

## **Sikh Museum 'made in Calcutta'**

Granted it's not science, but it was a challenge to our technological expertise. The government had entrusted us with the job because we best knew how to do it, asserted director-general of National Council of Science Museums (NCSM) Ingit Mukherjee.

He was referring to the Maharaja Ranjit Singh Panorama, recently inaugurated by the Punjab chief minister in Amritsar.

The permanent visual documentation on the 'Lion of Punjab' was conceptualised and designed in Salt Lake by the NCSM. The two storeyed cylindrical museum, 39 m in diameter has been installed near Maharaja Ranjit Singh's summer palace, at Rambagh Heritage Garden in Amritsar. The Centre provided Rs. 5 Crore for the project.

The shape of the museum is meant to accentuate the effect of the exhibits. The same techniques had been used for the Kurukshetra Panorama Science Centre near Delhi. The NCSM also designed and installed the museum in 2001.

"The focus of the Kurukshetra facility is on science, while Maharaja Ranjit Singh Panorama recreates different historical episodes. In a way, this was more difficult because there were fewer finites or givens," pointed out Mukherjee.

The prime attraction of the panorama is the 100x12 m painting depicting the six major battles fought by the Maharaja. A 13-m platform on the first floor serves as the viewing deck.

The master drawings were made on a 60x6 ft canvas by a group of 10 artists over 15 months. Singh's victories in Lahore, Kangra, Attock, Multan, Kashmir and Naushera are shown. The image was digitally enlarged about seven times and printed on vinyl sheets before installation.

"The entire work, including digital printing, was done in Calcutta," stated Mukherjee. "Twenty sculptors worked on the diorama display and fiberglass models for 16 months."

On the ground floor of the museum, there are more paintings and dioramas on episodes form the life of the Lion of Punjab.

[Courtesy: *The Telegraph*]

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## **Pakistan to recruit Sikhs in Police!**

After the Pakistan army got its first Sikh officer, the Pakistani Punjab government has decided in principle to recruit Sikh youths in police.

This was disclosed by Mr. Harwinder Singh Sarna, president, Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC) who recently visited Pakistan.

Earlier, a Pakistani Sikh, Harcharan Singh (19), hailing from Nankana Sahib, had hit the headlines when he was commissioned in the army as an officer.

So much so that the Jathedar, Akal Takht, Giani Joginder Singh Vedanti, had congratulated Harcharan Singh for his commissioning in the Pakistan army and asked him to serve his country with dedication.

On paper, there is no bar on the minorities in Pakistan from joining the military or police but neither a Hindu nor a Sikh could get selected for the army, para-military forces or police services since 1947. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations, many Christians have served in the army.

Mr. Saran said the commitment to recruit Sikh youths in Pakistan's Punjab Police was given by Mr. Pervez Elahi, chief minister, during his meeting with him in Lahore.

[Courtesy: *The Statesman*]

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## **Respect The Turban A Plea to the Asian Age**

Sir, - I am an avid reader of The Asian age and I think Sudhir Tilang's cartoons are generally superb. However, I must protest his representation of Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh. While as a cartoonist he is free to play with the Prime Minister's face, why does he have to show the Prime minister as a bald man in every cartoon? Also he persists in drawing Dr. Singh's turban in a manner that it seems like a woman's *Jooda* (hairdo). As a Sikh I strongly feel about this. The turban is our religious attire and due respect should be given to it.

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### **Sikh protests spread beyond Jaipur**

Hundreds of Sikhs went on the rampage in Jaipur on Wednesday to protest the trimming of a Sikh boy's hair by a group of students. Enraged Sikhs pelted stones, ransacked the Gandhinagar police station and damaged police vehicles in Jaipur, while in Punjab, Sikh groups forced a shutdown in several towns.

Indrapreet Singh, a student of Class XII, was abducted on Monday, 21st August, allegedly by a group of boys jealous of his affair with a girl.

"Indrapreet was stopped by two motorcyclists and then abducted in a Maruti car. He was severely beaten up and his hair was trimmed by the students. He was then dropped in front of his school gate," police said.

Demanding arrest of the culprits, Sikhs held demonstrations at various points in the Pink City. A senior police official said, "In the afternoon, a group of people was marching towards Transport Nagar to forcibly close shops, and we tried to stop them. They started pelting stones at us and in the process some of our vehicles were damaged," a police source said. The protesters damaged some hand-drawn carts and forced traders to shut their shops, the source added.

The investigating officer in the case said station house officer Ramdeo and sub-inspector Rajkumar of Gandhinagar police station were withdrawn from active duty and sent to the police lines for negligence in dealing with the case.

"So far, no arrests have been made and we are still looking for the culprits," an officer said, adding, "The situation as of now is under control and we have deputed additional forces to ward off any untoward incident."

[Courtesy: *Times of India*]

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### **Storm in Parliament over forced haircut**

Both Houses of Parliament witnessed an uproar today over the forced haircut of a Sikh boy in Jaipur, with members cutting across party lines expressing concern over the incident. The home minister, Mr. Shivraj Patil, assured agitated members in the Rajya Sabha that government would take note of the incident, which had hurt religious sentiments.

Raising the issue during Zero Hour, the BJP leader, Mr. HS Ahluwalia, said the incident was an insult to the entire Sikh community and sought immediate action. As members joined Mr. Ahluwalia in condemning the incident, Mr. Patil appealed to people not to fall prey to the nefarious designs of some quarters to divide society by whipping up religious passions. He assured that strict action was being taken and expressed confidence in Rajasthan state

government to deal with the issue.

In the Lok Sabha, the incident triggered a clash between the BJP-Akali Dal and the Congress with the two sides charging each other of “poor” record on the issue of protection of minorities. Both the Congress and the BJP attacked each other for being “communalist”.

[Courtesy: *The Statesman*]

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### **Main accused held**

Arjun Meena, main accused in the trimming of a Sikh student’s hair, was arrested from Delhi airport on Thursday morning. He was nabbed by a team of Rajasthan police soon after his arrival from Mumbai,” Vishal Bansal, Jaipur south SP said.

Six cases are pending against Arjun in the Sanganer police station, he added.

A love triangle was reportedly behind the abduction of the Sikh youth, Indrapreet. The Class XII student had been threatened by Arjun, who is a commerce graduate and the son of a property dealer, in June. Indrapreet’s father had reported this to the Gandhinagar police. However, police failed to take the matter seriously.

During his interrogation, Arjun denied his involvement and said he ran away because his name figured in the FIR and the Sikh community was looking to punish him.

The forcible haircut issue was raised in both Houses of Parliament on Thursday, with home minister Shivraj Patil assuring agitated Rajya Sabha members that the government would take note of such incidents hurting religious sentiments.

In the Lok Sabha, the issue triggered a clash between BJP-Akali Dal and Congress. Both sides targeted each other over their “poor” record on the issue of protection of minorities. The matter was raised by Congress’ Madhusudan Mistry, who said BJP-ruled states had a poor track record in protecting minorities. BJP members rose in protest and the Speaker asked for the remarks to be expunged. The issue finally forced two adjournments in the Lower House.

Meanwhile, Sikh groups continued their protests across Punjab and also in Delhi and Mumbai. Protesters forced a shutdown in Amritsar and brought parts of Ludhiana to a standstill.

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### **Hockey Star Sandeep Singh shot at**

The Indian hockey team last August, suffered a serious setback ahead of their World Cup preparation, when penalty corner specialist Sandeep Singh was “accidentally” shot in the back today on board the Delhi bound Shatabdi Express.

The ace drag flicker was on his way to Delhi from Chandigarh when the pistol of an ASI of railway Protection Force went off accidentally near the Kurukshetra railway station.

Sandeep was rushed to the LNJP Hospital in Kurukshetra, before being transferred to the PGIMER Hospital in Chandigarh where he underwent a surgery to remove the bullet. He was out of danger after surgery.