

**YOUNG JOURNALIST OF THE YEAR 2015  
AWARDS CEREMONY**

**MINISTER'S SPEECH**

**Thursday 18 Feb 2016**

**MITD Lecture Theatre, MITD House, Phoenix**

A warm welcome to all of you at the seat of this Ministry. We are indeed happy to have partnered with the British Council in the organisation of the latest Young Journalist of the Year Competition in 2015. The primary aim behind this competition is “to encourage young people and aspiring writers to connect to the English language and contemporary UK writing and creativity.”

I could be tempted to stop at that. But I won't.

I believe such a Competition serves a multiplicity of purposes although some of them are implicit rather than explicit.

Yes, indeed, the budding journalists in our schools would certainly seize this as a means to reflect their dexterity in the use of English language as a medium of expression. And because this is a writing exercise, it certainly demands linguistic precision, rigour and discipline—especially when the rule stipulates a 750 word limit!

In addition, these young participants would definitely have generated a high degree of self-motivation—they would have had to engage in deep thinking, carry out research to come up with new ideas.

It is interesting that this should be the case because all the above characteristics--- discipline, research, creativity, discussion with friends, and so on are the fundamental qualities that 21<sup>st</sup> Century learners are supposed to have. These are the survival and coping skills we today expect schools to help foster in our learners.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am sure that the students who had taken part in this competition would have had a taste of what journalism today stands for.

It is important to keep in mind that the Press, especially what we call the non-partisan press, has commonly been referred to as the Fourth Estate, the first three being the Executive, the Legislative and the Judiciary.

It is fascinating as well to keep in view that a strong press, with its ability to act as a channel for the flow of communication, is at the very heart of a democracy. Traditionally, reporters have been expected to reveal what others would love to push under the carpet—the Watergate Affair and, more recently, the Wiki-leaks are two such illustrations.

So journalists are duty bound to be accurate and unbiased in what they write if they are to enjoy increased credibility. On top of it, they are to discern between what is likely to be newsworthy and what not. That in itself is no easy task!

And, lest we forget, they now have to operate in an environment where the very survival of newspapers (and therefore journalists!) is at stake and they are losing out to an increasing predominance and ubiquity of the electronic media!

However, my dear Students, you did not have to go through the throes of such ethical debates and controversies.

The theme that you were expected to write on related to **‘What makes Shakespeare so great?’**

And Shakespeare’s perennial survival is never ever in question!

As previous speakers have indicated, this theme has been opportune in view of the **Shakespeare Lives** activities and events programmed on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of the Bard’s death in this year. Shakespeare indeed is and will remain a universal figure, one who speaks for all people and nations. We can discover ourselves in many of the characters he depicted and I can understand that you would have been thrilled to demonstrate the qualities that led to his greatness.

And one of those is undoubtedly his versatility in the use of language—and especially his influence on the English Language.

Allow me to share something with you.

At the Launch of ‘Shakespeare Lives’ in Westminster House, both the British High Commissioner, HE Jonathan Drew and I emphasized that Shakespeare was writing in a language for which there was as yet no dictionary and no established grammar text. And yet he contributed over 3000 words to the English language.

We also quoted heavily from him-- for Shakespeare is probably the most quoted author, next to the writer of the Bible.

I am tempted to believe that you who have been writing articles on what makes Shakespeare great must have used a number of words and expressions whose creative origins go back to him.

In fact, it would be interesting to carry out a quick search and

discover how many Shakespearean words and expressions have been used by our budding authors!

**Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Allow me to seize the opportunity of the Awards Ceremony to express my Ministry's deep appreciation to the British Council and its previous and present Directors for all the support they have been extending to us over the years.

Connecting Classrooms, Capacity Building of School Leaders and this Competition are just some illustrations of the collaboration.

Congratulations to the British Council for helping to develop and sustain English-speaking and writing skills among our students and for encouraging the flourishing of talent.

The beauty about the Competition we are here for today lies in the fact quality matters as much as quantity. And that, I am certain, would have raised the standard of entries.

My congratulations also go to the winners and runners-up of the Senior and Junior categories as well as to the Rectors, Educators and parents for their encouragement and support.

My final earnest wish would certainly be to see more students participating in such competitions and thereby giving a fillip to the English language in Mauritius.

***I thank you all for your attention.***