

**Address by Hon (Mrs) Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun,
Minister of Education and Human Resources,
Tertiary Education and Scientific Research**

**Launching Ceremony of the Post Graduate Diploma course in IT
Under the
Graduate Training for Employment Scheme (GTES)
23 February 2016**

It gives me great pleasure to be amongst you today on the occasion of the launching of the Post Graduate Diploma Course in IT offered under the Graduate Training for Employment Scheme.

First of all, I would like to thank all those who walked the extra mile to make this event happen, especially the companies participating in the project.

I believe we have here another excellent example of how Government and a dynamic private sector can work together to meaningfully address the graduate unemployment issue. Both recognise the centrality of developing our manpower as being at the heart of their actions and both recognise that human resource development is a society-wide issue that requires a concerted effort.

I would therefore wish to show my appreciation for those companies partnering with us to invest in the development of our human resources.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

All of us present here today have a deep-felt and genuine conviction that every individual should have the opportunity to find gainful employment. This is in fact more than an expectation: it is a right.

And that can happen only when we maximise the potential of that labour force, when we put in place systems and programmes to facilitate and promote the development of their capabilities. The Minister of Finance in the Budget Speech 2015/2016 said it loud and clear: high investment and high employment are at the very top of this government's agenda, and to be achieved through mega projects as the creation of Smart Cities and the development of both entrepreneurship and the SME sector.

It goes without saying that, for these mega projects to be successful, a range of skills is called for that would cater for the novel needs of the new economy.

The Post Graduate Diploma course that we are launching today under the Graduate Training for Employment Scheme is part of that larger picture.

And we shouldn't be surprised that the Scheme should be kick-started with IT.

The ICT sector is indeed one of the largest wealth creators and has been one of the fastest growing sectors over the last decade in Mauritius. It is one sector that is constantly evolving, with new technologies being continuously introduced.

Mauritius has to be on the cusp of such a wave of change.

Ladies and gentlemen,

If Mauritius is to become an ICT hub in the region, if we are determined to use technology as a key lever to enhance our country's role in the international economic value-chain, we must have the professionals with the right skills and knowledge.

The latest 2015 Global Readiness Index report by the World Economic Forum has ranked Mauritius 45th out of 143 countries, yet we cannot rest on our laurels. We must continue to build and maintain a sustainable and world class ICT workforce to meet the current and future needs of the economy. We must ensure that Mauritius continues to achieve strong productivity, economic and social benefits from ICT.

This explains the very *raison –d'etre* of this Scheme.

It makes for a win-win situation.

On the one hand, it guarantees that our graduates are retooled and equipped with relevant and up-to-date technical skills and knowledge which will open the doors for employment. On the other hand, it ensures that employers get the competencies they are looking for and that enterprises in various economic sectors can leverage on graduates' talents for their growth and profitability.

Government has earmarked up to Rs 80,000 per graduate per year to fund these tailor-made courses in various fields.

Ladies and gentlemen,

What we are really talking about here is the bridging of the Skills Gap. I know a lot has been said about it, both here in Mauritius and overseas.

But let us not have a blurry vision about this concept.

The Skills Gap is a moving target and it cannot be fully pinned down. Do what we will, strategize as much as want, the world of work is far too dynamic for anyone to gauge the nature of the skills that will be required ,in the future.

And when you add to that the fact that the jobs of the future have as yet not been created, the equation becomes even more muddled .

In such a context, the world of Education and Training inevitably operates in a reactive mode and can go only thus far in finding effective solutions.

As important, the education system aims also at inculcating the principles of skilling---de-skilling and re-skilling.

I will not labour this point too much because I am in the midst of a gathering of employers and HRD gurus who are probably bandying and tossing about concepts like “employability” and “21st century skills” on a daily basis.

Suffice it to say that my Ministry, invested with the responsibility for education and training and HR, is fully cognisant of its new role in this changed context of job-related skills uncertainty.

Thus, we are establishing closer linkages between Education and the HR sector in the formal education sector.

Short-term Placement programmes and Industry/ Enterprise attachments are also the corollary of such courses as is the foretaste of hands-on and work-related skills provided to students.

Dear graduates,

I certainly cannot end my speech without addressing a few words especially to you. Congratulations to all 35 of you who have made it so far. You have stuck it out despite the group of 172 graduates. It is the first step of your career. It is a wonderful opportunity to gain experience, learn from the very best and, accordingly, lay the foundations for your future career.

I will entreat you not to drop out in the middle of your training. Government is investing a huge sum of for each of you to acquire the skills that will make you more employable and I can only urge you to complete this training with dedication and perseverance.

I would also like to convey my heartiest thanks to Ceridian, Accenture Mauritius, Agileum and Orange Business Services for their contribution to nurturing our young talents and maximising their potential.

Today's launching ceremony is an excellent example of co-investment and building on the public-private sector partnership for a better Mauritius for the future generation.

Keep up the good work.

I would finally like to commend the HRDC for its coordination role with Ministry, Development Partners and other stakeholders.

With this, Ladies and Gentlemen, I officially declare this Postgraduate training Programme in IT under the Graduate Training for Employment Scheme open.