

India Day Celebration at Sandown High School, Sandton (16 August 2026)

(Remarks by High Commissioner)

Consul General Koventhan, Manish Gupta, President of the India Club, my colleagues from High Commission and Consulate, dear friends

Happy Independence Day to all!

I congratulate the India Club for bringing together all the regional and state associations of India on one platform. Throughout the year, our regional associations organise programmes showcasing the rich diversity of our different states and regions. But today's India Day celebration brings all of us together and truly showcases the **unity in diversity—the beautiful mosaic that is India.**

I have a very nostalgic memory of the India Day celebration in 2023, when I had just arrived and joined the Mission, and you welcomed me with such warmth. Over the past three years, we have grown together and become a family. **India Club has truly become a home to me.**

The celebration of India Day, coming just after yesterday's Independence Day celebrations, is also a wonderful opportunity to remind ourselves of the spirit of our freedom struggle, the remarkable progress India has made since independence, and the promising future that lies ahead.

I would like to thank all those who participated so enthusiastically in the various campaigns and competitions organised in the run-up to Independence Day, including the **Har Ghar Tiranga campaign, the painting and photography competitions, and the Bharat Ko Janiye Quiz.** Your enthusiastic participation reflects the strong bond that the Indian diaspora continues to maintain with India.

I am also pleased to inform our Persons of Indian Origin community that we will be organising the **Girmitiya Games** early next year, and we look forward to enthusiastic participation from South Africa. As our women athletes continue to bring greater glory to India by winning medals on the international stage, we hope to see strong and equal participation by women athletes from the diaspora in these Games as well.

Our Consulates will be reaching out to community organisations for the selection of participants. I urge all of you to participate enthusiastically in this process.

We will also be organising the **Viksit Bharat Run**, as we did last year, and I encourage you to participate in large numbers once again.

Last year, Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi received a very warm welcome from the Indian community during his visit to South Africa for the G20 Summit. **A big thank you to all of you for that memorable welcome.**

You will recall that during the Prime Minister's visit, India extended the OCI facility to the seventh generation of Persons of Indian Origin and also relaxed some of the eligibility criteria. Our Consulates have subsequently organised workshops to inform the community about these changes. This was another important step towards strengthening the bonds between India and its diaspora.

I also have some more good news to share with you.

On **12 August**, India and the Southern African Customs Union signed the Terms of Reference for negotiations on a trade agreement, which we hope to conclude within about a year. This is an important step towards further strengthening our commercial and economic relations with the region.

India is currently chairing **BRICS**, and the BRICS Summit will take place on **12–13 September**. We have seen very good participation from South Africa in the BRICS Ministerial meetings and various side events. President Cyril Ramaphosa will lead the South African delegation to the Summit. All of this reflects the strong and enduring strategic partnership and close connections between our two countries.

Recently, at the **PIO Connect** event held in Pretoria, we witnessed the enthusiastic participation of members of the Indian diaspora from different walks of life. We are very proud of the achievements and contributions of the Indian community in South Africa. The diaspora is an important bridge between our two countries, and its contribution to strengthening India–South Africa relations is deeply valued.

The High Commission and our Consulates will continue to encourage and facilitate the active participation of the Indian community in our programmes and events. We will also be very happy to receive your suggestions on how we can further strengthen our engagement with the community.

Once again, I wish all of you and your families a very **Happy Independence Day**.

Jai Hind! Jai Bharat!
