Minister’s Speech

Sensitisation on the School Composting Project
Bell Village SSS

Mr. Gokhool, Rector of Belle Village SSS

Staff of Belle Village SSS

Representatives of Parent Teachers Association

Staff of Mauritius Institute of Education

Distinguished guests and

Dear Students,

It gives me immense pleasure to be amongst you today for this function in connection with the sensitisation on the School Composting Project under the aegis of Clean up the World 2006 activities.

Recently, I was invited by the Mauritius Institute of Education at Reduit as chief guest at a workshop on Environmental Education which laid emphasis on compost making and ever since it has become my earnest wish to bring forward such a project into our daily life. This project falls within the framework of an Education for Sustainable Development which has been targeted by UNESCO as a ten year programme and which can be done at grass root level and does not require big investments. However, this small activity is going to curtail the 1 billion rupees project on waste management. This project was launched on 7 September 2005 at Riche Mare and is now being extended to 50 schools (25 Primary and 25 Secondary Schools of which five are in Rodrigues). You will appreciate that this is the reason why we are here today, and above all, it is my personal wish to visit this beautiful institution.

Our country is situated in the tropical belt with a variable rainfall regime and plenty of sunshine. This condition favours lush vegetation and the production of large quantities of biodegradable material. Added to this, we have developed with time the habit of consuming a lot and producing some 1200 tons of waste daily. The tendency noted is on the rise. This causes immense pressure on our only landfill site at Mare Chicose with dire consequences on the environment through odour and other associated environmental nuisances. Mare Chicose which was originally designed to receive 300 tons daily is now receiving 1200 tons of waste. As a result of this, the life of this sanitary landfill has been
reduced from 19 to 8 years. Composting can therefore become a positive initiative to relieve our country from this burden and help to minimise our volume of waste produced. Compost is mainly obtained from the decomposition of plant remains to make an earthy, dark, crumbly substance that is excellent for adding to houseplants or enriching garden soil.

There are several ways of composting and we have chosen the rotary drum type of compost bin which is very practical especially within school premises as it does not cause any inconvenience to the school population or to neighbouring inhabitants. The process is environment friendly and does not give rise to odour problems nor does it attract flies and vermins.

Today, the use of composting to turn organic wastes into valuable resource is expanding rapidly in many countries, as landfill space becomes scarce and expensive, and as people become more aware of the impacts they have on our environment.

The National Federation of Young Farmers Clubs had initiated a composting project in 1998. This project was a particular interest to the organisation as it led to a reduction in the volume of green wastes and a reduction in the use of chemical fertilizers in agriculture; hence healthier vegetable for consumption.

We have been laying much emphasis on reduction and recycling of waste and this endeavour will no doubt imbue people with environment-friendly ethics and the need for every citizen to think and act responsibly in as far as waste disposal is concerned. You can contribute to the ‘composting revolution’ by composting your own yard and kitchen wastes at home. Everybody in towns or villages can promote composting through home composting and the collection of yard wastes for large-scale composting. Whatever be your style of composting, there is plenty of room to get involved and to make things happen.

It is important to note that composting is the optimum choice for organic waste disposal if we truly want to recycle it and extend the life of the landfill.

This is one example whereby on one hand children can learn through hands on activities to care for the environment and that will serve as lifelong learning process and on the other hand they can transmit the message to their parents to get them involved in turn at community level.

This will prompt us to bring forth various similar projects that will enhance the quality of life of our fellow citizens and make composting a national hobby.

The result at Riche Mare Government School is very encouraging and our dream of making Mauritius cleaner and greener is becoming a reality through the contribution of the school children. The results instil hope for success and there is no doubt that the school children at the Bell Village SSS will contribute to boost this image which is going to revolutionise the destiny of this country as far as solid waste minimisation is concerned.

As Minister of Environment & NDU, I have full confidence in you, the future leaders of this country to lead us through actions which are environment friendly and be champions of the environment.