INDIANS REVIVE MUSEVENI'S TRIBE OFFER

By John Ricks Kayizzi

The Indian community has hailed President Yoweri Museveni's government for being accommodative and business-oriented, reminding the newly sworn-in leader about his promise to recognise them as Uganda's newest tribe.

While hosting the Indians for a dinner to commemorate their annual Diwali celebrations at [illegible] House Entebbe late last year, Museveni said the Indians qualify to become another tribe in Uganda because they came at the same time as the Nubians.

"They were all initially brought by the British. So, why shouldn't the Indians qualify?" he noted.

In a conglaturatory statement upon his swearing in, which was issued by Pareth Mehta, the Ag. chairperson of the India Association of Uganda, the latter said after contributing to the country's development for many years, their story is now intertwined with that of Uganda.

"The hospitality of Ugandans has made generations of Indians feel at home, enabling them to invest confidently in sectors such as manufacturing, real estate, construction, banking, ICT, agriculture and services," he said.

Mehta added that this has significantly enabled the community to contribute to national development, thereby making them deserving of official recognition as an indigenous tribe.

He said from a humanitarian perspective, the Indian community has sent 238 children to India for life-saving heart surgeries along with their caretakers, and another 100 children will be sent next year.

"Indians have contributed to Uganda's story from the time of Ali Dina Vislam to the modern era of Dr Sudhir Ruparelia, Mehta, Madhivani and to many others who have built industries, schools, hospitals and livelihoods," Mehta said, recalling the legacy of Narendra Patel, Uganda's first speaker of parliament.

Currently, the Indian Community in Uganda is estimated to have about 40,000 members. Many of these are rooted in enterprises that support production, supply chains and employment across the country.

Making the promise last year, Museveni said apart from inviting them to Uganda as investors, his Government managed to right the wrongs of former president Idi Amin by restoring thousands of Indian property back to their rightful owners.

WHAT OTHERS SAY

John Walugembe, the managing director, Federation of Small and Medium Enterprises



It is okay to recognise Indians as a Ugandan indigenous tribe since many have been here for decades and Uganda is all they know as their home. It's only fair that they receive all the entitlements like other Ugandans. But we should be careful not to create an omnibus tribe that speaks different languages, since there are Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Philipinos and Arabs who came from the coast, who are all referred to as Indians.

Charles Ocici, the director General, Enterprise Uganda



It makes economic sense to recognise Indians as a Ugandan tribe. They have massively invested in factories and services, and are helping government to create a middle and skilled working class. They need to have a sense of belonging so that they form a broader revenue base for the Government to get money to educate Ugandans and erect infrastructure.

FACTS

The 1995 Constitution primarily rec
indigenous communities that were i
of February 1, 1926 and some gover
have previously indicated that India
the traditional definition of an indic
Indians first came to Uganda in la

