

**Address of Hon (Mrs) L.D.Dookun-Luchoomun  
Minister of Education and Human Resources,  
Tertiary Education and Scientific Research  
10 March 2017**

**Parents and students**

Thank you for having invited me on this auspicious occasion to read to you the message of the Prime Minister. You will all agree that this message has been a very forceful, a very powerful one.

In fact, it has accomplished two major things.

One, it has placed Education at the heart of change and transformation and, two, it has reflected the deep commitment of the Government to the concerns of the youth of the Republic.

And both of them are certainly inter-related.

Indeed, the concerns of the youth of this country should be uppermost in our minds. We have all been brought up on the notion that every generation has to leave the world a better place than what it has inherited from its predecessors. This is no cliché. We adults are always likely to be accountable for our acts in the eyes of our youngsters. As parents, many of us here present have probably gone through a phase when we have had to justify many of our decisions.

**Dear Students,**

I believe we all realize that, ultimately, it will be your responsibility to take over and prepare yourselves to solve the major issues confronting our world. These issues can be as much economic as social or, again, developmental.

But you have to be equipped for that.

And that begs the question: How best does the education system address your needs?

Allow me to repeat what I have said elsewhere before: the fast pace of change in the world today — and this is valid for Mauritius as well — demands that you, our youth, be equipped with the means to both adapt to the oncoming changes as well as be the major change agents.

Today, maintaining the status quo is no option. Just consider: it has become a normal feature to stress that the jobs of the future have not yet been created. Similarly, it has been maintained that many of the existing jobs are very likely to disappear, what with the transformations that technology is bringing in.

If you want to know more about this—and I believe you should — just read about what is today referred to as “*The 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution*” or, again, what Japan refers to as “*Society 5.0*”.

In this changing configuration, the role of Education gains increasing importance.

Hence the philosophy behind the reforms I have initiated in the education system.

The global discourse is centered today on the development of what are referred to as the 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills or ‘Deep Learning’ Skills.

Problem-solving aptitudes, creativity, critical thinking and communication skills as well as working collaboratively are among the essential tools to prepare students for the future.

This is our endeavor for you and the children coming after you. My Ministry is introducing reforms that are systemic—and so we are starting right from the early stages of education.

But let me also use this opportunity to correct one misunderstanding, one misinterpretation.

As of next year, your school, just as other Regional Secondary schools, will get your first cohort of post-PSAC students in Grade 7. No student will be held back in Grade 6.

However, this does not mean that students can henceforth adopt a laid-back attitude, that they will not have to put in a lot of effort or that they should not compete for the best grades. .

In the system we have been having so far, students have been brought up to be always competing against one another so as to be seen as most meritorious.

I am not against competition.

It is a fact of life.

It is inherent to any school system in the modern times. A school where there is no competition would be an anachronism in our modern and hectic times.

But this competition should not pervert the natural development of our children. There are always ways by which this competitive instinct could be more positively channeled in creative and innovative directions.

Again, one essential part of the reform rests on the concept of EQUITY. This carries the notion of fair-mindedness, of justice. It also suggests that personal or socio-economic circumstances should not act as a hurdle to students in achieving their learning and development potential.

Let me inform you that, as from next year, we are bringing in the Student Support Programme for the Lower Secondary students.

Today, the system is rife with an outrageous emphasis on private tuition. Of course, private tutoring has its benefits especially for those who have learning weaknesses, but it doesn't justify the negative offshoots it has generated.

The Student Support Programme will provide free additional support to students after school hours so as to consolidate their learning. A flexible mode of delivery will be used: the e-platform will allow students to learn, at their own pace, and from home. Additional learning materials will be available to students. Moreover, along with a dedicated website, we also intend to recruit full-time Educators to prepare materials that will be quality-assured prior to on-line delivery.

**Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear students,**

There are a number of other developments that have already started taking place in Education. We will have ample time to speak more on them.

For today, let it suffice for me to request all of us to reflect on what it means to be an independent Republic with its values, the rights that we the Citizens have but also our responsibilities that come with these rights.

Mauritius is a great place to live in. We have a lot going for us — socially, economically, culturally. We need to cherish and safeguard our positive points—and especially, we need to preserve our biggest asset — that's our “togetherness”, our “social connectedness”.

***Happy Independence and Republic Day to all of you!***