



SPEECH

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

EVENT: OPENING OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS EVENT

**VENUE: PAUL OCTAVE WIEHE AUDITORIUM,
UNIVERSITY OF MAURITIUS**

DATE: 27 OCTOBER 2025

TIME: 10:00 HOURS

Protocol

Honourable Mrs. Anishta Babooram, Junior Minister of Health and Wellness

Mrs. Devina Ramma, Secretary to the President

Mrs. Chandanee Jhowry, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tertiary Education, Science and Research

Professor Issack Santally, Acting Vice-Chancellor of the University of Mauritius,

Mrs. Subhashini Luckshmi Devi Gopee, Officer-in-Charge of the Open University of Mauritius,

Representatives of all partner institutions and NGOs,

Esteemed Faculty members, students, and members of the community,

Distinguished Guests,

Members of the media

All Protocol Observed.

Introduction

Good morning.

Thank you for inviting me in your midst and for the opportunity to make an address.

It is a pleasure to be with you at the opening of the **Health and Wellness Event 2025**, jointly organised by the **Open University of Mauritius** and the **University of Mauritius**, in collaboration with the **Ministry of Health and Wellness**, the **Mauritius Institute of Education**, the **Higher**

Education Commission, and several NGOs, including the **Rotary Club of Moka** and **PILS**.

This event is a remarkable example of how collaboration between our higher education institutions, ministries, and civil society, can be a platform to bring about meaningful and lasting changes in the lives of our citizens.

I wish to commend, in particular, the **Community Engagement Cell (CEC)** of the Open University, under the leadership of its chairman Mrs. Suniti Nundoo Goorah, as well as Mr. Bhisham Ramkelawon- project coordinator of this event, for their dedication towards this initiative and taking it beyond the university campus to reach **communities in deprived areas**.

Health and Wellness: A National Priority

Ladies and gentlemen,

The greatest wealth of a nation is the health of its population.

But if we do a reality check, the statistics are worrying.

Non-communicable diseases such as **diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease** continue to affect a large proportion of Mauritians, while **mental health issues** such as depression and anxiety are rising, particularly among the youth.

In Mauritius, more than **one in five citizens** lives with a chronic illness, and mental health disorders affect individuals and families in every community.

These realities remind us that good health is not only a personal goal - it is a **National Responsibility**.

The time has come to shift from a culture of treatment to a **culture of prevention**, where every citizen takes proactive steps to care for his or her health and well-being.

Mental Health: The Hidden Crisis

In addressing wellness, we cannot overlook the growing **mental health crisis**.

Across the world, one in eight people live with a mental disorder.

In Mauritius, studies show that **22% of citizens** experience mental health difficulties, while **around one in three adolescents** report emotional or behavioural problems.

These figures should concern us all.

Mental health affects learning, productivity, family life, and community harmony.

The sessions planned on **stress management and mindfulness** are therefore particularly relevant.

They remind us that health is not only about treating the body, but also about nurturing the mind and heart.

We must continue to **destigmatize mental illness** and ensure that those who need help feel supported, not judged. Seeking help must be seen as a sign of **strength**, not weakness.

The Future of Work, Learning, and Wellness

Wellness also has an important link with the **future of education and work**.

As technology, artificial intelligence, and digital connectivity redefine our world, the pressures of modern life can take a toll on mental and physical health.

Healthy individuals learn better, perform better, and innovate more effectively.

For this reason, promoting wellness in universities and workplaces must become part of our national development agenda.

I applaud the inclusion of sessions on **yoga at the workplace** and **positive mindset building** - they reflect an understanding that productivity and well-being are inseparable.

Preventive Health and Wellness Education

The activities planned over these two days - medical check-ups, blood donation drives, workshops on stress management, yoga, and nutrition - represent concrete steps toward a preventive health culture.

Prevention is not just a medical concept; it is a philosophy of living.

It begins with awareness and is sustained by daily choices - how we eat, how we rest, how we move, and how we manage our emotions.

Wellness is holistic. It includes the body, the mind, and the spirit.

A healthy society is one where people understand that wellness is not achieved through medication alone, but through education, mindfulness, and community support.

According to the World Health Organization, up to 80% of premature deaths from cardiovascular diseases can be prevented through lifestyle changes and early detection.

I salute the efforts of all partners in spreading this message of empowerment and responsibility.

We must seriously think about recalibrating our public health strategies by balancing the culture of treatment with the culture of prevention.

Prevention is always better than cure.

The Role of Universities and Partnerships

Universities have a unique responsibility to lead by example - not only as Centres of Learning, but as Agents of Social Transformation.

This event, bringing together OUM, UoM, MIE, and the Ministry of Health, reflects an enlightened model of inter-institutional collaboration.

It demonstrates how higher education can engage directly with the community, applying research and knowledge to real-world challenges.

By promoting wellness education, preventive care, and positive mental health practices, our universities are helping to shape a healthier, more resilient nation.

This initiative also aligns perfectly with our national commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in particular:

- SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being,
- SDG 4: Quality Education, and
- SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals.

Through this collaborative model, we see education and health working hand in hand to create a more inclusive and sustainable Mauritius.

The Spirit of Community and Volunteerism

Let me also acknowledge our **NGO partners** and **volunteers**. Your presence here - whether to organise health screenings, collect blood, or educate the public shows the power of collective action.

Health is not the sole responsibility of government or professionals; it is a **shared civic duty**.

Every citizen can contribute to a healthier Mauritius by caring not only for themselves but also for others.

The **blood donation drive** today is a moving expression of this solidarity. Each donor saves lives and strengthens the chain of compassion that binds our nation together.

A National Call for Health Responsibility

If there is one message I wish to leave with you today, it is this:
Every Mauritian has a role to play in protecting his or her own health.

Government can build hospitals, doctors can prescribe treatment, and universities can provide knowledge, but **lasting change** begins with individual commitment.

It begins with walking instead of driving, choosing fruits over fast food, resting instead of overworking, and speaking openly about stress and emotion.

True wellness is built through **daily discipline** and **collective awareness**.

The State House Health Track Initiative

In that same spirit, I am pleased to announce that on **8 November 2025**, the **State House will officially open its Health Track to the public.**

This initiative is part of our effort to promote a culture of **active living and preventive health**.

The track will be open to students, families, and citizens of all ages who wish to walk, jog, or simply reconnect with nature in a safe and inspiring environment.

It is our way of contributing to a **national movement for wellness**, and I warmly invite everyone here to join us on that occasion.

Let the Health Track become a symbol of unity - where people from all walks of life come together in pursuit of one shared goal: **a Healthier Mauritius.**

Sustainability: Beyond the Event

As we celebrate this event, I encourage the organisers to think about **continuity and sustainability.**

Let this initiative not end when the event closes, but continue as a long-term programme of engagement, education, and community action.

Health promotion should be built into our institutions - not as a campaign, but as a culture.

Universities could consider developing a **permanent Health and Wellness network**, linking campuses, NGOs, ministries, and local communities in ongoing collaboration.

This would ensure that the seeds planted today grow into a lasting movement for public well-being.

Conclusion

Ladies and gentlemen,

Health is the foundation of happiness and the cornerstone of progress. A Nation that values Wellness is a Nation that invests in its future.

The **Health and Wellness Event 2025** is more than an awareness campaign - it is a **call to action**, a **celebration of life**, and a **renewal of hope**.

It reminds us that the power to create a healthier Mauritius lies within each of us.

Let us therefore move forward together - universities, government, NGOs, and citizens to build a nation where **every heart beats stronger, every mind feels lighter, and every community thrives in harmony** – As One People, As One Nation.

Together, let us make Health and Wellness a **National Culture and shared legacy**.

Together, let's make a difference.

Thank you.