

BSCF Vote of Thanks – Kamaljit Kaur Ragha

Let me start the vote of the thanks with the Sikh greeting, Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa Waheguru Ji Ke Fateh.

Happy Vaisakhi to everyone.

It's an incredible honour to be here with you all today on the 16th Vaisakhi event at Parliament organised by the BSCF. I joined the British Sikh Consultative Forum interfaith group last year and have been getting more involved in its activities.

It is very kind of the Speaker of the House, Rt Hon Sir Lyndsay Hoyle to host the annual Vaisakhi celebration in his State Rooms. What a grand space to have the event, it certainly feels special indeed.

On behalf of the British Sikh Consultative Forum, let me thank the Rt Hon Pat McFadden, MP who makes this event possible by sponsoring it. He has been bringing Vaisakhi to Parliament now for over ten years. We also thank Jane Stevenson MP for sponsoring the event this year too.

It is truly overwhelming to see so many Members of Parliament joining us today, to celebrate Vaisakhi. They have all taken time out from their busy schedules to support the Sikh community, showing the reverence held for Sikhs in Britain.

MPs do a lot for their constituencies. I wish to thank them for their hard work. I hope they will also take the message of today's Vaisakhi event, that is 'sewa' selfless service to others.

This event would not be the same without the delicious food from Punjab Restaurant. Amrit Singh, OBE, who has regularly been supporting Vaisakhi at Westminster - thank you. I also want to thank Mr Saguu and Mr Kohli for their support and sponsorships.

The sweets to take home are courtesy of Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Southall who have been generously supporting for many years.

As you can imagine such events take months of planning, I would like to thank Gurinder White who has now been working with BSCF for three years for her tireless efforts to ensure the event ran seamlessly. Alongside, Eve Navais from Pat McFadden's office who has been coordinating the event with the Speaker's Office, with MPs and all arrangements here today. The two work as a great team.

And of course, helpful staff of the Speaker's Office whom without we could not make the event happen. They are really marvellous and supportive.

We have had many volunteers this year. Their help makes the event go without hitches. BSCF thanks them as our champions.

We have had representatives from some 85 Gurdwaras, organisations and affiliations who have attended today. I believe this is one of the largest gatherings of Sikh organisations and Gurdwaras in Parliament. On behalf of British Sikh Consultative Forum, I thank you all for coming together. It is inspiring to see such unity across the Sikh community.

This event would not be what it is without all the guests - your presence today is why so many MPs attend, thank you.

The executive of BSCF works silently behind the scenes, especially Mr Sukhbir Singh and his colleagues - thank you for all that you do. I may have missed some people, and I apologise.

Let me wish you all Happy Vaisakhi again and hope to see you next year. Safe travels home all.

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ke Fateh