

Sikhs make Guinness size statement with Blood

From page 1

"It is remarkable that the Sikh community thought of such a grand sweeping idea that not only sends a powerful message but also underlines how at the end of the day human beings are equal. A unit of blood can save the life of a child, an elderly, a low caste or a high caste," said Suzzane Able, an American photographer visiting India as a tourist who had come to the camp to witness history in the making. She was surprised to know that Sikhism does not recognize any caste. "You have told me the best thing about the community. Now I know the real significance of your motto of universal brotherhood," she said.

At a time when rest of India was busy playing Holi with colors or cow dung, the Sikh community was making a statement with this drive. 25,000 units of blood in flat 24 hours was the target, and the organizers, led from the front by Akal Purakh Ki Fauj outfit, had made sure that all mandatory requirements of the administrators of Guinness Records are fulfilled and cameras keep a record of all donors, quality checks are stringent, medical care at its best and safe blood keeping practices are followed. With this blood donation drive, the Sikhs beat the Sirsa dera's earlier effort to collect 13,000 plus units on one day.

The sheer scale of logistics was mind boggling as the camp spilled over on to two lakh square feet of makeshift tents, 700 beds divided in 14 blocks of 50 beds each, and averaging 2,500 donations in one hour. All this effort was possible, thanks to an army of 8,000 volunteers, 3000 paramedical staff and 100 doctors deployed for the camp. Army personnel from Jalandhar and Chandni Mandir were among the teams collecting units. Kiranjit Kaur had not heard of the camp and had come visiting the Takht Sahib with her parents. "I never attend the political rallies that happen at the sidelines but I was mesmerized by the idea of the camp. Me and my sister insisted



about donating blood and our parents finally agreed to stay over for the night. We have waited for six hours and hopefully our turn will come," she said. Baljinder Singh Maur said the camp has inspired him to become Amritdhari. "May be it needed this camp to bring me the Guru's blessings," he said.

The Holla Mohalla festival attracts lakhs of pilgrims from all over Punjab and the rest of the country and is the festival of truth, courage, bravery and service. The milling crowds of Sikhs who came to know of the camp added largely to the success of the effort, monitored for Guinness record purposes.

Sikh enthusiasts had come from, thanks to the massive mobilization campaign to ply blood donors, as far as Maharashtra, UP, Uttarkhand, Jammu and Kashmir and Haryana.

Jathedar of Sri Akal Takht Sahib, Giani Gurbachan Singh, and Dandami Taksal's Harnam Singh Dhumma were among the first few to donate blood to inaugurate this mega blood donation camp at the Guru Teg Bahadur college grounds that ended at 7 am Wednesday India time. Donors also included Jathedar of Takht Sri Kesgarh Sahib Giani Tarlochan Singh, former Akal Takht jathedar Prof. Manjit Singh, Punjab Minister Bikram Singh Majithia and Akali Dal leader Kiranjit Singh Kang. Jathedar of Takht Sri Kesgarh Sahib Giani Tarlochan

Singh performed the ardas as the camp began.

More than 110 blood banks from all over the country had assembled to collect blood from this camp. Special arrangements were made to airlift the donated blood to different parts of the country the same day itself. An army of people in nearby areas was marshaled to cook and serve refreshments and fruit to the donors. Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal, Akali Dal president Sukhbir Singh Badal, Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa MP, Dr. Daljit Singh Cheema who is the Akali Dal candidate from Anandpur Sahib Lok Sabha seat and a number of Punjab ministers also visited the camp.

A medical team from Poona Serological Institute Blood Bank led by Deepak Patil said their earlier best day was getting 800 units from a single camp in 2004 but this will beat all records as they are likely to get 1,500 units. Blood units were also being sent to the New Delhi airport in a specially equipped van from where these are to be flown to other states. "I do not know which human being on earth will end up getting the blood I donated, but I am sure that this is what Sarbat Da Bhala means. The land of Anandpur Sahib is truly holy," Kiranjit. Kaur said as her family members felt proud to have become the only family back home in a Ludhiana area to have donated blood on the same day.

From page 1

credit for pushing Indira Gandhi into Operation Bluestar, and Badal wants him and no one else as the Prime Minister.

At a time when the Badal Akali Dal is feverishly stating that its alliance with the saffron Hindutva right wing party BJP is not political but a meeting of the souls and that it is a relationship as good as the one between 'Nauhn-Maas' (nails and flesh), BJP's other alliance partners are waking up to a new reality. In Orissa, Navin Patnaik wanted to salvage his secular image and dumped the party even at the cost of threat to his own BJD-BJP government. It was a parting of ways after 11 years of marriage.

In Assam, the AGP has said it only has a seat adjustment with BJP and is not part of the NDA. Only in Haryana have Badal's friends Chautalas tied up with the BJP.

At the national level, the Third Front talk is becoming stronger. Senior CPI(M) leader Sitaram Yechury is trying out possibilities with Navin Patnaik, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar, TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu and BSP leader Satish Chandra Mishra. Left has often dreamed of a decisive shift in the policy direction but has repeatedly made the mistake of failing to lead from the front by setting an example.

Unlike Badals who feel comfortable in Advani company, Bihar CM and Janata Dal (United) leader Nitish Kumar is stuck between political realities, his personal dislike for BJP and survival of his government. Former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda is hyper active on Third Front issue and TRS chief K Chandrashekhara Rao and AIADMK chief J Jayalalitha seem to be still deciding.

Meanwhile, the BJP campaign remains focussed on L K Advani whom the party wants to project as a "strong leader" thus trying to paint Manmohan Singh as a "weak PM". The BJP is planning to launch its

campaign carpet-bombing style with huge rallies on March 16 across the country.

Both parties have selected advertisement companies. JWT for Congress and Frank Simoes and Utopia for the BJP. With mobile telephone subscription of 35 crore, SMS campaigns will be all over and Internet campaign will also be full throttle. All of it, of course, will remain focussed primarily on Advani as far as the BJP goes.

The Akali Dal position is very weak and the BJP has written off its Punjab partner who may not be able to deliver even a couple of seats. Sukhbir Badal is keeping everyone guessing about whether his wife will fight the Bathinda seat simply because his intelligence team is not very sure it can be clinched by using all tricks in the trade including the kind of violence that Punjab had witnessed during local bodies elections.

The UPA had made unemployment a major campaign issue in 2004 and promised the creation of 1 crore jobs every year; but with recession, the BJP in 2009 will try to focus on the UPA's failure on this front. That it will be hard put to not acknowledge the hugely successful NREGA scheme that guarantees job to rural and urban India for 100 days a year and the empowering effect of the Right to Information Act is a moot point. Akali rhetoric remains in a time warp, stuck in the same old groove: "Congress is the enemy of Punjab, Centre discriminates against Punjab and Punjab is going through unprecedented development." There is a kernel and more of truth in Centre being unfair to Punjab, but coming from the Badals it loses all the sheen of the truth. More than the Congress, the BJP is an ultra-nationalist, its parent RSS is a votary of Hindu rashtra, and L K Advani a rank communal man, but the gurdwaras of the Sikh quom and the national resources of the Sikhs are being used to make Advani the Prime Minister.

Sikh-dera tensions on the boil again

From Page 1

The administration has banned Sant Dadu's entry into the village, thus raising the tempers further. Jathedar Nandgarh said the only way left was to send "Marjeevra Sikhs" from March 22 to shut down Salabatpura dera in Punjab. Nandgarh is to lead representatives of the Sikh organisations to Jhorar Rohi village on Wednesday morning (India time) just as this WSN issue was going to the press.

Others who are participating proactively included Sukhwinder Singh Khalsa, president of the Guru Granth Sahib Satkar Sabha, Daljit Singh Bittu of the Akali Dal (Panch Pardhani), Bhai Baljinder Singh of the Ek Noor Khalsa Fauj and Nihang Sant Charat Singh, chief of the Taruna Dal.

From Sirsa, a few members of the so-called peace committee tried to meet Jathedar Nandgarh on Tuesday evening but failed to establish contact. It also visited the village to convince the organizers that the conclave be put off till the end of parliamentary polls but

made no headway. Main reason was the provocation created by the Sirsa dera activists and the partisan attitude of the administration.

The ruling Akali Dal in Punjab is overly worried about the outcome of the latest confrontational phase as it would negatively impact the chances of victory of its family member in Bathinda where Sirsa dera followers are said to enjoy leverage in terms of votes. The Akal Takht has asked political parties to stay away from the Sirsa Dera.

Earlier, Sikh-Dera tension was witnessed at a gurdwara of Chandpur village in Fatehabad, Haryana where too the administration had imposed restrictions under Section 144 but that were removed later after the Sikhs expressed resentment.

Punjab and several other places in the country were on the boil in May 2007 after the Sikhs protested against the sect chief allegedly dressing himself as Guru Gobind Singh. There has been no end to provocations from the dera side.



Dera head's son booked by Delhi police

CHANDIGARH: With his father already embroiled in umpteen legal hassles, beleaguered Sirsa dera head Gurmeet Ram has new troubles: Delhi police has booked his son Jasmeet Singh for cheating, forgery, criminal breach of trust and conspiracy under various sections of IPC.

On directions of Kakardooma additional chief metropolitan magistrate, Krishna Nagar police station in East Delhi registered a case against Jasmeet and six others on the complaint of Labh Singh, a descendent of former head of Dera Shah Satnam Ji

Maharaj. While Labh had reportedly approached the police in September, an FIR was lodged only after an intervention by the court, before which the police will now have to file a compliance report on April 4, 2008.

In his complaint, Labh alleged that Jasmeet and his accomplices fraudulently ousted him and a few others who were directors of a company, Sach Agro and Food Products Private limited, founded in 2002 by Sirsa-based Dera head's son and Labh's brother Avtar Singh. The company, with a registered office in East Azad

Nagar, New Delhi, was later also registered in the name of Labh, Gurchet Singh and Bhupender Singh.

With Jasmeet as managing director, the company was reportedly doing well and in 2006-2007, it also purchased agricultural land measuring 8-1/4 acre in Sonapat district of Haryana. When price of that land soared, Jasmeet got greedy. Knowing very well that he couldn't own it entirely with the other directors of the company around, he conspired with his accomplices and prepared our fake resignation letters.