

South Africans in China Celebrate 24 Years of Freedom

Beijing, PRC, 27 April, 2018 - South Africans in China joined their fellow countrymen and women in commemorating the attainment of the country's freedom. It was 24 years ago on this day that South Africans of all races and cultural backgrounds could stand together as compatriots.

To mark this auspicious occasion, South Africans living in Beijing were hosted by the Embassy of the Republic of South Africa to celebrate this significant milestone.

“Of all the prominent commemorations on the South African calendar, Freedom Day is particularly important as it is a reminder of the glorious day on which South Africans went out in their millions to do something they had never done before - and that is to elect a government that is representative of its citizens. The day is also a stark reminder of the sacrifices that were made during the long struggle against a repressive apartheid system that was finally dismantled,” remarked South African Ambassador to China, Her Excellency Dolana Msimang.

It is within the context of the struggle for freedom and dignity for South Africans of all races that South Africa's revered statesman and “father of the nation”, former President Nelson Mandela rose to prominence the world over.

The year of the dog is indeed a notable one for the Rainbow Nation in China. The latest festivities follow on the year-long focus on 20 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries that commenced on 01 January 2018. It was on 1 January 1998 that then President Nelson Mandela led South Africa to the initiation of what is today a prospering relationship with China. Interwoven with occasion, is the momentous milestone of Nelson Mandela's Centenary - it was 100 years ago that South Africa and indeed, the world, was blessed with the birth of Madiba.

Attended by 300 South African business people, teachers, students as well as friends of South Africa, the celebration marked the 24th year that South Africa has been a free and democratic country. Her Excellency Ambassador Msimang, in her address at the event, called upon all South Africans to “hold hands together and move together in one direction as a united people working towards one goal, a peaceful and prosperous country with equal opportunities for all”.

Seeking to strengthen ties China in the long term, South Africa is working hard at building its nation brand reputation amongst Chinese citizens. Building strong relations with stakeholders across government, business, civil society is a priority in this regard and South Africans who are currently living in China have an important role to play. Both Brand South Africa and the South African Embassy are encouraging South Africans to play their part in enabling people-to-people exchanges at every opportunity whenever they interact with Chinese citizens.

China has also become one of South Africa's core tourism markets, with visitor numbers booming as travelers yearn to experience the truly unique and diverse country. Chinese

visitor spending is meanwhile predicted to reach US\$100 million this year, making the country a major contributor to the tourism industry which supports one in every ten jobs in South Africa.

To encourage Chinese visitors, visa facilitation centres have also extended to 9 Chinese cities, with more enhancements planned for this year. Accessibility of travel between the two countries will certainly contribute towards bring South African and Chinese people closer together than ever before.

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Notes to the Editor

About the Embassy of the Republic of South Africa in Beijing

The Embassy of South Africa in Beijing serves to promote South Africa's interest in People's Republic of China. It is a country blessed with an abundance of natural resources, a unique combination of a well-developed first world economic infrastructure alongside a vibrant emerging market economy.

South Africa is a major player on both continental and global economic landscape and an attractive destination for inward investment, trade and business. The country is also a popular tourist destination, offering visitors unforgettable and unique experiences including culture, natural beauty, wildlife, history, food and wine.

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