

**Address of Hon (Mrs.) Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun, G.C.S.K.  
Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education,  
Science and Technology  
4<sup>th</sup> Graduation Ceremony  
(Trianon Convention Centre)  
Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> September 2024**

**Senior Chief Executive, Mrs. Sandrine Valere,  
Permanent Secretaries,  
Prof. Theeshan Bahorun, Chairman of  
Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd  
Mr. Yamal Matabudul, Chief Executive Officer  
of Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd  
Senior Officials and Advisers of my Ministry  
Chairmen and Directors of Parastatal bodies  
Captains of Industry and Internship Partners,  
Staff of PML, Parents  
Graduating Students,.  
Members of the Press,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

A very good morning to you all.

It gives me great pleasure to attend this Graduation Ceremony of Polytechnics Mauritius this morning. I am given to understand that 344 students will be graduating today. Interestingly, this happens to be the fourth such Convocation and it seems only yesterday that we had gathered for the first such ceremony.

Polytechnics Mauritius can rightly pride itself on its 1000-strong alumni!

To all of you graduating today, to your parents, loved ones and well-wishers, I extend my warmest congratulations. Of course, you'll also bear in view that this acquisition of a completion certificate is but one leg of your education and training journey. In this age of lifelong learning, one never completes one's education but rather moves from one chapter to another.

However, you need not worry. I am confident that your dedication has equipped you with the

skills and competencies needed to upshift into advanced learning as much as they will facilitate your stepping into the world of full time work – be it as an employer or your own venture, as job creators.

## **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We want this high level of achievement to be spread across the entire learning community. Government, as you well know, has committed itself right from Day 1 to make manifest boundless possibilities for all learners alike –

- be they children taking their first step into the world of formalised learning, or
- School goers who now are exposed to a fairer and open system of learning with the National Education Reform, or, again,
- School leavers joining diverse pathways as a means to a livelihood of their choice or, finally,

- Mature learners who come back to the world of upskilling and reskilling to change and improve their status quo.

Our efforts have been relentlessly focused on a single aim – to give equal opportunity and choice to one and all and leaving no learner behind in a world that is becoming increasingly and challengingly VUCA – volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is important sometimes to apply the brakes, look into the rear - view mirror, and take stock of the transformation that has taken place.

- From the nine-year continuous basic education to a more inclusive and adapted learning for learners with special needs through the Special Needs Education Authority;

- From the creation of the Polytechnics to the introduction of Free Tertiary Education;
- From the significant investments in upgrading school infrastructure to the adoption of digital learning tools at all levels for learners to walk in lockstep with the evolution of Generative AI and Chat GPT;
- From increased financial provision to Laureates as well as increase in the scholarship scheme for vulnerable families to greater monitoring and support for the well-being and holistic development of learners;
- From the introduction of free pre-primary education benefitting more than 74% of children of this age group to most recently the provision of internet to the youth in the 18-25 year bracket in a world where being online is a must.

Through these forms of support for greater inclusion and equity in the system, you will all agree that this Government is leaving no stone unturned in eliminating all barriers to learning and development.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Let me be very honest. This reform was never a restyling of the educational setup to achieve political mileage. I am a strong adherent to the belief that we always need to flag up an avant-gardist vision in education, a vision that is about preparing learners not just for the world as it is but for the world as it would be. Our learners have to be in a position where they develop the capability to navigate and thrive in diverse and evolving environments.

Also, the reforms in education were not undertaken in a bid to vie for quick returns: the ripple effects of such a transformative agenda do

not manifest in the short term but rather become self-evident in the medium and long term.

And you have history that bears testimony that changes never happen overnight.

Consider the focus that we have now come to place upon technical education. By revamping, modernising and innovating the technical and vocational education landscape with the creation of Polytechnics, Institute of Technical Education and more recently, Technology Education at the level of secondary school, we have given that sector its *lettres de noblesse* .

Pathways are now connecting vocational education to technical education and University, thereby fully recognising the significance of staircasing skills development.

Obviously, we are not alone in that venture.

The Scandinavian countries, Singapore, Germany, all have placed an equal premium

upon technical education and higher education while South Korea, Philippines and Morocco have felt the absolute necessity of providing a broader palette of skills development in line with the emerging sectors of their economy.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Our philosophy is simple. No matter where you are in life – schooling years, early career, mid-career or silver years, there is direction to match destination. To drive Mauritius' next phase of development towards a high-income status economy, there was and is a pressing need to establish clear skill sets and resultant career pathways across all occupations in the labour market, including, especially, the emerging sectors. This is also a recognition that each student learns differently, and we cannot afford to leave anyone behind.

### **Ladies and gentlemen,**



It is absolutely a welcome sight to witness that Polytechnics Mauritius, the body that you have trusted and committed your career and future to, now has a student population that has exceeded 5300. Its success story resides also in its infrastructural expansion that now numbers 7 campuses. I am given to understand that the rate of placement into Full time employment currently stands at around 98%-- which goes to show that the Polytechnics model works. Let me congratulate the faculty and staff of Polytechnics Mauritius on this achievement and encourage them to keep up with the good work.

### **Dear Graduates,**

As you set out on a new adventure today, let me proffer some advice. We are often told that careers are like cardboard boxes with a finite number of solutions and hence we want to be

Doctors, Lawyers, Engineers, Scientists, etc. We focus on “what” we want rather than “who” we want to be.

Do not make this mistake.

Nothing is worthwhile in life, unless you take risks pushing yourself out of your comfort zone. The late Nelson Mandela said, I quote, “there is no passion to be found in playing small, and settling for a life that’s less than what you are capable of living”. Think big and be different.

But above all, be you. Do not pretend to be someone else.

Also, be aware that tomorrow’s job landscape will bring jobs and titles that do not exist today, jobs propelled by Industry 5.0 and the Future of Work. A Harvard Business Review article written by a Futurist in February 2024 spelt out a list of “Jobs of the Future” – jobs that lie at the cusp of technology, creativity, innovation and

strategy . Let me mention a few that will catch your interest: Chatbot and Human Facilitator, Genetic Diversity Officer, Virtual Reality Immersion Officer, Human Bias Officer, Climate Change Response Leader, to mention a few.

Of equal importance, my young friends, keep in view that the country needs a responsive and responsible citizenry. We need not only well-educated, trained, entrepreneurial and confident individuals but also those who are ready to contribute to the economy, serve society and uplift mankind.

Once again, I congratulate all the graduates, their parents and families, the industry partners and lecturers who stood by them.

As I conclude, I am reminded the words of Antonio Guterres, the UN Secretary General in his Vision Statement at the Transforming Education Summit, in New York, I quote:

“Transformative education should support learners in four areas: Learn to Learn, Learn to Do, Learn to Live Together and, finally, Learn to Be”. We would be mindful to follow his advice.

***With these words, I thank you for your attention.***