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India-South Africa celebrates 20 years of strategic partnership in science & technology

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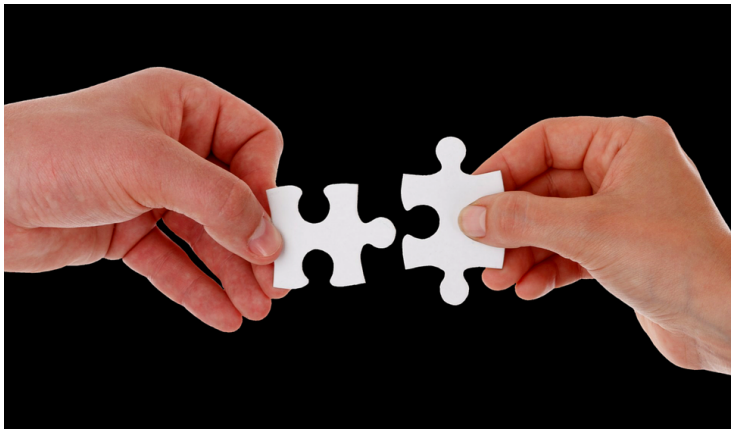

Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences, Environment, Forests & Climate Change recently attended the celebrations of the collaboration in science and technology in Durban.

The event was co-hosted by the departments of Science and Technology of South Africa and India. Naledi Pandor, South African Minister for S&T along with Dr. Vardhan released a booklet highlighting the two decades of fruitful cooperation in science and technology spanning across the knowledge chain which has resulted into a robust networking of the best researchers and academic institutions.

Inter-governmental agreement on cooperation in the field of Science & Technology was concluded in 1995. Since then the S&T cooperation has progressively evolved as an important pillar in the India-South Africa strategic partnership based on mutual trust, warmth and friendship.

Areas like Astronomy & Astrophysics, Agriculture Sciences, Green Chemistry, Indigenous Knowledge System and Health Sciences has been the focus so far.

A multi-institutional project on HIV Vaccine Research Collaboration has been also initiated this year which is aimed to develop preventive HIV vaccine and will also lead to the identification of biomarkers and development of novel techniques for diagnosis and management of tuberculosis.

Dr. Harshvardhan remarked that this is a unique project, where two countries will use science for addressing the health care needs of people of both countries, in the area of HIV and TB.

Another hallmark of the vibrant collaboration was the launch of a new program on ‘Grass Root Innovation’ aimed towards sharing of open source technologies and IPR protection of traditional knowledge systems. This program is designed for co-development of products through value addition, validation through product deployment and market ready technology transfer with a focus on affordability.

“Both India and S. Africa have a rich pool of traditional knowledge which can be leveraged by providing the scientific knowledge base required for technology development for societal benefit. This cooperation on grass root innovation will provide scientific and technological solutions for addressing the unmet needs of the common man. The novel initiative has been aptly named as ‘Gandhi-Mandela Program on Grass Root Innovation’. National Innovation Foundation, Ahmedabad will implement this program on the Indian side”, Harshvardhan added.