

Lessons for Punjab from Oz attacks

WSN Bureau
CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Prakash Singh Badal's Cabinet-rank advisor Daljit Singh Cheema was recently in a TV studio to participate in a panel discussion programme on racist attacks against Indian students in Australia. It seemed to be a cakewalk of a discussion, and there seemed to be little for which the poor Badals can be held accountable for. After all, the attacks were happening in distant Australia, were the work of either xenophobic bunch of individuals or rank criminals out to loot hapless hard-working Indian students.

Unfortunately for Cheema, talk TV is not always so mundane and meaningless. As soon as Kesar Singh Barwali of Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development (CRRID) brought up the point that neo-liberal economics leaves behind in its wake some socially excluded groups that indulge in crime, Cheema was quietly fielded a query: "So what lessons about development has the Punjab government learnt since it too is pushing a neo-liberal agenda; so where's the guarantee that we will not leave behind socially excluded groups?"

As he fumbled and tried to fall back on his trademark soberness, the well known Dalitism scholar and author Gian Singh Bal was



soon stressing how governments thrive on divisive issues and how there is a class angle to the entire racism debate. Soon the talk turned towards the bigger caste issue and Cheema was asked whether the castism divisions were not as bad as racism and whether casteism is not a sort of racism? Soon, the anchor also threw in the Jat versus non-Jat debates in Punjab, the Punjabi versus migrant labourers' treatment and the debate was wide open.

This is the problem with serious debate. Nothing happens in isolation, and nothing can be discussed in isolation. In an intricately intertwined and inter-dependent world, the problems too are multifaceted and soon the anchor was underlining with amusement the

fate of the representative of the government and the ruling party about how does it fee to answer questions about government accountability in a debate about crime happening thousands of miles away.

The gracious Daljit Singh Cheema agreed to most points raised and scored some brownie points because he did not seem to be hell bent on defending the government but was rather more interested in understanding and acknowledging the linkages. But what really came about was the fact that the way Punjab was following a peculiar model of growth and development, we may be headed for big trouble.

It is no different for the rest of India.

Sikhs Organize Nationwide...

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"We have held several blood drives at individual locations before too", said Harjot Singh Khalsa, President of the Gurdwara (Sikh place of worship) in Fremont, CA. "However, we decided to make it a coordinated nationwide effort this year, after receiving calls from various blood agencies about the shortfall in blood donation," he said.

"Sikhs will be donating their blood to honor Guru Arjan Dev Ji, who was tortured and killed after refusing to convert to Islam in 1606 in Punjab, India", said Harsimran Singh, leader of Sikh Youth of America, from Central Valley, CA. "Along with honoring Guru Arjan Dev Ji, we will also be remembering those who gave their lives in the struggle for a free Sikh homeland", added Sandeep Singh of Modesto. Central Valley Sikhs have scheduled two blood drives, one in Stockton, CA and the other in Modesto, CA and are hoping to add two more in July in Sacramento, CA and Livingston, CA.

Satnam Singh Khalsa, Secretary of the Fremont Gurdwara, explained



that by going nationwide we want to raise awareness among other Americans about Sikhs and their way of life. He wants to encourage members of other communities to join Sikhs in this blood drive.

As part of the second phase of the blood drive, main event is planned to be held in Yuba City, California, where thousands of Sikhs gather in November for the Annual Sikh Parade. "We want to hold the biggest ever California blood drive that day", said Nirpal Singh, President of Sikh Youth of America for Bay Area.

(For more information, contact Jot Preet Singh Sahi, National Coordinator, Sikh Youth of America at jpsahi@yahoo.com or 510-872-5987)

Check outbound ones too

The Government of India has now asked the US to scan all outbound passengers also for the swine flu symptoms.

Speaking at the 'High Level Forum in Advancing Global Health in the Face of Crisis in New York', India's health secretary Naresh Dayal said, "I would like to say that the developed countries would do a great service to the developing countries if they could contain and check the spread of infection in their own countries. I would, therefore, urge them to take action to



stop the spread of the infection." The high level forum was organized by the secretary general of the United Nation on June 15.

KHALSA SCHOOL, FREMONT KIDS CAMP

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Students from the Khalsa School, Fremont held a camp at Elizabeth lake under the supervision of school principal Kulwant Singh, teachers and many volunteers. The students enjoyed themselves with a pizza party at the Teen Centre where the Italian pizzas went well with the traditional langar. Members of the Gurdwara management committee found it a good opportunity to spend time with the younger generation. Gurdwara president Harjot Singh Khalsa and other Gurdwara committee members were thanked by the principal for their cooperation. Everyone was happy that the joint efforts of the local community leaders and the parents were succeeding in ensuring that the Sikh children imbibe knowledge about their religion and heritage and grow up with the Sikh Swaroop.

