



*Speech by*

*Her Excellency Mrs Ameenah Gurib-Fakim,*

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*President of the Republic*

*on the occasion*

*of the*

*“Reception in honour of the Laureates of the HSC Examinations 2017”*

**Thursday 01 March 2018 @ 11:00**

***State House, Le Réduit***

***Honourable Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development,***

***Honourable (Mrs) Leela Devi Dookun – Luchoomun, Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research,***

***Dear Laureates,***

***Distinguished Guests,***

***Ladies and Gentlemen,***

***Good Morning!***

I wish to extend a warm welcome to all of you present today at the State House for the Reception in honour of the Laureates 2017 for their brilliant educational performance and achievement.

Let me start by recognizing the parents here today. I am also a parent and I can understand that our pride in our children has no bounds.

You have made great sacrifices to enable your child to get such a tremendous education.

So, this is your day too, because you've been also on this journey, listening, worrying and above all placing your hopes in your child.

And let's not forget, of course, rectors and teachers those dedicated individuals who shared their vast wisdom, knowledge, and experience with you.

Dear Laureates,

Passing your Cambridge Higher School Certificate with excellence is indeed a pride for you, your family and school.

Achievement at this level is significant as this qualification now opens many windows. It is, indeed, a starting point, a passport and not an end in itself.

This is a wonderful day for all of you, as you mark the end of one great effort and the beginning of another.

You've taken on difficult assignments, passed tough exams. You've worked hard and I hope you also had some fun.

It is the beginning of a great life ahead where you will be learning new things, experiencing new adventures, coming across people from different cultural and social background, and most importantly becoming a successful independent individual.

While we celebrate your academic accomplishments, I want to challenge you to continue your quest for knowledge and to discover your own unique ways to contribute to our society.

You will surely receive tons of advice from parents, teachers and from everyone.

But what is most important is that you must dig deep down and ask yourselves,

Who do you want to be? Not what, but who. Not what your parents and teachers want you to be, but YOU.

As Steve Jobs rightly said, “Our time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma — which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice.”

Of course, we are all expecting you to climb the ladder of success, but it is probably high time to redefine success as the world, you are headed into, desperately needs it.

Today, success is largely based on two main ingredients, money and power.

So, it is about time to add, beyond money and power, a third ingredient, one founded on well-being and wisdom.

There will be plenty of incitation along your path, encouraging you to make money and climb up the ladder.

However, you will almost never be invited to stay connected to the essence of who you are, to take care of yourself along the way, to reach out to others and to connect to that place from which everything is possible.

So, find your place to stand, a place of success but also of wisdom peace and strength.

You are graduating at a time in history when our world is dealing with enormous challenges.

The world is going through one of its greatest transformation and at warp speed.

Contrary to your parents, you were born and educated in a technological world that only existed in science fiction stories when many of us in this room were in school.

The whole world is becoming a village due to the industrial revolution and fast developing communication technology.

The globalization of industry and commerce is bringing a vast change in various aspects of life.

Your generation should thus think more on the global level and try to create a more peaceful world.

This means a more compassionate world.

Nelson Mandela said, "There is no passion to be found playing small, in settling for a life that's less than the one you're capable of living."

Of course, you will fail at some point in your life.

Accept it.

You will lose.

You will embarrass yourself.

Because taking a risk is also about knowing what you know and what you don't know. It's about being open to people and ideas.

And my message to you today is not only to take risks, but to be open to life, to accept new views and to be open to new opinions.

While it may be frightening, it will also be rewarding because the chances you take, the people you meet, the people you love, the faith that you have that's what's going to define you.

Trust yourself, no matter how and what anyone else thinks.

Do not hesitate to break the rules as there are today, so many rules in life about everything.

We are of course asking you to break the rules not the law!

Whatever path that you take in your lives, you must always find time to give something back, something back to your community, give something back to your country.

Coming to our country, Ladies and Gentlemen, we are celebrating in a few days its 50th anniversary of independence, we all know that our economic progress is bound to meet with new and emerging challenges.

Mauritius needs more than ever its human resources, their competencies and commitment to steer the country's sustained development to achieve the welfare of our citizens and to provide a better quality of life for all.

Over and above the recurrent debate that we hear each year on whether "laureates" should come back or not in their country, Mauritius needs to seriously address the issue of brain drain.

We are in a free world and you will ultimately make your own choice.



But as a country we should be concerned with the result of the latest report of the Harvard Business Review, where Mauritius ranks 5th in the world and first in Africa in terms of brain drain, losing some 41 % of its graduates.

Losing doctors, engineers, professors, and other skilled professionals is detrimental to a country.

There is hence a growing concern worldwide because of the impact of brain drain on the economic development of developing countries.

Countries invest massively in the education and training of its young people and the intellectuals of any country are some of the most expensive resources because of their training in terms of material cost and time, and most importantly, because of lost opportunity.

This translates into a loss of considerable resources when these people migrate, with the direct benefit accruing at the end, to countries welcoming them.

Young, well-educated, healthy individuals are most likely to migrate, especially in pursuit of higher education and economic improvement.

Continuing disparities and de-motivating working conditions, low salaries, between richer and poorer countries offer a greater 'pull' towards the more developed countries as well as the hope of prosperity for themselves and their families, to work in well-equipped environment, and the opportunity for professional development.

The role of governments and recruitment agencies in systematically encouraging the migration of students very often increases the pull.

You can imagine that brain drain is seriously hitting the African continent drain.

Former South African president, Thabo Mbeki recently labelled Africa's brain drain as "frightening."

He estimates that more African scientists and engineers live and work in the US and the UK than anywhere else in the world.

But Brain drain is fortunately not inevitable for countries like ours.

Rwanda, for example, holds onto their best and brightest, and at the same time attracts international talent.

Rwanda tops World Economic Forum's list of African countries able to retain their top talent, followed by some distance ahead of Morocco and Kenya.

Regarding international attraction, Rwanda again is number one.

Whether driven by declining opportunities within a country, or growing demand within others, workers go where there is opportunity.

Mapping the skills flows between economies offers an unprecedented opportunity for governments, businesses, and employees alike to understand skills hotspots in near real-time.

Decision-makers in developing countries are searching for policy options to slow down and even reverse the outflow of professionals.

Here also new technologies can be helpful as in this interconnected and globalized world, the physical location of a person may or may not have any relation to the ability to make an impact.

So, as you open today a new chapter of your life-book, believe in something larger than yourself, get involved in some of the big ideas of our time.

We are in a transitional period, a fascinating one and the world you will contribute to shape, should be the most interesting, exciting, fulfilling time in human history.

There are no longer these barriers of time and space and people are not confined to where they were born.

The only way that you can make the most of the world that lies before you, is to believe that it's interesting and fascinating and profoundly important as all of our diversities are.

You are the generation that will take the technology of today to new dimensions.

You are also the ones who will bring solutions to environmental concerns such as global warming, conservation of natural resources, and development of alternative energy sources, the issues that my generation is only now identifying.

Learn to live with confidence in the face of all these changes.

If you want change, you have to make it.

If we want progress, we have to drive it.

Technology helped transform a bipolar world into the deeply interconnected global community.

Yet the planet is still divided by fundamental inequalities.

Some regions live in peace, freedom, and comfort while others are condemned to conflict, poverty, and repression.

These massive disparities erode our common security and corrode our common humanity.

You can therefore become agents of change and contribute to lift up the most vulnerable and to serve those with the least, both at home and around the world.

As Michelle Obama rightly said, and I quote “You may not always have a comfortable life and you will not always be able to solve all of the world's problems at once but don't ever underestimate the importance you can have because history has shown us that courage can be contagious, and hope can take on a life of its own.” (Unquote)

I wish you a lot of success for the future but do not forget along the way to enjoy and have fun as you need also a good dose of passion in whatever you undertake.

I thank you for your kind attention