

# News story: Armed Forces celebrate Raksha Bandhan with the Hindu Community

In the run up to today's festival, the Armed Forces Hindu Network organised Raksha Bandhan celebrations across the country, including at the Ministry of Defence in London, marking the strong bonds of protection between the community and the Armed Forces. The network has also hosted in recent weeks a Raksha Bandhan tour across a number of temples in Newcastle, Swindon, Liverpool, and London.

Raksha Bandhan, colloquially known as Rakhi, is an age-old Hindu festival that celebrates brotherhood and love. For the Hindus serving in the Armed Forces, the festival holds special significance as it symbolises the duty of the Armed Forces in protecting their society.

At an event at MOD Main Building in London recently, serving personnel from the Armed Forces and MOD civil servants had a Rakhi (a knot of protection) tied to their wrist. Defence Minister Earl Howe participated in the event and later gave a speech to everyone gathered at the event.

Highlighting the ties and values shared between the Hindu community and the Armed Forces, Defence Minister Earl Howe said:

As we exchange our multi-coloured bands, it's a unique opportunity to remind ourselves of the multifaceted ties that bind our great Hindu community and our Armed Forces together.

To defend ourselves we must unite: speaking up for those beliefs of tolerance, fairness and dignity, that make us who we are.

Embracing the importance of diverse communities, the Minister also added:

Knowing what our diverse communities bring, only makes us ambitious for more. Indeed, this Government is committed to recruiting 10 per cent of personnel from minority communities, by 2020.

Members of community forums, including the Hindu Council UK and the Hindu Forum of Britain, came together to celebrate the occasion, along with the Chief of Defence People, Lieutenant General Richard Nugee, and the Director of Submarine Capability, Rear Admiral Tim Hodgson.

Hindus have time and again contributed to the defence of the UK. During the First World War, 1,750,000 Hindus deployed overseas. In the second World War, over 1.25 million Hindus played a pivotal role in the allied victory.

Last week the Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon and senior Defence leaders paid their respects to those who fell during the First World War, at the commemorations of the centenary of the Battle of Passchendaele.

A ceremony was held at the Menin Gate in Ypres which bears the names of hundreds of Indian troops whose graves are unknown. Located nearby to Menin Gate is The Indian Forces Memorial which is dedicated to the 130,000 troops of the Indian Forces who served in Flanders.