

OPINION

SEYCHELLES – BEYOND THE YEAR 2016

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Sir James

THE year 2016 is just about to come to an end. It has been a year full of important events – the outcome of the US elections; the results of the British, Italian and Dutch referendums; the continuing bloodshed in Syria; the despicable terror attacks all over the world including the recent one in Berlin; the gradual and dramatic transformation of the way we receive information; the rise of populism and xenophobia and many other significant and worrying developments.

For us here in Seychelles, the year 2016 is being regarded according to which political camp you belong. For those sympathising with the LDS (*Linyon Demokratik Seselwa*) it could be regarded as a great year, but for those on the side of the ruling party (*Parti Lepep*) it could certainly be viewed as an horrible year of successive electoral traumas. These points put forward and honestly accepted must get us to ponder as to what lies ahead in 2017 and beyond.

Certainly if we are to consider Christmas messages of both the President of the Republic, Mr Danny Faure and the LDS leaders, we could take the optimist view that we are indeed on the road to a more balanced period when it concerns the overall national interest and more national cohesion as opposed to partisan division.

As President Faure's Christmas message is concerned it is all about the Christmas spirit of living like brothers and sisters within the atmosphere of national harmony and as for the LDS leaders their message can certainly give comfort to those who felt menaced by the once politics of '*Pil lo li*' and '*Saboule*'.

"We take the occasion of Christmas to offer our hand and friendship to all those in our country with whom we may be set apart because of our differences whether political, religious or social – we extend these wishes to everyone in all our communities, also on behalf of our members in the National Assembly and our representatives. May our country and people continue to be blessed with the grace of the Almighty," the LDS Christmas message concluded.

Our leaders must now start to walk the talk and their good intentions must not evaporate after the New Year celebrations are over.

It is of course one thing leaving our future all in the hands of the Almighty but what should we ourselves be doing to give homage to God's peaceful intentions?

In terms of our local politics, it is my view that certain areas should be identified where there is a need for all party supports, again in the national interest. Such sensitive areas like citizenship, immigration, drugs and drug-related issues, protection of our national heritage and other areas should not become partisan issues which finally threaten the best delivery for the nation as a whole.

We must certainly make sure that those who may wish to see us divided in order to rule over us fail to succeed in such endeavours.

We are a small and fragile nation in a world of turmoil. Many external developments – be it war or major natural catastrophes could menace our tourism prosperity. While thinking about our tourism potential I recently said that Seychelles must aim to become and to be seen as the brightest star in the Indian Ocean tourism constellation. For this to materialise we cannot just rely on the natural beauty of our islands which are all a gift of the Gods. We must enhance the service level with more *savoir-faire*, *savoir-vivre* and maybe more of the spirit of *joie de vivre*.

We must not only look for privileges in our society but also realise the responsibilities which come with them.

We live in an evergreen environment, let's add to this some additional colours by organising each year a competition which would reward the home which is

surrounded by the most beautiful and colourful flower garden. Of course that doesn't mean not having some home-grown vegetables and a few fruit trees and where possible at least one of our favourite breadfruit trees.

Of course there are many ideas we can put together for a better rounded future if we succeed to sustain an atmosphere of peaceful harmony. The task and challenges of bringing this about certainly lies on the shoulders of all those occupying positions which would require them to consider the national interest as top priority.

Over the last few days I have received many Christmas and New Year greetings from different parts of the world. I have gone through them to choose one I believe I should share with you at this time of the year. It happens to come from a yoga master who prides himself to be the world record holder for largest collection of autographed photos.

"My dear respected Sir James Mancham, my wishes for you – great start for January, love for February, peace for March, no worries for April, fun for May, joy for June to November, happiness for December. Have a lucky and wonderful New Year.

"Receive my simple gift of love wrapped with sincerity, tied with care and sealed with blessings to keep you happy and safe all lifelong.

"A relaxed mind, a peaceful soul, a joyful spirit, a healthy body, a heart full of love – all these are my prayers for you.

"Once again my wishes are silent but true. Everywhere they will follow you. Luck is yours, but the wishes are mine. I wish your present and future always shine.

"Please bless me with your kind blessings, with two autographed photographs for my world record collection."

"With regards. Yours Yogiraj Dr Sarvesh Soni."

Perhaps I should send a copy of these wishes of the Indian yoga master to US President-elect Donald Trump as there is much room for thought and reflections as we penetrate the door of 2017...

Of course I am sure that the yoga master would value two autographed photos of President Trump.