SPEECH SAFINA LOTUN 9 March 2025

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, please allow me to welcome this audience which represents our pluralistic Mauritius. Thank you for your kindness and generosity. If you would allow me, let me say a few words about Alif. Without great resources, we have supported talented young people in their university studies. We have helped 38 students to graduate and post graduate in medicine, 150 in engineering, 5 in architecture, to name just a few of the 400 and counting, who have already completed their studies in Malaysia so far. And I would like to take the opportunity to make a special mention of a former Alif student who now leads an oncology research team at the University of Southampton in the UK and another who is responsible for installing simulators on behalf of Pratt and Whitney, a US aircraft manufacturer. We also have an agreement with Chisty Hospital in Pakistan for the free treatment of patients who are inoperable in Mauritius. The contribution of our guests has gone a long way in this achievement. Our bank account shows that you have already contributed just enough to sponsor one Malagasy student. So, thank you very much indeed.

Also let's say a big thank you for this dinner to the SIMS company, whose directors, the charming Mimi and her husband Swaley Peerkhan are here, as well as to the Director of Water Edge Garden, Ali Rojid, who is hosting us this evening.

This dinner is special and gives me a peculiar feeling.

Did you know the houses of Daureeawoo, Allyman Peerbux, Sohawon and Baucha are within a stone throw from each other in Vale and that Choomka’s is in my street whereas Eshan Joomun’s folks are five minutes away and that their grand dads of were my friends.

1. Farhad is the son of my colleague and friend.
2. Dr Conhya is the son the great trade unionist and prolific writer, among the most elegant and well-dressed civil servant and a good friend of mine

A special hi to my friend Dawood Rawat and to Usha Canabady who shines everywhere she goes

Tonight, Alif has organized this event to celebrate four among the best of our compatriots, one woman and three men: Mrs. Safina Lotun, elevated to the rank of CSK, Dr Vincent Florens elevated to OSK, Father Maurice Labour and Hon Farhad Aumeer, both elevated to the rank of GOSK. These laureates serve as an example to the whole of Mauritius and who will, I hope, serve to inspire a new generation. They are four personalities with impeccable qualities that we celebrate without them asking to be admired, recognized or celebrated. There are four of them, four journeys, four destinies, four stories that go towards giving a new direction to our homeland. These heroes are the new face of Mauritius who have uplifted the values of the Republic.

We would like to see them as the precursors of a Mauritius that has left the beaten track and enters with full force and confidence to face the new challenges. We would like our children to be enthused with the same vitalities, and spurred by the same convictions and the same love of their country. If we have invited them, it is because they are the symbol of commitment and courage.

Frankly, our wish would be to celebrate them separately to render a tribute that they deserve. Alas! If wishes were horses, beggars would ride.

For Mrs. Lotun, courage is political and an irresistible choice. Safeena Lotun, as tradition dictates, I would summarize your career in a few sentences: you completed your secondary studies at Queen Elizabeth College and your tertiary studies at the University of Paris VIII, which granted you a Master's degree in law. You have spent 27 years in the service of the nation as a civil servant in close collaboration with the greatest clerks of the State, particularly at the Presidency, the Executive and the judiciary.  You have been Administrative Secretary of the regional interparliamentary organisations and a member of the Society of Clerks, a status that has allowed you to enrich yourself further by participating in conferences, seminars and other workshops. You have also shone beyond our shores being internationally recognized for your efforts to promote the use of ICT in parliament and consolidating the partnership between our National Assembly and the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Evaluating the function of our parliament during COVID 19, the 2023 Global Report on e-Parliament highlights the resilience of our August Assembly. It is thanks to your efforts Dear Madam.  Today, Safeena, you are an advisor to the President of the National Assembly.

 Folks, Ms. Lotun sat in Parliament without being elected and without being a member of any political party. She denounced in her own way the infernal repression and profanation of the Assembly which we would like to call august. She did not give in to the speaker, who wanted to muzzle the opposition with the infamous "I order you out". Alone against all, she was not afraid to defend freedom. But "all" had a dimension defined by autocrats who brought together the National Radio-Television, the judiciary and other institutions in a fightback. She says goodbye to the National Assembly and leaves the fight to the people who had the last word by saying to the gravediggers of democracy: "we order you out". This principle of virtuous living is worth a place in our Hansard.

Madam, there is a saying that would be very fitting - no one is a prophet in his or her own country. A nation can outlive its fools, and even the ambitious members. But it cannot survive the betrayal from within, according to Cicero, a famous Roman senator.  And then, the potentates who harassed you hadn't heard this Turkish wisdom that could apply to them: when you introduce a clown into a castle, the clown doesn't become king, but it's the castle that becomes a circus. Congratulations.