

ACCUSED from A1

Suspect unable to wear turban in court

Malik's lawyer says it is an outrage his client, a Sikh, was not permitted to wear his headdress, apparently for security reasons, as he was being transported to court.

His lawyer, Terry La Liberté took exception to the fact his client, who is a baptized Sikh, was not allowed to wear his turban, apparently for security reasons, as he was being transported from Burnaby to the Vancouver court.

"It is an outrage to Mr. Malik and his religion to hold him this way," La Liberté said. "It's demeaning, embarrassing and it shows the way he has been dealt with by the RCMP so far."

La Liberté said the court appearance was unnecessary given that the Crown would undoubtedly be proceeding by direct indictment against the accused.

He said Malik's turban was not considered a security risk when he was in jail in Burnaby all weekend, yet he was forced to remove it for the court appearance. "He was stripped of that and had this article put on his head."

Outside court, La Liberté reiterated earlier comments that the Crown has little evidence against Malik, a Vancouver millionaire Sikh separatist who has headed major institutions in his community such as the Khalsa School and credit union.

"They have told us of no direct forensic evidence, no evidence at all thus far, other than a few people that don't like Mr. Malik," La Liberté said.

He said he will ask for bail for Malik at Friday's hearing in B.C. Supreme Court.

Bagri changed into a blue turban and street clothes before making his brief appearance. He is represented by lawyers Narinder Kang and Les Mackoff.

Among the supporters of the pair in court Monday was Narinder Singh Parmar, the son of the late Babbar Khalsa leader Talwinder Parmar, who with Bagri led the Babbar in Canada.

Parmar was the number one Air India suspect when he was killed while in the custody of Punjab police in October 1992.

The charges against Bagri and Parmar accuse them of conspiracy to commit murder, first-degree murder, attempted murder and endangering an aircraft.

Bagri is also charged with attempted murder in the 1988 assassination attempt on Sikh publisher Tara Singh Hayer, who was fatally shot a decade later.

According to court records, RCMP searched the homes of Malik, Bagri, Johal, Inderjit Singh Reyat and another individual in February 1997.

Reyat was convicted of manslaughter in 1991 and sentenced to 10 years in connection with the Narita bombing.

Tensions were high outside the courtroom when a Sikh journalist, Sukhminder Singh Cheema, was ordered by one of Malik's three sons to stop taking photographs.

The young man yelled at Cheema: "Don't publish that picture or we'll fix you."

Cheema, who hosts a late-night radio talk-show and writes for a series of publications, said he was shocked by the exchange and intended to report the incident to police.

Malik's sons, Jaspreet, Hardeep and Darshan, refused to comment to reporters. They left in one direction, while Parmar and other Babbar supporters got into a van and sped away.

Meanwhile, Moira McDermott of the ministry of education said government officials will meet today with members of the board at Surrey's Khalsa School today to find out what the board has decided to do about Malik's status as president.

"Our interest is the programs and the school," she said.

Just because the school's founder and president has been charged with Canada's worst mass murder, doesn't mean the \$3-million funding to the school will be re-evaluated, McDermott said.

The Air India bombing is believed to have been plotted by a group of B.C.-based Sikh extremists who wanted to retaliate against the Indian government for sending troops into the Golden Temple in Amritsar in June, 1984. The army killed separatist leader Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and hundreds of pilgrims.

Crown prosecutors refused to comment to reporters as they left court, as did Geoff



GLENN BAGLO/Vancouver Sun

SUPPORTER OF ACCUSED: Appearing at provincial court in support of the accused was Narinder Singh Parmar (front), son of the late Babbar Khalsa leader Talwinder Parmar, who was killed while in the custody of Punjab police in 1992.

Gaul, of the B.C. attorney-general's ministry.

"As to future steps or what's going to happen in the future, Crown counsel is not going to be speculating on what's going to happen," Gaul said.

The release of Johal later in the day prompted moderate

Sikh leader Rajinder Singh Bhela, secretary of the Ross Street temple that Johal once headed, to express concerns about the tactics being used by police.

"The way they are proceeding is creating a lot of tension in the community," Bhela said.

Also on Monday, the World Sikh Organization renewed calls Monday for a public inquiry, saying the Sikh community has endured "trial by media" over the past 15 years.

Inderjit Singh Bal, the Canadian president of the organization, said RCMP have

blamed their lack of results on the Sikh community's silence.

"Our offers for assistance, help and cooperation have been ignored, yet our community is continuously held responsible for the actions of specific individuals," Bal said in a news release.