



Consulate General of India Durban

April 11, 2025

Press Release: Unveiling of Mahatma Gandhi Bust, launch of documentary and publication of book titled “Caught in the Crossfire – Indian involvement in the South African War at Anglo-Boer War Museum, Bloemfontein

High Commissioner of India, H. E Shri Prabhat Kumar launched a first of its kind documentary about Indian involvement in the Anglo-Boer War and a publication titled **“Caught in the Crossfire – Indian involvement in the South African War”** at Anglo-Boer War Museum, Bloemfontein. H.E Shri Prabhat Kumar also unveiled a bust of Mahatma Gandhi at the War Museum.

2. The War Museum in Bloemfontein, Free State, has the South African / Anglo-Boer War (1899- 1902) as its central theme. This War involved South Africans of all races, including White, African, Coloured and Indian. The Museum has embarked on a project to give long-overdue acknowledgement to Indian involvement and suffering in the War by means of a substantial journal publication and production of an extensive video documentary. The publication : **“Caught in the Crossfire: Journal on Indian involvement in the South African War, 1899-1902 ”** consists of a series of articles relating to Indian involvement during the War.

3. This publication - is the most comprehensive publication in the world on Indian involvement in the South African War and the first of its kind, which would foster a new outlook on a subject that has hitherto been neglected for years and will bring to light the sacrifices and hardships Indian people experienced during the war, especially South African Indians

4. The most substantial chapter focusing on the British Indian Army that served in South Africa during the War is a reprinted monograph by the late Dr TG Ramamurthi which was published by the Indian Palit Trust in 1996 and whereby the War Museum attained permission from United Services Institute - General Palit Military Studies Trust (GPMST) of India to republish in this publication with the support of Consulate General of India, Durban.

5. On this occasion, High Commissioner **H. E Shri Prabhat Kumar unveiled the bust of Mahatma Gandhi** later in the evening ceremony at Sol Plaatje Hall of War Museum along with Director of Museum Mr. Tokkie Pretorius and Hon’ble MEC Finance, Economic Development and Tourism Mr. Moses Ketso Makume and representatives from office of Premier, Free State. High Commissioner emphasised the fact that Mahatma Gandhi ji’s Bust in the Museum not only signify the contribution of Indian origin South Africans in the War but also the

contribution of Gandhi himself including the role of the Indian Bearer and Ambulance Corps during the War, where he and many local Indians helped to carry wounded British soldiers from the battlefields of Natal to field hospitals. However, their loyalty towards the British cause ultimately went unrewarded and unappreciated. As a leader of the Indian Ambulance Corps, Gandhi, who was also a devout humanitarian, involved himself in the war to save the precious lives.

6. He also applauded the contribution of Indian diaspora in South Africa, originating from indentured labourers and later traders, who have significantly contributed to the country's economic, social, and cultural fabric, playing a role in the anti-apartheid movement. The year 2025 marks the 165th anniversary of the first arrival of Indians in South Africa. 2025 marks 110 years of Gandhiji's final arrival to India from South Africa; he reached India on 9th Jan 1915; this date is now commemorated annually as Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, where Indian diaspora is celebrated at a global stage.

7. The publication launch was further enriched with the performances from ICCR sponsored troupe - Shadow and Light, a contemporary - classical duo of Ms Pavithra Chari - a cross-genre vocalist, lyricist, composer and Mr. Anindo Bose - producer, arranger, keyboard player. Their music is a multi-lingual blend of Hindustani classical, pop, jazz and electronica. This was followed by a dance performance by ICCR scholar Ms. Elina Komarova-Tagar. The performances were the important highlight of the celebration.
