

**Address of Hon (Mrs.) Dookun-Luchoomun GCSK**

**Vice Prime Minister,**

**Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology,**

**My Colleague Hon Dr Jugutpal, Minister for Health and Wellness**

**Mr Dewanand Hossen, Chairperson of Blood Donors Association**

**Senior officials of my Ministry and Ministry of Health and Wellness**

**Dear Educators and students,**

**Good Morning!**

It is my pleasure to be in your midst today and to add my voice to the warm welcome already extended to you.

Today, we are unfurling two events that have equal and complementary importance: we are proceeding with the launch of the Young Blood Donors Team as well as the opening of the one day workshop on Recruitment of young blood donors workshop.

As is obvious, both events are focused on an action that is highly philanthropic, namely, the willingness to save a life through the donation of one's blood. In an implicit but distinctive manner, both also focus on what has now become the reflection of a serious educational need: the molding of responsible, socially conscious citizens of tomorrow.

And no act can be called more responsible, more societally significant, than that of contributing towards the health and well-being of our fellow citizens.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

That is precisely going to be one of the crucial functions of the Young Blood Donors Team in schools—Advocacy, setting the example, acting as role models. The integration of such a Team within the School Health Clubs marks an important milestone in our collective mission to develop a sound, stable and responsible citizenry.

It is an unfortunate reality that, as per estimates, only approximately 2% of people donate blood in our country. Indeed, the need for blood is universal but, sadly, access to it is not ! Engaging in blood donation is and should be seen as an altruistic endeavor, a selfless undertaking, an act of generosity . Homer, the Greek poet comes to mind here. He wrote

*“ The charity that is a trifle to us can be precious to others”*

The very act of donating blood reflects the potential to preserve invaluable lives. This necessity for blood transcends demographic, socioeconomic, and geographical boundaries. Whether it be a newborn mother experiencing postpartum hemorrhage, a child afflicted with blood disorders, or an accident victim, prompt blood supply can potentially determine survival or demise.

A powerful expression of empathy,, of solidarity, of care—that’s basically how blood donation should be viewed. It binds us together as a compassionate society.

As I refer to this concept of a compassionate society, it reminds me that some people always complain about Mauritian students being highly self-centered because outrageously competitive. Today I will not engage in that debate: there will be a time for it. What is important is that when you are looking up, it is equally proper not to lose sight of what is on the ground.

And what does this ground reality show?

It shows that we have an ageing population issue—and age brings its own passel of illnesses and diseases .

It shows the inability to predict what and when traumatic injuries could really be coming down the pike.

It also shows that road accidents have become a major flash point of our lives—just consider the number of casualties , both fatalities and injuries, that have been taking place over the last few years. And this, despite the national Road Safety Awareness Campaign launched.

I am not catastrophising : we are all likely to be subjected to the hard knocks of life that come in a variety of shapes and forms. However, the common denominator is the need to replenish constantly, and in an on-going manner, our blood bank.

And students like you have an invaluable role to play in this enterprise. I firmly believe that we must inculcate the values I was just referring to, the values of empathy, civic responsibility and selfless community service in the youth.

I trust that the Young Blood Donors Team will be torchbearers of this vision.

I am told that, last year, approximately 2,000 pints of blood were collected from secondary schools. Let us strive and commit ourselves to increasing it further this year by driving impactful blood donation campaigns across all the secondary schools and universities.

**My dear students,**

You are never too young to make a difference! Though in your teens, your voice can be a massive heft in inspiring your peers, parents, neighbors to come forward for this humanitarian cause. We have all learnt about the importance of blood since our science textbooks in early grades. But true education is about applying that knowledge for the betterment of people around us. It should shape us into sensible, helpful, contributing members of the society.

And the Young Blood Donors Team promises to ignite this spirit among the student community. Rest assured that, by organizing blood donation initiatives in educational institutions, the message that every individual contributes to nation building and social progress will be reinforced.

**Ladies and gentlemen, dear students,**

It is highly laudable that today's one-day workshop should have been conceptualised as a means to provide practical advice and direction for establishing robust blood donor groups in all schools.

Of course, I realise that, for quite a few of you, this is going to be a novel experience, a *terra incognita* that you will be called upon to explore. Rest assured that such activities make for excellent learning opportunities beyond textbooks and classrooms.

Thus, specialists will impart their knowledge regarding the effective management of donation campaign logistics, awareness-raising, and donor recruitment. You

will imbibe skills like organizing events, mobilizing resources, managing logistics, spreading awareness about health/social issues, and demonstrating leadership.

Orchestrating campaigns that effectively motivate students, educators, guardians and the community will also prove to be invaluable lessons that shall hold you in good stead when you step out as working professionals

Here, I will make an earnest appeal to every School Leader and Educator to wholeheartedly support this initiative. Lead by example; organize and facilitate blood drives periodically to set the right precedent. Let us show our students that health issues like blood donation deserve as much mindspace as academic upswing in any self-respecting and well-rounded education framework.

As I close my address, I wish to reiterate that the purpose of education is not just equipping students with academic degrees. Rather, it is about enabling them to grow into responsible, caring, community-minded individuals.

It is about nurturing good human beings who shall uplift the lives of people around them.

The Young Blood Donors team promises to deliver precisely on this mandate. It shall transform the health map of the country, one drop of blood at a time.

I therefore have the privilege of declaring the blood donation one-day workshop open and the Young Blood Donors Team officially launched.

May this initiate a movement spearheaded by students that revolutionizes the accessibility of blood for every citizen. Let us take a pledge to ourselves that we shall leave no stone unturned to make this initiative a resounding success in the service of humanity.

***Thank you!***