



## MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SMALL ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Statement by Sen. the Honourable Jennifer Baptiste-Primus Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development on the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha's Rejection of our On the Job Training Programme Trainee – Ms. Nafisah Nakhid**

The Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development deeply regrets the experience that Ms. Nafisah Nakhid, an On the Job Trainee, encountered on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> May, 2018 when she was denied entry onto the Lakshmi Girls Hindu School Compound, because of her religious attire.

This incident is certainly an unfortunate one especially in this Holy Month of Ramadan and also it being her first day on the Job. I therefore empathize with Ms. Nakhid on this most unfortunate experience. This young lady who is a qualified Mechanical Engineer is clearly articulate and highly intelligent.

I assure that the On-the Job Training Programme, which was integrated as a Division of this Ministry effective May 2017 based on a Cabinet decision, would have undergone the appropriate assessment which would have qualified Ms. Nakhid as a fitting Trainee for placement at the College. The Programme utilizes specific guidelines when considering the placement of any Trainee which primarily entails their educational qualifications. Consideration may be given to their geographic location and the requests for Trainees from registered Training Providers in the Trainee's particular field of interest.

Guided by these procedures, the Placement Officers of the On the Job Training Programme would have placed Ms. Nakhid based on the aforementioned guidelines and not based on religion, race, gender or any other factors.

In processing the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha's request for a Teacher's Aide – Science, Ms. Nakhid would have been selected based on her qualifications. Her placement was discussed with the Principal of the College who agreed to accept Ms. Nakhid as a Trainee for twenty four (24) months or two (2) years which is the established limitation for anyone to participate in this Programme.

It is to be noted that this is not the experience that we anticipate for any Trainee enrolled in the On the Job Training Programme, as the programme was created with the intent of producing a cadre of trained professionals between the ages of 16 to 35 years with relevant job exposure who can, upon leaving the programme access sustainable employment and contribute to our country's continuous development.

I want the public to be assured that the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development through its' On the Job Training Programme is in the process of arranging a Transfer for Ms. Nakhid to the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government to ensure that she operates in a healthy and safe working environment.

I am also taking this opportunity to remind the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha and other employers that the focus should be placed on Trainees' qualifications, skills, competencies as well as the invaluable contributions that they can make to their respective organizations and the country at large as we strengthen our journey towards a more peaceful and all-inclusive society.

We wish Ms. Nakhid the very best in her future endeavours and urge her not to allow this incident to shape her perception of future employment experiences and to continue to shine as Allah has destined.

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