



SPEECH

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

EVENT: WORLD BOOK AND COPYRIGHT DAY 2025

**VENUE: LYCEE DES MASCAREIGNES,
ST PIERRE**

TIME: 09 45 HOURS

Dr. Guy Jean-Noël Geneviève, A.g Director - Ministry of Education
Human Resources

Mr. Grégory Bailleul, Director – Lycée des Mascareignes

Mr. Gheerishsing Gopaul, President - Mauritius Library Association

Distinguished Guests,

Esteemed Participants

Members of the Media,

ALL PROTOCOL OBSERVED.

Introduction

Good Morning.

Bonjour.

Je vous remercie de m'avoir invité pour l'ouverture de cette formation d'une journée organisée ce matin par la Mauritius Library Association, en collaboration avec le Lycée des Mascareignes.

Je tiens à féliciter l'Association et le Lycée pour cette initiative louable.

Je vous félicite aussi pour vos efforts continus visant à promouvoir l'amour et le pouvoir de la lecture auprès de notre population, en particulier auprès de nos jeunes.

Je remercie également tous les enseignants, bibliothécaires, employés de bibliothèque et agents de bibliothèque pour leur dévouement indéfectible à l'accès à l'information, à la promotion de l'alphabétisation et à la promotion de l'apprentissage tout au long de la vie en agissant comme des relais communautaires.

Je suis convaincu que vous continuerez à être la voix de tous les professionnels de l'éducation, de l'information et des sciences de la bibliothèque à l'île Maurice.

Je suis heureux de me joindre à vous pour cet événement important dans le cadre de la **Journée mondiale du livre et du droit d'auteur**, célébrée chaque année le 23 avril, et qui nous permet de réfléchir à la nature et à l'importance, en constante évolution, de la lecture, et à sa contribution à façonner notre avenir

One Event, Two themes

- **World Book and Copyright Day 2025**

The theme for World Book and Copyright Day 2025 is '**The role of literature in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.' The theme focuses on the vital role of literature in advancing the SDGs-how literature-knowledge-can help bring about social and societal change. Make societies better. Make the lives of people better

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 interconnected global goals adopted by the United Nations in 2015 to address pressing global challenges and achieve a more sustainable future by 2030. These goals are designed to be universal and apply to all countries, regardless of their level of development.

- **World Book Day 2025**

The World Book Day 2025's theme this year is 'Read Your Way' and being able to read for pleasure, calling not only for the global celebration of literature, reading and storytelling, but also reminding us of the importance of literary activities for our development.

It was first celebrated on 7 October 1926, to honour the author Miguel de Cervantes on his birthday, before being moved to his death date, 23 April, in 1930.

Both themes have a common denominator which is READING- the purpose and the power of READING.

Why Reading Matters?

- Pleasure
- Personal Growth
- Professional Advancement
- Progress of societies and people

The focus of my intervention today will be on the power of READING and the role and responsibilities of Libraries and Librarians.

Reading and books have been the bedrocks of civilization for generations, preserving culture, passing down knowledge, and contributing to meaningful change.

The benefits of reading have for long been well documented:

It enhances cognitive functions, boosts intelligence, fosters emotional intelligence, empathy, and communication skills, and enables personal and professional development.

In fact, a study by the University of Sussex found that reading for just six minutes can reduce stress levels by 68%, enhancing mental health as well as reducing aggressive behaviour.

Interestingly, it has been proven by the Institute for Learning & Brain Sciences at the University of Washington that babies begin to absorb and learn language while still in the womb, and after birth, they can recognize words they first heard in the womb.

Reading therefore is essential for healthy brain development, and the earlier we start, the better. It is the oxygen of our brain.

It is actually recommended that pregnant women read aloud daily to their unborn baby to develop its sense of hearing, have a secure parent-child attachment, and foster healthy growth and development of the child's personality and brain.

Research has also shown that the single most important indication predictor of academic success is the amount of time children spend reading books, more important even than economic or social status.

And one of the few predictors of high achievement in math and science is the amount of time children devote to pleasure reading.

Decline in Reading Habits

Yet, there is evidence of a global decline in reading habits, particularly among young adults and across different age groups.

More than a third of UK adults have given up reading for pleasure. 23% of Americans haven't read a book the previous year.

In Mauritius, our literacy rate of 92.7 % does not reflect the depth of reading engagement.

A study at the University of Mauritius has highlighted that students' attitudes toward reading were influenced by factors such as lack of interest, convenience of digital reading, and the compulsory nature of academic reading.

We do not read for pleasure or intellectual enrichment, but under pressure of academic achievements.

Reading Is a Must

Before becoming the President, in 2008, I was the Minister of Education and I had emphasized on the need for every school and every class to have a library.

As the President, I interact with the youth every week when they visit the State House and I always remind them that true education is not about degrees or certificates, but about the way we think, act and treat others, our character, and our values.

My message to you is: Whether through printed books, articles or e-books and digital material, what matters most is that we read every day to feed our mind and soul so that we are informed, developed and connected.

Reading in the Digital Age: Balancing Screens and Books

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are all aware of the promises and complexities that the digital present and future hold.

There are both opportunities and challenges. I do not want to go into the debates: Digital vs. Print Reading: Which one's better? There is a lot of research which is ongoing and the debate is still very much open. Both have unique advantages.

While embracing the virtual as real, it is imperative that we do not compel ourselves and our younger generations to choose between their screens and books-between print and digital reading.

If digital resources did not exist, our students and professionals would not have been able to progress during the years marked by the Covid-19 pandemic.

So, technology or the internet is not the enemy of learning or books.

We must therefore come together to reflect on how we can curate a culture of meaningful, sustainable, enjoyable and safe reading in both online and offline spaces.

This day must serve as an important occasion to reflect on all these complexities.

This should also be an opportunity for librarians, educators, writers and book lovers to come together to design inclusive strategies that reimagine libraries as hybrid spaces for acquiring and sharing of both

digital and printed knowledge; support local authors and storytellers in both print and online platforms; and cultivate a culture of mindful reading—one that builds character, empathy, and unity and contributes towards social and societal changes.

Conclusion

In closing, allow me to thank the Mauritius Library Association and the Lycée des Mascareignes once again for this initiative.

I hope that today's sessions will allow you to move forward together towards acquiring and sharing digital knowledge, guided by human wisdom.

And that we will continue to believe in the transformative power of books for a just, free, empowered and equitable society.

I wish you all a fruitful learning experience.

Happy World Book and Copyright Day 2025.

Thank you for your attention.