

ENGLISH SPEAKING UNION - ANNUAL DINNER -INDIAN SUMMER RESTAURANT

THURSDAY 17 AUGUST 2017

Hon. Pradeep Roopun Minister of Arts and Culture

Sir Victor Glover, Patron of the ESU

Mrs Marie France Roussety, President ESU

Members of the ESU

Ladies & Gentlemen, lovers of the English Language

Good Evening,

For me it is always with a keen interest and a great pleasure that I attend a function organised by the English Speaking Union. That's because I place a high premium on the mastery of the English Language for success in life, in general for any individual and the raison d'être of the ESU is in fact the promotion of that language.

I am happy to see that the ESU, founded 14 years ago, by Sir Rabindra Gurbhurun along with Sir Victor Glover, Mrs Meena Seetulsing, Late Prof. Jagdish Manrakhan and late Mr. Mohamad Vayid is today in good hands under the chairperson of Mrs M.F. Roussety and the present executive committee. As indeed it has been under the successive chairmanships of Sir V. Glover, Mr.

Sanjeet Teeluck, Miss Sharmila Bima, Mr. Mohamed Vayid and the immediate Past President, Mr. Prem Bhurton.

I had the honour and privilege myself of serving as secretary for a number of years. My best and most fruitful time spent at the ESU was in 2013 when we celebrated the 20th Anniversary of the ESU in Mauritius. It was a year when, apart from the usual annual Public Speaking Competition, the spelling bee, the Commonwealth Essay Competition, story-telling in Rodrigues, workshops for students and teachers, we organised additional activities including (i) a debate at the MBC, (ii) talks by Ms. Reshma Kumar on Mauritian Author Ramesh Ramdoyal and Story Telling in Rodrigues by Prof Serge Rivière on the Irish presence in Mauritius, we started with the English Language Day in the Primary and Secondary Schools with a message on the importance of the English language to be read at the assembly in primary and secondary schools. That was upon a suggestion by my good friend Mr. Parama Veeraragoo who served as Secretary for a number of years. We also collaborated with Mrs Soraya Sayedhossen, daughter of Mr. Mohamad Vayid in staging Shakespeare's A Mid Summer Nights Dream.

In 2015, the ESU participated in the Magna Carta Essay Competition organised at the international level by ESU London at which Mauritius won the Junior Trophy for the African Continent and the runner up for the senior level.

The main activities of the ESU remain the PSC for Lower six students and the spelling B for lower secondary students.

What is interesting to note is that instead of just evaluating what is, i.e. evaluating students at the present level, the ESU took the decision to concentrate a bit more on what should be the type of oral English. With this in mind the ESU organised workshops for participants to improve their public speaking skills and adopt correct pronunciation and stress for word pronunciation in the spelling B competition. In that way improvements can be expected.

In my speech last year I emphasized on the need and importance of improving the quality of spoken English among students. It may seem a gigantic task but I personally believe that, with the necessary goodwill and determination some work can be done. The work must start with training to be given to teachers.

For this to happen we need the approval of the Ministry of Education and the willingness of members of the ESU to actively participate in this noble task.

I know that the ESU staff is already doing a lot of work but none the less I would venture to suggest some other activities which could be considered.

It is the Shakespeare drama competition which is very popular in America and UK. We refer to English as the language of Shakespeare and it is all too natural that as we promote the English Language we should promote Shakespeare.

In so doing it is not just Shakespeare that we would be promoting but also dramatic art, which according to educational Philosopher, Sir ken Robinson is a very potent activity for the overall development of the individual. I agree 100% with him because I know how my active participation in theatre has helped in my own personal development.

To conclude let me reiterate my congratulation to the President and members of the ESU for the great work you are doing and encourage you to do more. As far as I can, I will be by your side.

Thank you for your attention.