

**Prix Nicolas Lambert Award Ceremony – Henessy Park Hotel – Ebene – Saturday**  
**28 January 2017**

The Chairman of Media Trust, Mr. Lindsay Rivière and Mrs Rivière

Members of the Jury

Representative of the French Embassy - D. Vaysee An

Representative of the American Embassy - Mr. Thomson

Representative of the High Commission of India – Mrs Devi Gopinath

Former Chairmen of Media Trust

Director of Government Information Services

Ladies and Gentlemen,

When I received your invitation to this award ceremony, Mr. Rivière, Lindsay I should say, I felt really honoured and pleased as it would provide me an opportunity to meet, at one go, practically all the press and media professionals, who, together, represent that *“Quatrième Pouvoir”*.

Indeed you do wield a great power – the power not only to inform, but more importantly, to persuade, and influence the minds and hearts of readers if it is the written press, listeners, if you are on radio or viewers, when it comes to television and other multi-media.

Joseph Pulitzer, famous journalist and American Congressman, after whom were established the Pulitzer Prizes, said:

{I Quote}: ***“I am deeply interested in the progress and elevation of journalism, having spent my life in that profession, which is regarded as a noble profession and one of unequalled importance for its influence upon the minds and morals of the people”.*** {End of Quote}.

Journalism is indeed a noble and challenging profession and I am sure all of you are proud to belong to this profession.

Journalism plays an irreplaceable role in democracies. It exposes corruption, draws attention to injustice, holds politicians and businessmen accountable for their promises and reminds them of their duties.

Journalists form and build public opinion, avoiding to be biased or prejudiced against anybody or any institution in the process.

Journalists are also considered as educators as they impart knowledge to their audiences.

Indeed, professional journalists like you play an important role in the affairs of a nation. In Mauritius, I can say, to your credit, that you are a very strong force. And you are doing a splendid job. You are well structured and well organised and in general you are making judicious use of the freedom of expression enshrined in our Constitution.

Like in all professions, journalists have a set of ethics and standards to follow: like the Rotarians who abide by the 4-way test, I believe that media professionals should also have a set of tests before releasing an article or news item.

Questions should be –

1. Is my article accurate and saying the truth?
2. Is my article fair and impartial?
3. Is my article going to harm or hurt others?

In addition journalists should be independent and accountable.

We are gathered here to-day to reward the best journalists in various categories, from among whom the best of the bests will receive the Nicolas Lambert Trophy – which last year was won by Ms Lina Myte Pascal of Weekly – Your English News Magazine.

Nicolas Lambert is a very good choice of a name for the trophy. Nicolas Lambert was in fact the pioneer, the very first journalist in Mauritius. He deserves this honour.

As far back as 1773, during the French Colonial period, he was the one who published the very first newspaper which was a weekly.

Since then, thousands of newspapers have come and gone. Today we have a good number of successful newspapers mainly in French. As far as radio and television is concerned, we must say that so far the national radio and TV

broadcasting stations have fulfilled their role of informing, educating, and entertaining quite well and we should be grateful for that.

However, we must admit and be happy for the fact that in recent years the advent of private radios has brought a revolution in the communication landscape. For this, the private radios deserve all our thanks and congratulations.

To-day, media professionals face a number of challenges. More and more readers, viewers and listeners are going on-line for their news. Television, newspapers and radio are still here but there is growing competition. The audience is getting most of their information from their phones.

To-day many stories are received through Facebook posts or Tweets so that by the time the story is assigned to a reporter, the story in some form or another is already out there in the media universe.

Here we must say that stations like Ion-News and others are keeping pace with the current trends in broadcasting. I believe that current developments may in fact be paving the way towards better journalism and more independent journalists. There is need to redefine the place of professional journalism in this new information system and you, professionals of the industry, need to go through a re-engineering process.

This is where the Media Trust has an important role to play. The trust is determined to give to the profession "*Sa lettre de noblesse*" by promoting

excellence in the media and encouraging quality journalism. This award competition is well in line with this philosophy.

I gather that during the course of this year, the Trust, in partnership with “*Le Centre pour la formation et le perfectionnement des journalistes*” will provide a series of training sessions for both beginners and experienced journalists. You will all be well-advised to avail yourselves of these opportunities to enhance your competence.

To cope with the changing environment of the journalism profession, the need for the setting up of a School of Journalism which would cater for the needs of local journalists and media personnel is becoming quite urgent.

Before I conclude, I have 2 humble requests to make to you:-

1. You will agree with me that practically everyday the local media is full of gloomy – negative news – sensational. You will also agree with me that in parallel there is a lot of nice things happening. My request to you is to also cover these positive, heart-warming news – let’s have a fair balance of the two.

My second request concerns the promotion of spoken English.

Please do not get me wrong: I enjoy speaking creole.

Promoting English language is not in any way intended to downplay the importance of creole.

But the fact is that English is “incontournable”, it is the *Ligua Franca* of the whole world and if you do not have a working mastery of spoken English you may not get far in your respective career and in life in general. Reasons why spoken English is at a low level are:

1. Little importance given to oral
2. Insufficient exposure and practice
3. Etc, etc.

But it is one thing to speak English and another thing to make yourself understood in that language.

My observation is that when Mauritians speak English it is difficult to grasp because of a number of weaknesses in pronunciation, word stress, intonation etc.

These problems are not unsurmountable. There are ways and means of changing the situation for the better. One means is greater exposure to the language. This is where the local radios are directly concerned.

So, there is work to be done: Support the work of ESU and Toastmasters, train teachers in Spoken English. Your roles, especially the radios are crucial.

Let me conclude by congratulating the Chairman and Members of the Media Trust for organizing this Award Ceremony to celebrate excellence in the profession. My thanks to the panel of jury and congratulations to all the participants and the winners in each category and of course special congratulations to the overall winner – the winner of the *Prix Nicolas Lambert*.

To you all journalists present, continue to be proud of your job. Do your best as true patriots of the Nation.

**Paramasivum Pillay Vyapoory, G.O.S.K.**  
**Vice-President of the Republic of Mauritius**  
**28.01.17**