

Speech of

Honourable Deepak Balgobin

Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation

Conference on Data Protection Today

Date: 16 January 2020

Venue: Intercontinental Hotel, Balaclava

Protocol:

The Permanent Secretary of my ministry

The Data Protection Commissioner

Our guest Ms Pam Dixon, Executive Director, World Privacy Forum,

Heads of Institutions,

Representatives of the Private Sector,

Members of the Press,

All protocols observed

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning

I am delighted to be here today and I seize this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to all you to this conference on the theme **Data Protection Today – Breaking the Iceberg**.

I hope that this full-day session will enhance your understanding on Data Protection Laws in Mauritius and how it prevails in our local context and in other jurisdictions.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As you all know, information technology and especially the Internet have transformed our life. It is beyond doubt that technological platforms, like Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon and others, are having a transformational and profound impact on the way people interact and, more and more, the way business is conducted.

Talking about facebook, I saw a programme on BBC some time back on how Facebook stores your data in their nerve center in California. The nerve center itself is the size of four american football fields, that is 230,000 square feet and has hundreds of thousands of servers that stores your likes, comments, memories that you share etc. It is very interesting to note that worldwide some 14 billion photos are uploaded in a week.

You go on your newsfeed and you are thinking how complicated can that be. But whatever you choose to click on or to look at for a while or to respond to is used to train a machine on this system, which is basically a model of your taste. So that forms your alter-ego in Facebook servers and they figure out what to show you next.

So, it is very important that our privacy and confidential information be strongly protected. We want our personal information to be safe, secure and not exposed to any unlawful activities. It goes without saying that, we need data protection laws and enforcement and this is what you are all going to explore today during this conference.

Now... when we look at Europe, countries have continually adopted robust data protection standards, culminating with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) which came into force last year. The GDPR aims mainly to give control to individuals over their personal data and to simplify the regulatory environment for international business. Given that a number of companies in Mauritius provide BPO and KPO services to European customers, it is essential that they comply with both the GDPR and our own Data Protection Law.

Here...allow me to remind you that in January 2018, Mauritius was the first country in the world, to introduce legislation compliant with the principles of GDPR, which came into force in May 2018. It is also be to noted that the UK legislations incorporating GDPR principles came into force after Mauritius. This shows the importance that our government and the Honorable Prime Minister, gives to our ICT sector.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the regulator, the Data Protection Office, which is under the purview of my Ministry, has as mission to ensure that all organisations, both public and private, comply with the Data Protection Act when dealing with personal information.

I take this opportunity to commend the Data Protection Office and all the team for working on sensitisation, education, counselling as well as enforcement.

I would like to encourage you to train your employees so that they understand the potential impacts of not respecting data protection standards but at the same time promote data protection within your organisations. This might be a complex journey but rest assured the Data Protection Office will offer all the assistance that you need.

You know when organisations deal with customers... we all know the rule “le client est roi” (JOKE) (Hospitality) (En moi meme je suis un prince) (Prince de L’est)

So by adopting Data Protection standards, your organisation will reap the benefits of becoming more trustworthy in the eyes of existing and future customers.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I hope that the discussions during this conference will be fruitful and beneficial to all of you.

I now officially declare this conference on the theme **Data Protection Today – Breaking the Iceberg** officially open.

Thank you for your kind attention.