
World Sikh Council

America Region Newsletter

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Newsletter of World Sikh Council - America Region (WSC-AR)

A Representative Body of Sikh Institutions of America under the Patronage of Siri Akal Takhat Sahib
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Chairman's Message

Member Institutions

Gurdwara Sahib Fremont, Fremont, CA
Guru Nanak Sikh Mission, Livingston, CA
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
Mid South Sikh Sabha, Memphis, TN
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

Vaheguru ji ka Khalsa, Vaheguru ji ki Fateh.

Since the last issue of the World Sikh Council - America Region's newsletter, a series of events have taken place in the Sikh world. Unfortunately, the World Sikh Council (WSC) President Justice Kuldip Singh tendered his resignation in light of obstacles placed in his way by the ruling party of Punjab, some religious heads, and other individuals. The resignation of Justice Kuldip Singh has still not been accepted by Siri Akal Takhat Sahib to the best of my knowledge. Sardar Baldev Singh Sibbia, Vice-President WSC is the acting President. Major General (Rtd.) Narinder Singh continues to be acting General Secretary of WSC. All these individuals are able and firmly committed.

Under the presidentship of Justice Kuldip Singh, World Sikh Council made several achievements and the biggest achievement is its survival against all odds, especially after Justice Kuldip Singh appointed the People's Commission to investigate the human rights violations and fake encounters in Punjab in which thousands of Sikhs lost their lives. He was forced to do so because the Sikhs had no other chance of getting justice. Taking such a firm stand against the government and Punjab police is never easy. It was a risky task and it was a risk worth taking. We salute Justice Kuldip Singh for his courage, dedication and commitment to the Khalsa Panth.

You might have also heard some rumors in the media about the appointment of "a rich Sikh farmer in California" whose name is being attached to World Sikh Council. It is not true and that "rich Sikh farmer of California" is not a member of the World Sikh Council. There is only one World Sikh Council mentioned above which is recognized by Siri Akal Takhat Sahib.

World Sikh Council has on its agenda to open a world-class World Sikh University as part of its original charter, but it will be done with the cooperation and help of all the Sikh Sangats throughout the world with proper planning and feedback from Sikh religious institutions, and top notch scholars and educationists in the world. Please support the World Sikh Council. Wishing you Charhdi Kala!

Sardar Amarjit Singh Buttar, Chairman

WSC-AR Firmly Behind Justice Kuldip Singh and Bhai Ranjit Singh

On May 23, 2001, World Sikh Council – America Region issued a press release expressing support for Justice Kuldip as President of World Sikh Council and continuing to recognize Sikh Sahib Bhai Ranjit Singh as the Jathedar of Sri Akal Takhat Sahib. The text of the press release issued from San Jose, California is as follows:

“Sikhs all over the world are being deliberately misled by the agents of Indian Government with respect to the internal affairs of World Sikh Council. The Tribune, Chandigarh, dated May 15, 2001 reported that Mr. Didar Singh Bains (a rich farmer from California) was elected the president of the World Sikh Council by a self-styled group. Mr. Bains does not represent the Sikhs even in the US much less in India or elsewhere and has no qualifications to run the World Sikh Council. This group has no right to elect the President or interfere in the internal affairs of the World Sikh Council. World Sikh Council - America Region strongly condemns the actions of this group which seems to be led by Mr. Jaswant Singh Mann.

Mr. Jaswant Singh Mann was the General Secretary of the World Sikh Council at one time, but was removed from that position when an entirely new committee was formed under the direction of Jathedar, Sri Akal Takhat Sahib, Bhai Ranjit Singh. In a written communication on March 03, 2001, World Sikh Council (Head Office, India) had asked PSB Housing Finance Ltd. to credit its account in the amount of Rupees 18,00,480/- (approx. US \$38,300) on the expiry of the Fixed Deposit tenure. This account is still controlled by Jaswant Singh Mann and his group. We urge this group to return all the funds belonging to World Sikh Council in the true Sikh spirit without further delay to the legitimate office bearers - Justice Kuldip Singh

and Maj. Gen. (Rtd.) Sardar Narinder Singh (General Secretary, World Sikh Council). These individuals have been formally appointed by the Jathedar of Sri Akal Takhat Sahib and recognized by the Khalsa Panth.

World Sikh Council - America Region would like to set the record straight and re-emphasize its earlier stand that it recognizes only Jathedar Ranjit Singh as the legitimate Jathedar of Sri Akal Takhat Sahib and Justice (Rtd.) Sardar Kuldip Singh as the President of World Sikh Council. World Sikh Council - America Region has never recognized Giani Puran Singh or Giani Joginder Singh Vedanti as the legitimate Jathedars of Sri Akal Takhat Sahib because they were appointed by the government, not by the Khalsa Panth.

World Sikh Council - America Region is a representative body of 26 Gurdwaras and 6 other Sikh institutions in the United States. World Sikh Council - America Region is a non-profit religious organization that operates under the patronage of Sri Akal Takhat Sahib.”

WSC-AR Welcomes Tennessee Gurdwara Sahib as Member

The Mid South Sikh Sabha Gurdwara Sahib of Memphis, Tennessee has joined WSC-AR as a member Gurdwara. WSC-AR welcomes the Gurdwara Sahib joining the organization and looks forward to working with it. Currently thirty-two Gurdwaras and Sikh organization of USA are members of WSC-AR.

Sikhs celebrate Vaisakhi Across US

The Sikh community across North America celebrated Vaisakhi during the month of April. Significant media reports on Vaisakhi observances were published by The Journal News (4/14/01), India in New York (4/27/01), Houston Chronicle (4/14/01), New York Daily News (4/22/01), Ottawa Citizen (4/14/01), Toronto Star (4/23/01), Gazette – Montreal (5/21/01),

“Why I Will Never Cut My Hair”

An article written by Sardar Gurdeep Singh Sareen, a Sikh youth and freshman at Herricks High School in New York, was published recently by Newsday New York (5/7/01):

“When I was in kindergarten, I was an outsider. Every day at school, kids would gawk at me and snicker at my long hair. No one, not even my teacher, was there by my side to help me through my pain and anguish.

So the abuse continued, both verbally and physically. There were times when the abuse was just too much and I was ready to cave in and cut my hair. But I couldn't turn my back on my parents. They were the ones who gave me the courage to be who I am and to ignore the malicious and ignorant comments of others.

Sikhs believe that nothing God gives them should be changed. This is why we don't cut our hair. By keeping my hair long and staying a true Sikh, I have kept my uniqueness in a world where uniqueness is becoming extinct. I am glad to be unique.

Many people go through life with a feeling that they don't fit in. They are discriminated against because they are too tall or too short, too smart or too dumb, too dark or too light. Almost all people have had times when they have felt they didn't belong-a time when you feel distant from everyone else.

But I encourage everyone- whether it be the way they dress, talk or even laugh-to be themselves.

Reach within and find who you really are.

Then be that person.”

Sardar Harbans Singh Sidhu Passes Away

Dr. Harbans Singh Sidhu died on 7/19/01 due to a heart attack. He was involved in the setting up of the Sikh Council of North America and was its President in 1982-1983, was among

the founding members of Sikh Religious Society of Chicago and served as its President, was one of the founding trustees of the Sikh Religious and Educational Trust, was active in setting up of the New Orleans Gurdwara Sahib, besides being a distinguished engineering researcher. It was an ironic coincidence that he was selected for an award by the Eglin Air Force Base the day he had his heart attack. The glowing citation, a check for \$1000 and a plaque were posthumously received by Sardarni Bhagwant Kaur, his widow. He loss was keenly felt by his many friends and colleagues. His body was cremated in Pensacola, Florida on 7/22/01 and a Sehaj Path started that day at his residence in Crestview, Florida was completed on 7/26/01. Because he had been associated with the Chicago Sangat, a Path was done there as well. At the Bhog, hundreds of friends and relatives joined in Ardaas on 8/5/01. Keeping his association with Gurdwaras and education of children in view, the family donated \$10,000 to the Chicago Gurdwara Sahib and another \$2,000 to the Gurdwara Sahib for use in the library and for bringing out recordings of Sabads in correct Raags.

Tragic Incident Brings Sikh, Christians Together in Washington

The shooting death of Sardar Jasbir Jaspal Singh of Washington, DC has brought closer the Sikh and African American communities of the city. The victim was shot while driving a cab and died in the arms of Patricia Thompson, a minister of Ark of Safety Christian Church. Joint memorial services have been held by the two communities. (Washington Post, 3/24/01)

Yuba City – Capital of Sikhs in CA

The San Jose Mercury News (6/27/01) reported that the California central valley town of Yuba City has become the capital of Sikhs in California. Nine percent of the Sutter County residents are of Indian decent - the vast majority of them being Sikhs. The Sikh community in Yuba City are mainly farmers, thriving to maintain the traditions of their faith.

New NJ Gurdwara Sahib

The Sangat of central New Jersey opened a new Gurdwara Sahib in early April 2001. The Gurdwara Sahib is located in Windsor, NJ. The opening ceremony was attended by more than 1,000 persons from March 9-11. (India in New York, 3/23/01)

Sikhs Gather to Pray for Peace

Sikhs of New Mexico gathered on June 17, 2001 in the Jemez Mountains of New Mexico to celebrate the 16th Annual International Peace Prayer Day. (Associated Press, 6/17/01)

High-Tech Companies Encouraging Religious Diversity

The Detroit Free Press (June 27, 2001) published an excellent article on the diversity efforts initiated by several high-tech companies of Detroit. The article mentioned that Sardar Mandheer Singh Dulai, an information technology software engineer for Altair Engineering, is allowed to dress according to the Sikh religion which calls for him to wear a turban and not trim his beard or hair. Dulai said that he would not have worked for a company that did not allow him to follow his religion. "It is a very important religious commitment," Dulai said, adding that he was never questioned about his dress during his employment interview. "It means a lot that I can feel free to wear it. I feel more comfortable and I don't even think about it."

Court Rules Orders FedEx to Remove Ban on Beards

A U.S. District Court in Augusta, Georgia has ruled that Federal Express must allow employees to wear beards for religious reasons. The case was brought forth by Mr. Khaleed Abdul-Azeez, a Muslim, through a complaint to the Equal Opportunity Commission. FedEx representative Marty Hartman (issued a statement, "FedEx has always been sensitive to our employees' religious convictions and has accommodated sincerely held religious beliefs. We have now clarified our personal appearance policy to further insure such beliefs are accommodated." (Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 6/20/01)

Maryland Sikh Youth Camp

Guru Harkrishan Institute of Sikh Studies will organize a Sikh youth camp in Maryland from August 4 to 11, 2001. The camp is for children ages 7-20 years. The camp does not provide accommodations for parents at the camp site. More information on the camp may be obtained from www.cyber-link.net/camp.htm.

Sikh Soldier's Turban Case

The case of Sardar Trilok Singh Puniani, who has been denied permission to wear a turban by the US Army, has been taken on by Rep. Edolphus Towns (New York Democrat) and the Council of Khalistan. Sardar Puniani joined the Army Reserve in 1999, just a month after new regulations were adopted by the army denying exemption of wearing turban for those who joined the service after 1984. (India Abroad, 3/23/01)

Sikh Youth Denied Entry to Club

Sardar Sarab Singh Thapar, a Sikh teenager of West Orange, New Jersey, was denied entry into the Groove Lounge club for wearing a patka. The teenager explained that the patka was not a hat but a part of his religion. The youth was told to remove the patka or not enter the club. The boy's father came to the US from India in 1984 to escape religious persecution and is particularly upset at the incident. He intends to speak with a lawyer to see if his son's rights were violated. (Associated Press, 4/3/01)

Sikh, Mexican Community Alliance Successful

The Sikh and Mexican communities in San Jose joined forces to form an alliance which successfully resulted in late amnesty immigrants being given the right to stay in the US. The alliance was formed among Mexican and Sikh members of Association for Residency and Citizenship in Americas. (India Currents, 3/31/01)

Ohio Sikh Students Demand Apology

Sardars Gurmeet Singh Bedi and Puneet Singh, two 14-year old Sikh students of Akron, have demanded an apology from the Summit County Commons Please Court Judge, Judge Jane Bond, for mistaking their Patkas as gang headgear. On June 25, 2001

as a part of an educational visit to a courtroom, the boys were asked to step out the court by the bailiff on instructions from the judge. The boys explained the importance of the religious headgear, yet they were made to wait outside the court for more than 40 minutes while the rest of the students listened to the proceedings being conducted by the judge. On being invited back to the courtroom, the boys returned and asked for an apology from the judge. The judge refused to do so. The students of Glen Oak High School in Stark County are supporting the apology demanded by their fellow students. (Akron Beacon Journal, 6/27/01)

Modified Khanda Emblem Withdrawn

Under immense pressure from members of the Sikh community, Stormfront Studios removed a modified Khanda which was to be used as the logo for its upcoming Sony Playstation 2 video game. (India West, 3/16/01)

Sikhs Protest Visit of Sonia Gandhi

On June 25, 2001, Sikhs of New York and surrounding states gathered near the Sheraton Central Hotel in New York City to protest the US visit of the President of Congress Party of India. The Congress Party along with the ruling-BJP Party in India has been notorious for initiating ethnic cleansing and genocide against Sikhs and other non-Hindu minorities of India.

Interfaith Activities

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

- Sikhs of Phoenix, Arizona, joined members of the Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, and Jewish faiths to present an interfaith concert titled "Voices of Faith" at the Phoenix Symphony Hall on March 6, 2001. The proceeds from the event benefited a house for Habitat for Humanity. The event was organized by the Arizona Interfaith Action Coalition.
- The Sikh community of

central Ohio joined several other faiths in celebrating the second Mayor's Interfaith Prayer breakfast on June 1, 2001. Dr. Ranbir Singh Sandhu, Trustee of Sikh Educational and Religious Foundation (member of WSC-AR), represented the Sikh community at the event by sharing a Sikh prayer with the audience.

- Sikhs of Dallas, Texas participated in the National Day of Prayer Breakfast on May 3, 2001.
- The Sikh studies program at University of Santa Barbara was highlighted in the Los Angeles Times, 5/27/01. The article highlighted several religious studies program at the university. The Sikh perspective was presented by Professor Gurinder Singh Mann.
- Sikhs of Australia joined adherents of other faiths in observing Victoria's Centenary of Federation celebrations on 5/7/01. The event was attended by the Australian Prime Minister in Melbourne. (AAP Newsfeed, 5/7/01)

Congressmen Urge President Bush For Release of Political Prisoners in India

Nineteen members of the US Congress wrote a joint letter to President George Bush on March 9, 2001 urging him to bring up the issue of political prisoners with the Indian Government. They asked the President to use his influence to secure the release of all political prisoners in India.

Council of Khalistan

Some of the recent activities of the Council of Khalistan include:

- Organized a successful demonstration on June 2 at the Indian Embassy to commemorate the martyrs of the Indian Government's 1984 attack and desecration of Harmandir Sahib. Sikhs from DC area, Baltimore, Pennsylvania, and Florida participated in protests.
- A press release dated 6/29/01 in

which it was emphasized that the turn of Jagjit Singh Chohan and Wassan Singh Zaffarwal to India will not have an impact on the Sikh freedom struggle. The press release noted that "The Indian agents are returning home."

- A press release (6/27/01) condemning the attack in India on a train carrying the Sikh Scriptures. The Council said that the attack was a wake-up call for the Sikh nation.

The 14th Annual International Convention of the Council will be held on October 6 and 7 in Atlanta, Georgia. Kindly contact Sardar Gulberg Singh Basi at (404) 396-5033 for more details.

SMART Activities

The Sikh Mediawatch and Resource Task (SMART) Force has recently started publishing a newsletter titled The Sikh Advocate. The task force has also initiated electronic publication of Sikh American New Briefs on a frequent basis. Electronic versions of these publications can be obtained by e-mailing info@sikhmediawatch.org or by visiting the SMART web site at www.sikhmediawatch.org. Recent activities of the task force include:

- Issued a Vaisakhi publicity kit on April 9, 2001 to help local Sikh communities prepare and publicize Vaisakhi celebrations across the US.
- Worked to have Stormfront Studios remove a modified Khanda as the logo for its upcoming Sony Playstation 2 video game.
- Table display at New York Sikh Day Parade on 4/21/01.
- Presentation at North Orlando Gurdwara Sahib in March 2001.
- Working with a hospital in Washington state in developing a policy for the wearing of Kirpaan on hospital premises.
- Participation in Interfaith Alliance's annual "Walter Cronkite Faith and Freedom Award" on 5/3/01. SMART was invited to lead the invocation prayer.
- Wrote Letters to the Editor of

several newspapers (Houston Chronicle, Dallas Morning News, Toronto Star, on issues of Sikh interest.

- Endorsed the Interfaith Alliance's "Keeping the Faith" campaign to educate

religious organizations about President Bush's faith-based initiative.

Sikh is Summer Intern for Senator
Sardar Angad Singh Buttar, a senior at University of Connecticut, is currently

working as a Senate Intern in the office of U.S. Senator Christopher J. Dodd. Angad plans to pursue a law degree after graduation.

NEWS FROM PUNJAB (HOMELAND OF THE SIKHS)

Hukamnaamas Issued

Two Hukamnaamas were recently issued from Siri Akal Takhat Sahib on 4/18/01. Copies of Hukamnaamas can be accessed at www.sgpc.net:

- Organizers of Sikh Samaagams and Nagar Kirtaans were asked to accord full respect to Siri Guru Granth Sahib during such events. The Hukamnaama was issued to prevent taking of Saroop of Siri Guru Granth Sahib to places where liquor and tobacco may be served.
- Sikhs were ordered not to participate in female infanticide or abortion.

Antim Ardaas for Bhindranwale Held at Akal Takhat Sahib

Several Sikh organizations gathered at Siri Akal Takhat Sahib on June 6, 2001 to offer Antim Ardaas for the martyrdom of Sant Jarnail Singh Khalsa Bhindranwale. Sant Bhindranwale was killed while defending the Harmandar Sahib complex from invading Indian army in June of 1984. The event was organized by the Shaheed Sant Jarnail Singh and Ghallughara Yaadgar Committee. It needs to be noted that the ceremony was held despite strong opposition from some SGPC officials. No senior Akali Dal (Badal) leader was present during the ceremony. During the ceremony, the district administration deployed police officials inside and outside the Harmandar Sahib complex. (Tribune, 6/7/01; Hindu, 6/8/01, 6/17/01; Statesman, 6/6/01)

Special Train Carrying Siri Guru Granth Sahib Attacked

A special train carrying saroops of Siri Guru Granth Sahib and its message of

love of God was attacked on 6/22/01 at Uttarwa near Calcutta, West Bengal. The attackers included an unruly Hindu mob of about 7,000 people, who were denied entry on to the train. The unruly mob insisted on smoking cigarettes inside the train, where Siri Guru Granth Sahib was being read. The mob pelted stones on the train and set a coach on fire. The incident has brought widespread condemnation from the Sikh community across the world. (Tribune, 6/23/01; Pakistan Newswire, 6/23/01; Statesman, 6/22/01)

SGPC Drops Resolution on Sikh Matter Referrals

A controversial SGPC Executive Committee resolution, to scrutinize complaints of the Sikh congregation before they are taken up at Siri Akal Takhat Sahib, was dropped by SGPC on June 9, 2001. The dropped resolution was originally adopted on May 4 by the Executive Committee and it suggested that any religious issue should first be referred to the Sikh Advisory Board and then to the Dharam Prachar Committee and the SGPC Executive before being taken up by Siri Akal Takhat Sahib. Many Sikh scholars and institutions had criticized the original resolution aimed at eroding the authority of Siri Akal Takhat Sahib. (Tribune, 6/10/01)

Only Akali Dal (Badal) has Panthic Agenda declares Bhai Joginder Singh Vedanti

Bhai Joginder Singh Vedanti, in an interview published in The Hindu (6/7/01) said that "only the ruling Shromani Akali Dal (SAD) had a panthic agenda. He appealed to all other splinter factions to sink their differences and unite in the interest of the Sikh community and the State." The misleading statement has given a boost to the ruling SAD which choose

and appointed Bhai Vedanti as Jathedar of Siri Akal Takhat Sahib through the SGPC. The World Sikh Council – America Region does not recognize the appointment of Bhai Joginder Singh Vedanti and considers Bhai Ranjit Singh to be the real Jathedar of Siri Akal Takhat Sahib.

Amnesty International Issues Statements on Punjab, India

Amnesty International issued a press release on April 27, 2001 in which it asserted that state of Punjab and the Government of India continue to obstruct justice in Punjab. The document was issued in advance of the April 29 disappearance anniversary of Sardar Harjit Singh, who was killed in 1992. While nine police officials have been charged for abduction and murder in the case, Amnesty International claimed that they had not been arrested and efforts to cover up the truth about the police killing in the state continues. The press release said, "As it was found in the case of Harjit Singh, there is indeed much for the state to be ashamed of and to wish to hide. But there is no legal or moral justification for it to continue to cover up these crimes and to deny justice to thousands of victims and their relatives." (Amnesty International, ASA 20/031/2001)

As a part of its one-year long campaign in India, Amnesty International called on law and order authorities across India to make a commitment to taking action against torture. Amnesty said, "For too long torture has been accepted as a necessary evil. Both policy-makers and the public have a role to play in ridding India of this grave human rights violation." (Amnesty International, ASA 20/005/2001)

Supreme Court Directs High Courts

to Hear November 1984 Massacre Petitions

After 17 years of killing of over 4,400 Sikhs across India during the November 1984 massacres, the Supreme Court of India has directed nine high courts of India to consider a petition alleging failure on part of the states to protect the lives of the minority Sikh community. The high courts of Delhi, Rajasthan, Orissa, Punjab and Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Patna, Madhya Pradesh, Allahabad, and Bombay have been directed to hear the petition. The petition alleges that states failed to protect the Sikh minority in November 1984 in violation of article 21 of the Indian constitution. (PTI, 3/18/01, Times of India, 3/19/01)

Update on Nanavati Commission

The term of the Nanavati Commission, originally formed in January 2000 to probe the 1984 Sikh massacres, has been extended for six months until October 3, 2001. The recent deponents before the commission have included Madhu Kishwar, Khushwant Singh, Ram Jethmalani, Swami Agnivesh. Madhu Kishwar stated before the commission on May 22, 2001 that the Delhi police actively connived with the mobs attacking the Sikhs and their property. She recounted to the commission the story narrated to her by a riot victim, Sardarni Gurdeep Kaur, who was gang-raped by Hindu mobs in front of her 17-year old son and then later killed by them. Khushwant Singh deposed before the commission that the Delhi police were mute spectators as Sikhs were being killed across Delhi. He added said, "I felt like I was refugee in my country. In fact, I felt like a Jew in Nazi Germany." He further compared the massacres to the elimination of Jews in Germany by calling the massacres a "pogrom."

The commission has ordered notice to the Union Government of India seeking a direction to summon the Union Home Secretary. The commission has also directed the government to provide a record of the movement and meetings of then Home Minister, Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao. The commission has also asked for three records missing from the

Ranganath Misra Commission proceedings. These include statements by then Chief of Army Staff A.S. Vaidya, then Commanding Officer Major J.S. Sandhu, and then Major General A.S. Jamwal that a battalion of the army was called to deal with the riots in Delhi immediately after the assassination of Indira Gandhi but the battalion was prevented from controlling the situation. (PTI, 3/28/01, 4/24/01, 4/25/01, 4/26/01, 4/27/01; Hindu, 3/28/01; Hindustan Times, 5/30/01; Tribune, 5/23/01;

Punjab House Condemns November 1984 Sikh Massacres

On March 15, 2001, nearly seventeen years after Operation Blue Star, the Punjab Vidhan Sabha unanimously passed a resolution condemning the November 1984 massacres. Thousands of innocent men, women, and children were killed and raped by Hindu mobs across India during the first week of November with direction from organized Hindu mobs. The text of the resolution approved reads, "The House unanimously resolves to condemn the senseless killings of Punjabis, especially Sikhs, in Delhi and other parts of the country in the 1984 massacres engineered by politically motivated people with the intention of deriving political mileage. The House welcomes the constitution of the Nanavati Commission and strongly recommends to the government to take immediate steps to approach the central government and the state governments concerned to bring the killers, who have so far escaped the clutches of the law, to book and ensure the severest possible punishment to them so that the communal fabric of the country in maintained." (Tribune, 3/16/01)

Punjab House Condemns Operation Blue Star

On March 22, 2001, the Punjab Vidhan Sabha unanimously passed a resolution condemning Operation Blue Star. The approved resolution reads, "The House condemns the senseless act of Operation Blue Star undertaken at Sri Harmandir Sahib, Amritsar, in June 1984 wherein innocent devotees were killed in the holy precincts which had a long and crushing effect on the psyche of the

humanity as a whole." More than 37 Gurdwaras across Punjab were attacked in June 1984 by the Indian Army as a part of Operation Blue Star. Thousands of Sikhs were tortured and killed in the operation (Tribune, 3/23/01; Hindu, 3/23/01)

Reservations for SGPC Run Educational Institutions

The Governor of Punjab issued a notification on April 3, 2001 declaring Sikh Educational Institutions run by SGPC as Minority Education Institutions. This will allow for SGPC to "reserve up to fifty percent seats, exclusively for the members of the Sikh Community and for furtherance of the interests of the Sikh community". Full text of the notification can be accessed at www.sgpc.net.

Badal Initiates Efforts on Black Listed Sikhs

Punjab Chief Minister, Parkash Singh Badal, has initiated efforts with the central government to revise the list of "blacklisted" Sikhs living abroad and are not allowed to visit India. The central government is known to have blacklisted more than 1,500 Sikhs thus preventing them for visiting India. (Tribune, 4/9/01, 5/22/01)

SGPC Orders Probe Into Embezzlement of Funds

SGPC has ordered a high level probe into the alleged past embezzlement of funds. Sardar Jagdev Singh Talwandi, President of SGPC said that the inquiry in this regard was underway and facts would be placed before the Sikh Sangat after the completion of the inquiry. SGPC has often been accused of financial mismanagement by Sikhs all over the world. (Tribune, 6/16/01)

Giani Kewal Singh Refuses to Resign

Giani Kewal Singh, Jathedar of Takhat Damdama Sahib, refuses to resign from his post although he has been formally charged by a local court in Talwandi Sabo for the 1997 dowry killing of his daughter-in-law, Sardarni Sharanjit Kaur. Non-bailable orders were issued for the arrest of Giani Kewal Singh on 6/11/01, but the order was recalled unexecuted on 6/14/01 by the Punjab and Haryana

High Court. (PTI, 6/11/01, 6/14/01; Tribune, 6/13/01, 6/12/01, 6/14/01, 6/15/01, 6/20/01, 6/22/01)

SGPC Poll May be Held in November

General elections to the SGPC are currently being scheduled for November 2001. Although an announcement to this effect has been made by the Chief Minister of Punjab, yet the voter's list of the SGPC has not been prepared and a notification for reducing voting age from 21 to 18 years has not been issued. Election to the general house of the SGPC is conducted by the Chief Commissioner, Gurdwara Elections, who is appointed by the Union Home Ministry with assistance from Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, and Chandigarh. The current Chief Commissioner of the Gurdwara Election Commission is Justice Harbans Singh. (Tribune, 4/21/01, 4/29/01)

Several Excommunicated Sikhs Pardoned; Rejoin Sikh Panth

Several controversial Sikhs who earlier had been excommunicated by Siri Akal Takhat Sahib have now rejoined the Sikh Panth after completing Tankhah ordered by Siri Akal Takhat Sahib. These include Baba Santa Singh (excommunicated in 1984 for reconstructing Siri Akal Takhat Sahib in connivance with the government), Rattan Singh Girm (a resident of Canada who defied the langar hukamnaama), and the family of Teja Singh Bhasaur and Niranjan Kaur (who had been excommunicated on August 9, 1928 for challenging some portions of the Gurbaani). (The Hindu, 3/26/01; Tribune, 3/10/01, 3/18/01, 5/4/01)

Sikh Publishers Awarded Tankah

Messars Chattar Singh Jiwan Singh of Amritsar were awarded tankhah on May 15, 2001 for continuing to print copies of Siri Guru Granth Sahib in violation of a May 1998 Hukamnaama which declared that the SGPC had the sole right to publish Siri Guru Granth Sahib. (Tribune, 5/16/01)

Maharaja Ranjit Singh Bicentennial Celebrations Begin

The Punjab Government has begun

celebrating the bicentennial of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's coronation starting April 12, 2001. The inaugural celebrations were held in Delhi on April 21, 2001. (Tribune, 3/17/01, 4/3/01, 4/11/01, 4/22/01,

Chohan, Zaffarwal Return to India

Jagjit Singh Chohan, the self-styled President of Council of Khalistan and Wassan Singh Zaffarwal, member of the Panthic Committee, have both returned to India voluntarily.

Chohan arrived in New Delhi on June 26, 2001 after receiving a travel certificate from the Indian Embassy in London. Upon arrival, Chohan declared that he would continue advocating for Khalistan and does not support violence. However, intelligence agencies have said in published reports that the remarks by Chohan on Khalistan are contrary to the understanding reached by him and the Indian Embassy in London. (Statesman, 6/27/01; New York Times, 6/28/01; Hindu, 5/31/01, 6/29/01; PTI, 6/27/01; Agence France Press, 6/27/01, 6/30/01; Tribune, 6/13/01, 6/23/01, 6/27/01, 6/28/01, 6/29/01, 6/30/01, 7/1/01)

Wassan Singh Zaffarwal, was arrested by police in Amritsar on April 11, 2001 in a stage-managed operation. Report published in the Hindustan Times (4/13/01) concludes that Zaffarwal alighted from a bus at the Amritsar bus stand and comfortably walked into the police net at a nearby dhaba. He did not offer any resistance to his arrest. Media sources had speculated that Zaffarwal was in Punjab and that his arrest was imminent since the state government had given the greenlight for him to be arrested and kept in police custody. Tribune (4/16/01) reported that he had been in touch with Punjab police for the last one year. A published report in the Tribune dated 6/10/01 said that he praised the SAD-BJP government and said that it was pro-people and was doing commendable job for the welfare of people. (Hindustan Times, 4/13/01; Tribune, 4/1/01, 4/3/01, 4/4/01, 4/12/01, 4/13/01, 4/14/01, 4/16/01, 4/21/01, 5/30/01, 6/10/01, 6/16/01; BBC News, 4/12/01)

Drugs Major Problem for Punjab

Youth

A survey conducted by the Punjab Health Department has shown that the use of drugs has become a major problem for youth of Punjab. According to the survey, every third male and every seventh female student in the state has "tasted" drugs. The problem is not limited to the Malwa belt alone but is now considered to be widespread across Punjab. (Tribune, 4/9/01)

Suicides of Sikh Farmers Continue Unabated

In the past few months, an alarming increase in suicides by debt ridden Sikh farmers have been reported across Punjab. For the past several months, weekly reports of Sikh farmers committing suicide have been printed in the local press. Some of the incidents reported from Punjab are as follows:

- Neta Singh, resident of Bucho Khurd village, jumped before a running train on 6/7/01. He is reported to have been in extremely poor economic condition taking care of only six acres of land and facing virtual starvation.
- Nirmal Singh, a 50-year old marginal farmer of Singhpura village near Nakodar had to hand over five acres of land to an arhtiya (money lender) in lieu of a Rs. 2 lakh loan. Following this, he committed suicide by consuming cephos tablets.
- Surinder Singh, resident of Tahlianian village, was forced to sell his land and committed suicide.
- Balraj Singh, an 18-year old could not find any job and committed suicide in the last week on May by consuming cephos tablets.
- Sarjiwan Singh, resident of Mehatpur near Jalandhar, committed suicide on 5/17/01 due to small land holding of four acres. Although he had changed his profession several times, he was unable to succeed economically.
- Amrik Singh, resident of Borawal, Mansa, hanged himself on March 25, 2001.

He was under a debt of Rs. 5 lakhs.

- Nachattar Singh, resident of Ahmedpur village near Mansa, consumed insecticide and died on March 25, 2001. He owned five acres of land and was under debt from a bank and an arthtiya.
- Jaswant Singh, resident of Daangarh village near Barnala, hanged himself on 3/19/01. He is reported to have been under stress because of a loan.

(Tribune, 3/21/01, 3/22/01, 3/24/01, 3/29/01, 5/18/01, 6/5/001, 6/9/01, 6/20/01)

RSS Gives Government One Year on Ram Temple

The RSS national general council on 3/17/01 passed a resolution endorsing the decision to go ahead with the construction of the Ram temple after Shivratri next year (2002). The spokesman for the council, Mr. M.G. Vaidya said, "we have already waited for about nine years for a judicial solution to the problem. After all, there is a limit to people's patience." The Babri Masjid was destroyed by Hindu fanatics in 1992. RSS has been issuing ultimatums to the government that it will construct a Ram temple at the site. (Tribune, 3/18/01).

Two Sikhs Killed in J&K

Sardar Mohan Singh and Sardar Lakhbir Singh, two Sikh youth of Poonch, are reported to have been killed at village Lashana. The security forces have blamed Kashmiri militants. However, the militants have blamed the security forces for having killed the Sikhs to oust Sikhs from Jammu and Kashmir. (Tribune, 3/17/01, 3/18/01)

Sikh Gurdwara Partially Burnt in Kangra

The local Gurdwara Sahib in Trilokpuri (Kangra) was partially burnt down after some miscreants set fire to the building. The Gurdwara Sahib was set afire after an altercation between the local Granthi and an employee of the Irrigation and Public Health Department. Instead of arresting the miscreants, the local police arrested the Granthi and a

Sevaadar. (Tribune, 3/15/01)

Police Attempt to Burn Home of Kashmiri Sikhs

On the night of May 26, 2001, local Sikh and Muslim residents of Aloochoi Bagh area of Srinagar caught nine police personnel with firearms and petrol for burning the homes of Sikhs and putting blame on Muslims to foment communal passions in the area. A police vehicle used in the attack was captured by the locals. The residents of the locality held a demonstration against the attacks on the Sikh homes. The demonstration was attended by over 3,000 persons. Speakers at the event included several Hurriyat leaders. (Tribune, 5/28/01; Hindu, 5/28/01; Pakistan Newsfile, 6/9/01)

Amnesty International : India Muzzling Dissent in Kashmir

Amnesty International, has charged that India is using draconian laws to suppress political dissent in Kashmir. A statement issued by the organization on June 19, 2001 said that authorities are using the Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act of 1978, meant to curtail terrorism, against political activists. (Amnesty International, ASA 20/034/2001; Reuters, 6/19/01)

Quran Burnt, Pig Flesh Thrown into Mosque by Hindu Fanatics

Members of the All India Hindu Protection Society are reported to have burnt a copy of the Holy Quran outside a mosque in Amritsar and thrown the carcass of a pig inside the mosque on 3/21/01. Five members of the Society have been arrested. One of the accused, Mr. Harish Sharma who is the head of the organization, had official security provided to him by the government of Punjab through the state police. It is not known whether the security officers provided to Mr. Sharma participated in the outrageous sacrilegious act. (India Abroad, 3/30/01; Tribune, 3/23/01, 3/24/01,

Parents Wait for "Dead" Son

The Tribune (4/5/01) highlighted the case of Sardar Kartar Singh and his wife Sardarni Bachan Kaur, residents of Guru Nanak Pura of Bathinda, whose son had been picked up by Punjab police on 12/16/91 and is

alleged to have been killed in police custody. The victim, Sardar Harnam Singh, was picked up by a police party in December 1991 and has been missing since then. The parents have approached the state and federal government for an inquiry into the incident but of no avail. A correspondent of the Tribune met with them in Bathinda. The old Sikh couple broke into tears and pleaded that if their son was dead, they may be told so. "it is our duty and right to perform the last rites of our son, if he is dead. ... We are hopeful that our son is very much alive and would return home."

Police Lawlessness Against Sikhs Continues in Punjab

- Sardarni Sukhcharanjit Kaur and three other Sikh residents of Batala, including a minor, were picked up by Punjab Police and confined to illegal detention. A warrant officer of the Punjab And Harayana High Court raided the police station on 6/25/01 and rescued the victims (Tribune, 6/26/01)
- More than twenty army personnel belonging to the 28 Madras Regiment went berserk on 3/3/01 evening at the Amritsar railway station, beat a Sikh family and attempted to burn the beard of a Sikh traveler. The army men were under the influence of liquor and had occupied the seats reserved for a Sikh family. The Station Superintendent confirmed the incident. The family belongs to Majitha Road, Amritsar and could not file a report against the army since they were scheduled to take a flight from New Delhi the following day. (Tribune, 3/6//01)
- Kirpal Singh Randhawa, Deputy Chairman of Punjab Human Rights Organization, in a letter to the Union Government has stated that he fears a threat to his life from the Amritsar SSP following the registration of several false cases against him by the SSP. (Tribune, 5/23/01)
- Rajinder Singh, resident of Nagra village near Bhawanigarh, is reported to have been beaten and tortured by local police officials on 6/10/01. The victim was released after the police took a

Rs. 10,000 bribe but he was unable to walk due to torture in police custody. (Tribune, 6/20/01, 6/21/01)

- Gurdev Singh, resident of Samana, is reported to have died in custody of Punjab Police on 12/14/00. A probe was ordered into the case by the Punjab Human Rights Commission on 6/23/01 (Tribune, 6/24/01)
- Harjit Singh Kahlon and Bhupinder Singh Bhinda, both residents of Latifpura, Model Town in Jalandhar, were picked up by police on 6/4/01 and kept in illegal custody till 6/7/01. Their release was secured by a warrant officer of the Punjab and Haryana High Court. (Tribune, 6/8/01)
- Shamsher Singh, resident of Amristar, was picked up by Punjab police on 1/5/01 by police officials of the Buttar police post. His family members had approached the Punjab Human Rights Commission (PHRC) to secure his release from illegal detention by the Punjab Police. On 6/28/01, the commission ordered a compensation of Rs. One lakh to the victim for the illegal detention. The complainant (victims brother) and his family members and other relations were also awarded a compensation of Rs. 50,000 each. (Tribune, 6/29/01)
- Nearly seven years after Nasib Kaur, a resident of Banawali village near Mansa, was raped by three Punjab police officials, she has been unable to register cases against the accused. The incident occurred in 1994. The accused are reported to have admitted their guilt to the local SSP but no criminal case has been registered against them. (Tribune, 6/17/01)
- An official of the Kapurthala district jail has been indicted for not providing adequate medical treatment to Gurnam Singh, who died on 5/25/01 in judicial custody. (Tribune, 5/26/01, 6/6/01)
- The Punjab Police recently arrested the following Sikhs on suspicion of being terrorists: Pargat Singh was arrested near Dujowal village on 3/15/01;

Sarwan Singh (resident of Aulakh, Gurdaspur), arrested on 3/23/01; Sukhwinder Singh (resident of Bhukhra village), Gurmukh Singh (resident of Gurdaspur), Randhir Singh Dhira (resident of Kalanaur), Manjit Singh (resident of Kalanaur), and Balwinder Singh (resident of Dostpur), all arrested on Punjab police for being activists of Babbar Khalsa International; Sarwan Singh (resident of Dhingar village, Mansa), arrested 6/18/01 (Tribune, 3/16/01, 3/24/01, 4/3/01, 5/3/01, 6/21/01)

Four Cops Get Life Term for Killing Sikh

Four officials of Punjab Police were convicted to life terms on 5/15/01 for the custodial death of Devinder Singh, a 21-year old truck driver from Hassanpur village near Kharar. The victim was killed in September of 1999 while being tortured by the police officials at the CIA office in Ropar. (Tribune, 6/16/01)

Compensation and Inquiry Into 1992 Faked Encounter Killing

The Punjab and Haryana High Court has ordered a Rs. 3 lakh compensation to the family of Santokh Singh and ordered inquiry into his faked encounter killing by Punjab police. The victim was picked up in December 1992 by the police and liquidated in a faked encounter. The victim's father had approached the court to investigate the disappearance of his son. The judge ruled that the police version regarding the escape of the accused from custody was not believable and that prima facie Santokh Singh had been eliminated in a stage-managed encounter. Within the last two decades, thousands of Sikh youth have been killed in faked encounters by the police in Punjab. (Tribune, 5/10/01)

Cop Convicted for Harassing Sikh Farmer

An Inspector of the Punjab Police has been awarded 3 years rigorous punishment for harassing a Sikh farmer, Bhurpur Singh, on false charges of harboring a terrorist. The order was passed by a special Judge in Mansa on 3/5/01. Bhurpur Singh,

resident of Gurne Khurd village, had been attacked by five police officials at his home in April 1993 and accused of hiding a Sikh terrorist. The objective of the false charges was to extract money from the Sikh farmer. (Tribune, 5/6/01)

Report on Missing Sikh Women to be Submitted

The Khalra Mission Committee has reported that it will present to Siri Akal Takhat Sahib a report regarding the disappearance of 950 Sikh women in Punjab and the alleged dubious role of the police. The 950 bodies were declared unclaimed, and ultimately cremated by the police. The report released recently contains evidence that of the 25,000 so-called unclaimed bodies cremated in Punjab in the last two decades, 950 were women who were alleged to have been abducted from their homes by Punjab police in the name of curbing terrorism. (Indian Express, 3/10/01).

Police Officials Facing Murder Charges in Disappearance of Babbar Khalsa Activist

Four Punjab police officials including a DIG (then SSP in 1993) Sanjeev Gupta, Inspectors Ramesh Chander and Jagtar Singh, and DSP Mohinder Singh, are facing murder charges for conspiring to kidnap Sardar Sukhdev Singh Sukha 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, 3/1/01, 3/2/01, 3/3/01, 3/8/01, 3/9/01, 3/14/01, 3/16/01, 3/17/01,

PHRC – A toothless body

A published report in the Tribune

(5/13/01) claims that the Punjab Human Rights Commission, formed by the state government in 1997 to investigate human right violation complaints in the state, may be toothless body because the state government has failed to follow its

directions for awarding compensation to victims in a timely manner. In several cases, the state high court has been approached for non-compliance by the state of Punjab. In the case of award of compensation to witnesses of the murder of Sardar Jaswant Khalra,

the commission is planning to approach the High Court against the state of Punjab for implementing its recommendations. The commission currently receives 70-80 complaints daily of human rights violations across the state.

NEWS FROM OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD

Foundation Honors Sikh Achievers

Toronto based Centennial Foundation held an awards ceremony on April 1, 2001 in which it recognized and honored twelve persons for their outstanding contributions. Those honored included Scottish Lord Iqbal Singh, former Premier of British Columbia Ujjal Singh Dosanjh, Mississauga based multimillionaire Harinder Singh Takhar, and British twins Rabindra and Amrit Kaur Singh. (Toronto Star, 3/29/01, 4/1/01; Press Trust of India, 4/2/01; Scotsman, 4/18/01)

Another Charged in Air India Crash

On June 5, 2001, Canada charged Inderjit Singh Reyat with murder in connection with the 1985 Air India bombing which killed 329 persons. Reyat was extradited from UK in 1989 and was serving a 10-year prison sentence for manslaughter in the bombing at Tokyo's Narita airport. Earlier, Ajaib Singh Bagri and Ripudaman Singh Malik were arrested by Canadian Police on October 27, 2000 and charged with the same crime. They have declared that they are innocent of the charges filed against them. 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. (Gazette-Montreal, 6/5/01, 6/6/01; Agence France Presse, 6/6/01; AP Online, 6/6/01; Toronto Sun, 6/7/01)

Sikh Regiment in British Army?

The Prince of Wales is reported to have taken on the British Ministry of Defence with plans to raise a Sikh regiment within the British Army. UK Sikh leaders have backed the proposal saying that such a unit will be no different from the Scots, Welsh, and Irish Gaurds or the Gurkhas, and there

will be no shortage of young Sikh recruits from a community that prides itself on martial heritage. Sikhs have fought for the crown, from Flanders to Burma, as a part of the old British Indian Army, with a large number winning decorations for gallantry. (Independent, 6/23/01)

UK Museum Launches Monthly Lecture Series

The Victoria and Albert Museum, London begun launched a monthly lecture series, starting March 2001, focusing on Sikh arts and heritage. The lectures include topics such as Sikh history, Gurmat Sangeet, weaponry, and accounts of early European travelers to the Lahore Durbar.

ISYF Campaigns for De-Proscription in UK

The International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF) in Britain has launched an aggressive campaign to de-proscribe itself from the new anti-terrorism law. The legislation, which was passed on 2/19/01, empowered 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 included the International Sikh Youth Federation and Babbar Khalsa International. The ban was approved by the British parliament. Following the announcement of the ban, Babbar Khalsa International dissolved its UK wing on 4/19/01. 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.

Update on Gurdwaras in Pakistan

The Pakistan Gurdwara Prabhandak Committee has spent nearly Rs. 100 million in renovating Gurdwaras across Pakistan. The renovations were carried out at Gurdwara Janam Asthan Siri Guru Nanak Sahib, Gurdwara Rorhi Sahib (Eminabad), Gurdwara Sacha Sauda (Farooq Abad), Gurdwara Bhai Joga Singh (Peshawar), Gurdwara Darbar Sahib (Narowal), and Gurdwara Tamboo Sahib (Nankana Sahib). After a gap of two years, India based SGPC sent a Jatha of about 1,500 Sikh pilgrims to Gurdwara Janam Asthan (Nankana Sahib) on the occasion of Vaisakhi in April, 2001. The pilgrims from India were joined by over 10,000 Sikhs from Pakistan and other countries in observing Vaisakhi at the Gurdwara Sahib. In a major potential policy change, Pakistan may lift restrictions on the number of Indian Sikhs visiting Gurdwaras in Pakistan. (Pakistan Newswire, 4/11/01, 4/16/01; Tribune, 4/17/01; Press Trust of India, 4/9/01; Hindu, 4/18/01)

Malaysian Sikhs Build Orphanage

Sikhs of Kula Lumpur have set up a home for orphans and underprivileged children known as Pusat Jagaan Kanak-Kanak Gurburi. Gurburi is translated as the "House of the Guru." The center can accommodate 80 children. Children at the center are taught Punjabi, Sikh history, and music. (New Straits Times – Malaysia, 3/8/01)

New Gurdwara in Western Australia

The first Gurdwara Sahib in Western Australia opened on March 4, 2001 at Perth. The state premier as well as the local aboriginal community participated in the inaugural ceremony. The Sikh population of Perth is estimated to be about 2,000. (Australasian Business Intelligence, 3/5/01)

Sikh Population Declining in Iran

The population of Sikhs in Iran has been steadily declining for many years and it is estimated that only a few hundred Sikh families now live in Iran. About 100 Sikh families currently live in Tehran. The Sikh community in Tehran, involved largely in trading, imports, and exports, has seen a significant loss of

economic opportunities in the country. Tehran has a large Gurdwara, which is nearly 40 years old. (Tribune, 4/13/01)

Kuwait Seeks Closure of Gurdwara

The Kuwaiti authorities are seeking to close Sikh Gurdwara within Kuwait City arguing that the Gurdwara has operating in the country illegally since 1985 in contravention of Islamic law. However, it is interesting to note that Kuwaiti law does permit monotheistic religions, such as the Sikh faith, to have places of worship. The Kuwait Human Rights Association has condemned the campaign by some politicians to close the place of worship. The current Gurdwara Sahib serves a Sikh population of over 13,000. (Agence France Press, 6/14/01, 6/15/0, 6/27/01)

Taliban: Sikhs Safe in Afghanistan

The ruling Taliban government in Afghanistan has said that Sikhs are free to practice their religion in the country. The Afghanistan Foreign Minister has asserted that they have not destroyed any Gurdwara in Afghanistan and that Sikh traders enjoyed greater security under the Taliban than under any previous regime. However, justifying the recent destruction of Buddha statues, the minister said that keeping and worshipping statues was "unislamic." The Christian Science Monitor (4/13/01) published a detailed news report on the examples set by Sikhs in Afghanistan in getting along with the Taliban. (Tribune, 3/10/01; Christian Science Monitor, 4/13/10).

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

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Phone: (408) 972-2476

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

Nanakshahi Calendar 533

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)

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Cops Confess to False Encounters: Say They Acted on Directions From Top

Varinder Singh
Tribune News Service

The Tribune, August 13, 2001

Jalandhar, August 12

More than 100 Punjab police officials facing a number of cases and CBI inquiries for their role in killing terrorists in “false” encounters during the decadelong turmoil in the state, virtually dropped a bombshell today, confessing that whatever they had done was on directions from the top and demanding that either the then DGP, Mr KPS Gill, SSPs, DCs and other senior officers be booked like them or they too be exonerated.

These police officials who have already announced that they would return their awards and medals to the President against the “biased” treatment being meted out to them, have urged Mr Gill, the then DGP (Intelligence), Mr OP Sharma, and other IPS officers to join their “struggle” by returning their awards to the President if various cases and inquiries against them were not withdrawn by the government by August 15.

A group of 100 police officials, some of whom are facing up to 10 cases, confessed their involvement in “encounters”, but said these were carried out in accordance with the wishes of their senior officers like SSPs, Mr Gill and Mr Sharma.

Later, these encounters were declared legal by the then DCs and SDMs. “So, why should we alone face the music? Is it justice that we are facing trials for our actions directed by others who have been hogging the limelight and were awarded on the basis of our achievements, argued Mr Sardool Singh, a retired SP and leader of the group comprising serving and retired police officials.

A serving official of the rank of Sub-Inspector alleged that monetary awards announced by the government to lower ranks, were usually usurped by senior officers who would make them sign documents stating that they had received the amount.

Should not the senior officers who used to hold press conferences and flaunt these encounters as achievements be booked for the same offence under which we have been booked,” asked Mr Dilbagh Singh, another official.

They said they were going to file a PIL in court pleading Mr KPS Gill, Mr O.P. Sharma and all other SSPs and DCs be booked under the same Sections. Mr Sardool Singh said instead of providing amnesty to police officials, the state government was allowing prosecution, though it was not competent to do so in the light of the Disturbed Area Act under which the Centre could grant permission for prosecution of police officials.

These officials said besides their scheduled programme to march to Delhi and returning their awards to the President on August 15, they were planning a protest dharna in front of the Punjab Vidhan Sabha.

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