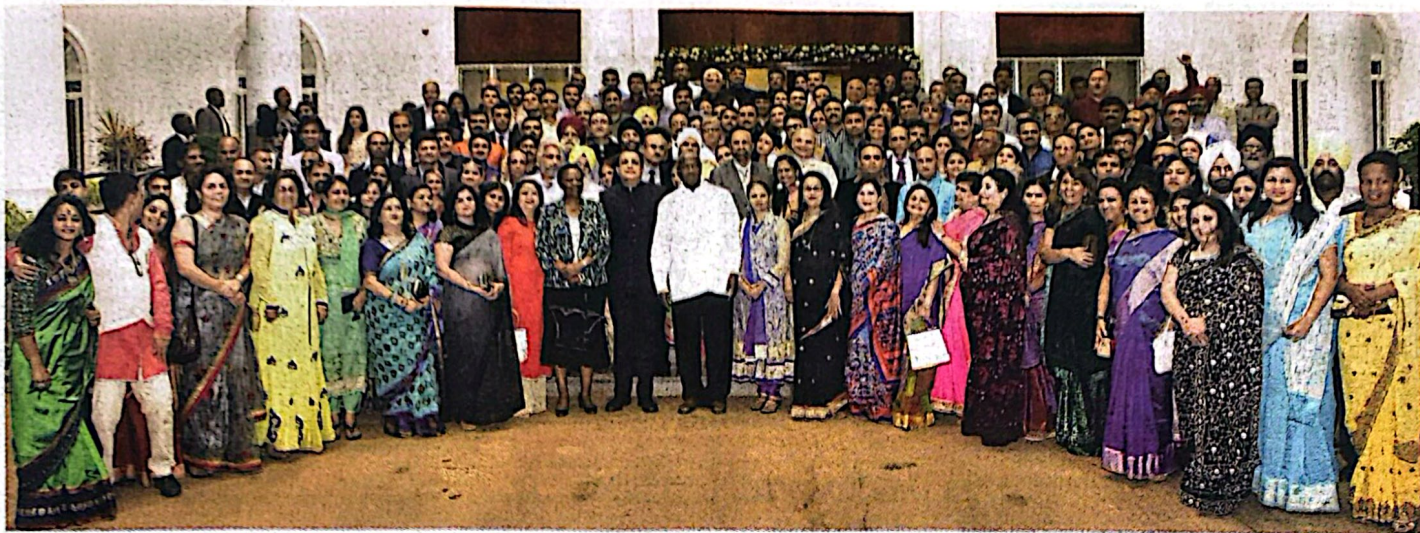




President Museveni (centre) with members of the Indian community in Uganda during a Diwali celebration at State House Entebbe on Friday. PPU Photos

By Vision Reporter

President Yoweri Museveni has commended the Indian community for having played a big role in Uganda's development. He wooed more Indian businesspeople to invest in Uganda and take advantage of the unexploited potential in raw materials, manufacturing of fabrics, steel mills, dairy and leather tanning.

The President was speaking last evening at the fourth annual Diwali celebrations during which he hosted the Indian community to the Diwali dinner at State House, Entebbe.

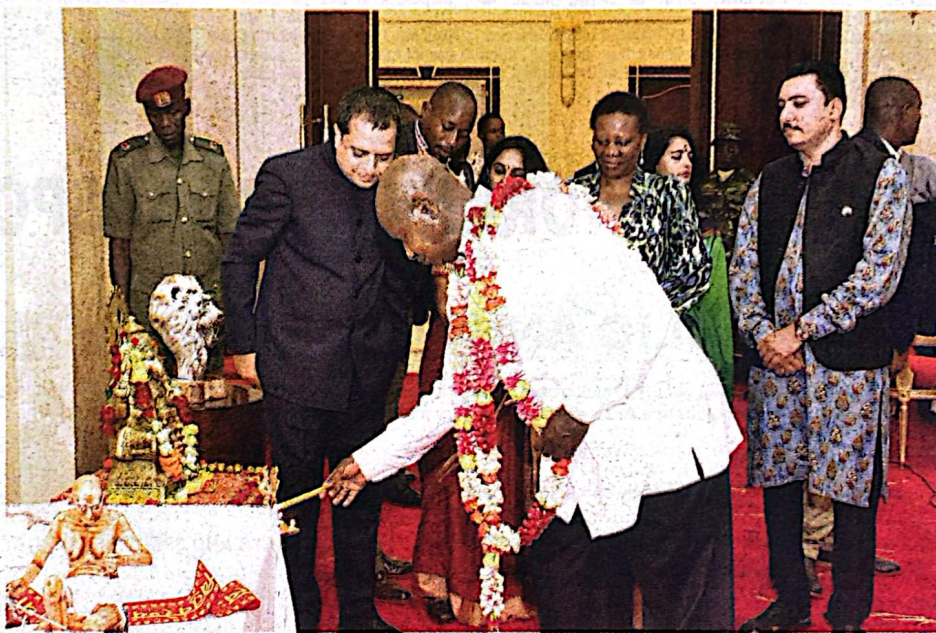
"The Indian community has played a big role in Uganda's development. When the Indians came to Uganda, they filled the trading gap that existed. The community played a very complementary role in modernising the country. It was a big mistake for Idi Amin to see them as a problem and chase them away. It is only the Amin regime that saw the Indian community as a problem. People who were and behaved as parasites and were not engaged in production, were the ones that saw Indians as a problem," he said.

Diwali, aka Deepavali, means rows of lit lamps. It is one of the most popular Hindu festivals of lights marking the victory of light over darkness, good over evil, knowledge over ignorance and hope over despair.

President Museveni assured them that there is no problem for the Indians born in Uganda to become citizens. He said he would personally follow up the matter of citizenship of the Indians. He noted that Africa is a continent that unites people, adding that the Indians who have lived in Uganda are entitled to becoming citizens. He reiterated that citizenship should be based on loyalty to the State.

President Museveni observed that what Uganda lacks most today, is value addition to her products. He observed that before the Indian companies took over dairy production in the country, the Government

Museveni lauds India's role in development of Uganda



President Museveni lights a candle during celebrations to mark Diwali. Looking on is Ravi Shankar (left) and Irene Muloni, the energy minister



President Museveni receives a painting from the Indian women during the Diwali celebrations

plant in Kampala used to produce only 15,000 litres of milk per day. He, however, observed that within a short time, the production of milk rose to 500,000 litres per day. He, therefore, encouraged Indian groups to cover up the various areas of value addition and manufacturing. He urged them to engage in the industrial sector.

President Museveni assured his guests that Uganda will not have another shortage of electricity, adding that the Government will strive to ensure that electricity is

available and at a cheap price. He added that the cost of electricity for industrial consumption should not be more than five US cents per unit.

The Indian High Commissioner to Uganda, Ravi Shanker, praised the bonds between Uganda and India, which stood together in the fight against colonialism.

"Uganda and India have stood together right from the time of fighting against colonialism. President Museveni is a friend of India," said the Indian envoy.

Shanker said the Indians of Uganda are honoured to be nationals of Uganda and India. He saluted President Museveni for hosting them to the Diwali ceremony. He wished the President a merry Christmas and a happy New Year 2018.

BETWEEN THE LINES

■ The Indian High Commissioner to Uganda, Ravi Shanker, praised the bonds between Uganda and India, which stood together in the fight against colonialism.

The chairperson of the Ugandan Indian Community Association, Chirag Dave, thanked President Museveni for the invitation to the Diwali celebrations at State House. He assured the President that the Indian community is committed to working with Ugandans towards the industrialisation of the country, promoting peace, security and harmony, not only in Uganda but the region as well.

He revealed that the Indian community has enabled 2 Ugandan children to undergo heart surgery in India, adding that another 10 are being prepared to travel soon for similar treatment. He gave assurances that the Indian community is striving to make Uganda an export-oriented country within a few years.

Energy minister Irene Muloni attended the Diwali dinner.