

Public Service Excellence Award, 2007

Address

by

Mr S. C. Seeballuck

Secretary to Cabinet

and Head of the Civil Service

on Thursday 03 July 2008 at 09 30 hours

Sir Harilal Vaghjee Memorial Hall

Colleagues, Senior Chief Executives and Permanent Secretaries

Mr Mohammad Vayid, Chairman of the Panel of Jury

Mr Kris Ponnusamy and other Members of the Panel of Jury

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am pleased to be in your midst this morning to celebrate with all of you, the extraordinary achievements that are going to be recognized through the Public Service Excellence Award. Over the last two years, the Public Service Excellence Award has indeed helped us to highlight and celebrate excellent examples of innovation, leadership, team spirit, effectiveness and customer care in our Civil Service. I think, as public officers, we should all be very proud of the success stories that this award has helped to identify. I am sure, there are more such

examples of excellence than what the award reveals every year. As Head of the Civil Service, I would like to seize this opportunity to thank you all, for responding effectively to the everyday challenges facing the civil service and for the great work that you are doing collectively in the service of the Nation.

Ladies and Gentlemen

We are gathered here today, precisely, to recognize and celebrate the inspirational work of some of our colleagues. They are the best among the best. Those who have participated in the competition are demonstrating that they want to make a difference. They are in fact the forerunners of the type of civil servants that we would like to see in our civil service in the 21st century.

I am fully aware that, as civil servants, you work behind the scene and do not always get the credit that you deserve. Very often, coverage is all about negative

stories, rather than the good work that you do. But I believe that if you stick to your job, and do it well, with dedication and professionalism, then, sooner or later, you do get the recognition. I am sure, like me , you were all equally delighted the other day, to hear the Prime Minister in the National Assembly, publicly acknowledging, the instrumental role played by the civil service in the construction of post-independent Mauritius. To me, that acknowledgment from the Head of the Government, in itself, constitutes the highest excellence award that we could expect as civil servants. The credit also goes to our illustrious predecessors who toiled hard to build the reputation that the civil service enjoys today. It is now our duty to work harder so as to enhance this reputation.

Ladies and Gentlemen

After independence, the civil service has indeed been playing, and will certainly continue to play, a pivotal role in the socio-economic development of the country. The civil

service, as the executive arm of the Government, has been successfully driving the agenda of successive governments, of different political complexion. It has served all of them with the same loyalty, dedication and professionalism. We have come a long way. But we must not allow our success to give way to complacency. There are still higher rankings to reach in several areas. But the road ahead will be difficult. The international context remains volatile with the ever increasing price of oil. We also face the risk of the US sliding into recession and its knock-on effect on Europe. Mauritius remains vulnerable to such outside shocks. We have no choice but to succeed in our economic reforms, not in spite of these challenges, but because of them.

Our task today is to continue to enhance the current capabilities of the civil service so as to respond effectively to the new priorities of the Government. As you are aware, the Minister of Finance has, in his last budget speech, announced a wave of new measures to address

the current and upcoming challenges that we face both on the local and international front. The new reform measures aim to give Mauritius a strong and vigorous impetus to run the next development lap and build the Mauritius of tomorrow. These measures are profound and wide-ranging and touch almost all sectors of our economy.

Once again, the Government will rely on the civil service to translate its new vision into reality. As civil servants, it is our first duty to deliver on the programme of the Government of the day. Therefore, the public service has to line up with the new policies of the Government with renewed commitment and determination. The Ministry of Finance has allocated the necessary financial means to realize the objectives set in the 2008/2009 Budget. The Pay Research Bureau, for its part has, in its last report set the scene for civil service to deliver on its mandate. The ball is now in our court. It is up to us now to realize the targets set under the Programme Based Budgeting (PBB). The continued funding of the different

programmes under the PBB in the next financial year will depend on the achievements of the respective programmes in this financial year. Any failure in achieving the programmes' objectives will put an embarrassing question mark on our ability as policy implementers.

The message for us is therefore clear. We have to brace ourselves to meet this new challenge.

However, you will agree that we cannot build the Mauritius of tomorrow with the civil service of yesterday. We need a stronger and more resilient civil service. There is ample evidence that countries with a weak civil service have a weak economy. This is the reason why successive governments have been investing so much in the reform and modernization of our civil service.

We must therefore increase the pace and scope of our reform programme so as to create a civil service that is fit for the 21st century. I note that the theme of the 2007

edition of the Public Service Excellence Award was “*In the pursuit of Excellence: enhancing trust in the Public Service*”. Indeed we need a culture of excellence at all levels. It is this culture of excellence that will strengthen public trust in the civil service, and not vice versa. This trust is vital because without it, the civil service will not survive and will not deserve to survive. As civil servants we have to deliver world class and customer focused services. We need to organize our human resource around problems affecting our citizens. We must manage with the citizens in mind. We need a public service more open to the public, private and voluntary sector. And we also need to interchange among them. In short, we need open communications and exchange of information. This, in my view, will also help to build trust in the public sector. I am glad to note that we are today also launching a new publication containing guidelines on how to improve our public counter services. It is a user-friendly document which outlines the basic principles required for a customer centric and quality service. I am sure Public Sector

organizations will find the document useful in their effort to improve their counter services.

Colleagues,

The challenges lying ahead are daunting indeed, but I have every reason to believe that, as in the past, the civil service will, once again, rise up to the challenge with its usual distinction.

Before ending, I would like to thank the panel of jury, in particular, Mr Mohamed Vayid, for having devoted their precious time to handle this task which I believe must not have been an easy one. I again congratulate the winners and invite those who have not participated to do so in next year's edition.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you for your time and attention.