

Award Ceremony for Mahatma Gandhi Scholarship (2017-18)

February 20, 2019- 1400 hrs onwards

[Venue: MoE Auditorium, Battarmullah, Colombo]

HIGH COMMISSIONER'S SPEECH

- Hon. Akila Viraj Kariyawasam, Minister of Education, Sri Lanka
 - Hon.Vijayakala Maheshwaran, State Minister of Education, Sri Lanka
 - Secretary/Addl Secretary, Ministry of Education
 - Senior officers and officials of Ministry of Education
 - Principals of leading schools
 - Parents & dear students
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- It gives me great pleasure to be here this afternoon; today we are awarding Mahatma Gandhi Scholarships to 150 students from all across Sri Lanka. It is more special as we are celebrating 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi this year.

 - Hope you know, couple of months back, we made a special video “Vaishnav Jana To”, a favorite bhajan of Gandhiji, sung by popular Sri Lankan artists and youth icons– Bathia, Santhush and Umaria. We believe in collaborating with the Sri Lankan youth.

 - I thank Hon. Akila Viraj Kariyawasam, and Hon. Vijayakala Maheshwaran for their gracious presence here today. I also thank officials of the Ministry for all their efforts.

- I want to underline the aspect of island-wide coverage of our partnerships. Our projects are spread across Sri Lanka. We are giving this scholarship today to students from all 25 Districts of Sri Lanka.
- Just two weeks before, we handed over new buildings in two schools in Jaffna built under Indian grant assistance. We are constructing new classrooms in 27 schools in the North. Last year, we handed over the largest University Auditorium in Sri Lanka in University of Ruhuna, in the South, built again under pure grant. We have also set up several Language Labs in Sri Lanka. We are happy to walk with Sri Lanka in its developmental journey.
- This is the twelfth year in continuum that we are recognizing the bright students with Mahatma Gandhi scholarships, encouraging them to continue their studies. We have also increased the scholarship amount recently.
- It is heartening to note that some of the previous recipients of the prestigious Mahatma Gandhi Scholarship have climbed up the ladder and are doing well in their careers.
- I am a strong believer in the power of the youth. India is a nation of over 800 million youth. I believe that this young population of ours decides not only our future, but also determines the future of our world.
- I urge the students to connect with the youth of India and take advantage of scientific and educational developments in India. Indian

Institutes of Technology, and Indian Institutes of Management, have become a global brand name. New and Young India uses technology in their everyday lives to create transformative stories. Recently, we launched world's lightest satellite, Kalamsat made by Indian students. Never underestimate the power of youth, for today and tomorrow are built by them.

- India offers around 750 scholarships annually to the Sri Lankan students. According to the Ministry sources, this year, we have received an overwhelming response to our Scholarship Schemes.

- For those who are interested in Engineering and Science, the IIT Joint Entrance Examination and the Graduate Aptitude Test for Engineering (GATE) are now held in Colombo. Sri Lankan students have also now been allowed to take National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) for admission to Medical and Dental streams in Indian medical colleges.

- We have also recently launched a new Portal titled "Study in India". More than 25000 seats are earmarked in our Institutions for foreign students. I urge you to browse the Study in India Portal where you can get all information at the click of a mouse. We hope that Sri Lankan youth would make full use of these opportunities.

- I congratulate the recipients of Mahatma Gandhi scholarship, their proud parents and teachers. I wish the students the very best in all their future endeavors.

- It was Lord Buddha who said, "*If anything is worth doing, do it with all your heart.*" Keep up your passion, and fly high, my young friends...The world is yours..

Thank you..