
World Sikh Council

America Region Newsletter

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

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Member Institutions

Gurdwara Sahib Fremont, Fremont, CA
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Sikh Gurdwara of LA, North Hollywood, CA
Sikh Gurdwara Riverside, Riverside, CA
Siri Guru Granth Sahib Found., Anaheim, CA
Colorado Singh Sabha, Denver, CO
Guru Singh Sabha of Augusta, Augusta, GA
Sikh Study Circle of Atlanta, Atlanta, GA
Sikh Religious Society of Chicago, Palatine, IL
Sikhs Serving America, Topeka, KS
Sikh Society of South, New Orleans, LA
Sikh Gurdwara of Michigan, Rochester Hills, MI
Sikh Society of Michigan, Madison Heights, MI
Sikh Gurdwara of North Carolina, Durham, NC
Garden State Sikh Association, Pluckemin, NJ
Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Glenrock, NJ
Sikh Cultural Society Inc., Richmond Hills, NY
Sikh Cultural & Educational Society of Western New York, Buffalo, 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 Nanak Foundation of Greater Cleveland, Richfield, OH
Guru Gobind Singh Sikh Society, Bedford, OH
Tristate Sikh Cultural Society, Monroeville, PA
Academy of Guru Granth Studies, Arlington, TX
Sikh Center of Gulf Coast, Houston, TX
Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Richardson, TX
Sikh Gurdwara of North Texas, Garland, TX
Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Fairfax, VA
Sikh Religious Society of Wisconsin, Brookfield, WI

Chairman's Welcome Message

Vaheguru ji ka Khalsa, Vaheguru ji ki Fateh.

In October of 2000, the delegates to the World Sikh Council - America Region gave me the sewa as the Chairman of this only elected umbrella Sikh organization in this country. I pray to Akal Purakh to give me the strength and wisdom to fulfill the responsibility and come up to the expectations of not only the delegates but also of the members of the organization and Khalsa Panth.

On February 17, 2001, a meeting of the members of the executive committee and member organizations was held at the Gurdwara Sahib in Raleigh/Durham in North Carolina. A brief report on the proceedings of the meeting is included in this newsletter. The Khalsa Panth, both in India and abroad, is passing through a very critical period. There are challenges both from within and outside to the Sikh identity, institutions, and ideals. Most of our leaders and organizations are under the tight control of anti-Sikh forces. Whenever and wherever Sikhs gather informally or otherwise in small numbers or large gatherings, the common denominator is the discussion about deteriorating state of Sikh ethics, morals and values. Sikh families seem to be breaking, apostasy among Sikhs seems to be at an all time high, and our Gurdwaras particularly outside India are becoming "sanctified social clubs". Our new generation is getting alienated. The time has come to reverse this trend and to bring our families and children into the Sikhi fold. Gangoos have always been with us in our history, are with us today and shall always be with us in the future. Khalsa Panth has survived similar challenges in the past and with Akal Purakh's blessings, we will emerge triumphant after these difficult times. Let us all pray to Akal Purakh to bless this organization and its sewadars with wisdom and strength. Please support World Sikh Council – America Region.

I shall be failing in my duty if I don't thank Sardar Kuldeep Singh Ji of Toledo, Dr. Ranbir Singh Ji Sandhu, and all other sewadars for their service to Sikhs in North America through this organization. I pray to Akal Purakh to bless them with continued good health so that they can continue to serve the Panth for many years to come. More in the next newsletter. In the sewa of Khalsa Panth,

Sardar Amarjit Singh Buttar, Chairman

Newsletter Publication Resumed

The *World Sikh Council America Region Newsletter* was not published after March of 2000. Many member Sikh organizations requested that the newsletter publication be resumed. We have now committed ourselves to the bi-monthly publication of this newsletter. Hard copies of the newsletter will be mailed to WSC-AR member organizations, members of regional committee and associate members. An electronic version of the newsletter will be made available to other interested Sikh organizations and individuals. To receive a copy of this newsletter in electronic format (Adobe Acrobat PDF file format), please send an e-mail to wsc-ar@nahal.com.

US NEWS

Newly Elected WSC-AR Executive Committee Holds Annual Meeting in North Carolina

The annual meeting of the newly elected Executive Committee of WSC-AR was held on February 17, 2001 at the Gurdwara Sahib in Durham/Raleigh, North Carolina. At the meeting, several key decisions were made:

- WSC-AR will explore the possibility of providing identity cards to Amritdhari Sikhs in the US, as a first line of defense so that they may not be harassed by law enforcement agencies for carrying a Kirpaan.
- WSC-AR supports the Nanakshahi calendar and will use it in its correspondence.
- WSC-AR will observe every June 6 as "Sikh Ghallughara day" across USA and will encourage participation by member organizations.
- Effective immediately, the newsletter will be published on a bi-monthly basis.
- A user-friendly website for the organization shall be developed in the next three months.
- WSC-AR will encourage formation of regional units of WSC in other countries.

On February 18, the Chairman and Secretary of WSC-AR addressed the local Sangat during the Sunday diwan. The annual meeting was hosted by the Sikh Gurdwara of North Carolina, Durham, which is a member of WSC-AR.

Sikh Institutions Select New Executive Committee of WSC-AR
The General Body of World Sikh Council – America Region, consisting of thirty-one Sikh institutions of America, successfully selected a sixteen member Executive Committee

and the following Officers:

Chairman: Sardar Amarjit Singh Buttar, Vernon, CT, naamsimran@aol.com

Vice-Chairman: Dr. Amarjit Singh, Williamsville, NY asingh71@aol.com

Secretary: Dr. Tarlochan Singh, San Jose, CA, nahal@ix.netcom.com

Treasurer: Sardarni Parminder Kaur, Raleigh, NC pkdhillon@aol.com

These representatives were selected entirely by the member institutions of WSC-AR as laid down in the articles of WSC-AR. All the office bearers are outstanding and dedicated individuals well known for their contributions to the Khalsa Panth. All have taken *Khande da Pahul*. (WSC-AR Press Release, 10/25/00)

WSC-AR Organizes International Conference on Sikh Studies

The WSC-AR organized an International Conference on Sikh Studies at Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan, on June 10, 2000. The conference sessions included invited presentations on Sikhism in Cyberspace and Sikh Youth, Heterodoxy in Sikhism, Atrocities in Punjab, Post Independence Era and Sikh Leadership, and Siri Guru Granth Sahib and Sikh Studies. The conference was co-sponsored by The Center for International Programs at Oakland University, Sikh Gurdwara of Michigan (Rochester Hills) and Sikh Society of Michigan (Madison Heights). Both these Gurdwara Sahibs are members of WSC-AR.

New Book on Sant Bhindranwale

A new book titled "Struggle for Justice: Speeches and Conversations of Sant Jarnail Singh Khalsa Bhindranwale" written by Dr. Ranbir Singh Sandhu was recently published by Sikh Educational and Religious

Foundation (member of WSC-AR). The 608-page book includes an introductory essay on the Sant's mission and martyrdom and chronologically arranged English translations of forty-four speeches and three conversations of the Sant transcribed from several audio and video tapes. This publication raises vital questions for the media and academia, who expect transparency from state agencies and hold them accountable for their words and deeds. They might have to undertake a probing self-analysis and ask themselves, as to why did they accept the official media blitz of misinformation without verifying the sources and thus unwittingly becoming a party to distorting the truth? Within USA and Canada, the paperback edition is \$19.95, while hardbound edition is \$29.95. Orders can be mailed to SERF, POB 1553, Dublin, Ohio 43017. Bulk order inquiries, please e-mail sandhu.2@osu.edu.

Sikh Youth Seminar Held

The Sikh Religious Society of Chicago organized a Sikh youth seminar on 3/10/01 for youth 6-24 years of age. The youth were grouped and assigned to read a book according to their age level. The speeches presented by the youth were based on a set of questions. The winners of the competition will participate in the zonal and North American Annual competition. Sikh Religious Society of Chicago is a member of WSC-AR.

Interfaith Activities

The following inter-religious activities and events with Sikh participation were reported recently:

- Christians, Muslims, Sikhs, Jews, and followers of several other religions joined hands on 1/14/01 in

a shoulder-to-shoulder worship service at the Mount Zion First Baptist Church in San Antonio to commemorate the birth anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The group proclaimed Dr. King's message of racial and religious tolerance (San Antonio Express, 1/15/01). Several members of the Interfaith Association of Central Ohio (including Sikhs) joined Mayor Michael Coleman of Columbus, Ohio on 1/14/01 in a commemoration march in honor of Dr. King.

- The State of Ohio's Bicentennial Commission has formed a Religious Advisory Council to celebrate and observe the 200th year of the state of Ohio in 2003. The advisory council members include representatives of several faith based organizations including the Sikh Educational and Religious Foundation (a member of WSC-AR)

- Mayor Michael Coleman of City of Columbus, Ohio formed a Religious Advisory Council in February 2001. The interfaith council includes representatives of the Sikh Educational and Religious Foundation (a member of WSC-AR)

- In the last week of June 2000, a five-day annual Global Summit was held in Pittsburgh by the United Religion Initiative (URI). Persons of several faiths attended the event. India Abroad (7/14/00) reported that one of the Sikh participant from India presented URI with an almost 500-year old brick from Harmandar Sahib, Amritsar.

- The Columbus Dispatch (2/16/01) reported on the efforts of faith communities in central Ohio in promoting interfaith understanding and tolerance through The Interfaith Association of Central Ohio. Dr. Tarunjit S. Butalia, Trustee of Sikh Educational and Religious Foundation (a member of WSC-AR) was quoted as "When we emphasize to others that Sikhs believe in one God, which also is the supreme being for other faiths; consider all faiths to be divinely inspired; and promote peace and

justice, many discover that we are not very different in our basic beliefs than other religious traditions... The challenges before communities of faith, irrespective of faith tradition, are quite similar."

- The Columbus Dispatch of 12/01/00 reported on faith based observances for the month of December. The article highlighted a Sikh family's lighting up a home for Parkash Divas of Siri Guru Nanak Sahib as mistakenly understood by a neighbor as a premature Christmas decoration. The article ended with a quote from a trustee of the Sikh Educational and Religious Foundation (member of WSC-AR), "This season is one of hope, prayer, and love. Hope for a better world, prayer to God for mercy on human beings, and love for our fellow beings – irrespective of their faith affiliations."

India is in Urgent Need of Tolerance

The Columbus Dispatch (9/9/00) published a letter to the editor from Dr. Tarunjit Singh Butalia, Trustee of Sikh Educational and Religious Foundation (member of WSC-AR). The article chronicled the persecution of Sikh, Muslim, and now Christian minorities in India and emphasized the need for people of faith to come together to combat religious intolerance in that country. The article elaborated "it is time for people of faith in India to come together to promote interfaith tolerance so that religious intolerance can be curtailed. Until they do so, the tyranny of the majority will continue, and people of minority faiths will continue to be targets of hate – all in the name of national assimilation and glory."

SMART Raises Concerns Over Senator Ashcroft's Nomination for Attorney General

The Sikh Mediawatch and Resource Task (SMART) Force issued a statement on 1/17/01 voicing concerns about the views of Senator John Ashcroft on the topic of religious liberty and civil rights. Sardarni Sumeet Kaur, Associate Director of SMART, issued a press statement

stating: "We'd like to emphasize that we're not taking a position concerning [Senator Ashcroft's] nomination. Nor are we saying that a person of faith should not be attorney general. But we do want to raise concerns that arise from our perspective as a minority religious group in America. In particular, we want to ensure that minority religious groups are afforded the same protection under the law as all other groups in this great nation of ours." SMART joined with the Interfaith Alliance in expressing their concerns at a press conference in Washington, DC. More information on SMART and its activities can be obtained from www.sikhmediawatch.org.

Council of Khalistan

The recent activities of the Council of Khalistan include:

- A new year's message to the Sikh nation through a press release issued on 1/31/01 asserting that RSS is completely in control of the Sikh leadership in Punjab and is determined to destroy the Sikh religion.
- The Persecuted Church of India published an article on 1/17/01 in which it thanked the Sikh community, particularly the Council of Khalistan, for protecting Christians from Indian government oppression. The article stated that "Gurmeet Singh Aulakh, the Sikh leader in the US was one of the first persons to lobby against the Christian persecution in the US Congress by the Hindu fundamentalists."
- On occasion of India's Republic Day, the Council organized a rally in Washington, DC on 1/26/01 to protest Indian genocide of minorities in South Asia.
- The Council issued a press release on 1/26/01 extending sympathies to the victims of the earthquake in Gujrat, India, which killed over 1,000 persons. The press release quoted Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, "The death of all these people is very tragic. We extend our deepest

sympathies to their families. Sikhs will pray for the families.”

Recent Activities on Capitol Hill

- Honorable Dan Burton of Indiana addressed the US House of Representatives on 1/30/01 to highlight the statement of a group of Christians in India known as the Persecuted Church of India commending the protection that the Sikh community has provided to the Christians in India from Indian government persecution.
- Honorable Edolphus Towns of New York spoke before the US House of Representatives on 1/31/01 and highlighted a New York Times article (dated 12/31/00) that indicated India’s responsibility for the Chithi Singhpura massacre of 35 Sikhs.
- Honorable Edolphus Towns of New York spoke before the US House of Representatives on 2/27/01 stating that even outside India, Sikhs continue to be harassed by Indian Government and its allies. The remarks highlighted the detention and mistreatment of Sardar Harjinder Singh Dilgeer at the New Delhi and Moscow airports in the first week of January 2001.

US Rights Report Indicts India

On 2/26/01, the United States State Department issued a human rights report in which it claimed that serious human right problems remained in

India. The report highlighted the judicial tolerance of the government’s heavy handedness in counter insurgency tactics, and refusal of security forces to obey court orders. (Tribune, 2/26/01)

Kulvir Singh Barhapind Case

Professor Cynthia Mahmood, University of Notre Dame and Sardar Simranjit Singh Mann, Member of Indian Parliament, appeared as witnesses at the extradition trial of Sardar Kulvir Singh Barhapind before U.S. District Judge Oliver Wanger in California. Kulvir was arrested in 1993 in Los Angeles with a phony passport and has remained in custody since then, while his lawyers battle extradition charges filed by the Indian Government and try to win him asylum in the US. Another witness at the hearing testified that he had been tortured by Punjab police officials for 18 days in 1992 and offered Rs. 15 lakhs if he turned in Kulvir Singh. The lawyers were scheduled to argue the case before the judge starting March 1 after submitting closing briefs to the court. At the hearing, the Indian Government is represented by Assistant United States Attorney Stanley Boone. (Fresno Bee, 2/14/01, 2/15/01, 2/16/01)

Only Person Currently Detained Under Secret Evidence Law is a Sikh

The Associated Press reported on 1/9/01 that with the recent release of a

Palestinian, only one person in the US is left jailed on secret evidence charges. Sardar Harpal Singh, a 42-year old lawyer, is the only person currently detained under secret evidence laws. Details on the case were published earlier in the WSC-AR newsletter of Jan-March, 2000 and St. Petersburg Times, 2/29/00. Civil liberty lawyers have won freedom for several of the Muslims charged under the secret evidence law.

Amnesty International Launches Anti-Torture Campaign on India

On 1/30/01, Amnesty International launched a year-long anti-torture campaign in India and called on law enforcing agencies and authorities throughout India to make a commitment to taking action against offenders. The campaign is a part of Amnesty International’s global Campaign Against Torture. The India campaign report titled “India - Words into Action: Recommendations for the Prevention of Torture” includes fourteen recommendations as constructive steps towards eradication of torture practiced by Indian police and army. Extensive online reports and information on violation of human rights by the Indian government and its security forces can be obtained from www.amnesty.org.

NEWS FROM PUNJAB (HOMELAND OF THE SIKHS)

WSC Clarifies Stand on Definition of “Sikh” and “Sikh Voter”

In response to the recent controversy regarding the definition of Sikh, the World Sikh Council, Central Working Office, issued the following press release on January 20, 2001:

“ 1. The World Sikh Council (WSC) has been watching with anguish the unseemingly controversy regarding the definition of "Sikh" in relation to the Sikh Gurdwara Act 1925 (1925 Act). Various articles, news-items and statements published in the Media indicate that by and large there has been no proper application of mind on

the subject. The WSC has given a thoughtful consideration to the so called issue and has ventured to give its viewpoint on the subject.

2. It is elementary that no organization religious or political has the authority to lay down the definition of a Sikh. "Right to Religion" being a Fundamental Right under the Constitution even the Parliament/State Legislature have no statutory jurisdiction to define the expression. Sikh Religion is what is given to the Sikhs by the Ten Gurus and is being deciphered by Guru Granth Sahib. The controversy has

totally lost sight of the fact that what is required to be defined is not the "Sikh or a follower of the Sikh Religion" but "a Sikh Voter" entitled to vote under the 1925 Act.

3. The Sikh Rehat Maryada was formulated and declared in the year 1935. The Rehat Maryada identifies a Sikh as: ‘A woman or man who believes in :- a. One God, b. Ten Sikh Gurus (from Guru Nanak Dev Ji to Guru Gobind Singh Ji), c. Sri Guru Granth Sahib and the Gurbani and the teachings of the Ten Gurus, d. The concept of Amrit initiated by the Tenth Master Guru Gobind Singh Ji,

and, e. Does not believe in any other religion.’

4. Keeping in view the above definition of "Sikh" it is axiomatic that all those who fulfill the conditions therein are Sikhs. A Sikh is a Sikh whether he keeps unshorn hair or is clean-shaven. Visually the followers of the Sikh Religion are categorized as under: i. Amritdhari Sikhs, ii. Non Amritdhari but having unshorn body hair, iii. Those who trim their body hair but wear a turban, iv. Cleanshaven like the Sindhis and some of the NRIs [Non Resident Indians].

5. Believers of Sikh tenets in terms of the Rehat Maryada in any of the four categories are followers of Sikh religion. The issue before us, however, is as to which out of these four categories are to be made eligible to be listed as voters under the 1925 Act. One view is that all the four categories be permitted to vote, as is the present position under the 1925 Act. The other view is that the 1925 Act be amended and only the first two categories i.e. the Amritdhari Sikhs and non-Amritdhari with unshorn hair, be permitted to vote. Since the voters are required to elect a high powered committee entrusted with the religious duty of managing the Sikh Gurdwaras there is overwhelming opinion amongst the Sikhs that only the first two categories should be permitted to vote and only the Amritdhari Sikhs be permitted to contest the elections and become members and office-bearers. This is the position under the Delhi Act.

6. The WSC is, therefore, of the firm view that all the four categories mentioned above are Sikhs and part of the Sikh religion but only the first two categories be permitted to vote under the 1925 Act and the Amritdhari alone should be made eligible to become members and office-bearers.”

WSC Expresses Condolences for Gujrat Earthquake Victims

The World Sikh Council, Central Working Office, issued the following press release on January 30, 2001: “1. The World Sikh Council (WSC) expresses its deep anguish and sorrow at the monumental loss of life and extreme suffering which the people of

Gujrat have suffered in the earthquake. It expresses its deep sympathy and condolences with the bereaved families.

2. The WSC will soon be sending a team to the disaster area and make arrangements for distribution of relief material. Sardar Harbhajan Singh, Chairman WSC (Delhi Region) will be coordinator.”

Meanwhile, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad has declared that it will not allow Christian missionaries to distribute relief materials among the quake victims. (Tribune, 1/23/01)

WSC Continues to Recognize Singh Sahib Bhai Ranjit Singh as Jathedar of Siri Akal Takhat Sahib

The World Sikh Council (WSC) has repeatedly made it clear that it completely rejects SGPC’s illegal dismissal of Singh Sahib Bhai Ranjit Singh as Jathedar of Siri Akal Takhat Sahib and does not recognize any subsequent appointments as the legitimate Jathedar of Siri Akal Takhat Sahib. The Council continues to recognize Singh Sahib Bhai Ranjit Singh as the Jathedar of Siri Akal Takhat Sahib.

Indian Security Agencies Responsible for Killing of Sikhs in Kashmir: Hizbul Chief

The head of the Hizbul Mujahideen group, Mr. Syed Salahuddin, has accused the Indian security agencies of killing six Sikhs in Srinagar on February 3, 2001. In a statement, the Muslim leader said, “Indian agencies have killed six Sikhs living in Mahjoor Nagar, Srinagar, to vitiate cordial relations between the two communities.” He further added, “I condemn these brutal activities and assure our Sikh brothers that the ploy of the Indian government will be defeated.”

In response to the killings, Sikhs in Jammu organized protest marches. During one such protest march, the police fired and killed a Sikh protestor, Sardar Mohinder Singh, on February 5, 2001 at Jammu. (Agence France Presse, 2/4/01, 2/8/01; Deutsche Press-Agentur, 2/4/01; Tribune, 2/4/01, 2/5/01, 2/6/01, 2/7/01)

SGPC to Resume Sending Jathas to Pakistan

The Executive Committee of SGPC met on 2/27/01 and approved the resumption of Sikh jathas to visit Gurdwaras in Pakistan. Two years ago, SGPC had suspended the jathas to protest the formation of the Pakistan Gurdwara Prabhandak Committee. The committee also decided to give sponsorship to jathas of Pakistani Sikhs who wanted to visit Siri Harmandar Sahib or other Gurdwaras in India. (Tribune, 2/28/01)

Rashtriya Sikh Sangat Backs Down

The Tribune (1/18/01) reported that the Rashtriya Sikh Sangat, a offshoot of the Hindu fundamentalist RSS, in a letter to Siri Akal Takhat Sahib has admitted that it “accepts the supreme temporal authority of Akal Takhat.” Earlier on December 31, 2000, in response to strong protests by the Sikh community, the organization cancelled its proposed celebrations of birth anniversary of Siri Guru Gobind Singh Sahib, by taking Saroops of Siri Guru Granth Sahib from Gurdwaras to Hindu temples. The Sikh community had protested strongly any such move by the organization. (Tribune, 1/1/01).

Sikhs Have Separate Identity: RSS

Representatives of RSS and the National Minorities Commission met on January 16, 2001 and unanimously expressed the view that the Sikh community had its own identity and separate religion. A press note issued by the commission stated “on the issue of the Sikh community, the commission and the RSS representatives were of the unanimous view that the Sikh constitutes a separate religion and a separate identity.” RSS has been active in Punjab in recent years in distorting the Sikh faith and its beliefs, which major Sikh organizations find to be objectionable. (Tribune, 1/17/01)

Remarks of BJP Councilor Are Offensive

Mrs. Geeta Chaudhry, BJP Councilor from Abohar, in an interview given to a local Hindi newspaper, is alleged to have equated Siri Guru Gobind Singh

Sahib with Mr. Brij Lal Ranwa, BJP chief of Punjab. Sikh organizations declared the remarks to be offensive to the Sikh faith and its adherents, and have referred the matter to Siri Akal Takhat Sahib. (Tribune, 2/20/01)

Release of Sikh Detainees Contemplated

The Union Home Ministry of India in consultation with the Punjab Government is contemplating releasing Sikh youths languishing in various jails across the country. Many of these Sikhs were picked up by police for merely supporting the idea of an independent Sikh state and charged with false crimes. The Tribune, January 23, 2001 reported that "most of those languishing in various jails have been acquitted in serious cases but convicted in other cases, including the Arms Act, to undergo imprisonment for varying periods." The article also mentioned that over 500 suspected Sikh militants have been released from jails or enlarged on bail in the last several years, but that "instructions have been issued to the police in different districts to keep watch on their activities."

In response to the article published in the Tribune (1/23/01), the National Minorities Commission has asked the Punjab Government to immediately provide to the commission a list of persons who have been detained under TADA in the state. In a letter to the Punjab Government, the commission writes "Punjab is the only state which has defaulted on apprising this commission about the names of all such detainees. Almost all states have sent us the names and have also taken subsequent action on its recommendations of this commission." (Tribune, 2/9/01)

Punjab Government Official to be Prosecuted for Misusing Khalsa Tercentenary Funds

The Director of Public Relation Department of Punjab will soon be prosecuted for misappropriating about Rs. 46 lakhs intended for the Khalsa Tercentenary celebrations. The Punjab Government has sanctioned his prosecution and he has been arrested,

but is currently on bail. The Punjab Vigilance Bureau determined that the Director and film-maker Mr. Mangal Dhillon, misused these funds while working on the film "Khalsa". (Hindustan Times, 1/4/01)

Punjab Government and Police Allegedly Patronizing Drug Peddlers

On January 13, 2001, Giani Joginder Singh Vedanti and Professor Manjit Singh accused the Punjab Government, which is a SAD-BJP ruling coalition, and the Punjab Police of being directly responsible for spreading the drug menace in the state. They alleged the state government and the police were patronizing drug peddlers, harming society and youth in particular, who were taking drugs in a big way. The Punjab Government, led by Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal, has not responded to the allegations. (Tribune, 1/14/01, 1/17/01)

SGPC Stops Sale of Book Edited by Giani Vedanti

The SGPC has stopped the sale of a book titled "Gur Bilas Patshahi Chhainvi" edited by Giani Joginder Singh Vedanti and Dr. Amarjit Singh. Many Sikh scholars had raised concerns over certain distorted facts in the book regarding the life of Siri Guru Hargobind Sahib. (Tribune, 1/7/01)

Shiv Sainiks Demolish Mosque in Gurdaspur District

On January 14, 2001, more than 20 activists of Shiv Sena are alleged to have prevented local Muslims from offering prayers at an ancient mosque in Dhaliwal (Gurdaspur District), demolished it, and installed an idol of Shiva after the demolition. The incident has created fear and panic among several Muslim families living in the town. (Tribune, 1/18/01)

Mann Blames Congress, Badal for Operation Bluestar

Shiromani Akali Dal (Amritsar) President, Simranjit Singh Mann, has blamed both the Congress party and the Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal, for Operation Bluestar. He said that while the former conducted the

operation, which shattered the Sikh psyche, the latter facilitated it by creating a conducive environment for it. (Indian Express, 2/10/01)

Inquiry Demanded into Casualties of Operation Bluestar

The Punjab Human Rights Organization (PHRO) and Movement Against State Repression (MASR) have urged the Punjab Government to set up a commission of inquiry into the number of Sikhs killed and arrested during Operation Bluestar. The organizations pointed out that a former Special Secretary to the Home Ministry, Mr. Ved Marwaha, had declared that as many as 4,712 Sikhs were killed and about 10,000 arrested during the operation across Punjab. (Tribune, 2/17/01)

Nanavati Commission Demands Complete Record of 1984 Sikh Massacres

The Nanavati Commission formed recently to probe the 1984 Sikh massacres has issued notices to the Union Government, the Delhi Government, and the Delhi Police asking them "to place complete record pertaining to the subject matter of this inquiry commission including the affidavits filed by the victims, other agencies, and reports of the Misra Commission, Marwah Committee, Kapoor Mittal Committee, Jain-Aggarwal Committee, Ahuja and Dhillon Committees." The directions were issued on an application filed by the 84 Carnage Justice Committee, a body of prominent persons working to obtain justice for thousands of Sikhs who were killed by Hindu mobs in October of 1984. (Tribune, 1/19/01)

India to Review Visa Blacklist

India has agreed to review a controversial black list of people, mostly Sikhs, who are being denied visas to travel to India. (Vancouver Sun, 1/8/01)

Punjab Police Chief Admits Liquidating Suspected Terrorists

The Tribune (1/16/01) reported that Mr. Sarabjit Singh, DGP Punjab, on January 15, 2001, while addressing a workshop on thematic analysis of terrorism at Phillaur, admitted

“policies like liquidating suspected terrorists, infiltrating police cats in the terrorist groups and countering the idea of the terrorists helped curb terrorism” in Punjab. The Punjab police, in the last two decades, is known to have killed thousands of innocent Sikh youths in faked encounters simply on the suspicion of supporting the Sikh independence movement.

NHRC Limits Investigations Into Cremations Case

India’s National Human Rights Commission has turned down a request to enlarge the Punjab mass cremation of Sikhs by Punjab police case to the entire state and ruled that an inquiry would be conducted into only the 2,097 incidents investigated by CBI in three police districts of Amritsar, Tarn Taran, and Majitha. (Tribune, 2/19/01)

Punjab Police in Dock for Killing of Sikh by Highly Decorated Police Cat

The Tribune newspaper reported on 1/11/01, that a series of unsavory incidents involving senior police officials over the last couple of months have created a serious image problem for Punjab police. During the past six months, a large number of cases of alleged police misconduct have been reported.

In the latest case, a former ‘ police cat’ as well as recipient of *President of India’s Police Medal for Gallantry* and now an Inspector at Moga is accused of having killed a Sikh youth of Ludhiana, Sardar Avtar Singh, on January 7, 2001. In the past, the police cat is alleged to have killed many innocent Sikh boys in faked encounters and thus promoted to constable and then inspector.

Punjab DGP, Sarabjit Singh, admitted that “former cats had started misusing their power and now some of them were topping the list of rogue gallery of the state,” However, he claimed that individual police officials recruited cats and there was no definite policy for recruiting them. The police chief admitted to the Tribune (1/13/01) that individual officers recruited cats and gave promotions to certain persons,

claiming that they proved useful in curbing terrorism.

Meanwhile, the Punjab Human Rights Organization has urged the Punjab Government to cancel promotions granted to Punjab police cats.

(Tribune, 1/11/01, 1/13/01, 1/14/01, 1/16/01, 1/18/01, 1/19/01, 1/20/01)

Police Lawlessness Against Sikhs Continues in Punjab

➤ On March 5, 2001, more than 20 army personnel belonging to the 28 Madras Regiment assaulted a Sikh couple at the Amritsar railway station and attempted to set fire to the beard of the Sikh male. The victims belonged to Majitha Road in Amritsar and could not file a complaint against the army as they had to board a flight from New Delhi the following day. (Tribune, 3/6/01)

➤ Sardar Iqbal Singh, a resident of Muktsar, is alleged to have died in police custody on January 5, 2001. (Tribune, 1/8/01)

➤ Sardar Ranjodh Singh, a resident of Jaito in Faridkot, is alleged to have died while in police custody on January 7, 2001. (Tribune, 1/8/01)

➤ Sardar Jaspal Singh, a 17-year old resident of village Sahari near Morinda, is alleged to have been beaten to death at the Morinda police station on 2/7/01. The SHO accused of killing the Sikh youth is reported to have been honored on Republic Day (January 26) at Ropar as the *Best SHO of the District*. Lawyers for Human Rights International have demanded a CBI inquiry into the incident. (Tribune, 2/8/01, 2/11/01, 2/17/01, 2/23/01, 2/9/01)

➤ Sardar Karnail Singh Panjoli, President of All India Shiromani Youth Akali Dal, is alleged to have been beaten up and detained by Fatehgarh Sahib DSP during the last week of January, 2001. The Dal Khalsa has demanded an inquiry into the incident. (Tribune, 2/2/01)

4 Police Officials Charged in Disappearance of Babbar Khalsa International Activist

Four Punjab police officials including

a DIG (then SSP in 1993) Sanjeev Gupta, Inspectors Ramesh Chander and Jagtar Singh, and DSP Mohinder Singh, have been charged with the conspiring to kidnap Sardar Sukhdev Singh and subsequently killing him. The victim was summoned to the Sohana police station in 1993 for a meeting with the then SSP. He is alleged to have been tortured subsequently at the CIA cell in Ropar for one month in March of 1993. The victim was then alleged to have been transferred from one place to another till July of 1993 when the DSP took the activist away and he is alleged to have been killed soon thereafter. The case had been referred to CBI after the victim’s wife, Sardarni Kamaljit Kaur, approached the Punjab and Haryana High Court to obtain justice. (Tribune, 2/2/01, 2/3/01, 2/13/01, 2/20/01)

Khalra Case: CBI Claims Right to Proceed

The CBI in its reply to an application filed by seven police officials accused of murdering human rights activist Sardar Jaswant Singh Khalra, has asserted in the sessions court in Patiala that it has full right to proceed against the accused officials as the acts allegedly committed by them were outside the purview of their official duties. The accused had earlier claimed that the their alleged activities were covered by the Punjab Disturbed Areas Act, which was in effect during the September 1995 abduction and killing of Sardar Khalra. The human rights activist was killed while he was in the process of collecting data on cremations of unidentified bodies of Sikh youth across Punjab. (Tribune, 1/19/01)

PSHRC to move High Court

In response to the Punjab Government’s defiance in implementing the recommendations of the Punjab State Human Rights Commission (PSHRC) regarding compensation of Rs. 50,000 to human rights activist Rajiv Randhawa and Sardars Rachpal Singh and Sarabjit Singh, the commission has decided to move the High Court for enforcement of its recommendations. The PSHRC, on July 2000, had issued the

directions to Punjab government to compensate the three persons for their illegal detention in police custody and for “wrongly accusing them of forming a fresh terrorist outfit – Tigers of Khalistan.” Mr. Rajiv Randhawa is an eye witness in the Khalra murder case against seven Punjab police officials. The commission’s full bench observed that “it appears that the Punjab police has not so far been sensitized regarding the provisions of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 and the state government as well as the commission have to take active steps for doing so.” (Tribune, 1/17/01)

Court Orders 2 Police Officials Suspended for Faked Encounter Death of Sikh

A Judge of the Punjab and Haryana High Court on 2/2/01 issued a directive to the Punjab police chief that two police officials be suspended for the faked encounter death of Sardar Daljeet Singh. The victim is alleged to have been killed in a faked encounter by the two police officials on 12/29/92 in Sarangdev village in Ajnala, after being picked up by police for routine questioning. (Tribune, 2/3/01)

Five Cops Charged for Kidnapping and Harassing Sikh Family

A special Central Bureau of Investigation Magistrate is probing the alleged October 1994 kidnapping and torture of Sardar Gurmit Singh and his family by five Punjab police officials in Muktsar district. The cops have been granted bail. (Tribune, 2/13/01)

Punjab Police Official Convicted of Harassing Sikh on False Charges

An Inspector of Punjab Police was sentenced to three years of rigorous imprisonment on March 5, 2001 for harassing Sardar Bharpur Singh, a resident of village Gurne Kurd in Mansa district, on false charges. In April of 1993, the police official along with four other cops had come to victim’s house in a jeep and accused him of harboring a Sikh freedom fighter. On denial by the victim, the police officers are reported to have beaten him up and obtained three bribes totaling over Rs. 70,000. (Tribune, March 6, 2001)

SP, DSP Booked for Kidnapping Sikh School Teacher in March 1994

The Malerkotla police have registered a case against a Punjab police SP and DSP for allegedly kidnapping Sardar

Ajmeer Singh, a Sikh school teacher, in March of 1994. (Tribune, 2/2/01)

CD Encyclopedia on Sikhism Released

Sardar Raghbir Singh Bains of Canada released the new version of the “Encyclopedia of Sikhism” on compact disc at an international conference organized by Akal Purakh ki Fauj at the Guru Nanak Dev University complex on 1/20/01. (Tribune, 1/21/01)

Interfaith Seminars Held

The following two interfaith seminars, with Sikh participation, were held recently:

- “Inter-Faith Dialogue – The Only Hope for Future”, February 19, 2001 at New Delhi (organized by Punjabi University)
- “World’s First Inter-Faith Scripture”, February 25-28, 2001 at Guru Nanak Dev University (organized by Guru Nanak Dev University in collaboration with Academy of Guru Granth Studies, Texas)

(Tribune, 1/21/01, 2/13/01, 2/23/01, 1/27/01)

NEWS FROM OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD

Sikh Youth Reach Out to Homeless

A group of more than thirty Toronto Sikh youth spent the first day of 2001 distributing food and supplies to homeless people. The group gathered over \$5,000 from the Sikh community and then bought food and necessities such as socks, scarves, blankets, and sleeping bags. They distributed them to homeless persons across downtown Toronto. Sardar Balpreet Singh, a 19-year old student at University of Toronto said “Helping others is a fundamental part of our spirituality.” Sardar Sukhi Singh Chohan, a Brampton resident studying at University of Windsor remarked “I don’t know why I had the idea. It’s a calling by God, I guess. I truly believe it’s God’s work.” (Toronto Star, 1/2/01)

New Book for Sikh Youth

Sardar Jaswinder Singh, a Canadian-born Sikh has published a new book titled “Discovering Divine Love in the Play of Life”. The main purpose of the book is to introduce the teachings of the Sikh faith to the younger generation. The book is published by Journal of Contemporary Sikh Studies and costs CAN\$15. (Vancouver Sun, 1/15/01)

Sikh School Expansion Draws Concerns

The plans for building a primary school for Sikh children in Surrey, Canada is being opposed by local residents who have raised sewer, traffic, and tax concerns. About 150 people packed a public information meeting on February 22, 2001 to express opposition to the project. The

school is being proposed by the Satnam Educational Society as an addition to one of its operational Sikh school in Surrey. The Society, a registered charity, currently receives about \$3 million per year from the education ministry – funding that will increase if the number of students rise. (Vancouver Sun, 2/23/01)

Sikhs Honor Toronto Police

The Sikh community of Toronto honored the city police of Toronto, and Mr. Julian Fantino, its police chief, on 1/28/01 for its dedication to foster the cause of multiculturalism in Canada. Constable Gurpal Singh Sidhu, a Toronto police official said “We feel as a Sikh community that the chief is not just doing the talk, but he’s walking the walk as well. A lot of things that he believes in and is

instilling in the officers of the Toronto Police service are the same as those that Sikhs believe.” The Toronto police is actively trying to recruit Sikh police officials. (Toronto Star, 1/29/01)

Sikh Journal Highlighted

The Gazette – Montreal (2/10/01) highlighted *Understanding Sikhism: The Research Journal* edited Dr. Devinder Singh Chahal of Montreal. The journal has an editorial board of 25 members from five countries. More information on the journal can be obtained from www.dsUPER.net/dchahal.

Canadian Sikhs Charged in Air India Crash Declare Innocence, Allege Mistreatment

Sardar Ajaib Singh Bagri and Sardar Ripudaman Singh Malik, who were arrested by Canadian Police on October 27, 2000, have declared that they are innocent of the charges filed against them. Bagri has further alleged that he is being mistreated by fellow inmates. Both the Sikhs are allowed limited religious ceremonies but are not allowed to keep the Kirpaan. World Sikh Council – America Region urges the Sikh community and member organizations to support these Sikhs so that they can get justice and prove their innocence. (Vancouver Sun, 2/8/01, 2/14/01, 3/2/01)

Scottish Probe into Racially Motivated Killing of Sikh

Scotland’s top law officials have ordered an investigation into the conduct of a race murder trial after two white men accused of killing a Sikh waiter, Sardar Surjit Singh Chokkar, were acquitted by the Glasgow High Court on November 29, 2000. One of the accused, a 19-year old male was found guilty on a lesser charge of assaulting Chokkar with a metal-lined piece of wood. Lord Advocate Colin Boyd, Queen’s Counsel, has apologized to Chokkar’s parents and admitted that race was a factor in how they were treated. The Chokkar Family Justice Campaign has been working actively to garner public support in the country. This case has aroused public interest in

Scotland because this is the second time that Scottish prosecuting authorities have tried and failed to win a conviction in the same murder case. In March of 1999, another person was cleared of murder, but convicted of a lesser offence of serious assault. He was alleged to be a member of the three-member gang that participated in the attack on Chokkar. (India Abroad, 12/8/00)

Europe’s Largest Gurdwara Sahib Nearing Completion

The biggest Gurdwara Sahib in Europe at Smethwick, England, is nearing completion with the addition of a solid gold dome on top of the prayer hall. The construction costs for the Gurdwara Sahib would be nearly 3 million pounds. The building will be illuminated with blue floodlights at night so that the Gurdwara Sahib is visible from a far distance. (Birmingham Evening Mail, 2/23/01)

Sikh Web Resources for Non-Sikh Children Profiled

The Guardian (1/23/01) profiled the following web sites for children interested in exploring and learning more about the Sikh faith:

- *Sikh Faith for Children:* atschool.eduweb.co.uk/carolb/sikhism/sikhism1.html
- *Tour of Harmandar Sahib:* www.sikhs.org
- *Hukamnama:* www.sikhnet.com
- *Sikh Artifacts:* www.strath.ac.uk/Departments/SocialStudies/RE/Database/
- *Teachers Link:* www.allre.org.uk/re-xs.ucsm.ac.uk/

British Religious Leaders Oppose Human Cloning

A diverse group of eleven faith leaders in Britain, including a representative of the Network of Sikh Organization, have joined forces in an unprecedented campaign to halt the legislation of human cloning being considered by the British House of Lords. It is for the first time in Britain that faith leaders have overcome their differences to intervene in a political issue they regard as morally dubious. (Telegraph, 1/15/01)

Sikh-Jewish Dialogue at Cambridge University

A Sikh – Jewish dialogue was organized at Cambridge University in England on 1/23/01. Speakers of both faiths presented an introduction of their respective faiths. This was followed by a panel discussion on issues facing both faith communities.

Sikh Group Provides Educational Material to South African Children

The Guru Arjan AIDS and Orphans Foundation, based in England, recently distributed educational materials to some South African children affected by HIV and AIDS. The event was arranged in collaboration with Christian, Buddhist, and Sufi representatives. About 40% of the people in the South African region of kawzulu-natal are HIV positive.

Sikh Police Officer Cleared of Race Hatred Charge, Awarded Compensation

Sardar Gural Singh Viridi, a Sikh police officer in Britain, has been cleared of charges of sending hate mail to fellow officers and has been awarded 350,000 pounds compensation as well as a letter of apology from the Commissioner of Metropolitan Police of London. Mr. Viridi had claimed that he was farmed and discriminated against after challenging white officers on race crimes and threatening to expose them. (Daily Telegraph, 2/14/01)

Britain Bans 21 Groups

The British Government announced on 2/28/01 that under the new anti-terrorism law, it was banning 21 radical groups. The legislation, which was passed on 2/19/01, empowers the British Government to ban groups that commit violence abroad and to crack down on supporters who channel funds and recruits to terrorist organizations. The ban includes the International Sikh Youth Federation and Babbar Khalsa International. The ban still requires the approval of the British parliament. (AP Worldstream, 2/28/01)

Both these Sikh organizations have clarified their position that they are not involved in any violent activities

and are for negotiated settlement of the Sikh political and religious problems. According to a press release issued by ISYF, the ISYF was founded in September 1984 with the following aims and objectives:

1. Promote Sikh philosophy and the Sikh way of life
2. Promote and preserve the Sikh heritage and culture
3. To speak out against Human Rights violations
4. To act as a voice of the oppressed Sikhs of India
5. To peacefully work towards establishing an independent homeland for the Sikhs Khalistan where they can feel the glow of freedom.

Sikh Survivors of Turkish Shipwreck Awaiting Decision

The ten Sikh survivors of the 1/1/01 shipwreck tragedy off the Mediterranean coast near Turkey, are

awaiting the decision of the Turkish government on whether they will be deported to India or allowed to proceed to their destinations. The ten Sikh survivors are reported to be illegal immigrants from the Doaba region of Punjab. The Sikhs fled India fearing persecution at the hands of the police and to explore better economic opportunities. (Tribune, 1/6/01)

Sikh Profiled in France

The life of Sardar Vikram Singh, an illegal immigrant, in Paris, France, was highlighted by the Agence France Press, 2/15/01. Vikram came to France in 1999 and has been working as an Egyptian Pharaoh statue outside the Louvre museum. The article mentioned that Vikram does not smoke, drink, or gamble. When asked what the future holds for him, he replied, "I don't know. I am prepared to do any job as long it is honest."

Giani Joginder Singh Visits Malaysia

During the first two weeks of February 2001, Giani Joginder Singh Vedanti, visited Malaysia and commended the country's policy of freedom of worship given that the official status of Islam as the official religion. He urged the Malaysian Sikh community to maintain a link with other religions and cooperate with the government of Malaysia. (Bernama Malaysian National News Agency, 2/2/01, 2/4/01)

Talibans Promise Protection of Gurdwaras

The ruling Taliban government in Afghanistan has promised that officials would not enter the place of worship of minority faiths, including the Sikh faith, as a part of its recent controversial efforts to destroy Buddhist statues in the country. (Independent, 2/28/01)

How to Become a Member of World Sikh Council - America Region?

In general, any Sikh Gurdwara or Sikh organization whose management committee is engaged in the Charhdi Kala of Khalsa Panth and promotion of Sikh faith, working for the welfare of the humanity, believes in the teachings of Siri Guru Granth Sahib and accepts the supremacy of Siri Akal Takhat Sahib under whose patronage the World Sikh Council operates, can become a member of the World Sikh Council - America Region. The same general rules apply for individual members. For organization membership, the yearly fees are \$250. For individual members, the yearly fees are \$10.

Please contact Dr. Tarlochan Singh, Secretary, World Sikh Council for additional information and for requesting membership forms:

E-mail: wsc-ar@nahal.com.

Phone (408) 972-2476

Address: World Sikh Council - America Region, P.O. Box 21949, San Jose, CA 95151-1949 USA

Nanakshahi Calendar 532

Guru Sahib	Parkash Divas	Gur Gaddi Divas	Jyoti Jyot Divas
Siri Guru Nanak Sahib	1 Vaisakh (14 April)	From birth	8 Asu (22 Sept.)
Siri Guru Angad Sahib	5 Vaisakh (18 April)	4 Asu (18 Sep.)	3 Vaisakh (16 April)
Siri Guru Amar Das Sahib	9 Jeth (23 May)	3 Vaisakh (16 Apr.)	2 Asu (16 Sep.)
Siri Guru Ram Das Sahib	25 Asu (9 Oct.)	2 Asu (16 Sep.)	2 Asu (16 Sep.)
Siri Guru Arjan Sahib	19 Vaisakh (2 May)	2 Asu (16 Sep.)	2 Harh (16 June)
Siri Guru Hargobind Sahib	21 Harh (5 July)	28 Jeth (11 June)	6 Chet (19 March)
Siri Guru Har Rai Sahib	19 Magh (31 Jan.)	29 Phagun (12/11Mar)	6 Katik (20 Oct.)
Siri Guru Harkrishan Sahib	8 Savan (23 July)	6 Katik (20 Oct.)	3 Vaisakh (16 April)
Siri Guru Tegh Bahaadar Sahib	5 Vaisakh (18 April)	3 Vaisakh (16 Apr.)	11 Maghar (24 Nov.)
Siri Guru Gobind Singh Sahib	23 Poh (5 Jan)	11 Maghar (24 Nov)	7 Katik (21 Oct.)

Completion of Siri Guru Granth Sahib	1 Bhadon (16 August)
First Parkash of Siri Guru Granth Sahib	17 Bhadon (1 September)
Gur Gaddi Divas of Siri Guru Granth Sahib	6 Katik (20 October)
Establishment of the Khalsa	1 Vaisakh (14 April)

World Sikh Council – America Region (WSC-AR) publishes this newsletter with assistance from Sikh Educational and Religious Foundation (SERF). Its distribution is limited to existing or potential members of WSC-AR, SERF, and to certain other interested Sikh organizations and individuals. The news items published in this newsletter, which are not directly related to the activities of WSC-AR, do not necessarily reflect the views of WSC-AR or SERF. If you would like to send a news item for possible publication in the newsletter, please e-mail it to wsc-ar@nahal.com or send it to WSC-AR Newsletter, PO Box 1553, Dublin, Ohio 43017, USA. For membership and other information, please write to World Sikh Council - America Region, P.O. Box 21949, San Jose, CA 95151-1949 USA.

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