

UoM Innovation Week 2021

(18 October 2021)

Honourable Pravind kumar Jugnauth, Prime minister of Mauritius

Honourable Mrs Leela Devi Dookun Luchooman, Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology

Honourable Minister Alan Ganoo, Ministry of Transport and Light Rail

Dr Jean Claude Autrey, Chancellor University of Mauritius

Professor Dhanjay Jhurry, Vice Chancellor

Pro Vice-Chancellors

Professor Mohee Commissioner Higher Education Commission

Distinguish guests and Participants, All protocol observed

Good morning and welcome to our innovation week 2021.

We are told that innovation requires first and foremost creativity. So let me give you a small problem to solve to test your creativity, if you are able to solve the problem you will be declared potential innovator of the week. Here is the problem: “*A lady rode in a town on Friday stayed for two nights and went back on Friday*”. How is this possible! I have asked this question quite a few times in the past, so if you already know the answer you are disqualified. And please keep thinking of the answer while listening to me.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am increasingly tempted to believe that we are living more and more in a world of science fiction. Only yesterday I read that the University of Warsaw has invented robotic bees that can pollinate plants as effectively as normal bees. My neighbour said he is looking forward for the day when we will had robotic dogs which will do their jobs without soiling our garden and without having to be fed.

Indeed, we are living in a world of miracles; technological advances moving at rates exponential, are making us enter territories never dreamed of before, they are giving us levels of sophistication as never witnessed in our history, but these same advances, if not kept under harness, will lead us on the path of destruction, of annihilation. Biodiversity crisis, forest fires, droughts, floods, extreme weathers, so far all in scale unprecedented, bear witness to the fate soon likely to befall us if nothing is done.

Hence, the need for a development that is sustainable speaks for itself! We need a development that can meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet theirs. To achieve this, technology and innovation of a sustainable nature is the answer.

Indeed sustainable technology and innovation is considered by the United Nation Organisation central to the realisation of all the Sustainable development goals of Agenda 2030.

Our own economy, Mauritius, emerging from Covid 19 heavily relies on sustainable technology and innovation to promote the development we intend to undertake to ensure added prosperity for all.

I would like, however, to point out that Innovation alone, by itself, is not a sufficient condition to bring desirable development, it must always be accompanied by a sense of added responsibility, of altruism, caution and wisdom so that innovation is not misused. Remember the same dynamite which has helped to open up inaccessible areas and provided us with more land to exploit has also helped kill millions of people.

Innovations, ladies and gentlemen, can be of several types but whatever be their types, whether they be homegrown innovation, imported innovation, disruptive innovation or frontier innovation, they all have three major aspects in common:

- The first aspect is concerned with the creation of knowledge; here of course, research and development occupies the front seat. However, I believe that in small island states like ours, where our resources are relatively limited, our Rand D endeavors must primarily focus on promoting innovations which responds to the priority needs of our country, though allowing sufficient freedom at the same time to our researchers to be involved in areas of their interest. I know we have plenty of research potential in our country and I am convinced that it is time now to dare to think big, as we are doing at the University of Mauritius.
- The second aspect of innovation concerns the diffusion of the knowledge. Here among other things networking involving all pertinent parties, become highly important.
- The third aspect of innovation concerns the adoption of knowledge. Here capacity building is of primordial importance.

Sustainable innovation, therefore, requires Creation, Diffusion and Adoption of knowledge. All these three themes will be addressed in this innovation week.

By the way, Capacity building has two dimensions: one is of a restricted nature, specific to the innovation we wish to promote. Any new production process, for instance, would obviously require the prior training of the workforce involved with that process. This is obvious.

The second dimension of capacity building is less obvious and is more of a diffused and general nature and above all is a slow process concerned with the gradual building up, through our educational system and other agencies, of a national work force that eventually becomes imbued with the capacity to be flexible, to learn, unlearn and relearn, to value work, to adapt to change, to be inquisitive and to accept innovation and contribute to the improvement of its work environment, however big or small. Where such capacity exists, a

culture of innovation will emerge and sustainable innovations will thrive and will be a way of life.

Ladies and gentlemen, I will end here. I would like to express my heart felt appreciation of the professionalism with which this second edition of our innovation week has been organized. The themes chosen for deliberation are highly pertinent to our needs. I wish all participants success and we are looking forward to the recommendations that will emerge from this innovation week 2021.

Only this morning in an interview of Prince Charles by BBC on Climate Change he said, I quote: “*we must have less clever talks and more clever actions*” unquote. This sentence, full of meaning, indicates the need to reset our priorities.

En passant, *Friday was the name of the horse, so solve the problem now!*

Thank you

P Chitamun, CSK
Pro-Chancellor and
UoM Chairman of Council

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