ADDRESS BY HON. SUTYADEO MOUTIA, MINISTER OF CIVIL SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCHING CEREMONY OF THE COURSE ON LEADERSHIP FOR SENIOR OFFICIALS OF THE MAURITIUS CIVIL SERVICE ON 04 DECEMBER 2012 AT LA PLANTATION HOTEL, BALA CLAVA.

Mr Sateeaved Seebaluck, Senior Chief Executive of my Ministry
Dr Moonshiram, Director, Landmark Management and Tech. Consultants Ltd
Staff of my Ministry
Facilitators
Representatives of Federations representing employees of the civil service
Distinguished guests,
Dear Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen

A very good morning to you all!

I am pleased to have this opportunity to address you today. It is not often that government targets to bring together under one roof officers above mid-management from across the whole civil service afford to participate in such programmes.

I am proud that after so much of anticipation, the first training programme under the aegis of the Civil Service College is being launched. This is the fruit of a long struggle especially when we are all aware that we have to compete for funds.

The natural aspiration of generations of civil servants and the dream of successive governments is being realized by this government of Dr. the Honourable Navinchandra Ramgoolam who has always believed in the need for this college. Today, it’s a reality.

Ever since I was sworn in as Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms, this project has been on top of my priority list. The college is now a legal entity. There are still a few details left to be finalized before the institution can beat its wings.
This launching ceremony is very special indeed as this is the very first course being launched under the aegis of the Civil Service College, Mauritius. You must also be proud to be its very first customers. This event augurs well for the future. It is just the beginning of a long life for this new institution. It needs the commitment of all civil servants for its sound development into a full-fledged and self-reliant adult learning centre.

I do not have the least doubt that in years to come, it will cater for the training needs of civil service across the continent and even for Commonwealth member countries.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Honourable Prime Minister has stated last week in the National Assembly, I quote:

“I think it was in the early 1970s- there was a report which said that Mauritius managed, not only because of the sound economic policies, not only about the choices that the government made, but also because we had a civil service that could work and deliver on time.”

Unquote

The civil service has, in fact, positively influenced the socio-economic development of the country since independence. The scores are on the billboards! Whether you look at Moody’s, Mo Ibrahim or indices of the World Economic Freedom or in the statements of Hillary Clinton or Stiglitz, there is convergence of views that the civil service in Mauritius has contributed to the position that Mauritius has earned as a young nation.

However, we may not lie peacefully on our laurels! Ladies and gentlemen, public services today face unprecedented challenges. More is being asked of public sector leaders than ever before. There are strong demands from both the public and other stakeholders for improved and cost-efficient public services in Mauritius. These include:

- Demands to modernize public services and orient them more closely to the needs and wishes of customers;
- Higher expectations on the part of the general public who expect public services to keep up with private ones;
• Increased opportunities and requirements for partnerships both across the public sector and with non-state actors;

• Pressure to harness new technology and deliver government services electronically.

The challenge grows in complexity when we take into consideration the need to cope with and manage diversity within our population towards effective nation-building.

To cope with these challenges, we need strong and competent leaders. Good leaders are those people who can encourage and motivate members of their teams to go the extra mile steering their organizations even in troubled waters. I do not personally believe in magical solutions such as the wholesale import of leaders from the private sector.

Ladies and gentlemen, leadership is not a quality or skill that comes naturally to everyone, though some people seem to be, as we would say, “born leaders” of organizations. Not everybody is a Steve Jobs or Bill Gates! Most people who become leaders, though, develop their leadership skills over time, through experience in tough situations, through exposure to role models, and through training. Government believes that leadership ability is the key requirement for executives in the public service, perhaps more important than knowledge or experience or who you know or how well you get along with those above you in the organization. It is certainly more important than the ability to manage.

As you are already aware, I have never been in the civil service. When I assumed responsibility for this ministry, the questions that naturally came to my mind were:

• Why does it take so many years for the civil service to implement the performance management system when it is believed to have highly qualified officers?

• Why are organizations unable to address the areas mentioned in the report of the National Audit Office?

• Why are projects not completed on time?

• Why is the cost often on the higher side?
After a little more than a year as Minister, it is apparent that the civil service should shed its transactional approach to management and adopt a transformational stance. We need leaders for this. This is the main reason why my ministry believes in the need for training in leadership for senior level officers of the civil service.

Today, as stated earlier, we are in the midst of a major reform process and all sectors in the public service are called upon to steer up actions and measures to improve performance. My Ministry, through its administrative reforms initiatives and modernization programmes, is steadily pushing forward the promotion of a good corporate image for the public service, while at the same time focusing on improved methods of service delivery.

Dear participants, this training programme has been tailor-made to suit the needs of the public sector in Mauritius. It aims, inter alia to:

1. Deepen your understanding on the complexities of the public service and connect this learning to your respective service story through a broad, multidisciplinary approach
2. Expose you to models of ethical and effective service
3. Develop your leadership knowledge, skills and competencies through a comprehensive programme of theoretical study backed by practical experience and analysis
4. Further enhance your understanding of the issues faced by public servants and how best to strategically confront and solve challenges.

I am hoping that while meeting its objectives, this programme will enable you to improve service delivery to meet and why not exceed your customers’ expectations. I had announced during my intervention on the budget and it also appears in our PBB that we will introduce a Customer Satisfaction Survey in 2013.

This will be a tool to gauge the level of satisfaction the public gets from our services. In the first instance we will target a limited number of public services; ultimately we will widen the range.
This tool will enable us, along with our revised performance agreement document, to identify performance gaps, determine where training is needed, what type of training should be organized and for whom so as to address any shortcomings. However, it all depends on the individual’s ability and readiness to internalize the learning, transfer it to the job and change their mindset to adjust to new challenges.

Ladies and Gentlemen, you are certainly aware that financial resources are not unlimited while our wants and needs know no limit. Therefore, every cent we devote to training and development should bear fruits by bringing visible and tangible improvement in service delivery.

Otherwise, there will be no justification to request for any increase in budgetary provisions for training next year. My ministry is sparing no effort to make optimal use of whatever resources available. We firmly believe in the virtues of training and capacity building especially at the present juncture.

Training and development is necessary for organizational change. In a complex and demanding work environment, public officers constantly need to build their competencies and skills.

It is often said that the human resource is the most important asset which an organization may possess. However, people in an organization do not become a useful resource unless they are properly trained, developed and dedicated to productive work.

I am given to understand that each of the three batches comprise officers at middle and top management levels, high officials from various technical cadres. You should see it as an opportunity to share your knowledge and experience and at the same time foster an effective networking relationship among yourselves.
I am convinced that Dr. Munshiram’s team will facilitate the learning process for the three days that you will be together. This focused training is providing you participants with the opportunity to interact with each other and make the most out of this course to enhance your leadership qualities. I await with eagerness to see the fruition of this training.

With these words, Ladies and Gentlemen, I have the honour now to declare this course on Leadership officially open.

I thank you for your attention