

**Speech of Hon. (Mrs) L.D.Dookun-Luchoomun
Minister of Education & Human Resources,
Tertiary Education & Scientific Research**

***55th Anniversary of Friendship College Boys
02 June 2016***

Ladies and Gentlemen

A Very Good Morning to all of you

At the very outset, allow me to express my appreciation to the Management and Staff of Friendship College for the kind invitation extended to me. I am indeed very pleased to be here amongst you this morning to celebrate the 55th anniversary of the College.

This occasion is all the more auspicious since the College is also inaugurating its newly built gymnasium.

Congratulations to you all.

Ladies and Gentlemen

People may not realise it but 55 years of existence for an institution, especially an educational institution, is in itself a major achievement. It demonstrates clearly the foresightedness and the ambitious vision of the Founding Fathers of the College who believed in the transformational nature of education.

We should realise that, way back in 1961, access to secondary education was a matter of real concern. We did not have many providers and educational opportunities for adolescents were few and far between.

And yet some people persevered; some people hung on to their Vision. And an institution like Friendship College that started with a small student population can today boast of an average of 575 students and 70 members of staff.

Friendship College has also demonstrated remarkable achievements both in Academic and Sports fields, with the Football and Volleyball teams having won most of the tournaments organised by the Northern District Council and the Mauritius Secondary Schools Sports Association.

To the management and staff, I will simply say, 'Bravo' and hold on to the dream and continue to cherish and fulfil the sacred mission of education.

For education is such a treasure that, the more we share, the richer we become.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Students

I referred earlier to the transformational nature of education. I believe you see this every single day of your lives. Education is indeed a driver of change and innovation. It is a powerful force in eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions.

The global community has recognised this for quite some time and, only last year, this was reiterated through the universal adoption in September 2015 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals Agenda which is a plan of action for three major components: **'people, planet and prosperity'**.

Allow me to highlight two of these.

I will start with "Prosperity" first.

A country's survival depends upon the degree to which the people's needs and wants are satisfied. The economy of a country determines the standard of living and the lifestyle enjoyed by its people. Hence,

Government has to show the way by highlighting and charting out new economic fields and orientations.

This is what our Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Sir Aneerood Jugnauth has done through the Economic Mission Statement he delivered to the nation as a roadmap to achieve the Second Economic Miracle and Vision 2030.

As you know, this vision for prosperity relies, among others, on the Ocean Economy, the transformation of Mauritius into a regional platform for trade, investment and services and the renovation of the Innovation, Technology and Communication sector.

It is obvious that it is only a well- educated human resource that can make this Vision a reality.

And that, Ladies and Gentlemen and students, is at the basis of the reforms I am bringing into the education system. But let me also stress that it is a reform agenda that covers all the sub-sectors of Education—the Pre-Primary, Secondary, TVET and Tertiary.

This comprehensive reform package aims at providing all students with a range of skills and competencies and hence preparing them for the changing landscape of the 21st century.

Within this package lies the new landmark of Nine Years of Continuous Basic Education.

Ladies and Gentlemen, you will agree with me that, if we want to make the new economic thrusts a reality, we cannot afford to keep some of our precious human resources on the sidelines.

Well, this is what the situation currently is.

We cannot afford the loss of a considerable proportion of students from the education system by the end of primary schooling.

We also cannot afford seeing a percentage of even those who pass the CPE being semi-literate and semi-numerate.

The 9-years of basic schooling is a direct response to this situation. It is my deep conviction that all of our students have to have a solid foundation that would both facilitate and sustain the building of further and future lifelong learning.

We do not know what tomorrow's workplace will look like but at least we can equip our youth to adapt to it. And we can do that by empowering our children with what we now call 21st Century skills, that is, communication and critical thinking skills, scientific literacy and reasoning, ICT skills, creativity, adaptability, collaborative teamwork skills, among others.

All of these will be useful in adapting to the new realities of the future.

Dear Students,

Let me now speak of the “**People**” dimension, and I am addressing you because this is of direct concern to you.

An educational reform cannot rest upon the development of cognitive, academic capabilities alone. For such a reform to be complete, it has to cater for the whole person.

Education is about developing the whole person, his interests, talents and strengths so as to fulfil his potential and aspirations, enabling that learner to lead a full, creative and meaningful life.

Mes chers enfants,

Il est du devoir d'un système éducatif de pouvoir inculquer des valeurs – des valeurs qui permettent à tout étudiant de se préparer à vivre un mode de vie qui soit sain, socialement acceptable et respectueux de la différence de son prochain.

Je mise beaucoup sur une éducation qui puissent transmettre les différents types de valeurs—les valeurs humaines d'abord, c'est à dire nos sentiments de respect, de considération, d'appréciation et d'empathie pour d'autres humains.

Mais également les valeurs morales et éthiques.

Il nous faut comprendre qu'une éducation qui nous initie à notre vie future en tant que citoyens du monde doit être basée sur les valeurs universelles. Ce sont ces valeurs universelles qui sont à la base des relations entre êtres humains, dans un esprit de réciprocité et de respect mutuel.

Cela est d'autant plus important car vous les jeunes serez appelé demain à vivre et à évoluer dans un monde où se côtoient des personnes issues des cultures différentes, avec des états d'esprit divers qui dictent des comportements distincts.

Apprendre à vivre avec les autres, c'est aussi ça le devenir du citoyen du monde qui est votre destinée ultime.

Et c'est là que je mise beaucoup sur vous, les enseignants, pour faire de cela une réalité, pour faciliter ce dépassement de soi de vos étudiants.

Ladies and gentlemen, Members of the Administration and teaching staff,

I will also seize this platform given to me to allay some apprehensions I have come across concerning the secondary sub-sector.

The Nine Year Schooling reform will not result in the closing down of private grant- aided secondary schools. If one or two have to close down, it will certainly not be because of the reform but more because of reasons intrinsic to their own incapacity to be attractive to stakeholders.

The rest will remain as Regional schools, retaining their specificity—very much like Friendship College has been able to do in so successfully serving the northern region of the island.

On the other hand, it has never been a question of teachers losing their job. If anything, we want to strengthen the hands of teachers, even restore their dignity and improve their status.

In this context, we propose to set up a Teachers' Council soon that will have as objectives to, among others, promote Educators' professional development and enhance your professional standards and competence.

We also want to have more capacity building programmes for educators. In fact, trained, qualified and motivated teachers are at the heart of a highly performing education system. And it is universally recognised that the quality of teachers is the most important **within-school** factor for positive learning outcomes.

Let me equally remind you that we are aligning ourselves to the 2030 Target of Global Goal 4 on Education to the effect that we will ensure "all learners are taught by qualified, professionally trained, motivated and well-supported teachers"

Rest assured, ladies and gentlemen, that this Government is strongly committed to implementing the education reforms. I am determined to make these a reality: after all, the well-being of our children and youth by far surpasses our individual and narrow selves.

I certainly hope that, like me, you will subscribe to that famous quote from American Philosopher and Psychologist, William James, to the effect that

" The great use of life is to spend it for something that will outlast it"

On this wishful but positive note, let me reiterate my congratulations to the management and staff of Friendship College for their dedication and strong sense of commitment to the cause of Education.

Do work towards making of the next 55 years of the existence of the College an even more fruitful and prolific period.

To the students, I wish you all a highly rewarding and successful future.

Thank you for your attention.