

Sikh Film Festival

The "Spinning Wheel 2005" successfully celebrated the 2nd Sikh Film Festival late last year in Long Island, with impressive response from the local and out-of-the-state viewers. The event was jointly organized by the Sikh Organization of New York, the Hofstra University, the International Punjabi Society, and the Sikh Coalition. New movies, covering a wide range of interests and various aspects of Sikh diaspora, history and values were screened in the presence of the movie-producers from various parts of the world and an array of local and visiting VIPs.

The inaugural ceremony was held at the Long Island Marriott Hotel in a jammed banquet hall. The participants were entertained to cultural dances performed by a Canadian *bhangra* troupe. The highlights of the evening were the formal launching of a journal by the S.K.K. Bindra Chair for Sikh Studies at the Hofstra University and the Award Ceremony in honour of the late Yogi Harbhajan Singh. His wife, Mrs. Inderjeet Kaur Yogi, the members of the Yogi family, and leading members of his vast and diverse following were present for the occasion. It was a touching moment when the achievements and the life-story of the great international preacher-cum-entrepreneur were cited and then shown to the guests in a movie-screening, and when his wife received the Posthumous Yogi Harbhajan Singh Award. The Hofstra University Student Center Theater was agog with continuous activity and arrival of new faces from different places to watch movies during the last two days of the festival. The crowd during the final few screenings was beyond the organizers' expectations. The producers of the movies made brief presentations about their respective creations and answered viewers' questions.

Chattar S. Sahni-Khanpuri

Co-convenor, The 2nd US Sikh Film Festival, 109 Deer Run, Roslyn, NY 11577-1969 (US).
Email: sahnikhani@aol.com

* * * * *

Canadian Sikh among victims of Iraqi kidnappers

More than a month after Norman Kember's kidnappers offered a last chance to save the British peace activist from death, new footage has been released showing him alongside fellow captives. In the brief, silent film - the sixth such video to be released since the 74-year-old was taken hostage in Baghdad - Mr Kember could be seen alongside **Canadian collegeues James Loney, and Harmeet Singh Sooden**. Ominously, however, there was no sign of a fourth captive, American Tom Fox.

Fellow campaigners from the group Christian Peacemaker Team (CPT) said they were continuing to pray for the safe release of all the men, while reiterating their belief that "the occupation must end." The retired professor from Pinner, north-west London, had travelled to Iraq along with Mr Loney, 41, Mr Harmeet Singh Sooden, 32 and Mr Fox, 54, as a "gesture of solidarity" when they were grabbed in western Baghdad on 26 November last year by a previously unknown group called the Swords of Righteousness Brigade. The group demanded the release of all Iraqi prisoners and threatened to kill the four men if their ultimatum was not met.

Last month, supporters throughout the country lit candles and said prayers while an hour-long vigil was held in Trafalgar Square to mark 100 days of captivity. Today's footage, dated 28 February and broadcast on the Arabic TV channel Al-Jazeera, was said to contain pleas from the men for their governments to work for their release.

□

