



## **SPEECH**

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

**EVENT: OPENING CEREMONY – MAURITIUS  
INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY AND CAREER EXPO**

**VENUE: SVICC, PAILLES**

**DATE: 12 FEBRUARY 2026**

**TIME: 18:15 HOUR**

**Dr Kaviraj Sukon, Minister of Tertiary Education, Science & Research**

**Mr Kriti Patel, President of Rotary Club of Grand Baie**

**Representatives of the Diplomatic corps**

**Rotarians**

**Distinguished Guests**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

**Introduction**

Bonsoir and good evening to you all.

I am very pleased to have been invited to this 29th edition of the Mauritius International University and Career Expo, organised by the Rotary Club of Grand Baie.

And I thank the organisers for their invitation.

Thank you also for giving me the opportunity to make an address on this important occasion.

I understand that the objective behind this event is to provide first-hand information to prospective students about educational opportunities locally and internationally and to enable them to engage in fruitful discussions with the education providers to make informed decisions about their educational pathways.

And also, to create awareness about prospective career opportunities through interactions with employers and industry captains.

I commend the organisers for this very laudable initiative and their sustained dedication to creating a platform that connects students with local **and** global academic opportunities, fosters informed decision-

making, and opens the doors for both personal and professional development and growth.

I extend a very warm welcome, in particular, to our esteemed representatives from local and international Tertiary educational institutions.

I am confident that this International University and Career Expo will provide valuable opportunities for students to encounter diversity, broaden their outlook, and develop the flexibility and adaptability increasingly required to navigate a world full of uncertainty and unpredictability.

## **Context and Education**

Ladies and Gentlemen

As you are aware, the world is going through fundamental transformation of all fronts-political, economic, social, technological, ecological and cultural.

We are witnessing an exponential growth of knowledge, while the shelf life of existing knowledge keeps on shrinking.

Technological innovations have become pervasive.

The very purpose of education and the way we educate ourselves is no longer the same as in the past.

The way we teach and learn is changing dramatically.

Covid-19 accelerated the pace of distance and on-line learning and transformed the brick and mortar educational institutions into virtual learning spaces. Chat GPT and the latest versions of AI **are** transforming the education ecosystem and the world of work

Acquiring knowledge and skills for lifelong employment is no longer the end purpose of education. Rather, the way forward now is lifelong

learning and flexibility and mobility as far as career progression and growth is concerned.

Against this backdrop, it has become imperative to rethink not only where education occurs, but what education must now become. And to recalibrate educational policies and strategies.

## **Perspective**

As you may be aware, this is the second year of my mandate as President of the Republic, and I continue to draw deeply from my experience as an academic and as former Minister of Education -

A perspective that informs my understanding of the transformative power of education and its central role in shaping both individuals and our nation.

**“Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself.”**

These timeless words of the American philosopher and educational reformer John Dewey invites us to reflect deeply on why we should undertake higher studies.

It is important to view our educational journey not as a transient phase confined to classrooms and examinations, but as a continuous human process through which we can shape identity, cultivate judgement, and participate meaningfully in society.

We must also keep in view the impact of the latest versions of AI and constantly evaluate its ramifications for the job market. Volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity and flexibility are some of the inescapable features of the emerging job markets which we will have to incorporate in our decision-making algorithm.

In my media intervention on the 2025 HSC results this week, I emphasised that university education must extend beyond formal degrees.

It should cultivate critical thinking, emotional and spiritual intelligence, creativity, ethics, values, and the capacity to contribute meaningfully to society.

Whether our young adults study locally or abroad, they will face a world marked by division and fragmentation, transnational loyalties, and rapidly evolving technologies.

Social media has heightened awareness of conflicts and increased empathy, yet cybercrime, online gender-based violence, and revenge porn are on the rise due to Artificial Intelligence - leading to mental health crises and suicide among the student community.

Education must therefore go beyond content delivery encompass a wider mission involving critical thinking, ethical judgement, character formation, judgement, moral awareness, informed agency and community engagement - qualities not found on transcripts but essential to thrive in a world that is increasingly interconnected yet fractured.

## **Spirit**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is in this spirit that I address you this evening.

I am happy to note that our youth are becoming aware of the new realities of our changing world, which is reflected in the wise words of one of our new laureates, Shaivi Boodhun, who made this thoughtful comment:

**“Il ne faut jamais laisser une machine penser à sa place. »**

This is precisely why, at the Presidency, we want to accompany the younger generation

In this respect we initiated two innovative projects:

The **National Essay Competition** and the **Learn-AI Innovation Challenge** - designed to encourage students across our Republic to participate in nation-building, engage with contemporary societal challenges, and explore the responsible use of technology for the common good.

These are two highly successful projects that I pioneered last year. These projects are intended to engage students in expanding their educational horizons and perspectives of life.

I call upon all educational institutions and their leaders to fully embrace their profound responsibility in preparing our students for the complex realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century; to cultivate not only knowledge, but interdisciplinary understanding and holistic, life-long learning.

### **Mauritius International University and Career Expo**

I understand that this International University and Career Expo is an annual fundraising event of the Rotary Club of Grand Baie, which, for nearly three decades, has built enduring bridges between aspiration and opportunity, knowledge and purpose, local ambition and global possibility.

I am particularly pleased to note that the proceeds from past editions have enabled the implementation of noteworthy social projects, including:

The construction of toilets in Sin Fat; house renovations for vulnerable families, the creation of a Therapy Park for children undergoing treatment at Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Hospital, and water filtration systems in northern colleges.

Initiatives reflecting the principle that engagement with society and practical contribution are among the essential expressions of education itself.

I am confident that the Rotary Club of Grand Baie will continue to foster meaningful engagement between education and communities.

## **Reflections**

Distinguished Guests,

Beyond its impressive scale, the true value of this upcoming Expo lies in the quality of the human interaction it seeks to foster:

Thoughtful dialogue, personalised counselling, scholarship opportunities, and honest reflection on career trajectories.

**I take this opportunity to call upon all educational institutions and their leaders to fully embrace their profound responsibility in preparing our students for the complex realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century; to cultivate not only knowledge, but interdisciplinary understanding and holistic, life-long learning.**

As Guardian of the Constitution of the Republic of Mauritius, I am also closely monitoring the educational reform of the Honourable Minister of Education and Human Resource as well as the initiatives being taken in the Higher Education sector.

These efforts reflect an ongoing commitment to strengthening education and opportunities for our young people.

And as Head of State, I am committed to ensuring that our education system remains accessible, equitable, inclusive, relevant and responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people and society.

### **Closing Remarks**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In closing, allow me to extend my gratitude and appreciation to all organisers once again for their continued dedication to facilitating meaningful engagement between our young people and the world of local and international higher education.

Let us inspire ourselves with the wise words of internationally respected world leader Nelson Mandela.

Let us leverage Education to restore the beauty of the blue planet for our generation and generations to come and immunize ourselves from such ugly and horrible episodes like the Epstein files.

Let us remind our younger generation of the inspirational reflection of Rabindranath Tagore:

**“Reach high, for stars lie hidden in you.”**

**Let this exhibition and career fair be a gateway to your dreams**

I welcome your presence among our students, and wish the University and Career Expo immense success. I invite you to take full advantage of our warm and vibrant Mauritian hospitality

Have a productive and pleasant stay in our midst.

Thank you.