

<b>Member</b>	Matthew Guy	<b>Electorate</b>	Bulleen
<b>Period</b>	1 April 2024 to 30 June 2024		

<b>Regulation 6 - Expense allowance and electorate allowance</b>	
Total amount paid to member for electorate allowance	\$12,079.83
Total amount paid to member for expense allowance	\$3,340.96

<b>Regulation 7 - Motor vehicle allowance</b>	
Total amount paid to member for motor vehicle allowance	\$0.00
Member did not receive the motor vehicle allowance in the previous quarter and member has elected to receive the motor vehicle allowance for this quarter	No

<b>Regulation 9 - Parliamentary accommodation sitting allowance</b>	
Total amount paid to member for parliamentary accommodation sitting allowance	\$0.00
Suburb in which the member's parliamentary accommodation is located	n/a

<b>Regulation 10 - Travel allowance claims</b>					
Date from	Date until	Reason for travel	Total amount paid	Town or city in which accommodation was located	Value of the accommodation
Total number of nights for travel allowance claims			0		
Total amount paid to member for travel allowance			\$0.00		

<b>Regulation 11 - Commercial transport allowance claims</b>					
Date from	Date until	Reason for travel	Total amount paid	Mode of transport	Value of transport
Total number of nights for commercial transport allowance claims			0		
Total amount paid to member for commercial transport allowance			\$0.00		

<b>Regulation 12 - International travel allowance claims</b>			
Date from	Date until	Reason for travel	Total amount paid
11-Apr-24	22-Apr-24	Travel to India for Parliamentary business to complete study tour of cultural and transport issues in my role as Shadow Minister for Public Transport and Member for Bulleen.	\$1,256.02
Total number of nights for international travel allowance claims			11
Total amount paid to member for international travel allowance			\$1,256.02
See attached travel report for further details			

**STUDY TOUR TO MALAYSIA AND INDIA**  
**Thursday 11 April – Sunday 21 April 2024**

**Matthew Guy MP**

## PURPOSE

Malaysia and India have strong similarities to Australia, in the formation of their modern states, particularly in that both - like Australia, have their constitutional and institutional structures developed by the British.

This means that our parliamentary systems, our legal and business frameworks, and many of our societal structures have a structure that is familiar to Australia, having been formed along British systems. While there is a drive in Australia and particularly in India and Malaysia to distance from this heritage there is no doubt that all three nations have benefited from these strong legal, parliamentary and societal structures that have seen the development of three different but strong nations.

My primary reason for this trip was economic and cultural development in India, particularly in Punjab, the home state of the Sikh community. The Sikh community is a huge presence in Melbourne and as such, developing parliamentary and friendship links with the home state I believe is important for all Victorian members of parliament. In history, many MPs would have had similar attitudes to many European nations, I believe it is so important, now, to engage India in a deliberate and respectful way, given its history and where its future clearly will be, as the world's largest nation.

Travelling to India I took the time to stop over in Malaysia for around 36 hours, and in that time to engage in a number of meetings to stamp a Victorian presence on a nation that has such strong links back to our state, Many Malaysians call Melbourne home and an increasing number of Malaysian business is focusing on Melbourne.

It's important we also spend time and effort in Malaysia given the economic growth and opportunities to develop further ties with one of our closest neighbours that too often isn't given the attention that Australia should give to it.

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I first visited India on a parliamentary delegation in 2015, took myself back privately, but for work, last year and decided to lead a delegation of local Indian community leaders and myself, this year. The focus was to be clearly on Punjab, the home state of India's 20 million Sikhs.

Punjab has historically been a strong economic performer and a highly influential part of the nation; with many past Prime Minister's noting an old saying that 'he who controls the Punjab, controls India.' While this historical saying isn't as relevant nowadays, what is relevant is the influence of the Punjabi community in Victoria; increasingly in business and cultural ways.

Indian migrants are now Victoria's top source of new arrivals, displacing Chinese two years ago. Many of those arrivals are coming from Punjab. The vast majority are of the Sikh faith; and while India is overwhelmingly a Hindu nation, what is clear is that faiths – in most parts of India – live in a peaceful and harmonious way together.

Villages, neighbours, work colleagues are all of the three main faiths, Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam, and while there has been some focus by western media on internal conflicts, the vast majority of Indians get along with their daily lives oblivious to other people's faith. Multiculturalism is an historical fact to India and being a multifaith society is also just a part of history.

In that sense, the nation is refreshing and highly interesting.

## **ITINERARY**

Thursday April 11

Arrived in the evening into Kuala Lumpur, largest city and capital of Malaysia.

Friday April 12

Meetings in Kuala Lumpur.

Saturday April 13

Midday flight from Kuala Lumpur to Delhi, via Bangkok (change planes).

Late night arrival into Delhi, India's capital city and now the world's second largest metropolitan area.

Sunday April 14

Meetings in Delhi.

Monday April 15

Meetings in and around Delhi.

Tuesday April 16

Morning departure from Delhi for drive to Chandigarh, via Karnal; drive time of just over four hours. Meeting in Karnal and in the afternoon in Chandigarh.

Wednesday April 17

Meetings in Chandigarh.

Thursday April 18

Meetings in Chandigarh then afternoon departure driving to Ludhiana, via Khanna for an evening meeting. Drive time around two and a half hours.

Friday April 19

Day trip to Amritsar, return drive of two and a half hours each way.

Evening meetings back in Ludhiana.

Saturday April 20

Meetings in Ludhiana, then late afternoon drive back to Delhi; six hour drive.

Sunday April 21

Afternoon return flight back to Australia.

Monday April 22

Arrive back in Melbourne.

## **KUALA LUMPUR**

### **Merdeka 118**

In Kuala Lumpur I was honoured to be given a tour of the world's second tallest building the Merdeka 118 tower. At around 680 metres tall (Australia 108 is 318 metres tall) and 118 stories, the building is enormous and while topped out, is now going through the final internal fitting out.

Most importantly, the building's principal designers were Melbourne based Fender Katsalidis, who as a world renowned architectural firm, have designed many of Australia's contemporary large skyscrapers and have a reputation for being edgy and modern. The Merdeka tower is certainly both of those.

Our tour was hosted and guided by the CEO of PNB Merdeka Ventures – one of Malaysia's largest and most important companies – Tengku Dato' Abdul Aziz Tengku Mahmud. It was an honour to meet him and for him to have given up his time to show us the building was very much appreciated. He was accompanied by Mr Chen Chien-Jou, the Project Director and Mr Subash Chandra Kesi Kesavan, the project manager of the Merdeka 118 tower, both from the Turner group.

The lack of mandatory set back requirements in central Kuala Lumpur has certainly helped architects be given the freedom to use the whole site for modern buildings, like Merdeka 118, and the imposition of such requirements in the Melbourne CBD has certainly seen a direct reduction in interest in the city as a result.

### **Mr Murugan Veloo**

It was a great pleasure to spend time and meet Mr Murugan Meloo, a young entrepreneur in the education space and prominent business figure in Kuala Lumpur. Mr Maloo is the co-founder and Director of the Kings University College and has a strong reputation for increasing educational availability to Malaysia's young and particularly to under the privileged.

The Kings University Colle has many thousands of students spread over a number of KL campuses; it has made a great name for itself particularly in the I.T, business management and now in the Artificial Intelligence space. As such it's hugely popular.

The business was founded by Mr Meloo, who spoke at length about the ability for start ups to develop in Malaysia, and ideas that Victoria could adopt to get similar results for startups in Melbourne.

While direct cash funding is not granted by the Malaysian Government, taxation incentives are and as such, business start ups like Kings University College has developed and thrived. It was a productive meeting, particularly on the importance of Victorian taxation policy as a direct incentive for business startup development potential in Melbourne and how smaller taxation incentives can often yield big results.

### **Mr U K Menon LLM**

Late in Kuala Lumpur, I met Mr U.P Menon the CEO of Espact Education. Mr Menon has a Masters in Laws which he obtained from Monash University in the 1960s; when he lived and worked in Melbourne as a student before returning home to Malaysia.

Mr Menon is a fascinating and worldly individual, having seen Australia and his home nation Malaysia develop over the past decades from smaller economies to what they both are today. The discussion with Mr Menon mainly focused on relations between our nations; how Victoria and Melbourne can

position itself in a better way in places such as Malaysia and the importance of continual Australian engagement of nations at cultural meeting points like Malaysia. Mr Menon also spoke about the difficulties of starting business in Australia as opposed to the Malaysian regulatory system and how alignment in these spaces could see much greater opportunities between our nations; and particular with Victoria.

## **INDIA (general)**

### **Indian Railways**

Initially I was excited about being able to use the Indian Railway system again, something I had done in the past from Bangalore to Chennai; but a long running farmers strike which has blocked many of the major roads and rail corridors for months, sadly put an end to the ability to use intercity trains.

At Mohali Railway station I was given a tour of the facilities of this large regional centre and of some of the rollingstock in use for the regional lines on the northern sector of Indian Railways. Indian Railways is divided in to 19 zones; and is one of the largest single employers in the entire country. The northern zone predominately serves Punjab to Delhi trunk lines but also to Haryana state which it neighbours as well.

The main lines in the northern group are, predominately, electrified and mainly use WAP-7 locomotives, which have a whopping 6,300 horsepower and can cruise at 130 km/h; although most track speed will be around 110 km/h.

Locomotives are being fitted with new GPS 'fog signalling' systems; meaning that trains are now communicating with each other directly, as well as the signalling systems, rather than relying solely on standalone two or three position signals.

The use of GPS signalling will allow greater track use and theoretically a safer system as train warnings can be issued electronically as well as via signals alerts and of course, diver observation.

Mohali Railway station serves the Chandigarh twin city of Mohali – It is currently being rebuilt to comply with new disability and aged services requirements that, as station staff advised me, are taking a long time to implement.

Most Indian Railway stations are large community facilities. People use them to meet and congregate, not just catch trains. On almost every railway station in India there is a community letter rack; it contains much about community India as it does transport – letters from pilgrims, a father looking for a son, or someone seeking blessings. Either way, railway stations reflect the life of towns, not just soulless transport hubs.

While at Mohali I had the opportunity to inspect several locomotives; particularly the cabs of two WAP-7 locomotives that were being run around the train consists after concluding local runs. I was fortunate to be allowed in the cab for one of these shunting manoeuvres. The new signalling systems were evident in a somewhat older featured cab; and the modern, highly technical GPS systems stood out in a cab where bars replace windows on the side.

The WAP-7 locomotives are incredibly powerful for passenger engines. I observed them on intercity runs while at railway stations in Delhi and Ludhiana, but only entered one in Mohali. The WA class locomotive has three varieties, WAP for passenger haulage, WAG for freight (goods) and mixed use engines WAM class. The classification and demarcation of them is very indicative of India railways who are very specific on who and what does what job, and not starting from that course at all.

Hence station staff told me at great length that they can't even change rail points, even for shunting, that has to be done by a registered signalman. Thus, the returning Mohali local train was somewhat delayed by the late arrival of a signalman simply to manually change the points (switches); two straight forward movements; but demarcation makes it clear that station staff can no longer do these jobs.

It is pleasing to see that a nation such as India has for many decades pursued electrification of intercity railway lines as a priority. This is something Australia has never done, yet our neighbour, New Zealand, has. Electrification is cleaner, easier, clearly requires no refuelling or movement of fuel reserves and allows for greater horsepower, traction and speed in locomotives. India pursued it with gusto in the 1980s and 1990s and today most of the northern and main southern trunk lines are electric.

New South Wales has historically had a large non metropolitan electric network; Queensland electrified more than anyone else in the 1990s for coal haulage, for the same reasons as India – motive power strength on heavy loads, but Victoria has curiously not done the same.

The only regional electrification in Victoria was the main line to Traralgon and branch line to Yallourn in the 1950s, which was cut back in the 1990 and early 2000s as being a single expense that was not worth the specific investment. This is despite frequent state government plans to electrify the Geelong line as well as Traralgon dating back to the 1940s.

It is my view that regional electrification, particularly to Traralgon and Geelong, should again be examined. Nowadays retrofitting or using new rollingstock orders for slight variation (particularly to the on-order Xtrapolis 2.0 vehicles) could be used for interurban use at higher speeds with faster pick up from stations; allowing greater time table efficiency.

Federal and state funds would be well spend on new electric overhead infrastructure to run directly from Geelong to Traralgon, obviously via Melbourne and possibly via the city loop, where storage or maintenance can be located all outside of the metropolitan area thus saving on space and current crowded carriage storage facilities.

### **Indian Freeway network**

We used the Indian freeway system extensively rather than fly to Punjabi cities and due to the long running farmers strikes, as previously stated, we were unable to use intercity trains.

Indian freeways, like the rail lines, are full community movement channels; they're not just cars and trucks but carts, walking paths, animal stock movement routes; despite the obvious speeds of many of the vehicles passing.

It was pointed out to be on many occasions and by several of the Punjabi Ministers whom I met that road quality in Punjab was one of the states key features for investment attraction.

Noting my previous visit to Rajasthan, I can attest that the quality of the major road network in Punjab (joint federal and state funded) is of a much higher quality than many of the other states I have been to in India; and thus aids Punjab's place as a centre for heavier industries as goods transportation can be easily achieved compared to other places in the nation.

Indian road speeds are similar to Australian; around 100-110 km/h depending on the quality and interaction of other roads to the freeways and in Punjab, given the higher quality of roads and great effort made by the state government in to road maintenance, mostly 110 km/h.

Road safety campaigns are now greater than ever before; something I did discuss with officials in Punjab about Australia and particularly Victorias world leading changes in these areas in the 1970s.

## **DELHI**

### **Gurdwara Bangla Sahib**

No trip to Delhi should be without a visit to the capital's most prominent Sikh temple (Gurdwara) the Bangla Sahib. Having been a temple location since the last 1700s the site is now a place of worship for tens of thousands of Sikhs every day, in a central and prominent location.

The site is home to a large kitchen where, as is the case for all of Sikhdom, anyone can visit and be fed. The kitchen is enormous and the tour we received through it was through many rooms of piled food and enormous pots of Indian food, that is all consumed each day and cooked by volunteers on the site.

We were honoured to meet the Head Priest of Bangla Sahib Mr Giani Ranjit Singh who gave us a tour of the outdoor areas of the Gurdwara.

### **Harmeet Singh Kalka**

We took the time to meet one of the most important figures in the national Capital region, former MP and now President of the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee Mr Harmeet Singh Kalka.

Mr Kalka is exceptionally influential person in the capital and is a close associate to India's Prime Minister the Hon Narendra Modi. We also met Mr Jagdip Singh Khalon, the Committee's General Secretary along with Mr Kalka.

Mr Kalka's role is to manage the affairs of all the Sikh temples across the capital region and to advise the government directly on religious and cultural matters that the Prime Minister and his close team should be aware of. He has been a strong figure in maintaining peace and order across the capital over the last few years and is in regular contact with leaders of the main religious bodies in the National Capital Region and beyond.

Mr Kalka and I spoke about the desire for Punjabi farmers to make a presence in Australia; how this can be assisted by visa sub classes and how support for such policy was present in Australia in the 1990s. We also spoke at length to Mr Kalka and his large team around issues of multiculturalism and multifaith societies.

It was an insightful and worthy time and again reinforced my view that Victoria's Multicultural Commission has been much diminished by our current state government and should return to the Kennett/Bracks days of structure and thus an independent operation, free of government interference.

### **Swaminarayan Akshardham**

The BAPS Hindu temple of Swaminarayan Akshardham is one of the largest places of worship in the world. Its scale is hard to describe, the intricacies of the hand made buildings are hard to fathom and



the fact it was done entirely of volunteer labour is mind blowing. It has been labelled as one of the seven modern wonders of the world, and rightly so.

The 100 acre sight is absolutely enormous and breathtaking. We were given a full guided tour of the site, from the main temple to the surrounding structures, history of India pavilion and a history in the to the BAPS denomination of Hinduism.

After this we had the honour to meet Gnanmunidas Swami (GM Swami) the head swami of the Akshardham temple; a very senior figure in BAPS worldwide. GM Swami has hosted many Australians, from Julia Gillard, Peter Dutton and former NSW Premier then High Commissioner, Barry O'Farrell. He is a New York born, Texan educated Indian American who, having worked for places such as McKinsey and Goldman Sachs, brings a new energy and professionalism to faith in India. GM Swami is reflective of the cool, corporate intelligence that is now evident right across senior figures in India, even in its faith institutions.

GM Swami and I spoke at length about BAPS and their presence in Australia. Having just inaugurated a new BAPS temple in Taylor, a suburb in Canberra (which I recently visited as well); they are now planning a new, enormous facility in the southeastern suburbs of Melbourne. Having purchased land, they are now in final design phases and seek the temple to be a place of collective presence for all faiths, not just Hinduism and not just BAPS.

It was an honour to meet GM Swami and no doubt, like other Australians who have had this honour, it's one I would not forget and valued.

### **Ministry of Road and Transport Conference**

At the Ashok Hotel I spend a morning listening to speakers at a National Highways of India workshop on transport asset management, particularly in relation to roadside asset management. It was a conference I knew was on and thus, though the time pairing to be opportune and the speakers to be useful.

India faces many similar issues to Victoria in relation to vegetation growth on roadsides, despite large desires to maintain vegetation in these locations. It also has similar problems to Victoria and Australia in relation to a large land area, many roads, sealing of edges, sign posting and lighting as well as increased safety issues.

Of keen interest was the discussion about level crossings in rural areas, which India, like Australia, has many.

The conventional view that freight trains can run without side reflector or even solar lights, is one that is being abandoned as truck drivers become increasingly concerned about remote level crossings at night with freight train movement that is exceptionally hard to deter with no warnings.

Similar lessons for Australia and regional road, rail crossings.

### **Business gathering**

A number of the Indian community leaders from Australia had organised a large business gathering for us to engage in, connecting with around a dozen business people across varying sectors to provide feedback and discussion that could be helpful to policy or relationship development.

Attendance of the Delhi based business people were facilitated by two brothers who own export businesses, Monty Singh Rakha and Sunny Singh Rakha.

Most of the discussion centred around the ease of export to international markets. I was stunned to learn that a number of the business owners had found it easier to export to Caribbean nations than Australia and had in fact ceased their work in Australia as a result.

Bureaucracy and onerous red tape issues on the Australian side was cited as key reasons why it was very difficult to export to Australia; businesses ranging from food (packaged not fresh) to building materials were the key point that were cited at the hour and a half long meeting.

## **KARNAL**

### **Universal Visa**

In Karnal we visited the offices of Mr Aseem Saini, a businessman from Melbourne and also from Karnal (on the way to Chandigarh). While primarily focusing on immigration and visa delivery, Mr Saini is now turning his attention to sport and the mutual love of both nations for cricket.

Developing links with Australian sporting clubs and pairing them with clubs in India is now becoming a passion of his and he is seeking to create greater cultural links through sport, for both boys and girls.

While it has been hard to get off the ground in Australia, the interest from India has been enormous, with many local clubs seeking to make contact with Australian clubs and develop friendships and mutual sporting relationships.

It is a terrific idea, and is one that deserves support from government, even at simply a moral level, in the absence of financial.

## **CHANDIGARH**

### **Former Magistrate Sawram Singh Dhaliwal**

It was terrific to begin meetings in the Punjabi capital with a former Magistrate, Sawram Singh Dhaliwal. Having served for more than two decades he had a unique insight in to many sentencing issues and, I believe, had great advice on how to manage and deal with many repeat problems in Punjab that have relevance for Victoria.

Crime, particularly violent crime, domestic violence issues and drug crime was the key topic of our discussion; his view of the importance in many areas of minimum mandatory sentencing having been a policy area that has vastly helped Punjab, was one I believed important for Victoria as well.

It's an outcome that I believe is relevant for legal systems, such as ours and that in India, which have been formed of British law – that is the importance of minimum mandatory sentencing for a number of crimes, particularly those related to violence. This meeting set the scene for a raft of crime/law and order based meetings I had in Punjab, mixed with business and cultural meetings.

### **Periwinkle Singh Grewal**

Meeting Mr Grewal was important after meeting Mr Dhaliwal, as he is a senior Police officer based in Mohali, the sister city of Chandigarh. As a senior Police officer in Mohali, Mr Grewal was able to talk about the issues relating to enforcement and particularly those issues related to drug importation, the problems of land borders and social crimes that come as a result.

It is fascinating and important to hear these stories and to understand that Australia is not alone in many of the drug issues we face and thus the social issues that follow, particularly in relation to violent crime, particularly involving knives.

Again, it was also important to note that mandatory sentencing is a hot topic of discussion in dealing with these issues and my views in support of this approach was again reinforced, albeit from examples similar to Victoria but on the other side of the world.

#### **Former Deputy Chief Minister of Punjab, The Hon Sukhbir Singh Badal**

It was wonderful to meet and chat to The Hon Sukhbir Singh Badal, the former Deputy Chief Minister of Punjab from 2009-2017. Mr Badal served as Deputy Chief Minister three times, his father serving as the Chief Minister previous to this.

Mr Badal has a huge insight in to Punjab and the Sikh people and spoke about the large migration of Sikhs to Canada and Australia, particularly to Melbourne. He spoke at length about the importance of entrepreneurialism to the Sikh people and how important it was to communicate to first arrivals in Punjabi, for Victorian governments, so that new arrivals can get themselves established in Melbourne and thus not be a long term burden upon the Victorian taxpayer but rather become prompt contributors.

His comments were wise and the meeting helpful. He made important points about engagement, not just of Punjabis but comments that are relevant to all new arrivals to an economy like Victorias where we still offer limited communication in detail in non English language.

#### **Minister for Tourism, The Hon Anmol Gagan Maan**

It was an honour to meet Punjab's Tourism Minister Ms Anmol Gagan Maan; a former prominent entertainer and now successful member of the Punjabi parliament and state Minister.

As Minister for Tourism, Cultural Affairs and Investment, Ms Maan has the role of economic promotion of the state and its international tourism investment strategy. This is a focus for the Punjabi Government who have not wasted time in seeking to open new doors to investment and tourism attraction for their state; seeking new branding campaigns as an answer to refocus the state to new markets.

It should be noted, Victoria has recently cut our budget for the very same portfolio topics. Further, it should be noted that even places like Punjab place the absolute importance on a well-funded tourism and business investment strategy to showcase themselves to the world; a point this Minister was very keen to point out. Sadly, for Victoria, our state government has reduced all focus and spend in this area, despite the rest of the world going the other way.

#### **Former Education Minister, The Hon Sikander Singh Maluka**

The Hon. Sikander Singh Maluka was a fascinating person to meet, with a deep interest in education and higher education, portfolios in government he has both held for five years.

Mr maluka spoke directly about the challenges of a dwindling base of younger people in India seeking education overseas, but also on the opportunities it brings those nations, like Australia, to harness the best minds of what is being 'exported' from places like Punjab.

It was a candid discussion about how Australia is not doing anything near the effort of Canada or the United States on seeking the best minds from overseas that study locally, and seek to retain or

incentive a lengthy stay of those students for the benefit of the local Victorian or Australian economies.

### **Chandigarh Institute of Hotel Management**

At this location we met the CEO Mr Vishal Kalia, who gave us a guided tour of what is Chandigarh's biggest institute to train the hospitality workers of the future. It was an impressive facility in size and complexity and offered many insights into how Victoria can train a workforce to be prepared for hospitality challenges, rather than leave it to ad hoc practices as is currently the case.

Punjab acknowledges the importance of hospitality to their economy, a point well made by the meeting with the Punjabi Tourism Minister. As such, hospitality institutes (privately run) have sprung up and now become a source of education, training and labour for the economy in these areas.

They also educate students on their rights, roles, responsibilities and appropriate practices in the workforce of themselves and their employers.

It was an all-in-one facility that gave many younger people a clear opportunity for career protection and development and allowed their economy to have a clear source of future labour for an industry that is so important to them.

### **Director General of Counter Intelligence, state of Punjab, Mr Shivejumar Verma IPS**

Meeting the Director General of Counter Intelligence for the State of Punjab was a slightly daunting experience, given the time being in the middle of the national elections and the management of order during this period being one of his key roles, however it was rewarding and interesting and offered valuable insights in to managing such a large and vast democracy, even in a state of 27 million people.

The importance of law and order bodies to work together and have cross pollination of information was key to Mr Verma's discussion and the importance of elected officials to make this possible was evident. This was interesting to hear on the other side of the world and reinforced my view that Victoria and Australia as a whole can do better in this field.

Mr Verma spoke at length about the importance of maintaining calm situations in the election period; something increasingly relevant for Australia and increasingly relevant at prepoll centres where voting is becoming distracted by protest and in some cases scuffle and violence.

The knowledge of electoral laws was of vast importance to those managing election booths in India, as it is in Australia.

### **Director General of Domestic Intelligence, state of Punjab, Mr R.K Jaiswal IPS**

Similar issues to the Director General of Counter Intelligence was the Director General of Punjabi Domestic Intelligence; monitoring the national election but also, terrorism alerts and issues within multicultural communities.

I was keen to talk about the issues within communities that Punjab manages in the multicultural space; sadly international conflicts have increased issues in these spaces, not just in Australia but worldwide and as such, monitoring all threats in these spaces is important.

While it is not appropriate to vocalise some of those discussions, it is fair to say they are as relevant in India as they are in Australia.

### **Kushaldeep Singh Dhillon MLA**

Meeting Mr Dhillon in Chandigarh he was keen to point out that as a member of parliament from a smaller town, regional services were keenly on his mind. He was keen to discuss how Australia, and Victoria overcomes these service inequities based on geographical divide.

As we spoke about the challenges of providing services to non metropolitan communities, it was clear that India suffers similar issues for farming communities and farming towns that Australia does. But the 'pooling' of government services to one office and one delivery agency, then locating these offices across strategic town in rural areas has helped a lot to overcome these issues in rural Punjab – a point Victoria could well learn from as well.

### **PANCHKULA**

#### **Mandip Singlia**

In the neighbouring city to Chandigarh, Panchkula, we met with Mr Mandip Singlia, a prominent CEO of the manufacturing firm the JP Group. This company is heavily involved in the automotive and medical sectors, providing component parts for companies in Europe and North America in both fields.

Mr Singlia spoke at length about taxation incentives and the importance of subtle government support as much as direct industry support; a point noted on current high taxing Victorian conditions. It was a valuable discussion to talk directly with a CEO who is seeking business with Australia, specifically Victoria, but finding it an onerous task to do so, and what some of the remedies may be for Victoria to attract international interest from firms such as the JP Group.

It should be noted that Mr Singlia was well aware of the Victorian Government super trade missions that occurred a decade ago, a point not lost on him that they no longer take place.

### **LUDHIANA**

#### **Panjab University, Associate Professor Dr Namita Gupta**

It was lovely to meet Dr Namita Gupta who have us a tour and run down of the activities at Panjab University, the biggest university in the state.

Dr Gupta is the head of public relations at the University, which is the educational home for over 25,000 tertiary students. The university is a major focus of the city of Ludhiana with transport and medical centres in the campus. It has a large area for student accommodation on site and also features a primary and secondary school; integrating all levels of education; something that should be considered in Australia as well.

The University is keen to establish more formal links with institutions in Australia and while being courted by Canadian and UK tertiary institutions, made a note of saying they do not have much contact with similar facilities in Australia.

#### **Mr Vineet Sehgal**

In Ludhiana we were invited to a round table of around a dozen local business owners; all in the manufacturing sector, to talk about trade and investment issues, headed by the CEO of local manufacturing firm Mr Vineet Sehgal.

Mr Sehgal owns and managed a clothing manufacturer but his meeting contacts were wide and across varied industries from machine components to the food sector to the aircraft manufacturing industries.

All had similar interest, to explore Australia and Victoria as trade destinations, but all had limited idea how to approach Victoria as a market. It was evident that this kind of interest could be facilitated through stronger localised communication and marketing of Victoria, probably through trade offices, to local business groups and directly to manufacturers such as was present at the meeting.

## **AMRITSAR**

### **The Golden Temple**

It is not possible to go all the way to Punjab and not visit the Golden Temple.

While the roads are very busy, and what is a one hour trip in Australia may be a three hour trip in India, the time taken to get to the edge of the state, to Amritsar, to experience the reverence, splendour and sheer power of the Golden Temple is well worth every travel minute.

Sri Hamandir Sahib, as it is formally known, is the holiest place in the Sikh faith. It is the home of the Holy Book, the last Sikh Guru and as such, is a place of pilgrimage for thousands of Sikhs each day. Its relevance to Victoria's Sikh community is as strong as those who live in the city of Amritsar, the Golden Temple means everything to those of the Sikh faith.

Therefore, it was an honour to visit and tour the full facility that is the whole Golden Temple site and to experience a location that since the late 1500s has been central to one of the world's most well known faiths.

Like all Sikh Gurdwara it is a place open to people of all faiths. It is a place where anyone can visit, pray or eat. Central to Sikhism is the commonality of all in the kitchen and, like Bangla Sahib and almost every Gurdwara across the world, meals are served free to anyone who enters.

It was a powerful experience, one that I encourage all Victorian political leaders to experience and thus, to gain a strong insight into the place, the faith and the values that guides and drives so many of our Sikh arrivals to Melbourne and to Victoria.

...

In conclusion India is a fascinating and powerful nation. But it has changed from my first visit in 2015 to now; it's no longer an old-fashioned nation; it's a modern and determined nation, with clear ambition and ideas. It has a young population that have a determination and vigour that is palpable. They want to succeed; they want their nation to succeed.

Indians know their country is now the biggest in the world. They're no longer afraid of the international economy, or of any other nation; they are seeking to become a truly international and focused nation.

Australian and Victoria have a special chance to be apart of this economic, social and cultural revolution. As a place with such a warm reputation amongst so many Indians, it is our opportunity to develop long standing links that go beyond temples and food, to strong economic and business ties.

It is our chance now to embrace and welcome more from India to Victoria and to further strengthen bonds and ties that will last for a long, long time.

I wish to place on record to appreciation to those from Victoria's Indian community who accompanied me fully at their own cost to be a part of this delegation. Mr Paramjit Singh Jaswal, Mr Sarbrinder Singh Brar and Mr Jasvinder Singh Gil. They worked over time to make this delegation a success.

India is a place I believe all Victorians Members of Parliament should be actively interested in and it is a place I will have no hesitation to return to again promote our state and learn from theirs.

## **ACCOMMODATION**

The following are the accommodation costs for this trip:

Kuala Lumpur; two nights  
Total cost \$392.19

Delhi; three nights  
Total cost \$480.51

Chandigarh; two nights  
Total cost \$162.31

Ludhiana; two nights  
Private residence, no cost to taxpayer.



