

**Speech of Hon L.D. Dookun Luchoomun  
Minister of Education and Human Resources,  
Tertiary Education and Scientific Research**

**ICCR Foundation Day**

**TUESDAY April 9, 2019**

**H.E. MR. TANMAYA LAL**

**MRS. SHUMITA LAL**

**ICCR SCHOLARS**

**Distinguished Guests**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

**Namaskar** and good evening to all of you.

Thank you, Excellency, for inviting me here today for the celebration of the ICCR Foundation Day.

69 years ago, on this day, this Council came into existence thanks to the far-reaching insight of Maulana Abul Kalam Muhiyuddin Ahmed Azad, commonly known as Maulana Azad, independent India's first Minister for Education. True to his vision, the ICCR has lived up fully to its primary objective of establishing, reviving and strengthening cultural relations and mutual understanding between India and other countries.

As we well know by now, the Council elaborates relevant policies in the attainment of this Objective as well as establishes and develops relations with organizations, both Indian and international, in the field of culture.

For those of us familiar with the workings of the ICCR, we can vouch for the quality of the cultural manifestations it regularly organizes both in India and elsewhere. This very Centre where we are today, the Indira Gandhi Centre for Indian Culture, falls under ICCR's responsibility for the operation of Indian Cultural Centers overseas.

***Ladies and gentlemen,***

Our links with the Council go back to quite some time. We see this through the Distinguished Visitors Programme, the regular visits of cultural troops and performing artists from India, the holding of exhibitions, and so forth. Again, it has been instrumental in establishing a Chair for Indian Studies at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute, with particular emphasis on Sanskrit and Indian Philosophy.

But, as Minister of Education, I would particularly wish to emphasise the highly productive and enabling role the ICCR plays in developing the intellectual capital of our country.

It is perhaps important to state that, one of the key functions of the ICCR is to administer Scholarship Schemes for overseas students on behalf of the Government of India, and to supervise the welfare of

these international students attending some of the most prestigious Indian Universities.

It must be stressed that this falls clearly in line with the international mandate India has invested itself with. It is a mandate that thrives on ensuring the collective good and wellbeing of countries that, for historical reasons, have been for long kept in a state of low development.

The Scholarship Schemes administered by the ICCR have proved their extreme usefulness. In fact, it is now commonly agreed that the returns on higher education are enormous. Today, the role of higher education in development is widely recognized and the provision of scholarships acts as a bulwark, a supporting pillar to socio-economic change and transformation.

The proof of this will be evidenced by the 2 Speakers, ICCR alumni both, who will be sharing their experiential as students and professionals.

I have noted the call for nominations for **ICCR DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD 2019** that has appeared in the local press recently. This is a means of recognising and celebrating those alumni having taken major strides professionally and those who have helped promote understanding, goodwill and friendship between India and Mauritius.

You would wish to note, incidentally, that during the “Second Distinguished Alumni Award” ceremony held on March 20, 2017 in New Delhi, Awards were presented to five persons, and these included one Mauritian, Mrs Sarita Boodhoo, Chairperson of Bhojpuri Speaking Union.

And this is not applicable exclusively to Mauritius.

You are probably aware, distinguished guests, that, during the inaugural plenary of the India - Africa Forum Summit held in New Delhi in April 2008, India expressed its willingness to offer 900 scholarships for tertiary level studies to African states.

This still holds good. Let me share with you that, for this Academic Year 2019/2020, the Republic of Mauritius, for its part, has benefited from 92 scholarships at undergraduate and postgraduate levels under this Scheme.

This compares very favourably with the scholarship allocation for other countries on the Continent for this same academic session of 2019-20. Thus, illustratively, 55 scholarships are offered to meritorious nationals of Ethiopia; Uganda has 30 slots, Djibouti, 11 and Burundi, 10.

Naturally enough, it is the ICCR that is called upon to implement this scheme on behalf of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs.

And all this suggests that the ICCR opens new opportunities to deserving students.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Obviously, managing so many scholarships is no easy task.

Often students once there try to change games.

Scholars are not allowed to shift from one Programme of study to another or from one University allocated to another, once admission has been finalized and confirmed.

Furthermore the ICCR makes it a point to provide opportunities for the cultural enrichment of the scholars. ICCR is in fact reputed for bringing students from different Universities together, for organizing tours, psychedelic shows and so forth.

I myself had the opportunity to visit several wonderful places in India through ICCR Organised tour.

**Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As I conclude, allow me seize today as an opportunity to show my appreciation for the strong bond, the unshakeable relationships that cement our two countries. Our linkage goes back a long way in the historical past that we share.

And it is based on the mutuality of respect, on a partnership between equals--something that is at the heart of the ICCR credo.

In hindi, there is a “kahaavat”, a saying that goes thus,

*“Hum hi hum hai, to hum kya hein?*

*Tum hi tum ho, to tum kya ho?*

*Baat to tab bane jab hum aur tum saath ho.”*

Congratulations to India for being so supportive of the Republic of Mauritius and happy Foundation Day to the Indian Council for Cultural Relations.

***Thank you for your kind attention.***