VaheGuru Ji ka Khalsa, VaheGuru Ji Ki Fateh.

Sat Sri Akal

My name is Pat McFadden.I am the MP for Wolverhampton South East and I am pleased to be your host for this celebration of Vaisakhi in Parliament.

Let me begin by asking you all to thank the wonderful Kirtan players from the Nishkam Nursery School. And let me say to them you have done your school proud. Your music was beautiful and your parents and teachers will be very proud of you.

We have a wonderful evening ahead of us with speakers from the Sikh community and from across the political parties. This is a cross-party event and I am very grateful to my parliamentary neighbour and co-host, Jane Stevenson the MP for Wolverhampton North East, plus of course, the British Sikh Consultative Forum who co-host and sponsor the event.

We may not have a bias towards political parties but we have a little bias towards Wolverhampton. We will hear from Jane later but right now I want to thank Mr Speaker for agreeing to let us use these wonderful Speaker’s State Rooms once again for hosting this Vaisakhi event.

These rooms are right in the heart of our Parliament and that is exactly where we should be to celebrate this great occasion. We have been holding this event here for many years and once again we are grateful to Amrit Mann and the team at the Punjab restaurant, Covent Garden for providing us with the wonderful food for tonight.

Vaisakhi itself was on 14 April 2023 but I think we should consider Vaisakhi less of a date and more of a season. Across the country in recent weeks there have been celebrations in homes and Gurdwaras and of course the Nagar Kirtan processions through the streets and neighbourhoods of our constituencies. I was honoured to join the Nagar Kirtan in my constituency last Sunday when thousands took to the streets to celebrate the birth of the Khalsa and the special meaning of Vaisakhi.

The theme of this year’s event is volunteering or Seva. As all of you know that theme of Seva is at the heart of Sikhi, not just in the gurdwara but in everyday life too. We saw it during the pandemic when the Sikh community made enormous efforts to look out for others: Sikhs and non-Sikhs alike. And we see it in so many other ways.

We will hear tonight from speakers, who will talk about how important an expression of faith was, the foundation of the Khalsa, and what this occasion means in terms of the teachings of Sikhi. But for the moment It’s my great pleasure to introduce one of my own constituents - Dr Sadhu Singh, Director of the British Sikh Consultative Forum.