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# THE CONSULAR CHRONICLES





Hon. Consular Corps  
Diplomatique-India



## EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

Greetings!

Time certainly flies and we are in March already celebrating the onset of spring and a season of Color.

As India assumed the Presidency of G 20, we bring you a short note on what it stands for. The World Congress of Congress at Cyprus was very well represented by a large contingent from India and Around the nation there were many events held in Mumbai, Chennai and Bengaluru that have been featured. The Grandiose dwellings of Chettinad have been showcased in The Heritage of India and there is much more.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition and as always looking for your ideas and suggestions.

Wishing you a very Happy Holi.

**Surbhi Sharma**

Editor

Consular Chronicles

Honorary Consul of Spain

## WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS



**Hon. Mr. Major Guneet Chaudhary (R)**

Honorary Consul of Czech Republic



**Hon. Mr. Karthik Tallam**

Honorary Consul of Kingdom Of Cambodia



**Hon. Dr. Pratap Madhukar Kamath**

Honorary Consul of Kingdom of Morocco



वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम् | ONE EARTH • ONE FAMILY • ONE FUTURE

### **India, as President of the G20 since 1 December 2022, will host the G20 Summit 2023.**

The 18th G20 Heads of State and Government Summit will take place on 9th-10th September 2023 in New Delhi. It will be a culmination of all the G20 processes and meetings held through the year among ministers, senior officials, and civil societies. A G20 Leaders' Declaration will be adopted at the conclusion of the New Delhi Summit, reflecting the Leaders' commitment to the priorities discussed and follow up action agreed upon during the meetings.

The G20 Logo draws inspiration from the vibrant colours of India's national flag – saffron, white and green, and blue. It juxtaposes planet Earth with the lotus, India's national flower that reflects growth amid challenges. The Earth reflects India's pro-planet approach to life, one in perfect harmony with nature. Below the G20 logo is "Bharat", written in the Devanagari script.

The theme of India's G20 Presidency - "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" or "One Earth · One Family · One Future" - is drawn from the ancient Sanskrit text of the Maha Upanishad - affirming the value of all life – human, animal, plant, and microorganisms – and their inter-connectedness.

For India, the G20 Presidency also marks the beginning of "Amritkaal", the 25-year period beginning from the 75th anniversary of India's independence on 15 August 2022, leading up to her centenary in 2047.

### **G20**

This premier forum for international economic cooperation comprises 19 countries and the European Union . altogether the G20 member countries are responsible for about 85% of the global GDP, over 75% of total global trade, and represent approximately 2/3rds of the world's population.

### **Inception of G20**

The G20 was founded in 1999 in response to the Asian financial crisis of 1997-98 - as an informal forum for Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors of the most important industrialized and developing economies to discuss international economic and financial stability.

### **Elevation to Leaders' level**

After that, in 2007 it became necessary, in the wake of the global economic and financial crisis of 2007, to ensure efficient crisis coordination at the highest political level – and thus the G20 was upgraded in 2009 to the level of Heads of State/Government.







### Annual Summits

G 20 Summit meetings are held annually - under the leadership of a rotating Presidency. The forum had initially focused on broad macroeconomic issues, but has expanded its agenda over the years - to inter include the key themes of trade, climate change, sustainable development, health, agriculture, energy, environment, women's empowerment and anti-corruption, among others.

### Guest Countries and Invited International Organizations

It is customary for G20 Presidencies to invite guest countries and international organizations to participate in G 20 meetings and the Annual Summit. For the G 20 Summit this year, India has invited Bangladesh, Egypt, Mauritius, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Oman, Singapore, Spain and UAE as well as the International Solar Alliance, the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure and the Asian Development Bank in addition to UN, IMF, WB, WHO, WTO, ILO, FSB, OECD and Chairs of Regional Organizations – the AU, AUDA-NEPAD and ASEAN.

### People's Participation

As per the vision of the H'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, the G20 will be more than a diplomatic event – it will be a historic occasion involving the fullest possible participation of the Indian public (Jan Bhagidari).

India's G20 Presidency will bring to the G20 to a more inclusive, ambitious, action-oriented, and decisive approach.

### Engagement Groups

Recognising that solutions to the world's most pressing concerns can only be solved together by governments, civil society, businesses, youth and all stake holders working together, the G20 has established 11 Engagement Groups who will contribute to the shaping of its agenda: Business20 (B20), Youth20 (Y20), Women20 (W20), Think20 (T20), Science20 (S20), Labour20 (L20), Parliament20 (P20), Urban20 (U20), Supreme Audit Institutions 20 (SAI20), Civil20 (C20), and Startup 20.

## Pan India

More than 50 cities have been involved in the G20 events. Logistics have been coordinated and training has been imparted to cover all aspects - including security , medical facilitation, road connectivity, airport connectivity . Due care has been taken to display the unique cultural and touristic dimensions of the rich and diverse Indian heritage . In this context, for example, the Hornbill festival in Nagaland, Sangai Festival in Manipur and the International Kite Festival in Gujarat were opened to G 20 invites.

## Inclusivity

India's approach is to 're-energise' world focus on a global agenda of 'Respond, Recognize, Respect and Reform'. Our position is that in the 21st Century, global growth will come from countries of the global 'South'. While global challenges such as the COVID pandemic, climate change, terrorism and even the Ukraine conflict have not been created by the Global South, they, in fact, affect these countries the most .

In this context, India hosted the 'Voice of the Global South Summit' in which 125 nations participated . Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi shared his vision of globalisation for developing countries that does not create a debt or climate crisis or over-concentration of global supply chains - and called for 'a human-centric globalisation' that brings prosperity and well-being to humanity as a whole.

Key initiatives announced by India include provision of essential medical supplies by India to any developing country affected by natural disasters or humanitarian crises; connecting young foreign ministry officials through a 'Global-South Young Diplomats Forum'; and instituting 'Global-South Scholarships' to enable students from developing countries to pursue higher education in India.







## Financial Inclusion

Similarly financial inclusion is another key theme of the G 20 - where leveraging digital public infrastructure for financial inclusion and productivity gains, completing the ongoing Financial Inclusion Action Plan 2020, preparing and adopting a new Financial Inclusion Action Plan 2023, and updating the Terms of Reference of the Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion are core themes. Similarly on the subject of water security, India will share her experience through people-centred initiatives showcasing the balancing of technology, climate and sustainability, to deliver affordable, scalable, and reliable water security models for the entire world, especially the global South.

## G 20 Calendar

Since India's assumption of the Presidency of G20, a number of high level meetings and conferences on a wide variety of themes have already been held : these will continue right up until the main Summit on September 9-10, 2023.

Stay tuned!

Our Thanks to Office of the Chief Coordinator ,  
G20 Secretariat, New Delhi.



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## HCCD - INDIA

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



**K L Ganju**, o.c.v.c. (cdr.)  
Consul General (Hy.)  
Advisor to the Foreign Minister  
Union of the Comoros  
President – HCCD – India

At the outset, I once again take this opportunity to complement Hon'ble Ms. Surbhi Sharma, Hony. Consul of Spain in Bengaluru for her immense efforts in preparing to bring out the new edition of "Consular Chronicles".

As regards, activities of HCCD-India, it is to inform you all that a large delegation of Hon'ble Members participated in the 13th World Congress of Consuls which was held in Limassol, Cyprus from 6th to 9th November, 2022. As you are all aware that the name of Hon'ble Mr. Purrshottam Bhaggeria, Hony. Consul of Moldova in India, Secretary General, HCCD – India and also Director, World Federation of Consuls (FICAC) was sponsored by HCCD-India to fight election during the World Congress for the post of Director. I am very pleased to inform that he won the election with

handsome votes. He was also appointed Secretary General of FICAC which is great honour for all of us. His role as Director on the world body was highly appreciated by one and all during his last term. The HCCD-India complements Hon'ble Mr. Purrshottam Bhaggeria for this achievement.

I may also add here that a large number of the Hony. Consuls from Bengaluru Chapter participated in the World Congress which was highly appreciated by the President of FICAC. He even mentioned this fact during his inaugural speech. I also complimented all the Hon'ble Members with a "Plaque of Appreciation". The President and the Secretary General of the HCCD-India personally visited Bengaluru to present these plaques of appreciation.

As regards FICAC and HCCD-India identity cards, please be informed that the process is on and hopefully will be ready soon. HCCD-India identity cards will be issued for the term 2023–2026.

It is also to inform all the Hon'ble members that a delegation of HCCD-India met the new Chief of Protocol and presented to him the issue of distinctive number plate for Hony. Consuls. The Chief of Protocol assured to look in to the matter and try of solve the issue soon.

In the end, I am very pleased to inform you that this year the Consular Day celebration will be held on 31st March, 2023 in New Delhi for which the invitation cards will be sent to the Vice Presidents of each chapter well in advance.

God bless you all!!



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FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DES CORPS ET ASSOCIATIONS CONSULAIRES AISBL

[www.ficacworld.org](http://www.ficacworld.org)

Brussels, January 11, 2023



Nikolaos K. Margaropoulos

Dear Hon. Mr. President,

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to HCCD – India, for the high level of engagement and meaningful support to FICAC.

The strong commitment and excellence of the Officers of HCCD – India, their hard work and the excellence of its members, have made a great and measurable difference to FICAC.

With a new and innovative approach on how to take FICAC forward, let us continue to work together in close coordination and collaboration to achieve even better results.

Thank you for your willingness to serve and continually support FICAC in addressing so many significant challenges and achieving its goals.

My best wishes to the Honorary Consular Corps Diplomatique – India for good health and prosperity.

Sincerely yours,

Nikolaos K. Margaropoulos  
FICAC President





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## AROUND THE NATION

### MUMBAI



Welcome meeting: Mr. Anton Pashkov, Consul General of the Republic of Belarus in Mumbai



Reception in honour of Shri Vivek Phansalkar, Commissioner of Police – Mumbai at World Trade Centre, Cuffe Parade. In attendance were Consul General and Honorary consuls of various foreign countries along with Police and Government officials.



Uganda Plans dedicated park for Indian Industry says Hon'ble Minister Mr. Okello. Interactive meeting on September 07, 2022 with H.E. Ms. Margaret Kyogire, Acting High Commissioner of the Republic of Uganda in India; Dr. Vijay Kalantri, Chairman, MVIRDC WTC Mumbai; Hon'ble Mr. Oryem Henry Okello (M.P.), Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Republic of Uganda and Capt. Somesh Batra, Vice Chairman, MVIRDC WTC Mumbai.



Mr. Kim Young-og - Consul General of Korea, Mr. Fernando Heredia Noguer - Consul General of Spain, Mr. Mahendra Sanghi - Honorary Consul of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Mrs. Mohini Kalantri, Mrs. Damian Irzyk, Mr. Damian Irzyk - Consul General of Poland and Dr. Vijay Kalantri, Chairman – Honorary Consular Corps Diplomatique Mumbai & Vice Dean – Consular Corps Association Mumbai



Mr. Gul Kripalani - Honorary Consul General of Iceland in Mumbai, Damian Irzyk - Consul General of Poland in Mumbai, Ms. Andrea Kuhn - Consul General of South Africa, Mr. Mahendra Sanghi - Honorary Consul of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Mr. Ralph Hays - Dean of CCAM, Dr. Vijay Kalantri - Vice Dean of CCAM, Mr. R.A. Goenka - Honorary Consulate of Kenya, Mr. K. K. Singh - Honorary Consulate of Ukraine, Mr. Guillermo Devoto - Consul General of Argentina at the committee meeting of CCAM



National Day for the occasion of Sheikh Jassim Bin Mohammed Bin Thani – Founder of the State of Qatar – Dr. Vijay Kalantri at the Qatar National Day celebration in Mumbai with other diplomats of Consular corps.



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Dr. Vijay Kalantri, Chairman – Honorary Consular Corps Diplomatique Mumbai & Vice Dean – Consular Corps Association Mumbai with H.E. Mr. Sulaiman Bin Eid Alotaibi, Consul General of Saudi Arabia in Mumbai



Farewell reception hosted in honour of Mr. Ralph Hays – Dean of Consular Corps Association Mumbai (CCAM) and Consul General of New Zealand at World Trade Center Mumbai. Mr. Hays being felicitated with a bouquet of flowers at the hands of Shri Vivek Phansalkar – Commissioner of Police, Mumbai. Attended by various foreign Diplomats and industrialists.



Honorary Consular Corps Diplomatique executive committee meeting held . Various Career Consul Generals and Honorary Consuls also attended the meeting followed by a networking reception.



Bunker Site visit to The Governor House, Raj Bhawan was attended by Consul Generals and Honorary Consuls followed by a courtesy call on H.E. Shri Bhagat Singh Koshyari, Governor of Maharashtra on Monday.





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### BANGALORE



Reception held in honour of visit of H.E Dr. Eliska Zigova -  
Ambassador of the Czech Republic to India



Members of Bangalore Chapter along with Consul Generals at  
Raj Bhavan on Republic Day

Reception on the occasion of visit of H.E Mr. Jose Maria Ridao -  
Ambassador of Spain to India on the occasion of the Constitution  
Day of Spain







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On the occasion of the opening of the office of the Honorary Consul of the Kingdom of Cambodia at Bengaluru



On the occasion of the opening of the office of the Honorary Consul of the Kingdom of Morocco at Bangalore



Plaques of appreciation presented to Members for participating in the World Congress of Consuls at Cyprus.







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Rotary Club of Bangalore and Bangalore Chapter jointly held a 'Gala Evening' in aid of Charity







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## AROUND THE NATION

### CHENNAI



Joint meeting of the CII & HCCD at the Taj Coromandel attended by Honorary Consuls & Consul Generals.



HCCD members at the Japanese Emperor's Birthday Celebration. Along with the Consul General of Japan Mr. Taga & Hon'ble Finance Minister Mr. PTR Thiagarajan.



HCCD Members with H.E Mr. Raymond Serbe Bale, Ambassador of the Republic of Congo during his visit to Chennai.







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HCCD Members at the "At Home" tea party at Raj Bhavan, hosted by the Hon'ble Governor of Tamil Nadu



HCCD members at the 75th Sri Lankan National day Celebrations



HCCD members attending the morning parade at the Marina Beach on occasion of the Republic Day celebration.





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Inauguration of the Honorary consulate of Uganda in Chennai.



The Annual Diplomatic futsal tournament supported by HCCD Chennai. The UNHCR team also participated apart from diplomats in ten teams from different countries.







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## ROYAL HERITAGE OF INDIA - CHETTINAD



Chettinad Chic: How the grandiose dwellings of this southern region have carved a distinctive style. By Chocko Valliappa\*

Drive through Chettinad in the Sivaganga region of Tamil Nadu and you cannot help exclaim at the magnificence of the architecture of homes here.

It seems like everybody is a royal here, as palatial homes with extravagant facades and opulent interiors abound in the settlements in this area – remarkable for its spatial uniformity and planned streets. The Indo-European styled mansions of the wealthy mercantile Nattukottai Chettiar community are so unique that they have become big heritage tourist attractions, with

some – like the lavish Kanadukathan Palace, built by Sir Annamalai Chettiar – also becoming popular filming locations.

However, not all the homes are well maintained – many seem to be in ruins, in deep neglect, though their facades wear signs of a resplendent past, as most inhabitants have moved to cities.

My own ancestral home, the 100-year-old Lakshmi Vilas in Poolankurichi village near Karaikudi, lay untenanted for over 35 years until we decided to restore and refurbish it to its glorious old days. Built in 1922 by M Subramanian, the 50-room mansion is spread over two floors, with the main pillars made of stone and granite and Burma teak, used liberally. The central hall is truly exquisite and splendid. This was the house where my grandfather, M S Chockalingam, the son-in-law of the renowned textile baron and Gandhian Karumuttu Thiagarajan Chettiar, was born.

Like many of the mansions in the area, our home too had luxurious Belgian chandeliers, exquisite artefacts from all over the world, beautiful vegetable oil paintings on the eggshell plaster walls and roofs, and stunning chequered tiles – locally known as Athangudi tiles – on the floors.

It was during the restoration process, painstakingly done by Bengaluru based architect Vikram Ponappa, keeping all the original sensibilities intact, that we began delving into the history of our community and why such ornate mansions were created.

### Settling in the region

The Nattukottai Chettiars, who were merchants, miners and traders, originally lived near the sea in a place called Naganadu, somewhere near Kanchipuram but the floods destroyed their land. They then moved to Kaveripoompatinam (Poompuhar) around 789 BC where they resided for about 1400 years before moving into the Sivaganga District in 707 AD.





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The reason why we moved to this district from Kaveripoom Pattinam near the shore was because of constant floods and water flowing into the homes. So, the Chettiars chose a dry place – Sivaganga region is very arid – and not only that, they built their houses on a huge citadel.

The Chettinad region as it eventually came to be called, is spread over 1550 sq kms and comprises 96 villages. There are nine big temples in the area and every Chettiar family is attached to one of these nine temples. Hardworking, humble, and god-fearing, with traditional values, the clan may be small in number (there are barely 50,000 Chettiar families) but it is big in stature.

The first houses that the Nattukottai Chettiars built in this area were fairly simple and shows the community was not that wealthy. They mostly traded rice, salt and pearls.



But gradually, the Chettiars became merchant bankers and slowly earned renown as financiers. Around the 1850s, the intrepid community became last mile bankers to the British empire and began making voyages to Burma (now Myanmar), Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), and Malaya (now Malaysia), and got into the business of timber, rice, tea, coconut and rubber plantations as well as tin factories, making big fortunes.



This wealth began to slowly reflect in the Chettiar dwellings back home. Materials imported from various countries – teak from Burma, tiles from Italy, chandeliers from Belgium, artefacts from Vietnam, Cambodia etc. were used in the new opulent homes that came up. However, many of the important architectural features of the original modest homes were preserved – for instance, the east-west orientation, the outer verandah or thinnai supported by columns, a courtyard inside, open to the sky with similar columns, around which are the rooms.

Over time, as the wealth of the community grew, it began reflecting more and more in the homes, where the walls were now embellished with elaborate paintings, the doors had elaborate carvings, the tapering columns in the thinnai now made of teak set on fluted granite bases and topped by ornate wooden brackets, false ceilings made of wood in criss-crossing patterns and in some of the halls with breathtaking paintings.

In my own home, you enter through the doorway into the thinnai and from there into a central durbar hall that is the majestic centrepiece of the house, whose embossed ceiling extends over two floors high. On both sides of this are courtyards around which are organised rooms, a stairway that leads to the upstairs deck where you can stand on the corridors and gaze down into the hall.

Upstairs on the verandahs, leading to the colonnaded balcony, etched on the floors are ancient board games played in the Mahabarata– a form of chess. The roofs clad in traditional tiles slope down steeply and the ventilation units that stream in light and air into the homes are right here.

Another notable feature at many of the Chettiar homes are the huge money chests almost as large as a cot, where the daily collections would be kept. At night, the munim, or the accountant, would sleep on top of the box, thereby ensuring safety. Maybe this is where the term "sleep on the money originated".



The cuisine of Chettinad is one of the best examples of fusion food– combining local dishes with their own. The use of aromatic spices, sun-dried meats and salted vegetables, and rich gravies reflects the dry climate of the region. The Chettiars were traditionally vegetarian but their travels all over for trade influenced what they ate, and now the cuisine has earned fame for the complexity of its flavours and the heat of its curries. Rice-based dishes are the staple, served up in myriad ways. The icing on the cake is the Japanese black rice pudding.



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The clothing of the Chettiars is also distinctive with the women wearing silk or cotton sarees with a checkered pattern that is unique to the area called Karaikudi Checks.

It was a unique way of life and the beauty is that many of these dwellings are preserved for us to go and marvel and understand how the earlier generation lived.

Normally, in India, you have royal palaces that remain with no dwellings of the common man to show. Chettinad in contrast, had no royalty but it is the epitome of people's palaces.

*Chocko Valliappa, a fourth-generation entrepreneur and Founder and CEO of IT services firm Vee Technologies, can be reached at [chocko@veetechnologies.com](mailto:chocko@veetechnologies.com)*







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## NEWS FROM FICAC

### WORLD CONGRESS AT CYPRUS

The Congress of the World Federation of Consuls (FICAC), took place in Limassol, Cyprus, in early November 2022, elected Nikolaos K. Margaropoulos as the new President and new members of the Board. The Congress thanked outgoing President of FICAC Aykut Eken for his dedicated work to keep the organization united, strong and for increasing visibility and prestige of the role of the consuls all over the world.

HCCD-India is proud to announce that Hon'ble Mr. Purshotham Bhaggeria was elected as Secretary General of FICAC.

President, Nikolaos K. Margaropoulos, presented the new Administration's plan for the next 3 years and stated that FICAC has made real strides on what is important to the development of Consuls, building relationships with impact and value, in its efforts to promote and enhance mutual understanding globally.

The World Congress was attended by nearly 140 delegates from across the Globe and HCCD-India was represented by the largest delegation of 15 with the maximum number from Bengaluru.







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## SPECIAL FEATURE - WORLD HERITAGE SIGHTS OF TUNISIA

**Tunisia has eight inscribed World Heritage Sites and thirteen properties on its tentative list**



**Shabinaa Sultana**  
Honorary Consul of  
Republic of Tunisia  
in Bangalore

### Archaeological Site of Carthage

Carthage, which was established in the ninth century BCE, grew into a commercial power in the Mediterranean. The Romans devastated the settlement in 146 BCE during the Punic Wars, but it was subsequently rebuilt.



### Dougga



Dougga is a Berber, Punic, and Roman village located close to the modern town of Téboursouk in northern Tunisia. It is the best-preserved Roman small town in North Africa, and UNESCO declared it a World Heritage Site in 1997. It is unique due to its immensity and well-preserved structures, including a Libyco-Punic Mausoleum, the Capitol, the Roman theater, and the sanctuaries of Saturn and Zeus.

### Amphitheatre of El Jem

In the present-day Tunisian settlement of El Djem, formerly Thysdrus in the Roman province of Africa, there is an elliptical amphitheater called the Amphitheatre of El Jem. Since 1979, UNESCO has included it on its roster of World Heritage Sites



### Ichkeul National Park



UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1980.

The northernmost metropolis in Africa on the Mediterranean Sea, Bizerte, is situated 20 kilometers from Lake Ichkeul, a lake in northern Tunisia. Each year, hundreds of thousands of migrating birds make a pit break at the lake and marshes of Ichkeul National Park. Ducks, swans, storks, and pink flamingos frequent the lake, but the natural equilibrium has been altered by the building of dams on the lake's feeder waterways.





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## Kairouan

Kairouan is the seat of the Kairouan Governorate in Tunisia and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, established by the Umayyads in 670. It is a major hub for Sunni Islamic education and Quranic learning, with 187,000 residents in 2014.



## The Medina of Sousse



The Medina of Sousse is a neighborhood in Sousse, Tunisia's Governorate of Sousse, which was named a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1988. It includes a Kasbah, defenses, and the Sousse Great Mosque. The Sousse Archaeological Museum is housed in the Medina, and several Punic steles were found in the 19th and 20th centuries.

## The Medina of Tunis

The Medina of Tunis is a UNESCO World Heritage Site with 700 monuments dating back to the Almohad and Hafsid periods.



## Kerkouane



Kerkouane was a Punic settlement in northeastern Tunisia, close to Cape Bon. It had been around for nearly 400 years and was designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1985. Archaeologists gave the community the moniker Kerkouane, but no historical document mentions its appellation from antiquity. The ruins are the only example of a Phoenician-Punic city that has endured.



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## SPECIAL GUEST - H.E Ms. Andrea Kühn Consul-General South African Consulate General in Mumbai

### SOUTH AFRICA - INDIA: CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS IN 2023

South Africa and India is celebrating a historic milestone of 30 years of diplomatic relations in 2023. Relations were restored after a gap of over four decades with the opening of a Cultural Centre in Johannesburg in May 1993. Full diplomatic relations with India were established on 22nd November 1993. South Africa established its High Commission in New Delhi and opened a Consulate General in Mumbai in April 1994. The Indian High Commission in Pretoria was opened in May 1994.

The first visit by a South African Head of State to India took place in 1997 when former President Nelson Mandela laid the foundation for the Strategic Partnership between the two countries with the signing of the Red Fort Declaration. The last State Visit to India was when President Cyril Ramaphosa was the Chief Guest at the 70th Republic Day celebrations on 26th January 2019 in New Delhi.

The celebrations this year afford us the opportunity to reflect on the strong bonds of friendship and shared history between our two countries also through the world icons of Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela that played a significant role in shaping both our countries. The bond is further cemented through the South African population which is from Indian descent and who have deep roots in South African society.

As leaders of the Global South we share a common vision on a range of global issues and domestic challenges, including democracy, human rights, sustainable development, climate change and challenging the prevailing global system and financial architecture. South Africa is actively participating in the G20 meetings under the Indian Presidency and looks forward to host Indian delegations to South Africa as the Chair of BRICS for 2023.



South Africa is a vibrant and growing economy, with the IMF forecast of an economic growth of 1.2% in 2023. It is highly diversified from a sectoral perspective and the most developed and technologically advanced economy on the African continent. The investment environment remains attractive and numerous investment opportunities have been identified which include local content manufacturing across various sectors.

Our strong economic relations are driven by a Joint Ministerial Commission which provides a solid platform to strengthen investment and bilateral trade relations to our mutual benefit and have seen bilateral trade increase significantly from \$640 million in 1995 to \$10 billion in 2022. Indian investment into South Africa has been significant, with South Africa attracting investment across numerous sectors from companies such as Tata, Wipro, Mahindra and Cipla. According to latest available data, India's total FDI investment in South Africa (since 1994) amounts to approximately USD \$8 billion, whilst South Africa's investment in India is amounting to approximately USD\$ 2 billion. There are over 130 Indian companies in South Africa, employing approximately 18,000 South Africans. This has assisted South Africa in combating the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and economic transformation and contributed towards skills transfer.

Progress has been noted in the establishment of 13 special economic zones throughout South Africa which provide investors with targeted investment incentives, preferential tax rates and export support, as well as an attractive manufacturing base for companies seeking to supply both local and international markets.

Through the Just Energy Transition Investment Plan, R1.5 trillion (approximately US\$85bn) will be invested in our economy over the next five years in new frontiers such as renewable energy, green hydrogen and electric vehicles. One of the potent reforms we have embarked upon is to allow private developers to generate electricity. There are now more than 100 projects, which are expected to provide over 9,000 MW of new capacity over time.





A number of companies that have participated in the renewable energy programme will soon enter construction and deliver a total of 2,800 MW of new capacity. Hydrogen economy provides significant opportunities. The ICT sector has a well-established and sophisticated information and communication technologies (ICT) sector that generated revenue of US\$13.73bn in 2021. South African companies are world leaders in pre-payment, revenue management and fraud prevention systems, and manufacturing of set-top boxes, which are exported globally. Notable innovations include the invention of pre-paid mobile airtime, the Please Call Me messaging service, Ubuntu - the world's first free and consumer friendly operating system and Computicket, the world's first complex computerised reservation system for ticket holders.

The electronics sector is another sector filled with opportunities, South Africa has a diverse electronics sector that ranges from electrical machinery, household appliances, and telecommunications equipment to consumer electronics. According to Statistics South Africa, the country manufactures more than US\$5bn worth of electro-technical equipment per year. Although South Africa has both world-class capabilities in the industrial electronics industry and in consumer electronics, overall electronics manufacturing contributes only 4% to South Africa's total manufacturing output. The consumer electronics segment remains largely dependent on imports. It is estimated that in 2018, South Africa accounted for 60% of Africa's total consumer electronics imports.

Africa's high dependency on imported electronics combined with robust market growth especially in the consumer electronics sub-sector provides opportunities for investors to onshore production of electronics. Through its localisation programme, the South African government drives demand for electronic product and components. Products and components such as high voltage switch gear, LED lighting, air conditioning, fire and smoke detection equipment, lifts and generators have been identified for local procurement. Other exciting opportunities include contract manufacturing of electronics, manufacturing of household appliances and the manufacturing of consumer electronics.

The outlook on agriculture remain positive and the Department of Agriculture Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) expected the sector to show strong growth figures and create employment. This optimism was supported by good weather, expansion in area plantings, and improving business confidence in the agriculture and agri-business sectors. Effective public-private partnerships and transparency with in policy-making partly underpin the positive business confidence in the sector.

Fresh fruit accounts for approximately 50% of South African agricultural exports. Globally, South Africa is the second largest exporter of citrus fruit. Along with citrus, other fruit exports include pome fruit, stone fruit, table grapes, subtropical fruit and exotic fruit; exported to 111 destination countries. Vegetables are also exported from South Africa. The economic value generated from these exports is in excess of \$2.5 billion. In addition, South Africa is the largest fresh fruit exporter (by volume) in the Southern Hemisphere.

Government has identified agriculture and agro-processing as one of the crucial economic sectors to transform the economy through sustainable employment creation, business opportunities, investment attraction and growing export base. Sector opportunities identified include vegetable canning, oilseed production, commercial planting of crops for biofuels, meat processing ect.

In terms of trade, the South Consulate has identified that significant potential exists in India for South African agricultural products such as pears, apples, automotive components, renewable energy and defence products.





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Many multinationals investing in South Africa also use the country as a base to serve their customers in Africa and in particular the southern region. As a relatively stable country with a technologically advanced telecommunications network and a secure banking system, South Africa provides support to these global companies so that they can take advantage of opportunities in the country and the region as well as benefit from preferential access to many global markets. South Africa's regional partnerships include participation in the Southern African Development Community, the Southern African Customs Union and the new African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).



The AfCFTA launched in January 2021 aims to boost trade by harmonising a market of 1.3bn, people in 55 countries with a GDP of US\$3.4 trillion. It will make trade between African countries easier by providing new export opportunities for Southern African products and services to member countries which trade with each other without tariffs or other hindrances.

According to the World Bank "the agreement will lift 30 million Africans out of extreme poverty and boost the incomes of nearly 68 million others who live on less than \$5.50 a day. It will further boost Africa's income by \$450 billion by 2035 (a gain of 7%) while adding \$76 billion to the income of the rest of the world and increase Africa's exports by \$560 billion, mostly in manufacturing."

South Africa continues to relax cross-border financial regulations and tax requirements to enable local businesses to expand into Africa to support continental growth. Similar support measures apply to foreign companies which use South Africa as their regional headquarters to invest in African countries.

InvestSA, a division of the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC) stands ready to advise and support Indian companies on their investment into South Africa. InvestSA works closely with InvestIndia to expand investments in both countries. We also invite you to contact the South African Consulate General in Mumbai as we partner in a collaborative approach to build stronger economic relations between South Africa and India to our mutual benefit.

### **Discovering South Africa: A Guide to the Diverse Wonders of the Rainbow Nation**

South Africa is where adventure meets magnificent wildlife, great culture, lip-smacking food, endless beaches, warm local hospitality, mesmerizing natural beauty and rich history and culture! A South African style vacation can be as laid-back or as active, as travellers would like it to be. Travellers can go on a safari, indulge in 3000+ adventure activities, enjoy a city break, relax by the beach or sample delicious food and wine. Explore the formidable and astoundingly beautiful Drakensberg Mountain

Range in KwaZulu-Natal or the wild stretches of bushveld in Mpumalanga, Limpopo and the North West provinces. The Free State offers big skies and homegrown hospitality, and the Northern Cape's mesmerizing



lunar landscapes offer a new way to interpret adventure. Travellers are spoilt for choice when it comes to South Africa – they can watch the sunset on the beautiful coastline that stretches for about 3750 kilometers in total or spend nights getting to know each other better in the magnificent and royal national parks of the Rainbow Nation. They can devote time in a boutique room on a rocky outcrop with a partner – with no walls or a night under the starlit skies with all the comforts of a suite. In addition, attractive currency exchange rates make South Africa a lucrative, value for money long-haul destination.





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## QUICK VISAS

At present, travellers can apply via VFS ([www.vfsglobal.com](http://www.vfsglobal.com)). There is no visa fee for Indian nationals charged by the South African Consulate General or the South African High Commission. However, the VFS logistics fee to process visas is between INR 2040 and INR 2301.

## ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES FOR THRILL CHASERS

South Africa has over 3000 adventure activities and is undoubtedly the adventure capital of the world. The country has options across shark-cage diving, zip lining, bungee jumping, quad-biking, horseback safaris – and just about any other extreme sport you can name, all supported by dedicated and authorized operators. Some must-do adventure activities are:

### Shark-Cage Diving

This is one of the biggest draws to South Africa, and a trip to the Rainbow Nation is incomplete without attempting the hair-raising shark-cage dive. KwaZulu-Natal often credited as a hub for shark-cage diving, is an ultimate experience. One should explore options at Simon's Town, Mossel Bay, Dyer, Port Elizabeth and Seal Island among other places.



### Big Rush Big Swing, KwaZulu-Natal

It has been officially named the world's tallest swing by the Guinness Book of Records since May 2011. The thrilling leap swinging out into a massive 220m arc where you soar into the centre of the stadium.

### Bloukrans Bridge Bungee, Eastern Cape

The highest commercial bridge bungee jump in the world, it has a 216-meter gorge below. It is one of the ultimate activities to feature on any adrenaline seeker's bucket list while visiting South Africa.

Abseiling from Table Mountain, Western Cape

The 7th Natural Wonder of the World offers a spectacular view of the Mother City with its bustling city life and the blue ocean. Abseiling from the top of Table Mountain gives you a view of the city that you will never see without indulging in the activity.

### Gorge Swing, KwaZulu-Natal

The highest gorge swing in the world is located on a waterfall cliff in the Oribi Gorge in southern KwaZulu-Natal Province of South Africa. Swinging out like a human pendulum across the gorge, prepare to freefall 68 m, plummeting 0 - 160km/h in 3 seconds – the view is spectacular and so is the after-rush.



## FOR THE HISTORY BUFF WITHIN YOU

If you enjoy being immersed in history and soaking in rich heritage, South Africa offers a multitude of experiences at places that shaped the history of South Africa, and ultimately the world. Be sure to explore the following sites:



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### Take the eThekweni Inanda Heritage Tour

The eThekweni Inanda Heritage Route in the Inanda Valley, located in north Durban, gives travellers the chance to explore the noteworthy historic legacy. The trail houses some critical components of not just South African history but of India's past too. Inanda is dubbed the 'cradle of South African democracy'.

### Robben Island (World Heritage Site)

Robben Island now a World Heritage site and museum, is also a place where Nelson Mandela spent 18 challenging years in prison. During 17th to the 20th century, the island was a place of imprisonment – today it is a beacon of hope and a place where visitors can gain some insight into the life and times of Nelson Mandela and fellow freedom fighters.



### Pietermaritzburg Railway Station-

7th June 1893 went down in history due to Mahatma Gandhi's refusal to budge from a 'whites only' coach on a train to Pretoria, he was thrown off the train at Pietermaritzburg Railway Station for this act of defiance that set the stage for Civil Disobedience. The historic building stills stands, with a plaque commemorating the incident that proved to be a turning point in Gandhi's fight against racial discrimination.

### Cradle of Humankind, Gauteng (World Heritage Site)

This is one of the eight World Heritage Sites in South Africa. The dotting landscape with subterranean limestone caves turned up a rich fossil record for human evolutionary studies, lending credence to the 'Out of Africa' theory of where our ancestors came from. It is known as the birthplace of humankind. Apart from being a history lesson for both kids and adult it is also an opportunity for animal watching, as it's home to a diverse animal, plant and bird life.





