

Screening of Sikh Turban (Dastaar) at European Airports

IMPORTANT PROGRESS: Letter from Department for Transport (DfT) on 22nd August 2012

Sikh Council UK Affiliation Strengthens Joint Negotiations.

The issue of Sikh turban (dastaar) scanning first came up in June 2010. Lobbying efforts regarding respect for the dastaar were started immediately by the Sikh Federation UK and other Sikh organisations.

The Sikh Council UK was set up in December 2010 to strengthen Sikh negotiating position regarding issues of common concern, by presenting a united front. The Sikh Federation UK, affiliated to the Sikh Council UK, has been liaising with the Department for Transport and keeping the Sikh Council UK informed and involved as required, including attending meetings with the Minister for Transport.

The Sikh Council UK has been focusing its efforts on the same issue in mainland Europe where the problem is more serious. This is because many member states of the European Union have not followed the excellent example set by the UK Government.

The Sikh Federation (UK) has received the letter of 22 August, 2012 from the Department for Transport (see below).

This letter has been forwarded to the Sikh Council UK for circulation to all member Gurdwaras and organisations, as well as to Gurdwaras and Sikh organisations that have yet to join the Sikh Council UK.

The letter is particularly helpful as it provides hope for a real and lasting solution to respect for the Sikh turban (dastaar) across Europe. Sikhs across Europe will need to make sure their own governments support the proposals when it is time for the Members States of the European Union to make a decision in the next 12 months or so.

Joint and sustained progress on issues like the Sikh dastaar scanning at UK and European airports, shows precisely why Gurdwaras and organisations should renew their ongoing affiliation with the Sikh Council UK as soon as possible. Also, other Gurdwaras and Sikh organisations should join the Sikh Council, so that the UK Government is left in no doubt that the Sikh community wants greater accountability to the grassroots of the community on all issues that impact on Sikhs in the UK.

The Sikh Council UK provides the means of communication for the Government, the departments and agencies to be able to do that.

Letter from Department for Transport (DfT) dated 22 August 2012 and received by email on 24 August 2012.

Searching of Religious Cultural Headgear

I am writing to you to provide an update of the current headgear trial, which is due to come to an end this month. As you may recall, my colleague Raj Chana had previously explained that tests had been completed in December 2011 and these results have been presented to the European Commission.

The presentation was received with interest and generated probing questions, which we were able to provide satisfactory answers to. During this session we were asked to complete further tests during 2012, which we completed in May. We have now presented this further information to the European Commission. After due consideration of our reports and presentations, I am very pleased to inform you that the European Commission has written to notify us of its intention, subject to agreement by Member States, to introduce into EU Regulation the use of Explosive Trace Detection (ETD) and Hand Held Metal Detection (HHMD) as an option for primary screening, at least in cases such as the screening of the religious headgear of passengers and staff.

To allow time to prepare the necessary changes to regulation the Commission has extended the trial with immediate effect for a further 12 months, or until such time as the new regulation enters into force (whichever is sooner). This avoids the need to stop the trial pending changes to regulation. I hope you will agree that that this is a positive step.

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Circular issued on behalf The Sikh Council UK by Sardar Gurmel Singh Kandola, Secretary General.

Queries about this Sikh Council UK circular should be sent by e-mail to:

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The Sikh Council UK affiliation form can be printed by clicking:

<http://sikhcounciluk.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/SCUK-Affiliation-Forms-12.pdf>,