



WELCOME ADDRESS AND SPEECH

(IN CASE OF BAD WEATHER)

**His Excellency Mr Dharambeer Gokhool G.C.S.K.,
President of the Republic of Mauritius**

**EVENT: AWARD CEREMONY OF
 MAURITIUS SCOUT ASSOCIATION**

VENUE: STATE HOUSE

TIME: 13 45 HOURS

His Excellency Mr Robert Hungley G.O.S.K., Vice President of the Republic of Mauritius

Honourable Ashok Subron, Minister of Social Integration, Social Security & National Solidarity

Honourable Arianne Navarre - Marie, Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare

Honourable Karen Foo Kune - Bacha, Junior Minister of Sports

Mr Yusuf Imrit, Acting Chief Scout

Members of the Mauritius Scouts Association

Esteemed Award Recipients

Distinguished guests,

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good afternoon and welcome. We are gathered today to celebrate the Founder's Day, which carries profound significance for scouts across Mauritius and around the world.

I am very happy and honoured to be associated with this important event.

Today is an occasion to not only pay tribute to the leadership of Lord Robert Baden-Powell, the founder of the Scouting movement, but also to reflect on the purpose, legacy, and core values that scouting instils in people —discipline, teamwork, dedication, integrity, respect and resilience.

Since its inception, the Scout movement has been instrumental in building character, shaping personalities and empowering the youth.

The key purpose of scoutism is captured in the acronym SPICES which stands for social, physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual make up the fundamental basis of a person's character and personality.

By focusing on a range of outdoor practical activities and informal education, scoutism strengthens the very foundations of a holistic and inclusive vision of education.

History of Scouting

Both Lord Baden-Powell and his sister Agnes have been instrumental in propelling the Scout movement as an international youth movement

Today, the World Organization of the Scout Movement has 176 members and around 43 million participants across the world, with girls-only, boys-only and co-educational programmes.

Mauritius Scout Association

The Mauritius Scout Association is a testament to the legacy of Samuel Blunt de Burgh Edwards, who founded the first patrol of Scouts in Mauritius in 1912 at age 17 and later became its first adult leader.

A legal Adviser, Crown Prosecutor and Police Magistrate himself, he embodied values of hard work, discipline, perseverance and strength, as well as the desire to make society better.

While separate scout associations for different religions developed under the Mauritian Branch of The Scout Association UK, 1971 marked a new chapter for the realm of scouting in our country.

When Mauritius achieved its independence, the Mauritius branch of The Scout Association UK became The Mauritius Scout Association to serve the needs of a free Mauritian nation, united in diversity as well as in new aspirations for a better society.

This milestone was marked here at the State House, under the chairmanship of Governor General Sir Leonard Williams.

This year marks 54 years of this pivotal moment, and I am glad to be a part of it and witness our scouts united in a spirit of collaborative learning and a shared sense of belonging to the community, beyond race, religion and gender.

Present day reflections

Ladies and Gentlemen

As we reflect on this rich history, we must also look ahead with hope, optimism and determination to better further the missions of the Scout movement.

Since my assumption of Office as the President of the Republic, on many occasions I have expressed my commitment to be close to our people. I have already had several interactions with students from different schools, colleges and universities. I have also gone out to meet people with disabilities.

I am very attentive to their concerns and aspirations for the future.

Our nation has made so much progress that today, everyone possesses multiple certificates and degrees.

In fact, we are in an era where we have Artificial Intelligence, with platforms like Chat GPT and Deepseek able to perform most academic tasks.

But education must be accompanied with values that help us be responsible and engaged citizens, not only of the Republic of Mauritius but also of the world.

I have always advised our youths to go beyond academic literacy and foster critical thinking, human values and community service.

The fundamentals of what make us educated and human, cannot be built or replaced by AI. Intelligence extends beyond technology and textbooks. There is a need to develop emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence to be able to retain our authenticity as humans.

This means being able to discern right from wrong, frame proper narratives, connect with each other, respect differences and give back to our communities, which can only be achieved if we ensure real-time skills and character development of our youths.

We are a society dominated by social media and empowered by free education. Yet, our younger generations are grappling with vulnerabilities such as loneliness and lack of emotional regulation, often leading to substance abuse.

Initiatives that emphasize holistic education; encourage young people to serve their communities, build relationships, develop character, promote responsibility and resist peer pressure, are becoming more and more crucial.

I understand that these are priorities for the Mauritius Scouts Association through its efforts towards capacity-building of our youths.

With activities like workshops to promote practical skills, survival techniques and leadership; adventure walks, sports, mobile camps, musical bands, cleanliness drives, inter-religious celebrations and health awareness sessions, you play a key role in guiding our young generations.

Awards

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is also a moment to celebrate well-deserved achievements and renew our commitment towards preparing responsible citizens who contribute meaningfully to our local and global communities.

I congratulate all the awardees and hope that this recognition will be a source of encouragement and motivation for you to keep leading, mentoring and shaping the next generation in bigger and stronger ways.

I also take this opportunity to thank and congratulate all Scout leaders, mentors, and members for their continued dedication towards this important cause.

To our scouts; the choices you make and the opportunities you grab now, are what will shape the person you become and the future you build.

Continue to leverage every learning opportunity you get so you can stand for what is right, stand for your dreams and empower those around you.

Future plans

This moment must also serve as a reflection of what decisive action can be taken to add value to the cause for which the Mauritius Scouts Association stands.

I am happy to note that after my first meeting in January with the Association, an action plan that seeks the collaboration of various stakeholders to enhance the scouting movement in Mauritius, has been elaborated.

I welcome the proposals of the Mauritius Scout Association for consideration. As suggested during our meeting, I would like to see the movement engage in a national recruitment drive so as to make the movement representative of the diversity of our population and close any urban rural divide. The Mauritius Scout Association must aim to be an authentic, representative national youth movement of our Republic

I remain committed to ensuring that our youths benefit from holistic education and development.

Conclusion

Let us always be ready to serve, to learn, and to lead with integrity and compassion.

Always remain true to and honour the Scout Motto and the Scout Oath: Be prepared and help others at all times.

Once again, congratulations and good luck.

Thank you for your attention.