BSA pledges £1 million for a Sikh regiment in the British Army

Dr. Rami Ranger CBE, Chairman of the British Sikh Association, pledged £1 million to support the creation of a Sikh regiment within the British Army. Dr Ranger was speaking on 23rd March 2017 at the British Sikh Association annual dinner hosted at the Lancaster Hotel, London to celebrate the Sikh festival of Vaisakhi. The occasion when the Order of the Khalsa was created by Sri Guru Gobind Singh, the 10th Sikh Guru. The Chief Guest at event was the Rt. Hon. Sir Michael Fallon MP, Secretary of State for Defence and the Guest of Honour was H.E. Mr Y.K. Sinha, High Commissioner of India to the United Kingdom.

Over 650 distinguished guests were in attendance including: Mr Richard Harrington MP, Member of Parliament for Watford and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Pensions; Mr Virendra Sharma MP, Member of Parliament for Ealing-Southall; Cllr. Julian Bell, Leader of Ealing Borough Council; Lord & Lady Sheikh of Cornhill; Lt. General Andrew Graham CB CBE, Chairman of the charity ‘Combat Stress’; Mrs Sue Freeth, Chief Executive of the charity ‘Combat Stress’; The Rt. Hon. Sir Tony Baldry DL; Lt. General James Bashall CBE, Commander Home Command; Major General Paul Nanson CBE, Commandant of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst; Major General Tyrone Urch CBE, General Officer Commanding Force Troops Command; Major General Richard Stanford, General Officer Commanding Support Command; Professor Peter John, Vice-Chancellor of the University of West London; Mr Gopichand Hinduja, Co-Chairman of the Hinduja Group; Mr Kamal Vachani, Group Director of Al Maya Group; Mr Joginder Sangar and Mr G. S. Bhalla, Patron of the Punjabi Society of the British Isles.
The event commenced with the spectacular Band of the Brigade of Gurkhas performing the national anthems of India and the United Kingdom followed by a one-minute silence to remember the bravery and sacrifice of PC Keith Palmer, the bravery of all our emergency service men and women and those who have lost their lives or were injured in the terror Attack in Westminster on 22nd March 2017 (a day earlier). An emotional video presentation on Sikh involvement in the British Army and both World Wars was given by Mr Matthew Ward of History Needs You in which he spoke of the strong bond of friendship developing between the British and Sikh soldiers.

In his welcome address, Dr. Sukhbir Kapoor OBE, Secretary General, the British Sikh Association and the Vice Chancellor of World Sikh University, London highlighted the innate bravery of the Sikhs and how in 1699, Guru Gobind Singh inaugurated the Khalsa and how its formation inculcated the strength, bravery and heroism of the Sikhs, with the brave warriors protecting the mother land from invasion at the strategically critical Khyber Pass. The dynamism and strength
was such that it was the strength of the Khalsa that removed the Mogul Empire.

£1 million pledge for a Sikh Regiment

A special video presentation courtesy of the BBC showcasing the impact of the Sikhs in the British Indian Army and both World Wars was followed by the speech by Dr. Rami Ranger CBE, Chairman of the British Sikh Association, who spoke of the growing need for the contribution of Sikhs in both World Wars to be taught as part of the curriculum in our schools. It is scantily known the over 84,000 Sikh soldiers died and over 109,000 injured over the two world wars and there should be a better understanding of our shared history. He spoke of the need to resurrect a Sikh regiment within the British army and announced a £1 million pledge for the recruitment campaign for the regiment.

The Rt. Hon. Sir Michael Fallon MP, Secretary of State for Defence, said it was a great privilege to be attending the programme and opened by greeting the audience in Hindi and Punjabi. He congratulated the great Sikh community on forthcoming Vaisakhi. He highlighted that the Sikhs add an immense contribution to the UK economy. The Secretary of State paid tribute to the bravery of the soldiers at the Battle of Saragarhi and to Flight Lieutenant Jon Singh who, when serving in Afghanistan whilst under fire, landed his helicopter in the most difficult of circumstances. The Secretary of State’s speech was followed by a special presentation of a Limited Edition WW1 Sikh Memorial Fund Bust hand-sculpted by Mark Bibby to the Rt. Hon. Sir Michael Fallon H.E... Mr. Y.K. Sinha. A specially commissioned Saragarhi portrait was also presented to Major General Paul Nanson CBE, Commandant of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.
The special presentations were followed by the Sikh Jewel Awards for outstanding contribution being presented to:

- **Mr Jasminder Singh OBE**, Chairman of Edwardian Hotels London for services to the hospitality industry
- **Khalsa Aid** for Charitable Causes
- **Captain Jagjeet Singh Sohal** for Journalism
- **Ms Gurinder Chadha OBE** for her pioneering achievements in the film industry.

A graduation ceremony by the World Sikh University London followed where Ph.Ds were awarded to **Ms Harmanjit Kaur Sandhu**, **Mr Wazir Singh Sidhu**, **Mr Mohinder Singh Rai** and **Mr Dilbadshah Singh**. The University also awarded Honorary Doctorates to **Mr Gursharan Singh Chadha** and **Mr Atul Pathak OBE** for their outstanding contribution to business and society.