

Nanakshahi Calendar gets SGPC support

The Tribune reports from Amritsar: The draft of Nanakshahi Calendar that generated considerable controversy and debate was approved unanimously at a marathon meeting presided over by Akal Takht Jathedar and attended by all other Sikhs organisations here last March.

Announcing the draft approval SGPC chief Prof. Kirpal Singh Badungar said the Calendar would be implemented after the approval of the general house of the SGPC at a special session.

However, the meeting failed to agree on the date of Guru Nanak Dev's birth which would continue to be celebrated on the 'puranmashi' (full moon) in the Bikrami month of Katak, instead of during the month of 'Vaisakh' (April).

With the approval of the draft proposal controversy regarding the formal announcement of the "death" of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, the calendar has declared a public holiday on June 6 as his martyrdom day. thereby laying to rest the controversy over Sant Bhindranwale's demise. It may be recalled that Jathedar Akal Takht Giani Joginder Singh Vedanti had constituted an 11-member committee of Sikh scholars and experts to study in depth in Nanakshahi Calendar prepared by a Canada-based Sikh scholar Mr Pal Singh Purewal.

The committee last March gave its final acceptance to the calendar which was presented before Sikh intelligentsia and representatives of various Sikh organisations that also gave their final approval for its implementation.

Significantly, on the issue of dates of Diwali and Hola Mohalla jointly celebrated by Hindus and Sikhs, the calendar continue to follow common dates of 'Bikram Samvat'.

President of Takht Patna Sahib Giani Mohinder Singh Romana has also sent his consent for the approval of the Nanakshahi Calendar according to the press note issued by the SGPC.

Earlier, too, the former SGPC President Mr Gurcharan Singh Tohra in 1999 had got the approval of the SGPC general house to implement the calendar and even got the calendar printed but he could not implement the resolution as he was defeated in the SGPC presidential elections.

Prominent among those who attended the meeting included Jathedar Akal Takht Giani Joginder Singh Vedanti, SGPC President Prof. K.S. Badungar, Mr Pal Singh Purewal, author of the calendar, Jathedar Takht Keshgarh Sahib, Giani Tirlochan Singh, Jathedar Damdama Sahib, Giani Balwant Singh, Giani Kewal Singh, former Jathedar of Damdama Sahib, Mr Tarsem Singh, Chairman, Dharam Parchar Committee, New Delhi, Mr Avtar Singh Hit, Mr Kuldip Singh Wadala, Mr Jasbir Singh Rode, former Jathedar Akal Takht, Prof Jagmohan Singh, Mr Kashmira Singh and Bibi Kiranjot Kaur.

Governor releases "Guru Bal Gatha" for the blind

"Guru Bal Gatha", the latest braille publication of the Maharaja Ranjit Singh National Braille Society was released late last year by the (then) Governor of Uttaranchal, Sardar Surjit Singh Barnala, who later distributed its copies to the blind. On this occasion the society honoured dignitaries who have contributed for the

cause of blind, including Mr. Lal Advani, Col. Tilak Raj, Dr. R.K. Verma, Sardar Surendra Singh Shergill and Mrs. Surinder Kaur Sagar who were also presented the 1st Maharaja Ranjit Singh memorial international awards 2002.

Dr. Kunwar Singh Negi, Padmabhushan, Secretary of the society appealed to the people to contribute liberally for the society. Contributions may kindly be sent to the secretary, M.R.S.B.P. Society, Dharampur Danda, Divya Vihar, Dehradun. 248001.

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Canada's BS Mahal honoured

Sr. Bhupinder Singh Mahal has been awarded Commemorative Medal for Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee by a Royal Proclamation in celebration of Her Majesty's 50th year as Queen of Canada. This commemorative medal is awarded to Canadians who, over the past 50 years, have helped create the Canada of today, including those who are actively contributing to the country's future. It recognizes citizens for outstanding and exemplary achievement or service to the community as a whole.

S. Bhupinder Singh Mahal was recipient of the Golden Jubilee Medal at a ceremony held in Brampton, Ontario. We extend our congratulations to Bhupinder and his wife Sunita for a well deserved honour.

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Samadh of Maharaja Ranjit Singh at Lahore®

Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780-1839) was the most powerful Sikh ruler of Punjab. He ruled from 1799 to 1839 A.D. His samadh lies just opposite the Lahore Fort on its west and occupies the spot where he was cremated. The construction of the samadh was commenced by his son Kharak Singh, but could not be completed till about 1848 A.D. When the infant Sikh Raja Dalip Singh was deposed and taken to England by the British. Built in brick, with a sprinkling of red sandstone and marble, it is mixture of Indian and Muslim architecture. The square roof with a central fluted dome is crowded around with designs, generally misunderstood as acanthus leaves, kisoska, stone lanterns, and cupolas. The ceilings are decorated with glass mosaic work or plain glasswork, which is beautiful and has been done skillfully in the main dome. The arches of the interior are of marble, strengthened with brickwork and joined with iron clamps. In the center of sepulchral decorated with pietra dura work wrought in semi-precious stones. In its center rests a marble urn in the form of lotus containing the ashes of Maharaja. Eleven small marble knobs placed around hold ashes of four queens and seven slave girls; the remains of the queens being distinguished by a carved representative of pigeons. The interior of the samadh chamber is also decorated with frescoes pertaining to Sikh Gurus. Two small domed buildings adjacent to and west of the main building contains the ashes of Kharak Singh and Nau Nihah Singh and their wives.

The large marble doorframe of the main entrance to the samadh proper is decorated with superb pietra dura work.

[Courtesy: Shah Hussain, Sitara Travels - Pakistan]

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Dr. Jagir Singh gets prestigious award for Gurbani Kirtan

Chandigarh based *Ragi* Dr. Jagir Singh has become the first musician to be honoured with the coveted Central Sangeet Natak Akademi award, initiated in the category of *Gurbani Kirtan*. Interestingly, it is the first time that the Akademi has presented an award in the category of *Gurbani Kirtan*. Dr Jagir Singh is currently serving as Deputy Director in the Punjab School Education Board. Talking to Chandigarh Tribune about his association with this rare stream of music, which is on decline in the place of its origin, Dr. Singh said that his initiation into the field came easy because of his father's religious and musical leanings. The love affair started way back in 1968 when Dr Jagir Singh started accompanying his father to significant classical Gurbani Kirtan recitals at prestigious Gurdwaras in Punjab. Years later, he honed his talent under the tutelage of many established Classical Maestros of the region like Prof. Yash Pal Sharma, former Head, Music Department, Panjab University. Having acquired perfection in controlling the soft medium of Gurbani, Dr. Jagir Singh went on to compose various musical scores, apart from releasing many music albums of Gurbani Kirtan.

According to G. S. Channi, who attended the meeting of the governing council held in Delhi on March 25, regarding the announcement of the award, Dr Jagir Singh has been awarded for "his valuable contribution in the field of Gurbani Kirtan. He holds a doctorate in Gurbani Kirtan, and is a creative artist. He has been awarded for "having uplifted" the status of Gurbani Kirtan to that of an art form.

Dr Jagir Singh has already been involved with the formulation of music at the school level (between classes VI and XII). For some years now, he has been publishing a monthly magazine *Amrit Kirtan*. The literary work has even been influential in getting Gurbani Kirtan accepted as a diploma stream in Punjabi University, Patiala and Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar.

**[Courtesy: The Tribune
(thru Dr. Harbans Lal)]**

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Philanthropist Honoured

Sr. Manjit Singh reports from Montreal: Canada's Governor General has appointed Mr. Baljit Singh Chadha to the Queen's Privy Council of Canada. The Oath Ceremony was held at Rideau Hall (Governor General's house) in Ottawa last February. He was also appointed as a member of the Security Intelligence Review Committee (SIRC) by Prime Minister Jean Chretien.

As a member of the Privy Council, Mr. Chadha will be entitled to carry the title "honourable" for life and to the use of the initials "P.C." after his name. All Cabinet ministers are appointed to the Queen's Privy Council in addition to other persons of distinction chosen by the Prime Minister as a special form of honour. Mr. Chadha will be the first non-politician of Asian origin to be named to the Privy Council.

Established in 1984, SIRC is composed of three to five members of the Queen's Privy Council and is responsible for assuring that CSIS uses its powers judiciously.

This appointment is one of the most prestigious, especially after 9/11. Mr. Chadha will be the first Indo-Canadian and Asian-Canadian to join SIRC.

Mr. Baljit Singh Chadha of Montreal, Quebec, is a prominent Sikh member of the Indo-Canadian community in Canada. Mr. Chadha was born in Bombay, completed his school education from Don Bosco High School Bombay and did his B.Sc. from St. Xavier's College, Bombay. He came to Canada in 1973, at the age of 21 for higher studies in Business Management, and in 1976 created Balcorp Limited, one of Canada's successful trading houses.

He has worked unstintingly to promote understanding and harmonious relations between South Asians and the rest of the Canadian community. Mr. Chadha has been personally responsible for starting the Canadian Sikh Council. He has also been very active in benevolent and philanthropic causes.

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Sikhs Protest Australian Documentary: Screening of racially damaging movie: "The Jury"

Sdni Ranjit Kaur reports:

The Australian Sikh community has been outraged at the screening of the movie serial "The Jury" by Australian Channel 7 in April/May 2003.

In the documentary, a 15-year-old Sikh boy is shown to have murdered a schoolmate using a *kirpan* in violation of the strict code of his religion. The kirpan is a fundamental article of the Sikh faith.

Further, the Sikhs have been alluded to as being fanatical and extremist, "Sikhism is a violent religion" and its followers "love fighting". It deliberately depicts Sikh values inaccurately with intent to harm the image of the community.

These misrepresentations are likely to incite racial hatred, bigotry, prejudice and religious intolerance against the Sikhs, when peace, tolerance and goodwill are sorely needed in the world in light of current world events.

Screening of this movie on the part of Channel 7 is an act of insensitivity and may cause irreparable damage to inter-community relations. The company must take the full blame for any untoward acts that the screening would cause against the Sikhs.

Please give your support for this Petition on:

<http://www.petitiononline.com/thejury/petition.html>

[Petition initiated by Victorian Sikhs]

