

Sher J.B. Singh reports from Washington: The Sikh Council on Religion and Education (SCORE) urged the Sikh community last September to participate in the commemorative events related to the tragedy of September 11 around the country. We feel that it is important that Sikhs are seen participating actively in these ceremonies. It is also advised that all Gurudwaras hand deliver flowers, or symbolic gifts to the local fire station (city and volunteer) and the police station (city, state and county) chiefs on September 11.

SCORE recommends dedicating the Diwan on September 15th to the victims and their families. The service can be publicized through local newspapers, department stores, community centers and placing posters and banners outside the Gurudwara welcoming everyone to offer prayers. We will be sending suggestions for the kind of program for this Diwan. If possible, Gurudwaras can organize a blood drive too with the help of local hospitals. It is also suggested that Gurdwaras organize a candle light vigil after the Diwan.

Founded in 1998, the Sikh Council on Religion and Education (SCORE)'s mission is to present the Sikh perspective in public forums, interfaith discussions and governmental organizations to promote community understanding and a just society for all.

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## **Golden Temple beats Taj Mahal**

The Golden Temple of Amritsar is the sixth among the world's first 50 sites people would "die to see". The Taj ranks 10th, while Mount Everest takes the 30th place. Travel agents said the Golden Temple and the Taj Mahal get India most of tourists and charter operators.

The survey of the first 50 most preferred places was carried out before the Bali bombing for screening in the BBC's Holiday Programme and involved interviewing more than 20,000 people. Tour operators in Britain were not surprised that the Taj figured so high on the list, but one of them said he had not expected the Golden Temple to score over the Taj.

The 270-mile Grand Canyon emerged on top of the list. It was followed by the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, Walt Disney World in Florida, South Island in New Zealand and Cape Town. Las Vegas, Sydney and New York followed the Golden Temple, and preceded the Taj, bagging the seventh, eighth and ninth places.

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## **Keep Gurdwara politics out: Appeal by Sr. Tarlochan Singh**

Varinder Walia reporting from Amritsar says: The National Commission for Minorities today came down heavily on the SGPC chief for his statement that he would appeal against the verdict of the Supreme Court, which has pronounced that '*Udasi deras*' are not gurdwaras.

In a fax message, Sr. Tarlochan Singh, Vice-Chairman, asked Sr. Kirpal Singh Badunagar to withdraw the statement as it would create a fear psychosis among different sects worshipping the holy Guru Granth Sahib. He said such statements by SGPC officebearers in the past had caused irreparable damage to Sikhism.

Sr. Tarlochan Singh said the followers of Nirmala and Udasi sects feared they would 'grab' their properties by making these 'gurdwaras.'

While settling a 25-year old litigation between the SGPC and a *mahant* on declaring on Udasi *deras* as a gurdwara, the Supreme Court has ruled that mere worshipping of Guru Granth Sahib at a *dera* does not qualify it to be a gurdwara.

The apex court has ruled that the essential ingredients for an institution to be treated as a gurdwara are that "there should be Guru Granth Sahib, worship of the same by a congregation and a Nishan Sahib".

Sr. Tarlochan Singh said Guru Granth Sahib had been removed from many Singh gurdwaras for the same reason as they feared the SGPC would take control of their properties. Many *deras* where congregations were held as per Sikh tenets had been converted into temples.

The commission alleged that while the SGPC had become a centre for politics, most *deras* belonging to Udasi continued to preach the faith in the true sense. He said the SGPC had never bothered to bring all '*Nanak naam leva*' (followers of Guru Nanak Dev) on a single platform.

It may be mentioned here that Prof. Badungar had announced the SGPC would appeal against the verdict of the Supreme Court that Nirmalas and Udasis were part of Sikhism.

[Courtesy: *The Tribune*]

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## **Sajjan Kumar acquitted in Sikh massacre case**

In a setback to the prosecution in the anti-Sikh carnage case, a city court acquitted Congressman Sajjan Kumar and all others accused for lack of evidence.

The judgment brings down curtains on the involvement of Congress politicians, accused of leading riots which left 2,733 dead in the capital following the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984 by her Sikh bodyguards.

Apart from Kumar, five years ago the court had also named Congress leader HKL Bhagat an accused, on the basis of complaint filed by a riot victim. However, he was discharged later.

On another appeal by a riot victim, the high court had ordered Delhi Police to probe the allegation of instigating of riots by Congress Jagdish Tytler in north Delhi. Subsequently, the police filed a closure report saying no case was made against him.

Following the riots, a Jain-Aggarwal Commission was set up, which recommended registration of 700 cases of killing, violence and arson. Of these FIRs were resitered in 400 cases and just 200 cases reached the trial court. With the exception of a few small cases, trials in most of the cases have been completed and there have been only 10 convictions.

Of these 10 convictions, death sentence was awarded only to one accused, Kishori, who hacked many to death with his butcher-knife in Trilokpuri area during riots. However, his death sentence too was commuted to life by the Supreme Court.

Acquitting Kumar on Monday, additional sessions judge Manju Goel said no case was made out against Kumar because his presence in mob indulging in the riots could not be proved.

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## **India protests poor upkeep of Sikh shrines in Pak**

India lodged a protest with Pakistan against the poor maintenance of Sikh shrines in that country, including the birth-place of Guru Nanak, Nankana Sahib, and Punja Sahib gurdwara, and sought their proper upkeep.

The joint secretary in the foreign ministry, Mr Arun Kumar Singh, called in the Pakistani deputy high commissioner, Mr Jalil abbas Jilani, to convey the protest, based on a report by the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee *Jathas* who had gone to Pakistan last November to celebrate Guru Nanak's birth anniversary.

The *jathas*, on their return, had written to the Prime Minister's Office and to the foreign minister detailing the deplorable condition of the shrines and the kind of treatment meted out to Indian pilgrims.

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## Taking *gurubani* across the world

We have heard of Bengali classical musicians taking to *ghazal*, *thumri* Rabindrasangeet and *adhunik bangla gaan*. With the kind of training that a classical musician gets, he or she only needs to be a bit flexible to adapt to the different styles of music.

Talk about flexibility, Ratna Roy is the only Bengali who can sing Gurbani, the sacred music of the Sikhs. The 59-year old singer has been reviewed by two Punjabi newspapers, *Desh Darpan* and *Ajit*, circulated among gurudwaras all over the world. She has performed at several *gurudwaras* across the country, and has an album in *Gurubani kirtan* to her credit.

Hailing from Bhagalpur, Ratna Roy had developed a keen interest in classical music at a very early age. Noticing her love for music, her father, late Prof. Amol Kumar Bose, sent Ratna to Ganesh Chandra Mishra of the Mishra gharana. She learnt under Pandit Mishra for eight years, till she joined the Bethune College in 1961.

"A Punjabi friend of mine invited me to sing at the Jagatsudhar Gurudwara, on Rashbehari Avenue, Calcutta. The audience liked my voice. Then, my friend had an idea: why not try Gurubani? She took me to a Sikh priest who taught me this beautiful form of music. Since, I was already singing *Bhajans*, I didn't have a problem with the Gurumukhi script," Ratna says.

Soon, she was flooded with offers. She performed at the Sheeshgunge-Rekabgunge Gurudwaras and Bangla-Sahib Gurudwara in Delhi, and also at gurudwaras in Bangalore, Alwar, Amritsar, Patna, Indore, Monghyr, Dhanbad, Asansol, Benaras and Bhubaneshwar.

Ratna was scheduled to perform in Bangladesh. Her name is enlisted at the Gurdwara in Singapore, where she will be performing soon.

**[Courtesy: *The Hindustan Times*]**

