

80th Independence Day of India Reception at Chancery (17 August 2026)

(Remarks by High Commissioner)

Namaste! Good afternoon! Sanibonani, Dumelang, Molweni

Honourable Chief Guest, Deputy Minister of Water and Sanitation of the Republic of South Africa, Dr Jack Bloom;

Ms Leane de Jager, from the Gauteng Provincial Legislature

Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, Ambassador of Eritrea, H.E. Mr Salih Omar Abdu;

Dean of the Asian Group of Diplomats, High Commissioner of Singapore, H.E. Mr Zainal Arif Mantaha;

Ambassadors and High Commissioners

Directors-General and Deputy Directors-General of various South African Government Departments;

South African business leaders;

Consuls General of India in Johannesburg and Durban, Koventhan and Niteen

Honorary Consul of India in Lesotho, Biju Abraham Korah

Members of the Indian community;

Distinguished guests, esteemed colleagues from the High Commission and our Consulates in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban;

Dear friends and fellow citizens of India,

It gives me great pleasure to extend a very warm and heartfelt welcome to each one of you to India's National Day Reception.

This year, India proudly commemorates the **80th anniversary of its Independence**. The freedom we attained on 15 August 1947, followed by the adoption of our Constitution, which came into effect on 26 January 1950, laid the foundation for an inclusive, vibrant and democratic India. Over the past eight decades, these foundations have remained the bedrock of our nation's socio-economic transformation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me take this opportunity to share with you some of the significant developments in the multifaceted partnership between India and South Africa over the past year.

The highlight was undoubtedly the visit of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India to Johannesburg for the **20th G20 Summit in November 2025**. Prime Minister Modi also held a bilateral meeting

with President H.E. Mr Cyril Ramaphosa and participated in the IBSA Leaders' Meeting held on 23 November 2025 on the sidelines of the Summit.

The South African Presidency of the G20 saw active and substantive participation by several Indian Ministers in the G20 ministerial and working-level processes. On behalf of India, I would like to express our appreciation to the South African Presidency for its leadership, commitment and hospitality throughout the year. I would also like to place on record our appreciation for the South African G20 Sherpa and his able team for their excellent stewardship of the process.

Our bilateral engagement has continued to grow from strength to strength. In a major boost to our relations, the Deputy President of South Africa, H.E. Mr Paul Mashatile, accompanied by a high-level delegation, including five Ministers and senior government officials, visited India from 29 May to 3 June 2026. An 11-member South African Parliamentary delegation, led by the Hon. Dr M. Maimane, Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Appropriations, also visited India in February 2026.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

2026 is also the year in which India assumed the chairmanship of BRICS. South Africa's active and meaningful participation in the various BRICS events being hosted in India is further deepening our cooperation.

We have had visits by several important South African Ministers to India for BRICS meetings as well as bilateral consultations, including the Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition, Mr Parks Tau, and the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Mr Ronald Lamola.

We look forward with great anticipation to welcoming the President of the Republic of South Africa, Hon'ble Cyril Ramaphosa, to the **BRICS Summit in New Delhi on 12–13 September**.

Minister Parks Tau had also led a high-level South African business and trade delegation to India for the **20th CII India-Africa Business Conclave in August 2025**, at which South Africa was the focus country.

Our excellent trade and investment partnership is reflected in the displays at the booths as you enter this venue. Last year, bilateral trade reached **USD 15.57 billion**, while Indian investments in South Africa stood at approximately **Rand 3 billion**.

The signing last week of the **Terms of Reference for a Trade Agreement between the Southern African Customs Union and India** marks an important step forward. We hope that this process will further enhance trade and investment between India and the members of the Customs Union, and we look forward to completing the negotiations within the next year.

Mining and critical minerals are another promising area of cooperation.

India's Minister of State for Mines, Hon. Shri Satish Chandra Dubey, led a business delegation that participated in Mining Indaba 2026 in Cape Town. Last month, I had the privilege of leading a delegation of Indian business leaders to the Northern Cape, further advancing our engagement in the mining and investment sectors.

The **India-South Africa Critical Minerals Symposium**, held in partnership with the University of Pretoria in March 2026, brought together leading mining companies, industry experts,

consultants and academicians from prestigious Indian Institutes of Technology, including IIT Bombay, IIT Hyderabad and IIT Dhanbad. The discussions explored opportunities for deeper cooperation in critical minerals, an area of growing strategic importance for both our countries.

In the **defence sector**, following the 9th Joint Defence Committee Meeting held in June 2025, Navy-to-Navy Talks were held in September 2025. The South African Navy frigate *SAS Amatola*, accompanied by a high-level naval delegation led by the Chief of the South African Navy, Vice Admiral Monde Lobese, participated in the **International Fleet Review 2026 and MILAN 2026** in Visakhapatnam in February 2026.

Our **people-to-people ties** have also continued to deepen.

During the visit of the Hon'ble Prime Minister last year, India extended the facility of **Overseas Citizenship of India** up to the seventh generation of persons of Indian origin from South Africa. The Indian diaspora is, indeed, a living bridge between our two countries.

We recently hosted the second edition of **PIO Connect** in Pretoria, further strengthening our engagement with the diaspora.

With the introduction of the **Trusted Tourist Operator Programme**, Indian tourism to South Africa has increased, although we all know that the potential is much greater.

Our education links have also expanded, with two Indian universities signing Memoranda of Understanding with South African institutions of higher learning during the past year. India also offered more than **100 academic scholarships to students from South Africa and Lesotho** to pursue studies at various Indian universities under the India-Africa Maitri Scholarships programme.

Our **cultural cooperation** has continued to flourish.

We are grateful to the South African authorities for installing a bust of **Mahatma Gandhi at the War Museum in Bloemfontein**, honouring his enduring legacy of peace as well as the contribution and experiences of Indian communities during the Anglo-Boer War. The event also saw the launch of the documentary *Caught in the Crossfire*, which highlights our shared history and cultural connections.

A three-day **Indian Film Festival** was held in Durban in March 2026, featuring eight films dubbed in isiZulu, along with an expert panel discussion involving Indian and South African filmmakers.

South African participation in the **International Day of Yoga** celebrations in June, held in Pretoria, Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town, was truly inspiring. More than **20,000 enthusiasts** participated in these events across the country.

Several South African cultural troupes and sports personalities also participated in festivals and sporting events in India, further enriching our people-to-people connections.

Our **cricket ties** remain as strong as ever. Our women's team triumphed over South Africa in the ODI World Cup, while South African women prevailed over India in the T20 series on home soil—ensuring, as we might say diplomatically, a **balanced outcome**!

We look forward to South Africa hosting the **ODI World Cup next year**, and wish the Proteas and all South African sporting teams every success.

Let me also take this opportunity to congratulate **Bafana Bafana** on their impressive performance in the FIFA World Cup.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

India's **development cooperation** with South Africa has also expanded during the past year.

India and South Africa have agreed to establish another **Centre of Specialisation for Artisan Skills at Majuba TVET College**. The Centre, being established in collaboration with Hindustan Machine Tools International (HMTI) of India, will contribute to skills development and create new opportunities for South African youth.

Around **50 South African nationals** also travelled to India last year under various capacity-building and training programmes.

These initiatives reflect the spirit of our development partnership—one based on sharing experiences, building capabilities and creating opportunities for sustainable development.

Dear Guests and Friends,

As we look to the future, there is much to be optimistic about in bilateral ties.

With the BRICS Summit approaching and several high-level visits and engagements planned in the coming months, we are committed to further strengthening and expanding the India-South Africa partnership across all sectors.

Our relationship is rooted not merely in government-to-government engagement, but in **shared values, shared historical experiences, strong people-to-people ties and a common commitment to a more equitable, inclusive and prosperous world**.

India and South Africa have much to offer each other, and I am confident that our partnership will continue to grow in depth, breadth and ambition in the years ahead.

As we celebrate the **80th National Day of India**, I extend my sincere gratitude to our Chief Guest, Hon'ble Deputy Minister Dr Bloom, and to all our distinguished guests for joining us today.

I thank the Government and people of South Africa for their enduring friendship towards India.

Long live the friendship between India and South Africa!

Jai Hind!

Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika
