

### **Winner all the way**



Kolkata boy, Jasvinder Singh Bath never thought he could write. But today he is one of the four winners of the India Screenwriting Workshop, organised by the British Council, Saregama and Eleenora Images. The event that was held in Goa recently has awarded Bath a seed grant worth Rs. 1,00,000. An alumnus of St. Xavier's College, Kolkata, Bath worked with an ad filmmaker in the city.

After shifting to Mumbai in 2004, Bath assisted directors such as Chandra Prakash Dwivedi and Ashwini Choudhury. "But my family encouraged me to write. They convinced me that I had it in me. I was with the the Film Writers Association and started writing a script," says Bath, who was told about India Screenwriting Workshop by a friend. "Ten people were short listed from all over India. I was one of them," he says. With Sabrina Dhawan, writer of Mira Nair's film Monsoon Wedding and associated professor in screenwriting at the Tisch School of Arts, and Paromita Vohra, writer of 'Khamosh Pani' and visiting faculty for scriptwriting at Sophiya College, Mumbai, leading the seven-day workshop as principle mentors, the process was an enriching one for Bath.

"We had individual as well as group sessions. Filmmakers Abbas Tyrewala and Vishal Bhardwaj were guest mentors," says Bath. "I was lucky my script had flaws as it gave an opportunity to work on them. We concentrated on script concerns and exchanged ideas," he adds. The participants had to pitch their stories to director Shekhar Kapoor. "Kapoor advised each one of us. He told me, "Never lose the craziness in your writing," says Bath, still dazed from the experience. The winners have to turn their scripts into screenplays and make a video clip to show the industry biggies. "My script is a comedy set in a jail. This is a great platform," he says.

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### **EEOC Visits Dallas Gurdwara to Raise Awareness among Sikhs on employment Discrimination in USA**

USA's Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) visited Dallas (Texas) Gurdwara Singh Sabha last January in an effort to educate the Sikh community about employment discrimination, and to provide strategies to prevent, address, and contest discriminatory practices. Approximately 500 people were in attendance, listening as EEOC officials explained the many facets of workplace discrimination. The EEOC highlighted many of the issues Sikhs face at the workplace, and explained ways to counter them. Representing the EEOC were Belinda F. McCallister and Beverly Squire, both EEOC Investigators, and Michael Fetzer, Director of the EEOC Regional Office in Dallas.

The EEOC is a federal agency working to end employment discrimination within the United States, primarily by reviewing and litigating cases on behalf of employees who are victims of workplace discrimination.

In addition, the EEOC made a presentation informing the congregation of their rights in the workplace, detailing discrimination regarding hiring, pay raises, and promotions. EEOC representatives also discussed what to do if discrimination occurs and how to seek redress. Brochures and pamphlets were also distributed to the attendees, covering many of the issues in the presentation.

According to Harpreet Singh, Legal Director of UNITED SIKHS, "The EEOC is collaborating with UNITED SIKHS to create educational programs to inform the EEOC staff regarding discriminatory practices that the Sikh community encounters, and to instruct the Sikhs about their rights in the workplace." Commenting on the collaborative effort, Fetzer stated, "We are looking forward to working with the Sikh community and we thank UNITED SIKHS for the opportunity to speak and to learn about the Sikh faith." In an effort to create a better dialogue and understanding of the Sikh faith and community, UNITED SIKHS have been requested to present a seminar about Sikhism at the Dallas EEOC office, going into detail about the turban and other Sikh articles of faith. "We appreciate the hospitality displayed by the Sikhs in allowing us to come and address their community. This has been an educational experience for us, and we hope to use this information to help Sikh Americans arm themselves against workplace discrimination," McCallister stated. An initiative is underway to inform employers and employees about the Sikh religion, the significance of the Sikh articles of faith, and the rights of Sikhs in the workplace.

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### **Sikhism as a Sovereign Religion:**

#### **Sr. Tarlochan Singh, MP's Bill on Constitutional Amendment falls through**

In a typical instance of majoritarian rule, the Rajya Sabha Member Sr. Tarlochan Singh's 'private' Constitutional Amendment Bill was allowed to lapse in April last. The Bill sought to de-link Sikhism (as well as Buddhism) from the 'inclusive' term of 'Hinduism' in Art. 25 of India's Constitution.

The relevant Art. 25, Exp. II reads: 'In subclause (b) of clause (2), the reference to Hindus shall be construed as including a ref. to persons professing the Sikh, Jain or Buddhist religion....'

[In this context readers may recall the article by Sr. Tarlochan Singh in SR: April 2006. - Ed. SR]

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### **Vancouver Mayor joins Vaisakhi Celebrations**



It is a matter of great pride for Sikh Indo-Canadians that Mr. Sam Sullivan, Mayor of the beautiful city of Vancouver, joined Vaisakhi Celebration last April.

As in the past, the Vancouver Mayor gave a meaningful speech, in flawless Punjabi on the auspicious occasion of Vaisakhi Nagar Kirtan on April 19, celebrating the creation of the Khalsa. He received applause, in *Jaikaras*, by the huge congregation at Gurdwara Khalsa Diwan Society.

The Mayor wore a blue turban, with embroidered Kurta-pajama, for this special event.

Addressing the congregation, including BC Premier Gordon Campbell and other political dignitaries, the Mayor said, " On behalf of Vancouver City and the members of City Council, I extend my warmest greetings to Gurdwara Khalsa Diwan Society and the entire community on the occasion of Vaisakhi and the creation of Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh Ji on this day. Today I am very glad to see a gathering of thousands of people belonging to different communities on the auspicious occasion of Vaisakhi Nagar Kirtan. I am very delighted to know that by creating Khalsa on Vaisakhi Day Guru

Gobind Singh Ji gave the message of love, service, high spiritedness and equality to the whole world. Guru Gobind Singh has said, it is only through love that we can obtain God. Treat the whole human race as one. The Indo-Canadians have made great contribution towards the progress of Canada. I am confident that, with mutual love and cooperation, we can all the more glorify the name of Vancouver and Canada in the world. Whenever I get time, I try to learn Gurmat and Punjabi. Gian Singh Kotli is my teacher. I pray to Waheguru to bless all with high spiritedness and mutual love."  
[for any information contact Gian Singh Kotli 604 5027151 ]

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### **'Aasra?': A New Punjabi-English Magazine in USA**

The USA-based Sikhism.com and 'Aasra' Magazine have agreed to pool their resources in order to share the beauty and depth of *the Sikh faith* with a wider audience. *Aasra* Magazine is a Punjabi/English bimonthly, distributed free throughout Washington state (USA) by community businesses, places of worship, and public library systems. A variety of topics, such as poetry, public events, and general interest subjects are covered.

Selected articles from 'Aasra' Magazine are available free of charge on the World Wide Web at <http://www.sikhism.com/aasra>

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### **Britain's 'United Sikhs' Up-hold Human Rights**

Inspired by the Khalsa, UNITED SIKHS is working globally with various government agencies, NGOs, and individuals to fight against inequality, wherever discriminatory practices arise, and encourages you to come forth if you have been discriminated against. UNITED SIKHS recognizes religious freedom as an essential human right and continues to struggle against discriminatory practices, such as the ban against ostensible religious symbols in France, against Sarika Singh's inability to wear her *kara* (a steel bangle that is carried as an article of faith) to school in the United Kingdom, and in Canada, where Baljinder Singh Badesha is not allowed to wear his *dastaar* (Sikh turban) unhindered while operating a motorcycle. In the United States, UNITED SIKHS actively advocates against hate crimes, participating in preventative efforts as well as working directly with governmental organizations, to ensure that justice is served for victims of hate crimes. In close collaboration with various governmental agencies such as the Department of Justice, Department of Homeland Security (with National Incident Management System membership), Transportation Security Administration, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, UNITED SIKHS continues to fight discrimination against Sikhs and others in the United States. **As a grassroots organization, UNITED SIKHS relies on your financial and moral**

**support to continue its efforts to advocate for human rights.**

In the spirit of the Khalsa, UNITED SIKHS believes in empowering individuals and groups to help them attain their full potential and become active participants in society. Empowerment occurs largely through education, training, and community development projects. UNITED SIKHS aims to encourage people to participate in the decision-making processes in their local community as well as in the international arena.

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**1984: Rehabilitation of Victim Families**

The information below is in response to Sr. Tarlochan Singh, MP (Rajya Sabha)'s unstarred question 2554 for 16.4.2008 regarding progress of the 'Rehabilitation Package' announced for victims of 1984 anti-sikh riots.

As per information available with Home Ministry, the concerned state governments have settled, as many as 27,916 claims, thereby providing relief to eligible claimants, as per provisions of the 'Rehabilitation Package' announced by the Prime Minister on 16.01.06: The amounts disbursed under the above-mentioned package by the concerned state governments are as follows:

**Name of State Amount disbursed**

GNCT of Delhi	Rs.130,62,44,500
Bihar	Rs.2,26,72,533
Chattisgarh	Rs.1,59,16,644
Haryana	Rs.6,46,72,215
Himachal Pradesh	Rs.1,90,83,192
Jammu & Kashmir	Rs.1,54,51,000
Jharkhand	Rs.12,68,08,268
Madhya Pradesh	Rs.14,06,29,557
Punjab	Rs. 237,43,59,997
Uttar Pradesh	Rs.10,26,49,342

- Courtesy: Sr. Tarlochan Singh, MP

