

Address by President at Indian Community Reception in Cape Town, South Africa

April 03, 2019

**Hon'ble Mayor of Cape Town Mr Dan Plato
My dear Fellow Indians,
Members of Indian Diaspora,
Friends of India,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Namaskar ! Good evening!**

I am delighted to meet all of you. Thank you for your very warm and affectionate welcome. दक्षिण अफ्रीका और भारत, विविधताओं और सांस्कृतिक समृद्धि के देश हैं। यह विविधता जीवन के हर क्षेत्र में मिलती है, लेकिन इसमें एकता का मजबूत धागा मौजूद रहता है। चाहे सितार हो या सारंगी, तबला हो या मृदंग, हारमोनियम हो या बांसुरी, शास्त्रीय संगीत हो या बॉलीवुड के गीत - भारत के इन जीवंत कलारूपों ने हमेशा से ही जनमानस में आनंद और उल्लास का संचार किया है। आप सभी ने आज यहां जिस तन्मयता और लगन के साथ यह रंगारंग सांस्कृतिक कार्यक्रम प्रस्तुत किया है, उसे देखकर मुझे बहुत खुशी हुई है।

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a unique privilege for me to be visiting South Africa this year, in the 150th birth anniversary year of Mahatma Gandhi. As we pay tribute to him and to his ideals of peace and non-violence on the occasion, it is natural to be reminded of the role South Africa played in his journey from Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi to Mahatma Gandhi. The 21 years he spent in South Africa from 1893 till 1914 turned him into a true stalwart of freedom and justice. In honour of the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, we have begun our celebrations the world over. Over 130 countries, including South Africa, joined us in singing his favourite bhajan "Vaishnav Jan To Tene Kahiye". I paid my tribute to him in all the three countries - Croatia, Bolivia and Chile - that I visited on this overseas tour, speaking to the youth on the relevance of Gandhiji's legacy in our daily life.

India stood firmly with our brothers and sisters in South Africa in their trials and tribulations during the Apartheid regime. We cried in joy when Nelson Mandela visited India in 1990, after his release from Robben Island. We are honoured to have conferred on him Bharat Ratna, our highest national honour the same year. Tomorrow, I will have the opportunity to pay my respects to him at the Robben Island.

South Africa is home to one of the largest Indian diaspora any where in the world and we take great pride in your success and accomplishments. Most of you belong to communities and families that arrived in this beautiful country several generations ago. We have heard the inspiring stories of your forefathers, of how they overcame adversity and built life for themselves. Many among you have come to this country only recently, as professionals, scholars and entrepreneurs.

I deeply appreciate that despite the distance and the passage of time, South Africans of Indian origin have kept India close to their hearts. You celebrate your fairs and festivals with much fanfare, and you have maintained your tradition and culture with pride and glory.

Just a few weeks back, I had the pleasure of conferring Padma Bhushan, India's third-highest civilian honour on Mr. Pravin Gordhan , Minister of Public Enterprises of South Africa. He is a shining example of the contribution of Indian diaspora to the making of this great nation and carrying forward the legacy of stalwarts like Ahmed Kathrada, Lalu Chiba, Mac Maharaj , Billy Nair, Fatima Meer, Dullah Omar, and many other distinguished members of the Indian diaspora who stood shoulder to shoulder with their compatriots in waging a struggle for freedom and creating a modern Republic.

The visit of President Cyril Ramaphosa to India this January as Chief Guest for our Republic Day celebrations opened another chapter in our bilateral relations. The relationship between the two great nations is going from strength to strength. Our economic engagement is one of the key ingredients of this vibrant partnership. Indian companies in South Africa are adding value by opening new avenues of growth in the country. They are providing direct and indirect employment to thousands and stand fully committed to supporting the leadership's vision of bolstering the economy. South African companies are also partnering in India's growth and collaborating in our flagship initiatives like Make In India, Digital India, Clean India, and Smart City programme.

Our relations are, indeed, deep and varied. We stood with South Africa not just in the political sphere. We also took the lead in bringing South Africa back to international cricket. And today these sporting ties are flourishing and running to the boundary, from Newlands to Eden Gardens, and from test cricket to T-20. There is a slice of South Africa in every corner of India, and a bunch of South Africa in every IPL team.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Government of India is committed to deepening its ties with our diaspora abroad. I would urge you to benefit out of the schemes and plans that we have put in place. We have made our OCI scheme simple for more and more people to benefit. Through technology, we have scaled up our outreach and improved our public service delivery. Today, as a matter of routine, we are reaching out to those in need, and with a sense of urgency. I wish to share with you that in the last four years we have rescued over 90,000 Indians caught in violence, strife and natural disasters overseas. हम अपने लोगों के वेलफेयर के प्रति हमेशा तत्पर हैं।

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Tomorrow, as I pay homage to the Struggle Veterans on the Robben Island, I will recall the shared values of our two peoples, and the shared principles of the founding fathers of our two nations, that drive us steadily onto the path of equality and prosperity. May our two nations continue to chart new paths and forge new ties to unleash the creative energies of the two

peoples in ensuring peace and prosperity, not just for ourselves, but for the entire humanity, ably guided by the Mahatma and Madiba.

आपसे मैंने कुछ समय पहले, परम्परा और संस्कृति को संजोकर रखने की बात की थी। मैं आपसे एक और अनुरोध करना चाहूंगा - आप अपने घर पर अपने परिवार से मातृभाषा में बात करें चाहे वह हिन्दी हो, कोंकणी हो, गुजराती हो, पंजाबी हो या तेलगु या तमिल हो, जो कि आपको अपनी रूट्स व सभ्यता से जोड़े रख सके। आप सभी से विदा लेने से पहले, मैं आप सभी को राष्ट्रपति भवन को देखने के लिए आमन्त्रित करता हूँ। हाँ, यह मेरा आवास एवं कार्यालय है परन्तु यह ऐतिहासिक भवन आप सभी के लिए सदैव खुला है। हमारी विरासत व लोकतान्त्रिक मूल्यों को जानने के लिए आप सभी का राष्ट्रपति भवन में स्वागत

And as I say good bye, I wish to invite each one of you to visit Rashtrapati Bhavan. Yes, it is my residence cum office, but more importantly it is a national monument, and you must come by to learn of its democratic values and heritage.

Thank You.

Cape Town
April 02, 2019