

SIRI GURU NANAK DARBAR GURDWARA

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NEWS RELEASE – 13 April 2008

GREAT VAISAKHI CELEBRATIONS IN GRAVESEND

The Sikh festival of Vaisakhi was celebrated in Gravesend this weekend by the communities of Kent and South East London with the Nagar Kirtan (procession) on Saturday 12th April, and the Gurpurb (celebratory service) on Sunday 13th April at the Guru Nanak Darbar Gurdwara.

More than 5,000 people took part in the procession on Saturday, starting from Guru Nanak Darbar Gurdwara in Clarence Place and stopping at the spectacular new Gurdwara being built in Khalsa Avenue. The procession then carried on through the Town Centre and past the Ravidas Gurdwara in Brandon Street before returning to Clarence Place. People from all communities either took part or watched as the thousands of people and many floats passed by. The front part of the procession was religious, whilst cultural floats followed behind. At the front of the procession was the model of the Golden Temple, within which was the Sikh holy scripture, Guru Granth Sahib. Children from the Guru Nanak Punjabi School walked behind as Shabad Kirtan (Sikh religious "hymns") were sung. Children from the Komal Sangeet Academy also performed Kirtan on a following lorry. The elderly were also able to take part, with a lorry and three vans from Guru Nanak Day Centre (Gravesend) and Milan Day Centre (Dartford), both managed by Kent Social Services.

The whole day was a great success, thanks to the months of planning. The Gurdwara Management Committee would particularly like to thank Gravesham Borough Council and Kent Police for all of their help and assistance on the day, as well as Kent Fire & Rescue Service and the NW Kent Racial Equality Council who have been involved throughout the planning. The Gurdwara is also grateful to the many other organisations who contributed to the day being such a success, including Komal Sangeet Academy, Baba Fateh Singh Akhara, Lethal Soundz, Jugnu Bhangra Group, Asian Welfare Society, Four by Four Bhangra Group. Children from Rosherville School, Wrotham Road School and Holy Trinity also took part on the Jugnu and Asian Welfare Society floats. Kent Police and Kent Fire and Rescue Services took part with many officers and specially decorated vehicles taking part. St Johns Ambulance Service and the Environment Agency also took part. Gatka (Sikh martial art) demonstrations were given by the Baba Fateh Singh Gatka Akhara at the end of the afternoon, as well as the group taking part in the procession.

The new £11.5 million new Gurdwara is being funded entirely by voluntary contributions from the community, and appeals for funds were made throughout the weekend, resulting in £150,000 being donated or pledged. The Anthony Nolan Trust also appealed for bone marrow donors to volunteer, particularly to help find a blood type match for a young local girl (Rhiana Deol) who is suffering from Leukemia.

For pictures of the weekend, please see <http://picasaweb.google.co.uk/GuruNanakDarbarGravesend>

Jaspal Singh Dhesi

President, Guru Nanak Darbar Gurdwara

On behalf of the Gurdwara Management Committee

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