

**12th International Day Of Yoga at the South Lawns, Union Building,
Pretoria (21 June 2026, 09:30 hrs-12 hrs)**

(Remarks by High Commissioner)

Distinguished dignitaries, representatives of the Government of South Africa, High Commissioners / Ambassadors, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, Deputy High Commissioner, staff of the High Commission of India, sponsors, esteemed yoga enthusiasts and instructors, members of the Indian diaspora, friends of India, ladies and gentlemen,

I extend my warm greetings and welcome you to the celebration of the 12th International Day of Yoga.

Today, we celebrate not merely a physical exercise, but a timeless philosophy and way of life that has enriched humanity for thousands of years. The International Day of Yoga has grown into one of the largest global movements dedicated to promoting physical, mental, and emotional wellness.

Yoga is one of India's most enduring gifts to the world. Originating in the ancient Indian civilization, it is rooted in a profound understanding of the inter-connectedness of the body, mind, and spirit. The word *Yoga* is derived from the Sanskrit root *Yuj*, meaning "to unite" or "to join." It signifies the union of the individual self with the universal consciousness, and the harmonious integration of our thoughts, actions, emotions, and aspirations.

Yoga teaches us that true well-being is achieved when there is balance within ourselves and harmony with the world around us. It is not merely about physical postures, it is a holistic discipline that nurtures self-awareness, mindfulness, inner peace, and resilience.

Recognizing yoga's universal relevance, the United Nations General Assembly, in December 2014, adopted by consensus a resolution proclaiming

21 June as the International Day of Yoga. This historic initiative was proposed by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, during his address to the United Nations General Assembly earlier that year. The resolution received unprecedented support co-sponsored by 177 member states across the world including South Africa and Lesotho. The resolution demonstrated the universal appeal of yoga and its contribution to global health and well-being.

As **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** observed in his historic address to the United Nations in 2014:

"Yoga is an invaluable gift of India's ancient tradition. It embodies unity of mind and body, thought and action, restraint and fulfilment, harmony between man and nature; a holistic approach to health and wellbeing."

He further reminded the world that yoga a pathway to discovery, *"the sense of oneness with yourself, the world and nature."* These words remain deeply relevant today.

The Prime Minister has also described yoga as:

"One of the most powerful unifying forces in the world. Yoga unites individuals, families, societies, countries, and the entire humanity." "What unites us is Yoga."

These sentiments resonate profoundly with both the Indian philosophy of **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam** *"The World is One Family"*, and the African philosophy of **Ubuntu**, which teaches us, *"I am because we are."*

Together, these philosophies remind us that our well-being is interconnected and that true progress can only be achieved through mutual respect, compassion, and shared responsibility.

I would like to acknowledge and appreciate the enthusiastic participation of the people and institutions of South Africa and Lesotho in this journey. Throughout the years, the High Commission of India has partnered with yoga organizations, schools, universities, community groups, and wellness

institutions to conduct numerous yoga outreach programmes, bringing together hundreds of participants and further strengthening bilateral relations between these countries.

During the year, the High Commission of India successfully organized six yoga events at Crawford International School, Stadio University, Tshwane South TVET College, Shree Pretoria Hindu Seva Samaj, Virgin Active Loftus, and at India House. Each event witnessed participation ranging from 50 to 200 yoga enthusiasts reflecting the growing interest in yoga and its holistic benefits across diverse communities.

As we celebrate the 12th International Day of Yoga, this year's theme, “**Yoga for Healthy Ageing**”, highlights the importance of yoga for people of all ages. Through movement, breathing exercises, and mindfulness, yoga enhances physical health, mental well-being, and stress management, while helping older adults remain active, independent, and engaged as they age. These benefits align closely with the objectives of the **WHO Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030)**, including promoting independence, reducing the risk of falls, enhancing quality of life, and fostering person-centred approaches to health and well-being

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to further convey a few important announcements:

1. **ITEC Programme:** The Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme, sponsored by the Government of India, continues to provide valuable fully funded short-term training opportunities throughout the year for professionals across various sectors. Early this year, fifteen (15) participants successfully traveled to India to attend the Yoga Training Programme, comprising seven (07) participants from South Africa and eight (08) from Lesotho.

There is an upcoming Special Training Programme for Yoga Trainers (Iteration-I) scheduled to take place from **24 June 2026 to 20 July 2026** in

India. Interested applicants are encouraged to submit their applications at the earliest opportunity. Subject to sufficient demand, an additional customized yoga course may be organized this year to accommodate more participants. Prospective applicants are also encouraged to regularly visit the ITEC Portal for information on upcoming yoga courses and other professional training opportunities offered under the ITEC programme.

2. **Book Launch:** It gives me immense pleasure today to announce the launch of a remarkable publication titled "**Restorative Yoga: For a Healthier Way of Life**", authored by **Mr. Ashwin Harispersad**. The book is written in an accessible and engaging manner, providing practical guidance and clear illustrations that make yoga approachable for both beginners and experienced practitioners.

As we gather today beneath the South African sky at the historic Union Buildings, let us remember that yoga is a bridge between cultures, a pathway to well-being, and a powerful reminder of our shared humanity.

May this International Day of Yoga inspire each of us to embrace healthier lifestyles, cultivate inner peace, strengthen our communities, and contribute to a more harmonious world.

Let us carry forward the timeless message of yoga, **unity over division, assimilation over animosity, and healing over suffering.**

Wishing all the best to Bafana Bafana South African National football team for the FIFA and Vaibhav Sooryavanshi for the world record for the fastest List A half-century by reaching 50 runs off just 11 balls.

I wish you all a meaningful and enriching International Day of Yoga 2026.

Thank You...
