

Of Ajit Garh and Tarn Taran

by Manohar Singh Gill

WHEN Punjab was again divided in 1966, I was DC, Ambala. I proposed the creation of Ropar district in new Punjab. This was accepted. A decade later, Chief Minister Zail Singh changed the name to Roop Nagar. I could not see the rationale.

Mohali township was started by Lakshman Singh Gill. Gyani Ji was persuaded to change it to Sahib Zada Ajit Singh Nagar to commemorate Guru Gobind Singh's eldest warrior son. The name was too long and never used. It is always written as SAS Nagar (Mohali). Sadly, even Punjab Government orders use this name.

I suggested that Mohali's name should be Ajit Garh which fits with Gobindgarh and Chandigarh. It is short and pithy. I pointed out that the billion-dollar publicity cricket brings, sadly goes to Mohali and Ajit is forgotten. Gyani Ji offered to write in favour of my suggestion, but I said I will write and try.

Over the years, I wrote repeatedly to succeeding Chief Ministers of Punjab, including my current friend. Nothing happened. Now a new district has been created. I would one again suggest to the Government and people of Punjab to consider my idea and perpetuate Sahib Zada's memory.

Now about Tarn Taran. In the choice and shape of the new districts, something interesting has happened. After Pratap Singh Kairon passed away in 1965, political power has remained south of the Sutlej, irrespective of the party in com-

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mand. Many new districts have been created all in one region. We have Faridkot, Muktsar, Mansa, Fatehgarh, Nawanshahr, SAS Nagar and may be some more. The size and boundaries defy understanding and logic. Some districts have a population of only a few lakh.

However, Amritsar with 30 lakh or more population, continues to remain unchanged. In 1987, I suggested to Governor Ray the creation Muktsar and Tarn Taran as new districts, to meet Sikh sentiments and better management. This did not happen. Later Muktsar emerged, but Tarn Taran remains ignored.

Tarn Taran has a central place in the Sikh Faith. Guru Arjan Dev compiled the Granth Sahib here. Can we imagine a Golden Temple without the Granth Sahib? Give Tarn Taran its due and declare it a district with sub-divisions at Patti and Goindwal. It will have a balance of population, reduce the pressure on the DC, Amritsar and enhance the development of this neglected border area.

When I was Development Commissioner, Punjab, I started a new Mandi Board scheme of Vikas Bhavans in all sub-divisions of the state. The first one, a four-story office block, was built in the Tarn Taran Mandi. I visualised it as the future Tarn Taran DC's office. It still awaits its first occupant.

The writer is a Member of Parliament