

**Speech of Hon Minister
Meeting with Laureates
State House
Thursday March 1, 2018**

Protocol

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to be in your midst this afternoon for this traditional get-together in honour of our Laureates of the 2017 year group.

At the very outset, my warmest congratulations to all of you, Laureates, for your outstanding performance. All the parents, teachers and friends who have contributed to that success also deserve our warm appreciation.

Obviously, Laureates, you will be constantly feted in different functions—it is just a recognition of your capacity to situate yourselves among the very best in the world. And this, you would have achieved through sheer dint of your hard work, dedication and commitment.

Well, that is now something that you will have to sustain.

Being a Laureate is wonderful—but it also means that this is just one battle that has been won. There will be many more confronting you as you embark on higher level tertiary studies. The demand on your time, on your intellectual capabilities will be even greater.

You are now standing on the threshold of a new experience, not only in education, but also in life. As you progressively move into further studies locally or overseas, you will perceive that the entire challenge of tertiary education lies in developing an agile and innovative mind

so as to be up to speed with change and innovation. This is a pre-requisite if you wish to grow into efficient professionals in your respective fields of expertise. It is also a pre-requisite if you wish to be the entrepreneurs, the architects of tomorrow, capable of charting out new trails, of pushing the frontiers of knowledge further back. After all, keep in mind that you have to espouse a spirit of lifelong learning whilst seizing any exciting opportunities that may lie ahead of you.

Dear Laureates,

I had the opportunity to read some of the interviews that most of you gave to papers and elsewhere. I noticed that, generally speaking, you have almost already made up your mind as to **what** you want to study and **where**.

Despite that, I would still suggest that you take some time, reflect some more and consult Priority lists at the TEC.

You see, there are a number of new emerging sectors that will offer a rich potential for the future. Of course, I am not saying that traditional professional areas like Medicine, Law and Engineering will lose their attractiveness.

They won't.

But we have to move beyond fashion statements: Mauritius will need new high-level skills and competencies if it is to maintain itself in the vanguard of development. The new pillars of economic growth will require the relevant human resources to jump-start them. To join the league of high income nations, we could use all the skills and competencies that will enable us to achieve higher levels of economic growth and social development.

That was the “**what**” to study. Let me now come to the “**Where**” part.

I know that most of you are certainly thinking of studying in a foreign university.

However, let me inform you that you can and do have quality higher education on offer in our local Universities as well.

Indeed, the benefits of studying locally are numerous:

- Our local universities, both private and public, and off-campus branches propose a whole panoply of programs that definitely stand their own against those offered in foreign universities.
- They have entered into strong partnerships with renowned foreign institutions from France, the US, Australia and others.
- As part of our professed policy to internationalise higher education and develop Mauritius into a regional knowledge hub, we are witnessing an influx of foreign students into our local Higher Education Institutions. This is cosmopolitanism in the making—and Mauritius is fast becoming a favoured destination for Tertiary education.

There are 2 additional benefits:

One, we are giving a boost to Research -- and that also means we plan to make of our campuses a hub exuberantly bubbling with the generation of novel ideas.

And two, on completion of an undergrad programme locally, ***you are not simply guaranteed a two-year work experience but also a fully- paid post-grad scholarship in any part of the world.***

So, there are numerous benefits of studying in a local university, as you can see.

Let me also remind you that, as from last year, we have revised the allowances payable to all laureates.

However, Laureates, wherever you decide to pitch your tent, remember to open yourselves up to your peers, to be humble in your success. After all, the fact of the case is that you are role-models and a major source of inspiration to others around you.

You cannot afford to put a foot wrong here.

Finally, Laureates, I would wish you to realise that, yes, there is a terrific glitz to studying, working and living overseas. Yes, the pay packet and other forms of incentivisation are greater there.

Nonetheless, contributing to the “Brain Gain” of your country should be a strong motivating factor.

We have recently had a meeting of the Diaspora at the University of Mauritius. It has strengthened the conviction that one can be a participant in the development of our country even from a distance. And technology is making this quite possible.

It leaves me now to, again, congratulate all of you, laureates, for your efforts and you, parents for the support provided. Your determination to succeed will inspire you to seize all exciting opportunities that will lie ahead of you.

Good luck to you in all your future endeavours.

Thank you for your attention.