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PUNJAB & HARYANA HIGH COURT

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Dated: 2.5.2020

To,

1. Secretary, Government of India,
Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology,
New Delhi.

2. President, News Broadcasters Association,
NOIDA

3. General Secretary/President,
Editors Guild of India.

THROUGH E-MAIL

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Dear Sirs,

Subject : Request for issuance of directions to electronic and print media to exercise restraint in broadcasting news about pilgrims returning from Hazur Sahib, in Nanded, testing Corona positive:

Kindly refer to above. As you must be aware that the electronic and print media is reporting day in and day out regarding substantial number of pilgrims returning to Punjab, from Hazur Sahib, in Nanded (Maharashtra) (also known as Takaht Hazur Sahib), testing Corona positive. A vast section of Sikhs in Punjab feels aggrieved on viewing such

reports, as if persons belonging to a particular religion are being blamed for spread of Corona in Punjab. As a matter of fact, there were several thousand Sikh pilgrims at Hazur Sahib, who got stranded there due to declaration of nation-wide lock down. The State Government of Maharashtra, as well as Punjab, could not make any prompt arrangement for repatriation of those pilgrims. It can not be ruled out that delay in their repatriation resulted into unfortunate situation, wherein the pilgrims fell victim to Corona. The pilgrims were not at fault for this. They can not be faulted for the resultant horrible situation. They are rather the victims of apathy of the two Governments. They deserve all the compassion. As per reports, a few thousand pilgrims have been brought back to Punjab, whereas about seven thousand are still stranded at Nanded. Arrangements are afoot for their repatriation also. The same has to be undertaken promptly.

The grievance of a vast section of pilgrims is that by repeatedly mentioning the name of their historic shrine (i.e., Hazur Sahib), their religion is being maligned for no fault of theirs. It would have been better if the electronic channels would not have referred to Hazur Sahib, since a mere reference to persons returning from Maharashtra would have been sufficient.

You will kindly appreciate that Punjab has been at the fore front of every war against neighboring Country. It has suffered a lot during terrorism. Sikhs have always made maximum sacrifices for the Nation. Any inadvertent attempt to alienate them by mentioning the name of their historic shrine in news broadcasts is utterly unnecessary and avoidable.

I would therefore, call upon you to issue appropriate instructions/guidelines to electronic and print media to exercise restraint and avoid referring to "Hazur Sahib" or "Sikhs" while telecasting reports about some of the pilgrims returning from Hazur Sahib testing Corona positive.

Meanwhile, please acknowledge receipt.

Yours Sincerely,

(H.C. ARORA)

ADVOCATE AND

SOCIAL ACTIVIST