

**Address by Hon ( Mrs) L.D. Dookun-Luchoomun**  
**Minister of Education & Human Resources,**  
**Tertiary Education & Scientific Research**  
**55<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Curepipe College**  
**01 June 2017**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

Good morning to all of you and thank you so much for the warm welcome extended to me.

I, in fact, deem it an honour and privilege to be here this morning with you on the occasion of the celebration of the 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary of your school, of **our** school. I view it always as a matter of immense pleasure to participate in all celebrations that go towards recognizing the worth of an educational institution and its pursuit of student wellbeing.

55 years in the life of a school does represents a long journey of hard, unremitting work. That is most definitely true for the almost two generations—managers and all staff-- who have been instrumental in sustaining Curepipe College through thick and thin.

The journey travelled over that entire period of time by this College is in itself a major milestone. I am therefore not surprised to note the attractive pull Curepipe College has had for the community of parents it has serviced over the years.

In fact, what does a school population of 1100 students show? It shows the trust of the parents in the quality of the education being dispensed and the ability of the school to fulfil the personal aspirations of its students.

My thanks therefore go to the parents who are present here today and the host of others who unfortunately could not make it here today. Thank you for helping to sustain this school in its noble mission.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

One basic reality that we have to cherish is that much of the progress that Mauritius has experienced over the years would never have been possible if somewhere, our forefathers had not had strong convictions and taken all sorts of risks to live up to these convictions.

In those difficult days, one such conviction was that education is the key to open the doors of success. We are fortunate that this tradition of seeing education as a driver of change and development, as an agent for social mobility, has been deeply entrenched in Mauritius to this day.

Indeed, my dear students, this is what education is all about. It opens new horizons to us all; it opens wider the windows of opportunity; and most, importantly, it enables us to construct a knowledge- based society and progress towards the achievement of social and personal goals.

Let me remind you that this is something that all of you will be called upon to do. Like all young persons the world over, you have your personal aspirations. You have goals and targets that you have probably set for yourselves. You will have realised that, at the end of the day, there is only one bottom line: your chances of accomplishing your goals are vastly increased with good education and training.

The price for ignoring this is much too heavy to pay!

On the occasion of this Prize Giving ceremony, therefore, it is also a fitting time for all of us to reflect on and reiterate the significance of education.

## **Dear Students**

My Ministry is precisely guided by the desire to develop the unique potential of each individual and we are doing that by providing as many facilities as possible—IT facilities, the maintaining of a proximity with parents on the issue of discipline and attendance of their children. In addition, opportunities are also provided for you to participate in international fora, have additional scholarships based on meritocracy and social criteria, as well as the payment of examination fees for SC & HSC.

You should take advantage of these facilities and many others for we are keen on investing you with a range of skills and competencies to prepare you for the changing landscape of the 21st century. The Education Reform agenda that we are implementing aims precisely at ensuring that, as citizens of this country and, tomorrow, as citizens of the world, you can stand on your own ground and be reckoned as capable, effective and resilient persons.

Obviously, we do not know what tomorrow's workplace will look like but the least that we can do is to equip you, our youth, to adapt to it. It is hence vitally important for you to be empowered with what we now call 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills. Communication and critical thinking skills, scientific literacy and reasoning, ICT skills, creativity, adaptability, collaborative teamwork skills are some of those skills that will help you adapt to the new realities of the future.

## **Ladies and gentlemen, Members of the Administration and teaching staff,**

Allow me to avail myself of this platform to allay some apprehensions that I hear in some quarters concerning the secondary sub-sector.

The education reform, especially the Nine Year Continuous Basic Education programme, will not result in the closing down of private grant-aided secondary schools. A college like Curepipe College will continue to operate as a regional secondary school as it has always been so successfully doing.

True, we are witnessing a demographic decline.

But threats have to be converted into opportunities.

There will be fewer students entering secondary schools over the years—but that should allow us to have reduced class size and focus on the QUALITY dimension of education.

Incidentally, you have to see the mandatory “Five Credit” dimension from this perspective. Some people seek to unnecessarily make an issue of this. Yes, my Ministry is going back to the basics: students have to be better equipped so as to move on to ‘A’ level / HSC studies. We have to concentrate on the quality of the students leaving the secondary sub-sector and subsequently, those leaving the Universities.

A Knowledge Hub can only be constructed on the Quality edifice.

Besides, education and the putting in of effort and hard work are indissociable we always expect our teachers, our Head of Schools as well as the parents to inculcate the virtue of hard work in all students. Five credits, in lieu of three, will demand more efforts and more dedication at work but will yield rich dividends at the end of the day.

Of course, I also realise that, for one reason or another, some students may not make it past the “five-credit bar”—but there will be alternative pathways, and, certainly, Polytechnics represent one such major sought-after alternative.

On the other hand, quality also depends on the professional development and enhancement of the professional standards and competence of Educators. In fact, trained, qualified and motivated teachers are at the heart of a highly performing education system.

We intend to ensure that CPD, that is, continuous professional development, becomes the norm across the education and training system of the country.

In return, dear Educators, you must commit yourselves to each of your students. You have to make each child believe in himself/herself so that, eventually, when leaving school, he/she becomes the author of his/her destiny.

**Ladies and gentlemen,** Every single year of successful educational achievement by our students counts—and counts for a lot.

**Let me share these statistics.**

It has today been estimated that one extra year of schooling increases an individual's earnings by up to 10%. And each additional year of schooling raises average annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth by 0.37%.

Let me end on this hopeful note.

I would like, once again, to seize this opportunity to congratulate the management, staff and students and the PTA of Curepipe College, for the good work carried out and I wish you ALL best of luck in all your future endeavours.

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