

Branding of the Mandela Bridge

04 June 2010

Speech by the Executive Mayor of the City of Johannesburg, Clr Amos Masondo, on the occasion of the branding of the Mandela Bridge, Newtown – Johannesburg

The question is often asked "Waar was jy.... Where were you"? Do not miss to be part of the part of the World Cup!

Programme Director

MMC for Community Development: Clr Bafana Sithole

Chief of Council: Clr Nonceba Molwele

Members of the Mayoral Committee

Representatives of FIFA and the LOC

Miss Zindzi Mandela

Managers and Officials of Council

Distinguished Guests

The Media

Programme Director, on Wednesday the 2nd June, the City handed over Soccer City Stadium to FIFA. At this occasion, we indicated that when Grinaker/Lta Interbeton started its work on the stadium, on 17 of January 2007, we were one thousand two hundred and forty (1 240) days to the kick-off. On Wednesday, we were a mere 8 days away from the "biggest sporting spectacle on the globe". Today, Friday the 4th of June, we are a mere 6 days away from the start of the games. This is the last soccer Friday before the kick-off.

On this occasion, we also said that soccer city is a historic site;

It was here that Nelson Mandela addressed more than 100 000 people 3 days after his release from prison in February 1990.

It was at this venue where more than 80 000 mourners gathered to pay their last respects to Chris Hani, the ANC and the South African Communist Party leader, who was assassinated on 10 April 1993.

It was here where the masses of South Africa gathered again a week later to pay their last respects to the President of the ANC, OR Tambo who had passed on.

The finals of the African Cup of Nations in February 1996 were played in this very stadium, in a game where Bafana Bafana beat Tunisia 2-0. Bafana Bafana, then went on to defeat Congo 1-0 to qualify for the first time for the 1998 FIFA World Cup.

Ladies and gentlemen you will agree with me when I say that the Mandela bridge is also a site of historical significance.

We all know that Nelson Mandela, Johannesburg's most illustrious resident and South Africa's icon, and the staging of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, cannot be separated. One of the reasons why we won the bid is because Nelson Mandela in person, engaged in vigorous campaigning for the country to host this biggest sporting event. When, in a few days' time, the eyes of billions of people across the world will be fixed on Soccer City, it will also be a tribute to the stature of the founding father of our democracy.

Like the person it was named after, the Nelson Mandela Bridge has become the iconic symbol of the "new Johannesburg" – an inclusive city, a melting pot of cultures and traditions, a vibrant meeting place for all the peoples of Africa. As we drape this bridge, we reaffirm Madiba as the architect of our transformation the symbol of reconciliation and nation-building.

Paris has the Eiffel Tower, New York has the Statue of Liberty, Sydney has its Opera House, Johannesburg has the Nelson Mandela Bridge – the largest cable-stayed bridge in southern Africa. We are looking forward to an excellent performance not only by Bafana Bafana, but expect the five African teams to set the stage on fire and do us proud. Let us not forget that this is an African world cup. We call on all residents and citizens of our land, and all African patriots, to open their hearts and give a warm embrace to the world. Lets see Ubuntu and Harambee in action.

Six (6) days before the first whistle is blown at Soccer City, as we unveil this poster of Nelson Mandela's face, we are immensely proud of the work done thus far. We have no doubt, that everyone will feel welcome when they cross this bridge, which symbolizes the connection between the South and North divide of our City.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to all our guests that would make this City their home in the following month and wish all the teams well in their endeavours to compete for the title of the soccer world champions.

As a South African may I take this opportunity to wish our National team, the coach and the technical team well.

May the best team win.

Thank you

Facts about the bridge

The asymmetrical dual-pylon cable-stay bridge is made up of a 66 metre north back span, a 176 metre main span and a 42 metre south back span, giving a total length of 284 metres.

The north pylon is 42 metres high and the south pylon 27 metres high, creating a delicate balance and an interesting visual appeal. According to Engineering News, the main span was built as light as possible, using structural steel with a concrete composite deck, while the heavier back spans were built from reinforced concrete to counterbalance the long main span.

The bridge "is supported on the largest pot bearings ever to be installed in South Africa," Engineering News reported. "The 1.5 metre diameter bearings, which have a capacity of up to 27 Mn, are designed to accommodate the large temperature movements of the bridge."

Approximately 4 000 cubic metres of concrete and 1 000 tons of structural steel were used to construct the bridge, with around 500 tons of reinforcing steel cast into the concrete.

Today marks the full realisation of what the City had set out to do in its preparations to host the "best world cup ever"

Ladies and Gentlemen, please allow me to indicate, as many have already stated so many times before, that the best team of this World Cup will be crowned here on 11 July 2010.