

## **“United Sikhs” triumph in USA: Kirpan is allowed**

Washington: Sikh students enrolled in 61 schools run by the National Heritage Academies in the USA are allowed to carry a *kirpan*, a symbol of their faith, subject to certain restrictions, said a statement issued by the United Sikhs.

*[The Statesman: Sat. 26 Sept. 2009]*

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## **MP Sufi Muslims Remember Sheikh Farid**

In Madhya Pradesh, the Muslim Tehwar Committee organised a rambunctious, night-long function for Shab-e-Baraat. An event last summer at the Dargah of Baba Fareed in Bhopal witnessed prominent Sikhs from the local Gurdwara Prabandhak Samiti lending a helping hand.

The protagonists of Sufism are having to painstakingly explain that their devotion at a Sufi shrine is ‘*Ehteraam*,’ not *Ibadat*, as the latter is reserved solely for the Almighty. Likewise, under the pressure of assault on their very identity as Muslims, they have set out lucid do’s and don’ts on issues like idol-worship, one reason why even many Chistiyas among Muslims don’t visit the shrine of Sai Baba in Shirdi any more. Luckily Sikhism also does not approve of idol worship.

*[Based on a Report in India Today]*

## **Malaysian govt wakes up to Sikh Issues**

Out of the 1,00,000 Sikhs settled in Malaysia during British rule, as many as 28,000 live in Perak state. The community has produced many leaders in the field of politics, business, education and entertainment. Assuring the Sikh leaders, chief minister Youn said he would arrange a meeting with chief minister Zambry Abdul Kadir in order to brief him personally on the issue.

The incidence of relative poverty and drug abuse among youth and single mothers from Sikh community settled in Malaysia’s Perak state have surprised Malaysian authorities, who seem to be finally waking up to the challenge. In a recent communication, Chinese affairs adviser to Perak’s *menteri besar* (chief minister) Chang Ko Youn said, attention to community’s problem was “long overdue”. The general impression among Malaysians is that Sikhs are successful people who do not have socio-economic problems,” Youn said, adding that the general perception does not hold water and people need to be made aware.

Representatives of nine Sikh organizations presented their case under the banner of Union of Perak Sikh Organizations (UPSO). Meanwhile, UPSO chairman Dheer Singh said Sikhs had been ‘suffering in silence’ for a long time as the community lacked political representation. **“For over 50 years, Sikhs have been neglected by those in power. I hope things will move in a positive direction now. The perception that Sikhs do not need help must be discarded.** We need urgent attention and help,” Dheer was quoted as saying.

“That briefing was an eye-opener,” Youn said. “The areas where assistance will be extended: (a) ‘substance abuse problems’ among youth, (b) welfare aid to poor families and single mothers, (c) Punjabi as a medium of education, (d) sports development, and (e) allocation for gurdwara sahib,” Malaysian daily *The News Straits Times* reported.

[Courtesy: *Times of India*]

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## **Guru Granth Sahib volume desecrated in Sind Protest & Mourning in Pakistan**

On September 5, 2009 some unidentified miscreants set fire to the holy book of Sikhs in a Dharamsal: “Guru Nanak Darbar” at Kandhkot, in the northern district of Sind province, according to a Karanchi report.

**The act caused panic among the Hindus and Sikhs throughout Sind. The Pakistan Hindu Foundation called for a three-day mourning against the incident, after which the Hindu community observed a shut down in different districts of the province.**

The Pakistan Minister for Minorities’ Affairs has announced: “the culprits would not be forgiven at any cost and the Sindh government would soon put these miscreants behind bars.” Addressing an emergency press conference in the Sindh Secretariat with minority MPAs, Saleem Khurshed Khokhar, Pitamber Sewani and others, Kohistani condemned the incident and said that these criminals wanted to create problems for the religious minorities. The Sindh government assured the Hindus, Sikhs and other religious minorities that they would be protected at every level.

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## **India’s Railway Board has a New Chairman**

A graduate of the University of Roorkee (now IIT/Roorkee), SS Khurana, the incoming chairman of the Railway Board, has vast experience gained through his stints at various railway zones in the country. As the top technocrat of India’s vast complex of railways, he is responsible for modernizing the system, that includes electrification of major grids connecting metros.

It will be recalled that independent India’s first chairman of Railways was the trail-blazer Sardar Karnail Singh, till mid-1950’s. His elder brother became the first Sikh member of the US Congress during Dwight D Eisenhower’s Presidency.

