ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY MAYOR COUNCILLOR CYRIL XABA REMARKS ON THE OCCASION OF THE 80TH INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION OF INDIA, 15 AUGUST 2026

- Programme Director
- His Excellence Consul-General of India: Mr. Niteen Subhash Yeola
- Members of the Diplomatic Corps
- Government officials
- Artists
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning, Namaste, Vanakkam, Sanibonani.

It is a profound honour to stand before you today at India House, representing the eThekwini Municipality, as we celebrate the 80th Independence Day of the Republic of India.

Today, we celebrate more than a nation's independence. We honour a shared history that connects Durban to India through a timeless legacy of resilience, dignity and the pursuit of freedom. Our two nations are bound

not only by the Indian Ocean, but by struggles that shaped our respective journeys to liberation.

Eighty years ago, India's independence in 1947 became a powerful symbol of self-determination and hope across the colonised world. India's journey since then has been extraordinary. From the challenges inherited at independence, it has emerged as a global force in technology, innovation, science, manufacturing and economic development, while retaining a rich and distinctive cultural identity.

Excellencies, the relationship between South Africa and India is today far more than a historic alliance. It is a cornerstone of South-South cooperation and an important partnership within the Global South. Our shared economic and strategic interests offer enormous opportunities for the future.

For eThekwini, this relationship has a particularly deep meaning. Durban is home to one of the largest communities of Indian descent outside India, and Indian heritage is woven into the social, cultural and economic fabric of our city.

Our histories are also inseparably linked through the struggle against oppression. It was here in South Africa that Mahatma Gandhi developed and refined the philosophy of Satyagraha, which he later carried back to India. Decades later, independent India became a leading international voice in the struggle against apartheid, standing firmly with the people of South Africa in our quest for freedom and justice.

It was former President Nelson Mandela himself who so beautifully captured the depth of this relationship. During his visit to India in 1990, he spoke of the historic bond created by the Indian community in South Africa, saying: ***"As much as India is a particle of our country, so are we too a particle of India."*** He reminded us that history had brought our peoples together as members of one family, and that this shared history made it possible for both South Africans and Indians to claim Mahatma Gandhi as a national hero.

Madiba also understood that the freedom of South Africa was never achieved in isolation. When he addressed the Indian Parliament in 1995, he paid tribute to the people and government of India for their constant

support and counsel to the oppressed people of South Africa. He recognised that India had helped keep the struggle against apartheid before the conscience of the international community and acknowledged that “our victory is the victory of India as well.”

These words are particularly meaningful here in Durban, where the history of the Indian community is inseparable from the broader history of our liberation struggle. They remind us that solidarity is not merely something we celebrate in retrospect; it is a responsibility that we carry forward.

As we gather in 2026, we honour this unbreakable lineage of resistance and solidarity. Our freedoms were forged in a common commitment to human dignity, justice and equality.

We also celebrate India’s remarkable transformation into a global leader in digital innovation, science and technology. From digital public infrastructure and information technology to space exploration and pharmaceutical manufacturing, India has demonstrated what is possible when ambition, innovation and national purpose come together.

This achievement offers important lessons for all of us. India has shown that economic progress and technological advancement can go hand in hand with cultural identity and social development.

As we look to the future, the opportunity for eThekwini and our partners in India is clear: we must transform our shared history into a shared future. We should deepen cooperation in technology, renewable energy, investment, skills development, manufacturing and local economic development, while continuing to strengthen our cultural and people-to-people ties.

By connecting eThekwini's opportunities with India's global momentum, we can create new pathways for innovation, employment, investment and inclusive growth.

On behalf of the eThekwini Municipality and the people of Durban, I reaffirm our commitment to strengthening our relationship with the Consulate General of India and to building a future founded on mutual respect, shared prosperity and lasting friendship. We are pleased to see India and Durban deepening their trade and investment ties, as

demonstrated by the Invest India seminar held in Umhlanga last week. Initiatives such as these will further strengthen trade and economic cooperation between India and Durban.

To the government and people of India, and to the Indian diaspora around the world, I extend our warmest congratulations and fraternal greetings on this historic 80th Independence Day.

May the friendship between South Africa and India continue to grow from strength to strength.

Happy Independence Day!

I thank you.