

**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SIKH ADVISORY BOARD
FOR THE PERIOD NOVEMBER 2011 – OCTOBER 2012**

1. Appointment of Board Members

- 1.1 The following members were appointed to the Sikh Advisory Board (SAB or Board) by the Minister for Community Development, Youth & Sports (“MCYS”) for the period from November 2011 to October 2012.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Institution</u>
Mr Harjit Singh	Central Sikh Gurdwara Board
Mr Pritpal Singh	Khalsa Dharmak Sabha
Mr Sukhbir Singh	Khalsa Dharmak Sabha
Mr Harbans Singh	Khalsa Jiwan Sudhar Sabha
Mr Bhopinder Singh	Government Representative
Mr Malminderjit Singh	Government Representative
Dr Narinder Kaur	Government Representative
Mr Surjit Singh	Government Representative
Mr Rashbar Singh	Gurdwara Sahib Yishun
Mr Charanjit Singh	Pardesi Khalsa Dharmak Diwan
Mr Harjit Singh	Pardesi Khalsa Dharmak Diwan
Mr Darshan Singh Bajaj	Sri Guru Nanak Sat Sang Sabha
Mr Jaj Raj Singh Bal	Sri Guru Nanak Sat Sang Sabha
Mr Manjit Singh	Sri Guru Singh Sabha
Mr Ranjit Singh	Sri Guru Singh Sabha

2. Meetings of the Board

- 2.1 The Board met quarterly as scheduled on 12 January 2012, 15 May 2012, 7 August 2012 and 16 October 2012.

3. Major Issues Addressed by the Board

3.1 The Sikh Inmates’ Issue

- 3.1.1 Sikh leaders were briefed on the Sikh Inmates’ issue by SAB chairman on 21 January 2012. He pointed out that, at the request of the Board, the Prisons Department had carried out an investigation on allegations made that 3 Sikh inmates had their hair cut by the Prisons authorities. The findings of the investigations revealed that the allegations were untrue.
- 3.1.2 The Sikh leadership was satisfied with these findings of the investigations. However, on the policy of the Prisons Department with regard to shorn Sikh inmates, they felt that:

- i. All inmates should be given an opportunity to rehabilitate and therefore shorn Sikhs should be allowed to keep their form, that is with uncut hair and beard, as part of their spiritual rehabilitation.
 - ii. There should be room for each request to be viewed independently and opportunities given to individual Sikhs to keep unshorn hair.
- 3.1.3 On 20 June 2012, the SAB issued a press release to the Times of India in response to an article in their paper, which alleged that the Singapore Prisons Service had cut the hair of a particular Sikh inmate and that the Board was complicit in this or supported it. The Board was deeply concerned by the allegation, which was untrue, and issued a press release to correct this misleading report. The copy of the press release is at Appendix I.

4. Other Issues Handled by the Board

- 4.1 At the request of the Sikh leadership, the government had identified a parcel of land in the western part of Singapore for use as a Gurdwara and ancilliary facilities. Details of the site were presented to the Sikh leadership on 21 January 2012.
- 4.2 Officials from the Central Sikh Gurdwara Board (CSGB) and the SAB met the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and senior management of the School of Hospitality and Resort Management (SHRM) in April 2012 to voice their deep concern at the cutting of the hair of a female Sikh student, enrolled in the school, by one of their teachers. The CEO acknowledged that the teacher was wrong in cutting the hair of the student and took appropriate action to discipline the teacher. As a follow-up, SHRM also invited SAB and CSGB members to engage their staff in May 2012, to among other things, give them a briefing on Sikh values, traditions and religious practices.
- 4.3 The National Environment Agency (NEA) wrote to the Board on 24 April 2012 that a resident had complained about “noise” being emitted from the Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara. After conferring with the Gurdwara officials, the Board informed the NEA that the Gurdwara’s darbar hall was totally air-conditioned and always had its speakers facing inwards to minimize the emission of any sound. NEA noted this explanation.

5. Interaction with Sikh Institutions and other Organisations

- 5.1 The Board chairman and secretary attended a meeting with the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) and MCYS officials on addressing the space needs of religious organisations on 25 November 2011. They informed the agencies that Sikh Gurdwaras had moved beyond being purely places of worship to being community nodes, and would therefore welcome additional space to provide for computer rooms, playgrounds, parking spaces and other ancilliary facilities.

- 5.2 The Board chairman attended the Taoist Federation book launch on 8 January 2012.
- 5.3 Some members of the Board met up with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) officials on 20 January 2012 to finalise the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the carrying of the Kirpan by Amritdhari Sikhs. Board members present made some amendments to the draft presented by the MHA. The key points in the SOP were that the blade of the kirpan should not be more than 6 inches long, that it should be carried discreetly beneath the clothes and that an oral declaration should be made when clearing immigration that a kirpan was being carried on the body of the person. The draft amended SOP was presented and approved by Sikh leaders at a meeting held on 21 January 2012 at the Central Sikh Temple.
- 5.4 Chairman and some members of the Board attended the Taoist Federation's inter-faith dinner cum prayer for world peace on 16 March 2012 at the Singapore Exposition Hall. The President of Singapore, Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam, was the Guest of Honour.
- 5.5 Singapore Indian Development Association (SINDA) officials, led by its CEO Mr Raja Segar, gave a presentation to Board members on 15 May 2012 on the educational challenges and consequent solutions put in place to upgrade the academic status of all Indian students. Board members suggested that SINDA officials should work with the Singapore Sikh Education Foundation (SSEF) and Sikh Welfare Council (SIWEC) to promote the importance of quality education among Sikh students and parents in Singapore.
- 5.6 The Jain Community organized the Harmony Games on 26 May 2012 at the Maha Bodhi School. The Harmony Games is an initiative of the National Steering Committee on Racial and Religious Harmony, which has the objective of bringing together groups from various races and religions to mingle with one another, get to know each other better and to foster racial and religious harmony through sports and games. As in previous years, the Sikh community supported the Games by sending a number of participants to participate in the events. The next Games in 2013 would be organized by the Sikh community. It would be held on 20 April 2013 at the Singapore Khalsa Association. Preparations for the Games had begun in August 2012.
- 5.7 Heads of Sikh Institutions had a luncheon meeting with Mr Chan Chun Sing, Acting Minister of MCYS on 2 July 2012 at the Singapore Khalsa Association. Issues of common interest on education, youth and procreation were raised and discussed.

6. Other Matters

- 6.1 The counselling of Sikh inmates had previously been handled by Singapore Anti-Narcotics Association (SANA) Sikhs and the SIWEC. However, with the dissolution of SANA Sikhs as an organization, these responsibilities, including the counselling of

Sikh inmates and the training of counsellors, was taken over by SIWEC with effect from December 2011.

- 6.2 The Board was informed on 7 August 2012 that the Ministry of Home Affairs “does not support having Singapore Police Force uniformed officers serve as a member of a body that has nexus to religion, so as to avoid potential conflict of interest.” As a result of this directive, Mr Manjit Singh who was the Sri Guru Singh Sabha representative on the Board, and a uniform police officer, stood down from the Board.
- 6.3 One of the outcomes of the Sikh Retreat, organized by the SAB on 22 January 2011, was the setting up of the mentorship programme for Sikh undergraduates and graduates. During the period of this report, 15 mentors and mentees were matched and introductions made for them to proceed with discussions. Separately, the team working on Corporate Governance had uploaded relevant documents onto the SAB website (<http://sikhadvisoryboard.org>) that would assist Sikh institutions in performing a self-audit as well as to improve their systems. The steering committee of this group had also met with a few Sikh organizations to guide them on this self-audit process and to identify areas where they could improve on.
- 6.4 On behalf of the Sikh community, the Board issued a media statement on 6 August 2012 expressing deep sadness at the loss of innocent lives in a Gurdwara in Wisconsin, USA. It urged Sikhs all over the world to implement a rational and relevant response to this senseless act of violence and to take efforts to increase awareness and education about the faith, community and religion.
- 6.5 With effect from November 2012, the MCYS would be split into 2 Ministries - the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) and the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY). The SAB came under the purview of the MCCY from then and would be accountable to Acting Minister of MCCY Mr. Lawrence Wong.

7. Acknowledgements

- 7.1 This was another eventful as well as challenging year for the Board. The Board would like to put on record the support, encouragement, and involvement of Member of Parliament (MP) Mr. Inderjit Singh and the cooperation received from all Sikh institutions, which enabled it to perform its duties and fulfill its obligations efficiently and effectively.
- 7.2 The Board would especially like to thank the Central Sikh Gurdwara Board for its continued support, cooperation and assistance and for allowing it the use of its premises at the Silat Road Sikh Temple for its meetings.
- 7.3 Finally, the Board would also like to thank MCYS officials for their advice, assistance and support. The close cooperation and facilitation rendered by these officers made

the work of the Board that much easier to manage and handle. The Board also welcomes the opportunity to work with the new leadership and senior staff at MCCY.

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