
THE KASHMIRI PANDIT INTERNATIONAL

Newsletter of Kashmiri Overseas Association, Inc.

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website:

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President's Column

Namaskar,

During the last couple of months we have witnessed a number of untimely and tragic deaths within our community. I offer my condolences and sympathies to the families and friends of the deceased. In many ways, all of us have been affected by these tragedies. Let us all pray that GOD shows us ways to cope with these tragedies and helps us develop an everlasting bond of friendship and care within our community.

We have recently launched a program to send used computers and books to refugee children in Jammu. This program will be implemented in two phases, i.e. Assessment Phase(1), and Collection Phase (2). During Phase 1, which is already under progress and is nearing completion, we have collected about sixty books and sent them to refugee children in Jammu and Udhampur Schools, requesting the School authorities there to provide us with a short report about the usefulness of such books. We have set a deadline of Jan. 1998 for this evaluation. Based on the feedback we receive, during Phase 2 we will start a drive to collect used computers and used books from donors here and ship them to Jammu.

I would like to thank Sushma Bhan of TX, Nancy Zutshi of IL, and Shiban Warikoo of PA for collecting books from various people and to Autar Mattoo of MD, Ashok and Santosh Raina of MD, Sandeep and Nisha Kaul of VA, and Shiban and Nanna Warikoo of PA for carrying these books and delivering them in Jammu. I believe that without their help we would not have been able to complete the first part of this program in so short a period of time.

In connection with this project, Nalin Bamzai and I met Indian Embassy official in Washington DC and requested customs waiver and free freight for shipping of the used computers and books to Jammu. Nalin Bamzai, who is presently visiting India, plans to also meet the Indian home ministry people in this regard. As soon as we are able to get the customs waiver, an appeal will be circulated to the KOA members for donating used PCs/Macs to KOA for refugee children. We intend to initially send at least 10 PCs and over 400 reference books.

We also had a meeting in Washington DC with a USAID official in charge of India and discussed possibilities of assistance to KP refugee children. We are also exploring possibility of support from international foundations, such as Ford and Rockefeller

foundations, that operate in India. We have already made contacts with these foundation representatives in India.

KOA just completed the nomination/election activity for six board of directors. This newsletter carries a report from Dr. Shiban Warikoo, Chairperson of the Nomination/Election Committee. We very much appreciate this committee's effort in conducting all the required procedures in a timely fashion and offer special thanks to Shibanji for his leadership role. From Jan. 1998, KOA will have four newly elected board of directors; Rohit Dhar (Zone 3), Kong Posh Bhat (Zone 5), Vijay Dhar (Zone 9), & Renu Bhat Hansen (Zone 10) and two reelected board of directors; Sanjay Kaul (Zone 2) & Ameeta Bamzai (Zone 7). KOA congratulates and welcomes these six members to the KOA Board of Directors for a term of two years.

KOA's web site has been accessed by people from various parts of the world. The information provided by our web site regard-ing Kashmiri Pandit history & culture has proved invaluable. KOA has received many letters in this regard, one of which is reproduced in this newsletter. With Sanjay and Bindiya Fotedar's help and dedication, we have been able to complete another milestone, i.e., providing Kashmiri music on the web. Please visit our web site at: <http://www.koausa.org/Music/music.html>. Many, many thanks to this young couple for their time and effort. I want membership to know that KOA is proud of such volunteers and that through the help of our volunteers KOA has been able to reach and influence KPs at all corners of the world.

Once again, I would like to remind those members who have not yet paid their 1997 membership dues, to please pay now. Also, this is the time to renew your membership by paying 1998 dues. Please mail your membership dues and generous donations to KOA. KOA's achievements are possible only with your donations and support.

I wish you and your family a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

Lalit Wanchoo

Report of 1997 Nominations for KOA Board

An announcement was mailed to members in the October 1997 KPI issue for nomination of six board of directors to KOA. Our committee received the following nominations:

_ Zone 2: Sanjay Kaul, MA

_ Zone 3: Rohit Dhar, NJ

_ Zone 5: Kong Posh Bhat, TX and Phool Trikha, TX. Phool Trikha withdrew her nominations.

_ Zone 7: Ameeta Bamzai, IL

_ Zone 9: Vijay Dhar, CA and Jeevan Zutshi, CA. Jeevan Zutshi withdrew his nominations in favor of Vijay Dhar

_ Zone 10: Renu Bhat Hansen, CA and Suraj Bhat, CA . Suraj Bhat withdrew his nominations in favor of Renu Bhat Hansen.

Since each of these zones nominated just one nominee per zone, these nominees (whose names are shown bold-faced) have been elected to the KOA Board for a term of two

years effective Jan 1, 1998.
Shiban Warikoo
Chairman, Nomination/Election Committee

Refugee Camp Visit

We recently went to Jammu and visited three camps there on October 8, 1997 accompanied by Sh. T. N. Khosa, President KP Sabha, Jammu and Sh. Moti Lal Koul, Camp Commander, Muthi Camps. The camps we visited were: Muthi Camp Phase I (~500 families), Muthi Camp Phase II (~500 families) and Mishriwala Camp (~1200 families). Mr. T N Khosa was gracious enough to escort us to the camp sites in his own van. Visiting these camps was heart-breaking, especially Muthi camp phase II which is one of the newer but less developed camps. Living conditions here are deplorable. Anyone visiting Jammu, should take a "pilgrim-age" to these camps to get an idea of the depraved living conditions forced upon our unfortunate KP brethren. Some of the deficiencies noted were: 1) Limited accommodation with very little privacy, 2) Almost no sanitation, 3) No prenatal care for pregnant women and no preventative health care for infants, 4) Significantly high proportion of disease - T.B., malnutrition, cancer, etc., with no resources to take care of the sick, and 5) Lack of hope amongst the youth and able-bodied adults that is likely to continue as long as they live in these conditions. Attempts must be made to reinstate these refugees with the mainstream population at the earliest. While their problems are of enormous proportions, and only GOI truly has the full resources to take care of these problems, we in KOA must do our part. Let us try to break these daunting problems down to one small problem at a time, and let us all pledge to help one child, one youth, or one family at a time. This way we will be able to make a difference in at least one particular individual's life. In that regard, we must enhance already existing programs such as:

- a) Child Sponsorship - coordinated by Mr. Pran Kaul of CA
- b) Educational Assistance Program - sponsor a young person for post secondary education - coordinated by Dr. Tej Nath Kaul of NY.

Some suggestions are:

- a) Provide discretionary funds for emergency medical relief.
- b) Anyone going to Jammu could take 5-10 books for children grade one to five. Mr. Khosa will deliver them to Udhampur School and refugee camps.
- c) KOA should seriously consider having liaison office in Jammu with well paid executive secretary and staff to oversee all KOA related activities in India.
- d) Upgrade Udhampur School to 10th class and develop it into a technical training place (vocational training, carpentry, masonry, A/C technician, computer and electronic technician). That will give our youth marketable skills to survive and grow.
- e) Provide funds for medicine for the local dispensary at the camps.

Remember, it is purely a matter of chance and luck that we are here and not in any one of these camps. We want to thank Lalit Wanchoo, KOA President for arranging this eye opening visit to refugee camps. Believe us, we got more from it than what we put into it.

Shiban and Nanna Warikoo, PA

KOA Community News

(1) Tri-State (NY, NJ, PA) Deepawali Celebration:

On November 9, 1997, Tri-State KOA celebrated Deepawali function at a local church hall in Verona, NJ. About 70 people of our community gathered together to enjoy this fun filled evening. The evening started with "HAPPY HOUR". While everyone was arriving, we served our local delicacy (tea and snacks). This was followed by "Puja" & "Arti" performed by our Punditji from a local temple and participated by every one present. The children's program was the highlight of the evening. Hats off to our talented kids, who's performance was out of this world. Our little Maria Satiwati Nakhasi (three years old) got excited and sang a complete song as " the wheels on the cars goes round and round.... so on". The credit goes to Sunita Dhar for organizing this outstanding children's program. Thanks Sunita!

After the children's program we started our musical program while community dinner was being served with all the varieties of Kashmiri vegetarian delicacies. The delicious food and melodious songs kept the evening alive. Our talented singer even got every one involved in group singing. I am sure everybody had a wonderful evening.

My sincere thanks go to all community volunteers especially Sunita Dhar, Sonia Nakhasi, Sarita Kaul (of West Caldwell) for putting this outstanding program together and also for putting up with me.

Thanks!

Dilip K. Nakhasi
Tri-State KOA Chapter President

(2) Northern California Diwali Celebration

There was an overwhelming participation in this year's Diwali celebration amongst the members of the Kashmiri Pandit community in Northern California. Over two hundred members attended the function which lasted five hours. We welcomed the following new families who joined our already large community in this area:

- _ Meenu & Adhir Mattoo with parents & children (408)526-0607
- _ Vinod & Dimple Moza with their baby (650)691-9541
- _ Jai & Nalini Hakhoo + Nisha & Navneet (408)395-5315
- _ Ashok & Chandrakanta Bhat + Natasha & Ashwani (408)255-7947
- _ Vinay and Sushma Kaul + family (408)735-8813
- _ Rajesh Kaul (408)225-1303
- _ Juvesh Kaul
- _ Ranjana Bhatnagar & family (408)867-3256
- _ Sanjay Dhar (510)354-6198
- _ Anupama Bhat (510)883-9835
- _ Sheenee Ambardar (650)497-0956

We also had the company of Pran Tiku from Boston who was visiting us.

We congratulated Autar and Ratna Karihaloo for becoming proud grandparents of Enika (Muffin) Leila Dhar.

We had a lively performance by the children lasting for more than an hour which was diligently coordinated by Mohan Bhan. The program started with recital of shlokas by Bahar and Neel. These were followed by a whole range of outstanding dance

performances including Michael Jackson style western dance by Ashwani, Bhangra by Sugam, Bharat Natyam by Natasha, Kathak by Tara, bollywood dance by Kunal and a group dances by all of them plus Rudra, Vani, Nidhi, Neha and others. Among the musical performances, Kashyap played Jana Gana Mana on Tumpet, Priyanka sang a Kashmiri song by Habba Khatoon, Meghana sang a bhajan in classical style and Eishan sang a poem. Finally Mohan Bhan himself joined Natasha in a professional duet dance. The efforts put in by Mohan in organizing the practice sessions helped not only in making the program a success but also in increasing the interaction between the children and their parents. Our thanks to all the children and to Mohan.

Girija Raina and Mr. H.K. Kaw were joined by most of the people present in singing Kashmiri Leelas dedicated to Lord Ganesh & the Mother Sharika. It gave us the feeling of being in Tulamula.

Before all of us socialized for the last two hours over a sumptuous dinner, our Director Mr. Karihaloo and I gave a brief account of recent KOA activities and achievements in bringing focus to the human rights abuses of KPs at international forums and within the US congress. We requested everyone to participate in the fund raising efforts by KOA. For this purpose, we individually handed out the letters and appeals to all the families and requested them to do everything to raise the money from their non-Kashmiri friends and their own families for the KOA activities. Bharat Bhushan made announcements regarding the seventeen children from the Jammu camps, ten of who are still waiting for sponsorships.

All of us from Northern California expressed our anguish at the unnatural loss of the precious young lives of Ashu, Munish, Anjela and Jay and prayed that Kachroo, Bazaz, Qazi and Wali families will have the courage to bear this great loss, which we all share with them as an extended family.

Vijay Dhar,
Chapter President Northern California

Community News

Congratulations

- _ Dimpi (Kaul) Garyali and Anil Garyali on their wedding, which took place on Nov. 6, 1997
- _ Suraj and Anjali Bhat of CA on their son Ankur's yagnopavit

New Arrivals within the KP community

- _ Mona and Sanjay Dhar of CA for a baby girl Enika and also to Autar and Ratna Karihaloo for becoming proud grandparents
- _ Congratulations to Arti and Vijay Parimoo of NJ for their new arrival a baby boy, Shann.
- _ Congratulations to Navneet and Sundalini Kotwal of PA on the birth of their baby boy, Arjun.

_ Also congratulation to Vimi and Sanjay Mattoo of NJ for their new arrival a baby boy, Ishan.

Condolences

- _ Mala and Dhruv Qazi of VA on their daughter Angela's untimely death.
- _ Swapna Raina of MD on her brother Jay Krishan Wali's death.
- _ Manavendra Bakshi of PA & Veena Dhar of PA on their father Sh. N N Bakshi's death.
- _ Maharaj Krishan Jalla of VA and Vijay Laxami Kaul of GA on their mother's death.
- _ Mr. Shiban Tiku whose uncle, Shri Somnath Razdan from Manigaam, was killed while returning from Tulmula on the occasion of Janamasthmi, by terrorists who bombed the bus he was travelling in.

Matrimonial Advertisements

Wanted a suitable match, preferably an MD, raised in US, for a KP girl, MD. Girl born and raised in U.S. Please respond as soon as possible, with detailed bio-data, tekni and family background to Shub, #1504-27570 El Camino Real, Redwood City, CA. 94063-1296.

Looking for a tall Kashmiri female for a very brilliant handsome doctor of 25 year age and six feet plus height. Mother Kashmiri and father Punjabi. For information, please contact Neerja 2378 Pheasant Run Circle, Stockton, CA 95207, telephone no: (209) 473-0446 (evenings).

Employment Opportunities

A Bio-medical Engineering company engaged with Healthcare technology systems in Asia/Pacific with Singapore as its headquarter and with companies throughout Asia/Pacific countries, seeks bright engineers with interest in furthering their career into Bio-medical engineering systems (and/or computer sciences) for the expanding Asian/Pacific countries. For information, please contact:

Romesh Kaul

kaulrk@pacific.net.sg

Tel : (65) 299-6954

Fax : (65) 299-1344

Kashmir Shaivism Fellowship

The Kashmir Shaivism Fellowship has been formed (Registered with State of California, while the Federal & State Tax recognition is pending) to make the teachings of Swami Lakshman Joo maharaj available to everyone. The services of the Fellowship are open to the public without discrimination based on religion, caste, creed, race, gender, or nationality. There are no particular criteria for admittance, except the desire to learn the philosophy and practices, advance spiritually, and to honor the lineage of Shaivite Masters and the heritage of Kashmir Shaivism Fellowship. Additional information about of Kashmir Shaivism Fellowship is available at our website (www.kashmirshaivism.com). We recently filed for 501(c)(3) status and are waiting to receive the Non-Profit recognition within 2-4 months!

We meet regularly on Sunday's at a Northern California and a Southern California

location for 1-2 Hour Puja Service (typically 30-45 Minute Puja Service and 1 hour of watching Swami Ji's lectures on Bhagavad Gita).

We also hold an annual Birthday retreat on May 9th. The retreats have been held in Culver City, CA., Richland, CA., Bear Mountain, CA. and earlier this year at Shenoa, CA. Shenoa is located in Northern California. The hosts provided 100% vegetarian meals with no garlic and no onion meals for us. This freed everyone from having to cook or clean and focus on Swami Ji's teachings. The retreat was for 3 days and the schedule was as follows:

Morning: Morning Puja, followed by 30-45 minutes of quiet time meditation or Interviews of Swami Ji's devotees, followed by Swami Ji's Lectures. Afternoon: Free for activities (Walking, Hiking, etc.). Evening: Puja, 30-45 minutes of quiet time meditation, followed by watching lectures of Swami Ji.

We are planning for next year's retreat and are looking at several locations, with additional plans to extend this for an entire week and combine it as retreat/vacation. The second get together happens around September on the occasion of Swami Ji's Mahasamadhi (Solar date is September 27th - Lunar date depends on Jantri date). We typically celebrate the event with a Havan (performed by a priest from Malibu Temple), Puja Verses, and followed by breaking the fast with a meal. Over the course of last 7 years, we have met at Malibu Temple, Raj & Ranju Wanchoo's house, and at John and Denise Hughes's house.

We are also investigating the possibility of bringing over a Kashmiri Priest from India and taping the entire ceremony (audio and video). The major concern that we have is that the existing service is not in the "Kashmiri Shaivite" tradition. Taping and recording the service would allow us to use this material for training purposes, allowing us to keep this tradition alive for future generations and to train someone to take over this activity.

Some of the other projects the KSF is involved in include: Publishing of Swami Ji's lectures on audio and video tapes, producing a documentary about Swami Ji, and finishing the editing work on Bhagavad Gita by Swami Lakshman Joo Maharaj. All of the works are of extraordinary importance to mankind. The teachings of Kashmir Shaivism are truly unique and nothing like it exists anywhere. The Bhagavad Gita, for example has been translated by Swami Ji into English with a Kashmir Shaivite point of view. Swami Ji describes the Kaurava's and Pandava's as "States of Consciousness" existing within all of us, the battle of Good vs. Evil within our Consciousness. Nothing like it exists anywhere, there are various books and texts on Kashmir Shaivism but none by a Master of Swami Ji's caliber. He was the reincarnation of Abhinavagupta himself. If you or anyone is interested in attending the events, contributing to our organization financially, contributing time to our organization, or have suggestions please contact me at vkdh@kashmirshaivism.com

Thanks for your help, Jai Guru Dev,

Vijay K. Dhar
Kashmir Shaivism Fellowship
vkdh@kashmirshaivism.com
415-388-3337 (Evening)

MEETING NOTICE

During the last few months there has been debate about KP unity. We all are working towards the same goal and all of us care about our community. There are obviously difference of opinions, but these differences should not create impediments in our programs. In USA, we are just a handful of people who actively take part in KP cause. It should be very easy for all of us to coordinate and achieve maximum benefit. In this regard, KOA is organizing a one day meeting on 31st January 1998 (place to be announced later on). The purpose of this meeting will be to discuss coordinated approaches to our socio-cultural and political issues, to iron out differences that may hurt our community in the long run, and to define long term plans for the organization. KOA will not pay for any expenses that will be incurred by the individuals in attending this meeting. There will be no registration fees and this meeting is open to every KP in USA. Individuals who plan to attend this meeting should send an e-mail to wanchoo@koausa.org or contact Lalit Wanchoo at (301) 262-7743 by Dec. 31, 1997 (this date is important for making the meeting arrangements).

Letters to KPI

Letter 1:

KOA had published medical assistance appeal from Col. S.K. Razdan in October KPI. KOA had sent \$500 to Col. S.K. Razdan and following letter was received by KOA from Manju Razdan wife of Col. S.K. Razdan:

Respected Mr. Lalit Wanchoo,
Kindly accept our thanks with gratitude for your humanitarian gesture of sending us \$500 for medical assistance. It will see through two months expenditure. On behalf of my husband and kids, I would like to thank each and every member of the association for their generosity. I also take this opportunity to thanks for kindness of understanding our problem.

With regards and best wishes,
Manju Razdan wife of Col S. K. Razdan.

Letter 2

Dear Mr Wanchoo,
NAMASKAR,

What a wonderful job done by KOA. Thanks to internet & Gulrukh because of whom it has been possible for me personally to know about Kashmir and Pandit community. KP community should be indebted to you and KOA for such a wonderful job done sitting across the seven seas. I doubt we in India have such a wonderful information bank.

Simply amazing. Hats off to you

Believe me, it's because of visit to your page, I am inspired to do something similar for the community in India. Will you please guide me in case it is not too inconvenient for you.

With best personal regards,

RK Khushu

rkkhushu@giasd101.vsnl.net.in

IAKF News

1. Community Triumph

October 22, 1997 was a red-letter day for the KP community in the U.S. What we achieved on that day is something that our adversaries, the Kashmiri Muslims of the Kashmiri American Council (KAC) have been unable to gain in spite of their million dollar lobbyists, state support from Pakistan and their pan-Islamic funding. On that day, during a hearing on South Asia organized by the House International Relations Committee, the U.S. government, through Mr. Rick Inderfurth, testified that Kashmiri Pandits will be on the agenda when the U.S. Secretary of State and the U.S. President visit India later (Nov.- Feb.). At the same Congressional meeting, both Congressman Sherrod Brown and special guest Frank Pallone affirmed their strong support for Kashmiri Pandits and testified to their existence of the Kashmiri Political Steering Committee (KPPSC) to pursue a political dialog with the State and Central governments in India. All major Indian dailies carried this news and there have been positive signals from the Indian and Kashmiri authorities to the Committee since.

2. Meeting with U.S. Assistant Secretary of State

The following story was carried by the Hindustan Times of the October 15 meeting between KPs and the U.S. government:

A delegation of the Indo-American Kashmir Forum, led by its president, Dr Vijay Sazawal, met Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Karl Inderfurth for 50 minutes to acquaint him with the current condition and problems of Kashmiri Pandits who had become refugees in their own land. The delegation was all praise for the understanding and sympathy displayed by Mr Inderfurth, in happy contrast to the attitude of his predecessor, Ms Robin Raphel, who had tended to lecture a similar delegation earlier. The delegation thanked the State Department for naming the Harkatul-Ansar as a terrorist organization, but felt the report had been amiss in not including other organizations such as the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) and the Hizbul-Mujahideen, which were also operating in Kashmir. Members of the delegation told newsmen here yesterday that those organizations were collecting funds in the US to aid their activities in Kashmir. The delegation also urged the US to declare Pakistan a rogue nation for encouraging and assisting terrorists. That is unlikely to happen, since the US is now busy encouraging the newly started dialogue between India and Pakistan.

The Pandits took up with Mr Inderfurth a suggestion that had been offered by Congressman Frank Pallone, founder and co-chairman of the Congressional India Caucus, that USAID funds might be used to provide basic rehabilitation support for the Kashmiri Pandits. Mr Inderfurth indicated that he was in touch with Mr Pallone and would discuss the issue with him.

According to members of the delegation, Mr. Inderfurth agreed that reference to the plight of Kashmiri- Pandits could be strengthened in the annual State Department human rights report and invited the Pandits to provide more information both here and in New Delhi.

Talking to newsmen, members of the delegation pointed out that the US was indirectly responsible for some of the travails in Kashmir because much of the arms being pumped into the Valley for terrorist activity came from Afghanistan.

"There were no arms in Kashmir ten years ago," one of the members said. The delegation told newsmen that there were 300,000 Pandits in the Kashmir Valley in 1989. About 85

per cent of them had to leave on account of threats from Pakistani-aided terrorists. Initially, they were in camps. Gradually, many of those who had resources or could get jobs dispersed throughout India. About 50,000 Pandits are still left in the camps in horrendous physical and psychological condition. "Menopause begins at age 35, and the death rate exceeds the birth rate by four to one," a member said.

Members of the delegation told newsmen that some financial packages had been announced by the Government for the Pandits, but those were not enough. Issues of their political, security and cultural rights had also to be addressed. The Pandits felt that the Central and State Governments were not really addressing the issues in a meaningful fashion.

Apart from Dr Sazawal, the other members of the delegation were: Ms Asha Bakaya, Dr Inder Bhat, Dr Ashok Raina and Mr Lalit Wanchoo.

3. Review of the J&K State Sub-Committee Report on the Return of Pandits

The state government, under the auspices of the Minister for Revenue, established a Sub-Committee headed by Mr. M.L. Koul, Financial Commissioner, Planning, to prepare a plan for the return of Kashmiri Pandits. The interim report, prepared by the Sub-Committee, was handed to Prime Minister Gujral during a visit to Kashmir on July 24, 1997. The report's significance derives from the fact that it is the first formal policy statement on Kashmiri Pandits from the newly elected state government.

It should be noted that the report is a political document (even though it does not address political issues) from the Abdullah government. Actually, it is a "feeler" political document that has more value in the response it generates, rather than the contents of the report itself. Indeed, the interim nature of the report, legally provides a reasonable basis why the report will undergo drastic changes when finalized, that is, if it is finalized. As a political document, it conveys the following messages:

- a) The State government has not promised anything as yet. It is an action plan and it is an interim report. The report's lack of breadth and depth, except in an area noted below, is deliberate and by reason.
- b) KP concerns are primarily related to economic hardships resulting from their dislocation, including loss and damage to their real estate and livelihood (especially government employees). Even though the document in its final form (if eventually issued) will, in all likelihood, never commit to the size of the financial outlay described in the "teaser" interim report, I believe the emphasis on that aspect is a clear indication of the government's plans to do something in this area. In some instances, the report goes further than what is expected.
- c) The political aspects have been completely ignored. Indeed, by emphasizing that and dialog with the government, NGO's and Muslims should be of "social" nature, the State government is conveying a message that it is not ready to acknowledge political rights of the community outside of the current political structure, represented by NC, Congress, BJP, etc. in the State Assembly.
- d) The cultural aspects have been completely ignored. That would imply that the State government is unwilling to admit the endangered nature of our community, and the redoubling of the effort needed to save our community from extinction.
- e) The human rights issues have been treated superficially. The State government's obligations have been cynically reduced to "the appreciation that government can not protect every member of minority community". The report has put the burden on the

State NGO's for "social acceptability" of Pandits. By inference, the State government has absolved itself from any responsibility to protect the human rights of Pandits, including the inalienable right of Pandits to freely and fully practice their faith and customs without fear and prejudice. The report is completely silent on Islamic fundamentalism, Pan-Islamic insurgency and targeted assassinations of KPs since 1989 that led to the exodus and loss of human rights.

f) The report does not address issues dealing with the current state of religious Hindu properties in the valley, including temples.

g) The security issues have been treated superficially. The creation of Transit Settlements is simply one more constructive project intended to feed the black hole of corruption and nepotism in the State. The ability of PGMP to protect the properties has been questioned by the report itself, when it admits to a possibility of arson handed by PGMP (Section V, Item b). By ignoring the security issues, especially in light of historical data, the State government is making no commitments to take constitutional, political, judicial and administrative steps, beyond the formation of PGMP, to ensure that past tragedies are not repeated.

h) The report is clear in emphasizing that KP's are not organized in a predominant formation, and that the multitude of organizations and individuals carry equal voice and can be accessed in Jammu and Delhi.

This report is inadequate in addressing core issues facing the community today. It is unacceptable to Pandits because it was prepared with a political agenda to downplay community needs, hopes and aspirations. Furthermore, failure to recognize that Kashmiri Pandits have organized a united front in Jammu to facilitate dialog with the State government, indicates a lack of sincerity and goodwill on the part of the administration. The membership of the Kashmiri Pandit Political Steering Committee (KPPSC) is drawn from various front line organizations in Jammu and Delhi (Panun Kashmir, Panun Kashmir Movement, Kashmiri Pandit Sabha, All State Kashmiri Pandit Conference and Kashmiri Samiti Delhi). The State government must demonstrate its willingness to break institutional barriers that are blocking the Pandit community from participating in the political and decision making process. Minority Pandit community in Kashmir deserves the same rights as various minorities have demanded in the rest of India.

4. Late Breaking News:

Membership Drive Update

The 1997 membership drive for IAKF, for organizational purposes is closed on Nov. 30, 1997. Since this issue of KPI will not reach the reader until early December, the close-out date has been extended to Dec. 30, 1997.

This part of the newsletter has been compiled by Vijay Sazawal.

KOA Executive Committee:

President Lalit Wanchoo, MD (301) 262-7743

Vice-President Sushma Bhan, TX (281) 492-7575

Secretary Yoginder Kak, MD (301) 515-9472

Treasurer Shana Mattoo, MD (301) 552-2844

Directors:

Zone 1: Nirmal Mattoo (516) 671-1615
Zone 2: Sanjay Kaul (617) 893-4982
Zone 3: Ashoke Kachroo (215) 295-0218
Zone 4: Vijay Sazawal (301) 208-1679
Zone 5: Sushma Bhan (281) 492-7575
Zone 6: Sidarath Ganju (770) 409-1200
Zone 7: Ameeta Bamzai (708) 369-1324
Zone 8: Suman Hukku (810) 656-2542
Zone 9: Autar Karihaloo (209) 632- 0282
Zone 10: Shibani Tikku (805) 987-1139

KPI Newsletter - Editorial Board:

Rajinder Razdan, Ashok Raina, Autar Karihaloo, Lalit Wanchoo

REMINDER:

Please renew your KOA membership
Annual Dues: \$30/family, \$15/single,
\$15/senior couple, Life member: \$500

APPEAL

Please donate generously to KOA
(donations are tax deductible)

E-mail:

koausa@koausa.org

Websites:

<http://www.koausa.org/>
<http://www.kashmir-information.com/>

KOA Address:

4302 Rockport Lane
Bowie, MD 20720