

**Hon. Minister, S. B. Dissanayake,
Your Excellency Chancellor,
Venerable Mahasangha and the clergy of other religions,
Vice Chancellor, the Deans of Faculties,
Members of the University Senate and Council,
Members of the Academic and non-academic staff
Ladies and Gentleman, sons and daughters who are here
today as Graduands,**

As the Secretary of the Ministry of Higher Education, I am delighted to attend the 7th Convocation of the South Eastern University of Sri Lanka and I would like to mention that this is the 10th National University that contributes to the education system of the country.

First of all let me congratulate all the future leaders who are graduating today after three to four years of hard work and dedication.

Since all the graduands are from all the Faculties in your university, I would like to highlight the following facts about the present day global and economic environment, and business and public sector trends:

Firstly, all of you have obtained at least three "A" passes or three "B" passes at the A/L exam. That means all of you have proved that you are intelligent and clever. After entering the University you have studied many subjects in various fields and now you are ready to join the world of employment.

Secondly, you should understand the nature of organizations, which you are going to be partners from now on. There are three types of organizations based on ownership: Government, Non- Government and Private sector are those three main sectors. Then you can identify them as local or overseas organizations, based on the geographic location. Irrespective of ownership or geographic location you are going to work, all of those organizations are expecting only one thing from you. They need - "Human Capital" for the organizations and not "Human Liabilities". That means you should be pragmatic, result oriented, committed, dedicated, innovative, self learning, understanding, adaptable, flexible, self motivated and well disciplined young people who should be the future managers/ directors/ leaders who have the capability to take those organization to the next level.

May be, you have not done any subjects related to the above mentioned skills and qualities during your degree program. You may have done Economics, Islamic Studies, Geography, Languages, Applied sciences, History or Accountancy and something else. Now there is no time to complain. We have to understand organizational needs well and adapt to the situation and the environment. I am sure you have that capability. If not you have to get that knowledge, skills, and capabilities inculcated to your life and the mind set.

I believe that, you have done some projects, if you have organized and implemented some events, done some

extracurricular activities like sports, student associations, drama, music festivals etc at the University, you could gain these soft skills or human skills.

You may have “Technical Skills” like IT, Mathematics, Science or Engineering. But when you join an organization more important thing is your “Human Skills”. How to listen and understand others, sometime non-verbal communication or body language, team work, respecting others, contributing to discussions in systematic and convincing manner, working under pressure and worst/bad/unfavorable environments, physical and psychological fatigue to name a few of the skills you should have nurtured during your school and university time. If you did not have a chance to gain these experiences during your school or university time now it is too late but still you do not have to worry. Now this is the challenge you are having from now on.

What I was explaining above is the situation you may face after joining an organization. However, prior to that you should apply for a job and get selected to that organization. In that case what is the effective process? Now you should understand what kind of things the organizations or the managers of those organizations are expecting from you. Therefore the process should start from submitting an application, CV or bio-data. To submit an application you should find opportunities. Opportunities are found through various communication sources and by obtaining information from the prospective organizations. The most

important thing you should do is to buy the “Sunday Observer”, “Sunday Times” and other news papers and publications where you find employment opportunities weekly. There are websites like “Top Jobs” who publish employment opportunities on line, furthermore your seniors, friends, relatives will also provide you with some information and hints. Otherwise you can randomly select some organizations you like to work in and send your CVs to them. But, my understanding is that most of the unemployed graduates are not doing anything. They need jobs but they are waiting for jobs to come to their feet because they have a degree. Some graduates have even left that responsibility to someone else like the temple, God or even to the politicians. But it is not correct.

It is very important that you understand well the concept of making a “first impression” that should come from your application, CV, or bio data which you are sending to the organizations. You have to prepare a professional CV. There are soft formats available online for you to follow. Go to the “Google” and type “CV formats” and you will find it. But some graduates do not even know this.

The best thing is to visit some organizations and talk to the Managers in the Human Resource Department. You may not have any contacts, but just walk-in and talk to them and convince them that you are going to be an asset to the organization. Ask them to give you an opportunity to prove yourself and assure them that you will deliver results. Go

with photographs and results, awards and evidence. I am mentioning these things to you with great confidence based on my experience, both local and overseas as well as in the public and private sector for the last 30 years.

If you do not get direct employment join as a trainee and show that you are capable, different and creative. You will get a very good opportunity to impress them and prove yourself.

But at the same time you may prove the other way too. But during the training period do not make any mistakes. Then they will feel that you are not capable. If you are doing genuine work and make a mistake, it is acceptable, but if you are always late, not looking for new opportunities and just waste time then your bosses will observe these. Always talk to them, get their advice and do some work with your self-initiative, resolve a problem, introduce a novel solution with results then they will see your capabilities. I can give you many examples. The key is to think differently, out-of-the-box and try to give a better answer to the organizational issues and problems. Do not complain about problems ; go with a novel approach or solutions to those.

Once you have been called for an interview that process is also very important for your life. It may be ten minutes, one hour or three to four day orientation activity. Depending on the organization it may vary. Please remember one thing: that is they test your skills, capabilities, attitudes and mind

set during this process. Without your notice they will observe you. Without your knowledge they will discuss about you. As fresh graduates, now this is the challenge you all will face. I am sure I have given some important hints for you to prepare yourself to the world of employment.

Now, I will explain a bit about the new trends of the global and local organizational environment. You may be a "Tamil/Arabic Special" or "Sinhala Special"- first class or second class graduate. But it does not mean that you can do everything in Sinhala or Tamil in this country. You may have to send your CV or Bio-data in English. You may have to face the interview in English. You should know how to handle a lap-top or desk-top computer and you should know how to type a letter in English, Tamil or Sinhala by using it. Can you make a "Power Point" presentation in English by yourself and present it using your pen-drive in front of 100 other candidates and officials of the organizations. These are the skills you may need for tomorrow when you go for an interview. Even in the public sector, sometimes they use these new technologies. Even though you may have to go for a face to face interview you have to maximize that, 10-15 minutes in an effective and efficient manner. You have to speak louder in English or whatever the language they address you with confidence, with facts and figures and justifiable evidence in a nicely organized and impressive manner. You have to show that you are well prepared and well organized. There is a marking scheme used by the interview board. In general those areas are: Academic

Qualifications (O/L, A/L, Degree, Masters, etc), Professional qualifications (AAT, Chartered, IMA, CIM, CMA, ACCA, IPM etc.) Extracurricular Activities, Leadership, Team work related evidence, Presentation Skills, Knowledge in a Specific Field related to the job or your specialty, Experience, Your future vision and the link between organization and the job and your vision, how can you contribute to that organization in a more effective manner, public relations with people, some historical and present information relate to the organization through published documents and websites (Vision, Mission, Goals, History, Products and Services), and why you want to join this particular organization (you should have a logical answer) etc. and to point out a few facts from your knowledge.

Finally, I am going to conclude my speech with the following comments:

1. Do not underestimate yourself. You are a few of the hundred thousand students who have come a long way and today you are graduating as proud graduates of the South Eastern University.
2. There are many alumni members all over the world and locally doing excellent jobs, and performing well and delivering results. I can give you a long list of names from our University but no time to do that now.

3. Have a "Strategic Life Plan" in your mind or as a written document. If you do not have it, start making it from today. In that plan you should have to have your long term Vision ; "where to go", Mission ; "purpose of your life", Goals ; "long-term targets to be achieved", Objectives ; " Short -term targets in Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time specific - SMART- format, and strategies ; "innovative ways and means and action you are going to pursue to achieve your Goals and Objectives in the short-run and to achieve your Vision and Mission in the longer-term. At the same time you have to identify your "Strengths", "Weaknesses", as well as the "Opportunities" and "Challenges" you have to face with before the above exercise.
4. Have a commitment and dedication to minimize your weaknesses and to face the challenges in your future life. For example, if you are weak in English and IT start *minimizing* those weaknesses within the next three to six months and go for it with determination.
5. Talk to your friends, relatives, go to web-sites, read the newspapers and other communication sources and look for suitable jobs and visit those organizations and collect information about the company, the jobs and their expectations.

6. Prepare your CV, bio-data professionally and face the interview or selection process with confidence and convince the selection board effectively as “you are the one” they were waiting for.
7. Once you enter the organization stay for at least two-years and learn the subject, job, profession well and be a specialist on that subject. If there are any professional courses register for them and learn the profession well and be a professional in that area: for example, Marketing, Advertising (CIM or SLIM), HR (IPM), Accounting and Finance (Chartered, CIMA, CMA, or ACCA), IT (ACS, BCS) etc. Talk to the seniors and professionals you will find more information on these areas.
8. Prove to your bosses that you are different from the others and you deliver results and that you are punctual, systematic and updated.
9. Improve your communication skills, presentation skills, leadership skills and team work which are important to become a future leader.
10. Be a “Human Capital” of the Organization or an “Asset” to the Organization and not a “Liability” or just a “Rider”.

These are the ten rules you should follow from now on as “Young Graduates” and “Prospective Future Leaders”.

Finally, if you join the public sector you will receive a “Small Monthly Salary” with less work and a small pension for your whole life. If you join the private sector “you will get larger package” with a lot of work with EPF and ETF and no pension after retirement.

You can select both and no matter what the financial results are. If you are enjoying your work, that is what you need, that is what more important than your salary or benefit packages.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my university education which gave me knowledge, modern attitudes, skills and the correct mindset and to my great teachers who made me a result oriented person, and to the Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, who invited me to deliver the Keynote Address and the Professors, Senior Lecturers, Lecturers and other administrative and all the staff members who are always supporting us to make the universities as “Knowledge Centers” within the next few years.

In conclusion, I warmly congratulate all of you on your graduation and to become leaders and partners who will make our Excellency, The President,

Mahinda Rajapaksha's Vision to make Sri Lanka the
"Miracle of Asia" - a reality.

*Thank you all and wish you all the best for a better
and brighter future!*

Dr. Sunil Jayantha Nawaratne
Secretary
Ministry of Higher Education