

# **Outstanding Cambridge Learner Awards**

## **Minister's speech**

**26 July 2018**

### **Distinguished guests**

### **Dear parents, dear students**

### **Good morning**

It is indeed with great pleasure that I am in your midst today for this year's edition of the **Outstanding Cambridge Learner Awards**. This is a very special day for all of us and indeed this is very special day for most of you, students present here, who have excelled in the Cambridge SC and HSC 2017 examinations.

It is delightful for me to hear that, this year, 31 students have come **'Top in the world' as follows:**

- 10 students at "A' level (5 students in 'A' level' Mathematics)

This is indeed an excellent performance for the 2017 cohort and you deserve to be applauded.

For you students who are here to collect your prizes today, many of you have scored the highest marks worldwide in your respective subjects: This is definitely an outstanding performance.

I congratulate you, your teachers and your parents very wholeheartedly to celebrate the dedication, application and enthusiasm that have led to your academic success.

Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are greatly honoured by the presence of the Cambridge representative today: Ms Jane Henry, Head of Education Contracts, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Indian Ocean. This is a person who has always been a good friend of Mauritius. She is the linchpin in consolidating the partnership with CIE and enabling us to offer an education that provides modern and prestigious qualifications to Mauritian students – We are here talking of a partnership that spans over more than a century!

I wish to point out that Cambridge has been by our side in the development of new syllabuses. It is good to know that, in line with the cardinal principle of teaching to fish instead of giving a fish, CIE is providing continuous professional development to our Educators as part of the empowerment process. Besides, by having access to Cambridge teachers' website, our teachers are able to communicate with teachers worldwide on syllabus delivery and content.

Another major example of the fruitful collaboration between Cambridge and Mauritius is the offer, as from this year, of the "O' level Music Syllabus with components of different types of Music.

Let me also inform you that we are having discussion with Cambridge regarding an SC technical qualification which, it is my fervent wish, will be introduced in the coming years.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Nobody denies the significance of assessment. Over the years, we in Mauritius have been making a case to encourage best practice in the fields of assessment and evaluation. It is not just that we are a society that has placed a premium on assessments and examinations—*that*, we have done in a rather systematic way.

But we have also wised up to the reality that, in order to meet the challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> century, in a world which is changing rapidly, assessment has to evolve.

We have to encourage critical thinking and problem solving.

We are not talking here of achieving high marks for its own sake. Rather, 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 be responsive to future challenges.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the students we are acclaiming today, your wards, have the qualifications that are recognized by schools, universities and employers around the world as proof of academic achievement. But you and I would also want them to lead successful lives as innovators, creative thinkers and problem solvers.

Ladies and gentlemen, this explains why the educational landscape, under my policy guidance, is undergoing major changes with the reforms in the educational sector at all levels.

You know by now that the objectives of the reform agenda are to provide inclusive education to all children of Mauritius with a view to promoting a holistic human development. Our aim is not to stress exclusively on academic/ cognitive skills (hard skills)—these are certainly important: we need to bring at centre stage such soft skills as critical thinking, collaborative work, values and ethics.

A fact of life today is that the requirements of this Century will no longer be on the basis of what learners know but rather on what they can do with what they know. We want our learners to take an active role in their learning and be more involved in tasks which enhance reflection, critical thinking and teamwork.

You have done a great job to shine and outshine your peers. Your performance has to be – and is—lauded. But do remember that the changed global context implies you now have to stretch yourself to pluck those hanging much higher up!

That you can do that—and more!—is something about which I have absolutely no doubt.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to say a few congratulatory words for the parents present today. You have demonstrated the truth behind what has been a mantra for decades now: There is a huge social demand for

education. Education is accepted by our society as the central driver of change and innovation, of socio-economic uplift.

You should be really proud of the achievements of your wards. There is no doubt that you have put in huge efforts and made equally huge sacrifices to provide the best conditions for your children's education and for them to excel.

Congratulations to you all.

To our prize winners, I can say that this is a brilliant start to your academic career. You certainly deserve all the applause you are getting today.

But this is only a start.

If you maintain the attitude, determination, dedication, hard work, there is no doubt that a bright future is awaiting you.

However, you should never forget your country. Remember that no country can afford to sideline its academic elite!

So, I pray that, after your studies, you serve your country as exemplary citizens to contribute to its development and growth.

I thank you all for your kind attention.