



## **SPEECH**

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

**EVENT: THE DUKE OF EDINBURG GOLD AWARDS 2026**

**VENUE: STATE HOUSE, LE REDUIT**

**DATE: 22 FEBRUARY 2026**

**TIME: 10:30 HOURS**

## **Protocol**

Honorable Deven Nagalingum, Minister of Youth and Sports

Honorable Karen Foo Kune-Bacha, Junior Minister of Youth and Sports

His Excellency Mr. Goran Mandic, British Deputy High Commissioner

Mrs. Devina Ramma, Secretary to the President

Mrs. Dhanita Ramdharee, Acting Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Youth and Sports;

Distinguished Guests,

Dear Awardees,

Parents,

Members of the Media

All Protocol Observed.

## **Introduction**

**Good morning. And welcome to State House.**

As part of our cherished tradition, it is with great pleasure that I, as President of the Republic of Mauritius and Patron of The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award, that I am making this address on the occasion of this year's Gold Award Ceremony.

Like last year, this occasion holds a special place in our annual Presidential calendar of activities.

As Head of State and Patron of this project, it gives me the opportunity to recognise and celebrate achievements that truly demand discipline, resilience, and determination.

Signs of hope for our future.

I join Honourable Minister Deven Nagalingum in congratulating all our Awardees and in reiterating the importance of this programme.

### **The Duke of Edinburgh's Gold Awards 2026**

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award marks a double milestone this year: 70 years since its founding in 1956 by His Royal Highness the late Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, and 60 years since its launch in Mauritius.

I associate myself with the Honourable Minister in paying tribute to the late Prince Philip, on behalf of the Government of Mauritius and in my own name, for offering us such a laudable and far-sighted project.

And I extend my gratitude to the British High Commission for its continued efforts in strengthening the partnership between our countries and for its sustained commitment to empowering our people.

For this year's Gold Award, there are 129 of you being honoured today, from 16 Award Centres, including public and private schools, universities, and community groups.

A great example of diversity in action.

The world we are living in is interconnected, and learning to progress together with people from different backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives is one of the most valuable skills that is needed to live a fulfilling life.

What you have achieved is therefore highly meaningful.

Each of you has completed a demanding journey - through volunteering, learning new skills, participating in physical and adventurous training, and undertaking a residential project away from home.

I congratulate the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the National Award Committee, Award Leaders, Assessors, and all collaborators for their continued dedication and hard work in nurturing the true potential of our young people.

**This is borne out by the statistics for the past years, and I am pleased to note that this project shows an upward trend as far as its adoption is concerned.**

I also commend and congratulate your parents and families for laying a strong foundation for your learning and development through their steadfast support.

True education is not confined to our classrooms; our homes are also a testing ground for the education we acquire.

What you learn and experience outside classrooms must be reinforced by discipline, values, and guidance at home.

### **Reflections**

But beyond classrooms and our homes, it is in our societies that we must undergo the real test of the quality and relevance of our education, our personality and character.

Today, as in the past, there is an ongoing debate about the very purpose of education and how to improve the overall quality of our education.

Especially in world of multiple and unending challenges - economic, social, technological, ecological and cultural.

### **Purpose of education**

I continue to draw deeply from my lifelong experience - not only as a former Minister of Education and Human Resource, but also as a University academic.

Education cannot be confined to the four walls of classroom, cannot be limited to textbooks, examination scripts, assessments, certificates, diplomas and degrees.

Education must act as a **transformative force**, not merely as preparation for life, but as life itself - a life-long and life-wide, continuous process of discovery and rediscovery, through which identity is shaped, judgment refined, and meaningful citizenship cultivated.

Education must nurture critical thinking, ethical judgment, creativity, emotional intelligence, civic responsibility, and informed agency.

**If we are to equip our youths with a truly holistic education, we must foster an interdisciplinary approach that carefully balances and blends curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular in a comprehensive manner - ensuring long-term coherence in academic pathways and the social relevance of academic programmes.**

### **Complementary**

This is why, as President of the Republic, I initiated the National Essay Competition and the Learn-AI.School Innovation Challenge last year, designed to help learners cultivate critical thinking about national issues, reflect on their identity as Mauritians, and explore the responsible use of technology in a globalised world.

Both projects proved highly successful, and we are relaunching them this year to continue supporting the intellectual and ethical development of our youths.

These initiatives will offer safe, meaningful, and practical ways to reflect on how learners can contribute to their country, engage with technology, develop holistically, and become responsible citizens.

## **Message**

Dear Young Friends,

The human qualities of empathy, compassion, integrity, discipline, resilience, and moral and ethical judgment that you have gained through your journey, cannot be reduced to any digital shortcut, certificate, or medal.

They could have only been acquired through engagement, exploration and experience that the Duke of Edinburgh International Awards Programme provides.

Remember that in today's age, life-long and life-wide learning are sine-qua-non conditions for surviving and thriving.

## **Conclusion**

On this thoughtful and positive note, allow me to congratulate you all once again on your remarkable achievements.

Together, let us build a better, safer and wiser Republic - As One People, As One Nation.

I wish you all the best in all your future endeavours, and may you continue to make your parents, mentors and your country proud.

Thank you for your attention.