

**Address by H.E. Ms Muanpui Saiawi, High Commissioner
on the occasion of Maharashtra Day Celebration**

Date: 15th May 2026

Shri Dayanand Deshpande ji, President of Wellington Maharashtra Association and its members;

Distinguished leaders and members of the Indian Diaspora,
Ladies & Gentleman!

Kia Ora

सगळ्यांना माझा नमस्कार

महाराष्ट्र दिनाच्या हार्दिक शुभेच्छा!

कसे आहात सगळे

माझी जन्म भूमी मुंबई आहे

मी यवतमाळला आणि नागपुरला सुद्धा राहिले आहे

मला अभिमान आहे कि मी छत्रपती शिवाजी महाराजांच्या भूमित जन्माला आले .

2. Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi ji sent greetings to the people of Maharashtra on 1st of May this year, highlighting Maharashtra's long history of social awakening, cultural richness, and leadership across sectors. "From literature, theatre, music, and cinema to industry, education, science, and public service, the state has made lasting contributions to India's growth. Praying for the continued development of Maharashtra and the well-being of its great people." end quote

3. Maharashtra is India's leading industrial and economic powerhouse. Its prominent industries range from - automobile and EVs, pharmaceuticals and chemicals, textiles, media and entertainment, fintech, electronics, to emerging technologies. Its world-class infrastructure support these businesses through multi-modal connectivity through JNPT and Mumbai Port, international and regional airports, the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor, expressways and a robust network of industrial parks and sector-specific clusters. Maharashtra Government has launched one stop shop Maharashtra Industry, Trade and Investment Facilitation Cell (MAITRI/ which means friend). MAITRI provides G2B services for existing and prospective investors to get consolidated information about the investment process with regard to expanding their existing units or to set up a new business unit in the State. With the newly signed India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement, I encourage you to find investment and trade opportunities and connections between New Zealand with the vibrant economy of Maharashtra.

4. The length and breadth of Maharashtra is dotted by majestic ancient structures, including 7 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, such as Ajanta, Ellora and Elephanta caves, Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, Western Ghats, Victorian Gothic and Art Deco Ensembles of Mumbai and most recently in 2025, UNESCO inscribed the 'Maratha Military Landscapes of India' on the World Heritage List, which includes twelve major fortifications, mostly in Maharashtra with one in Tamil Nadu. These forts, such as Raigad, Shivneri, and Sindhudurg, were built, adapted, or expanded by the Marathas between the late 17th and early 19th centuries. The coastal stretch of Maharashtra offers picturesque views and adventure, its spiritual roots and sacred structures beckon pilgrims from far and wide and its vibrant festivals, glorious history, magnificent landscapes and mouthwatering cuisine make it a fascinating tourist destination.

5. While there are many more facets to highlight about Maharashtra, today we celebrate, "Movie World of Maharashtra from Dadasaheb Phalke to Modern Cinema". We recall the pioneering work of Dadasaheb Phalke, widely regarded as "the Father of Indian cinema". He directed India's first motion picture "Raja Harishchandra", whose success marked the beginning of Indian cinema and inspired the growth of the film industry in India, now the world's largest producer of films. It has been a pleasant surprise for me to find that often Indian movies are shown in the cinema theatres here in New Zealand. Some Indian movies have even been shot here, such as the Bollywood blockbuster "Kaho na pyaar hain."

(Pause)

5. On a personal note, I have forgotten much of the Marathi I learnt in school, but the rich and meaningful Marathi poetry remain close to my heart, such as one by Sant Tukdoji Maharaj and I would like to sing for you three verses from या झोपडीत माझ्या:

राजास जी महाली, सौख्ये कधी मिळाली
ती सर्व प्राप्त झाली, या झोपडीत माझ्या

महाली मऊ बिछाने, कंदील शामदाने
आम्हा जमीन माने, या झोपडीत माझ्या

येता तरी सुखे या, जाता तरी सुखे जा
कोणावरी न बोजा, या झोपडीत माझ्या

6. Ladies and gentlemen, I take a few minutes to reflect on the very sobering fact that the capital of Maharashtra, Mumbai has been victim of terrorism perpetrated by Pakistan. The 2008 Mumbai attacks, were a series of twelve coordinated terrorist attacks carried out from 26 to 29 November 2008 by ten members of Lashkar-e-Taiba, a Pakistani-backed UN proscribed terrorist group. A total of 175 people died, and more than 300 were injured.

7. It has also been a year since The Resistance Front, a proxy of that same Lashkar e Toiba carried out the dastardly attack on tourists at Pahalgam in Jammu and Kashmir on 22 April last year in which 26 innocent people were killed, the largest civilian casualty in a terrorist attack in India since the 2008 Mumbai attacks.

8. On 7 May 2025, India exercised its right to respond and pre-empt as well as deter more cross-border attacks. The actions taken by the Indian armed forces were measured, non-escalatory, precise, proportionate, and decisive. They focused on dismantling the terrorist infrastructure and disabling terrorists likely to be sent across to India. Pakistani military establishments had not been targeted. Our targets were terror nodes in Pakistan and Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. Subsequently, Pakistan launched targeted attacks against military and civilian areas where several lives were lost. India responded with retaliatory strikes on major bases of the Pakistan Air Force subsequently. Pakistan DGMO called Indian DGMO and requested for cessation of firing and military activities. The United Nations Security Council 1267 Sanctions committee published a report which included the Pahalgam terrorist attack, along with a reference to TRF and was adopted by consensus.

9. Operation Sindoor has carved out a new benchmark in India's fight against cross-border terrorism and created a new normal. India will give a befitting response to terror attacks on its own terms and take strict action at every place from where the roots of terrorism emerge. So, while we celebrate Maharashtra and its capital city Mumbai, we are also mindful of its resilient people who have suffered at the hands of terrorists and the work that the Government of India is doing to protect its citizens and root out cross-border terrorism perpetrated against India.

10. Coming back to the celebratory mood, I want to congratulate everyone who has a connection with Maharashtra or loves its culture. I would like to appreciate Shri Dayanand Deshpande ji, President of the Wellington Maharashtra Association, and all its members for keeping Maharashtra culture alive here in New Zealand. On this special day, let us celebrate not only Maharashtra but also the friendship between India and New Zealand.

धन्यवाद

Jai Hind!

Jai Maharashtra !

छत्रपति शिवाजी महाराज की जय!