The Maha Sabha promotes scripturally based Hinduism ideals and principles. The Maha Sabha is opposed to any practice or ritual that violates, or is not endorsed, by Hindu scriptures.

The vision of the South African Hindu Maha Sabha is to promote Hindu Dharma according to the highest tenets of Hindu scriptures. It is important to note that the SAHMS has a federal structure, and all Hindu organisations in the country are directly or indirectly affiliated to the Sabha.

Founded in 1912 due to the vision, energy and drive of Swami Shankaranand who was a visiting missionary from Punjab, the organization was a first Maha Sabha to be established outside of India.

The purpose for the establishment of the South African Hindu Maha Sabha was the promotion of Hinduism and the upliftment of Hindus. This included the promotion of Hindu education and festivals, and the creation of more Hindu bodies to promote cultural and religious endeavours.

The Maha Sabha provides a forum for Hindus to discuss their common problems and exchange ideas. It allows Sanathanists, Saivites, Arya Samajists and other Hindus of divergent linguistic, ethnic, social, cultural, educational and religious background to work under a common umbrella.

The program which included musical items by the different linguistic groups and goodwill messages from the public was well received.

Readers who missed the radio broadcast can access selected audio clips from the program by accessing the Maha Sabha’s Website and Facebook pages which has recently been re-designed to be more informative and user friendly.
Message from the President, Mr Ashwin Trikamjee

The President and Officials of The South African Hindu Maha Sabha are deeply concerned about your safety!

Covid-19 has literally taken control of our lives. The pandemic has taught us to be more aware of our surroundings, remain healthy and adapt to a lifestyle change of social distancing, washing our hands regularly and wearing of masks. Due to the rapid rise of infections, social gatherings must be avoided at all cost. In fact it is best to STAY AT HOME and avoid contact with anyone.

We are approaching the following festivals and we suggest that you exercise caution if you attending public spaces. Remember those of us who are over 60 years old must stay at home

Mariamman Prayer during the month of Aadi.
    Shravan Maas
    Naag Panchami
    Gita Week

All the best to You and Your Family. It is our heartfelt prayer that you remain safe.

Please study the Covid-19 guidelines for temples, satsanghs and ashrams that choose to be open to the public on page 3 which was issued in June, and advise that you take necessary precautions to avoid the virus!

Stay Blessed!

Ashwin Trikamjee
President
South African Hindu Maha Sabha
COVID-19 - Regulations / guidelines for Temples and priests

The South African Hindu Maha Sabha welcomes the government decision to open places of worship and the strict regulations that have to be followed. The declaration of the National Day of prayer against Covid-19 on Sunday 31 May 2020 coincides with the 108th anniversary of the establishment of the South African Hindu Maha Sabha.

The S A Hindu Maha Sabha, in consultation with the Purohit Council of the Shree Sanathan Dharma Sabha of SA, Arya Samaj South Africa, and other religious and faith based organisations has developed the following guidelines for places of worship which plan to open on 1st June 2020.

It important that the following protocols must be strictly enforced at ALL religious gatherings:

1. The maximum number of persons attending cannot exceed 50 including priests and temple officials and staff. By using digital media like Whatsapp an advanced register of attendees can be developed, and if capacity is reached this can be communicated to the congregation to avoid possible unpleasant situations.

2. A Covid-19 subcommittee should be established.

3. Mandir personnel to be on standby to administer and apply strict discipline.

4. All devotees must wear masks.

5. Appropriate social distancing (1.5 metre) must be observed.

6. A register of all devotees attending, including names, ID numbers, phones numbers and addresses must be kept.

7. It would be useful to keep a log of where everyone sits.

8. Acquiring and using a temperature scanner to screen all attendees must be mandatory.

9. The premises must be sanitised before and after each prayer/religious gathering.

10. Hand sanitiser must be provided for all devotees before and after the prayer.

11. Any ritual/activity that may expose devotees to risk must be avoided.

12. There should be a designated person/committee responsible for overseeing sanitising procedures, maintaining the register, liaising with public health officials, and helping to identify and notify contacts if necessary.

13. Two members/officials of the Temple must be on duty at the entrance to provide hand sanitisers for cleaning hands.

14. No-one is permitted to socialise after the prayer.

15. Priests to control and regulate all rituals and poojas and must have mask and gloves.

16. All offerings must be made by priest.

17. Washing, cleaning and dressing of murtis must be under strict supervision whist maintaining the rules.

18. If any person has any flu like symptoms including, but not limited to, sore throat/continuous coughing/fever, they should not visit the Temple and they are to self-quarantine until the symptoms disappear.

19. People who have comorbidities should be advised to worship from home.

20. No sharing of any books, musical instruments or any other personal items.

21. No sharing of Prasad or fluids is permitted.

22. If anyone does use the toilet, it is expected that he/she must wash their hands with soap and water and make sure the bowl is empty after flushing.

23. Toilets to be cleaned as often as possible. More support staff to assist.

24. Regulatory signs to be erected. Eg, The management reserves the right to disallow a devotee from entering the premises if he does not adhere to the Covid 19 rules.

25. Signs for masks, hand wash, etc.

PLEASE NOTE THESE PROTOCOLS AND REGULATIONS DO NOT, IN ANY WAY, REPLACE THE PROTOCOLS SET OUT BY THE GOVERNMENT. THEY ARE MERELY ADDITIONAL AND SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS TO KEEP US ALL SAFE. IF MANAGEMENT IS UNABLE TO COMPLY WITH THE ABOVE PROTOCOLS, IT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE TO DEFER OPENING OF THE TEMPLE.
S A Hindu Maha Sabha’s Covid-19 Relief Initiatives

With the declaration of the State of Disaster by our Government in March this year, President Cyril Ramaphosa also announced the establishment of the Solidarity Fund as one of the measures to mitigate the disastrous effects of the Corona Virus pandemic.

In keeping with the Maha Sabha’s slogan Vasudhaiva Kutumbukam “The World is One Family”, the South African Hindu Maha Sabha in partnership with Lotus FM appealed to all affiliates, Companies, Trusts, Families and Individuals to donate generously to the Solidarity Fund.

To set the ball rolling, the S A Hindu Maha Sabha pledged R500 000 to the fund.

The Maha Sabha also recognized that the poorest of the poor would be devastatingly impacted by the lockdown regulations. Many Maha Sabha affiliates and other Hindu organisations stepped forward to provide supplementary relief programs to help cope with this unprecedented disaster.

The table below lists some of the affiliates and organisations who were the first to respond to the call.

Some of the Covid-19 Relief Initiatives by the Hindu Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANISATION</th>
<th>NATURE of INITIATIVE</th>
<th>AMOUNT</th>
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<tr>
<td>South African Hindu Maha Sabha</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>South African Hindu Maha Sabha</td>
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<td>South African Hindu Maha Sabha</td>
<td>Gauteng Feeding program</td>
<td>R  40 000.00</td>
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<td>Arya Samaj South Africa</td>
<td>Contribution to Solidarity Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>Surat Hindu Association</td>
<td>Contribution to Solidarity Fund</td>
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<td>Contribution to Solidarity Fund</td>
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<td>Contribution to Solidarity Fund</td>
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<td>Contribution to Solidarity Fund</td>
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<td>Shree Sanathan Dharma Sabha of S A</td>
<td>Aryan Benevolent Home Sponsorship</td>
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<td>Dennis Hurley Centre</td>
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<td>Midlands Hindu Society</td>
<td>Distribution of Food Hampers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individuals (See page 10 for listing)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Merebank ISKCON</td>
<td>Feeding of 1500 people per day</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued on page 10 ….
The South African Hindu Maha Sabha has a dedicated team of women who constitute the Sabha’s Women’s Forum Group. This dedicated team of women continuously strive to recognize the important role that women play in the home and society at large.

One of the first projects of the Women’s Forum was the launch of its Micro-Home Industry initiative in Tongaat in 2015. This was an employment creation initiative for women conducted by an all women team at Buffelsdale Secondary School.

Buffelsdale Secondary School offered its well-equipped premises for these ladies to learn the art of Indian and western cuisine. Executive members Sabina Besesar and Aarti Dheda spearheaded this initiative.

Selected candidates underwent an intensive 8 week training session with well- renown chef Asha Maharaj. Apart from gaining food making skills, they also learnt business aspects such as:

- What is Profit
- How to put basic costing together
- Hygiene
- Quality Control
- Waste Disposal

Every year in August when Women’s Month is celebrated, the South African Hindu Maha Sabha’s Women’s Forum Group hosts a special function honouring women and recognizing their incredible contribution to society.

Last year, Ms Vino Govender, Managing Director of LA Consulting Engineers, shared her inspiring success story to an attentive audience at the 2019 Brunch held at the Elengeni Hotel in Durban.

Topics in her address included:

- “My Life”
- “My Journey”
- “My Faith”
- “My Spirit”

Ms Vino Govender is also a Mother, a Mentor to Entrepreneurs and a Global Goodwill Ambassador.
The S A Hindu Maha Sabha Youth Forum forms an integral part of the structure of the Maha Sabha, which has been created not only for continuity and succession, but to incorporate young minds who can introduce fresh and bright ideas with enthusiasm and drive.

The Maha Sabha Youth Forum comprises a number of members, who are undergraduates, postgraduates and young professionals between the ages of 18 and 30 years, bringing various innovative dynamisms to the Sabha’s functionality.

The Youth Forum’s goal is to promote and protect the social, spiritual, cultural and educational interests of youth and to impart the practices and studies of Hindu principles among followers of the Hindu faith.

Part of the vision of the Youth Forum is to inspire youth by promoting the principles, values, and ethos of Hinduism while being sensitive to the multicultural diversity in South Africa. In addition, of utmost importance is to encourage educational values that emanate from our religion to help the youth community. This is because we need to collectively raise awareness about the various social pathologies that affect us such as alcohol and substance abuse, delinquency and other risky tendencies.

Recent Activities of the Maha Sabha Youth Forum

A Youth Conference in collaboration with the Sai Group Go Green Project was held at the UDW Hindu Centre in September 2019. Topical issues of interest to youth were presented and discussed.

The conference also served as a platform to encourage other young people to join the Youth Forum.

Towards the end of September a feeding project was arranged for St Thomas, St Philomenas, and Lakehaven Homes. Veg bunnies, soft drinks and chips were served to a very appreciative crowd.

During this year’s Youth Day celebration, Akshay Singh joined other Youth in presenting inspiring talks on Lotus FM’s Bhakti Sangeet.

The conference also served as a platform to encourage other young people to join the Youth Forum.

Selected learners from Monterana Secondary School and Chatsworth Secondary School presented very interesting and informative talks live on the radio program in celebration of Youth Day. They explored very topical issues affecting youth.

Last Year’s Youth Day Celebrations on Bhakti Sangeet

Akshay Singh (above) and Akira Ramdin (below), current coordinators of Youth Forum

Feeding project in progress

Young people between the ages of 18 and 30 wishing to join the Maha Sabha Youth Forum can contact Akshay Singh or the Sabha offices for further details.
Maha Sabha’s Good Governance Workshops

Since 2016 the S A Hindu Maha Sabha has been hosting a series of workshops on Good Governance and Management of religious and cultural organisations.

This was as a result of the innumerable complaints received regarding internal problems in temples and cultural organisations.

The aim of the workshops are to provide leaders of Temple organisations with the necessary tools and knowledge required to run successful and harmonious organisations for the benefit of the temple, the devotees and the community.

The presenters explain in depth the good practices that make for successful organisations.

Topics discussed included:
- South African Legislative and Constitutional compliance
- Democratic Decision making
- Financial Compliance and Public Accountability
- Ethos and Morality
- Conflict Resolution

Last year good governance workshops were held in Gauteng and Ladysmith.

Shuddha Promotion - Concept of Vegetarianism

The Shuddha logo is the official registered trademark of the South African Hindu Maha Sabha. The logo represents the “Lotus flower” symbolizing purity.

The aim is to promote the interests, concerns and ideals of Hinduism and vegetarians so that they can be confident in their choices and manufacturers’ claims.

**Shuddha accredited products:-**
- Contain no eggs
- Cruelty free - no animal testing
- Free from alcohol
- Free from meat protein, tissue or fat (meat, poultry, fish, shellfish) or bone stock, animal or carcass fats, gelatin, insect or extracts from insects or any other ingredients resulting from slaughter.

- The primary packaging material (edible or non-edible) used to protect, sell, distribute food does not contain any of the above, eg wax coatings on cheese and related foods, sausage casings etc
- No pre-treatment of food should contain any of the above material, even if the material is extracted or absent from the final end product.
- No cross contamination during the production process.

- The Shuddha logo is the official registered trademark of the South African Hindu Maha Sabha. The logo represents the “Lotus flower” symbolizing purity.
- The Shuddha logo gives consumers reassurance and inspires trust in the products they consume to be totally vegetarian.

Benefits of choosing a Vegetarian Lifestyle

Vegetarianism ensures a positive, healthy way of living. Several studies reveal that a plant-based diet increases the body’s metabolism, causing the body to burn calories up to 16 percent faster than the body would on a meat based diet. Interestingly, researchers also argue that our bodies are designed to be herbivores eg the human molars are similar to that of herbivores - flat and blunt.

Vegetarians have lower body mass indices, lower rates of death from heart disease, lower blood cholesterol levels, lower blood pressure, lower rates of hypertension, type 2 diabetes and less prostate and colon cancer. (Source: https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/8749#foods)

The Shuddha logo gives consumers reassurance and inspires trust in the products they consume to be totally vegetarian.
The Maha Sabha’s Schools Program

The South African Hindu Maha Sabha with the assistance of various Departments of Kwazulu Natal Government, NPO’s and the Public Sector has conducted a number of programs at schools in Chatsworth.

The students were given the opportunity to listen to various presentations about the dangers of drugs and substance abuse, the experiences of prison inmates, the results of unwanted teenage pregnancy and the need to follow a healthy lifestyle.

The Adopt a School Project

As a follow up on the various Drug Abuse Awareness programs held at several schools in the Durban area, the South African Hindu Maha Sabha embarked on a new strategy by initiating an “Adopt a School” project.

Montarena Secondary School in Chatsworth was chosen as the pilot project.

Montarena Secondary School has more than 500 students most of whom are from under-privileged homes. They face various issues that are beyond their control. This has impacted on the children’s performance.

Some of the problems that the students are experiencing are:

- Exposure to Drugs and Substance abuse
- Lack of Food
- Unpaid School Fees
- Dysfunctional Homes

Addressing the escalating social pathologies experienced by the youth requires an integrated multi-pronged approach, including the assistance from the Faith Sector, Family Support, Education, and Social Welfare Rehabilitation Programmes.

Montarena Secondary School in Chatsworth

Students being made aware of the dangers of drugs and substance abuse

Students being made aware of the results of unwanted teenage pregnancy and the need to follow a healthy lifestyle

Students being addressed by officials of the Department of Correctional Services on the experiences of prison inmates

“Nobody can make you feel inferior without your permission”
by Eleanor Roosevelt
As part of the Maha Sabha’s social responsibility programme, members of the Sabha led by Sabina Besesar as coordinator and supported by Pundit Kanaya Jinabhai, together with other affiliates have been conducting regular spiritual services at Westville Prison.

The objective has always been to assist Hindu inmates in overcoming the challenges they face and encourage them to rehabilitate fully in preparation for their release and integration back into their families and communities.

During special important festivals such as Deepavali, an enhanced program is conducted which is always appreciated by the inmates.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, members have not been allowed to visit any correctional services facilities.

Members are still committed to continue serving in this important community service aspect.

Any assistance that the public can provide such as employment opportunities for parolees will be sincerely appreciated. Should you be able to assist, please contact the Maha Sabha offices.

Another social upliftment program of the South African Hindu Maha Sabha was the sponsorship of a specialized blood procedure room at the R K Khan Hospital in Chatsworth.

An Improved dedicated facility had become an absolute necessity. In addition, patients were afforded the necessary privacy when seeking medical attention at the facility.

As a follow up, an air conditioning unit was recently installed in the blood procedure room by the Maha Sabha.

Further improvements at the facility are currently under consideration.
Some of the Covid-19 Relief Initiatives... continued from Page 4

<table>
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<tr>
<th>CONTRIBUTOR’S NAME</th>
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<td>Midlands Hindu Society</td>
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<td>Shree Sanathan Dharma Sabha of South Africa</td>
<td>Religious programs on Radio Hindvani</td>
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<td>Tamil Federation of South Africa</td>
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<td>S A Hindu Maha Sabha Gauteng</td>
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<td>The Valley Trust - Hillcrest</td>
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<td>The Caring Sisters</td>
<td>Food Hampers</td>
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In addition, The South African Hindu Maha Sabha distributed 5040 Food Hampers in various areas using its network of affiliates and associates in different areas.

The above tables on pages 4 and 10 include the majority of donors which we are aware of. Our sincere and heartfelt thanks go to all those who responded so wonderfully in this difficult period. May all of you always be blessed.
My mask protects you. Your mask protects me.

Even if you don’t have symptoms, masks are important to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Please wear fabric masks in public. Always wash masks between use.

Without a Mask
- Your cough or sneeze travels farther
- More germs are released in the air and onto surfaces
- More people can get sick from your germs

With a Fabric Mask
- Your cough or sneeze is more contained
- Fewer germs are released
- More people are protected from your germs

NOTICE:
Slander and hate that is spreading on social media against other faiths and their followers

SAHMS does not promote or support the slander and hate that is spreading on social media against other faiths and their followers.

Such utterances are uncalled for and can only lead to fragmentation and undermine social cohesion in a country that needs unity now more than ever.

Vasudhaiva Kutumbukam - the world is one family!