

**Welcome speech of Hon. Deepak Balgobin, Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation on the occasion of the Webinar on 5G organised by the Institute of Engineers and Technology, Mauritius.**

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**Members of the Institution of Engineering and Technology,**

**Representatives of Huawei Technologies,**

**Industry partners, Technologists, ICT experts, Technicians and Engineers,**

**Dear Friends,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Good evening!**

I am pleased to meet you online today as our country is on its second confinement due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Thanks to high quality internet, we can connect with each other in a safe and secured way.

Driving connectivity in the country has always been a priority in Mauritius and for the Government. Starting with 1G in the early 90's to 4G deployment in the past decade.

Our telecommunication operators have been in the forefront of technological evolutions bringing increased bandwidth, coverage, and quality of service in the provision of mobile and Internet technologies.

Today, we have increasing consumer demand for connectivity, especially in these Covid times. We study, work and spend leisure time on e-Learning platforms, application softwares, social media and gaming platforms relying on the strengths of the underlying connectivity backbone.

- Mauritius is covered by Fibre-To-The-Home whilst we also have full mobile coverage running on 3G and 4G networks.
- Surprisingly, as it may seem, mobile penetration stands at 143.4%, made up mostly of smartphone users.
- Broadband Internet connectivity comes to 91.98%.

This a strong foundation for supporting “work from home” activities.

Following the onset of this second lockdown, enterprises switched naturally to “work from home.”

The reflex has set in with the experience of the first lockdown where businesses overnight transited to “work from home” and set up e-Commerce platforms for seamless continuity of their selling operations.

Nowadays, they rely more and more on the Internet infrastructure to source their raw materials, goods and other services. Our youths expand their understanding of topics through e-learning sites here in Mauritius and across the globe.

International connectivity is becoming more vibrant with the soon to be operational – METISS cable – which joins the already set up SAFE and LION/LION2 cables.

Seeing the growth in international bandwidth, Mauritius is readying itself for welcoming a fourth cable in the horizon 2022-2023.

5G is a key technology of **4IR** - the Fourth Industrial Revolution. It will definitely bring efficiency to our industries with new services and it will change the way we live, work and entertain. Innovative technology will also be an innovation platform and an opportunity for a series of new industry sectors like rail, health or energy.

The country's mobile networks are going for a major boost with the expected operationalisation of 5G technology. Local telecommunication operators are working on the deployment of 5G on the island.

We need to keep embracing new technologies, and guarantee an open communications and computing infrastructure to allow such specialized services and innovation to flourish.

At the occasion of IET monthly talk, I wish that today, you make the most of this exposure on 5G as a new technology to transform every industry, thus bringing more value to the digital transformation of the economy.

Communications is not complete without computing and 5G will bring the benefits of the cloud all the way to the edge of the network.

With 5G, the cloud will not be something you just connect to, but will become the intelligent system of the Mauritius Digital Society and Economy in every device and everyone's pocket.

Progress demands that we do not stand still. This technology is spreading rapidly across the world. We are not going to be the first in 5G, but in Africa but we might stand to benefit the most.

The communications infrastructure of Mauritius will not be just about communications. It will be about intelligence, and intelligence comes from our people.

I am glad to see partners and stakeholders, investing in people through the innovative programmes even during lockdown, drive innovations and contribute in the ICT talent ecosystem in Mauritius.

I wish you all a fruitful webinar.

Thank you!