

Sikhs to take turban issue to EU court

Taking the turban issue to legal course a Bristol-based firm of lawyers has been engaged to contest the turban case in the European Court of Human Right at Strasbourg in France. According to Dr. MS Rahi, an advocate of Punjab and Haryana High Court, the petition has been prepared on behalf of Mr. Ranjit Singh, an NRI settled in France. Lawyers would also extend help in contesting the case.

Mr. Ranjit Singh's welfare allowance was stopped by the French government as he had refused to get photographed without wearing a turban for the issuance of an identity card there. In France, Sikhs have to remove their turbans to get photographed for the issuance of the identity cards by the authorities concerned.

Dr. Rahi, who had gone to France for two weeks, said that the preliminary hearing of the cause would be before a single judge. Later the case will be referred to the double Bench. He said that certain additional documents regarding Sikh history, culture and religion had been attached with the petition.

He said a book written by him on the turban issue would also be part of the petition. Dr. Rahi, informed that copies of the book were sent to France by the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara management committee, which had helped him get it published.

Dr. Rahi said that disunity among the Sikh organisations and the divergent views of various Panthic organisations on the turban issue had become a stumbling block in the legal battle. It was unfortunate that these organisations were not united even on an issue, which was related to the entire community.

He said there was also a problem of finance. A lot of money was required to contest the case in French and European courts. "During our stay in France, we distributed literature on the Sikh religion, the turban and related social and political issues, among the members of European Parliament and opinion leaders of France," he added.

[Courtesy: *The Statesman*]

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Thousands of Americans welcome Sikhs at the US Independence Day parade in Washington

Washington - 60 Sikh men, women and children performing Gatka - Sikh martial art performance- enthralled the spectators at the US Independence Day parade. Young Sikhs, mostly born and brought up in America, took the center stage in the national festivities marking America's Independence on the streets stretching from Capitol to the White House. Swelling crowd of 300,000 spectators hailed the Sikh group with loud clapping and approving 'ye' sound as the group passed through the parade.

Gursharan Singh, leader of the Group said, "This was a great chance to show that Sikhs are part of the mainstream America and that we are equally joyous in the July 4th celebrations. This provided an opportunity for our youngsters to feel pride in being Sikh Americans."

This was the first time Sikhs participated in this national parade which was witnessed by the enthusiastic audience who traveled long distances to witness this annual ritual in the nation's capital

A float carrying a heading 'Sikhs of America' was certainly drawing the attention of the audience. This float had Rajinder Pal Singh, a tabla Maestro from Guru Gobind Singh Foundation, playing tabla constantly with the beat of the Religious Punjabi songs which certainly had the American audience waiving their bodies. The float also carried the

message 'celebrating 100 years of presence and patriotism in America', reminding the audience that Sikhs had been loyal citizens of America from last 100 years.

Dr. Rajwant Singh, Chairman of the Sikh Council on Religion and Education, was on the float, greeting the audience with 'Happy Independence Day' occasionally on the microphone on behalf of the Sikh group. He was delighted with the entire program and said, "This is the opportune time that we let all Americans know that we are equally contributing to make America strong. We also want to express our gratitude for the freedom that we all enjoy as citizens of this great country. This will also educate many more thousands about the rich heritage of the Sikhs."

Didar Singh Bains, the well-known Sikh businessman from Yuba City, who was on the float greeting audiences, said, "I am so glad that finally Sikhs are part of this large mosaic and our participation is very good for the entire community and it will strengthen our roots."

Amrit Kaur of GGSF, said, "Sikh men and women walking alongside American bands and floats celebrated not only the 4th of July but also displayed their distinct identity that drew hostility after the events of 9/11. This is our way of asserting that we are Americans and we will continue to educate others about ourselves."

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Sardar Charan Singh (1912-2005)

Jorhat (Assam)-based Sr. Charan Singh was a steady source of Gurmat wisdom and true devotion. Respected through-out North East, the Sikh *sangat* always found in him a guide and friend. The "Bharat Engineering Works", which he established by sheer grit and innovative skill, has spawned other enterprises, including 'Assam Valley Builders' that is run by his son, Sr. Avtar Singh. The *Antim Ardas* for the peace of the dear departed was held at Gurdwara Ramgarhia Sangat, Jorhat, on Aug. 07, 2005.

