

MEDIA RELEASE

Sikh Youth Australia – 2009 and Onwards

For Sikh Youth Australia, 2009 has been a watershed year. December 31 2009 saw the sun set on a year full of many achievements which did not seem likely at the beginning of the year.

The year kicked off as it had since 1999 with the annual Sikh Camp. New faces at the camp included a new facilitator, Veer Manpreet Singh from the United Kingdom. He was joined by Professor Jaswant Singh from Singapore and Giani Sukdaiv Singh from Malaysia.

A number of local residents also committed their time and effort as facilitators. New initiatives included question and answer sessions with junior and senior youths which were very well received. In addition, representatives of other religions were invited to the camp to discuss the value and modes of community service. SYA also received a small grant from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship to assist with the operations of this camp.

As always, the camp was a big hit, but the days following the camp were full of kirtan sessions featuring Veer Manpreet Singh and it seemed the camp was not quite over as everyone from the camp kept rolling up for the sessions.

In early April 2010, Sikh Youths from the Austral area organized a special bush fire appeal. The appeal saw 250 people come together and also saw more than 40 of them donate blood. In fact the Australian Red Cross was not able to cope with the number of donors who attended the day. What was special was that 70 % of the donors were new donors donating blood for the first time. And 80% of these were Sikh youths!

The blood donation effort has now become a permanent fixture on the SYA calendar.

Late April saw the arrival in Sydney of the Sri Dasmesh Bagpipes and Drums band. The 35-strong band from Malaysia had been invited by the RSL in NSW to participate in the Sydney ANZAC Day March.

The band commenced its tour by performing in the Glenwood Gurdwara Nagar Kirtan, where over six thousand people witnessed them in a community march. This was followed by performances in the Panania & Penrith RSL ANZAC Parades, where they were extremely well received.

The Band also performed at Martin Place, drawing a crowd of over 1000 people, and regaled the crowds at the Royal Easter Show. Their turn-out and performance at the ANZAC Parade was impressive particularly when they lead the Sikh Regiment under the auspices of the Sikh Council of Australia. They were also picked to march with the special combined bands as a finale to the parade and many were clamoring for them to return for the 2010 parade.

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Sikh Youth Australia is grateful to the major sponsor, The Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade (Australia-Malaysia Institute) and the Sikh Community of Australia for their generous support in ensuring the success of this project.

June saw the successful running of the Leadership Camp for Sikh Youths. The calibre and experience of Sikh facilitators at this camp shows how much of an impact Sikhs have made on the Australian Private and Public sector and are continuing to do so.

July saw the return to Sydney of Veer Manpreet Singh and it was like camp time again with kirtan sessions going on for the whole month.

A group of our young Sikh Youths was selected to attend the National Student Leadership Programme in Canberra in September. The youths included Taren Kaur Gill, Kunwar Singh Bhatia, Amardeep Kaur Gill, Saranpaal Calais and Hartaj Singh. In addition, to these 5 Sikh youths, Mr. Karan Singh from Darwin was also present at the Forum. We wish to acknowledge the assistance received from the Federal Member of Parliament for Greenway, Louise Markus, who kindly sponsored Amardeep Gill to the conference. Taren Gill was also selected as an assistant facilitator at the conference. The youths took the opportunity to work with 200 of Australia's brightest young men and women and were also fortunate to meet and have dialogue with the Prime Minister of Australia as well as other senior members of Parliament and Corporate Australia.

The idea of having a web-site for the SYA had been mulled for some time and SYA took the plunge in October by making Saranpaal Singh Calais the project manager tasked with developing a website for SYA. He has done a great job working with a team of volunteer helpers ranging in age from 9 to 60. The team members are: Jaspreet Boparoy, Banipreet Kaur, Devpaal Singh, Jasbinder Kaur, Prabpreet Calais, Ramneek Singh, Satjit Singh, Amarpal Sidhu and Surinderjeet Singh.

The site will be officially launched at the 2010 Summer Camp by Mr. Laurie Ferguson, Parliamentary Secretary for the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

With the rapid growth in scale and scope of SYA's events and activities, the management team decided to appoint a media manager to promote and communicate its activities and programs to not only the Indian community of Australia but also to mainstream Australians. We were pleased to secure the services of Surinderjeet Singh to undertake this task. Prior to his retirement, Surinderjeet worked as a senior journalist for more than 26 years with the main daily papers in Singapore and Australia. SYA will also be seeking an expression of interest for 2 media communication officers to assist him.

As 2009 came to an end, SYA capped things off in December by gaining recognition from the Australian Taxation Office of its status as a charitable organization. SYA is currently seeking Deductible Gift Recipient Status.

SYA has been blessed in the past few years with a management team that has knitted well and worked hard to bring the organization to its present position. Much credit is due to the tireless



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INSPIRING THE SIKH YOUTH OF AUSTRALIA

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efforts of Ajmer Singh Gill, Gurpreet Singh, Sukhvinder Singh, Amrik Singh, Inderjeet Kaur, Jaswinder Singh Sidhu and Satwant Singh Calais.

With their skills and foresight, and with more and more talented Sikh youths coming on board, there is much to look forward to in 2010.