

**ADDRESS BY HON D. GOKHOOL,
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AND RESEARCH**

**PRIZE GIVING CEREMONY
Science Communication Contest 2009**

Monday 15 June 2009

at 14 00 hrs

RGSC Auditorium, Bell Village

Prof.Muddun Bhuruth, Chairman of the RGSC Trust Fund

Dr. Maulloo, Director, RGSC

Dr. Henri Li Kam Wah, Chairperson of the Jury Panel

Distinguished Guests

Dear Students

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good afternoon and thank you for inviting me to today's function.

I am pleased to be here this afternoon at the Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre at the Prize Giving Ceremony of the Science Communication Contest 2009.

The Context

We should highlight that it is the first time in the history of Mauritius, that we have a Ministry responsible for Science and Technology in Mauritius.

As you are aware, my Ministry has the responsibility for three key sectors- Industry, Science and Research- so vital for our common future. One of the main thrusts of the Ministry's action is to improve the scientific literacy of the Mauritian population. We should always remind ourselves that Science and technology will

play a vital role in the coming years as Mauritius will move towards a knowledge based cyber economy.

Organizing this competition is indeed a very laudable initiative which puts into perspective the vision and mission of my Ministry and paves the way towards the creation of the technological base for the Mauritian society.

It is indeed a first step and, an important step, in an investment in human capital. In the context of extreme forces of globalism, the economic imperatives require that our workforce is skillful and adaptable, creative and innovative, proactive and future-oriented.

The 21st century is a very critical century, a make-or-break century. Those who want to succeed need to learn to think about the future. Then only we will be able to make the right decisions today.

The future is science and technology. We need to invest massively today in these fields to remain competitive and ensure the future of coming generations. Investment is not only in monetary terms, it is also in terms of new knowledge; but more importantly it is through a change in attitude, a change of a mindset.

Who will bring about this change? Of course, you, young people present here today. You are living at a time of great excitement and opportunities, perhaps more excitement and opportunities than at any other time in history. You are the ones to make a spectacular difference in bringing the revolutionary change.

Enhancing the status of science and Technology

In order to improve the status of Science and Technology, the RGSC has embarked into several important projects:

(i) The Mauritius Science Portal

You may be aware that the Ministry of Industry, Science and Research has launched the Mauritius Science Portal with a view to improve communication, promotion and awareness about Science and Technology in Mauritius.

The portal is now operational since two months and regular updating takes place to keep you informed about the latest news and events in the field of Science and Technology in Mauritius.

The Mauritius Science Portal is the first of its kind in Mauritius and is made up of four subportals: Science Education, Popularization of Science, Science for Socio-economic Development and Research in Science and Technology.

The Mauritius Science Portal can be considered as a one-stop shop for each and everyone, even if you are not so conversant with Science and Technology.

(ii) Science and Society

It is good to know that RGSC is presently developing a strategic plan for Science and Society. A first study /survey of this kind is being undertaken at a national level to gauge the status of the attitude and understanding of Science and Technology in Mauritius.

Science literacy is nowadays a must for national development otherwise this weakness could have serious implications on the quality of our human resource, particularly within the context of the vision of transforming the country into a Cyber island.

(iii) Science Competitions

In line with its objectives to supplement school education in Science and technology at all levels and to encourage creativity

and innovation among young people, the Rajiv Gandhi science Centre organizes science based competition aimed at primary and secondary school pupils

The Junior Science Adventure.

This competition aims at creating an interest in science among primary students and to initiate them to the investigation of contextual science problems encountered in their daily life. By proposing strategies to address such problems and implementing them, it is expected that pupils will develop positive attitudes and pro-social values.

The theme chosen for this year's competition is **“Me and My Health”**

The National Science Challenge

This project based contest is aimed **at Form 4 and Lower six students** who are judged on the scientific quality of their project and their ability to communicate the science of their work.

The challenge provides students with an opportunity to investigate issues related to science and technology using the scientific method and to understand about scientific investigation and to enhance their written and verbal communication.

The Science Communication Contest 2009

With the Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre mission to create awareness in current and relevant fields of science and technology, we also felt the need to encourage and train our young students to tap their inner potentials and communicate effectively.

Communication is today ladies and gentlemen, a very fashionable term that has emerged with what we like to call the knowledge based society. It is also felt that communication is the skill that gives people an edge.

As I am given to understand, the Science Communication Contest were open to students of lower secondary(Form I to III).They were supposed to research on a topic of their choice and prepare a PowerPoint presentation as to explain the topic/their understanding to the audience.

Through this competition I am sure many students got initiated to ICT tools and came to realise that ICT tools can prove to be a very effective tool for communication. Some who were already acquainted with PowerPoint have now become masters I suppose. As we are aware computer literacy is essential from the early age in today's educational system.

It has been brought to my attention that some presentations have revealed the incredible talent of our young generation.

My message

Dear Students,

Places like the Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre are indeed good avenues therefore for you to discover your hidden talent. Students who participate in such competitions profit from more than just knowledge and expertise, as they get the unique chance to have face to face communication through the friction of minds with other fervent students, and be implicated in the mesmerizing world of scientific research.

Through Competitions such as the one we had today, our youth gets transformed into more eloquent speakers and may they embrace careers like science reporters, science teachers or such similar fields. I have again to concretely reiterate my request for teachers to fully support co-curricular and extra-curricular activities in their programmes in order to demystify science and to persuade more students to opt for science subjects as we will need more scientific graduates in the forthcoming years to allow the smooth transition of Mauritius shifting from an industrial hub to a scientific hub.

I would like to seize the opportunity to congratulate the parents of all the participants in this competition and other activities of the RGSC for providing a conducive environment and encourage our youngsters to become proficient in science.

I would like to extend my most sincere appreciation and thanks to the Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre for organizing this rich event. I would also like to warmly thank all the parents, rectors and the teachers for having shown keen interest in the competition.

To conclude, I wish to tell you, all the participating students, that you are all winners. Keep your passion in science and technology. Do not let the light of curiosity falter after this event as we now live in an increasingly technological world. I am convinced that you will effectively stand up to imminent challenges, because by participating in such activities, and whether or not getting prizes, you have brilliantly illustrated through your performance the talent and the zeal for it.

Thank you for your kind attention.