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## **Policing career is a dream come true**

Naveed Hussain has become only the third non-ethnic-Chinese police recruit since the handover – helped by some intensive language learning

“Excuse me, what movie are you filming here?”

This is a question sometimes asked of Naveed “Alex” Hussain as he patrols Hong Kong’s streets in his police uniform.

“When I am on patrol, it’s not uncommon that those around me would look at me and wonder why there is a South Asian policeman,” said the 21-year-old, who has become the third non-ethnic-Chinese officer to join the 28,000-strong police force since the handover.

“Some would even ask me whether I am really a policeman or [an actor],” said Hussain, who is of Pakistani origin.

But after finding out that they have not intruded on a film set, passers-by tell him it is good news the force is becoming more ethnically diverse and that he should help encourage more people from the minorities to join the force.

And this is what motivated Hussain to join the force in the first place – to set an example for his fellow South Asians.

“I’ve always wanted to be a policeman since childhood, because most South Asians in Hong Kong are either construction workers or security guards, and these are the jobs most of my friends in Tin Shui Wai do,” he said. “I hope to set an example for them that they would not be restricted to low-paying jobs if they work hard.”

He started work in April after finishing his training.

The last census in 2011 found that the city’s Indian community numbered about 28,000, while the Pakistani and Nepalese populations were about 18,000 and 16,000, respectively,

Having grown up in Hong Kong after arriving from Pakistan with his family when he was six months old, Hussain speaks fluent Cantonese. But like most non-ethnic-Chinese children who do not go to mainstream local schools, the need for high proficiency in written Chinese often stands in the way of taking public-sector jobs.

“When I graduated from secondary school, I couldn’t even write 50 Chinese characters,” he said. To

make sure he could pass the language test, Hussain decided to devote a whole year to improving his Chinese.

“Every day, I read newspapers, learned to write the Chinese characters, and wrote a diary [in Chinese].”

Local friends he met at a police programme to introduce the force to ethnic minorities also helped him. After a year, the then 19-year-old passed the force’s alternative Chinese-language test, for which candidates must write a statement in Chinese after watching a video interview.

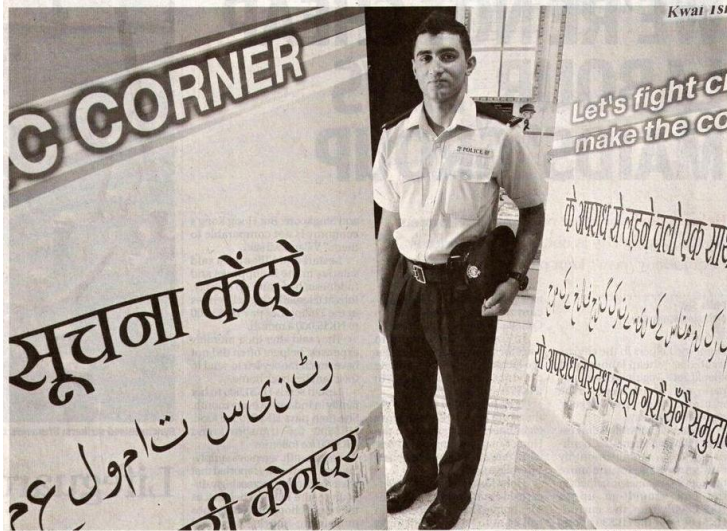
He says his ability to speak Urdu is helpful, and South Asians felt less intimidated when stopped and searched by him as “they would better understand why they are picked”. But he said he himself, when off duty, still gets his ID checked by officers from time to time.

By the end of this month, two more South Asian recruits are expected to complete their training and join the force.

More non-ethnic Chinese joining the force should help bolster affinity between police and the ethnic minorities, said ethnic minority advocacy group *Unison*, but the force should not consider their job done merely by hiring more South Asians.

“Quite a number [of South Asians] feel they are subject to unreasonable stop and search just because of their skin colour,” said the group’s campaign officer Annie Li Man, adding that raising officers’ sensitivity to racial issues was equally important. “It should say, black and white, in the force guidelines that ethnicity is not grounds for suspicion to conduct a stop and search.

“You can’t find any substitutes for certain functions the police perform, and that’s precisely why people of all backgrounds should feel they can count on the police.”



Naveed Hussain says he hopes to inspire more South Asians to follow in his footsteps and consider a policing career. Photo: May Tse

# POLICING CAREER IS A DREAM COME TRUE

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**Samuel Chan**  
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