

ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND INNOVATION, DR BE NZIMANDE, ON THE OCCASION OF THE CII-INDIA BUSINESS FORUM ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Friday, 10 June 2022
Bowlers Lounge, Killarney Country Club, Killarney

Programme Director;
First Secretary, High Commission of India in Pretoria, Mr. Bhupendra Singh;
Consulate General of India in Johannesburg, Mr. Sudhir Khurana;
The President of the India Business Forum – Mr. Praveer Tripathi;
Members of the Executive Body of the India Business forum (IBF);
Our Host, Mrs Devi Sankaree Govender;
Members of the IBF;
Members from the media;
Distinguished Guests; and
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good Evening!!!

I am honoured to have been invited to the India Business Forum (IBF) Annual General Meeting, at the time when the South African government and business need to foster strong partnerships in order to grow the economy and create jobs.

South Africa and India have a longstanding and close relationship. South Africa has the largest community of Indian origin outside of India. And it is a community that has played an extremely important role in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, and in the economic development of our country.

India itself played an extremely important role in the anti-apartheid movement, and was amongst the first countries to condemn apartheid immediately after its own independence, and led from the front in the struggle to defeat the racist tyranny of apartheid. We are also very pleased that you continue your journey with South Africa by being part of our effort for the economic reconstruction and development of our country.

Allow me to take this opportunity to thank the forum and Indian companies who since 1996 invested more than 100 billion into the South African economy across the pharmaceutical, Information Technology and Automotive industries.

As the South African government, we are gratified by your commitment to support our country in its development trajectory and we are looking forward for more partnerships with yourselves going forward.

Let me indicate that my portfolio as a Minister serve primarily the development needs of South Africa's youth population including those who acquired some form of education and those not in employment, education or training (NEETS).

This therefore put us in a unique position like no other to ensure that we cater for all the education and training needs of our youth.

Your AGM is taking place as we celebrate the 46th anniversary of the 16 June 1976 student uprising which took place in Soweto and in many parts of our country, where young people protested against apartheid education, especially the racist and insensitive imposition of Afrikaans by the apartheid regime as a medium of instruction for all black students.

I wish to salute the seminal role played by India in opposition to, and isolation of, the apartheid state since as far back as the 1960's. The distinguished role of India in this regard was recognized by former State President Nelson Mandela.

This year's celebration is held under theme: "Promoting sustainable livelihood and resilience of young people for a better tomorrow".

I see this AGM as another opportunity to take a step further to the promotion of sustainable livelihoods and resilience of our young people for a better tomorrow.

Ladies and gentlemen

As reported by the Statistician General, our economy grew by 1.9% in the first quarter of 2022, with eight (8) industries reported positive growth, with the exception of Construction; Mining & Quarrying, which recorded negative growth at - 0.7% and - 1.1% respectively.

We also continue to observe an increase in the number of those not in employment, education and/or training (NEETS). Close to 3.8 million young people between 15 to 24 years are not in school and unemployed today.

I must indicate that government cannot solve the growing unemployment crisis alone. This is the reason why we want to partner with organisations such India Business Forum in breaking the back of South Africa's unemployment crisis.

The initiatives of both my Department of Higher Education and Training and the Department of Science and Innovation are guided by the 2022 State of the Nation Address (SoNA), where President Ramaphosa emphasised the need for a new social compact between government, business, social partners and communities to grow the economy.

Both my departments are working together to contribute towards the revitalisation of our economy in the areas of their mandates.

The President highlighted the need for a new social compact to grow the economy, while reinforcing critical areas of focus, including –

- (a) overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic;
- (b) a massive rollout of infrastructure;
- (c) a substantial increase in local production;
- (d) an employment stimulus to create jobs and support livelihoods;
- (e) rapid expansion of the country's energy generation capacity.

Ladies and gentlemen

My Ministry presides over policy mandates driving higher education, science and innovation, following the alignment of the Departments of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) under one Ministry by President Cyril Ramaphosa in the 2019 SONA.

This new landscape opens up the opportunities for both these sectors to contribute towards a inclusive economic growth path in our country that addresses the structural challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality.

This new landscape has now brought under one umbrella a vast array of post school and training institutions and science and innovation entities driving our policy goals in the economy and society.

POST SCHOOL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SKILLS INTERVENTIONS

Through the Department of Higher Education, we have begun a process of crafting a one country one Master Skills Plan to promote a more efficient and effective mechanism for our country-wide skills planning.

Our latest National List of Occupations in High Demand (OIHD) in South Africa, which I have publicly announced, is one of the many instruments that guides government investment in skills development.

In this list, we have identified 345 occupations that are in high demand out of a total of 1500 registered in our Organising Framework for Occupations.

This list is updated every two years, and marks an important step towards helping us understand better the needs of the labour market and signals opportunities where our students and graduates are likely to stand a better chance of finding employment.

This list tells us about trends in future vacancies relative to occupations, and which occupations are likely to grow due to new investments, especially by government.

Many of the occupations on the list can be associated with key areas and sectors identified as crucial for the Reconstruction and Recovery Plan, such as the digital economy, energy, infrastructure development, manufacturing, tourism and agriculture, data scientists, web developer, computer network technician, electrical engineer, concentrated solar power process controller, mechatronic technician, toolmaker, gaming worker, crop produce analyst, agricultural scientist.

In 2018, we embarked on a campaign to launch 26 Centres of Specialisation located in 19 of our 50 TVET colleges, prioritising 13 occupational trades in high demand, with the aim of curbing the shortage of trade and occupational skills while reducing unemployment and poverty in our country.

The Centres of Specialisation are well positioned to prepare students for the workplace, or for self-employment, through the maintenance of close working relationships with employers in their areas of study.

At this point I would like to highlight that one of the biggest challenges we have as a department is that of finding workplaces, especially for students in our universities of technology and TVET colleges particularly, for purposes of completion of students' qualifications.

Experiences in technical and vocational education globally tells us that the SME sector often plays a leading role in the provision of internships, learnerships and apprenticeships to young people.

If you were to ask me as to what my most important messages are to you today, it would include the following:

- Firstly, that private companies, including SMEs, should create space for learnerships and apprenticeships in their operations. SMEs normally provide the best training spaces because their operations are smaller in size and there is much more-closer attention to supervision of trainees;
- The second message is that the task of skills development is a joint effort between government, colleges/universities and industry. Many young people who have for instance finished their theoretical training in TVET colleges are sitting at home unemployed because they have not had work placement and exposure.

Just in 2020 in our TVET colleges graduated just over 71 000 learners, whom must be placed for either work integrated learning for those who wish to proceed to diplomas, or workplace-based learning experience.

I will request that the Forum looks into our various TVET college programmes and see which ones you can adopt, where you commit that learners in those qualifications will be placed in your companies, including making contribution into the curriculum.

On our part as government, we have committed to the placements of 10 000 unemployed TVET graduates who require work experience in order to complete their studies and training, and so they get employed or are able to start their own small businesses or enterprises.

This would be in line with our clarion call as a Ministry that every workplace must be a training space!

Working with you, we can immensely contribute to ensuring that our young people are engaged into meaningful job and career related activities.

POSSIBLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATIONS

The Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services Sector Education and Training (MERSETA) has identified some key themes arising out of the Master Skills Plans within its sector. These include:

- Re-industrialisation (focusing on key sectors e.g., metals, automotive, plastics etc.);
- Localization- building local manufacturing value chains that can also significantly contribute to global value chains;
- Digital transformation – building smart manufacturing capabilities;
- Sustainable manufacturing – Greening efforts, energy efficiency etc.

Opportunities exist with the Indian Business Forum to share some of the skills and capabilities particularly on ICT and other smart manufacturing technologies to support the digital transformation of the manufacturing sector in re-industrialisation efforts.

Opportunities also exist to invest in South Africa's reindustrialization efforts through helping in building South Africa's local manufacturing capabilities.

The Media, Information and Communications Technologies Sector Education and Training Authority (MICT SETA) needs partnerships on skills transfer, hosting of interns for Internship programmes and hosting of youth who need work integrated learning (WIL) in order to obtain their qualification, particularly from an Information Technology/Computer Science perspective.

Indian Businesses could enter into a co-funding of these programmes in order to ensure massive uptake of South African youth.

Ladies and gentlemen

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION COOPERATION BETWEEN SOUTH AFRICA AND INDIA

South Africa and India, formalised its Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) cooperation through the signing of a bilateral Agreement on Scientific and Technology Cooperation in July 1995.

A number of institutional arrangements were concluded between the two countries resulting from the signing of the following bilateral Agreement:

- Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) and the Indian National Science Academy (INSA) in March 2013;
- MoU between the Government of South Africa and the Government of the Republic of India for the Establishment of Cooperation in Grassroots Innovation in July 2016 and;
- MoU between the South African National Space Agency (SANSA) and Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Cooperation in the Exploration and Uses of Outer Space for Peaceful Purposes in July 2018.

South Africa has identified South-South relations as strategically important, and as a Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) we seek to give effect to this imperative within our own domain and newly emerging multilateral platforms.

As an emerging market economy and a prominent player in the Asia-Pacific region, India is a major strategic partner to South Africa and plays a significant role in South-South cooperation.

This is evident in the establishment of the India-Africa Partnership (in 2008) which aims to strengthen the ties between our two countries.

Both our countries are strategic partners in six important STI multilateral platforms namely:

- The Square Kilometre Array (SKA);
- The Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS),
- International, Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB),
- Non-Aligned Movement (NAM);
- the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), and
- United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS)

An important milestone within the BRICS platform is the partnership response to COVID-19 being implemented through collaborative research and innovation projects under the BRICS STI Framework where both South Africa and India are participating.

My Department of Science and Innovation provides funds to the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) to manage South Africa's participation in seven (7) joint research and innovation projects selected for funding.

Square Kilometre Array (SKA)

India is a strategic partner for the success of the international Square Kilometre Array (SKA) radio telescope project, hosted in South Africa.

Indian scientists, notably from the National Centre for Radio Astrophysics of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, are making crucial contributions to software development systems supporting the SKA. This includes close cooperation with the South African Radio Astronomy Observatory.

The SKA project is a driver for accelerated technology development in domains such as supercomputing and big data, and this offers exciting opportunities for the South African and Indian enterprises to cooperate on the most promising technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Grassroots Innovation Programme

South Africa and India have a unique partnership to support cooperation between grassroots innovators.

Our countries share similar philosophical, policy and strategic perspectives, that science, technology and innovation must be harnessed for the benefit of all humankind, that the innovation enterprise itself must be an inclusive one, with the active participation of all, especially by innovators from rural communities and holders of indigenous knowledge.

As our world seek to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the accelerated deployment of innovations for social benefit is imperative, and in this regard there are several opportunities for South African and Indian enterprises to cooperate in supporting the commercialisation of grassroots innovations.

Cooperation in Biomedical Research and Health Innovation

Cooperation in biomedical research and health innovation is another priority area for South African – Indian partnership.

Our two countries enjoy long-standing cooperation with regard to diagnostic, drug and vaccine development for the fight against infectious diseases, particularly tuberculosis.

This cooperation continued in the fight against COVID-19, where strong South African – Indian cooperation constitutes one of the most successful scientific collaborations in BRICS to date.

South Africa and India both host campuses of the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, an additional platform for enhanced cooperation in health innovation.

The South African and Indian Governments' share the conviction of the critical urgency to enhance access of developing countries to vaccines and other medical technologies, as evidenced by South Africa and India's seminal joint leadership in proposing to the World Trade Organisation to waive certain of its intellectual property rules during the COVID-19 pandemic.

South African and Indian enterprises therefore have strategic opportunities and indeed a responsibility to cooperate in advancing global health democracy.

Space Science Cooperation

Both the South African National Space Agency (SANSA) and Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) signed a MoU in July 2018 and held their first bilateral meeting in October 2018. Since the signing of the MoU, ISRO continues to share training opportunities with the South African space community through SANSA.

At the World Radio Conference (WRC) in 2019, the South African National Space Agency (SANSA) supported Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) proposals

on two interventions. Currently SANSA and the Space Park Kerala, India's first space tech park, are in discussions on mutual interests in development of the space industry.

SANSA has interest in the ecosystems of the Space Park in particular the Space Technology Development Application Ecosystem (STADE).

Science Academies

Collaborations between the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) and Indian National Science Academy (INSA) was formalised through the signing an open-ended MoU in March 2013. Both Academies have an interest in organising activities of mutual interest through joint workshops, symposia and seminars.

Over the past three years, INSA has been instrumental in nominating experts from India to participate in some of the events hosted by Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf).

Both academies are also part of the BRICS Academies of Science Network.

Furthermore, both countries cooperate through joint R&D projects on specific research areas via calls-for-proposals.

The areas covered include astronomy, astrophysics, biotechnology, science and technology policy studies, right-sizing of technologies for rural application, IKS and energy technologies.

The most prominent areas of cooperation are astronomy, biotechnology and health sciences and these areas have been prioritised for future cooperation including innovation.

The National Research Foundation (NRF), on behalf of the DSI and DST-India are currently managing and funding ten joint projects emanating from the 2019 Joint Call for Proposals. These projects will run for a period of three years ending in 2023.

We are indeed looking for more research based collaborations which will assist the development of new ideas and knowledge which will be turned into tangible products and services.

In conclusion

It is envisaged that the strong bilateral cooperation of our two countries will also contribute significantly in making the aforementioned platforms successful.

To ensure that attainment of active partnership between the Indian Business Forum and both my departments of Higher Education and Training and Science and Innovation, we propose establishment of a joint Task Team to work on the details of our future partnership.

I must upfront indicate that as a Minister and both my departments we are more than ready to engage with this forum further for mutual benefit.

Once-more, thank you very much for inviting me.