

**ADDRESS BY HON. D. GOKHOOL
MINISTER OF INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND RESEARCH**

**LAUNCHING CEREMONY OF CASTME (MAURITIUS)
AND TO THE AWARD OF A SCHOLARSHIP OFFERED BY
CASTME (UK)**

FRIDAY 29 JANUARY 2010

AT 9:00 A.M

RAJIV GANDHI SCIENCE CENTRE AUDITORIUM

BELL VILLAGE

Dr. A.K. Maulloo, Director, Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre

Dr. Y. Ramma, President CASTME (Mauritius)

Lady Sue Tunncliffe, Honorary President, CASTME (Mauritius)

Mr Colin Matheson, Chairperson, CASTME

Distinguished Guests

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning and thank you for inviting me Launch CASTME Mauritius (Commonwealth Association of Science, Technology and Mathematics Educators) (Mauritius) and the award of a Scholarship by CASTME (UK).

Let me extend a very warm welcome to our guests from overseas, Lady Sue Tunncliffe, Honorary President, CASTME (Mauritius) and Mr Colin Matheson, Chairperson, CASTME and wish you a pleasant stay in Mauritius.

Initiatives

I am given to understand that CASTME (Mauritius) has set as its major objective the provision of a vibrant and ongoing platform for Educators from primary, secondary and tertiary sectors to engage in critical discussion and organize a broad range of science and technology activities.

As former Minister of Education and today as Minister of Industry, Science and Research, I can but welcome and commend this laudable initiative, especially in view of the fact that CASTME (Mauritius) forms part of the CASTME international network. As an insular small island state, such networking will enable our country to benefit from the scientific and technological development taking place in commonwealth countries.

My Ministry, through the Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre, has been offering all its support to CASTME (Mauritius) and this is but the first step in what I hope will be a long lasting and productive collaboration.

Science

This initiative of CASTME is very much in line with policy of my Ministry to promote the sciences in our schools and in society and also to mainstream science technology and innovation in our new developmental paradigm. Science has been the very foundation of all development and my Ministry is fully committed to promote Science and Technology education in order to create a Science Literate Citizenry. At the level of my Ministry we have taken a number of initiatives to promote science at all levels in industry, education and society. The Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre whose mission is to popularize the sciences has already drawn out a strategic plan and is implementing a number of interesting projects. I understand that the survey on science and society with the objective of understanding the attitude of people to science has been completed and will soon be released.

We all know that in the new economic trajectory that Mauritius plans for the next twenty years, Science and Maths will play a leading role to take our country to new heights. May I remind you that in his first state of Union speech of Wednesday 27 January 2010, President Obama stated that in the 21st century, countries

should aim for a world class education and made a plea for more funding to raise student achievement in maths and science.

May I remind you how science has profoundly changed society in the past 300 years, and how present biomedical research is changing the life of people as never before. In Shakespeare's day, life expectancy for the average worker in Britain was only 30 years. Even by the 1880s, for the malnourished working class, it was still under 40.

Today, life expectancy at birth in Mauritius is nearly 70 years, and we can expect many of us to live healthily into our eighties and nineties and I hope for you, even hundreds. The availability of this extraordinary progress is largely a direct result of advances in the life sciences and improved medical treatment. But we still have many more challenges in the field of Medicine and other fields. The journey must continue. Curiosity and the quest for new knowledge must be nurtured at all times and across all ages.

The CASTME initiative is most welcome as it will encourage a new dynamic thrust to the teaching of sciences and teachers

should develop the appropriate strategy to ignite the minds of our youth to develop renewed interest in the sciences.

At the tertiary level this initiative will provide a new impetus to research in the field of sciences.

I once again reiterate my request for teachers and lecturers 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 scientific graduates in the forthcoming years to allow the smooth transition of Mauritius from an industrial hub to a scientific, knowledge-based and a sustainable society.

The Government has invested a lot in reform that raises student achievement, inspires students to excel in maths and science and improve job opportunities in the new economy. The success of our economy and our society will depend largely on how successfully we can leverage the sciences in all our activities.

More than ever, our country is in great need of committed people with expertise in science and technology, to use science and technology to support new industrial initiatives. For e.g: in implementing the vision of ***Maurice Ile Durable***, (sustainable development) scientists will have to play a critical and catalytic role in the transformation of our society.

Let me congratulate the scholarship winner and wish him success in his studies.

I want to assure all of you my unflinching support to CASTME (Mauritius). This is an exciting and interesting collaboration and I have the pleasure to launch this collaboration and wish it a full success in its endeavour.

D.G.