

**Speech of Hon L.D.Dookun-Luchoomun  
Vice Prime Minister**

**Award ceremony for the bootcamp and short  
video competition**

**PROTOCOL**

**My Colleague, Hon. Deepak Balgobin, Minister of  
Information Technology, Communication and  
Innovation;**

**Mr. Vyankoj Mulloo, Officer in Charge Mauritius  
Digital Promotion Agency**

**Participants,**

**Distinguished Guests**

**Ladies and Gentlemen;**

**Good Morning to you all.**

I feel really privileged to be here, in your midst today, on this joyous occasion of the Award Ceremony that concludes one landmark initiative foregrounding the promotion of digital literacy among the youth.

Let me place on record the commendable efforts of the Mauritius Digital Promotion Agency for this forward-

looking enterprise which has spurred numerous participants from our schools to embrace creativity and innovation in their quest for addressing crucial issues linked to the digital world.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and gentlemen,

In today's rapidly evolving landscape, the importance of digital literacy cannot be overstated. The digital revolution has permeated every aspect of our lives, revolutionizing the way we live-work-play, disrupting our approach to communication and, most definitely, to learning. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) media and tools have proven to be efficient levers for education, opening up new avenues of knowledge and empowering individuals in ways that are unprecedented and certainly unexpected !

I am told that all of you have been engaged in some type of a bootcamp exercise, the kind that provides space for ideas to germinate, for innovations to be proposed, for specified goals and targets to be met.

It strikes me that this type of structured environment is just right, especially if we consider the themes

identified for reflection and implementation. These themes are not just relevant but also crucial to the concerns of our time. From addressing cyberbullying to fostering a thoughtful transition into the digital world, while also emphasizing the importance of bridging the digital divide between generations, these topics reflect the pressing issues that seeks our attention.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Students,

One reality that can no more be thrust under the carpet today is that digital technology is, both, part of our life today and also our future. Now , more than ever, it becomes important for us to enhance digital empowerment and provide means for the digital transformation.

And this has to start right from an early age. In a world where digital skills have become an indispensable currency, young persons like you should learn to navigate the challenges and opportunities of the digital age with confidence and competence.

Hence, we cannot afford to leave any child behind. It is our duty to ensure that all our learners, regardless of their socioeconomic background, have equal opportunities to acquire digital literacy.

We should make ours the conviction that it is primarily by bridging the digital divide that we can help create a society that thrives on inclusivity, empowerment, and innovation.

That has been central to the determination of my Ministry to implement such innovative measures as the Early Digital Learning Programme and the provision of internet connectivity for the primary sub-sector and the setting up of the Student Support Portal for secondary schools. These innovations, along with others , helped us make digital inroads in the world of education; they supported us well in coping with the impact of the pandemic and should be helpful in staring down future of potential crises.

At this stage, one cannot not speak of one of the most fascinating developments in recent years – namely, the rise of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools.

These tools have the potential to revolutionize the way we create, innovate, and express ourselves.

Generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT provide us with a new frontier of creativity, allowing us to explore ideas and possibilities that were previously unimaginable. They can be powerful allies in the pursuit of knowledge, self-expression, and problem-solving. Obviously enough, our youth can now have access to a wealth of resources that can amplify their creativity, facilitate collaboration, and inspire innovation

I know there has been a huge debate going on about the Chat GPT for some time now. I would personally go along with the widely endorsed belief that AI in education is not to be avoided. It can indeed help create a more equitable learning environment and prompt teachers to be more responsive to student-learning needs.

Thus, I would not personally favour banning it from educational institutions like we are witnessing in quite a few countries.

The genie, ladies and gentlemen, is out of the bottle and it's impossible to put it back in.

AI, and chatbots like Chat GPT should rather be used to give a fillip to the creativity of learners. Thus , I am strongly in favour of using technology as a support in doing our work rather than using technology to do our work for us.

Yes, indeed, there are always associated risks.

UN Secretary General, Mr Antonio Guterres, recognised this when addressing a session devoted to the theme of Digital Transformation during the Transformative Education Summit in November last year. He trenchantly stated, “.... *without guidance and guardrails [ digital technology has] a huge potential for harm*”

Let us then recognise that , with great power comes great responsibility. It is crucial to approach the use of Generative AI tools with diligence and discernment. While these tools offer tremendous benefits, we must be mindful of using them in a responsible and ethical way.

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Participants,

Today's ceremony must also be viewed through another prism.

We emphatically believe that boys and girls alike must have equal access to ICT tools and multimedia for their personal development. There is no better way to emphasize this than through a dedicated award ceremony that celebrates the achievements of both genders. By commemorating Girls in ICT Day and organizing a Boot Camp competition open to all, we are sending a powerful message of inclusivity and gender equality.

Let us continue to champion equal opportunities, empowering both our boys and girls with the tools they need to thrive in the digital age. After all, you, the young persons here present and your peers will be the ones responsible, tomorrow, for making effective the notion of ESG, ie, Environmental, Social Governance as well as enabling our future smart cities to go into hyper drive – and smart cities thrive on digitalisation, on IoT (Internet of Things) and the like.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Let me end by extending my heartfelt congratulations to all the participants, schools and teachers who have embraced this competition with enthusiasm and dedication. Your efforts have not only elevated digital literacy but have also fostered a culture of creativity, innovation, and forward thinking among our youth.

Today, as we celebrate the achievements of our young participants, we are reminded of their immense talent, creativity, and resilience. They have not only showcased their ability to address pressing issues but have also become ambassadors of change, driving us closer to a future where technology is harnessed for the greater good.

***Keep up the great work***

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