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Ken's adviser is linked



Rally: banners for banned Sikh terror group Babbar Khalsa in Trafalgar Square

Sikh civil servant who backs 'martyr' is now on TfL board

KEN LIVINGSTONE has appointed a former member of a banned terrorist organisation to the board of Transport for London, the Evening Standard can reveal. Until 2001, Dabinderjit Singh, a civil servant, was a member of the International Sikh Youth Federation, a UK-based group banned under British anti-terror laws.

The then Home Office minister, Lord Bassam, said British-based ISYF members were a "threat to national security" and the group had carried out "assassinations, bombings and kidnappings" overseas. The

ANDREW GILLIGAN

ISYF plotted a number of unsuccessful attacks in Britain. One of its members was convicted of the 1985 Air India bombing off Ireland, which killed 329 people—including 114 children—the deadliest terror attack on a single aircraft in history.

After it was banned the ISYF dissolved, creating a successor body, the Sikh Federation UK, whose executive committee and senior members — including Mr Singh — are largely the same as the ISYF's, and whose objectives are the same.

The Sikh Federation UK's official 2008 calendar glorifies terrorist "martyrs" — including the assassins of Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi and the mastermind of the Air India bombing.

Last June, Mr Singh spoke at a Sikh Federation UK rally — sanctioned by Mr Livingstone — in Trafalgar Square. At the rally another speaker praised terrorism and suicide bombing, and the banners of another banned Sikh terror group, Babbar Khalsa, were on display.

The Sikh Federation UK — not to be confused with the moderate British Sikh Federation — has received extensive support from Mr Livingstone and the Mayor has worked closely with it.

He met its leadership — including Mr Singh — as recently as six weeks ago. According to a City Hall press release on 29 February, they presented him with a shield in honour of "the work he has done in support of the Sikh community".

The press release described Mr Singh as a member of the Sikh Federation. He described himself to the Standard as an "adviser" to the federation's executive.

The Mayor also allowed free use of City Hall and the London Assembly chamber for at least two events organised by the Sikh Federation UK — the World Sikh Summit on 17 September last year, and a conference on "making Sikhs visible to decisionmakers" on 1 February 2006. Mr Singh spoke at both events.

Mr Singh has had at least one private oneon-one meeting with the Mayor, in September 2006, and was appointed by him to the TfL board in the same month. He is paid at least £22,000 a year for this appointment.

Mr Singh told the Standard today: "I was a sympathiser of the ISYF but the only time I came into the limelight with the ISYF was in 2000. The organisation was put up for proscription about two months later. When an organisation is proscribed, it's the organisation, not the individuals, that are banned."

He said he was "not disputing" there were links between the ISYF and the Sikh Federation UK but said the latter group was a "reputable organisation".

He described Home Office claims of "assassinations, bombings and kidnappings" by the ISYF as a "generic phrase" and said the ban was "illogical".

The Sikh Federation UK claims to be a peaceful organisation. However, its 2008 calendar is headed: "Never forget the sacrifices made by Sikhs in the last 30 years for freedom and justice." It is plastered with pictures of Sikh terrorists and "martyrs", including Talwinder Singh, the mastermind of the Air India bombing, and Beant Singh, Mrs Gandhi's assassin.

Asked whether it was acceptable to honour the assassin of a prime minister, Dabinderjit Singh said: "We are highlighting people who are martyrs... There is another side to the story. Indira Gandhi was responsible for killing many thousands." The three most senior officers of



terrorist "martyrs" including Indira TfL board member Dabinderjit Singh

the Sikh Federation UK are the former

leaders of the ISYF. The federation's chair,

Amrik Singh Gill, was ISYF president.

Federation vice-president Kuldeep Singh

Chaheru, and general secretary Narinderjit Singh, were vice-presidents of the ISYF. Amrik and Narinderjit met Mr Livingstone this February. Atma Singh, the Mayor's former Asian

Atma Singh, the Mayor's former Asian affairs adviser — himself a Sikh — told the Standard he had warned the Mayor about the Sikh Federation UK.

"In London, the Sikh Federation UK has very little support," he said. "Their power base is limited to half a dozen temples in the Midlands. But City Hall wanted to build them up and give them the same credibility as they did with the [fundamentalist] Muslim Association of Britain."

The ISYF was founded to campaign for an independent Sikh state in India, called Khalistan, and to avenge the 1984 Golden Temple massacre by the Indian government. The Home Office claims British members channelled money and arms to the Indian branch of the organisation.

The ISYF was involved in the bombing of Air India flight 182 over the Atlantic en route from Montreal to London. The attack was mainly the work of Babbar Khalsa. But the only man to be convicted, British-Canadian Inderjit Singh Reyat, from Birmingham, was a member of the ISYF.

ISYF members in India were responsible for killing civilians, including women and children, during the Sikh insurgency in the Punjab from the early Eighties to 1993.

The ISYF plotted murders in Britain, mainly of visiting Indian politicians. The plots were intercepted by British security forces and foiled. It is also suspected of involvement in the 1995 murder — still unsolved — of a moderate, anti-ISYF Sikh newspaper editor in Southall, Tarsem

