

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

Launching of the UoM Hackathon 2022

Raised Plaza, Academic Complex,

University of Mauritius.

25 May 2022 at 09:00hrs

- **Professor Sanjeev Sobhee, Pro-Vice Chancellor, University of Mauritius,**
- **Associate Professor Dinesh Hurreeram, Dean of the Faculty of Engineering,**
- **Associate Professor Kavi Khedo, Dean of the Faculty of Information, Communication and Digital Technologies,**
- **Academic and Non-Academic staff of the University of Mauritius,**
- **Dear Students and Hacka-tho-nians,**
- **Members of the Press,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

A very good morning to you all.

It is a great pleasure for me to join you this morning for this event which is the launching of the second edition of the UoM Hackathon 2022. This Hackathon contributes to the implementation of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 13 based on "Climate Change" and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 14 focusing on "Life Below Water". Participants will conceptualise practical and affordable digital solutions for these SDGs using IoT, Web, Mobile, Cloud, and AI technologies using IoT, Web, Mobile, Cloud, and AI technologies.

In this regard, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to the University of Mauritius for your leadership in guiding our young innovators in this competitive training which will benefit our country as a whole.

All countries around the world are experiencing the drastic effects of Climate Change. Greenhouse gas emissions are more than 50 percent higher than in 1990. Global warming is causing long-lasting changes to our climate system, which threaten irreversible consequences if we do not act promptly.

Mauritius has not been spared by the phenomenon of Climate Change. We are expecting an increase in the frequency of intense rainfall episodes and a sea level rise of 18 – 59 centimeters by 2100 and an increase in intensity of tropical cyclones. Throughout the world, oceans are heavily affected by pollution, depleted fisheries, loss of coastal habitats and livelihoods.

This Government, through the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change has brought forward the Climate Change Act which is in force since April last year. This shows that our commitment to combat climate change are ambitious. It is reflected in the adaptation strategies and measures in which the Government has committed since the ratification of the Paris Agreement, and will continue to be engaged in.

And the theme chosen this year is timely, as we have debated and voted the “The Beach Authority (Amendment) Bill” presented in the National Assembly by my colleague Honourable Kavy Ramano. The amendments of the bill will bring forward a holistic approach in the preservation of our beaches, lagoons,

our marine biodiversity and hence, help mitigate the adverse effects of climate change.

The need for sustainable management and protection of our marine and coastal ecosystems is crucial. Likewise, the need to reduce our emissions, and effective management of natural resources is vital. It is clear that developing policies and strategies alone will not be sufficient to overcome these problems. I believe that ICT in particular digital technologies can contribute massively to mitigate such conundrums.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are currently living a period of rapid change driven by Innovation and Technology. The unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, required immediate measures, built on solidarity, sustainability and resilience. And this crisis has shown us that in addition to adequate health services, our country highly relied on crucial broadband connectivity, ICT-infrastructure and digital skills.

Our ability to absorb and use related information will depend on how fast and how often we learn. I am confident that these kinds of innovative Hackathons, if organised often, will give us opportunities to discover and adapt new technologies to cope with the change and overcome the current and future challenges of our industries and beyond.

Dear Students,

Hackathons are always an exciting platform. Each of you will have the opportunity to bring your expertise and ideas together and it is wonderful to

witness the creative and competitive energies of all you who are participating in this hackathon.

You are coming together to explore ways to better use technology to solve problems and this is a great chance to apply your learning, in a cross-disciplinary fashion, to address real problem statements which we are facing.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is clear today that Digital Transformation is one of the only ways forward. Technology is widely being adopted to facilitate the development of novel ways of doing the things we usually do. Countries which had invested in the digitalisation of their society have had an added efficiency in the delivery of services to citizens.

On this note, I look forward to seeing the innovative and adaptable technological solutions you will develop in the next three days to address the challenges defined under the 2 SDGs.

I am sure that this years' participants will set a high standard for the competitions to come in the next years.

I hope that this hackathon gives you a better sense of the challenges and opportunities in the technology landscape, and helps to equip you with relevant skills to succeed in your respective fields in the future.

With these words, I wish you all the best for the next three days of your hackathon journey.

I have now the honour to officially launch the UoM Hackathon 2022.

Thank you for your attention.