

A Report on the STC Prize Giving

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Thomians treat all races and religions with respect – Tilak Marapane By Kesara Abeywardena

The sense of brotherhood instilled at S. Thoman's College, Mount Lavinia at a very young age makes every Thomian treat all races and religions equally with due respect, Defence Minister Tilak Marapane said at the annual prize giving of the College last Friday.

Minister Marapane who was the Chief Guest at the most important event of the year of his alma mater said that every Thomian is moulded and fashioned in the traditions of the College that reflects love and care for one another.

He said that at the time he was studying the non Christians in this foremost Christian institution outnumbered the Christians. "No one was forced to attend chapel. But we learned about Christian traditions. At the same time we were allowed to attend the temple nearby whenever the necessity arose. Maybe this is the reason that we Buddhist Thomians have great respect for Christianity as well. I learnt that Warden de Saram admitted me and my brother to College mainly because he had found out that our father was a leading Buddhist of his area," he said.

Minister Marapane fondly remembered the days he spent in College and especially the College boarding during its heyday. "Those were the days you were not considered a Thomian unless you were a boarder. There the new were quickly initiated into the traditions of the College. There was ragging, not for sadistic pleasure but to make the newcomer get used to the atmosphere of the College. Those who thought too much of themselves were cut down to size and in those who lacked confidence these qualities were developed."

He remembered with respect the teachers who taught them while enduring their student pranks. "I must admit that during our time no one took studies seriously. But unknown to us we were gradually being educated. By the time we left College

everyone was well equipped to conquer the world.” He also paid tribute to Warden Cannon de Saram who was the Warden when he was in College.

Minister Marapane said that becoming a part of the Thomian family with its legendary spirit is the best that can happen to any man. Even the teachers at College who are not Thomians, he said end up being Thomians who fiercely defend the traditions of the College. “There are essential characteristics of a Thomian. Even those who have not been in College but reflect these characteristics I consider a Thomian while those who have been in College during their entire student days but lack these essential qualities I don’t consider so. Thomians do not grab things. They wait till the correct time to receive them when they deserve it. They do not resort to unholy practices to gain positions or power. Thomians do not put false airs around them but maintain a balanced disposition. They do not advertise themselves but make everyone understand he is a Thomian through his ways,” he said.

Warden David Ponniah outlining the changes that are taking place in College said that education reforms are being introduced to College to reflect a student based education system. “Today English education is considered as essential for the development of the country. But the introduction of English medium should be done carefully so that it would not harm the Sinhala and Tamil mediums. In College we have reintroduced English medium in the Advanced Level Science stream and hope to do so in the Arts stream next year. We began English medium in the kindergarten level last year and will introduce it at grade six next year.”

The Warden explained an elaborate plan to introduce Information Technology to College in a widespread manner and restructure the College library. He said that the funds have not flowed as expected due to the economic situation of the country but said that he is optimistic that the money will come in when the project commences. He further said that the buildings of the College which are some of the best pieces of architecture in any educational institution in the country also need urgent repairs. “The College Chapel which has stood there for the last seventy five years also requires repairs to the roof. These will be undertaken in the future,” he said.

Mrs. Marapane distributed the prizes to the prize winners.