

Devout flock Nanded Sahib

Hazur Sahib, October 25

Unprecedented upsurge of devotional fervour has been witnessed during the tercentenary celebrations of Guru Granth Sahib's Gurta Gaddi Diwas here even as Sikh babas from Punjab, Haryana and Delhi set up separate langars.

Many babas have spent crores of rupees to organise community kitchens for devotees, who have started thronging Sachkhand Hazur Sahib and other historical Sikh shrines. They have enough ration to serve langar for more than one month though the celebrations may come to an end in the first week of November.

Baba Maan Singh of Pehowa, Haryana, said his dera would serve 300 dishes, including Chinese, gol-gappas, ice-cream, etc, during the celebrations. He had to bring ration worth Rs 1 crore from Hyderabad as ration demand had picked up in the local market.

Baba Makhan Singh of Amritsar said his dera had spent more than Rs 10 lakh on the purchase of dry milk. More than 500 quintal of atta, 200 quintal of pulses and 1,000 tins of ghee would be consumed at these community kitchens.

However, the babas feared the ration might not be consumed fully due to low turnout of devotees.

The huge pandals, put up by the Sachkhand Hazur Sahib Management Committee at a cost of Rs 60 crore, are quite at a distance from the main shrine. Though the Takht management has arranged 350 buses to ferry devotees from the campsite to the main shrine, all of them would not like to travel that far for the langar only, he added.

Baba Makhan Singh said the management was charging rent for the tent facility, which was unheard of in Punjab. The city did not have enough hotels or government accommodation.

Punjab Bhawan, constructed with the grant of Rs 8 crore given by the Punjab government, and SGPC's serai were yet to be fully furnished.

However, the Hazur Sahib management had built sufficient number of rooms in the serai of Takht Hazur Sahib. The Nishkam Sewa Jatha of the UK had got constructed an NRI serai, having 148 rooms.

Every house here has virtually been converted into serai with local residents receiving guests from far-flung areas.

Meanwhile, the SGPC got cancelled three trains from Amritsar to Nanded. Its president Avtar Singh said they had withdrawn Rs 5 lakh from the Railways deposited for train service because those did not get good response from the devotees. One of the reasons for the low turnout could be Diwali.

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Lakhs of Sikh pilgrims to attend 'Gurta Gaddi'

Sunday, October 26th, 2008

BIDAR (KARNATAKA): Over five lakh Sikh pilgrims, including Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, are expected to attend Gurta Gaddi, the tricentury celebrations of Guru Granth Sahib, to be held here from October 28 to November 7.

The Guru Nanak Jhira foundation sources told UNI that the main religious function will be held in Nanded in Maharashtra just prior to the Bidar event.

The Sachkhand Shri Hazur Abchainagar Sahib Gurudwara in Nanded assumed sacredness for Sikhs. The first Guru, Guru Nanak and last Guru Guru Gobind Singh visited Nanded.

More than 50 lakh Sikh devotees from across the world are expected to Nanded to offer prayers on the auspicious occasion of Tricentury celebrations of The Guru Granth Sahib.

After offering prayers at Nanded, the pilgrims come to Bidar to offer prayers at sacred "Gugu Nanak Jhira Gurudwara" as this Gurudwara was visited by Guru Gobind Singh, the last Guru of Sikhs.

Explaining the significance of Gurta Gaddi, Jhira sources said the last Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh had come to Nanded from Punjab to seek the help of Maratha Kings of fight against the Mughal Emperors.

But unfortunately, Guru Gobind Singh was fatally wounded in an attack by his own men. During his last days, in October 1708, he ordained that henceforth the Sikhs should treat the preaches of "Guru Granth Sahib" itself as the Guru of Sikhs and there should be no mortal Guru.

"Gurta Gaddi ceremony being celebrated on the occasion of "elevation" of Guru Granth Sahib as Guru," the sources said.

The Guru Nanak Jhira Gurudwara in Bidar has a rare significance "natural spring" which has sweet water flowing throughout the year. The Sikh devotees treat the water of the perennial natural spring as sacred.

The Gurudwara of 'Mai Bhagoji' at Janawada village, about 10 km from Bidar city is another sacred place for Sikhs. When Guru Gobind Singh came to Nanded in Maharashtra from Punjab, Mai Bhagoji had accompanied Guru Nanak.

During her stay at Janawada village, she spread the message of Guru Granth Sahib and sacredness of Sikhism.

In her remembrance, a Gurudwara in bar name of "Mai Bhagoji" was built at Janawada village.

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It is being managed by the Gurudwara Prabhandak Committee of Nanak Jhira Sahib of Bidar. The "tapsthal" where Mai Bhagoji meditated had been preserved at the Gurudwara.

Special officer of Gurta Gaddi cell, Muneshwar told UNI that arrangements had been made for the free flow of vehicular traffic at both the Gurudwaras.

He said arrangements had also been made for the pilgrims to stay overnight at Mai Bhagoji Gurudwara.

Union Home Minister Shivaraj Patil visited Bidar on October 18 and reviewed the arrangements for the mega religious function.

Official sources said that more than 1000 tents had been erected to accommodate about 50 thousand pilgrims. Besides accommodation would also be provided in some private schools and colleges.

The entire Bidar city has been spruced up. The main roads which lead to the Nanak Jhira Gurudwara had been widened and relaid.

Official sources said that a 50-bed hospital camp had been set up on the premises of the Gurudwara and expert doctor had been made available to provide treatment, if needed, to the pilgrims.

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