

MESSAGE OF GOODWILL BY KZN ACTING PREMIER, THE HONOURABLE WILLIES MCHUNU ON THE OCCASION OF THE TAMIL NEW YEAR AND THE THIRU VALLUVUR AWARDS AT THE CLAIRWOOD TAMIL INSTITUTE IN DURBAN ON THE 13TH OF APRIL 2013.

Protocol Observed.

It is a great honour and privilege for me to be part of the auspicious occasion this afternoon organised by the Clairwood Tamil Institute to celebrate the Tamil New Year, which in my opinion symbolises the importance of all racial, cultural and religious groupings in our country.

Before I came here I took a bit of time to think about the Clairwood Tamil Institute (CTI). In what could be a coincidence, I saw a link between the objectives of the Institute and the KwaZulu-Natal Government.

It is our dream as Government to see the people of this province rising and building themselves as communities in whatever form that will ensure their social development. The province is conducting a massive programme called Operation Sukuma Sakhe, translated as rise and build.

This programme calls for all spheres of government and all community structures come together and discuss various issues affecting a particular community at ward level. These issues may include crime prevention, poverty alleviation and health among others.

This Operation Sukuma Sakhe says that as people we have the potential and capacity to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality. But our approach in this must be the one that moves from a passive citizenry receiving services from the state to ensuring that people are active champions of their own development, where government works effectively to develop people's capabilities to lead the lives they desire.

I was therefore very much heartened to learn that over the years CTI has taken on much social responsibility and it does numerous humanitarian work in the community.

I heard that part of your programme is to conduct medical camps on a regular basis, a Winter Warmth program that sees blankets, clothing and hampers given out to needy families, feeding programs held at the Institute and in the community, health education programs, outreach programs to other communities and organizations.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as Government we want to appreciate the stance you have taken as Tamil community to ensure that your language and culture does not disappear with time. As all of us know, our country has come a long way from being a recluse on the global stage to being one of the most celebrated democracies in the world.

In our quest to become a nation that can take its rightful place as a respectable nation amongst other nations, we have overcome many challenges and succeeded to build a country which is a melting pot of cultural diversity, a country in which diversity is celebrated rather than used as a tool to divide our people.

Today our country has a constitution that is one of the most forward-looking and progressive in the world. Hence, we must collectively ensure that the heritage of all our people, including the Indian community, is fused and blended healthily into one tapestry that represents the rich variety of the cultures of South African people.

Programme Director, Ladies and Gentlemen, the contribution of the Indian community has always been of particular significance in building this country from the ruins of the apartheid and colonial rule to being the one all of us can be proud of.

The history dates back to the arrival of the Indians in South Africa in 1860 which heralded the early beginnings of protest action against colonial tendencies that undermined, belittled and bullied our people, including Indians.

Naturally, when we refer to these protests we recognize the exemplary role of Mahatma Gandhi as a leader who pioneered the idea of peaceful resistance, which became a critical pillar of the struggle against apartheid.

It was Gandhi who taught us that ours was a noble struggle and that we could face the might of the apartheid state machinery armed with nothing but the burning desire to free our people from the clutches of repression.

We recognize Dr G.M. Naicker, the President of Natal Indian Congress and Dr Y.M Dadoo, the President of the Transvaal Indian Congress, who in 1947 they declared a joint cooperation by with Dr A. B. Xuma, the then President of the African National Congress, which became a critical move in cementing the ties between all the oppressed people of this country.

Today, the "Three Doctors' Pact" is referred to by historians as one of the turning points in galvanizing all the oppressed people of this country to work in partnership against the apartheid enemy.

There have been many others from the Indian community who in the spirit of unity and non-racialism believed that South Africa belongs to all who live in it. Today many of them have been honoured by naming important structures after them.

These include buildings and streets, particularly here in Durban.

It is on the basis of this that when you remember, honour and salute all those who had served the Clairwood Tamil Institute over the past 85 years never doubt our support as Government. We are fully behind your vision and we wish that you may leave a rich legacy for the next generations to come in the Tamil community.

It is our plan provincial Government to have a constant engagement with the so called minority groups to address their concerns which we do in the form of our social cohesion programme.

I thank you.