



Address by Her Worship the Deputy Mayor, Cllr Fawzia Peer on the Occasion of the Opening Ceremony for the Diwali Shopping Festival

**09 October 2016 - 15h00
Moses Mabhida Stadium – People’s Park East**

- Programme Director,
- Member of Parliament, Mr Omie Singh,
- Director of Fair Trading, Mr Salim Mohamed,
- Stakeholders and partners,
- Distinguished guests and dignitaries,
- Ladies and gentlemen,
- All protocol observed,

Namaste and Vanakkum to all of you!

I am honoured to be a part of the opening ceremony for the Diwali Shopping Festival. I look forward to seeing people in their colourful traditional garb that symbolise the vibrant and sacred festival of light.

Ladies and gentlemen, Diwali brings back memories of the days when we struggled together for liberation. Every year, our Hindu friends are busy preparing to celebrate this religious occasion.

During the Diwali celebrations, Hindu's offer prayers and hope to overcome the forces of darkness so that we can liberate our people from oppression, ignorance and suffering. This is also a time for giving and having renewed hope.

Diwali dates back to more than 5000 years. I feel privileged and proud that our country is blessed with a rich diversity of cultures and traditions.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have worked hard to build unity among the people of our country. The Freedom Charter proclaims that "South Africa belongs to all who live in it" hence on 24 September, South Africans across all walks of life, celebrate Heritage Day.

On this day, across the spectrum, we celebrate our culture, the diversity of our beliefs and traditions in the wider context of a nation that belongs to all its people.

We are committed to embrace all of humanity under one umbrella and move forward in building a sustainable City that will be the legacy we leave behind for future generations.

Mahatma Gandhi's tradition and values are the essence of Hinduism. These values are Ahimsa (non-violence) Satyagraha (sacrifice for truth) and Sarvodya (service to the nation.) It is these values that inspired the late Dr Nelson Mandela and Chief Albert Luthuli.

During the time of Diwali and as you light the sacred lamp, I am aware of the triumph symbolisation which is: **"enlightenment over blind faith, prosperity over poverty, knowledge of ignorance, good health and wellbeing over disease and ill health as well as freedom over bondage."**

Programme Director, the Indian community and its leaders have always supported the cause of freedom and democracy in South Africa.

I am told by learned Hindu scholars that as we light the lamp and also pray to the Goddess Luxmi, we need to remember that from our position of wellbeing and prosperity, there are many who are less fortunate and deprived.

We have to work together to formulate ways of tackling the triple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment so that we can build an equal society.

During this time, we also remember leaders and persons who gave their lives for the cause of freedom.

Friends, I feel deeply honoured to be with you at this time of Diwali. Our country has entered a new era. We will light the lamps to thank God for giving the enlightenment as we go forward into the future in peace, hope and prosperity.

In closing, I wish to remind you to use fireworks responsibly, be considerate of your neighbours and animals. Also dispose fireworks appropriately and ensure that children handle fireworks under adult supervision.

On behalf of eThekweni Municipality, I wish all Hindu residents a blessed and peaceful Diwali.

Thank you!