

**ADDRESS BY THE HON D. GOKHOO,
MINISTER OF INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND
RESEARCH**

ON THE OCCASION

OF

BRAINSTORMING WORKSHOP

THE FILM INDUSTRY –

THE WAY FORWARD

SATURDAY 7 MARCH 2009

AT 09.15 HRS

La Petite Cannelle, Domaine Les Pailles

Mr Ragen, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Industry, Science and Research

Mr. Christian Nayna, Chairman MFDC

Mrs Kamla Ramyeed, General Manager

Board Members

Staff of the Corporation

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning. I am very happy to be with you on the occasion of this brainstorming workshop on the theme “The Film industry – the way forward”.

You will recall that when we met for the end of year dinner in December last, the idea of having an interactive session was evoked by the staff of the MFDC. I very much appreciated this suggestion and today, we are giving it a concrete expression. We have honoured our commitment with the organization of this workshop.

This is an in-house activity in which every staff member of MFDC is being given the opportunity to participate and contribute. I am sure members of the Board and Staff of my Ministry will also have an important input to the discussions that will take place.

I must say that ever since I have been appointed Minister of Industry, Science and Research, I have paid special attention to all the parastatal bodies falling under my Ministry. I never miss an opportunity to be present and be supportive of the initiatives being taken. I sincerely hope that with the collaboration and support of all stakeholders, the MFDC will be in a better position to accomplish its mission more effectively.

MFDC

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The MFDC has been set up as far back as 1986, with the main objective of promoting film activities. We must pay tribute to the legislators who set up the MFDC for they believed in the most potential of our country and its people. While Mark Twain has compared Mauritius to Heaven, late Indira Gandhi gave us the status of mini United Nations.

It is worthwhile to point out that the Corporation now operates under the aegis of my Ministry. This in itself is a strong signal of what the Government expects of the MFDC – that is to develop the film industry as an important economic activity capable of generating revenue and employment. The questions should preoccupy us all is: How far MFDC has been able to fulfill its mission? What needs to be done now?

Let me remind you that the entertainment industry across the world constitutes one of the major economic sectors contributing substantially to income and employment. We have a long way to go to establish ourselves but we must all share the vision of creating a dynamic film industry in Mauritius. It is essential that we benchmark ourselves with successful countries such as US, India, Hong Kong, Australia, Canada, Germany and Nigeria just to cite a few. We cannot, of course, have the ambition of Bollywood or Hollywood, but we need to identify niche areas where we can leverage our strengths and optimize on the opportunities.

For instance, Mauritius has reached a level of merit in the area of advertising. This clearly depicts considerable capabilities and can be an asset in propelling the film industry, both regionally and internationally. Let us not stop at the narrow definition of the film industry. The film industry can offer a wide basket of products

and services, namely short films, documentaries, feature films, animation, serials, commercials etc. I understand that we will be conducting a SWOT analysis of the industry during the second part of today's function. I am confident that a consensus will evolve regarding the key areas where we need to focus our energy.

Strategy

Ladies and Gentlemen

In the light of the opportunities that the film industry has to offer, the role of MFDC cannot be under-estimated. As one of the executive arm of the Ministry of Industry, Science and Research, MFDC will have to come up with a clear strategy for each sub-sector where we need to put resources and overcome constraints.

I understand that several initiatives have already been undertaken by the Mauritius Film Development Corporation to achieve its objectives of

- (i) producing films;
 - (ii) promoting Mauritius as a film shooting destination;
 - (iii) providing support to the development of a film industry.
- and
- (iv) capacity building

Since I assumed responsibility for film sector, I have been laying emphasis on the need to build capacity in this sector. I am pleased to note that MFDC has been embarking on an intensive programme of capacity building. A three-day workshop was held last November by Mrs Parsad Jha, holder of a degree in Fine Arts from New York University on Script writing. Some 85 participants were trained in the technicalities of documentary film making, script writing and outdoor shooting. The beneficiaries were independent film makers as well as staff of MBC, students and staff on the degree course in audio visual run by the Mahatma Gandhi Institute.

MFDC is pursuing this year with its training programmes in acting essentials and script writing. I understand that interest has been expressed by 75 applicants for courses in Acting essentials and scriptwriting. In view of the high response rate in Acting essentials, MFDC has decided to run the courses on a regional basis. We have to build the appropriate culture among the youth and the population so that we can realize our ambition of developing a film industry, where the multiplier effects will be substantial. We need to be equipped with both soft and hard resources that will motivate both the local producer and attract the foreign film producer in Mauritius.

Fund

Ladies and Gentlemen

As you are aware, Government has provided Rs 1 billion for a Human Resource Development, Knowledge and Arts Fund which is financing, inter alia, schemes to encourage and support local artists and initiatives to foster arts and creativity. Under my guidance, the MFDC has been applying for financial resources from the Fund for the promotion of the film industry.

The MFDC is also looking into avenues of co-production with friendly countries with which Mauritius has cultural exchange programmes. We have a dearth of professionals in Mauritius and I believe we should tap on existing links with friendly countries to assist us.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The success of our hospitality industry bears testimony to the fact that Mauritius has the potential to develop as an ideal shooting destination. We are known worldwide for our scenic beaches and natural beauty and our warm hospitality. To promote the film industry, it is also important that there is a concerted effort amongst promotion agencies such as BOI, MTPA, EM and Air Mauritius in order to also project Mauritius as a shooting destination par excellence.

Over the past seven months MFDC has served 46 foreign film crews from such countries as Russia, India, Australia and Holland. This represents a source of revenue from the MFDC and a step in line with government policy to gradually render all parastatal bodies self-financing. The Corporation should take the necessary measures to attract more foreign film crews in Mauritius.

MFDC has also been organizing film festivals on a regular basis. An Australian Film Festival and a Children Film Festival are scheduled to be organized in the coming months. A Mauritian film festival will also be organized in the context of the 41st anniversary of our Independence.

In order to encourage more and more local producers to come forward, it is imperative that locally produced films are given special attention by the MBC. In this context, I had a meeting with the Director General of the MBC to discuss about the possibility of having Mauritian films broadcast on MBC TV. It has already been agreed that MBC will broadcast local film productions provided MFDC look for sponsors.

Ladies and Gentlemen

I understand that the Mauritius Film Development Corporation has so far managed to achieve some of its objectives. However, I believe that there is still a lot to be done for the industry to take off. Let us not waste our time and energies in futile things. Let us transform MFDC into a model professional film making organisation. Hence, the need for the MFDC to chart out a strategic plan to reposition the film industry in the new business environment. I am looking forward to this workshop identifying the right strategies, projects and programmes with key performance indicators and clearly defined time frames.

I wish you a fruitful deliberation and I now have the pleasure to declare the workshop open.

Thank you for your attention.