

SPEECH DELIVERED BY DR. RAMI RANGER CBE AT THE ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY SANDHURST ON THE EVENT 9TH JUNE 2016

The Rt. Hon Earl Howe, Armed Forces Minister, Maj Gen Nanson CBE - Commandant Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, Dr Virander Paul, Deputy High Commissioner of India, Hon. Richard Harrington MP, Minister at the Home Office, Brig. Mark Abraham OBE, Brig. Rajesh Jha, Air Commodore Chris Luck MBE, Mr AS Rajan, Min Coordination at the India House, Lt Col Bill Blakey, Mr Ranjit Singh OBE, Mr Resham Sandhu MBE, DL, Mr Gurmail Singh Malhi, President Singh Sabha Gurdwara Southall, Dr Sukhbir Kapoor OBE General Secretary, Members of the BSA Executive Committee, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

First of all, we would like to express our gratitude to Gen. Nick Carter, Chief of General Staff for sparing his very valuable time for us and gracing the evening with his presence and making it extra special.

We are also indebted to Gen. Nanson CBE for hosting this special evening for us and that too at a historic place.

We are deeply touched with the warm hospitality and are beginning to feel at home.

It is an honour and privilege for me to be speaking from the Indian Army Memorial Room at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst.

A place from where illustrious soldiers are trained to defend our way of life at any cost to themselves.

This room also reminds us of our common military history going back centuries.

It symbolises our loyalty towards each other and above all, for the King & Country.

We are conscious of the fact that we are receiving this great honour today because of the sacrifices of our fathers and forefathers before us.

They fought shoulder to shoulder with the Brits in many battles including the two great wars and preserved world freedom.

Who can forget the battle of Saragarhi where just 21 brave Sikh soldiers made their last stand and defended a British post against 10,000 Afghan tribesmen.

They died fighting with valour until the reinforcement arrived.

It was due to their bravery that two crucial British forts, Lockhart and Gulistan, on the North West Frontier were saved.

It is worth remembering that the Brotherhood of Khalsa (Sikhs) was established to uphold human freedom and not to force people to change their religion.

More importantly, the Sikh Turban was worn not to oppress or suppress anyone but to liberate those who were being oppressed in the name of religion.

I shudder to think what would have been the future of India today, if it wasn't for the supreme sacrifices of Sikh Gurus and their followers to uphold human freedom.

It is also worth remembering that it was only the Sikhs who could contain Afghans and stop them from looting and plundering India.

Incidentally, Peshawar was once a part of Afghanistan which Sikhs annexed to keep the Afghans under control and built a fort at Jamrud to keep them on the other side of Khyber pass.

We believe, we too have to leave a legacy for our children and grandchildren so that they too are respected like we are today.

We urge the Minister to help us resurrect a Sikh Regiment in the British Army to bring alive Sikh history of courage and loyalty for our Queen and Country.

We are aware it will be called the Sikh Regiment to inspire British Sikhs but it will be open to everyone to join regardless of their race or religion, in line with the teachings of Sikh Gurus.

Many of you may recall that the British Navy had ships HMS Punjabi and HMS Sikh.

HMS Sikh took part in the sinking of German flagship Bismarck.

The Sikh Regiment will raise the profile of Sikhs in Britain and may stop attacks on them as a result of mistaken identity.

Regrettably, those who are perpetrating terror in the world also wear beards and turbans like the Sikhs.

The members of the Executive Committee are passionate about helping the Armed Forces recruit Sikhs and the Sikh Regiment will help them in their endeavour.

The Regiment will give the Sikhs even more sense of belonging to this great country and keep the honour and bravery of their ancestors alive.

Finally,

I would like to acknowledge all the members of the British Sikh Association.

They are proud to be Indian, Sikh and also very proud to be British.

We find there is no contradiction in being loyal to both countries.

One from where we originate and the other where we have made our homes and where our next generations will live.

They are successful in their own rights and lead very busy lives, yet find time to pay tribute to their Gurus by promoting their philosophy of peaceful coexistence.

I am indebted to them for their help and support in projecting our community for what we are, a positive force doing good for mankind.

Each one of us is an ambassador for our Gurus and we all must live up to their ideals of social and political justice in the world.

Thank you.