



SPEECH

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

EVENT: Launch of the Book “**Mauritius: Diversity of our
Volcanic Geo-Heritage**”

VENUE: MIE Lecture Theatre, Réduit

DATE: Thursday, 11 December 2025

TIME: 15.00 hrs

Protocol

Honourable Ranjiv Wochit, OSK, Minister of Local Government
Honourable Mahendra Gondeea, OSK, Minister of Arts and Culture
Associate Professor and Author, Mr. Prem Saddul,
Mr. Yashvin Hassamal, CEO of Édition de l'Océan Indien,
Esteemed members of the Scientific and Academic Community,
Distinguished Guests.
All Protocol Observed

Introduction

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am really pleased to join you this afternoon for the launching of the book entitled **'Mauritius: Diversity of our Volcanic Geo-Heritage'**, a major contribution to our understanding of the natural foundations of our island, written by one of our most respected scholars, Associate Professor Prem Saddul.

This occasion brings together not only scientists and academics but also citizens deeply connected to our land, its history, and its cultural identity.

For indeed, the geology of Mauritius is not merely a branch of science, it is an essential thread in the tapestry of our national story.

Geology

Geology is often perceived as a quiet science and is in fact one of the primary architects of our identity.

They inspire our imagination, shape our culture, support our biodiversity, and underpin our society.

They tell us who we are, where we came from, and what responsibilities we bear toward the future, especially in a context where our planet is facing numerous challenges.

Mauritius: A Land Shaped by Geological Time

Ladies and Gentlemen

Mauritius is a land of exceptional beauty, as brought out by Mark Twain who compared Mauritius to Heaven on earth, a jewel shaped by the forces of nature over millions of years.

Primarily volcanic in origin, over time, erosion, the elements, and natural processes have sculpted our landscapes.

From Le Pouce to Pieter Both, from Corps de Garde to Trou aux Cerfs, those sweeping mountain chains, basaltic cliffs, valleys, escarpments, and craters which continue to inspire admiration in residents and visitors alike.

They are silent archives of geological time and carry immense scientific, educational, cultural, and historical significance.

They remind us that long before the first human footsteps touched this island, Mauritius had already lived a long, dynamic, and ever-evolving life.

National Memory

For scientists, they represent invaluable data, a window into volcanic processes, climatic cycles, and geomorphological evolution.

For educators, they serve as open-air classrooms. For the public, they are sources of pride, wonder, and identity.

But beyond their scientific or aesthetic value, these landscapes also serve as anchors of national memory, our geological heritage, our sense of belonging.

Overview of the Book: A journey through the Mauritius' Volcanic Geological Past

In 'Mauritius: Diversity of our Volcanic Geo-Heritage', Associate Professor Saddul once again takes us on a journey into the deep past, the dynamic present, and the uncertain but hopeful future of our island's geology.

With meticulous research and a deep passion for the subject, he offers a comprehensive review of the island's most significant volcanic and non-volcanic landscapes and landforms.

Through vivid descriptions and rigorous scientific explanations, he unravels the mysteries of their origin, their morphology, and their cultural significance.

He reminds us that the beauty we admire today is the result of millions of years of natural processes that require thoughtful care and oversight if they are to endure.

Associate Professor Saddul reminds us that these landscapes are not static.

They are fragile, vulnerable to development, erosion, quarrying, human encroachment, and the growing impacts of climate change. He invites us to view geology as a living discipline with implications for modern planning, disaster preparedness, coastal protection, and sustainable tourism.

Above all, he highlights the urgent need to preserve these irreplaceable features for future generations.

Geological Heritage Under Threat

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mauritius is progressing at a rapid pace, and with progress comes pressure on natural landscapes.

Urban expansion, new infrastructure, intensification of land use, and population growth all exert increasing stress on our natural systems.

While development is essential, it cannot come at the cost of losing irreplaceable natural formations.

Once a geological feature is destroyed, it cannot be recreated. Unlike buildings or infrastructure, mountains, caves, reefs, and cliffs do not return. Their loss is permanent.

Therefore, the preservation of geological heritage requires a thoughtful balance -one that respects development needs while safeguarding the natural endowments that define our island. This responsibility belongs to all of us.

Associate Professor Saddul's message is clear: **the time to protect our geological heritage is now.**

Geological Heritage and National Development

Geological heritage is not only an academic matter but a cornerstone of sustainable national development.

By deepening our understanding of the land beneath our feet, we also deepen our capacity to plan wisely, to adapt responsibly, and to build resilience in an era marked by environmental uncertainty.

The book provides the scientific foundation upon which these goals can be built.

It encourages us to reflect deeply on the idea that natural heritage is not an obstacle to development but a guiding principle for sustainable progress.

The Author's Legacy to Mauritius

This afternoon, we honour the work of Associate Professor Prem Saddul, whose illustrious career has been dedicated to understanding and preserving the natural heritage of Mauritius.

A distinguished researcher and educator, Professor Saddul has made significant contributions to the study of volcanic island evolution, coastal geomorphology, and the geological history of Mauritius and Rodrigues.

His seminal publication *Mauritius: A Geomorphological Analysis* (1995) remains an authoritative reference and has been acclaimed by the Royal Geographical Society of Great Britain, of which he is a respected member.

His decades of teaching, field research, and public engagement have nurtured generations of young Mauritians and ignited in them an appreciation for the natural world.

Associate Professor Saddul embodies the rare ability to translate scientific knowledge into public understanding.

His work bridges the gap between academia and the broader society, reminding us all that the land we inhabit is not a passive background but a living, evolving heritage deserving of study, admiration, and protection.

Allow me to pay a heartfelt tribute to Associate Professor Saddul. His life's work is not merely academic; it is a legacy of national significance.

He has shaped environmental thinking in Mauritius and influenced policies, research, and public awareness. His guidance has shaped the careers of many scholars and professionals who now contribute to various fields across the country.

Through his research, he has made us see our landscapes with new eyes and not as familiar scenery, but as precious heritage.

A Gift to the Present and Future Generations

‘Mauritius: Diversity of our Volcanic Geo-Heritage’ stands as a scholarly masterpiece and a national treasure.

This book will undoubtedly serve as an invaluable reference for geologists, environmentalists, planners, policymakers, educators, students, and for all who cherish the natural heritage of Mauritius.

It will enrich our understanding of the island we call home, strengthen our capacity for informed decision-making, and inspire present and future generations to cherish and preserve our landscapes.

I encourage every Mauritian, from students to professionals, from policymakers to nature lovers to engage with this work.

It is not only scientific work, but a powerful reflection on who we are as a people and how we relate to the environment that sustains us.

Conclusion and Official Launch

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In closing, I wish to congratulate Associate Professor Saddul for this outstanding scholarly achievement.

‘Mauritius: Diversity of our Volcanic Geo-Heritage’ is a gift to the nation - a gift of knowledge, of vision, and of deep affection for the land.

It ensures that the geological treasures of Mauritius will remain sources of pride, wonder, and inspiration for generations to come.

It is with great pleasure, and with a profound sense of respect for the author and the subject, that I officially launch the book **‘Mauritius: Diversity of our Volcanic Geo-Heritage’**

Thank you.