

**ADDRESS BY HIS WORSHIP THE MAYOR OF ILEMBE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY,
COUNCILOR S.W. MDABE, ON THE OCCASION OF THE TAMIL NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS
HELD AT KWADUKUZA TOWN HALL, 14 APRIL 2010.**

Program Director,

Distinguished guests,

Well wishers,

Members of the media,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is indeed a great honor and privilege for me ladies and gentlemen, to be part of the Tamil New Year Celebration.

The distinctiveness of the Tamil people emanates from the fact that they are the people whose art and architecture encompass some of the notable contributions of India and South-East Asia to the world.

In other words they have a sense of pride about their identity and are skillful in depicting that in their art work.

It is therefore no wonder that Tamil was the first Indian language to be given classical status by government.

The Tamil people are often referred to as the last surviving classical civilization on earth, because of their consciousness and practice of the ancient music, temple architecture and stylized sculpture.

They have ensured that the Tamil language and their cultural heritage, going back two millennia ago, are passed onto the next generation.

Even during the times of civilization when they had to interact and trade with people from the West, with significant influence, they refused to acculturate foreign languages and cultures; because of the pride they have for their own identity and history.

It is therefore no wonder, ladies and gentlemen that we have gathered here today to celebrate a New Year for the Tamils.

In the context of Tamils living in South Africa and in the iLembe District in particular, where we live side by side with different cultures predominantly Zulu culture, it reaffirms that as South Africans we are **“united in diversity.”**

I know that one of the features that distinguish South African tourism from that of other countries is the very fact that we are diverse in our cultures. Visitors are able to see the world in one country South Africa.

As a government working together with our people, we were able to transform our society into a non-sexist, non-racial and a democratic South Africa in 1994.

It is through this new dispensation that it is possible for Tamils who have a strong feeling towards the Tamil language to teach the language in public schools and thus ensuring the survival of the language and culture of the Tamil people.

I am aware that Tamil is taught in a number of schools in the iLembe district.

The sense of pride about one's self which is a characteristic of the Tamils; is what the apartheid regime through its policies robbed us as black South African people.

We were made to feel empty about ourselves and we were systematically losing our own identity.

Initiatives such as these are an indication that as a Nation we are on the correct path towards the realization of a society which the likes of Chief Albert Luthuli, Ahmed Kathrada subscribed to, which is ***a non-sexist, non-racial and a democratic South Africa.***

The phenomenon of two different cultures living together is a constant reminder and it teaches us all to understand, tolerate and respect cultural and religious values of one another.

It also makes us, as the people of KwaDukuza and iLembe region, a unique society in a sense that our history and heritage encompass two diverse cultures living side by side as one community.

The year 2010 marks 150 years of arrival of Indian indentured labor in the area formerly known as Stanger, currently known as KwaDukuza.

This history again confirms that this region is rich in culture and heritage.

It has been discovered through the research of various municipalities that our District has enormous potential to become a world class tourism destination.

We have therefore, put together a program, which will ensure that we highlight the historical and cultural potential of iLembe region, and thereby attract more investment, which we desperately need to change the economic outlook of our district.

Starting from last year, moving forward, each year during the period between September and October we have and shall continue to mobilize people to observe this period as a heritage season in the iLembe District.

In terms of our plan the month of October will become a hive of activities where legacies of King Shaka, Chief Albert Luthuli, General Gizenga Mpanza, Mahatma Ghandi amongst others are celebrated.

We have collaborated with stakeholders in the corporate, public sector as well as state owned enterprises to mobilize all requisite resources and logistics around such activities themed: **"Diverse people unite."**

Last year in September, we also launched a District Digital Repository on Cultural Heritage a project linked to the National Digital Repository on Cultural Heritage.

The project is coordinated by the Presidential Commission on Information Society and Development.

Through this project, we aim to develop a National Digital Repository on Cultural Heritage, in order to ensure that South Africa's culture and heritage is collected, digitized for the purpose of preservation and dissemination worldwide.

The benefit of this project is that it will holistically present the historical and cultural significance of the District, together with the four local municipalities through a joint marketing and communication strategy; using print and electronic media coupled with direct visual onsite marketing to bolster the historical and cultural –tourism potential of our region.

Tamil New Year celebration is not only significant to the Hindu or Tamil speaking Community but to all people of KwaDukuza and iLembe at large; as it reminds us of the importance of a diverse nation united; living side by side one another, respecting our diverse cultures and religions.

Happy Tamil New Year to all our Hindu community!

I thank you,