

**Speech of Hon. Deepak Balgobin  
Minister of Information Technology,  
Communication and Innovation**

**IT Capstone Industry Showcase and  
Networking Event at Polytechnics  
Mauritius**

**Réduit Campus at 15h30  
Thursday, 28<sup>th</sup> October 2021**

**Professor Theesan Bahorun, Chairman, Polytechnics Mauritius**

**Mr Yamal Matabadul, CEO, Polytechnics Mauritius**

**Mrs Fazeelah Banu, Deputy Director, Amity Mauritius,**

**Dr Hemant Chittoo, Acting Director General, UTM**

**CEOs and Representatives of the Private Sector,**

**Dear Students,**

**Members of the Press,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Good afternoon to you all.**

I am delighted to join you today to witness this important milestone for students who have completed their Diploma in IT (Internet of Things) and Diploma in IT (Big Data Analytics). I understand that these two programmes are run jointly by Polytechnics Mauritius and Amity Mauritius.

I can empathise and understand very well the endless hours of sacrifice, anguish and sweat that you must have all endured and shed to get to where you are today.

I know that every one of you here has completed the last two years under conditions few students have ever faced previously as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. So, it is with my most heartfelt congratulations to all of you for not only overcoming these challenges, but also emerging victorious!

You are privileged to undergo a **Capstone Assignment**, instead of a dissertation or Viva or both. I need to admit, that I was quite impressed to see the different projects on which you have worked on as a culmination of your two-year course.

When I look at you, students, it gives me hope and confidence in the future generations of our beautiful country.

The great **William Shakespeare** once said,

(I quote)

**“Some people are born great, others have greatness thrust upon them and others still achieve greatness along the way”**

(Unquote).

Today I see you as future leaders and experts in the ICT sector.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We are in a generation, where technology has surrounded us from all sides. Our everyday runs on the use of technology, be it in the form of an alarm clock or the table lamp. Technology has been an important part of our daily lives. And it has never been so timely for the digital transition of our society, which has so much accelerated with the pandemic.

This Government realises that for our country to be able to face the world's volatile economy, we need to keep innovating and build a stronger capacity.

We firmly believe that Mauritius will continue to make formidable progress as a leading digital country for decades to come and will establish itself as a reference for other countries. With this in mind, this Government is continuously investing in new and bold initiatives to take our ICT sector to new heights.

Indeed, the ICT sector is one which has shown resilience despite the difficult situation with the Covid-19 pandemic. The sector has grown by 5.9 percent in 2020 and we will continue to ensure sustainability and growth of our economy.

### **Cybersecurity and Cybercrime Bill**

I am also pleased to have introduced in parliament, two days ago, the Cybersecurity and Cybercrime Bill which, when voted, will replace the **Computer Misuse and Cybercrime Act of 2003**. Today, there is more than ever, an urge us to consolidate appropriate safeguards to mitigate cyberthreats and attacks in our digital ecosystem, and this can only be addressed by a strong and comprehensive piece of legislation.

Under the abled leadership of our Prime Minister and his unwavering commitment towards the betterment of the lives of the people of our Republic, this Government is setting the stage for an even brighter future, embracing digital transformation initiatives and an accelerated adoption of new technologies at a much faster pace.

As a result, Government has developed and implemented digital solutions for its different services to enhance the quality of life of our citizens.

But it is not the Government alone that decides the innovation agenda. We work in close collaboration with relevant companies and the research community. We have a duty to lead the way. And this demands a constant focus on innovation in everything we do.

## **MRIC – Innovation**

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Innovation is not merely a list of projects. It is a mind-set and a must and we strongly believe in the potential of Research and Innovation to spearhead progress and development in Mauritius. This is why the Mauritius Research Council (MRC), under the aegis of my Ministry, was strengthened into the **Mauritius Research AND Innovation Council** in 2019. The MRIC Act was further amended in July 2021 to extend its mandate to conduct research on identified national priority thrust areas in order to strengthen the Mauritian research and innovation ecosystem.

Together with the relevant institutional changes to drive innovation, Government has earmarked special funds under the **National Innovation Program** to fund innovative projects.

The funds ranging from 125 million rupees to 150 million rupees have been earmarked in the annual Budget since 2016 and have been used to

a great extent to fund the measures outlined in the **National Innovation Framework** (NIF) (2018-2030).

With innovation as the **over-arching** philosophy and view of improving the competitiveness of Mauritius and the research and industry **nexus**, the NIF provided for funding schemes to cater for the funding of innovative business ideas, collaborative projects, and programmes while consolidating academia-private sector linkages.

The initiatives embedded in the NIF allowed the notable rank change for Mauritius from 82nd to 52nd in the **Global Innovation Index** report. My Ministry and the MRIC have conducted a number of initiatives to sustain and improve the performance of Mauritius in the GII. This has been particularly challenging with the disruption caused by the COVID 19 pandemic but the ranking of Mauritius in the GII report 2021 was still 52nd out of 132 countries and maintaining its first position in sub-Saharan Africa. This can be partly attributed to our resilient and flexible **National Innovation Ecosystem**.

Our vision is to stay abreast of developments in Science Technology and Innovation. It is in this kind of environment that projects at the frontier of Science and Innovation like **Mauritian Satellite** project (**MIR-SAT1**) are given the opportunity to emerge and develop.

Thus placing Mauritius as a **Space Fairing Country**. With a view to ensuring sustainability of the MIR-SAT1 and to exploring further the

opportunity to exploit Space as a potential economic sector, the MRIC is proposing to initiate a Space Unit which will drive a Space Program.

There is a Chinese proverb which says that “***a journey of a thousand miles starts with one step***”. We acknowledge that there is a long, long way to go but in my opinion this first step brings lots of hope in the decades to come towards the development of a new socio-economic pillar driven by Space.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

With an enhanced focus on indigenous innovation driven by Mauritians for the betterment of life and livelihood of the Republic of Mauritius, the MRIC has launched the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the National Innovation Challenge. One of the goals of the Challenge is to inculcate and nurture an innovation culture amongst the Mauritian population whilst finding practical innovative solution to common life problems. The second edition of NIC has been initiated in May 2021 and the Council received a total of 115 innovative ideas. The selection process is currently ongoing.

In the face of global economic adversities, there has been a pressing need to revive the innovation spirit amongst the Mauritian population.

In this respect, the Council will soon be launching the **National Innovation Campaign** aiming at making the public aware of the opportunities made available by the MRIC and other partner organisations to facilitate their path on the innovation journey.

This national campaign will culminate in the organisation of “**Les Assises de la Recherche et de L’Innovation 2022**” which proposes to be a platform for a national dialogue while concurrently providing insights on emerging and frontier innovations. The aim is to set the foundations for the development of a National Masterplan /Roadmap for technology, research and Innovation. **Les Assises de la Recherche et de L’Innovation 2022** is tentatively scheduled for the first quarter of 2022.

Perhaps more than ever, in the face of the rapidly changing world economy, the more so, in a New Normal imposed by the pandemic, it is crucial that we find such new creative and innovative ways to give a new push to the **Socio-Economic Development** of the country.

## **Conclusion**

With these words, dear Students, I once again applaud all your efforts.

I wish you all an inspiring, informative and successful networking.

I wish that you will find happiness and fulfillment as you embark on different pathways after your graduation.

**I thank you for your attention.**