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Dear Prime Minister

It is not easy for any Prime Minister to win the hearts and minds of a community in his own country, much less of a community in another country, that too one that is primarily located in a country widely perceived as an inimical neighbour, but you have done that and you deserve kudos for it.

Thank you so much for displaying an audacity of hope by accepting the long-pending demand of the Sikh community to allow the Sikh devotees free access to pay obeisance at Gurdwara Kartarpur Sahib (Pakistan) from Dera Baba Nanak (Punjab). Not only did you accept the demand but you pulled out all stops in facilitating that long-cherished dream. The upcoming refurbished and much expanded premises of the Gurdwara Sri Kartarpur Sahib in Pakistan and the facilities your government has endeavored to put in place at considerable cost escape no one's notice. That Pakistan is doing so much for the Sikh community when it is going through some tough economic times is a fact that the community will never forget.

We also value highly the much desired reciprocity displayed by the Government of India and its determination to see the venture through, negotiating a complex minefield of a topsy-turvy mutual relationship, occasional hiccups and competing national interests, to finally reach a point where the Sikhs worldwide are eagerly watching out for the blessed moment when the first jatha will cross over, walk along the corridor and pay obeisance at the shrine where Guru Nanak spent the last twenty years of his life.

Having said this, I consider it my duty to underline that at no point, during these 550th Birth Anniversary celebrations of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, anything should happen that is fundamentally contrary to the spirit of the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev Ji. No contemptuous irritant should be allowed to disturb the divine ambience of the Sri Kartarpur Sahib Corridor even inadvertently.

It is in this context that I have written to our Honorable Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi, to abandon plans to install a 300-foot high flagpole to hoist the Indian national flag on the Indian side of the Kartarpur Sahib corridor. The Sikh community strongly feels that such a display of territorial sovereignty on a spot so infused with religiosity and spirituality, and blessed by Guru Nanak, will not be in keeping with the spirit of what Sri Kartarpur Sahib Corridor has come to symbolize. Likewise, this is to make a fervent and humble plea to you to not fall for any competing display at Sri Kartarpur Sahib corridor.

Competitive ego matches have brought our two nations to a point where we have had to wait for decades before a politician could take decisions as bold as

yourself and Mr. Modi. It is now for you and Mr. Modi to avoid turning Sri Kartarpur Sahib corridor into another Wagah-style display of aggressive nationalism in order to showcase sovereign egos accompanied by bugle calls and drumbeats. Such a display of hostility would unnecessarily vitiate the serenity of the sublime atmosphere along the corridor of faith, which is also being seen as a corridor of peace by the world community.

Both India and Pakistan are undoubtedly two sovereign nations, and the world accepts and concedes that. It should be possible to not display hubris and unnecessary reassertion of sovereign arrogance at a shrine that has the capacity to conjoin us in each other's grief and happiness. India and Pakistan share 3,323 kilometres of clearly demarcated international border where each can plant as many national flags as they wish. But pray, why disturb the sublime ambience of a spiritual corridor with an embittered display of sovereigns egos?

As a precedent, lot many Indian pilgrims visit the Kailash Mansarovar where, despite ups and downs in our relationship with China, both sides have avoided indulging in any display of competitive nationalism along its route and continue to maintain the serenity of the land and the purpose. Let us develop Sri Kartarpur Sahib Corridor, that is just 4.7 kms long and of a very short width, as a symbol of the two nations' efforts to achieve harmony.

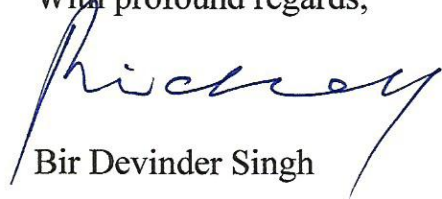
Prime Minister Khan, you won the hearts of the Sikhs when you said you understand their sentiments about Sri Kartarpur Sahib as these would be akin to the sentiments of a devout Muslim who was prevented from visiting Mecca-Medina and is stopped four kilometres away. My Prime Minister shared in his recent Mann Ki Baat; that Guru Nanak not just influenced people in India but in the entire world.

Guru Nanak Dev Ji's message of universal brotherhood transcends all borders and boundaries so, please convince my prime minister and allow him to convince you that both India and Pakistan will do well by refraining from hoisting national flags and instead let the Sri Kartarpur Sahib Corridor emerge as an 'Equatorial Line of Interfaith Understanding' in South Asia.

May Guru Nanak bless your efforts for peace.

Looking forward to a positive response and immediate action in the matter.

With profound regards,



Bir Devinder Singh

**Fazeelat Ma'ab Janab Imraan Khan Sahib
Honorable Prime Minister of Pakistan
Islamabad**