

Good afternoon. It is my great pleasure to join you all at the opening ceremony of the Mauritius International University and Career Expo 2017 and I would like to express my gratitude to the Rotary Club of Grand Baie for this invitation.

Let me extend a special warm welcome to our friends, who have travelled thousands of miles to be with us today

This event, which has been held annually for nearly twenty years by the Rotary Club of Grand Baie, has no doubt established itself as a premier event in equipping our students and job seekers alike with comprehensive and latest information on further studies, training and career openings, under one roof.

The Mauritius International University and Career Expo 2017 is the largest education fair in the region and I am told that this year this fair has assembled more than 100 universities from Australia, Canada, France, Germany, India, Malaysia, Mauritius, reunion, Singapore, South Africa, UK, USA and Vietnam.

It is crucial for students to be informed and empowered to make a successful transition from one level of education to the next, from school to the world of work and from job to job along their career path.

The completion of the Higher School Certificate or the “A’ level marks the initial and crucial stage of building a career, whether a student is likely to pursue tertiary education or not. Selecting a wrong stream may lead to the worst consequences in the long-term career prospects whereas choice of the appropriate stream will have a

long lasting positive impact on the student's future. Therefore decision should not be taken out of peer pressure or parental pressure as is often the case, but through informed and enlightened means.

Choosing a career is one of the most important decisions a person will ever make. In fact, developing a career is a process, not just a destination. Unfortunately, many people make career choices without much guidance.

Career guidance and counseling programs help individuals acquire the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to identify options, explore alternatives and succeed in society. They are designed to assist individuals in making and implementing informed educational and occupational choices.

The Mauritius International University and Career Expo 2017 has been organised in this context to assist students in their choice of a university or career. With 100 institutions to choose from, students and parents are presented a wider choice in terms of countries, programmes and cost.

With the Government's vision of creating around 15,000 jobs annually, there is need to incorporate employability skills into the tertiary education sector in order to orient our youth towards the right field of studies, to suit the present and future labour market .

This fair is indeed a great avenue and opportunity for students to mingle with employers, learn more about their chosen industry and also the work culture of the participating organisations. I believe that such interaction between higher education

providers and job providers is essential to ensure that students make the right choices and decisions. If someone wants to become a lawyer, a chef, a plumber, an accountant or an IT engineer, what's better than sitting down and talking to somebody who actually does that job, or even visiting the place where they work to see what it's like?

Activities like this Expo and other similar ones organized by various organizations, soon after the HSC results are out, are most welcome among the student population. Such events help them to take informed decisions about their tertiary education or making their choice of a career. However, I feel that there is need for a permanent structure to provide ongoing career guidance. Programmes must be set up to better prepare individuals for the ever changing workplace of the 21st century by: teaching labour market changes and complexity of the workplace; broadening knowledge, skills, and abilities; maximizing career opportunities; improving employment marketability and opportunities; promoting effective job placement and strengthening employer relations.

Allow me to say a few words about the crucial role of parents in forming student's career. Parents should help in the exploration of the right career option for their children. However, they should not impose their decision on children while choosing stream and should encourage their kids to follow their own dream. Positive parenting, like giving valuable advice and support, helps children to grow in an area of his interest and abilities.

I shall end by congratulating the Rotary Club of Grand Baie for having taken this laudable initiative of organising this event and I wish the different institutions a fruitful interaction with students and parents.