



SPEECH

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

**EVENT: DUKE OF EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL AWARDS
MAURITIUS - GOLD CATEGORY**

VENUE: STATE HOUSE, REDUIT

DATE: 29 MAY 2025

TIME: 13:00 HOURS

Protocol

Honourable Deven Nagalingum, Minister of Youth and Sports

Honourable Karen Foo Kune-Bacha, Junior Minister of Youth and Sports

Mrs Mudaliar, Secretary to the President

Mr Ferhan Khan Juhoor, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Youth and Sports

Members of the National Award Committee

Distinguished Guests

Parents and dear Awardees,

All Protocol Observed.

Introduction

Good Afternoon and Welcome.

It is an immense pleasure for me, as Patron of The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award in Mauritius, to welcome you to State House.

Yesterday, we had the honour of celebrating the achievements of 131 outstanding young individuals who received their Gold Awards.

Today, as we continue with the Award ceremony, we celebrate the efforts, resilience and success of the second batch of our equally deserving Awardees.

It is truly heartening to see such strong participation from our young people, a clear reflection of their eagerness to grow, challenge themselves, and contribute meaningfully to society.

Honourable Minister Nagalingum has already shared valuable insights into the journey and significance of this international programme.

I join him in congratulating all our Awardees for their achievements and all those who have played an instrumental role as their pillars of support throughout their journey.

I also congratulate the Ministry of Youth and Sports and all stakeholders for their efforts in making this programme a continued success over the years.

The Duke of Edinburgh programme is much more than a youth activity. It is a valuable complement to formal education—fostering essential life skills and core values like responsibility, empathy, courage, and perseverance.

I am very happy to note that it is also inclusive, empowering, and transformative as it brings together young people from every background, including those with Special Education Needs.

President as Patron of Award

To our young Awardees,

Your achievements today must mean more than personal milestones or medals and certificates.

It must be about the people you're becoming— individuals who are adaptable, socially conscious, strong, disciplined and willing to take initiative.

Allow me to share a personal note with you:

Before becoming President, I spent many years as an academic at the University of Mauritius, where I served as a lecturer and the Dean of faculty. I was also Minister of Education and Minister of Industry.

So I have always stayed connected with the heart, hope, struggles, dreams and voices of our youth.

As President of the Republic, I am now the new Patron of the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award in Mauritius.

I must say that I am fully conscious of the depth of transformation it offers—not only to participants, but also to those who witness its impact.

Today, I see in you, ambassadors of positive change: In a world where values can sometimes feel eroded, you are leading by example and are encouraging others to follow in order to make a difference in our communities.

Navigating complexities of Digital Age

However, as you are aware, the upcoming generation faces the pressure of navigating rapid technological shifts, economic changes, environmental challenges and social expectations all at once

In fact, a recent report from the World Economic Forum states that:

“The world’s 1.2 billion young people – 16% of the global population – stand at a crossroads. They face a future shaped by relentless technological upheavals, economic turbulence and an evolving social fabric that demands more from them than any generation before. In a world more connected than ever, their struggles are both uniquely personal and profoundly global.” (World Economic Forum, March,2025)

And these pressures are real, often leading to serious consequences:

Mental health challenges, cyber-crimes such as online bullying, harassment, revenge pornography, crypto fraud, lack of emotional regulation; loneliness, substance abuse.

Our collective challenge in this new world order thus remains to navigate with confidence, resilience, compassion and courage and to ensure that humanity survives and thrives.

We must embrace digital transformation, but always remember that while technical and digital skills will always matter, what will matter even more are the qualities that Chat GPT, Deepseek or Robots cannot replace: conscience, humanity, character, integrity, creativity and resilience.

In the age of AI and Artificial Super Intelligence, Emotional Intelligence and Spiritual Intelligence must never lose their value.

So it is imperative that we integrate the vision that this programme carries into our broader youth development strategy.

This is particularly important as the world you are growing into is complex.

While it offers incredible tools and opportunities, it also has new forms of stress and uncertainty.

Government Programme 2025-2029

You all remember that on January 24, 2025, I had the honour of presenting the Government Programme 2025-2029 that seeks to provide a bridge to a better, brighter future for our youths.

Government has already reiterated its commitment to launch a Youth Empowerment Programme so that our youngsters are not just job-ready, but life-ready.

Government will also promote cultural awareness, to encourage our youth to express their voices and explore their artistic paths.

You are already proving that such development is possible.

I urge you to carry forward the lessons you've learned. Let them shape your careers, your communities, and your country.

Conclusion

My Dear Young Friends,

These two days are marking the celebration of your perseverance and victory.

But this moment is not the end. It is what will lead you towards something greater.

Let it guide your choices, inspire your actions, and always remind you of what you're capable of.

You are now advocates and living testaments to the Duke of Edinburgh programme's spirit — one that stands for service, solidarity, and strength.

Together, let us build a Mauritius where our young voices are not only heard — but are empowered, equipped, and inspired.

Congratulations once again on your achievements.

Thank you for your attention.