and other articles of clothing is acceptable, while requiring a Sikh to cut hair to meet corporate dress codes is unacceptable. Twenty such illustrations of acceptable and unacceptable guideposts relating to several faiths were presented in the article.
- Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Hindu and Jewish speakers participated in a

seminar on April 5 in Redondo Beach, Los Angeles to celebrate Religious Founder's Day observed by the local Worldwide Ahmadiya Association

- The Fort Worth Star-Telegram dated 4/12/98 published an article on the role of various religions worldwide as a powerful force for political change. The article mentioned the role of the Sikh religious community in Punjab being at the forefront of the drive for self-determination. The article was written by Mark I. Pinsky, a Orlando Sentinel Religion writer, and was based on a speech delivered last year at the Wake Forest University as part of its Year of Religions series.
- The Toronto Star dated 4/12/98 published a story titled "Welcoming Back the Sun: The return of Spring is celebrated in many cultures." The Sikh religious celebrations of Vaisaakhi were included in the article.
- The Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism thanked the Malaysian Government on March 30 for its quick response to restore peace and order in Kampung Rawa, Pulau Pinang over a mosque and temple dispute.
- The Hindu-Sikh Foundation of Indian Immigrants donated food worth Rupees 255 million to 1,000 residents of Tanjung Priok, in North Jakarta, Indonesia. The Jakarta Post dated 3/30/98 reported that increasing number of organizations are extending a helping hand to the poor and needy due to the recent hardships being suffered by them because of the continuing economic crisis in Indonesia.

CNN Report on Sikh Weddings

A news video, describing the recent Hukamnaama issued from Siri Akal Takhat Sahib forbidding Sikhs all over the world from conducting Anand Kaaraj (Sikh marriage ceremony) in hotels and wedding places due to lack of religious respect accorded to Siri Guru Granth Sahib at these locations, was shown on CNN Newsroom Worldview on April 23. The video mentioned that "Most of India's Sikhs have welcomed the Akal Takhat's decision as a timely measure which will protect generations of traditions." The news item concluded that "the decision is expected to be a

far reaching one. While Sikhs maintain strong links to the past, they are also seen as a modern and progressive community.”

Wall Street Journal Showcases Sikh

The Marketplace section of Wall Street Journal dated April 22 published a brief article titled “In Silicon Valley, the Elite Way to Eat is on the Cheap.” The article featured the pictures of five persons, one of whom was Sardar Kirpal Singh Khalsa, a Gursikh holding a pizza.

Book: The Style of Lions

The Sikh Foundation is distributing a book *The Style of the Lion* written by Sardar Jaspreet Singh. The book projects contemporary Sikh life in India and abroad. More information on the book may be obtained by e-mailing SikhFound@ckns.net. The book is also available from Akal Publications, PO Box 130563, Ann Arbor, MI, 48113.

South Asian American Conference

A South Asian American Issues Conference titled “Identity and Conflict” was held on April 12 at Stanford University. The keynote speaker was Sardarni Kartar Kaur, whose family emigrated from Punjab to USA during 1890s. The Sikh perspective was presented at the conference by Sardar Jatinder Singh and Sardar Samir Singh. The participating Sikhs emphasized that 1) they were first Sikhs and then South Asians, and 2) Sikh issues in India are real and Sikhs outside of India feel obligated to help their community without being grouped as “Indians.”

Youth Leadership Retreat Planned

The Sikh Youth Federation, USA (a member of VSC-USA) is organizing its 4th Annual Gurmat oriented Sikh Youth Leadership Retreat at Camp Nahelu near Detroit, MI on May 22-25. The human rights workshop will be conducted by Dr. Cynthia K. Mahmood, author of *Fighting for Faith and Nation*. More information on the retreat can be obtained by e-mailing Sardar Kuldeep Singh at sikhs@access Toledo.com

Seminar on Sikh Form

The Sikh Gurdwara of North Carolina, Durham, NC (a member of VSC-USA), held a seminar titled “Significance of Form in Sikhism” on April 4. Three members of the congregation including a lady, one gentleman and a high-school youth spoke at the seminar. Issues relating to the Sikh *baana* were discussed.

ASP Activities

The Association of Sikh Professionals (ASP) has announced the following upcoming projects

- Junior Achievement Competition: High school or college students are encouraged to write papers on Sikh topics and submit them to ASP.
- Applications are invited for the Sikh Educational Aid Fund for its 1998-99 grant cycle.

June 20 is the deadline for both the projects. More information on the activities of ASP can be obtained from <http://www.maboli.com/asp>

Gurbani Researcher Program

The International Institute of Gurmat Studies has made available the Gurbani Researcher Program software which contains the Gurmukhi text and English translation of Siri Guru Granth Sahib. More information on the software can be obtained by e-mailing support@IGS.ORG

Council of Khalistan

The Council of Khalistan has written several letters protesting human right violations against Sikhs in Punjab to Punjab Police Chief Mr. P.C. Dogra, President of SGPC Sardar Gurcharan Singh Tohra, and Sikhs in the Congress Party. The Council had also written to the people and Government of Pakistan to stop Indian hegemony and recognize Khalistan. 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>

Ex-CBI Chief in Didar Singh's Committee

The Indo-Canadian Times dated February 19-25 has reported that the name of India's Central Bureau of Intelligence (CBI) ex-Director Joginder Singh appears in the list of the members of the national committee formed by Didar Singh Bains to start a bank in Punjab.

Student Council Activities

The Sikh Student Council at The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH will participate in the following activities

- Student Diversity Fair, April 27
- Asian-American Food and Cultural Festival, April 30
- Buckeye World Tour: 5K Run and International Festival, May 3

The Sikh participation is being coordinated by Sardar Maanik Singh, President of Sikh Student Council and a fine arts student.

Community Leader Passes Away

Sardar Bakshish Singh, the co-founder and President of the Sacramento Sikh Gurdwara Sahib died at the age of 43 on March 22 due to a blood vessel bursting in his leg. He had been active in raising money for the victims of the San Francisco earthquake and many other noble causes. Sardar Bakshish Singh was a forklift driver and shop steward for Campbell's Soup and worked 12 hours a day, six days a week. About 2,000 Sikhs are reported to have attended his funeral. The Sacramento Bee, dated 3/26/98 published an article on Sardar Bakshish Singh's death.

Human Rights School Project

The United Nations Cyber School Bus launched a human rights project on March 20 for young people to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The focus of the project is “Your Students in Action.” The project aims to collect stories of classes or schools defending and promoting human rights in their own communities, neighborhood and cities. The stories will be compiled into a global resource and student effort will be recognized on Human

Rights Day, December 10. To get your local school involved in this project, send e-mail to golbalschoolbus@un.org and in the subject field write 'rights'. In the message, include your name, school name and address.

US Officials Visit India

Several US officials are reported to have visited India recently on official trips. The officials included Shirley Jackson (Chief of the US Nuclear

Regulatory Commission), Bill Richardson (US Ambassador to UN), Rick Inderfuth (Assistant Secretary of State to South Asia), Bruce Reidel (Senior Director of National Security Council), and General Dennis Reimer (Chief of Army Staff).

Study Envisages Indo-Pak Nuclear War around 2006

The Rand Corporation, a respected think tank, has conducted a study for Pentagon in which it predicts the

cause of a nuclear war in South Asia to be insurgency in Kashmir and Punjab. The report is titled "Sources of Conflict in the 21st Century: Regional Futures and US Strategy." The report speculates insurgency in Kashmir spreading into Punjab and eventually leading to a nuclear war between India and Pakistan. The Statesman (4/8/98) and India Abroad (4/17/98) published an article on the report.

NEWS FROM PUNJAB (HOMELAND OF THE SIKHS)

Hukamnaama Issued on Guru ka Langar

A Hukamnaama was issued by Siri Akal Takhat Sahib, Amritsar on April 20, 1998 directing Sikhs all over the world to partake in Guru ka Langar only while sitting in a line on the floor. All Gurdwaras which served Langar on tables and chairs will now have to conform to the directive issued by Siri Akal Takhat Sahib.

World Sikh Council Projects

The Executive Committee of World Sikh Council met on April 8 at Chandigarh. Future action plans were formulated at the meeting. It was decided to undertake the following five projects immediately:

- Establishment of Guru Gobind Singh Vidya Kendra to impart religious education and train Sikh youth to serve as Sevadars, Ragis and Preachers in Gurdwaras and Sikh institutions
- Literacy project to promote the importance of education among Sikhs
- Human Rights Protection program to investigate past human right violations in Punjab
- Secretariat at New Delhi to interact and coordinate with Sikhs abroad with a view to render all assistance and help to them while visiting India
- Initiate study and research with a view to recommend to the Sikh Nation that the office of the Jathedar of Siri Akal Takhat Sahib be given independent autonomous status in accordance with Sikh traditions.

Rajasthan Police Keeps Eye on Amrit Ceremonies

The Rajasthan police is reported to be keeping a close watch on Khande-da-Pahul (Amrit ceremony) among the Sikh community in Rajasthan. A press statement issued by SGCP has alleged that Gurdwara management committees in Rajasthan have been asked by the local police to provide the names and addresses of the five Sikhs in charge of any Amrit ceremonies that may be scheduled. The police is also reported to have inquired about the affiliations of the five participating Sikhs. This alleged act of the Rajasthan police is a serious violation of the basic right of Sikhs to religious freedom.

Tohra Appears at Akal Takhat

Sardar Gurcharan Singh Tohra, President of SGPC, voluntarily presented himself at Siri Akal Takhat Sahib on March 20 to present clarifications about allegedly receiving a Siropa from Nirankaris and asking for their votes in favor of Akali candidate Prem Singh Chandumajra. The alleged incident with Nirankaris is reported to have occurred in Patiala about two months ago. Indian Express dated 4/21/98 reported that Singh Sahib Bhai Ranjit Singh said that if it was proved that Tohra made a direct appeal to Nirankaris to vote for his party, it would be taken as a serious violation of the Hukamnaama of the Akal Takhat. Amrinder Singh, a Congress party leader, who made the allegations has been asked to submit evidence to Siri Akal Takhat Sahib by

May 9 in support of his claim. Following the April 13, 1978 killing of 18 unarmed Sikh protesters by Nirankaris, Siri Akal Takhat Sahib had issued a Hukamnaama directing Sikhs not to have any social interaction with Nirankaris.

Web Site for Live Gurbaani Kirtan

Computer Today (4/19/98) reports that Sikhs worldwide will soon be able to hear non-stop recitation of Gurbaani direct from Golden Temple at Amritsar over the Internet. The SGPC is reported to have allocated Rs. 50 lakhs for the web site.

Movie Produced About Life of Siri Guru Gobind Singh Sahib

Ram Maheshwari, the producer of "Nanak Nam Jahaz Hai" has released another movie titled "Sarbars Daani Guru Gobind Singh." The movie is based on Sardar Harcharan Singh's play "Chamkaur di Garhi." The movie is said to have been prepared in cooperation with the Dharam Prachar Committee of Siri Singh Sabha of Dadar, Bombay.

Colonel Pratap Singh Passes Away

Sardar Pratap Singh, the President of Khalsa Raj Party and Convenor of the Movement Against State Repression (MASR), passed away on March 28 due to heart failure. He was a retired Colonel of the Indian Army and was also the author of the book "Khalistan The Only Solution." He had been jailed by the Indian government for speaking out for freedom for Khalistan, the sovereign Sikh

homeland declared independent on October 7, 1987.

Sikh Enrollment in Indian Army Plummet

India Today (April 13, 1998) published an article titled "Indian Army's Changing Face," which showed statistics that enrollment of people from Punjab (mainly Sikhs) in the Indian Army has dropped from 31.6% in 1965-66 to only 7.6% in 1996-97. This four fold drop over three decades is the largest reduction among all states in India. Other states which showed enrollment rate drops were Tamil Nadu (5.4% to 4.9%) and Kerala (4.6% to 3.1%).

HR Group Accuses Akali Govt. of Protecting Policemen

The Statesman (India) dated April 15, 1998 reported that The Committee for Coordination on Disappearances in Punjab has accused the current Akali government in Punjab of "protecting" the policemen accused of committing "excesses" in Punjab. The panel claimed that the central government was also supporting the Akali government's policy of protecting the accused personnel. It also said that on the human rights front, the policy of the current Akali government was no different than that of the previous Congress regime. On April 14 the Committee presented a memorandum to Punjab Chief Minister, Prakash Singh Badal.

Canadian Minister's Appeal to Punjab Government

Mr. Herb Dhaliwal, the Canadian Minister for National Revenue and the first immigrant to serve on the Canadian Cabinet, visited Punjab recently and appealed to the Government of India, particularly the Punjab Government to ensure transparency in its administration. According to The Hindu dated 4/6/98, Mr. Dhaliwal justified his earlier criticism of Human Rights violations in Punjab. Linking development and economic growth with the general atmosphere in the country (India), he favored political change through democratic means only. He cited the example of Quebec in which the people of that state exercised their

right to franchise on the issue of separation twice, but there was no violence and the verdict was acceptable to all. With regard to harmony in Canada, Mr. Dhaliwal said "It is based on the principle that while democracy functions on majorities, it must remain sensitive to the needs and fears of the minorities."

Article Blames Indian Politicians for Sikh Massacres

Rediff on the Net published an article on 4/13/98 written by Rajeev Srinivasan on Vaisaakhi and the tragedies of Operation Bluestar, November 1984 massacres and Jallianawala Bagh. The author blames the Indian politicians for atrocities committed on Sikhs in India during Bluestar and November 1984 massacres. However, he also contends that "the rest of us are not innocent either, for we stood by and allowed this disgrace to happen." The author also suggests that "it is the politicians (of India) who should be tried for crimes against the nation and crimes against humanity - - for this was their Kristallnacht. Just as the murderous Nazi thugs violated the human rights of Jews back then, so did our oh-so-sanctimonious politicians and their minions destroy Sikh lives and property. It is one of the darkest chapters in India's recent history." The author concluded the article by remarking that "I have felt uncomfortable when I have seen a Sikh in America wearing the distinctive orange or blue turban of the Khalsa warrior. I would have liked to go up to him and to say *I thank you and your tribe for what you have done for our country. I thank you for the Gadar Party, and for the Komagata Maru and for 1948 and 1962 and 1971, for every war in which young men spilled their blood for our country.* But I was afraid that he would laugh at me and tell me of what our country (India) has done to his father, his brother, his wife, his mother, his son. So, on this Baisakhi, I shall take the easy way out: for all the times that I did not go up to a Sikh, let me raise a toast to them all. Wahe Guru, my brothers! Sat Sri Akal."

Punjab Governor Asks Sikhs to Take Bluestar and 1984 Massacres in Stride

The Hindustan Times dated 4/14/98 published a news report of an interview conducted with Lt. General (retired) B.K.N. Chibber, Governor of Punjab. In the interview, Chibber is quoted by the newspaper as saying "The scars will remain, but considering that the 1947-post partition riots in the Punjab region, including the territories now in Pakistan, were of far more serious magnitude, Bluestar and Delhi riots should be taken in stride and seen in their overall perspectives." The Governor made these remarks during a visit to Bombay on April 13 as the Chief Guest at the Vaisaakhi cultural festivities. Sikhs around the world have protested the Governor's remarks as disrespectful to the memory of innocent victims of torture, humiliation and murder.

Articles on Plight of Sikh Orphans

The March 1998 issue of Spokesman published an article titled "Sikh Panth's Apathy Towards the Orphans of Holocaust Victims." The article presents an overview of the current dismal help being offered to the large number of orphaned Sikhs whose parents have been killed by Indian security forces in the last two decades. The immediate and long term responsibility for physical and mental rehabilitation of these orphans lies with the institutions of the Khalsa Panth. The March 1998 issue also carried an article on the "Mata Gujri Sahara Trust" for Sikh orphans. The trust was initiated two years ago at village Kalar Bhaini in Patiala district and it provides education to 50 Sikh orphans. After having suffered in jail under TADA (despite being innocent) and sacrificing their husbands for the Khalsa Panth, Sardarni Sandip Kaur and Sardarni Sohanjit Kaur and a few other women are playing an important role in managing the trust. The trust can be contacted at: *Mata Gujri Sahara Trust, Gurdwara Dukh Bhanjan Sahib, Village Kalar Bhaini, P.O. Box Jhandi, District Patiala, India.*

UN Commission for Human Rights

The United Nations Commission for Human Rights held its meetings during the first two weeks of April in which it heard from several non-governmental organizations who charged governments of the world, including India, of violating the religious freedom and rights of minorities. Speakers from the International Human Rights Association of American Minorities, World Society of Victimology, World Muslim Congress, and Human Rights Advocates contended that human rights violations of Sikhs have continued in India and presented evidence to support their claims. The activities of the Commission were reported in M2 Presswire dated April 2, 6, and 17

Increase in Custodial Death in India

India's National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has released statistics which show that custodial deaths in India sharply increased from 555 in 1996-97 to 1,012 in 1997-98. During the month of March this year, 821 such cases have been reported to NHRC. Deaths in judicial custody accounted for 81 percent of the custodial deaths last year. These latest statistics published by The Times of India dated 4/11/98 negate last year's signing of International Convention Against Torture and Other Forms of Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Punishment by the Government of India.

Delhi Cops Kill to Get Promotions

The Hindustan Times dated 4/11/98 published a news report in which it detailed the various methods the Delhi police officials have used to get rich and out-of-turn promotions. The article describes the case of the infamous Connaught Place shoot-out on 3/31/97 in which two innocent businessmen, including a Sikh Sardar Jagjit Singh, were shot to death by Delhi police officials on the mere suspects of being terrorists. The newspaper claimed that "police officers said, it was the lure of out-of-turn promotions that led the police team to open fire on two innocent businessmen."

Wardha Sikhs Demand Relief

A nomadic tribe from Rajasthan which had converted to the Sikh faith and currently settled in Wardha near Nagpur has demanded adequate compensation for the November 1984 massacres. The Sikh tribe is reported to have lost its entire property including houses in the massacres. The senior most leader of the group, Sardar Saran Singh said that in November 1984 the mob went on rampage, looting houses and setting them ablaze. The 15 Sikalgar families now living in Wardha have formed the Akhil Bharatiya Sikh Sikalgar Vikas Parishad to press their demands. The group alleges that the Gurdwara Sahib that they had constructed near Arvi Naik was looted in November 1984 by mobs and has now been converted to a school by former MP Vasant Sathe.

Fast Unto Death by Author

Sardar Gurcharan Singh Babbar, the author of the book Sarkari-Qatl-e-Aam (Government Organized Carnage) which was recently banned in India, is reported to have begun a fast to death to demand the lifting of the ban on his book. The Reuters published a news report on the fasting author on 4/8/98. The book deals with the November 1984 massacres in which nearly 20,000 Sikhs are reported to have been butchered by mobs in Delhi, the capital of India.

Web Site of HR Organization

The Committee for Coordination on Disappearances in Punjab has established a web site to disseminate information about its activities. The web page is located at <http://www.poboxes.com/humanc>

Surveillance Ordered of Families of Sikh Youths Killed

As per The Times of India dated April 24, the Punjab police chief, Purn Chand Dogra, has said that the police headquarters has asked all district chiefs to conduct an intensive survey to identify "sympathetic families" of Sikh youths killed by security forces and to monitor the activities of these Sikh families. This is reportedly being done on the fear that the families of slain Sikhs may give a boost to the

Sikh independence movement in Punjab.

HRDF Accuses Police of Planting False Stories

Sardar Jaspal Singh Dhillon, Chairman of Human Rights and Democracy Forum has accused Punjab DGP Mr. P.C. Dogra and his intelligence agencies of planting baseless stories to keep the bogey of terrorism alive. HRDF contended that such stories were being "cooked up" by intelligence officials and had serious implications on trials in progress.

PHRC Receives 200 Complaints

Justice (retired) V.K. Khanna, Chairman of Punjab Human Rights Commission (PHRC) has said that the organization has received approximately 200 complaints of human rights violations in Punjab since it started functioning in July of 1997. He further said that this year the number of complaints to the Commission have registered a three-fold increase over the past year. Justice (retired) J.S. Sekhon, another member of PHRC, has remarked that the chapter of terrorism may have ended but the style of working of Punjab police has remained more or less the same. Justice Sekhon said that 90 percent of all cases reported to the commission deal with police atrocities.

PHRC Issues Notice on Inspector's Reinstatement

The Punjab Human Rights Commission has issued a show cause notice to the Home Department in Punjab to explain the reasons for the reinstatement of police inspector Budh Singh who had been suspended for the 8/21/97 stripping of a Sikh widow, Amarjit Kaur, in front of her son. Budh Singh is reported to have been reinstated and posted in Mukustar district. PHRC Justice J. S. Sekhon said that all departmental inquiries into the case had indicted the accused. PHRC has recommended a compensation of Rs. 30,000 to Amarjit Kaur and Rs. 20,000 to her son for undergoing harassment and mental agony.

New Member to Join PHRC

Maninder Kaur Mattewal, a reader in Law Department of Punjab University, is reported to have been announced by the Punjab Government as a new members of Punjab Human Rights Commission. Mattewal has experience as a lecturer and reader for over 20 years. It has been reported that in 1996 Mattewal visited Stratsburgh, France and there she was the official representative of the Government of India at the 27th session of International Institute of Human Rights and the 24th session of International Center for University Human Rights Teaching. The other members of PHRC include former Chief Justice V.K. Khanna, Justice J.S. Sekhon, Justice T.S. Cheema and former IAS officer V.M.S. Chahal.

Police Lawlessness Continues in Punjab

- Punjab police officials of Ropar are reported to have illegally picked up a Sikh youth Nirmal Singh Nimma on April 8 on the suspicion of being an alleged militant. The Indian Express dated 4/19/98 has reported that the police now claims that the victim escaped from police custody on April 12 from the Khijrabad police post near Kuralia. Although the victim had been in custody of the police for four days as per Punjab police statements, yet no formal arrest was made. Members of the Human Rights and Democracy Forum claim that the victim was beaten by a Team of Kurali police officials in the presence of his co-tenant. They also said that the victim had pleaded for his life before being picked up by the police. It is feared that this case may be another one of thousands of cases in which the Punjab police have detained Sikhs illegally on false charges of being militants, torturing them to death in police custody and then declaring that they have escaped from police custody. Since the victim is not officially arrested in the first place, the courts and the victim's family have no police records to examine about the whereabouts of the Sikh victim.
- Six Sikhs are reported to have been arrested by Punjab police recently under charges of militancy as per The Hindustan Times dated 3/23/98. Those arrested under alleged false charges include Girdwar Singh of

Dayalpur, Baljinder Singh Neeta, Dhian Singh, Rajinderpal Singh, Gurvinder Singh and Narinder Pat Singh.

- Sardarni Ravinder Kaur, a 28 year old pregnant Sikh lady is reported to have been arrested by UP police on March 30 from Rudarpur, UP on the suspicion of being a militant aide. She is the wife of Nirmal Singh Nimma who was acquitted by Indian courts of the General Vaidya assassination case. Nirmal was released from incarceration in December of 1997 and the two got married in January of 1998. Ravinder has already been handed over to the Punjab police for interrogation. The police have made several monstrous claims of about the Sikh lady. Many Indian newspapers including The Times of India (4/2/98, 4/9/98, 4/10/98) and Indian Express (4/7/98) refer to the pregnant Sikh lady in derogatory terms as an unexploded human bomb.
- ASI Ramji Dass and an unidentified constable of the Punjab police are reported to have attacked two Sikh commission agents, Mohinder Singh and Jasbir Singh, on March 30 near Kesar Bagh, Patiala. The victims have lodged a complaint with the police that they were going home to Sanaur village when the accused police officials stopped them and took them to an isolated place at gun point. They alleged that they were asked to hand over the cash (Rs. 6,200) and jewelry (watch, a gold bracelet and chain). They are alleged to have been mercilessly beaten and pushed into a car and threatened that they would be thrown into the Bhakra Canal and liquidated but were saved by a local police party. The driver of the car, ASI Ramji Dass has been arrested.
- Two police constables, Gurdev Singh and Paramjit Singh of Ferozepore, along with three other members of a gang have been arrested for several alleged dacoities in Punjab.
- Residents of village Passiana near Patiala have accused the local CIA staff of picking up ten local youths from the village at random and torturing them at the police station in the middle of March. The victims include three brothers Dharam Singh, Balbir Singh and Mehrar Singh. Other victims include Hans Raj, Jinda, Goga, Puppy, Jella and Jaypal. The villagers alleged that the youths were picked up by police due to the March 11 death of Tej Kaur, wife of

a defense personal. The local SSP has now directed that no villagers be called to the police station for questioning.

- Several Mukerian police officials who were drunk are reported to have abducted four youths at 10 PM on March 22 and illegally detained them overnight. The victims were Rajiv Singh s/o Sukhdev Singh of village Jharing and three youths of village Salaria Kalan Amarjit Singh s/o Basant Singh, Sonal Lal s/o Chattar Singh and Hira Lal s/o Chattar Singh. The drunk police officials are alleged to have abused the victims, forced them into police vehicles and brought them to the police station. Next morning, the residents of the village came to know of their detainment and they rushed to the police station in tractors. The villagers staged a dharna outside the police station and condemned the lawlessness of Mukerian police.
- A 23 year old Amritdhari Sikh girl, Kamaljit Kaur, resident of village Katani, near Thana Sahnawal, Ludhiana, who was duped into going to visit a sick lady, is reported to have been gang raped on March 11 near village Lakhawal by three men who were helped by a lady. On being attacked at a house outside the village, the brave Sikh girl pulled out her *Kripaan* from her *Gatra*. However, the assailants overpowered her and threw the *Kripaan* in a glass of liquor. Thereafter, she was repeatedly raped by the three men who were drunk. When the victim's parent came to know of the incident, they filed a written report with the local police, but it has been reported that the police has not initiated any action in this regard. The victim met with reporters along with legislator Tarsem Jodha and bravely shared her humiliating experience.
- Gurmit Kaur, a resident of village Nurpur Bet, near Ludhiana is reported to have been raped on March 5 by ASI Satnam Singh of police station Hambra and an accomplice. The victim is alleged to have been unable to pay a bribe of Rs. 1,000 to the police official as a result of which she was raped at gun point. It has been reported that when the SHO of Hambra police station was contacted, he said that he had no knowledge of the incident and that he had not received a written complaint in this regard.
- Bakshish Singh, a Matador driver, was beaten mercilessly by three

police officials of the Gurdaspur City police station at the local Kahnawal Chowk during the first week of March. The victim was driving the matador vehicle and on being signaled by the police to stop, he stopped a little ahead of the police officials where he could find a place to park. The officials are reported to have dragged the victim from the vehicle, dragged him about 200 meters and attacked him with sticks and rifle butts in full view of the public till he lost consciousness. The police officials accused of the public torture of Bakshish Singh include Havaladar Des Raj, Homeguard Balbir Singh and Sipahi Gurnam Singh. Eyewitnesses to the incident include Murta Singh, Harial Singh, Hardev Singh of Baje Chak, Wassan Singh of Ramnagar and Harbans Singh. The victim has been admitted to the Gurdaspur Civil Hospital where he met with reporters.

- The Sikh parents of news writer Harjinder Singh Mandher, the Editor of Punjab Times International Derby of UK, who live near Kapurthala are reported to have been continually harassed by Kapurthala city police station officials. While the writer lives in UK, his father and mother who live in village Mander Dona, Kapurthala get regular visits from Punjab police officials inquiring about their son. On one occasion his father, Harbhajan Singh, was called to the police station from where he was asked to call his son. After he had talked to Harjinder, the incharge of Kala Singhia police station talked to Harjinder Singh. Harjinder inquired from the police official if he was wanted in any case by the police. The police official said that there was no case against him, but they were investigating because someone had complained about him. After a few days of this incident, police officials again raided the house of his aged parents. Harjinder Singh has appealed to the Badal government that the harassment of his aged Sikh parents be stopped immediately.
- Sukhbir Singh, a resident of village Ajnoha, Thana Mahilpur, Hoshiarpur is reported to have been duped of Rs. 10,000 by a Punjab police security Constable Karamjit Singh. The accused official came to the residence of Sukhbir Singh on January 29, 1998 impersonating as ASI Rajinder Singh of the Intelligence Bureau and demanded a bribe of Rs. 10,000 for a positive

report in favor of his brother, Lakhbir Singh, who lives in USA. The official threatened that if he did not give the money, he would make an adverse report about his brother. Sukhbir Singh gave Rs. 10,000 to the police official. However on a visit to the Civil Secretariat on February 5, the victim recognized the police official and confronted him. The constable is still serving under police security duty although the victim has filed a written complaint in this matter.

- Two persons in police uniforms are reported to have robbed the cashier of Hadiyah Grid electricity station, Barnala of Rs. 97,000. The alleged police officers are said to have escaped on a scooter.

Sister Inquires About Brother Abducted by Police 6 Years Ago

Sardarni Jawinder Kaur, a resident of village Madda near Tanda, is reported to have approached the Punjab government to inquire about her brother, Kuljit Singh, a resident of village Mohalla Pati Santokhpura near Siri Hargobindpur, who is reported to have been abducted by a team of Punjab police officials on November 3, 1991 and taken to Siri Hargobindpur police station. Sardarni Jaswinder Kaur met reporters and in tears told them that during the Akhand Paath Bhog ceremony of her father, police officials came to their house and took her brother away. The victim's mother, Sardarni Satya Kaur, has already made several inquiries about her only son, but of no help. It is feared that Kuljit Singh was tortured to death in police custody or killed in a faked encounter.

Tortured Sikh on Hunger-Strike

Paramjit Singh Pamma, an undertrial who has been tortured repeatedly by police officials as result of which he has lost an arm and eye, is reported to have been on hunger strike since March 24 to lodge his silent protest against police torture over the years. In 1994, his right eye had been completely damaged due to police torture. He has also been falsely framed in at least 8 criminal cases by Punjab police. He has filed a writ petition in the Punjab and Haryana High Court against his false

implication in two murder cases and torture by police.

Youth Claimed by Police as Killed in 1985 Appears in Court

Bhaghel Singh, resident of Man Sanwal village near Gurdaspur, is reported to have surfaced in the Punjab and Haryana High Court on March 25, despite the police claim that he was killed in an encounter in 1985. Then Batala SSP Gobind Ram had made the false claim on April 11, 1985 of having killed Bhaghel Singh and Tarsem Singh. The victim has alleged that Punjab police has already claimed an award from the government for having killed him in the concocted encounter. The victim feared that if he returned to his village, the Punjab police would kill him to cover up the false claim of his death. The victim has appealed to the Court to provide him security so that he may not be liquidated by Punjab police now.

Sikh Freedom Fighter Killed in Encounter

The United News of India news agency has reported that on March 11, Uttar Pradesh police officials had an armed encounter with Jarnail Singh Shutrana, a Sikh freedom fighter, at village Raghunath in district Bahiraich. Shutrana was killed in the encounter in which two police officials, a Company Commander and a Constable, are also reported to have been killed.

Two Policemen Guilty of Killing Sikh Family

The District and Sessions Judge, Amritsar has sentenced Deputy Superintendent of Police Baldev Singh and Head Constable Balwinder Singh of the Punjab police to life imprisonment for the kidnapping and killing eight members of a Sikh family of village Bagga near Majitha in 1991/92. Seven members of Sadhu Singh's family were picked up by a Punjab police team led by DSP on October 29, 1991 on the charge of being sympathizers of the Sikh independence movement. They were kept in various police stations in Batala district and killed within six months of their abduction. Four of the

seven Sikh victims were in the age group 14 to 22. The judge also fined each of the convicts Rs. 3.60 lakhs. Seven other accused in the case, including six police personnel were acquitted. The Times of India (3/31/98) and Indian Express (4/1/98) published news items on the convictions. The Times of India reported that this case may be the first ever conviction of Punjab policemen involved in so called anti-militancy operations. Thousands of Sikh youth are reported to have been kidnapped, tortured to death in illegal police custody and killed in faked encounters by security forces in the last two decades in Punjab.

3 Police Officials Convicted of Murder for Hire

The Gurdaspur district Session Judge has convicted to life three officials of Punjab police for the 1/26/97 murder of Sewa Singh, a resident of Gaddowal near Hoshiarpur. The guilty officials include Aliwal police station, Batala Head Constable Major Singh, SPO Tarsem Singh and Kulwant Singh. Kulwant Singh is reported to have hired the other two police officials to kill his father, Sewa Singh, for a price of Rs. 20,000. The killers were given an advance of Rs. 9,000. The three drove to the village of Sewa Singh, and abducted him in a van. The victim was taken to railway tracks near village Mahemowal under Sardar police station Batala and killed.

ASI Sentenced to Life

The Additional Sessions Judge of Hoshiarpur has sentenced Assistant Sub Inspector Balwinder Singh to life for the murder of Balihar Singh. Balihar Singh was murdered by the ASI and his wife on June 19, 1997 in the village of Nariala. The judge stated in his ruling that since the ASI was the protector of the law and he had committed a murder, he deserves no mercy from the law. The victims wife was also convicted to life for the crime.

Impostors Extorting Money in Name of KCF

The Fatehgarh Sahib police is reported to have arrested Jora Singh,

resident of village Amloh, on charges of mailing fake letters on behalf of Khalistan Commando Force demanding money. The police have seized a fake stamp and letter pad from the accused. He is reported to have been active in the Mandi Gobindgarh area and extorted money from physicians claiming to be Major General Jasbir Singh of Khalistan Commando Force. Many other such groups have been active in Punjab, extorting money from the local population in the name of Khalistan with the alleged direct and indirect help of the state government. Earlier on 6/19/97, Punjab police had arrested Nirvail Singh Naval, an office bearer of the Youth Congress political party and a close confidant of former Indian Youth Congress leader Maninder Singh Bitta, for terrorizing and extorting money from people in the name of Khalistan Commando Force. The police were reported to have recovered a letter pad with KCF stamp and a threat letter in Punjabi to a local businessperson, B.L. Khurana in that case. Two of Naval's accomplices, Jasbir Singh Kala and Arun Kumar Ravi, were also arrested and blank letterheads of KCF were recovered from their possession.

Police Officials Acquitted in Payal Faked Encounter Murders

The Himachal Pradesh High Court has upheld the acquittal of ten Punjab police officials accused of the staged murder of four Sikh youths in the infamous Payal murder case. Dilip Singh, Raj Anmol Singh, Gurjit Singh and Nirmal Singh are known to have been killed by Punjab police officials posted at Payal in Ludhiana in the night intervening August 13 and 14, 1983 during a faked encounter near a canal bridge at Rara Sahib. The case was investigated by CBI and India's Supreme Court had ordered the trial outside Punjab for reasons of security as a number of high ranking police officials (including then Ludhiana SSP D.R. Bhatti) were involved. According to the prosecution, the police killed Dilip Singh because he was suspected of having made contacts with Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. SSP Bhatti had also been the police official

who had arrested Sant Bhindranwale with regard to the Lala Jagat Narian murder case. It has been reported that the victims were intercepted during a nakabandi and brought to the police station. Messages were flashed to SSP Bhatti and other police officials and a police party took them to a secluded place 300 meters away from Rara Sahib bridge and shot the four Sikhs to death.

Sikh Cleared of TADA Charges

Sardar Jagjit Singh Dilli, who had been arrested by Delhi's Tilak Nagar police staff led by SI Om Prakash on July 29, 1991 for being a terrorist and charged under TADA was recently acquitted by the TADA judge.

Christian Assembly Attacked

A group of youths ransacked a Christian congregation near Grover Colony in Jalandhar on April 1. The group smashed the tube rods, overturned the chairs and set fire to the dias forcing the assembly of about 200 people to flee in panic. The incident has been confirmed by SSP Hardeep Singh Dhillon. Three local youths were arrested for the attack but shopkeepers of Basti Mithu and Basti Guzan observed a partial bandh to protest the arrest of the attackers.

Christian Priest Murdered

Brother Luke, a Roman Catholic Priest was murdered on March 23 in the eastern Indian State of Bihar. The news report was published by Reuters dated 4/1/98. Brother Luke was a member of Mother Teresa's world-renowned charity organization. His body was found with a bullet hole through the head.

Sikh Jathaas Visit Pakistan

Hundreds of Sikhs are reported to have visited Pakistan during the middle of April to celebrate Vaisaakhi. Sikh religious services were held at Gurdwara Panja Sahib, Gurdwara Nanakana Sahib, Gurdwara Dera Sahib, and Gurdwara Sachaa Sauda Sahib. Several Sikh activists are reported to have distributed literature supporting a free and democratic Khalistan to the visiting Sikhs. The Sikh visitors are also reported to have been pleased with the warmth and friendliness of the local populace.

Court Case for Reopening Karachi Gurdwara

The local Sikh congregation of Karachi has decided to approach the Supreme Court of Pakistan in order to reopen Gurdwara Aram Bagh Sahib. The Gurdwara has been closed since 1993 due to a dispute. The local congregation has appealed for funds from Sikhs within Pakistan and outside. More information on the case can be obtained by writing to: Sardar Hira Singh Khalsa, Assistant Director, Guru Nanak Satsang Sabha Gurdwara Prabhandhak Committee, Agricultural Development Bank of Pakistan, Fish Harbor Branch, Nagani Chamber, West Wharf Road, Karachi, Pakistan

White Supremacists Charged for Murdering Sikh Granthi

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police is reported to have charged five young men, linked to a skinhead white-supremacist group called White Power, with the January 4, 1998 murder of Sardar Nirmal Singh. The police has determined that Sardar Nirmal Singh, the 65-year old Granthi of Guru Nanak Gurdwara Sahib in the Vancouver suburb of Surrey, Canada, was beaten to death in the parking lot by the five skinheads (aged 17-25 years) after an all-night party organized by White Power for its supporters in neighborhood of the Gurdwara Sahib. White Power is reported to be aligned

with a number of other racist groups including the Northern Hammerskins, Aryan Nations and Heritage Front. The arrests have put to rest the earlier police claims that the Granthi may have been killed due to disagreements between groups trying to wrestle control of the management of the Gurdwara Sahib. The Granthi's son, had earlier been paralyzed after police in India wrongfully arrested him as a suspected Sikh terrorist and tortured him. This alleged hate crime has received wide publicity in the press and the following newspapers / agencies published articles on the ghastly crime: Reuters (4/21/8), The Toronto Star (4/22/98), Associated Press News (4/2/98), The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (4/23/98), Orlando Sentinel Tribune (4/23/98), The Palm Beach Post (4/23/98), Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (4/23/98), The Plain Dealer (4/23/98), Star Tribune Minneapolis (4/23/98), The Times-Picayune (4/23/98), The Xinhua News Agency (4/23/98), Agency France Presse (4/23/98) and South China Morning Post (4/26/98). The World Sikh Organization issued a press release on April 22 demanding enhanced sentencing provisions for hate crimes in Surrey, British Columbia.

Author of English Patient Honored

The Sikh-Canadian Centennial Foundation presented an award to Michael Ondaatje, the Canadian author of the novel The English Patient, on April 18 in Toronto. A Sikh soldier named Kirpal Singh nicknamed "Kip" was one of the main characters of the novel which was made into an Oscar winning movie. Herb Dhaliwal, Canada's Minister for National Revenue presented the award.

Canadian Being Pressurized to Confess

Inderjit Singh Reyat, a suspect in the 1985 Air India bombing that killed 329 people, has alleged that the Canadian police is pressurizing him to confess to the Air India bombing, a crime that he says he did not commit. Reyat made these remarks in an

interview broadcast by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

Sikh Accuses CSIS of Mistreatment

The Toronto Star dated April 15 published a news report in which it said that Ranjit Singh, a Sikh refugee from India awaiting immigrant status in Canada, has filed a complaint against Canada Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) of trying to force him to become a spy on the Sikh community in Canada and India. When Ranjit Singh refused to do so, he was threatened by a CSIS agent. Ranjit Singh is the second refugee claimant to come forward with such accusations. Earlier on April 4, The Toronto Star published details of a secret government report concluding that CSIS abused and endangered Tamil refugee claimant Thalayasingam Sivakumar. The secret report dated July 18, 1997 was written by the Security Intelligence Review Committee which oversees CSIS. The report questioned the propriety of CSIS in trying to recruit as informers some of the refugee claimants it screens for possible links to terrorism. The Refugee Lawyers Association of Toronto said that "since the report became public, a number of refugees have spoken about their mistreatment by CSIS agents."

Sikh Arrested in Canada

Iqbal Singh, a Sikh refugee from India who had applied for immigration in Canada, is reported to have been arrested by an RCMP Immigration Task Force on April 2 in Toronto under national security legislation that prevents him from knowing the evidence against him. Iqbal Singh's case will be reviewed in a closed hearing at the Federal Court of Canada where the judge may examine the government's evidence and any other evidence without the accused or his lawyer being present. Iqbal Singh had left India to avoid persecution by police and made his way to Canada in 1991 via Nepal, Thailand and Korea. The Globe and Mail dated April 11 published a story on the arrest of the Sikh refugee. The victim's lawyer Mr. Medel Green has

said that the Iqbal Singh “has been stymied... because he refused to act as a CSIS informant.” Mr Green denied the claim of CSIS that Iqbal Singh was member of Babbar Khalsa International. Iqbal Singh is said to have been deprived of his *Kakkaars* while being held in custody of the police, Maclean’s (4/20/98) and Agence France Presse (4/12/98) also published an article on Iqbal Singh’s case.

Protest by Ontario Sikh Students Association

The Ontario Sikh Student Association of Pickering, Canada has protested the remarks of Liberal party leader Dalton McGuinty, published in the March 30 issue of The Toronto Star, with regard to *Karas*, one of the five K’s of the Sikh faith. The Toronto Star dated 4/8/98 published a letter of protest from Sardarni Seema Kaur, representing the Association, in which she condemned McGuinty’s joking remark: “Can I get two of those (*Karas*) for Mike Harris and attach a chain between?” The letter writer said that the remark was insulting, offensive and degrading. She compared the religious insensitivity shown by McGuinty to that of a non-Christian jokingly asking a person of the Christian faith for a few crosses because “my tomato plants are falling over.” Another letter of protest by Sardar Puneet Singh of Scarborough was published by The Toronto Star on April 15 in which he contended that “an apology by McGuinty will go a long way towards repairing Sikh sentiments.”

Coalition Asks for Action on HR Bill

A group of more than 20 human rights and religious organizations have demanded that the British Parliament consider the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into British law. The group asked for the appointment of a Human Rights Commissioner by the government. The Independent (London) dated 4/21/98 published an open letter to the government drafted by the coalition. The coalition group included the British Sikh Federation,

Christians for Human Rights and Save the Children.

Samaagam in Memory of Martyrs of 1978

The Akhand Kirtani Jatha (UK) organized an International Akhand Kirtan Samaagam in London Gurdwaras on April 3-11 in memory of the 18 unarmed protesting Sikhs killed by Nirankaris on April 13, 1978 in Punjab.

UK Bike Ride for Human Rights

The annual Khalsa Human Rights Bike Ride has been organized for May 24 from Birmingham to Leicester, UK. The riders will begin at Baba Deep Singh Gurdwara Sahib in Birmingham. All funds collected shall go towards the activities of Khalsa Human Rights, a UK based Sikh human rights organization focusing on human right abuses in India. More information on the group and the Bike Ride can be obtained by e-mailing KhalsaHR@dial.pipex.com or from their web site at <http://dSPACE.dial.pipex.com/town/square/ev90495>

Teletubies

UK’s pre-school television show Teletubies, made for kids under 5 years of age, featured a Sikh demonstrating how to tie a *Dastaar*. The show was broadcast on April 14 on UK’s Children’s TV program channel.

Malaysians Organize Series on Social Problems

The Kajang Sikh Association of Jalan Sungai Chua, Malaysia is organizing a series of talks dealing with social problems to create greater awareness among youths of criminal activities. The first such seminar titled “Life in prison” is reported (New Strait Times dated 4/17/98) to have been on April 16 at the Kajang Gurdwara Sahib. Approximately 100 members of the Association attended the seminar.

Flying Sikh Favored to Win

Satwant Singh, the Flying Sikh from Zambia, is reported to be the most respected participant in the Tara Rally Namibia which started off on March 27 in Windhoek, Zambia. The Africa

News dated 3/26/98 published a report on the event and rally organizer Wicuh Bruwer said that “Singh has been rated favorite in the 1,000 km event which will have 18 cars in competition The route is very tough but with Singh everything is easy. I fancy him for that.” In addition, Zambia Motor Sport Association in cooperation with the Guru Nanak Council Malaysia also organized a two day car rally which started from the Sikh Gurdwara Sahib in Olympia Park and ended at Impala. The aim of the rally was to clear certain misconceptions about the Sikh faith and explore the motor rally potential in Zambia. A spokesperson of the Council was quoted in the Africa News that “the teachings of Sikhism that the public need to know is its advocacy of equality of sexes and equality of all social classes. The religion believes in one creator - God who reveals himself through the Gurus (prophets).”

Satwant Singh of Zambia is currently participating in the South African car rally. He is commonly referred to as the “Flying Sikh” of Zambia and is on course for his sixth African title at the rally.

Joint Celebrations by Sikhs & Tamils in Singapore

The Sikh and Tamil communities of Singapore celebrated their first joint New Year celebrations on April 13 in Singapore.

Documentary on Australian Sikh Immigrant Experiences

Kay Rassol has directed a documentary titled “Temple on the Hill” which elaborates on the experiences of Sikh immigrants in Australia. The documentary charts the inter-linked lives of Sikhs who immigrated from India to Australia and prospered as farmers where they were once farm laborers. The film’s title refers to the Gurdwara Sahib built by the Sikh community in Australia. The documentary includes scenes of religious observances and festivities and examines the problems (with and without) when one of the sons converts to Christianity and marries a white Australian girl. The

documentary was featured in India at the Mumbai International Festival for Documentary, Short and Animation Films in March of 1998. The Hindu dated 4/22/98 published a story on the film festival.

**Novel on Immigrant Experiences
Shortlisted for Fiction Prize**

The Track of Wind, a fiction novel by Jamila Gavin is reported (The Guardian dated 3/24/98) to have been among the four titles shortlisted for The Guardian Children's Fiction Prize. The book published by

Mammoth is the final volume in a substantial trilogy drawing the interwoven history of Britain and India as experienced by a Sikh family. Set in 1951, the novel takes Jaspal Singh and Marvinder Kaur back to India after years spent in London. The restrictions of rural India are portrayed as being hard for both of them to adjust to. Marvinder is expected to be wholly obedient to her father's wishes, especially in the all important matter of an arranged marriage. She maintains contact with her English family and dreams of the

very different life that she might have had there. Jaspal on the other hand finds immediate identification with his inheritance and rejects the British for their imperialism. Jaspal becomes increasingly sympathetic to the Sikh freedom movement and joins it for it is where he sees his true destiny. The three other novels that were shortlisted deal with the fight for freedom by English peasants in 1381, the story of a half human and half seal, an orphaned boy whose life gets changed when he has a mysterious visit from an owl.

Gurpurabs for May 1998

Actual Dates

May 4	Prakash Divas of Siri Guru Amardas Sahib (1479)
May 25	Gur Gaddi Divas of Siri Guru Hargobind Sahib (1606)
May 30	Shaheedi Divas of Siri Guru Arjan Sahib (1606)

Observed Dates

May 10	Prakash Divas of Siri Guru Amardas Sahib (1479)
May 29	Shaheedi Divas of Siri Guru Arjan Sahib (1606)

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

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 us a news item for possible publication in the newsletter, please e-mail it by the 15th of the month to vsc-usa@unforgettable.com or send it to VSC-USA Newsletter, PO Box 1553, Dublin, Ohio 43017.

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