

HIGH COMMISSIONER'S SPEECH AT NATIONAL DAY RECEPTION ON 27TH JANUARY, 2020

Our Honourable Chief Guest, the Minister of Transport Mr. Fikile Mbalula
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I welcome you all to our National Day reception, which commemorates the day 70 years ago that an old civilisation became a modern republic. Last year, the President of South Africa was the Chief Guest at the Republic Day Parade in India. His visit honoured the friendship between two nations born through struggle and sacrifice and whose history and future are intertwined.

The values, ideas and individuals that shaped the freedom struggles of India and South Africa also shone a beacon of light and hope to all mankind. With the inspiration of the past, we look to a future of promise. The development experience of India and South Africa hold important lessons. Both countries are using the powerful forces and instruments of democracy to reconcile the multiple and varying interests of a diverse population. We are each multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural societies seeking unity under the umbrella of a common nationhood.

The median age of the population in both India and South Africa is below 30. In any future economic or political dispensation, both countries will play an increasing role. We are both members of the Big Three in IBSA and of the Big Five in BRICS. The emphasis in South Africa on the 4th Industrial Revolution speaks to the aspirations of youth. In India, our IT industry is rapidly moving up the value chain. We need to connect Johannesburg, Capetown and Durban with Bangalore, Pune and Gurugram. And the South African Indian community has an important role to play in building bridges of connectivity.

We used to think that the vast Indian Ocean separates India and Africa. But in recent years we have come to see the opportunities that lie in the maritime domain. That is the thinking behind the Indian Ocean Rim association of which our two countries are members. We are working together to harness the

potential of the seas in connecting us and building a maritime economy centred around tourism, disaster and water management and fisheries to name a few areas.

As two emerging economies there is much to learn from each other and to work with each other. South Africa has provided telemetry and other services to India's moon missions. Our scientists are also collaborating in the Square Kilometer Array project. India has an ambitious solar energy program and we are well on our way to achieving our target of 100,000 MW of solar energy capacity by 2022. And last but not least, while South Africa can teach us how to defeat England in Rugby, India can give you a few tips on how to defeat England in Cricket !

Friends, the serial 'Mehek' on India's Zee TV is watched by millions of viewers in South Africa and the rest of Africa. It is a Bollywood production with African actors. 'Mehek' means fragrance and is the story of an African family that moves to India. The narrative develops as an Africa-meets-India story line. The daughter Norah played by Shonisani Masutha falls in love with Karan, an Indian boy. Its a beautiful romance. Thank you.
