Address of Hon (Mrs.) Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun
Minister of Education & Human Resources
Tertiary Education and Scientific Research
13 July 2017

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very good morning to you all. It is indeed a pleasure and an honour for me to be associated with the official launching of the New E-services, along with my colleague Ministers present here today.

I believe that the words of Shri Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India, quite aptly would set the tone for today's launch.

> He stated, and I quote,
> "*The beauty of e-governance is that a few keystrokes can bring smiles on a million faces.*

Unquote.

When this Government took office in December 2014, it committed itself to bringing meaningful changes to the lives of all citizens of this country. As part of the modernization strategies, Information Technology was to be one of the key drivers in that process.

Well, here we are, delivering on our promises through the rolling out of the new e-services today.

This goes directly in line with two important developments.

In the first place, it is commensurate with the shift of the economy from goods to services.

In the second place, it enhances the much sought-after G2C interaction, the interaction between Government and the citizens.

Distinguished Guests,

We must realise that E-government has become an ineluctable part of the technological advancement of a knowledge-based society.

E-Government is thus much more than cutting costs, red tape and delays in service delivery.

In fact the aim of digital Government is to create a digital space that would make people's lives easier and build trust in public administration.

Evidence from several countries clearly points to the numerous benefits derived from the role played by e-Service. The facilitation of employment is one; gender empowerment is another. One could go on – but perhaps the most significant is the direct impact on Democracy. The whole process thus thrives on transparency and accountability. The proof of the pudding therefore lies in active citizen participation as an indicator for both public satisfaction and government performance. I understand that a total of 69 e-Services have been developed so far and are already available on the Government Portal to members of the public.

This list includes some 4 services for the Ministry of Education. I am pleased to inform you that another set of 11 services provided by the Mauritius Examination Syndicate will be added to the list of new services to be made available online, following today's launching.

Thus, applications with respect to the Primary School Achievement Certificate and GCE "O" and "A" levels will henceforth be available online. Candidates will also have access to information and guidelines on the website of the MES and will have their examination fees calculated automatically.

Other services will include the provision of online statements of results and rankings while also allowing Assistant Supervisors and Invigilators to make online applications for the enlistment of their services.

I would like to highlight here that candidates who do not have access to either a computer or the internet will not be left on the sidelines. In fact, a number of PC's connected to the internet will be made available by the MES in their examination centres for those students.

Our ultimate objective is to do away with the long queues to an internet point. I would like here to make a special appeal to our students and their parents and encourage them to make maximum use of the online facilities to be provided.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since I took office as the Minister of Education I have been consolidating the foundations for a purposeful e-education at all levels—from Primary through to the Tertiary levels.

At this stage, all our secondary schools are equipped with a computer lab that students and teachers can easily access and, today, I am pleased to state that all our secondary schools will be connected to the internet by the end of this year.

Tenders for connecting all the primary schools as well have already been launched and that will be effective by next year.

One of our prized objectives is to endow our students with the right skills set so as to enable them to remain competitive in an increasingly interconnected world and to equip them for the jobs of tomorrow.

Obviously, we are not expecting all our learners to become computer whiz kids.

Just as not all science students will become medical practitioners or engineers, not all our students will become software developers. However, training in IT will enable them to engage in all courses of life and in any career they would wish to embark upon later.

The key for us as policy makers, parents and teachers, therefore, is to see to it that our students move beyond being passive consumers of technology. Familiarity of our children and youth with technology in their daily lives is already a given. We should now focus on how we can assist them to create technology.

Some of you may recall the words of former US President, Mr. Barack Obama, who famously observed to students in America, and I quote,

> *"Don't just download the latest app, help design it. Don't just play on your phone, program it"*

This demands that we catch our children young if we want them to later embark on self-learning and self-discovery adventures and be transformed into smart citizens of tomorrow.

The provision of tablets to Grades 1 and 2 pupils to be used as part of the learning process goes in that direction. We are currently actively engaged in the development of the digital content for uploading on these tablets.

Obviously, we will require the extra resources both from a teaching perspective and for technical support as well. That has now been taken care of: provision has been made in the budget for this financial year for the recruitment of 67 IT supply teachers at primary level. These will be attached to the different zones.

Ladies and gentlemen,

At the end of the day, it has been said that there is only one way in which we can successfully leverage e-government so as to improve both efficiency and effectiveness.

We should see to it that there is no gap between e-service availability and usage.

There will only be an increase in citizens' take-up of e-services when the following two conditions are met.

One, when the efficiency of service delivery is guaranteed, and

Two, when people have the dexterity and savvy to use the e-services.

Rest assured that, for its part, my Ministry will continue to invest huge efforts in ensuring our learners are technically literate to be innovative and competitive and thereby achieve the objective of prosperity for all.

I thank you for your attention.