

Second Sikh to join US Army

THE U. S. ARMY HAS ANNOUNCED last December that it will accept a second Sikh recruit, Captain Tejdeep Singh Rattan, with his Sikh identity intact. Captain Rattan, a military dentist, had refused to remove his dastar or shave his hair as a condition of joining the military.

On Vaisakhi 2009, the Sikh Coalition launched a campaign calling on the Army to accept all Sikhs, including Captain Kamaljeet Singh Kalsi and Captain Tejdeep Singh Rattan into the military. The Army announced that Captain Kamaljeet Singh would be allowed to serve earlier this fall.

The U.S. Army's acceptance of Captain Tejdeep Singh and Captain Kamaljeet Singh marks the first time in 23 years that the Army will accept Sikh recruits who maintain their articles of faith.

While the Sikh Coalition whole heartedly applauds the Army's action, it remains concerned that Captain Tejdeep Singh and Captain Kamaljeet Singh received individual accommodations to Army policy. There has not yet been a change to the overall policy excluding Sikhs from service.

The Big Picture: What This Victory Means for the Sikh Community

The individual accommodations for Captain Tejdeep Singh and Captain Kamaljeet Singh have significant implications for Sikh employees.

The Army is America's largest and most prominent employer. Ending discrimination in the United States Army sends a message to all other employers, both private and public, that discrimination against Sikhs who maintain their articles of faith is not acceptable.

Though Sikhs have approached several police and sheriff's departments for jobs, they are often told that if Sikhs cannot serve as US soldiers, they cannot serve as police officers either.

Most importantly, over the long-term, equal participation of Sikhs in all of society's institutions, including the Army, will go a long way towards reducing the prejudice Sikhs often face in schools and on the streets.

Next Steps

Over the coming year, with the community's active support and in collaboration with other Sikh organizations, the Coalition will continue to work with the US Army to ensure all Sikhs may serve without individual exemptions. We are encouraged that the Army has expressed its willingness to review its general policy of excluding Sikhs from service.

A Thank You to Our Community Partners

The Coalition would like to thank the law firm of McDermott Will & Emery LLP, and Amandeep Singh Sidhu, Esq., McDermott's lead attorney on the matter. In 2009 alone, McDermott attorneys have donated over \$250,000 in pro bono legal services to the Sikh Coalition on this issue.

The Coalition would also like to thank Representative Howard Berman (D-CA) and Jasmeet Kaur Ahuja on his staff for the countless hours they devoted to ensure a successful resolution of Captain Rattan's and Captain Kalsi's matter.

Several Sikh groups worked together to achieve this goal. The Coalition would like to thank the Sikh Council on Research and Education for the many hours it invested in outreach on Capital Hill, as well as the SALDEF and United Sikhs. Finally the Coalition would like to thank the thousands of Sikhs who signed petitions to the Army's leadership and contacted their Members of Congress.

As always, the Sikh Coalition urges all Sikhs to practice their faith fearlessly. If you are barred from joining the military or any type of employment because of your Sikh faith, please report the incident at legal@sikhcoalition.org.

[Courtesy: *The Sikh Coalition*]



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The Ideal Sikh That I Want To Be

*HIMMAT SINGH (16) (MALAYSIA)**

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I AM CURRENTLY A YOUNG but a quickly growing Sikh teen. When I grow older, I aspire to be as perfect a Sikh as I can be; one who would be an exemplary role-model to youngsters and whom they can look up to.

The best way, or rather the most conventional path to undertake is that I will subscribe to the teachings of the Sikh institution. Actually, it is not that I have not subscribed to those teachings yet. It is just that as I grow older, the thought of being a great Sikh will inspire and spur me on to lean onto the finer, more intricate teachings of the Sikh ideology.

For a start, I have taken 'Amrit', something that is a rarity given the age that I had taken it – 11. Well, there is ample of room of improvement there, and truthfully, albeit with much haste of my consciousness, I will improve there.

In addition to that, I also do my 'Rehraas Sahib' path on an almost daily basis. Speaking of that, I had started doing 'Japji Sahib' in the mornings but God forbid for some reason or another, I could not sustain it.

Furthermore, I do not indulge in anything that is strictly prohibited in my religion. To put it in perspective, I have unshorn hair and many of you would be amazed, my unshorn hair measures a little longer than 165cm. I also do not consume intoxicants such as liquor and cigars. There are other prohibitants too, but these are the key ones.

As a result of that, the thoughts of me cutting my hair or consuming alcoholic beverages do not even cross my mind. Moreover, I shall, through the entirety of my life, thank God for whatever he has in store for me as well as whatever he blesses me with.

I shall also work hard and live by the three golden rules put forth by Guru Nanak, namely; living an honest life by earning by the sweat of my brow and the strength of my back, resonate on the name of the Lord Almighty on every breath I take and lastly, share my earnings with the less fortunate and needy.

If, by God's grace, I become a millionaire or something to that tune in the future, I will build institutions for the less fortunate and shelter the homeless. I will, essentially, do as

much as I can do with the power within my hands to change the lives of the many needy people that are scattered all around the globe.

After helping these people get a firm footing in life, it is my hope that they would in turn help their needy brethren, and so on and so forth. If this cycle continues, the chances of finding helpless folks on the streets will diminish little by little year after year.

So much chatter but no work will make this piece of writing awfully redundant. I will, henceforth, stick to what I have said I want to be in the future. They say, actions speak louder than words, and for that reason, it is my duty to walk the talk, the sooner the better that is.

After all, I want to strive to be as compassionate as Guru Nanak, as great a learner as Guru Angad, as great a sacrificer as Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur, and also as commanding a leader as Guru Gobind Singh was. That is my perception of the ideal Sikh that I want to be.

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Editor's Comment:

It is an absolute delight to go thru this "pearl of an essay". His grasp of the quintessential Gur-Sikhi should be the envy of an older man. This is also a tribute to his school in Malaysia that develops such reflective scholarship.



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Jaspal Singh Bindra - A Success Story

JASPAL SINGH BINDRA, head of Standard Chartered Bank's Asia Operations, has been promoted to the bank's board as group executive director (ED), retaining his current responsibilities. Mr Bindra is the only Asian in the group executive board of the bank which generates 70% of its revenue and profits from Asia.

Mr Bindra's elevation to the board comes at a time when the bank is looking to list on the Indian bourses through an issue of Indian Depository Receipts (IDRs) - the first multinational to consider this instrument. Speaking to ET, Mr Bindra said: "The IDR is likely to happen after March this year subject to market conditions." The bank is likely to hit the IDR market in the second quarter of 2010.

Mr Bindra's appointment comes ahead of the retirement of Gareth Bullock, group ED, who retires before the next AGM. Along with Mr Bindra, the bank's board has also appointed three new independent non-executive directors and a senior independent director - former Korean prime minister Han Seung-Soo. With these appointments, the size of the board would increase from 13 to 16.

Stanchart's Asian focus has helped it come out of the global financial crisis largely unscathed. After the crisis, the group has further reiterated its Asia focus.

Within Asia, India is the second largest revenue and profit generator for the bank and the largest market for wholesale banking. Wholesale banking is the largest profit generator for the group. Out of the total employee strength of around 73,000, there are over 21,000 Indians in the bank. Its employee strength in India itself is around 19,000.

The bank has a strong number of Indians from the mid to the senior levels. Other than Mr Bindra, some of the other senior Indians in the bank include V Shanker, global head of the origination and client coverage; Subroto Som, global head of SME; Prahlad Shantigram, global head of M&A; Rahul Goswami, global head, strategic client coverage; Bala Swaminathan, regional head of origination and client coverage for South and Southeast Asia; and Sundeep Bhandari, head of global markets for northeast Asia.

It is also one of the very few global banks which have not been affected by the credit crisis, the impact of which is now being seen. Stanchart was seen offering balance sheet support of \$5 billion to Bharti during its talks to take over MTN.

“We are a client-focused organisation. For the right client, we will back them to the hilt. Like all prudent organisations, there will be limits. We will also be very supportive of our clients,” said Mr Bindra.

[Courtesy: *The Economic Times*]