



SPEECH

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

**EVENT: AWARD CEREMONY - LAUREATES BATCH 2024 -
 MERIT AND SOCIAL CRITERIA**

VENUE: STATE HOUSE, LE REDUIT

DATE: 29 JANUARY 2026

TIME: 11:00 HOURS

Protocol

Dr. the Honourable Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius

His Excellency Mr. Robert Hungley, Vice President of the Republic, and Mrs. Hungley,

Dr. the Honourable Mahend Gungapersad, Minister of Education and Human Resource, and Mrs. Gungapersad,

Mr Devendre Gopaul, Senior Chief Executive of the Ministry of Education and Human Resource

Mrs Devina Ramma, Secretary to the President

Esteemed representatives of the Ministry of Education and Human Resource and of educational institutions,

Distinguished guests

Dear Laureates,

Members of the Media

All Protocol Observed

Introduction

Good morning and welcome to State House.

I am very happy to join you, together with the Honorable Prime Minister and the Honorable Minister of Education and Human Resource, to share the joy and pride of your achievement and to congratulate you all, as well as your parents, teachers and friends.

The additional scholarship scheme based on merit and social criteria was introduced in 2013 by the Labour Government, to recognize and reward Mauritian Candidates who were not laureates but came from families with limited incomes.

In 1976, free education policy and in 2005, free public transport policy were implemented in a spirit of equity and inclusion.

These initiatives are a living testament to this very spirit, and the fact that ability, when coupled with the right opportunity, can flourish and contribute meaningfully to the development of our Republic.

Reflections

1. Redefining Education

Throughout civilisations, just like in Mauritius, progressive and socialist Governments have always recognized the pivotal importance of education in transforming lives and societies.

It is essential that we do not limit the purpose of education to mere facts and knowledge.

How we apply the knowledge, what contribution we make toward the progress of societies, must always be present in our minds.

You will have an opportunity to recalibrate your thoughts about Education and its purpose.

Here, I am reminded of a quotation used by the Hon. Prime Minister on Education: “*Education is replacing an empty mind with an open mind*”.

In an era of life-long learning cultures, we must continue to learn, unlearn and relearn.

2. Holistic Development

You must take the opportunity of your university education to expand your knowledge, enrich your values, shape your personality and character for responsible citizenship at a time where societies are confronted with a wide range of societal problems like:

Cyberbullying, revenge porn, digital sexual violence against women-causing suicide of many young girls.

Today, Artificial Intelligence (AI) offers incredible tools for learning, creating and solving problems, but it has its downsides.

In fact, when President Emmanuel Macron visited the State House in November 2025, we spent much time reflecting on this very issue.

As you may be aware, the French Government has introduced legislation to deal with issues relating to misuse of social media.

It is precisely to help our youths navigate these challenges that we launched the National Essay Competition and the Learn-AI.School Innovation Challenge last year.

Two highly successful projects that we are relaunching this year to encourage critical thinking, digital resilience and responsible use of technology.

These projects are a modest contribution to help develop a holistic, integrated and comprehensive view of education.

It is good to remind ourselves that no algorithm, platform, or certificate can teach you human values like empathy, integrity, respect; ethics, moral judgment.

And whatever field you are choosing, remember that today's challenges demand knowledge across disciplines and the ability to connect ideas.

For example:

- Engineers must study ethics and social sciences to design smart infrastructure that includes persons with disabilities and senior citizens, without harming the environment;
- Doctors need media and communication skills to handle sensitive situations with care.

- Lawyers must study digital humanities, while journalists and social media influencers must understand the law to navigate modern legal challenges.

For “the problems of today cannot be solved with the same thinking we used when we created them”, as argued by Albert Einstein.

Way Forward

As you may know, I am now in the second year of my mandate as President of the Republic, and before this responsibility, I served as Minister of Education (2005-2008).

I have also taught for nearly fifty years at the University of Mauritius and worked closely with young adults at different stages of their intellectual and personal development.

So, I speak to you today not only from the perspective of this high Office that I hold, but also most importantly as an Educator and Mentor who has accompanied generations of students as they followed their dreams and found their purpose.

As Guardian of our Constitution, I am following closely and carefully the Education Reform Agenda of the Honourable Minister of Education and Human Resource, and the Government.

Historical injustices should be repaired, but we need foresight so as not to create other injustices for posterity.

We must make the difference between speed and haste.

Concluding Remarks

To conclude, dear Laureates,

My message to you is:

As you advance in your studies and careers, remember that the Republic needs you - your ideas, your talents, and your dedication.

Together, we must build a society that is just, innovative, and compassionate - As one People, As One Nation.

So, wherever life takes you, remember to help your fellow citizens and serve the nation that has invested in you.

As former US President John F. Kennedy famously said:-

“There comes a time in the life of every citizen when you must ask, not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country”.

The time for it is now.

I wish you continued success in all your endeavours, and may you always make us proud.

Thank you.