

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

**“Award Ceremony” - Girls in ICT 2022
Programme**

**La Scala Conference Room, Caudan Arts Centre
Thursday, 21st July 2022 at 10am**

- **Mrs Kobita Jugnauth, Chief Guest**
- **Honourable Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun, Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology**
- **Honourable Kalpana Koonjoo-Shah, Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare,**
- **Mr Soburrun, Chairman of the National Computer Board**
- **Mr Vyankoj Mulloo, Officer in Charge, National Computer Board**
- **Officials of different ministries and departments,**
- **Representatives of various Educational Institutions,**
- **Dear Students,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**
- **All protocols observed**

Good morning to you all.

It is with great pleasure that I am here with you today for the award ceremony of Girls in ICT Bootcamp.

The international Girls in ICT Day as declared by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is celebrated annually on the fourth Thursday of April. This year it was observed on the 28th April 2022 and aims to encourage and empower girls and young women to consider studies and careers in the growing field of ICTs.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is of utmost importance to continuously inspire women and girls to step up and become creators, inventors, leaders in this fast-evolving field, so that we build a gender-equitable digital future that meets everybody's needs.

We are deeply concerned to note that during recent years, we have witnessed that the enrolment of girls in the Computer Science stream as from Grade 10 is lower than their male counterparts.

As we aspire towards greater gender equality and parity, digital technologies can accelerate our progress. They open new doors for women and girls to empower themselves personally, professionally and economically, as well as making the society more inclusive.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Coming back to today's event, I am pleased to say that the National Computer Board, operating under my Ministry, has marked the Girls in ICT Day celebrations during school holidays in April from 18th to 29th by organising a boot camp for secondary school students in each of the four educational zones island wide.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank Honourable Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun, our Vice Prime-Minister and Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology for her full support in making this training a success.

I am thrilled to say that we have received positive feedback from this first boot camp and propose that we organise it for our boys as well, and, on a regular basis.

During this training session, upper secondary girl students were introduced to block coding, programmable devices, robotics and 3D printing through hands-on exercises. The objective was to reinforce an understanding among young girls that they can be same or even do better than boys in the field of science and technology.

I am confident that those students who have participated in the bootcamp will be enthusiastic about technology which, I am sure, will ignite a spark to pursue STEM studies (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) and pursue a prosperous career in the very promising ICT sector.

Recent studies have concluded that acceptance rates of women exceeded those of men in every programming language. Studies have revealed two facts. First, women are better coders. Secondly, the tech community, which is 73% male, is biased against women”

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The ICT sector has been a very resilient economic sector as demonstrated by its robust growth rates during these last years. It has been growing at a rate hovering around 5 and 6.5% and has been constantly offering attractive job opportunities to our youth. Today, more than 30 thousand persons are employed in the ICT sector in Mauritius.

Huge efforts have been made by this Government, led by our Prime Minister, Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, and we will continue to support this sector and consolidate the local ICT ecosystem towards a smarter Mauritius!

In line with the digitalisation of Government Services to better satisfy the needs of all citizens and businesses, we are currently completing numerous projects. And one of these projects is the implementation of high-speed connectivity in colleges.

Currently, more than 500 sites have high-speed internet connectivity to the Government Online Centre (GOC). These sites will include the deployment of High-Speed Connectivity in 160 secondary schools across Mauritius and Rodrigues. This long-awaited project is already being implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let's work together to ensure that every girl and woman, everywhere, gets her chance to use digital technologies to flourish, achieve her dreams, and be her best self.

Before ending I wish to congratulate the winners and participants of this Bootcamp.

My message to you, always remember "*Armed with digital skills the future is yours to create*"

I thank you for your kind attention.