

THE STAR MONDAY FEBRUARY 8 1993

India plans cultural centre here

BRENDA KALI

The Indian government is to set up a non-racial cultural centre in South Africa in April.

In an historical move by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, the Director General of the Council, Niranjan Desai and the Indian High Commissioner stationed in Botswana, Stri Pal, are currently on a whirlwind visit to this country to reconnoitre the situation.

Big staff

"The centre will be used not only for cultural purposes but also for education and as re-source centre" Desai said yesterday. "It will be based in central Johannesburg and will be manned by a director, a service officer and a staff of eight or nine people from India. It's basic function is to establish contact with various cultural organisations and to promote education, disseminate information and run workshops. The centre will also be equipped with a library'

When asked why the ICCR chose South Africa, Desai said that it was the function of his organisation to reach out to the people and governments all over

the globe.
"We have centres in Moscow, Berlin, London, Jakarta, Georgetown and Cairo but the centre in South Africa is particularly special for it marks the resumption of the Indian presence in this country after 40 years".

He emphatically states that the centre will not be established to service the Indian community exclusively.
"It will be there for all those, regardless of race or colour, who need to use it", he said. "We also intend to send out dance, music and lan-guage teachers should there be a demand. It's mutual, we would like to know more about South Africa and in turn South Africans can learn about

Festival?

But the establishment of the centre is only the beginning. Desai does not rule out the possibil-ity that South Africa could be a venue for the Festival of India which has been held in Moscow, the UK, US and

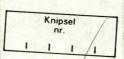
Despite the boycott, hundreds of South African students have been given bursaries by the ICCR to study in India for several years now, but subject to the approval of the ANC, which has an office in Delhi.

Tack Heath galley.

INSTITUUT VIR EIETYDSE GESKIEDENIS

Die Universiteit van die Oranje-Vrystaat

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Speaking of Inbeauty eand

HE pottery made by these communis was not only functional, some of it tiso seems to have had a symbolic, even sligious, significance," Dr Tim Maggs

I had asked him about the remains of a clay representation, highly stylised, of a human head which was recently dug up at one of the scores of Iron Age sites in Natal/KwaZulu. Much of the head has been lost, but the remaining sections have been pieced together to create something which is remarkably similar to the famous heads found in the early 1960s near Lydenburg in the Transvaal. I had asked Dr Maggs, the archaeologist at the Natal Museum who has been responsible for much of the research into the pottery, if the heads had to do with some reli-

"We don't know for certain," he re-plied. "But they definitely served some osmological function."

I asked what cosmological meant. "It's how a community perceives itself relation to the universe, both the phycal universe and the spiritual.

It is above all this sense of the usefuless of everything, an echo of earthy agmatism, which pervades this warm d beautiful exhibition. Yet coupled to s satisfying, even comfortable, sense is sharpness of the realisation of the of the artefacts on show. The pieces nead are, according to carbon dating, r 1 200 years old. The earliest pieces/ even older, having been made as long

Story by David Robbins

Natal's First Potters, an exhibition of pottery made by Natal's early Iron Age black farmers, opened at the Jack Heath Gallery this week. It runs until May 30.

"Were they farmers, rather than Stone Age hunter gatherers, even then?"

Dr Maggs nodded/"We call them agro-pasturalists. They/lived in large settled villages, and their economy was based on planting and reaping and the possession

"How do you know?"

"Look at this map. These are the known Iron Age settlements in Natal and Kwa-Zulu. We excavated several of them; particularly valuable to us are the refuse pits which have preserved remains in very good condition. We learn, from bones and carbonised plant remains, the nature of their diet. And something of how they lived. A lot of the pots you see here were used for the preparation of food, and for grain storage. We have also found, by a process known as flotation, the seeds they planted.'

In one glass case, I saw a rusted piece of metal, and a strange clay object in the shape of a tube with a distended opening.

"The metal is a hoe, the basic tilling implement of the Iron Age. The clay object is a bellows nozzle, either for a

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