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South African Prez cites historic ties, seeks stronger India cooperation

The South African president said the two countries' partnership now encompassed trade, investment, technology, education and international cooperation



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with South African President Cyril Ramaphosa (File Photo: PTI)

Press Trust of India | Johannesburg

3 min read Last Updated : Oct 17 2026 | 7:24 PM IST

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India and South Africa are 'bound together' by deep historical ties and common democratic values, President Cyril Ramaphosa has said while inaugurating a major expansion of a zinc mine operated by an Indian conglomerate in the Northern Cape province.

Ramaphosa made the remarks on Friday at the inauguration of Vedanta's Gamsberg Phase II concentrator plant in Aggeneys, in the presence of Indian High Commissioner Prabhat Kumar and Consul General Ruby Jaspreet, among other dignitaries.

A concentrator plant separates valuable minerals from mined ore to produce a more concentrated material for further processing. At the Gamsberg plant, the zinc concentrate can be processed further to produce refined zinc metal.

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The Consulate General of India in Cape Town said in a post on X on Saturday that the Phase II expansion involved an investment of approximately ZAR 10 billion (around Rs 5,757 crore), making it one of South Africa's largest mining investments of the past decade.

"This occasion is also an important affirmation of the enduring relationship between South Africa and India," Ramaphosa said during the inauguration event, according to an official statement.

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"Our two countries are bound together by deep historical ties, common democratic values and a shared commitment to development," he said.

The South African president said the two countries' partnership now encompassed trade, investment, technology, education and international cooperation, adding that the relationship had grown from a shared struggle against colonialism and oppression.

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"Today, more than 150 Indian companies have established a presence in South Africa, contributing investment, employment and industrial expertise," Ramaphosa said, describing Vedanta as an important example of the bilateral partnership.

Ramaphosa said he had engaged Indian business leaders on expanding trade and investment during the 18th BRICS Summit. Discussions covered manufacturing, energy, infrastructure, technology and mineral processing.

India and South Africa are both members of BRICS, an intergovernmental grouping that promotes cooperation among emerging and developing economies on trade, investment, development finance and global governance. The grouping's 18th summit was held in New Delhi last month.

Ramaphosa on Friday urged investors to create local employment, develop industries, transfer skills and contribute to surrounding communities, saying sustainable investment should generate benefits beyond returns for shareholders.

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He also welcomed Vedanta's plans to establish zinc-smelting capacity in Northern Cape, South Africa's largest province. He said this would help the country move further along the value chain, from producing zinc concentrate to refined metal.

Vedanta, an Indian conglomerate, acquired the Gamsberg asset from Anglo American in 2011, and Ramaphosa inaugurated the mine's first phase in February 2019. Vedanta Zinc International manages the group's zinc assets in South Africa and Namibia.

The Phase II expansion will double Gamsberg's annual ore-processing capacity from four million tonnes to eight million tonnes and increase its annual zinc-in-concentrate production capacity to approximately 500,000 tonnes, according to the company's website.

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