Speech of Honourable Yatin Varma, Attorney-General

CALL TO THE BAR CEREMONY

Supreme Court – 20 January 2012

Your Ladyships, Your Lordships, learned members of the legal profession, ladies and gentlemen.

It is a pleasure and a privilege to speak on this occasion. I accept the honour bestowed on my office by the Honourable Chief Justice with humility and gratitude. Today is indeed a memorable day for all the new Callees and their families. I would like to begin by congratulating all those being called to the Bar today and welcome them to a profession of great history, a profession which carries with it rights involving heavy obligations and empowering responsibilities.

It is also the right forum to pay tribute to the parents and families of all those who will be called to the Bar today for their unlimited support.

Your Lordships, ladies and gentlemen,

The Mauritian Bar has a history of 225 years and we are proud of it.

It is interesting to note that the first person admitted to practice as a barrister was Mr François Leforestier and he was sworn in on the 10th of February 1781. Since then a great many callees have been called to the bar of Mauritius and today there are over 500 barristers on the roll of barristers in Mauritius.

The Mauritian Bar is known for its independence. Sir Veerasamy Ringadoo said in the foreword to the Bicentenary Mauritius Bar, I quote “The rule of law in a democratic society requires the legislature to enact laws, the Judiciary to administer and apply those laws and the existence of a strong and independent legal profession to enable the individual to defend himself or vindicate his rights” unquote.

Barristers are expected to act for their clients without fear or favour but the paramount duty is not to mislead the court. The aim of barristers should be to observe the highest standards of ethics and competency. To promote a better grasp of the code of ethics, my office has taken the initiative to hand over a copy to each new callee. I will urge them to master and abide by the code and this will undoubtedly maintain the level of our profession.

Your Lordships, members of the bar, ladies and gentlemen, signing the roll marks the beginning of a unique professional career.

I will avail myself of this solemn occasion to convey some useful advice to the new members of the Mauritian Bar.
Today you stand on the threshold of your legal career. Your entry into this profession is well-deserved but bear in mind that it comes with great responsibilities.

Always remember that with the high honour of being a lawyer comes the obligation of concern for those who are less fortunate. You may discharge that obligation in an endless variety of ways but you have a duty to your honourable profession to give back.

My advice would be to continue your education, adapt to change, always look at the other side, be an optimist, be disciplined, move on and above all, give back.

As you are aware, a lot of emphasis is being put on training. The Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies is being set up and the Law Practitioners (Amendment) Act was proclaimed yesterday and will come into operation on 03 September 2012 and will inter alia introduce compulsory training for prospective judicial officers and continuing professional development for the legal profession.

My new Learned Friends, my sincere hope for all of you is that you enjoy a long and successful career at the Bar and find life in the law as gratifying as I have.

I will end by quoting Mr. Pepino Q.C from the Canadian Bar: By living a life of integrity, I also mean a conscious effort to stretch to take risks, to integrate everything you learn into everything else you do, whether in your lawyer’s work or while living in a community as a lawyer. Being in a profession is not just a job; it is a life: it shapes how you see the world and how the world sees you. Unquote.

Good luck and, again, many congratulations to you all.