

EDITORS/REPORTERS

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**MEDIA STATEMENT ISSUED BY THE CRL RIGHTS COMMISSION REGARDING ITS ENGAGEMENT WITH
THE HINDU COMMUNITY IN CHATSWORTH: A SIGNIFICANT PROCESS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE
REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION**

The Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Rights Communities, led by its Chairperson, Mrs. Thoko Xaluva Mkhwanazi, together with four Commissioners, successfully hosted a consultative engagement with the Hindu community on Saturday, 28 March 2026, in Chatsworth.

The engagement brought together a significant number of community leaders representing a broad spectrum of Hindu religious, cultural, and linguistic organisations. For many attendees, this marked a significant milestone in an engagement between the Hindu community and the Commission, particularly in line with its Constitutional mandate to promote, protect, and foster respect for cultural, religious, linguistic rights, while advancing social cohesion and nation-building.

During the engagement, Commissioners provided a comprehensive overview of the CRL Rights Commission's work, including its key programmes and interventions aimed at strengthening community participation and protecting rights within a constitutional framework.

Delegates were afforded the opportunity to raise challenges affecting their communities. Key concerns included the urgent need to prioritise the promotion and teaching of Indian languages in schools and universities, as well as the limited funding opportunities for the promotion of Indian culture. Several delegates also expressed the view that, as a minority community, the Indian community has at times experienced marginalisation and called for greater recognition and support.

The engagement was widely welcomed, with many participants expressing appreciation that the CRL Rights Commission had reached out to the Hindu community. This was seen as a strong affirmation that

the Hindu community is an integral part of South Africa's diverse social fabric.

While a few individuals initially raised questions about the Commission's role and function, the majority of attendees expressed full support after the Commission provided detailed clarifications on its objectives and the process going forward. The engagement was characterised by constructive dialogue, openness, and a shared commitment to progress.

A key outcome of the engagement was the proposed establishment of a Section 22 Committee for the Hindu community, which was endorsed by the majority of delegates.

In her address, the Chairperson emphasised that this forms part of a democratic and participatory process, grounded in the Constitution of South Africa. She further highlighted that similar Section 22 Committees have already been established for the Christian sector and the African Traditional Religion, respectively, with plans underway to extend this process to other religious communities.

"This path is not a procedure of imposition, but one of consultation. No community is being forced to participate. However, meaningful participation can only yield positive outcomes for the betterment of the diverse religious sector," the Chairperson stated. She further emphasised that such structures are important for conducting consultations across the country, developing peer-review mechanisms and a code of conduct, thereby addressing challenges within the sector, including cases of exploitation and abuse, which require collective engagement and ethical leadership.

It was clearly emphasised that this engagement represents the beginning of an ongoing consultative process. Once established, the Section 22 Committee will continue engaging with organisations across the different provinces to ensure that the broader Hindu community is reached and included.

The Commission also clarified that neither it nor the proposed Committee has any mandate to regulate or prescribe religious practices. The role of the CRL Rights Commission is not to tell people how to worship, but to protect the space in which all can worship freely, with dignity and mutual respect.

Commissioner Dr. Rajendran Govender added:

"This engagement was not about imposing structures, but about building trust. It is through

consultation, participation, and mutual respect that we strengthen both community identity and national unity. The Section 22 Committee will serve as a bridge between the Commission and the Hindu community — ensuring that no voice is left unheard.”

Some delegates also expressed concern regarding recent public statements by certain organisations that sought to discredit the Commission and the process. It was noted that such narratives do not reflect the broader sentiment of the community, particularly in light of the positive and active participation witnessed at the engagement.

The CRL Rights Commission welcomes the outcome of this engagement and looks forward to the next phase of the process, including the nomination and eventual appointment of members to serve on the Section 22 Committee.

As captured in the spirit of the engagement:

“When communities engage one another with openness and respect, we do not lose our identities — we strengthen them within a shared national vision.”

The Commission remains committed to inclusive consultation, transparency, and participatory governance, ensuring that all communities in South Africa are respected, protected, and empowered.

Issued by the CRL Rights Commission

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