

**Speech of Hon. (Mrs) L.D. Dookun-Luchoomun  
Minister of Education and Human Resources,  
Tertiary Education and Scientific Research  
Prize Giving Ceremony  
Soondur Munrakhun College  
19 May 2016**

**Distinguished Guests**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

**Good Morning to you.**

Thank you for inviting me to join you in the celebration of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary—the diamond jubilee-- of Soondur Munrakhun College. I am especially thrilled that there is scheduled for today a major package of events that fleshes up the programme you have put up for the occasion. Congratulations therefore to all of you for the imminent launch of your school website, a Souvenir Magazine and the holding of an Exhibition that we will be privileged to explore as well as of a cultural performance.

Well, it is quite a programme, you will agree; but then, when a learning institution sets a new milestone like the Soondur Munrakhun College is doing, such celebratory enthusiasm is quite legitimate and most welcome.

**Dear students,**

Days like today make me feel happy that I have spent so much of my time in the field of education. Indeed, as an Educator for so many years, I had always been comforted by the knowledge that, you, our young learners and our youth, are our pride. You are the torchbearers of change and novelty. You can be, in fact, highly creative and, if

properly empowered, you can be exemplars for the civic uplift of society.

You, my young friends, should not choose the path that some young persons have adopted as a way of life. You shouldn't choose to spend hours watching television or concentrating on your play stations when you have the chance of bettering yourselves, of assuming new responsibilities for the future.

If you are asking yourselves why I am raising these points, let me tell you that the reason is two-fold.

In the first place, a day like today should make you realize that you are celebrating achievement—and achievement does not have to be only academic in nature. Of course, we want all of you to do very well in exams. Of course, we would love to see you being rewarded for topping in your school and external assessments.

But achievement has to go beyond that. Achievement also lies in the type of meaning you give to your life.

Do not forget the words of the wise person who said, **“Il ne suffit pas de réussir dans la vie—il faut réussir sa vie! «**

Again, I am sure you have heard of Rudyard Kipling, the British Nobel Prize Winner for Literature. He wrote a fabulously inspirational poem in 1895 that has remained a landmark in motivational literature. The Poem carries a lot of significance in terms of indicating how to maintain one's personal integrity and sound behaviour as well a high sense of righteousness.

Allow me to read out the last stanza of that poem. It goes thus:

*“If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,  
Or walk with kings-nor lose the common touch,  
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,  
If all men count with you, but none too much;*

*If you can fill the unforgiving minute  
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run.  
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it.  
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!"*

The poem is entitled "IF" and I would strongly recommend the Educators who are here today to facilitate the understanding of the poem and encourage the young persons to cherish the messages it carries.

I said earlier that I have a two-fold reason why I have pinned great hopes in you, the youth,

The second reason is very simply this.

You should all realize that we are living at a highly peculiar time of human history. You are very much conscious – or you should be—that things are happening at a pace never experienced before. What used to be thought of as impossible yesterday is accepted today as commonplace. The belief system people used to view in the past as immutable, as unchallengeable, is today shaken at the very core.

The world that you will enter into as young adults is going to change even faster than you'd expect. How prepared are you therefore to face it? How ready are you to forge your way forward?

This is where I trust enormously your ability to weather all sorts of challenges. I love the optimism of our youth, your resilience, and your ability to face things, no matter how tricky they are.

When I look at you, the words of an American industrialist called J. Paul Getty come to my mind. The founder of Getty Oil Company is reputed to have said,

*“ In times of rapid change, experience can be your worst enemy.”*

Strangely, there is a lot that is true about this. It is maybe your lack of experience that can be your best friend in developing your resilience, your capacity to face and overcome obstacles.

Because you will be compelled to be innovative and creative.

Because you will have to see things from perspectives that are new and unthought- of -before.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Developing such an attitude is inherent to the intent that runs across the educational reforms my Ministry is bringing about. I wish to see our schools and Educators so equipped as to attend to the diversity of learning needs of all learners.

We have to provide the enabling environment that will empower our young persons to confront new and emerging challenges.

Education also has to help them grow into well balanced citizens capable of fending for themselves and their families as well as for the community at large.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I will also seize the opportunity, now that this platform has been given to me, to allay some of the apprehensions I have been hearing about concerning the private secondary school sector.

By a queer logic that I, for one, fail to understand, some people are bent on continuously insisting that the Nine Years of Continuous Basic Education reform will spell the end of private secondary schools. You have all heard the pseudo-arguments used to support this palaver.

### **Well, let me say it loud and clear.**

Such arguments are spurious and completely unfounded. Honestly, Ladies and gentlemen, do you see an institution like Soondur

Munrakhun College closing its doors and throwing you, the staff, by the wayside?

Do you see Pre Vocational Educators disappearing simply because we are doing away with the Pre Vocational stream?

Please don't be taken in by the words of prophets of doom. Changes are inevitable because the system has to be modernized. Always remember that, in any education system across the world, you have 4 major imperatives: **Access, Equity, Relevance and Quality.**

What the sector reform is doing – and I must remind you it is a comprehensive reform that cuts across all the subsectors in education, including the TVET component—what the reform is doing is to ensure we make the system more equitable and quality-focused. It will also be more relevant to the present and future needs of learners.

After all, you all know the international commitment we have taken to attain the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 and the national undertaking of achieving Vision 2030 as spelt out by our Prime Minister.

If we maintain the current system as it is, it will certainly not provide the foundation on which this new Vision can be built.

**Ladies and gentlemen, Staff and Students,**

**Let me end on this note.**

I recognize and congratulate all the students who have brought laurels to the school through excellence in academics, sports and culture. I recognize the teachers who have inspired the students to always set high targets in their lives so as to achieve their potential to the maximum. I also recognize the parents who devote their valuable and quality time to help build the character and moral strength of their children.

Finally, I would like once again to congratulate you all, the Manager, the Rector, teachers, staff and students of Soondur Munrakhun College, on your 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

To the prize winners and award recipients my heartfelt congratulations.

***Thank you for your attention.***