

Sikh NGO in France initiates major effort to restore turban pride

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Amritsar: What could be seen as a major effort to restore turban pride in France, a Sikh woman of Indian origin, running a NGO in France, has announced to hold a function in Paris to make French nationals, especially the younger generation, aware about the role and sacrifices made by turbaned Sikh soldiers in France's freedom struggle. "To commemorate World War 1 century, we are going to hold a function in Paris to eulogize the role of Sikh soldiers who had played a pivotal role during World War I, said Sonia Dhillon, president of Dhillon Mary Foundation on Saturday.

She said that the foundation had also constituted a team that would visit



India to trace roots of forgotten heroes of France and honour their relatives. "We are of the view that French nationals need to know the contribution of Sikhs to the freedom they enjoy now," she said, adding that the more they get to know about brave soldiers, the better it would be for them to understand Sikh turban.

French national Pierre Gourmet who is associated with the preparations of the forthcoming function said, "It's important to tell our youth about the contribution of men of diverse cultures and societies for the freedom of France and Sikhs hold a prominent place among others." He said they would also invite Jean-Marie Lafont writer of book *La Presence Francaise Dans Le Royaume Sikh Du Penjab*

which documents the stories of valour or Sikhs.

"Our effort will surely help to dispel myths about turban worn by Sikhs," said Sonia adding that they would also give a power presentation on Sikh's turban, how it was worn and how it was different from other turbans. In India, French embassy is holding various functions to commemorate WW-I. "Indian soldiers came from all over India - it is true that a large group was coming from Punjab and constituted Sikhs - this creates a particular link between France and Punjab in history," said a spokesperson of the French embassy in Delhi. Ambassador of France, Francois Richier, told TOI "We want to honour the memory of Indian soldiers who fought for France in World War-1, and also spread knowledge of their engagement as widely as possible."

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