

**Gold Award Presentation Ceremony 2024 at State House on Wednesday 5
June 2024 at 13:30 hrs**

**Hon. Stephan Toussaint, Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports
and Recreation**

Your Excellency Charlotte Pierre, British High Commissioner to Mauritius

Distinguished guests

Gold Awardees

Ladies and gentlemen

Good afternoon

I welcome you all at the State House to celebrate the achievements of 56 young boys and girls who have met the requirements of the Gold Award of the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award.

I ask all achievers to take this time and reflect... to reflect upon your experience and the journey which resulted with you finishing the program. You have all worked extremely hard, dedicating countless hours, listened to the advice and guidance of your group leaders and mentors thus, having the courage to try something new.

You all had a common goal; to push past yourselves over and beyond your boundaries. It was not an easy journey; for some, it was exceptionally challenging.

You wisely chose to focus on your personal growth by participating in the Award, and I deeply respect your accomplishments. I am very proud of the youth in

Mauritius. Your zest for life, creativity, and entrepreneurial spirit are truly commendable. I also greatly admire your altruism in helping others. The Award undoubtedly plays a significant role in nurturing the talents and skills of young people, enabling you to achieve your full potential. You have all made it worthwhile and completed the Gold Standard successfully.

Apart from recognising the credentials and talents of our awardees, today's event is a good occasion to reflect on the values which continue to nurture the spirit of this Award, and above all else, what keeps it relevant to our communities.

The aim of the Duke of Edinburgh's International Awards which dates back in 1956 is to promote personal development, resilience, and community engagement among young individuals.

Along the decades, it has served as a catalyst that motivates participants to transcend their comfort zones, acquire new skills, and make a tangible positive impact on their communities.

The Awards have gone a long way in fostering a culture of self-improvement, leadership, and societal responsibility. The three levels of this award offer young people an exceptional opportunity for personal growth and development, setting them on a secure pathway to good citizenship and helping us to build a more cohesive and resilient society

These are qualities that I wish to associate more closely to our youth.

Ladies and gentlemen

The youth population is an asset of a nation. They are the factor of national power that, if rightly utilised, can lead a country to the heights of glory and prosperity. The youth shoulders the future of a country and has the potential to bring about a revolution for the betterment of the country.

On many occasions young people have shown compassion. Many of you come to rescue when circumstances demand it. There is no accident, no flood, which does not see young volunteers making themselves available to help.

However, it is sad to recognise the fact that a significant proportion of the youth are unable to utilize their potential in an appropriate way due to lack of guidance and motivation.

Nowadays a large number of them are engaged in antisocial activities which create a lot of social problems like alcoholism, drug abuse, smoking etc. These habits deteriorate their physical and intellectual capabilities and also seem to be a burden to the society.

Education and empowerment are the two most important factors that the youth of our country should be enlightened about. Hence it is always important to facilitate the overall development of the youth to ensure the development of the nation.

Opening up opportunities for the next generation is a cause very close to Government. I personally truly believe that there is nothing more important for the

future of each and every country in the world than investing in our young people and equipping them with the skills they need to succeed in life.

I take this opportunity to congratulate Noemi Alphonse and Anais Angeline who won a gold medal and a silver medal respectively at the 2024 World Para Athletics Championships

Ladies and gentlemen

Our country does not need people with academic qualification alone. Knowledge is very important but not sufficient. What is also important, if not more important, is personal skills and positive, progressive attitude. As a matter of fact Youth require both formal and informal education for development of their life skills. The objective of life skills education is to help young people cope with daily problems in a successful manner and thus provide to their development

Non-formal education focuses on developing the wider 'soft' (or life) skills which help young people ensure they are ready for the world. When paired with a formal education, it provides a fantastic foundation for a young person to thrive.

Life skill education plays a very vital role to increase the awareness among the youth about all social problems and to alleviate social evils from the society. Life skills are essentially abilities that help promote mental well-being and competence in young people as they face the realities of life.

The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award can play a vital role in providing opportunities for young people to develop such life skills, complementing their formal education.

Dear Gold Awardees

The Gold Award that you will receive shortly will give you a unique international accreditation of your acquired skills and experience. Please remember that it is not just undertaking Award activities that is important; it is reflecting on what you have learned from each activity that really makes a difference.

I trust you will harness the skills and friendships you have gained to navigate through a bright future. You have shown commitment, energy, dedication and drive to accomplish your goals and complete this Award. I trust you will take forward all these qualities into your life, both through and beyond school, where they will stand by you in good stead in the wider world.

Congratulations to your parents and your mentors.

Achievement isn't a solitary pursuit and so I thank the volunteers along with the award leaders, school principals, teachers, youth leaders and parents for their support of the scheme. The achievements of these young people would not be possible without that sincere commitment.

I congratulate also the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation for its efforts in broadening the reach of the award, to ensure that the experience is more accessible for those from different walks of life.

I shall conclude by wishing you all every success, both now, and in the future.

You have learned to extend yourselves and say 'Yes, I can do this. Yes, I want to do this.' I hope you take this spirit of achievement forward and say Yes to many things well into the future, because as future leaders you will have a role to play in shaping our state and nation.