



Inauguration of INDEE 2007
Address by Chairman, EEPIC India, Mr. Rakesh Shah
Johannesburg, October 23, 2007

It is, indeed, a proud privilege for EEPIC India this morning to welcome you all to the formal inauguration of INDEE 2007 coinciding with MTI 2007 at Johannesburg. India is a partner country at this international exhibition and it is an honor for EEPIC India to be able to present the best of India's engineering talent. This exhibition is being held close after the IBSA Summit last week with our Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh leading a business delegation, signifying the importance that India attaches to forging ties with South Africa and other nations in the developing world.

A warm and hearty welcome to our Chief Guest, Hon'ble Dr Ashwani Kumar, Minister of State for Industry, Govt. of India. Dr Kumar has been a great friend of EEPIC and an enthusiastic supporter of the Indian engineering industry. Sir, we are deeply indebted to you for coming all the way to inaugurate INDEE 2007 and supporting our cause.

A grateful welcome to Hon'ble Dr. Goolam Essop Pahad, Minister in Presidency and Hon'ble Ms Elizabeth Thabethe, Deputy Minister of Trade & Industry for their honoured presence in our midst this morning. We are, indeed, thankful to you excellencies for your distinguished presence on this occasion.

Mr. Rajiv Bhatia, our dynamic High Commissioner in South Africa, perhaps, needs no introduction here, but without his constant guidance and advise, INDEE 2007 would not have seen the light of the day. A warm welcome to you, Sir.

Supplementing the efforts of our High Commissioner, has been Mr. Navdeep Suri, our Consul General in Johannesburg and it is a privilege to welcome you to INDEE 2007 this morning, Sir.

To the captains of industry in South Africa and other SADC countries, a most affectionate welcome from the people of India.

Excellencies & Friends, the living legend and an inspiration to all, H.E. Nelson Mandela once stated and I quote:

"a good head and good heart are always a formidable combination".
Unquote.

Today, as we have assembled here for the inaugural function of INDEE 2007, it is this formidable combination that we hope to epitomize in the true spirit that galvanizes man to achieve greater heights of excellence. Independent India is sixty years old this year. During the last six decades, India has weathered many crises of varied dimensions. But the spirit of entrepreneurship; of engaging with peoples of the world; and the desire to share our diverse experiences with global economic order is a path that we have always cherished.

Permit me, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, to share with you a personal thought that grips me as I stand before you today. Our Council was one of the first

Trade Promotion Organisation to send a delegation to visit Democratic South Africa when President Nelson Mandela had completed just 100 days in office. The EEPC Delegation was then led by my respected father Shri G D Shah, a doyen of India's engineering industry. Today, as I reflect on those nostalgic thoughts that my father shared with me, I feel a tinge of sadness that perhaps we could have done more in the intervening years to fulfill the potential that existed between our countries. In fact, I recall that the Indian Delegation had then identified that one of the major contributions India could make to the people of South Africa was in the field of education. It is human capital alone that can master the frontiers of technology and create conditions for the well being of the humanity at large.

Excellencies and friends, In 1893, a simple Gujarati lawyer arrived in this beautiful land of yours. The two decades he spent in South Africa and the lessons he learnt changed the course of modern history and strengthened the cultural bonds between the people of Africa and Asia. His innocuous sounding philosophy of *ahimsa* or "non-violence", was more than enough to uproot the long and treacherous tentacles of the most powerful colonial empire of his time. History, ladies and gentlemen, does not allow us the luxury to hypothesize. But I often wonder, had Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi not sailed to South Africa, would the world have found Mahatma Gandhi?

INDEE 2007 is a microcosm of that spirit. Ladies and Gentlemen, we have today with us 175 companies to share with you all the advances that we have made through the last six decades. INDEE or Indian Engineering Exhibition is a trademark product of the Engineering Export Promotion Council of India and this exhibition is the 17th such exhibition that our Council is holding around the world.

As this is the first INDEE in South Africa, it is a momentous occasion for the Council. The 175 companies who are here belong to a cross section of our country's economic scale of production. The products range from light engineering to heavy and sophisticated engineering. The technological skills, product range, and the technology absorption capability of our participating companies is something for you to judge, but I am sure you will not be disappointed.

I must also state that as many of you engage with our companies present here, not only will you find our products price competitive but the technology that goes behind these products are similar to what all of you are familiar with. This, I believe, is to a large extent due to our very similar historical modes of production. It used to be said that Indians revel in screw-driver technology. But that is no longer true. With the Indian economy growing at 8% plus in the last couple of years, FDI investment into India touching double digit figures and average tariff rates close to ASEAN rates, the Indian engineering sector today competes with the best in the world, innovating and benefiting from learning by doing. This is what I mean when I say that our modes of production are similar and South African engineering units will find much to synergize with our technical capabilities.

Excellencies, Ladies & Gentlemen, INDEE 2007 is a modest offering from the Council to the people of South Africa and SADC countries. But I do believe that this small step will be a giant leap forward for the engineering sector of our countries. There will be many challenges ahead and many miles to traverse as Hon'ble Nelson Mandela reminded us and I quote:
"after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb".

But we are committed to overcome all such challenges. Nearly a month ago, it was in your country that India emerged as the World Champion in a shorter version of the wonderful game of cricket. We are here, however, for the long haul to not only share our products and technology but also to win your hearts!

With these words, may I, once again, welcome you all to INDEE 2007 and thank all our honorable dignitaries for their gracious presence and encouragement on this occasion? May I also extend the very best to all the delegates from India and South Africa for a most profitable interaction during the Indee & MTI?

Thank you.