

## Chief Rabbi hosts first Hindu-Jewish meet

UK Bureau

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The leaders of the Hindu and Jewish communities met in London on Tuesday for the first time to discuss cooperation between the two communities.

During the meeting between Chief Rabbi Dr Jonathan Sacks and Ramesh Kallidai, Secretary General of the Hindu Forum of Britain, the Chief Rabbi, said, "The Hindu community had added so very much to British life. It simply wouldn't be the same without your contribution. You've added colour, grace and warmth and certain other characteristics, which are so needed.

"Your gentleness, your dignity, your joy of life is so welcome and so rare in a society and an age that often seems so rushed, noisy and sometimes so abrasive and aggressive. We are enriched by all you have given the society we share," he said.

Responding to Dr Sacks warm words, Ramesh Kallidai, added, "This is the first time that the Spiritual head of the Jewish community in Britain has hosted a meeting at his residence for British Hindus and this is a historic moment for enriching the dialogue between the two communities.

"The Jewish community is the most diasporised and modern of communities in the world. The Hindu community is also diasporised and modernised, but we look to the Jewish community for guidance."

Guests at the reception included Henry Grunwald QC, President of the Board of Deputies for British Jews, Rosalind Preston Co-chair of the Interfaith Network, Ned Temko Editor of the Jewish Chronicle, James Lipson of the Indian Jewish Association, Karen Pollock of the Holocaust Education Trust, C B Patel, Chief Patron of the Hindu Forum of Britain, Shruti Dharma Dasa, Vice President of ISKCON Bhaktivedanta Manor, Dr Girdhari Bhan, President of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad UK, Swami Nirliptananda from the London Sevashram Sangha and many others.

Henry Grunwald, President, Board of Deputies of British Jews commented, "Obviously we have political considerations as members of minority communities in this country, but we are guided by our religious principles and religious standards. We must never lose sight of the fact that our communities are based in the age-old traditions of the religions of which we are proud to be a part. That is what makes us different from other parts of British society.

"It's the great strength that we draw from everything that we learn from what our teachers have taught us and continue to teach us. If ever there were a primary example of the dignity of difference, it is in the coming together of our two groups tonight."

Speaking about the cooperation between the two communities, Ramesh Kallidai explained, "The Hindu Forum of Britain, which helped host the event, has established good very relations with the Board of Deputies for British Jews and the Community Security Trust, The Board of Deputies is helping the Hindu Forum to organise community structures similar to the successful model adopted by the Jewish community, while the Community Security

Trust will be helping the Hindu Forum to commission a project for the security of Hindu temples."

Commenting on the traditions common to the Jewish and Hindu faiths, the Chief Rabbi said, "We both honour our past while living in the present. We both seek to honour our traditions while contributing as members of British society. We both cherish our communities, our families and our children.

"We both think we have something more special than the individualism and consumerism of contemporary culture. We have much in common. We also have many things that are different between us. And what we have in common, unites us, and what we have different enriches us."

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