



SPEECH

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

**EVENT : AWARD CEREMONY - PRIX DE POÉSIE
 ÉDOUARD MAUNICK (5TH EDITION)**

VENUE: STATE HOUSE, REDUIT

DATE: 10 SEPTEMBER 2025

TIME: 17:30 HOURS

Protocol

Mr. Cassam Uteem G.C.S.K., Former President of the Republic of Mauritius

Honourable Ministers and MPs,

Excellencies,

Mrs. Devina Ramma, Secretary to the President

Mr. Rama Poonoosamy, Director of Immedia,

Esteemed Members of the Jury,

Dear Participants,

Distinguished Guests,

Members of the Media

All Protocol Observed

Introduction

Bonsoir, Good evening.

C'est avec un immense plaisir que je vous souhaite la bienvenue à la State House en cette soirée consacrée à une activité culturelle et littéraire de grande importance: rendre hommage au génie créatif des écrivains et créateurs mauriciens, qu'ils soient d'ici ou de la diaspora.

Depuis sa création en 2016, le *Prix de Poésie Édouard Maunick* s'est imposé comme une initiative exemplaire et rassembleuse, offrant à la créativité mauricienne l'espace d'expression et la reconnaissance qu'elle mérite.

La tenue de la cérémonie de ce soir témoigne une fois de plus de mon engagement à soutenir des projets qui renforcent la collaboration, et l'autonomisation de nos citoyens.

Je citerai, à titre d'exemple, le *National Essay Competition* lancé en mars dernier pour marquer le 57^e anniversaire de notre indépendance,

ainsi que le *Learn-AI Innovation Challenge*, inauguré il y a à peine deux jours à l'intention des élèves de Grade 12 - deux projets qui visent à encourager la lecture, l'écriture, la recherche et l'innovation.

En tant que Président de la République, je réaffirme mon soutien indéfectible à toutes les initiatives durables qui favorisent l'innovation, l'épanouissement intellectuel et l'autonomisation de notre peuple.

With your permission, I shall now make my address in English.

Tribute to Edouard Maunick

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This poetry competition bears the illustrious name of the late Edouard Maunick - poet, diplomat, critic and one of Mauritius's most extraordinary literary voices, who embodied resilience, creativity, and intellectual brilliance.

From "*Ces oiseaux de sang*" to "*Ki Koté La Mer?*", his writings brought the world's attention to our island, giving voice to our beautiful, complex and unique Mauritian identity, while also speaking to our universal human experiences.

It is therefore fitting that his remarkable talent was recognised with prestigious awards, including the *Prix Guillaume Apollinaire* in 1977 and the *Grand Prix de la Francophonie* from the French Academy in 2003.

I commend Mr. Rama Poonoosamy for initiating this poetry competition and for sustaining it over the years, so that the legacy of Edouard Maunick can inspire new generations of Mauritian writers.

I also wish to honour the members of the jury, Shenaz Patel and Kavinien Karupudayyan, for their invaluable contribution.

I extend my heartfelt congratulations in particular to the distinguished Ananda Devi, one of our foremost contemporary literary voices.

Her remarkable body of work has earned her numerous accolades, including the 2024 Neustadt Prize, the 2023 Prix de la langue française, and this year's Prix Gide du Contemporain Capital.

Her recent achievement has brought Mauritius once again to the forefront of the international literary stage, demonstrating the richness of our island's creative talent.

Writers and Creators

Since 2016, this competition has been a wonderful way to celebrate the creativity of our writers and poets.

I commend the *Recueil de Poèmes Primés* — a laudable effort by Immedia that has preserved these works and ensured that they continue to inspire future generations.

This year's theme, "*Rhythmes*", drew 136 participants and 307 poems in French, English, and Mauritian Creole - a true reflection of the richness and diversity of our literary talent.

I congratulate all participants and wish them good luck in their literary journey ahead.

Way Forward: Reflections

Dear Friends,

This evening's gathering must also be an invitation for reflection.

Allow me to share a few thoughts on the broader role of literature and poetry in our society.

We are living at a time when artificial intelligence is advancing rapidly and reading habits are on the decline, both in Mauritius and globally.

As President of the Republic, my main mission is nation-building, which requires the participation of all.

How do we come together as a nation, if not through stories, words, shared experiences and the power of imagination that allows us to explore, reflect, and connect?

In this context, the role of our creators, writers and poets takes on even greater significance in fostering a culture of readership and helping people, especially the younger generations, rediscover a love for poetry, the arts, and books – both online and offline.

Our nation can also benefit from a *répertoire des écrivains*: a consolidated platform where the voices of our literary talents can be preserved.

By embracing French, English, and Kreol Morisien, the *Prix de Poésie Édouard Maunick* beautifully mirrors our linguistic and cultural plurality.

Yet, Mauritius is a rainbow nation. Looking ahead, one may ask—why stop at just three languages?

By embracing all the languages spoken by our citizens, this competition could become a truly multi-cultural, multi-lingual, inclusive *projet républicain*, celebrating the full richness and diversity of our island's cultural and linguistic heritage.

Conclusion

Avec ces quelques réflexions et avec beaucoup d'optimisme pour ce que l'avenir nous réserve, je souhaite réaffirmer mon soutien indéfectible à nos écrivains et poètes.

I congratulate all participants, the team of Immedia, and all jury members once again.

I also thank my team at the State House for their continued efforts in our shared mission of nation-building.

Anou mars ansam, la main dans la main, pou construire enn lil moris pli meilleur - As One People, As One Nation, in Peace, Justice and Liberty.

Anou encourage nou ban poètes, écrivains et artistes pou ki zot continier émerveille nou avek zot plume et zot pinceau.

Merci, félicitation et bonne continuation.

Thank you for your attention