



agriculture
& rural development

Department:
agriculture
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PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

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SPEECH BY KZN MEC FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, MR CYRIL XABA AT THE DINNER TO MARK THE HAND OVER OF FINANCIAL COMPENSATION TO LAND CLAIMANT BENEFICIARIES: 28TH APRIL 2015, DURBAN CITY HALL

Program Director

Cabinet Colleagues

Consul General of India, Mr. R Raghunathan

Members of the Legislature

Honorable Mayor of eThekweni, Cllr James Nxumalo

The Speaker of eThekweni Municipal Council, Cllr Loggie Naidoo

Chief Director for Land Restitution Support in KZN, Advocate B. Mbili

Acting Head of Department and Senior Government Representatives

The Beneficiaries and their families

Veterans of our Liberation Struggle

All honored guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

In this month of freedom, South Africa mourned another loss of one of our struggle veterans, Kisten Moonsamy. His heart ceased this beat last week and he joins Comrades Nelson Mandela, Walter and Albertina Sisulu, Albert Luthuli, Oliver Tambo, Bram Fischer, Dorothy Nyembe, Ismael and Fatima Meer, Joe Slovo, Chris Hani, Solomon Mahlangu and many others who made personal sacrifices so that we could be free.

May his soul rest in peace.

Comrade Moonsamy, along with such stalwarts as Billy Nair and Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim were among the first to join Umkhonto we Sizwe. They were known as the Natal group. In 1963, 18 members of the group were sentenced for sabotage and sent to Robben Island. Moonsamy spent 14 years in prison. After South Africa became a democracy, he was honoured when he was chosen as a member of the first democratic Parliament. The void left by his departure reminds us of the non-racial nature of our fight for freedom and the role played by the Indian community in the liberation struggle.

His death also comes at a difficult time. In the past weeks, foreign nationals have been attacked in our country, actions that we as government have condemned in the strongest terms. Premier of the Province, the honourable Mr E.S. Mchunu, who has sent his apologies for not being here this evening, has taken the lead in working towards restoring Ubuntu, emphasizing that we are who we are because of others. The Premier has made it clear that hatred of fellow human beings has no place in KwaZulu-Natal. He not only spoke out against the attacks, he organized and led a peace march, as well as appointed a team of seven experts to assist in finding solutions to the situation. This team is headed by United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights and Durban resident, Judge Navi Pillay.

The KwaZulu-Natal government is committed to non-racialism, reconciliation and to correct the wrongs of apartheid and this evening's function is a celebration of that commitment.

Fifteen families are finally getting redress, after losing their homes and not being fairly compensated as a result of the Group Areas Act.

The process has been long but this is because the Land Claims Commission had to investigate and verify every claim. My Department has a close association with the Commission because we deal with land issues. I have since come to understand the process and I know that the researchers at the Commission have had to trace documentation, which is very often missing as well as fill in historical gaps. Their work has them scouring through historical archives and old newspaper files. To the families here today, I say thank you for your patience.

A total of 15 237 claims which were lodged with the KwaZulu-Natal Land Claims Commission by the 31st December 1998 deadline have been settled. The Commission has to date, awarded redress in excess of R9 billion to settle land claims through land restoration and financial

compensation. The families here this evening will be receiving compensation in varying amounts, which altogether amount to R9,7 million.

This function highlights the fact that apartheid's discriminatory laws affected all communities. In Durban, members of the Indian Community were particularly hard-hit by the Group Areas Act and had to give up homes across the city to move into racially segregated townships. The City Council in the 1950's and 1960's were ruthless in their application of the Act.

Kisten Moonsamy's own story reflects the pain of that period. In their biography on struggle, stalwart Monty Naicker, authors Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed describe Moonsamy's plight. They say that on his release from Robben Island, "his beloved Clairwood had all but vanished under the hammer of the Group Areas Act. His home was now Chatsworth. He was banned for five years and restricted to Chatsworth, where he struggled to find work. Some comrades bought him a truck and he picked up scrap metal to scrape a living."

In fact, the history of Clairwood shows the lengths that the Durban City Council went to, in order to achieve their goal of racially segregating the city. I was amused to read a report where the Group Areas Board, dominated by National Party members, opposed the Durban City Council's bid to re-zone the area industrial and instead declared it a "special Indian residential zone."

The then council fought this and employed a range of tactics to frustrate the families living there. For example they started widening the roads and used this as a means to get certain properties expropriated. Widening roads meant that the Council could expropriate properties without needing the Administrator's approval, a move that made the people of Clairwood powerless.

For example the local Indian Football and Sports Trust was forced to sell out of fear as the plans proposed by the Council showed new roads cutting right across the playing fields. In many instances these ghost roads were never built.

No doubt some of you here who have your roots in Clairwood could relate many other stories of the disingenuous methods used by those councillors to achieve their aims.

Cato Manor is another shameful chapter in the history of land dispossession in our country and the divide and rule tactics of the

apartheid government. Professor Iain Edwards in his paper, "Cato Manor: cruel past, pivotal future," wrote that in most cases the compensation paid for the expropriation of Indian-owned land bordered on "legalized theft."

For me as MEC for Agriculture, it has been disheartening to learn that the sprawling township of Chatsworth – which came into being as a result of the Group Areas Act - was once home to 600 Indian farmers.

These families farmed in the Cavendish, Welbedacht and Zeekoe Valley areas from the turn of the twentieth century. K Subramoney in his History of Chatsworth said about 35 hectares were under intense fruit and vegetable cultivation and that the famous "Cavendish Bananas," originated there.

Besides the farmers, market gardeners were also displaced from Chatsworth and forced to move into municipal housing schemes as tenants, losing their access to land and their subsistence. Imagine if Chatsworth was allowed to continue as a farming area, with market gardens thriving, we would not have to be as concerned about issues of food security.

The greatest loss from all of this is that families lost touch with the soil and farming skills could not be passed down to future generations. My Department is determined to win over our young people back to the land and the business of farming. There may be aspiring farmers here, whose grandparents or great-grandparents were once farmers in Chatsworth or elsewhere.

This is an evening of celebration, families that have been wronged in the past are receiving redress. Yesterday we commemorated Freedom Day when our first non-racial democratic election was held back in 1994. This is another reason to celebrate.

President Jacob Zuma has declared 2015 as the Year of the Freedom Charter. Sixty years ago, freedom-loving South Africans of all races penned this historic document which declared that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white.

Our government is committed to upholding the Charter and the legacy that struggle stalwarts like Kisten Moonsamy fought and went to prison for. We share a common past and a common future as President Zuma said we can build this country by unity in action.

I thank you and please enjoy the rest of the evening.



MEC for KZN Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr Cyril Xaba, greeting Ms Farhana Haffejee one of the claimants



MEC Cyril Xaba together with Consul General of India Mr R. Raghunathan, handing over a certificate to one of the claimants



MEC Cyril Xaba together with KZN MEC for Health Dr Sibongiseni Dlomo, KZN MEC for Arts, Culture, Sport and Recreation Mrs Ntombikayise Sibhidla-Saphetha, KZN MEC for Human Settlements and Public Works Mr Ravi Pillay, Ethekwini Municipality Speaker Clrr Loggie Naidoo, KZN MPL'S and Consul General of India Mr R Raghunathan