

Japan relaxes haircut rules to attract army recruits

19th February 2024

Harder



The "short back and sides" haircut is ubiquitous among soldiers, sailors, and airmen

and women in armies, navies and air forces worldwide. The Japanese Defence Ministry has just announced it will relax rules for new recruits to have this crewcut style. This is in a bid to attract more young people to its ranks. Many companies in Japan are experiencing staff shortages; and the military is no exception. From April this year, new enlistees to Japan's Self Defence Forces (SDF) will be allowed to have longer hair. Men will be able to sport longer hair on top, while female personnel can have long hair, provided it does not interfere with the wearing of a helmet or does not fall below the shoulders.

According to the Kyodo news agency, recruitment experts met last month to discuss how troop numbers could be boosted. Japan's defense forces are up against an ever-dwindling number of young people to recruit from. In addition, they have to compete with businesses who are more aggressively trying to lure new employees. Japan's Defense Minister said: "As our nation faces a serious workforce shortage, we recognize competition with others, including the private sector, to secure talent has been intensifying." He added that easing of haircut rules would "change or eliminate regulations that lack rationality". In a related move, the ministry is considering allowing people with tattoos to join the SDF.

Sources: japantimes.co.jp / bbc.com / asahi.com / breakingnewsenglish.com

DISCUSS

"All of us should have very short hair to help save the planet." Do you agree or disagree? Why (not)?

True / False

- 1) All soldiers around the world must have a very short hairstyle. T / F
- 2) Companies in Japan are also introducing new rules about hairstyles. T / F
- 3) The new rules on hair length will come into effect from April. T / F
- 4) Women in Japan's military will not need to wear a helmet. T / F
- 5) Experts hope the relaxed hair rules will increase the number of soldiers. T / F
- 6) Businesses are being aggressive to employees with long hair. T / F
- 7) A shortage of workers is one reason behind the relaxed rules. T / F
- 8) Japan's military will also allow people with tattoos to join the forces. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in bold are from the news article.)

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| 1. ubiquitous | a. remove |
| 2. shortage | b. have on show |
| 3. exception | c. specialists |
| 4. sport | d. omnipresent |
| 5. interfere | e. entice |
| 6. experts | f. lack |
| 7. boosted | g. increased |
| 8. dwindling | h. get in the way |
| 9. lure | i. decreasing |
| 10. eliminate | j. special case |

DISCUSS MORE

- 1) How can countries boost the number of people in their military?
- 2) Why do we need armies?
- 3) What are the benefits of joining the military?
- 4) Does requiring short hair 'lack nationality'?
- 5) Do you like your hair cut?
- 6) Why do those in military have such short hair?
- 7) Do you think people will join the army if they can have long hair?
- 8) Should people with tattoos be allowed to join the army?
- 9) What hairstyle would you recommend to have?
- 10) What questions would you like to ask the recruiters?

Service Jobs

Which is the best service job? Rank these items from 1 (top) to 8 (bottom).

- _ Soldier
- _ Sailor
- _ Fighter pilot
- _ Coast guard
- _ Marine
- _ Police officer
- _ Prison officer
- _ Bomb disposal