

## State of the Nation

### Operation Parakram: No war, and 1,847 soldiers dead !

Subedar Surinder Singh is a face behind a piece of statistic. The statistic is 1.847 – the number of casualties in the Indian Army's western and northern sectors from December 2001 to October 2002.

Dressed in grieving all-white, Subedar Surinder Singh's widow accepted the Ashoka Chakra, the medal of honour, on his behalf from the President earlier this year.

It was revealed in a reply in Parliament last April, six months after the mobilisation was called off, that there were 1,847 casualties in a military exercise lasting a little over 300 days. The exercise – Operation Parakram – has been neither discussed or debated in Parliament.

Both government and Opposition have an unstated agreement that it will not be analysed publicly. The ostensible reason for such silence is fear that public knowledge of major military activity can compromise security.

**Surinder Singh, a soldier with the 3 Sikh battalion, is dead. He was killed “for a pre-eminent act of valour of the most conspicuous bravery and self-sacrifice” in Rajouri sector of Jammu and Kashmir on March 3 last year. He had taken the full blast of a grenade on his body.**

It bears repetition – 1.847 casualties. In the 1999 Kargil war, the number of casualties was less than 600. In his written reply to the Rajya Sabha, ex defence minister George Fernandes would not state how many exactly were killed and how many injured. Nor would he describe the circumstances or explain what led to such high figures.

In the war on Iraq, the total number of American casualties so far is estimated to be around 500. There is no count available on the total number of civilian casualties in Iraq but press reports in the West quote figures ranging from 2,000 to 2,600. The Americans mounted a special commando operation to rescue Private Jessica Lynch from a hospital in Najaf at the peak of the war.

A recent report by the Indian army puts the “kill ratio” of soldiers at 1:5, that is, one soldier lost for every 5 militants killed in Jammu and Kashmir. Another set of replies in Parliament said that 982 Indian soldiers were killed and 2,507 injured in counter-insurgency operations in Jammu and Kashmir in three years from January 2000.

[Courtesy: *The Telegraph*]

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## Turban ban

France has assured India that the issue of ban on religious symbols in French public schools that includes turban worn by Sikh students would be sorted out in a manner responsive to the sensitivities of the Sikh community. The assurance was given when national security adviser Mr. JN Dixit raised the issue at the “highest levels” during his two-day visit to France from 23 August.

[Courtesy: *The Statesman*]

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## **Vatican warning to women against Muslim marriages**

Vatican City, May 14 (Reuters): The Vatican warned Catholic women today to think hard before marrying a Muslim and urged Muslims to show more respect for human rights, gender equality and democracy. Calling women “the least protected member of the Muslim family”, it spoke of the “bitter experience” western Catholics had with Muslim husbands, especially if they married outside the Islamic world and later moved to husband’s country of origin.

The document said the Church discouraged marriages between believers in traditionally Catholic countries and non-Christian migrants. It hoped Muslims would show “a growing awareness that fundamental liberties, the inviolable rights of the person, the equal dignity of man and woman, the democratic principle and the healthy lay character of the state are principles that cannot be surrendered”.

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## **“*Thus Sayeth Gurbani*” Gurbani Conceptual Dictionary in English: A must for youth**

A Conceptual Reference Dictionary called, “THUS SAYETH GURBANI” has been compiled by Pritpal Singh Bindra of Canada after a hard labour of more than three years. This 500 page hardcover book was first published by the Guru Gobind Singh Study Circle, Ludhiana in 1998. It contains nearly 700 conceptual headings, spread over more than ten thousand quotations from Sri Guru Granth Sahib. It was awarded the Akali Phoola Singh Book Award by the prestigious Academy of Sikh Religion and Culture, Patiala, Punjab.

Now, with the help of his son, Maninderpal Singh, Mr. Bindra, has developed the same into a CD. The Index contains about 700 headings and just a click takes one to the quotation. The CD is distributed free, but Mr. Bindra expects advance payment of out-of-pocket expenses [e.g. cost of CD, postage and packing which would vary from country to country (e.g. for Canada just \$6)].

Personal callers in Mississauga and Toronto, etc. can telephone Mr. Bindra at 905 569 0515; it will cost just \$4.

The book, is also available at Amazon.com. For comments, please do visit [[www.bindra.net](http://www.bindra.net)]

**- Surjit Kaur Bindra**