

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

**LAUNCHING OF
THE MAURITIAN FILM
FESTIVAL 2009**

Friday 12 June 2009

at 18 00 hrs

RGSC Auditorium, Bell Village

Mr Christian Nayna, Chairman MFDC

Dr M. Bhuruth, Chairman, Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre

Mr S Ragen, Permanent secretary, Ministry of Industry,
Science and Research

Dr Maulloo, Director, Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre

General Manager, MFDC

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening,

Thank you for honouring us by your presence tonight's Film Festival being organized by the MFDC.

Let me congratulate MFDC and thank all the sponsors supporting this event.

New Strategy

The organisation of this Film Festival of Mauritian Films, produced in the context of the 40th Anniversary of our Independence, forms part of a new strategy being put in place to revitalize the MFDC.

The MFDC which was set up in 1986 has as Vision the creation of a dynamic image industry. Its main objectives are:

1. To import, export, exhibit and produce films
2. To promote film activities
3. To hold and promote film show festivals
4. To give assistance to persons or bodies engaged in the production or exhibition of films and
5. To provide one stop shop services.

With its limited resources, up to now, the MFDC infrastructure has been fulfilling its role as the sole organization that caters for film activities in Mauritius.

Since I have assumed responsibilities as Minister of Industry, Science and Research in September 2008, I have spared no effort to support the Corporation in its endeavours.

In March this year a brainstorming session on theme “the film industry – the way forward” was organized. This workshop provided an important interactive platform for the staff of MFDC and all stakeholders to meet and discuss issues related

to the activities of the Corporation. At the end of the day an Action Plan was prepared.

We want to provide the film sector “un nouveau souffle” as we believe that the film/entertainment industry constitutes an important component of the cultural industry capable of generating revenue and employment and promoting Mauritian talent.

Film Competition

Ladies and gentlemen, the films which we will be viewing tonight were produced last year when MFDC in collaboration with the Ministry of Arts and Culture organized a short film competition on the theme ‘Nou Pei, nou Fierte’ marking the 40th Anniversary of the independence of Mauritius. There was a resounding response of some 50 entries which were recorded. After selection from a panel of Jury, 5 best scripts were retained and financed by the MFDC to an amount of Rs 100 000 per film.

A film can be very good but it serves no purpose if the hard work and skills of the artists remain locked in the reels out of the theatre, far from the audience. It is vital that once a film is produced it should be viewed by the large public for there is no film industry if there is no audience; the audience is the sine qua none for its success.

In Bollywood and Hollywood, films attract large audiences and the industry thrives. An audience does not solely play an economic role but as a source of motivation for the artist who can dream of Stardom, to be in a perpetual quest for adulation, perfection and professionalism.

No film industry in the world is an exception to this rule and therefore my Ministry will pay particular attention to this fundamental aspect of screening Mauritian films for without it, the local film industry will be at pain to flourish.

The filmmakers have spared lots of efforts to develop their creativity in the production and realization of their films and it is my duty to help in promoting these films vis a vis the public. I seized this opportunity to congratulate everyone who has responded positively to this film competition, especially the five filmmakers and their crews who have done a marvelous job namely:

- Wassim Sookia for ‘Rouzeblezonnver’
- Stephane Bellerose for ‘La Ronde du Bonheur’
- Satish Korugdharry for ‘Le Chant du dodo’
- Thierry Francois for ‘La Bourse ou la vie’
- Sachin Jootun for ‘Desh ki Shaan’

The Festival will run from Friday 12th to Sunday 14th June 2009 and the films will be screened in four locations, across the island.

This Festival will be an opportunity for the Mauritian audience to appreciate the outstanding work done by the casting team. I cannot describe it more aptly than in those words: ‘A Mauritian

Film Festival by Mauritians to Mauritians for Mauritians'. This line best reflects and embodies our visions, reasons and motives behind this festival and can only encourage our filmmakers to engage in further production.

Quality

I would like to have a word on the quality of the films also which is very good and has impressed many. Two of them have even crossed the borders to go to other countries, nominated at International Film Festivals. This means that we have talented artists who are able to perform outstandingly to impress international jury. I have in mind the film of Mr Wassim Sookia who has known international applause and appreciation and also Mr Stephane Bellerose's film 'La Ronde du Bonheur' which has won the Best Short Film Award at Sinesel in Seychelles.

I have no doubt that like the two above mentioned filmmakers; we have other Mauritian filmmakers who are of international caliber, who could have been the pride of the country in the world given their creativity, talent and skills. Though there is no yardstick measure to compare our industry to Hollywood or

Bollywood, our local filmmakers are managing quite well given the scarce resources being put at their disposal.

The filmmakers assume a pivotal role in our endeavors to take off the film industry and I will make it an obligation to adjust my agenda to meet the filmmakers and to discuss relevant issues pertinent to their aspirations, ideas and suggestions which will be welcomed and entertained so as we altogether can work harmoniously to define our very own Mauritian Film Industry. I want you to be privileged partner in the new dimension and dynamism we seek to bring to the film industry in Mauritius.

I am one of those who believe and advocate that competition is in fact essential if anyone wants to attain excellence. However I do not believe in what many others sum as ‘winning is not everything, it is the only thing’. I encourage participation and it would be wrong to proceed in my speech if I exclude those hard working filmmakers who have not seen their scripts retained. To them I encourage them to continue to work for there will be other opportunities soon. I urge all Mauritian filmmakers and potential ones to join efforts with us by

continuing to show a positive response to the various competitions which the MFDC will hold in the near future.

This Film Festival will be followed by a Children Film Festival scheduled for 20 – 30 June 2009.

Capacity Building

I am also pleased to note that the MFDC has also embarked on a programme of Capacity building. We need to impart appropriate training to all interested persons so that we may have a pool of talented professionals in different fields of filmmaking.

The Corporation is actually conducting training courses in Acting Essentials and some 40 Students are following the said courses in different areas of the Island. The Corporation is also planning to organize training courses in Scriptwriting Essentials which will start very soon.

We have also approached the HRDC to finance training programmes as per our Programme Based Budget in the fields of Film Direction, Stage Setting, Light and Sound techniques.

In this period of economic crisis, the MFDC is diversifying its activities. A freelance team of production crews are being hired to engage in production of Corporate Films for Governement/Parastatal bodies.

I am pleased to tell you here that the MFDC has already approached and obtained from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources a sum of Rs 2m from its Knowledge Development and Art Fund. This fund will be put at the disposal of our local filmmakers during the next local film competition which the MFDC will be launching soon.

Networking

MFDC is also developing collaborative arrangements with both local and international organizations to give a boost to the industry

This once again shows that we have at heart the development of the industry and no stone is left unturned to go forward and to consolidate the film making industry.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To reposition MFDC as per the Government Programme 2005-2010, we are revisiting our existing MFDC Act which I said earlier dates back to 1986 to make it more appropriate to the modern environment in which the Corporation needs to evolve. A new Bill for the image industry is under preparation.

I hope this film festival will be a real success. I also thank our different sponsors as well as the media for the coverage of this important event.

Thanking you very much and wishing you all an enjoyable night. Have a nice viewing!

