

'84 riot cases registered

The CBI has re-registered two cases against "unknown persons" in the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. The cases pertain to the 10 reports against sitting MPs Jagdish Tytler and Sajjan Kumar and Delhi's local Congress leader Dharam Das Shastri that the home ministry referred to the CBI October-end. Finding "credible evidence" against the trio, the Nanavati report, made public on August 8, 2005 had recommended further probe. The cases based on FIR nos. 250/84 and 178/84 from Sultanpuri and Mangolpuri police stations have been registered against "unknown persons" for arson, looting and rioting.

But further inquiries could lead to one of the three politicians. The police stations fall in Outer Delhi, Kumar's Lok Sabha seat in 1984. According to the Nanavati report, FIR no. 178 was recorded on November 15, 1984, but no one was arrested in this case and the case was filed as untraced. However, several incidents pertaining to this FIR, in which affidavits were also filed, directly indict Kumar. CBI sources said one case relates to an FIR filed at Mangolpuri police station in which one Iqbal Singh left for his shop on November 1, 1984, and never came back. The Nanavati report also mentions it.

"Affidavit filed by one Kher Singh before Jain-Banerjee Committee stated that on that day in the morning he had seen local MP Sajjan Kumar addressing a crowd of persons and telling them that Sikhs had killed their *maata* (mother) and that no Sikh in the area should be spared."

About FIR no. 250, the Nanavati report said that in spite of several incidents taking place in Sultanpuri on November 1, 1984, only one FIR was recorded. During investigations, murders of 137 persons were included.

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UK Sikh Forum's successful Conference in Chigwell (Essex)

The UK Sikh Study Forum whilst celebrating its twenty-first birthday last October, held its yearly National Conference at Guru Gobind Singh Khalsa College, Roding Lane, Chigwell, Essex. This Forum has been established since 1984 for dialogue and better understanding. In pursuit of this aim, it has organised over thirty conferences, festivals and exhibitions related to various aspects of the Sikh religion, history and culture. Its current Executive Committee members are B.S. Sabar, Tarsame Singh, N.S. Chahal, J.S. Bedi, B.K. Saund, Jasbir Singh, B.S. Bains, U.S. Bal, G.S. Boparai, Paramjit Kaur and J.S. Purewal.

The objective of the Conference was that man's onward march must find inspiration from Sikhism's noble and glorious deeds and self sacrifice. The Sikh history is replete with evolutionary and revolutionary models. The aim of the conference was to study our golden heritage with a view to be inspired by the Noble Deeds and to learn lessons from the mistakes done to march forward on the path of Righteousness.

This successful event attended by well over 150 people in its morning session received two written lengthy documents written in Punjabi language. The first paper was presented by Sardar Baldev Singh Sabar, Convenor of Sikh Study Forum and its subject was 'Lessons from the remarkable Sikh history and way forward for the Sikhs.' The second paper was presented by Sardar Sarup Singh Narang on the subject of 'How the Sikhs can safeguard their unique identity.' The Conference then listened to many contributors who spoke for three minutes each on their views on the above subjects and one could see from the debates that the Sikh community is well able to sit down and enter into a sensible dialogue on such emotive issues as self-determination, the present state of the Punjab state in India and Sikh identity issues.

Courtesy: Mrs. Balvinde Kaur Saund

Sikh Women's Alliance
1, Abercorn Garden
Romford, Essex RM6 RTA
UK

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Skeletons from 1990's Repression in Punjab DSP and ASI get Life Terms in Jaswant Singh Khalra case

It may be a case of justice delayed, but not justice denied, as the skeletons of militancy days in Punjab are revealed. The Patiala district court on Nov. 19, 2005 awarded DSP Jaspal Singh and ASI Amarjit Singh life sentence, while four others were awarded seven years rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs 5,000 each by additional Sessions Judge Mr. Bhupinder Singh in the Jaswant Singh Khalra disappearance case.

Mr. Jaswant Singh Khalra, who was general secretary of a human rights organisation, had gone missing on 6 September, 1995, from his residence at 8, Kabir Park, Amritsar, during Beant Singh's tenure. His wife moved the Supreme Court on 9 September, 1995, and on 11 November that year the Supreme Court ordered CBI to probe the case.

The accused had been booked by the CBI under Section 302, 201, 364, 120-B and 34 for murder, destroying evidence, kidnapping with intent to murder and conspiracy. Jaspal Singh and Amarjit Singh were found guilty for murder and destroying evidence while SHO Satnam Singh, SHO Surinderpal Singh, SHO Jasbir Singh and Head Constable Prithipal Singh were found guilty of kidnapping with intent to murder and hatching a conspiracy.

They were awarded seven years imprisonment for kidnapping and five years for hatching a conspiracy. Both sentences will run simultaneously. All convicted are serving police officers except Surinderpal Singh, who has retired from the police.

Incidentally, DSP Jaspal Singh and SHO Satnam Singh had been awarded the President's Police Medal for 'fighting militancy' in the state. Jaspal Singh is also embroiled in another murder case of Harbhajan Singh Dhatt, nephew of Bhagat Singh, and is currently out on bail.

The clinching evidence in the case was provided by SPO Kuldip Singh, who was the gunman of SHO Satnam Singh at the time of Mr. Khalra's disappearance. He had once retracted his statement but later said he had done so under police pressure.

Ms. Paramjit Kaur Khalra, wife of Jaswant Singh Khalra, said she would have preferred it if capital punishment had been awarded to the guilty. Lawyers of both parties said they would appeal in High Court against the verdict.

[Courtesy: *The Statesman*]

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Debt rocks cradle of green revolution

This may come as a shock - Punjab - the harbinger of the Green Revolution - has the highest number of farmers in debt. It is followed by Kerala, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

While the average amount of outstanding loans was the highest in Punjab at Rs. 41,576, that of Kerala stood at Rs. 33,907, followed by Rs. 26,007 for Haryana Rs. 23,995 for Andhra, Rs. 23,963 for Tamil Nadu and Rs. 18,136 for Karnataka, agriculture minister Sharad Pawar said last month quoting a May 2005 National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) report. He was responding to a question posed by MPs Sardar Sukhdev Singh Libra and Rattan Singh Ajnala in the Lok Sabha.

Pawar said several steps had been taken to reduce farmers' dependence on private money

lenders for meeting credit requirements and providing relief to indebted farmers. "The government has advised banks to increase credit flow to the agriculture sector at the rate of 30% per year," he said.

The minister added that as a part of the farm credit package announced by the government, farmers could restructure their outstanding loan in districts declared calamity affected. The rescheduled loan will be repayable over a period of five years at current interest rates, including an initial moratorium of two years. Farmers who have defaulted will be made eligible for fresh credit.

The House was also informed that banks had been advised to grant one-time settlement, including partial waiver of interest or loan to small and marginal farmers, who have been declared defaulters and were ineligible for fresh credit. Banks have been advised to review cases where credit has been denied on the sole ground that a loan account was settled through compromise or write-offs.

Banks have also been advised to waive security requirements for agricultural loans up to Rs 50,000 and for agri-business and agri-clinic loans up to Rs 5 lakh. Also, all public sector banks have been advised to reduce lending rate for agriculture to a single digit rate.

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