

Diwali Festival of Light

23 October 2010

Speech by the Executive Mayor of the City of Johannesburg, Clr Amos Masondo, on the occasion of the Diwali Festival of Light, Mary Fitzgerald Square, Newtown – Johannesburg

Programme Director

Chairperson of Council Committee Chairpersons: Clr Prema Naidoo

Members of the South African Hindu Maha Sabha – Gauteng

Religious leaders

Members of the Mayoral Committee

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The Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Programme Director, it is indeed a great honour and privilege for me to be part of this very important occasion – the Diwali Festival of Light.

The yearly FNB Gauteng Diwali Festival is now firmly established as one of the social and religious highlights on Johannesburg's annual calendar.

Programme Director, the Festival of Light occupies a very special place in the lives of the Hindu community. This celebration is about the triumphal return of Lord Rama to his kingdom of Ayodhya in 1450 BC after 14 years in exile. It also marks the triumph of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance and goodness over evil.

This celebration has grown over the years. Its appeal extends far and wide. Many communities in Johannesburg are drawn to these festivities. This is, amongst others, a reflection of excellent organisational work marked by quality entertainment and a wide variety of activities on offer.

This festival represents everything that is good about Johannesburg as an inclusive City, a melting pot of cultures, traditions, backgrounds and histories. It is my wish that this festival will continue to

foster the spirit of inclusiveness and promote cultural and religious tolerance and understanding amongst all our residents.

Programme Director, this year we celebrate the arrival of the first generation of Indian immigrants in South Africa, in the year 1860 – exactly 150 years ago. So the year 2010, is a very important milestone for the South African community of Indian descent.

Through the decades, the Indian community has played a vital role in all sectors of South African society. They have provided leadership and innovation in the areas of politics and governance, commerce and industry, education and the sciences, arts, culture and sport. We are grateful to all of them for making such a sterling contribution.

Programme Director, a little more than 100 years ago, a young Indian lawyer arrived in Johannesburg. He set up an office at Rissik Street, not very far from where we are. Historians and commentators, through the years, have written about the early life and thinking of Mohandas Gandhi.

It was at the Empire Theatre in Ferreira Street – between Fox and Commissioner (Streets) – that the founding father of the Indian Republic first spoke about "satyagraha" or passive resistance – a concept that has been associated with his thinking, ideas and practice. It is in this vicinity, at a site that boasts of a life size statue, at the Gandhi Square, that the initial seeds of passive resistance were sown. It is therefore no exaggeration to say that we collectively owe a deep sense of gratitude to the Mahatma.

Programme Director, Diwali is a festival to celebrate the simple joys of life. The programme for this festival is filled with quality entertainment that will appeal to all ages and cultures.

Let us together, celebrate the festival of light!

Thank you.

Tribute by the Executive Mayor of the City of Johannesburg, Councillor Amos Masondo, on the occasion of the memorial and unveiling of a tombstone in honour of the late mayor of the Southern Metropolitan Local Council (SMLC), Comrade Sophie Masite, ST Paul's Anglican Church, Ipelegeng Centre, White City - Soweto - Johannesburg