



SPEECH

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

**EVENT: PUBLIC SPEAKING COMPETITION 2026 BY
ENGLISH SPEAKING UNION**

**VENUE: CHARLES TELFAIR EDUCATION (CURTIN
MAURITIUS), TELFAIR**

DATE: 02 APRIL 2026

TIME: 10:00 HOURS

Protocol

Her Excellency Ms. Kate Chamley, Australian High Commissioner

Dr. Jeremy Charoux, Executive Director, Charles Telfair Education

Distinguished Representatives of the Embassy of the United States of America; the British High Commission, the British Council, Curtin Mauritius

The President - Dr. Rajendra Korlapu-Bungaree, and members of the English Speaking Union

Representatives of Educational Institutions,

Distinguished Guests,

Dear Participants.

Introduction

Good morning. Thank you for your kind invitation and the opportunity to address you today.

At the outset, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the English-Speaking Union, the Embassy of the United States of America, the British High Commission, the British Council, and Charles Telfair Education (Curtin Mauritius), for organizing the Public Speaking Competition - 2026 edition.

Since its inception in 1994, the competition has established itself as a well-structured, prestigious, and enduring platform within our educational landscape.

Its main aims are: fostering communication, critical thinking, and expression among our youth through this initiative.

Today's National Finals mark yet another important milestone in that progression.

I have listened with great attention to the thoughtful remarks shared by previous speakers, and I fully associate myself with their observations regarding the overall purpose and continued relevance of this competition.

Competition 2026

The themes selected this year for the preliminaries, as well as today's final round, invite in-depth reflection, critical engagement, and thoughtful articulation.

Our finalists are therefore called upon not only to present ideas, but to analyse, interpret and challenge them, and to express them with clarity, confidence and conviction.

I am particularly pleased to note the participation of both public and private secondary schools, including one from Rodrigues, in today's finals.

This diversity reflects the inclusive nature of this competition and highlights the collective commitment to nurturing talent across all regions of the Republic.

Reflections

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our recent Higher School Certificate results indicate sustained progression, with a pass rate close to 79 percent and participation across a widening range of institutions.

While such indicators remain important, they do not fully capture competencies such as sound reasoning oral impactful expression, and audience engagement - skills that are increasingly essential in the 21st Century and must be nurtured deliberately through initiatives such as today's competition.

In an increasingly globalised Mauritius, the use of English as the dominant global lingua franca, enabling access to over 50% of digital content, continues to evolve, underscoring the need to maintain both clarity and high standards in expression.

Digital platforms are contributing to the use of abbreviated communication and a sense of anonymity that may not translate into personal confidence or accountability in real-life interactions.

It is therefore imperative to distinguish between online expression and the cultivation of personality and character in the physical world - qualities that are required to engage, to lead, and to thrive beyond screens.

In this regard, platforms such as the English-Speaking Union must continue to play a meaningful role in encouraging students to articulate ideas, build confidence, and develop presence.

In today's globalised world, the ability to speak and understand English is crucial both for professional success and personal growth.

More importantly, public speaking is not merely about eloquence; it is about courage, discipline, and the ability to listen, reflect, and respond thoughtfully.

These are the very attributes that define responsible citizens and future leaders.

This is why, at the State House, we are also innovating - most notably through the introduction of a component of oral presentation in this year's National Essay Competition and the Learn-AI School Innovation Challenge - our annual flagship initiatives aimed at strengthening oral expression, critical thinking, and adaptability among our youth.

I encourage your participation in these two important initiatives as they provide valuable platforms for the development of expression, critical thinking, and confidence in addressing and engaging audience

attention. (Details of the two projects can be accessed through State House website)

In a rapidly changing world shaped by artificial intelligence, global competition, and complex societal challenges, the ability to communicate clearly and persuasively will remain one of the most powerful social skills at your disposal.

Together, we must continue to support and invest in opportunities to nurture skills so essential for professional and personal growth and development.

Concluding Remarks

To our Young Friends,

I look forward to your perspectives and the clarity of expression you will bring today.

I wish you all the best for this competition and beyond this stage as you continue your respective journeys.

Remember that participation, and the learning derived from it, are valuable achievements in themselves.

Have the confidence to express your ideas, the humility to learn from others, and the determination to keep improving.

Quote by Brian Tracy:

“Your ability to communicate with others will account for fully 85% of your success in your business and in your life.”

I wish you continued growth and success in all your future endeavours.

Thank you for your attention.