

Address of Hon. Mrs. L.D. Dookun- Luchoomun
Minister of Education and Human Resources,
Tertiary Education and Scientific research,
Prize Giving Ceremony -- Sir Leckraj Teelock SSS

29 June 2017

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning to all of you.

Thank you for inviting me to be present here today on the occasion of the Prize Giving Ceremony of Sir Leckraj Teelock SSS.

Such a Ceremony is in itself a means for every school to recognize its high performers, those who excel in the various scholastic and non-scholastic activities. It is practically a ritual that stands at the heart of an institution's raison d'être.

And it is also an opportunity for a school to celebrate its own successes and show the way it has travelled so far.

Today, Sir Leckraj Teelock SSS has advanced a lot, considering its humble origins as a Junior Technical School with an intake of just 70 students (35 boys and 35 girls) in 1972.

What a long way has indeed been traversed!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Students,

Today, SLT has become a beacon in the region, a symbol of students' sterling performance. Its appeal as a student-puller has been systematically enhanced over the years.

I am sure that many of you who joined SLT in what was then Form 1 were basically groping in the dark.

You were unsure about a lot of things. You were probably uncertain of your reception by the Seniors of the school; you were certainly quite

puzzled, even bewildered about seeing so many different teachers taking your several classes.

But one thing I know must have struck a positive note in you, something that made you look forward to your secondary schooling: That was your conviction that SLT would provide the conditions that would enable you to fulfil your dreams for the future

And that, dear students, is precisely what the Administration and Staff of this College have set out to do. I am sure that, over the years, the alumni, the former students of this school, constantly look back upon their school time and are grateful for what the school has been able to give to them.

However, today, ladies and gentlemen, dear students, there are newer challenges that are rearing their heads and have to be confronted.

A globalised world has its own requirements; it sets its own conditionalities.

We can no longer rest content with having our learners being simply literate and numerate. That was good enough at a given time and for a given period.

The present-day context compels us to move beyond these. Our youth have now to equally master additional competencies and skills.

Look around you: everyone—from educationists to employers—is speaking of the “soft skills”, the “deep learning skills” as a pre-requisite for all learners.

You, young learners, have to have a mastery of problem-solving, IT, communication skills among others.

You have to internalize a sense of ethical behaviour and values.

All of these, combined, will enable you to make the right choices, to grow into responsible citizens and to develop the capacity of *savoir faire*, *savoir vivre* and *savoir etre*.

In this evolving context, therefore, the education sector has to be constantly evolving as well so as to prepare students to meet these requirements of a globalized world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is what lies at the heart of the education reforms my Ministry has embarked upon.

The implementation of the whole package of reforms is well underway—whether it is at the Pre-primary, Primary, Secondary and Higher Education and TVET levels.

I have had the opportunity of meeting different stakeholders across the education sub-sectors, and my message has been clear to all of them: Mauritius cannot afford to waste its precious human resource.

If education is the key to human development, we cannot afford to lose any percentage of our youth on the wayside.

We have to ensure a number of things at the same time:

One, the integral and holistic development of all our learners—alongside cognitive development, talents and creativity must be allowed to manifest themselves instead of remaining latent.

Two, we must see to it that all learners successfully complete secondary schooling. So as to respond to the complex needs of the market.

And, three, we must stop looking upon Technical Education as a choice by default.

For too long, Technical and Vocational Education (TVET) has been considered as playing second fiddle to general education.

We seem to forget that *les grands chantiers qui nous attendent y compris les développements dans le domaine de petites et moyennes entreprises, nécessiteront de jeunes formés et de de haut.*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is in this context that Polytechnics are going to be the new players in the Training Sector.

We are starting with three of them and in such domains as Tourism, and Hotel Management, ICT-related fields and health care. The support of internationally renowned Polytechnics from Canada, New Zealand and Singapore has been secured and we are poised to start the Diploma level programs this very year.

Let me conclude by referring to the very inspirational words of Helen Keller, American author, political activist, and lecturer.

She said,

“Alone, we can do so little, together we can do so much.”

Dear students,

Always remember that success in a school is always a respect of combined efforts, the synergy of one and all—teachers, parents, peers, non-teaching staff, the Rector-- that make all the difference and enable you, the students, to achieve your full potential.

Each and every one of them, in their own way, works for your betterment.

Let me therefore seize this opportunity to thank everyone present here today and also those who, unfortunately, could not make it here today for their support. Thank you all for helping our children.

To teachers and members of the non-teaching staff, thank you for your passion and for your unwavering commitment to provide all students with the right learning opportunities.

I will end on this note. My heartfelt congratulations to the prize winners of the day as well to the entire institution for a highly successful ceremony.

I thank you for your attention.