

**Speech of Hon VPM
Outstanding Cambridge Learner Awards [26 July 2023]
Minister's speech**

**Mrs Hazel Carmichael, Head of Ministry
Portfolio, Qualifications Development**

**Mr. R. Meettook, Secretary for Home
Affairs and Chairperson of MES Board**

**Mr S. Samlall, Senior Chief Executive
Ministry of Education, Tertiary
Education, Science and Technology,**

**Mr M J Jaunbocus, Permanent Secretary,
Ministry of Education, Tertiary
Education, Science and Technology**

**Mrs D S Thanacoody Soborun, Director,
Mauritius Examinations Syndicate**

**Directors and Officials from the Ministry
and of Parastatal Bodies**

Rectors

Distinguished guests

Dear parents, dear students

Good morning to you all

It is really an immense pleasure for me to stand here today and be part of this special day when we are honouring you, our exceptional students who have achieved excellence in the Cambridge School Certificate and Higher School Certificate Examinations.

Celebrations are obviously in order as we all acknowledge the tremendous contribution your parents, your Educators and your Rectors have put in for you to have reached the pinnacle of success.

Obviously, you wouldn't have earned these accolades had it not been for the sheer hard work and unwavering perseverance that you have personally put in during your educational journey.

Indeed, it is only fair and proper to recognise that your achievements go beyond just good grades; they represent the culmination of countless hours of study, and unswerving focus as you hurdled over obstacles overcoming challenges in your pursuit of new knowledge and novel techniques.

So, as a token of our recognition, of you all as the top performers in various subjects, let me extend my congratulations to one and all, including to those who have directly and even indirectly played a significant role in enabling you to carry the day.

Ladies and gentlemen, Today's event carries a lot of messages but I will highlight and comment on just a few of these.

In the first place, it only goes to prove that the heavy investment we are making in

education is worth its weight in gold. As you all most probably know, Government annually allocates a huge budget for education since since we view it as both a public good and a basic human right. For this year alone, the amount allocated is around Rs 20 billion. This is because our Government has always held fast to the conviction that education has the potential to – and does--transform society.

In fact, Education always takes center stage in all national discussions of social and economic change or transformation. Indeed, in a rapidly evolving society like ours, education holds the key to bringing to the fore the next generation of leaders, innovators, and change makers for Mauritius, young persons like you who would

prove to be forward thinking and innovative in promoting new development perspectives.

Our education system is perceived by some people as being highly competitive and that could be demotivating for some. It is however legitimate to think that today's celebration is a sign of the clean and sound competition that exists in our education system.

Let us ask ourselves what these awards demonstrate? What do they really say? They in fact are revealing that our education system is one that can hold its own against others, even on the international scene. That's a statement that should echo loud and clear.

Ladies and Gentlemen, there is nothing wrong in a sound competition so long as we keep the real endgame in view.

And the real endgame that we should be working towards is the benchmarking of our education system, a benchmarking undertaken not exclusively through the setting of national standards. Rather, we have to benchmark our performance against prevailing international norms, against countries which are recognised for their high performing educational systems, countries like Singapore, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, to name just a few.

Well, kudos to you, awardees, who have proved your calibre both nationally and internationally!

Dear Awardees,

I recognize that you have proved yourselves and your capacity to face and overcome the odds. But the battle is not over yet. There

are other qualities, other competencies that will be expected of you as you mature into young adulthood and beyond. Obviously, I am speaking here of your ability to work and live with and through others. What a qualified as ‘Self’ skills or deep learning skills are proving to be fundamental as society grows increasingly complex.

I am here reminded of what Jacques Delors once defined as and which came up again during the Transforming Education Summit at the UN in September last.

‘Learning to learn, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together’

In an era of lifelong learning, you will have to sustain your ability for re-skilling and upskilling yourself. But specially, as citizens of the world, you will be judged by your

capacity to live in harmony with your fellow beings and thus construct a better world.

And that will be the final verdict on your achievement.

The exams results secured by you fittingly justify the Reform Agenda which aims at qualitatively consolidating and strengthening our education system.

Obviously, our duty is to encourage, foster and lay the groundwork for a culture of effort and hard work.;

All that it takes from you is that you empower yourself through greater self-discipline and enhanced confidence in your potential to improve.

Through the distinction you have achieved, you are in fact giving the last message to you, Awardees, is a very simple one.

Just before I end, allow me to remind you of a major social responsibility that should be yours. Excellence. is not just about being the best, but also about inspiring others to follow in your footsteps, to reach for the stars, and to believe in the power of education to transform lives.

You cannot make of your success a solitary achievement. It needs to be shared, to be spread—and not spread too thin!. The privileges of education do come with responsibilities. I would want you to be Champions of Effort and Hard Work in your respective institutions. Encourage others to

see that Gustave Flaubert was right when he wrote, and I quote,

“... if one always looked at the skies, one would end up with wings.”

As for those of you who have completed your A levels, remember that your educational institution has been your alma mater and, as alumni of same, it behoves you to link up with it whenever the opportunity presents itself. Do create platforms for peer-to-peer interactions and motivate others into reaching new peaks of success.

Dear guests,

We are greatly honoured by the presence of the Cambridge representative today: Mrs Hazel Carmichael, Head of Ministry Portfolio,

Qualifications Development. The partnership with Cambridge to offer an education that provides modern and prestigious qualifications to Mauritian students has a span of more than one century.

During the years, Cambridge has been in the forefront to encourage best practice in the fields of assessment and evaluation. In order to meet the challenges of 21st century, in a world which is changing rapidly, assessment has had to evolve to encourage critical thinking and problem solving. In order to achieve high marks, candidates not only have to demonstrate in-depth subject knowledge and understanding but also the ability to use knowledge in innovative ways and be ready to meet future challenges.

The students we are acclaiming today have qualifications that are recognized by schools, universities and employers around the world as proof of academic achievement.

I wish to point out that Cambridge has supported us for the development of new syllabuses and is still providing continuous professional development to our Educators.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me then conclude on this note.

My heartfelt congratulations go to each award recipient. Your achievements are a source of pride not only for yourselves but for our entire nation. You are the future, the hope, and the promise of Mauritius, and I have no doubt that you will rise to the occasion and make us all proud.

May your academic journey continue to be filled with success, inspiration, and a constant yearning for Excellence.

I thank you all for your kind attention.