



SPEECH

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

EVENT: Mauritius Olympic Committee-Excellence Award 2025

VENUE: Labourdonnais Waterfront Hotel

DATE: Saturday, 31 January 2026

TIME: 17H00hrs

Protocol

Honourable Deven Nagalingum, Minister of Youth & Sports,
Mr. Richard Papie, President of the Mauritius Olympic Committee,
Distinguished guests,
Dear athletes, coaches, and members of the sporting fraternity,
Ladies and gentlemen.
Members of the media
All Protocol Observed.

Introduction

Good evening.

Thank you for inviting me and giving me the opportunity to make an address on this very special occasion.

It is indeed a great pleasure to be with you this evening at the Mauritius Olympic Committee Excellence Awards 2025.

A prestigious occasion dedicated to celebrating excellence in Mauritian sport and to honouring those whose discipline, sacrifice, perseverance, commitment and passion for sports continue to inspire our nation.

There is one more reason why this is a special occasion for me. This is my second year of presidency. During the first year I attended a few sporting events, but to- day it is the first major national event that I am attending, in presence of the Hon Minister of Youth and Sports.

Also I am attending this function after I had a very in- depth discussion about the situation of Sports in Mauritius with the new President of the MOC and his team at State House on 23rd December 2024.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Congratulations to all our athletes, the MOC, the Federations, all staff and supporters. You made us proud.

Despite numerous challenges we acknowledge, **Mauritian sport is vibrant, resilient, and very much alive.**

Over recent months, our athletes have continued to distinguish themselves across a wide range of disciplines. In **cycling, badminton, athletics, boxing, judo, weightlifting, swimming**, and several other sports, Mauritians have competed with honour at regional and international levels, returning with **podium finishes, personal bests, and performances that command respect.**

Our athletes continue to compete with courage and determination, often in **demanding and resource-constrained environments**. Their performances signal a new phase, one marked by **higher expectations, increased global exposure, and the growing need for professional, long-term, and athlete-centred support structures.**

Their achievements have often been realised **with limited resources**, yet they reflect **professionalism, resilience, and an unwavering pursuit of excellence.**

They are not isolated successes, but clear indicators of the **depth of talent and potential** that exists within our sporting ecosystem.

Equally encouraging is the progress of our **young and junior athletes**, many of whom are already making their mark in regional competitions.

They represent a new generation of Mauritian sportspersons: **ambitious, disciplined, and globally aware.**

These examples remind us of a fundamental truth: **talent is not our constraint.**

But true challenge lies in ensuring that excellence becomes **sustainable, systematic, accessible and inclusive across disciplines.**

A sporting landscape in transition

Mauritian sports stand **at a pivotal moment in its evolution.**

To-day must also be an opportunity to pause, reflect, and take stock of where Mauritian sport stands today, and how, together, we must shape its future with clarity, ambition, and responsibility.

Sports lovers and the public in general expect major improvements in the field of sports.

3 Questions

Could we have done better, and if yes why did this not happen?

Why are sports not part of our DNA, for example we are an Ocean State surrounded by beautiful seas – why is not swimming a national past time? Why is football which is our favourite flagship national sport lagging behind? Just a few examples

What time- bound priorities must be implemented with clear performance indicators to transform our sports sector?

In today's world, excellence in sport requires far more than talent alone. **It requires sound vision, strategic planning, sports science, integrity, and collaboration.** This reality calls for a renewed approach to how sport is **organised, financed, governed, and valued** in our country.

The sector will not progress without a transparent, accountable code of good governance.

Elite sport and sport for the masses

A strong and balanced sporting nation must successfully reconcile **elite performance with sport for all**.

Elite athletes proudly represent Mauritius on the international stage. They deserve **structured pathways, professional support, and career security , both during and after their competitive years**.

At the same time, **community sport, school sport, and recreational activity** form the bedrock of public health, social cohesion, and national well-being.

Elite sport inspires. Sport for the masses sustains a healthy nation. One cannot flourish without the other.

In today's complex and rapidly changing social environment, sports has assumed **a deeper and more strategic role**.

Sports act as a powerful antidote for social evils like violence and drugs.

Our youth face challenges ranging from **substance abuse and mental health pressures to social fragmentation and the dilemmas posed by technology**. Sports offer structure, discipline, purpose, belonging, and resilience.

It builds character, conscience, nurtures community and civic duty and responsibility. Sports nurtures nation building.

It is **not merely competition**.

It is **prevention**.

It is **therapy**.

It is **holistic human development**.

Investing in sport is therefore an investment in **public health, social stability, youth empowerment, and national cohesion**.

Federations and collaboration for the future

This reality places a **profound responsibility** on sports federations, associations and committees.

You are not only administrators. **You are custodians of values, guardians of integrity, and architects of future pathways.** With autonomy comes accountability.

Good governance, ethical leadership, athlete welfare, transparency, and collaboration must define the way forward. Athletes must feel valued not only for their results, but for their **well-being, dignity, education, and future beyond competition**.

As we prepare for major milestones such as the **Commonwealth Games 2026**, the **Youth Olympic Games 2026**, and future Olympic cycles, **stronger and more coherent collaboration** between Government, the Mauritius Olympic Committee, federations, schools, the private sector, and communities will be essential.

Olympic Values & National Pride

This evening also reminds us that sport is one of the most powerful expressions of **national identity and unity**. When our flag is raised and our anthem played, it is not only an athlete who stands tall but **the entire nation stands with them**.

The Olympic values of **excellence, respect, and friendship** are not abstract ideals. They are lived daily by our athletes, coaches, officials, and volunteers. They must also guide our decisions, policies, and leadership choices.

Let us therefore ensure that Mauritian sports continue to be a space where **merit is rewarded, integrity is protected, and opportunity is fairly distributed.**

Closing

This evening, let us celebrate excellence, **but let us also embrace responsibility.**

Let us honour our sporting heritage **without being confined by nostalgia.**

Let us confront present challenges with **honesty, courage and unity of purpose.**

And let us build a future where sport in Mauritius is **inclusive, ethical, competitive, and truly transformative.**

Let us remind ourselves of transformative role of Sports in bringing to life this time honoured saying:

Men's sana in corpore sano **A healthy mind in a healthy body**

Un esprit sain dans un corps sain

To our athletes: **you carry the hopes and pride of our nation.**

To our youth: **let sports be one of the noblest path to purpose, resilience, and fulfilment**

To our federations: **the future of Mauritian sports rest firmly on your shoulders.**

To MOC: **the nation expects vision, values, strategies and outcomes to revitalise sports**

To our Hon Minister of Youth and Sports : **Lead and transform.**

As one People, as one Nation, let us move forward together as proud Mauritian sportsmen and women.

Congratulations once again

Thank you for your attention.