

**Address of Hon (Mrs.) Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun,**

**Vice Prime Minister,**

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

**WORLD TEACHERS' DAY**

**03 OCT 2020**

**The Senior Chief Executive and Staff of the Ministry**

**The President and Members of the Deputy Head Teachers' Union and  
General Purpose Teachers' Union**

**Educators and Deputy HMs**

**Distinguished guests**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Good morning.**

***Happy Teachers' Day to all of you.***

I am very pleased to be among you today on the occasion of the World Teachers' Day. I know we are celebrating it ahead of the earmarked date of 5 October—but I guess it simply shows that Teachers can be celebrated at any time and not exclusively on a specifically allotted date.

Traditionally, we have looked upon teachers as those who fashion the children and youth of today into responsible and empowered citizens of tomorrow. Learner development takes place and character is formed thanks to the right environment created in the classroom and the school in general.

Which goes to prove that, as a teacher, one's responsibility does not stop at the level of teaching exclusively.

Traditionally, also, many learners look upon their teachers as role models. Indeed, we all know that, at least at the initial stages of our careers as Teachers, we tended to imitate the methodologies, the pedagogical approaches, the voice modulation, the gait of those of our teachers who had left a sharply impressionable imprint upon us. That being the case, it is only natural that an increasingly high degree of ethical behaviour is expected of teachers.

**Ladies and gentlemen,** Our modern times reveal some tough challenges to the profession. Teachers and School Heads today are required more and more to work in a dynamic environment. Changing behavioral patterns of learners coupled with high expectations of parents have increased the complexity of the job. Easier access to information with an open window on the world has also further altered the behavior and expectations of stakeholders.

And teachers' reputation and recognition are predicated on their ability to meet such challenges head on.

But there are now even greater challenges that have surged—and I would be tempted to believe that it is in the light of a changed global environment dominated by COVID 19 that, this year, the theme for the World Teachers' Day happens to be “**Teachers: Leading in crisis, reimagining the future**”

Let's state the obvious.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly added to the challenges faced by education systems throughout the world. We are lucky that, in Mauritius, we took preemptive measures to forestall a too severe impact of the pandemic upon our education delivery.

Elsewhere, many countries have not been so lucky.

We know this has engendered a huge loss of learning time, with potential repercussions for their schooling and careers in the years to come.

We also know that, on the African Continent, for instance, there is always the risk that temporarily interrupted learning may become permanent, with many students not returning to the classroom once the crisis is resolved. And there remains the unfortunate possibility that, where girls are concerned, progress made in addressing gender disparities in education may well be halted.

This is why I believe that, now more than ever, we in Education, must work towards protecting the right of all to education and guiding it through the unfolding landscape brought about by the pandemic.

At this juncture, I must have a special word for the teaching community as a whole. If the risk of learning gaps has been largely mitigated, it has been thanks to the contributions teachers have made to provide remote learning. The hard work and dedication of all those involved in the educational programmes broadcast on the four TV channels during the lock down period merits a mention. It also gave a clear insight into their genuine commitment.

It was really extraordinary to see the teaching community joining hands to prepare programs, vet same, use technology and home recording on a daily basis for nearly three months.

That is not all. Some twenty-five Educators had even been travelling to the Open University during lockdown period for the recording of lessons.

I would like here to put on record my appreciation of your invaluable collaboration and support during the crisis.

And this portends a lot for the future: I know that, thanks to you, we will be up to speed should any crisis situation arise in the future

**Dear Educators and Deputy Heads,** I must also stress my appreciation to you all for what is universally accepted as a successful implementation of the transformation in the primary sector. You are aware what is at the heart of the entire process of change, what the driving force is: the Trinity of **Inclusion, Equity** and **Quality**.

Without your help, without your commitment, this educational reform would not have been possible. I, therefore, wish to thank you for having fully embraced the educational reform in the primary sector and for being the torch bearers for our children to acquire the right knowledge, skills, attitudes and values.

However, I also recognize that, what we are celebrating is also the role of Educationists in building resilience and shaping the future of education and the teaching profession.

And this future lies in an increasing emphasis upon the continuous professional development of educators and school heads.

Let me share with you that the International Commission on the Futures of Education established by UNESCO in 2019, has come up with a Report. This report presents nine ideas for concrete actions today that will advance education tomorrow.

I will not go into all of them – but I will encourage you to read the Report: it's quite telling.

I will however emphasise just one idea highlighted there.

A case is made for the necessity to value the teaching profession and teacher collaboration. Allow me this interesting quote:

*“We must encourage conditions that give frontline educators autonomy and flexibility to act collaboratively.”*

Now, that poses an important question for us in the education sector generally: why can there not be greater within-school collaborative ventures? Why cannot teachers establish a community of practice, a sharing of experience and good practices-- initially within the school and, subsequently, with neighboring schools?

The same applies for Heads and Deputy Heads of Schools.

I will insist that the uncertain future dictates that we think differently, see things differently, do things differently.

This will go a long way towards teacher empowerment—and such empowerment comes by way of capacity building and support.

Rest assured that my Ministry is and I, in particular, am committed to the provision of such support.

Indeed, new measures are being put in place to not only give a new dimension to the teaching profession, but also to set new avenues in the field of capacity building. The announced Educators’ Council will enhance the legal status of teachers and bring about avenues for changed conditions of teaching.

On the other hand, the forthcoming Academy of Educators will provide a platform for the dissemination of good practices and upgrading of skills. This Academy, though, will not cater exclusively for Educators but will assume responsibility for the overall professional growth of Heads and Deputy Heads of schools.

After all, effective school leadership is central to the process of gearing an educational institution towards its tryst with its destiny.

**Dear Deputy Headmasters**, you form the first line of supervision at schools and effective monitoring and regular feedback are crucial in providing support to the Educators. Your precious guidance into developing strategies to achieve set targets will consolidate the teaching /learning process. In addition, your role as mentor to new recruits will help new teachers strengthen their belief in this noble profession and help them face the challenges of the profession with serenity and boosted confidence.

**Let me end on that note.**

I would like to thank the Teachers' Club together with the Deputy Head Teachers' Union and General Purpose Teachers' Union for having given me the opportunity to share this event with you. We have, ahead of us, a long and challenging task and I know that we will continue working in a collaborative spirit for the advancement of the school population.

I wish you all a memorable celebration of Teachers' Day.

***I thank you all for your kind attention.***