

Annual Report of the Sikh Advisory Board for the period November 2014 to October 2015

1. Appointment of Board Members

- The following members were appointed to the Sikh Advisory Board (SAB) by the Minister of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY) for the period from November 2014 to October 2015.

Mr Jarmal Singh	Chairman, Government Representative
Mr Malminderjit Singh	Secretary, Government Representative
Dr Narinder Kaur	Government Representative
Mr Bhopinder Singh	Government Representative
Mr Dalbir Singh	Sri Guru Singh Sabha
Mr Tirlok Singh	Sri Guru Singh Sabha
Mr Pritpal Singh	Khalsa Dharmak Sabha
Mr Sukhbir Singh	Khalsa Dharmak Sabha
Mr Santa Singh	Pardesi Khalsa Dharmak Diwan
Mr Charanjit Singh	Pardesi Khalsa Dharmak Diwan
Mr Darshan Singh Bajaj	Sri Guru Nanak Sat Sangh Sabha
Mr Jaj Raj Singh Bal	Sri Guru Nanak Sat Sangh Sabha
Mr Jagdev Singh	Gurdwara Sahib Yishun
Mr Harjit Singh	Central Sikh Gurdwara Board
Mr Harbans Singh	Khalsa Jiwan Sudhar Sabha

2. Meetings of the Board

- The Board met quarterly as schedule on 13th January, 21st April, 30th June and 6th October

3. Items discussed or mentioned at the meetings

i. Issues Addressed:

- Sikh Inmates case

Commissioner Prisons invited Chairman, SAB, to seek views on keeping hair for the Sikh inmates. In the meeting, MHA reiterated that its stand remained the same as discussed earlier. The form in which the prisoner comes in and leaves will be the same with exceptions on a case-by-case basis where inmates may request to keep the hair.

- Sri Guru Nanak Satsang Sabha (Katong Gurdwara)

One of the neighbours to Katong Gurdwara lodged complaints with the relevant authorities on the Gurdwara not following guidelines on noise and other related issues. He had also acted in an aggressive manner towards the staff of the gurdwara and members of its congregation, while often inciting other neighbours against the gurdwara. The police and the inter-racial groups were alerted and worked on it for an amicable resolution. SAB was contacted by NEA to investigate the matter but Chairman, SAB, informed them that since this is a local issue, the Member of Parliament (MP) of the constituency, the gurdwara and the inter-racial groups there are best placed to resolve this local issue. Officials from Katong Gurdwara met with the MP and were advised to hire security guards to assist in keeping order around the temple. Chairman, SAB, reiterated that it was important for the temple's Committee to be aware of their unique situation as it was invariably located within a housing precinct that is multi-racial in nature. Katong Gurdwara informed the SAB that the matter had been resolved. The resident in question was given a warning by the police for causing disturbance to the neighbours. During major celebrations, the Gurdwara engaged security officers to manage the crowd and paid for a valet company to better manage traffic to take constructive steps to diffuse the situation.

- Longer Processing Time for Work Permits of Religious Staff

The Gurdwara highlighted that the process of work permits for their staff is taking a considerably longer time to be cleared by the relevant government agencies and on one occasion, whereby the permit for their incoming religious workers was significantly delayed, causing a disruption to their Sunday congregation. Other gurdwaras also expressed that they too faced longer processing and approval times for their work permit staff. The SAB Secretary informed MCCY and MOM of these delays and requested for the process to be facilitated quickly, wherever possible.

- Annual camp for kids – BAHADUR BACHEY camp

The SAB Secretary updated that Sikh Sewaks had contacted him to express their challenges in securing external venues for their Bahadur Bachey camp and they sought SAB's guidance and advice on what could be done. Board members deliberated and felt that since public spaces may not support hosting religious activities, the Bahadur

Bachey camp was much more than that and perhaps Sikh Sewaks should reflect others aspects of the camp – including leadership development, youth development and motivation – in their applications to such spaces in the future. In the meanwhile, the camps have been held at the Central Sikh Temple.

After Note: on 28th November at the SG50 YSA dinner, President YSA, Malminderjit mentioned the challenge of space for the community, including for this reason, in his speech in the presence of Prime Minister. When the Prime Minister delivered his speech, he acknowledged the request of having for more space, including for Sikh youth activities

ii. National Events

- National Day Awards 2015

There were no submissions from SAB as the notice from MCCY was too short for the SAB to consult any of the Sikh organizations for nominations. SAB had informed MCCY that such requests should be given ample notice in the future.

- Lunch with MCCY

MCCY invited the past (Surjit Singh) and present (Jarmal Singh) SAB chairmen and Secretary SAB to lunch as part of the leadership transition and also to meet the new Director for Community Relations at this lunch meet.

- Mr. Surjit Singh's Appointments

Mr Surjit Singh, former SAB Chairman, has been appointed to the Presidential Council of Minority Rights. The appointment is for a three-year term, beginning April 1 this year. The council, created in 1973, ensures that laws passed in Parliament do not discriminate against any racial or religious community. He was also appointed to the Presidential Council for Religious Harmony and as a Justice for Peace. The SAB looks towards working with Mr. Surjit in these new capacities.

- Mr. Lee Kuan Yew's Passing Away

Chairman and Secretary SAB and former Chairman, Mr. Surjit Singh, attended all the necessary proceedings during the Nation's mourning week.

- Nominations for National Day Awards 2016

The request was received from MCCY and forwarded by SAB Secretary to all Heads of Sikh Institutions. SAB had also received a request from Mr Gurdev Singh, who nominated Mr Harbans Singh s/o Puran Singh for the award. SAB had forwarded the request to President, CSGB, for consideration. The nomination has been submitted to MCCY for consideration.

iii. Strengthening Singapore's Social Cohesion

- PM's Dialogue on Terrorism

SAB attended the talk on terrorism and the current threats to all with an alert to all communities to be vigilant at all times. The various communities were also advised to work with each other in fostering closer communal bonds and weeding out the threat of terror in Singapore. Following this talk there will be a workshop for the youth and members of the Young Sikh Association were requested to attend to represent the Sikh community.

- Lecture on Hinduism organised by RSIS and HEB

SAB Chairman attended this lecture organized by the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) and the Hindu Endowments Board (HEB), where the speaker, Prof Julius Lipney, demonstrated a deep knowledge of the Hindu religion and its practices, particularly on religious respect and developing a peace order.

- Harmony Games 2015

The 2015 Harmony games were organised by the Catholics. Minister MCCY, Lawrence Wong, was the GOH. A team representing the Sikh community for football participated in the Harmony Games. As a courtesy, the SAB arranged for an ambulance service to be provided by Nightingale Nursing Home Pte Ltd.

- Racial and Religious Harmony steering committee

SAB Chairman was invited to be on the Racial and Religious Harmony Steering Committee. SAB Secretary has been invited to continue his term in the working group level.

- MUIS Dinner invitation

The dinner was attended by Chairman, SAB. The dinner talk centred on religion vis-a-vis being secular in our engagement with the community.

- TAOISM Federation dinner

Chairman and Secretary, SAB, with other members of the Sikh community attended this dinner. The GOH was the Prime Minister.

- Inter-faith and Intra faith

Chairman SAB had a meeting with MCCY officials on how various religious can strengthen intra-faith through the various channels within their communities. The past focus had been on Inter-faith. That has been established to some extent, but activities mostly involve the same group of people. There was a need to extend this. This aim is to strengthen the resilience and system of mobilisation within their own communities in preparation for 'black swan' kind of events. There was also a need to get more youth involvement in various activities. This will involve more of our Sikh youth organisations such as YSA, Sikh Sewaks and various Sikh groups in the

universities/polytechnics. There was an exhibition showcasing various religions at the Yishun MRT station during the month of July.

- ABDUL ALEEM SIDDIQUE MEMORIAL LECTURE 2015 on 3rd September at Harmony Centre, organised by MUIS

Mr Jarmal Singh, SAB Chairman, delivered the lecture on ‘The Challenge of Truthful Living in a Plural Age’.

iv. Sikh Community Events and Updates

- SG 50 publication - ‘50 SIKHS AND SINGAPORE’S NATION-BUILDING’

To celebrate SG50, YSA published a book profiling 50 Sikhs and their contributions. The names of the judging panel established by YSA were : panel chaired by Prof Tan Tai Yong and the other members are Mr Navin Pal Singh; Dr Narinder Kaur; Mr Surjit Singh and Mr Raja Segar. The book was launched by PM on 28th November 2015.

- Coordinating Council of Sikh Institutions (CCSI)

The SAB worked closely with the newly-established CCSI during the course of the year, with Chairman, SAB, invited as an observer or non-voting member of the Council. The CCSI has played an important role in coordinating the community’s efforts on key projects and issues, since its inception in 2014.

- SIKHI Conference

The conference – SINGAPORE SIKHI CONFERENCE 2015 was held on 22 and 23rd August 2015. The keynote speakers were Harinder Singh (from the US) and Prof (Dr) Arvinder Singh Chawla (from India). The papers presented were as follows and details are on the CSGB website. The next conference will be in 2017.

1. The Role of Sikhism in Youth Development
2. The Role of Sikhism in Achieving Economic Success
3. The Role of Sikhism in Gender Equality
4. The Role of Sikhism in Parenting & Family

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