

## **Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh**

**April 2015 Bulletin 52**

### **Key Dates:**

5<sup>th</sup> April 2015 Sikh Council UK Executive Committee meeting took place in Ramgarhia Sabha, Coventry

11<sup>th</sup> April 2015 Representatives of Sikh Council UK attended the Vaisakhi in London event at City Hall organised by Ernest and Young Sikh Network / Singh Sabha Gurdwara Sahib, Barking and the Mayor of London.

During April the following local meetings have been held as part of the Sikh Council UK Engagement Programme Roadshow:

- Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> April 2015 Gurdwara Nanaksar, Southampton
- Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2015 Ramgarhia Sikh Gurdwara, Slough
- Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> April 2015 Ramgarhia Family Centre, Coventry
- Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2015 Gurdwara Singh Sabha, Northampton
- Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2015 Gurdwara Singh Sabha, Hitchin
- Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2015 Gurdwara Singh Sabha, Seven Kings
- Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2015 Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Reading
- Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2015 Gurdwara Singh Sabha, Southall

Topics covered included local priorities and the Voter Registration campaign.

16<sup>th</sup> April 2015 Ernest and Young Sikh Network hosted a live televised Panth Time in the Ernst & Young offices in the City of London with an all-female panel including Paramjit Kaur Matharu Managing Director, Global Indirect Tax Head at JPMorgan Chase and also Chair of European and International Affairs Committee of Sikh Council UK and Balvinder Kaur Sandhu General Secretary, Khalsa Aid and also Chair of Community Safety Committee of Sikh Council UK.

22<sup>nd</sup> April 2015 representatives of Sikh Council UK attended a London Boroughs Faith Network meeting with Scotland Yard for a briefing regarding safety for places of worship

### **Campaigns:**

Following the recent announcement by the examining board, AQA, that they will cease offering Punjabi as a qualification at A-level in 2017 a campaign group including involvement from Punjabi language providers, Sikh schools, Sikh media, Gurdwaras, Jathebandis and Sikh Council UK has been established. As part of the campaign to reinstate A-level Punjabi and to increase uptake of GCSE and A-level Punjabi, Sikh Council UK has been tasked with liaising with politicians, AQA and other bodies. In order to raise awareness a petition, letter writing campaign and Sikh media work is ongoing. A paper is being produced which will detail the community response to the AQA decision as well as an action plan approach for community action to address concerns and to increase uptake of GCSE and A-level Punjabi. A draft version will be widely circulated in due course for community comments.

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A film entitled 'Nanak Shah Fakir' was strongly objected to by the Sikh community and eventually withdrawn from showings in the UK following dialogue between the film producer and Sri Akaal Takhat Jathedar Sahib. Sikh Council UK had issued a statement concerning the broader issue of depiction of Gurus, their families and historical Sikhs in films and in works of art.

Sikh Council UK has been approached by some members to engage with the Sikh Chaplaincy Service in prisons with a view to addressing concerns in relation to expectations of the users of the services and the community.

Sikh Council UK supported the campaign led by BSCF for requesting removal of Sri Harmandir Sahib, Amritsar for potential inclusion in the World Heritage List. An approach was made to UNESCO asking them to remove the details from the tentative list. However, UNESCO responded that whilst the site of Sri Harmandir Sahib, Amritsar is included on the tentative list put forward by India since 2004, there is no current consideration for its inclusion on the World Heritage List nor have they received any such application for it to be considered. It was also confirmed that inclusion of sites in India for the tentative list are put forward by the Indian State and only they have the right to request removal of sites.

## **Media:**

Extensive media coverage was obtained in print, broadcast and internet media following the safety helmets amendments in the Deregulation Bill receiving Royal Assent. This change in the law addresses an anomaly that meant that dastar wearing Sikhs were exempt from the requirement to wear safety helmets on construction sites only. This change extended the exemption to all workplaces with an exemption being retained for emergency response situations.

Media interaction was coordinated by a media consultant employed for this purpose and coverage obtained included:

- **BBC News Online** - Article is live: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-32118832>
- **BBC Asian Network** - News Bulletin: This ran every hour from 6am - 10pm on their 3minute news bulletin, mentioning Sikh Council UK
- **BBC Hindi** - News Bulletin: This ran on their 3minute news bulletin, mentioning Sikh Council UK
- **BBC World Service** - News Bulletin: This ran on the news bulletin, mentioning Sikh Council UK
- **Asian Image** - Article is live: [http://www.asianimage.co.uk/news/11888593.Sikh\\_Council\\_welcomes\\_change\\_to\\_law\\_allowing\\_turban\\_in\\_all\\_workplaces/](http://www.asianimage.co.uk/news/11888593.Sikh_Council_welcomes_change_to_law_allowing_turban_in_all_workplaces/)
- **Sikh Siyasat** - Article is live: <http://sikhsiyasat.net/2015/03/30/uks-new-employment-law-enables-sikhs-to-wear-turbans-in-all-workplaces/>
- **Sikh News 24** - Article is live: <http://www.sikh24.com/2015/03/30/uk-law-now-allows-turbans-in-all-workplaces/#.VRmogzvF9Hg>
- **Quartz (Business blog)** - Article is live: <http://qz.com/372692/sikhs-in-the-uk-have-won-the-right-to-wear-their-turbans-to-work/> - The blog has **137k** twitter followers
- **Time of India** - Article is live: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/nri/other-news/End-of-turban-trouble-in-UK/articleshow/46776325.cms>
- **Liberation Monde** – French website: [http://www.liberation.fr/monde/2015/03/31/royaume-uni-les-sikhs-autorises-a-porter-le-turban-quel-que-soit-leur-travail\\_1232215](http://www.liberation.fr/monde/2015/03/31/royaume-uni-les-sikhs-autorises-a-porter-le-turban-quel-que-soit-leur-travail_1232215)

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<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Sikh-Council-UK-SCUK>

- **India Economic Times:** <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/nri/visa-and-immigration/new-uk-law-allows-turban-in-all-workplaces/articleshow/46762438.cms>
- **Chandigarh Tribune:** <http://www.tribuneindia.com/news/world/new-uk-law-allows-turban-in-all-workplaces/60967.html>
- **BBC Radio:** Live interviews on **Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> April from 6 - 8pm** on the following stations targeted to a wide range of Asian audiences:
  - BBC Radio Derby
  - BBC Radio Leeds
  - BBC Radio Northampton
  - BBC Radio Stoke
  - BBC Radio Gloucestershire
  - BBC Radio Manchester
  - BBC Three Counties Radio
  - BBC Radio Nottingham
  - BBC Radio Sheffield
- **BBC Radio Breakfast Show:** Live interviews on **Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> April from 7 – 9am** on the following stations targeted to a wide range of multi-faith and mainstream audiences:
  - BBC Radio Lancashire
  - BBC Radio Sheffield
  - BBC Radio Sussex & Surrey
  - BBC Radio Coventry & Warwickshire
  - BBC Radio Shropshire
  - BBC Radio Manchester
  - BBC Radio Jersey
  - BBC Radio Cambridgeshire
  - BBC Radio Lancashire
  - BBC Radio Oxford
  - BBC Radio Bristol

## **Casework:**

Sikh Council UK has been made aware of alleged disability discrimination at three Gurdwaras in the Midlands. The matters are under ongoing consideration and dialogue.

Sikh Council UK was made aware of and engaged with two separate cases regarding wearing of Kirpan by school children within their respective schools in Derby and Nottingham. In cases such as these, Sikh Council UK is able to offer advice; meet and hold dialogue with parents, schools and others; make available EHRC guidance, guidance produced by other Local Authorities and individual school policies.

Sikh Council UK has been approached for assistance by a driver working for a haulage company who was being asked to remove his dastar at sites where he was carrying out collections or deliveries. In cases such as this, Sikh Council UK is able to offer advice; meet and hold dialogue with individuals concerned, employers, trade unions and others; make available Health & Safety Executive guidance and refer employers to the requirements to assess each case on its merits and not to impose blanket policies. The recent legislation addressing an anomaly in the law and which will allow for wearing of the dastar in work places other than just construction sites will come into force in October 2015.

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