The Prime Minister, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, has hailed the opening of the first cane flexi-factory whereby sugar will be a co-product of the cane industry, along with a range of other products particularly electricity and ethanol.

Inaugurating the Omnicane flexi-factory at La Baraque in l’Escalier on 18 June 2009, the first of its kind to become operational in the context of the sugar sector reform, the Prime Minister pointed out that the Government was ensuring that the cane clusters projects scheduled in the Multi Annual Adaptation Strategy (MAAS) were actually being implemented. He made it clear that the Government would not allow ‘national interests to be subverted by narrower interests motivated solely by short term pecuniary gains’. On the same occasion, the Prime Minister officially opened the 2009 cane harvest.

The MAAS is intended to ensure the long term viability of the cane sector with social sustainability. The cane flexi-factory concept forms an integral part of the MAAS which has been devised to mitigate the negative impact of a reduction of 36% in the price of raw sugar by the EU.
Criminal Investigation
A Legal Framework for Taking and Using DNA Samples

The DNA Identification Bill, tabled by the Prime Minister in the National Assembly on 16 June 2009, aims at providing a legal framework for the taking of DNA samples and their use in order to facilitate criminal investigation in certain specific circumstances.

The introduction of the Bill lies in the context of reinforcing the law and order system, by easing criminal investigation. The provisions would actually empower the police, in certain cases where deemed necessary, to take DNA samples and make use of them to determine if a person is connected with a crime or involved in it.

According to the provisions of the bill, unless a person consents, a DNA sample can only be taken from him by the order of a judge in chambers. In case a person already convicted of a serious offence does not provide a sample when so requested by the police, that person can be prosecuted for failing to provide the sample.

The bill also provides for the establishment of databases that would facilitate investigation and crime solving. Hence, the DNA Data Records will contain data profiles which will be used in investigating criminal offences where DNA samples have been secured from the scene of crime. A DNA Population Statistical
Database will be set up for the purpose of statistical interpretation of the results of forensic analysis. A database will also be created for unidentified and missing persons.

Storage, preservation and destruction of DNA samples would also be governed by the legislation, which provides for strict confidentiality of any information gathered from the study of a DNA sample.

The bill also provides for the establishment of filiation using DNA, pursuant to a judge’s order.

The DNA Identification Bill is being examined by Members of the National Assembly.

STREAMLINING TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
MAURITIUS INSTITUTE FOR TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT TO BE SET UP

The Mauritius Institute of Training and Development Bill, voted by the National Assembly on 16 June 2009, provides for the establishment of the Institute and its functions. In fact, there will be streamlining for technical and vocational education and training to operate under a single institution, the MITD. The MITD will also conduct programmes and courses as well as provide research and training facilities in technical and vocational education and training. It will also have the responsibility of setting up training centres.

Presenting the bill to the National Assembly, the minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources, Dr. Vasant Bunwaree, underscored the importance of technical and vocational education and training as ‘a major determinant of our future rate of economic growth as well as the type and number of jobs that we create’. Mauritians should realize that technical and vocational education and training is an alternative route to professionalism and give it parity of esteem with academic studies, the minister emphasized.

Such a change in the field of technical and vocational education has been dictated by the need for Mauritius to remain competitive in this era of globalization and technology. The advent of the information age and a technology dependent economy call for a competent and flexible workforce with opportunities and facilities for consistently skilling, reskilling, up-skilling and lifelong learning.

World Bank data show that 80% of jobs in the world require technical and vocational education and competencies. Yet, minister Bunwaree points out, in Mauritius there is still a stigma attached to such training as it is largely perceived as being restricted to those who do not succeed at CPE level. It is therefore urgent that people recognize the exigencies of the new world economic set-up.

Two other vocational education institutions, the Institut Supérieur de Technologie and the Swami Dayanand Institute of Management, will at a later stage be integrated within the framework of the University of Technology, Mauritius.
ICT

51 184 HOUSEHOLDS CONNECTED TO INTERNET IN 2008

The number of households connected to internet was 51 184 in December 2008. At the same period there were 104 809 mobile internet subscribers.

The above figures were revealed by the minister of Information and Communication Technology, Mr. Asraf Dulull, in a parliamentary reply on 16 June 2009.

As regards internet penetration for households, the rate was 16.6% in 2006. Though this figure looks moderate, the minister pointed out, the actual number of persons having access to internet is higher, since there are other means of accessing it, such as the workplace, school, local authorities, cybercafés, public libraries and youth centres as well as Public Internet Access Points.

As at date, over 90% of business organizations are connected to internet. 167 secondary schools and five public libraries were provided free internet services for a period of two and a half years and have been subsequently benefitting from connection at a subsidized rate, in the context of the School Net Project. The project also targets 260 primary schools in Mauritius and 13 in Rodrigues for the provision of internet facilities. So far 152 primary schools have already benefitted from these facilities. By the end of 2009, the provision of internet facilities to primary schools should be completed. These schools will also benefit from subsidized rates for internet in the second phase of the project.

Among other internet facilities accessible to the population at large: 26 Public Internet Access Points already set up in post offices and accessible free of charge to students, pensioners and widows; 67 additional internet access points in post offices to be available in the near future. Through the Community Empowerment Programme Project, computer clubs have been set up with free broadband internet access in 23 youth centres and 15 women centres. 54 social centres and 125 community centres as well as some village halls will at a later stage have internet facilities made accessible free of charge.

Furthermore, in line with the Government’s intention to democratize ICT, tariffs for ADSL home offers have undergone, from March 2009, decreases ranging from 33% to 45%.

WASTE WATER MANAGEMENT

THE PLAINES WILHEMS SEWERAGE PROJECT STAGE 1 REACHES WESTERN ROSE-HILL

Trench digging for the laying of pipes to carry waste water began on 15 June, marking a new stage in works undertaken to connect the 16 000 houses of Roches Brunes, Mont Roches and Plaisance, in the western region of Rose-Hill, to the sewerage system.

The works, referred to as Lot 1B, are part of the Plaines Wilhems Sewerage Project Stage 1 which aims to extend the sewerage coverage to 90% of the catchment population of the Plaines Wilhems region by 2012, stretching from the southern part of Curepipe to Beau Bassin and encompassing the urban conurbations of Curepipe, Floreal, Vacoas, Phoenix, Sodnac, Quatre Bomes, Rose Hill and Beau Bassin.

Lot 1B consists of the construction of approximately 41 km of sewer reticulation, the installation of the sewerage property connections for about 4,000 houses in the region of West Rose-Hill and the replacement of about 10 km of potable water pipes together with associated house connections up to the CWA water metre. The project, to the tune of Rs 973 m, is to be completed by
Sewage system upgraded to improve quality of life

December 2011. Since December 2008, preliminary works including trial pits, street and house surveys have been ongoing.

In the long run, the extension of the sewerage system to the region will improve the standard of living of the inhabitants through the elimination of pit latrines, septic tanks and cesspits. The sewage system will ensure that effluents are efficiently collected and transferred to the St Martin sewer treatment plant where it will be treated and re-used for irrigation purposes. The sewer disposal system will also preserve the environment by protecting water bodies, surface and ground waters as well as the lagoon waters from contamination by waste water disposal.

LABOUR
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE DROPPED IN 2008

The unemployment rate for year 2008 is estimated at 7.2%, compared to 8.5% in 2007. The rate was higher for women, at 12.7% compared to 4.1% for men. In 2007, the unemployment rate had been 14.4% for women and 5.3% for men.

In 2008, the labour force totalled 559 400, of whom 355 600 were men and 203 800 women. The labour force in 2007 amounted to 548 000 in 2007, that is, 353 600 men and 195 300 women.

The number of employed men and women in 2008 was 341 000 and 178 000 respectively, compared to 335 000 and 167 100 in 2007. The total number of persons employed was therefore 519 000 in 2008 and 502 100 in 2007.

The number of unemployed was 40 400 in 2008, that is 14 600 men and 25 800 women, compared to 46 800 in 2007, that is 18 600 men and 28 200 women.

WORKSHOP TO SENSITISE POLICE AND PRISON OFFICIALS

The Human Rights Unit of the Commonwealth Secretariat in collaboration with the Prime Minister’s Office organised a workshop on Human Rights Training for Police and Prison officials from June 22 to 26 in Pailles. The main objective of the workshop was to increase the level of awareness of human rights considerations in policing. Some 30 officials from the police force and the prison department participated in the five-day workshop.

The workshop’s programme, developed by the Human Rights Unit of the Commonwealth Secretariat, targeted mainly trainers in the police force and prison department in a bid to integrate, in the long run, the concepts and principles of human rights in standard police training so as to have a human rights-based approach in the structures, habits, culture and operational functions of the police.
During the workshop, there were presentations on how the participants as trainers could ensure the adoption of a human rights-based approach to policing in line with internationally accepted human rights standards and practices for law enforcement officials. The workshop also focused on the concepts of human rights in the context of policing, on topics such as investigation of crime and the use of torture, search and seizure, use of force and firearms, maintenance of public order, coping with vulnerable groups in particular women and children as well as on victims of crime.

**PROBATION AND AFTERCARE**

**LEGISLATION AMENDED TO PROVIDE FOR MORE REQUIREMENTS FOR PROBATIONERS**

Probationers may in future have to respect certain new requirements, namely attending a centre, respecting a curfew, following a treatment related to drug and alcohol consumption and residing in an institution. A court may, if it deems necessary, impose one or more of the above requirements when making a probation order.

The above requirements form part of an amendment brought by the Probation of Offenders (Amendment) Bill passed by the National Assembly on 16 June 2009.

Introducing the bill to the National Assembly, the minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare and Reform Institutions, Mrs. Sheila Bappoo, explained that the overall objective was to ‘review the concept of probation as a sentence treatment in the open’ and make it more humane. The new requirements are expected to enable the courts to deal more efficiently with probationers. The probation order, though maintaining its traditional orientation, is being reframed to make it a more dynamic sentencing option, Mrs. Bappoo underlined.

The core part of the legislation carries standard conditions applicable to all probationers, that is, good behaviour, avoiding bad company, not consuming illicit substances and residing at a particular address. The other part of the law will contain the optional requirements that can be imposed by a court on an offender depending on the nature of his problem.

Probationers referred to an attendance centre will benefit from life skills programmes with the help of Probation Officers and psychologists, among others. The attendance centre will hence serve to give offenders the tools that will guide them to address their problems and lead crime free lives.

The curfew requirement will be applicable to minors. It will compel them to remain indoors on specified days and for a specified time, to be determined by the courts. By restricting their movement, this requirement is expected to control the eventual involvement of the youth in delinquent activities. The families of the probationers concerned will be called upon to assume their own responsibilities to ensure the success of the curfew requirement.

The drug and alcohol treatment requirement will apply mainly to drug and alcohol addiction offenders. The latter will be referred to specialized institutions for supervision and detoxification treatment.

The residence requirement, applying to minors, was already part of the core section of the legislation. It is now classified as a requirement and will apply to probationers depending on the nature of their offence. Hence a minor may be given a probation order with the additional requirement that he/she stays at the probation hostel for a period of not more than twelve months.

The amendment voted on 16 June 2009 is considered as the first major change since 1946 in the legislation
governing the probation of offenders. Between 1955 and 2008, around 30 000 probation orders were made by the courts. Since 2003, the number of probation orders has been on the decline. This is attributable to the introduction of community service orders, now applied in certain cases which might have otherwise been granted probation service orders.

**PRESERVING THE ECOSYSTEM**

**FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF COASTAL ZONE NEARLY FINALISED**

A Validation workshop on the development of an Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) Framework for the Republic of Mauritius was held on June 15 and 16 at La Plantation Hotel, Balaclava.

The process for developing the ICZM framework started in January 2008 when the contract for the development of the ICZM framework study was awarded to the environmental consultants Landel Mills. Following introductory workshops, meetings of steering and technical committees comprising stakeholders concerned with the use and management of the coastal zone, the validation workshop was the final stage in the development of the ICZM framework. During the two-day workshop, participants were invited to discuss the proposed outcomes and recommendations spelt out in the report submitted by the consultants, and to assess the modes of implementation.

The ICZM Framework is deemed an essential tool in the preservation and sustainable management of our coastal zones. It will include policies, regulatory measures and strategies that would protect and preserve our ecosystem as well as improve the economic and social well-being of people living in coastal zones. It will also comprise an ICZM (area and action) plan for pressure zones to guide future development and intervention. The Framework is to be in line with government policies for sustainable development and with the requirements of various regional and multilateral agreements signed by Mauritius.

**TRADE AND BUSINESS**

**ENHANCING RELATIONS BETWEEN MAURITIUS AND EFTA**

A Joint Declaration on Cooperation (JDC) signed on 9 June in Geneva is expected to enhance economic relations between Mauritius and the four countries of the European Free Trade Area (EFTA), namely Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

The JDC also aims at facilitating cooperation in trade in goods and services and investment, and exploring further avenues of cooperation between Mauritius and EFTA. It also provides for a greater involvement of the private sector, mainly SMEs, in trade and commercial cooperation.

The Declaration was signed by Ambassador Servansing on behalf of Mauritius and by Ambassadors Johansen, Wasescha, Arnason and Frick for EFTA.

The JDC is seen as a first step towards the conclusion of a Comprehensive Agreement with the EFTA States. The proposal for such an Agreement, which was made by Mauritius, is intended to harmonise trade and economic relations with all the countries in Western Europe, based on the Economic Partnership Agreement which is currently being negotiated with the European Union and thus create more business opportunities for Mauritius on European markets. Negotiations for the Comprehensive Agreement are expected to start next year.

A joint Mauritius - EFTA committee has also been established with a view to formulating appropriate recommendations on cooperation.
Mauritius – EFTA trade amounted to a total of around US $76 million in 2008. Mauritius imported precious stones, machinery, clocks and watches, mineral fuels as well as pharmaceutical products from EFTA States for some US $43 million. Exports to EFTA, amounting to some US $33 million, consisted of knitted apparel, clocks and precious stones. Bilateral trade between Mauritius and EFTA has undergone an annual growth rate of 7.1% since year 2000.

MAURITIUS AND TURKEY TO EXPAND BILATERAL TRADE

A high-level meeting on Trade Relations between Mauritius and Turkey was held on 3 and 4 June 2009 in Port Louis to initiate discussions on the expansion of trade between the two countries.

A four-member delegation led by Mr. Engin Ertekin, Deputy Director-General, Turkish Directorate General of EU Affairs, Under-Secretariat for Foreign Trade, was in Mauritius to take part in the talks.

As the two countries have agreed to start a process that will lead to a free trade agreement (FTA), the talks focused on modalities for harmonising the proposed FTA with those of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). It is recalled that Mauritius has already initiated an EPA with the EU and is currently negotiating a full EPA. Turkey has a Customs Union agreement with the EU and has the obligation to align its trade policies with that of the Preferential Trade regime of the EU towards ACP countries including Mauritius.

Both Turkey and Mauritius agreed that existing trade potentials are yet to be fully tapped and the establishment of the free trade agreement (FTA) will be an effective vehicle to expand and diversify bilateral trade. With respect to the content of the FTA, both parties exchanged views on the possible provisions that would be incorporated in the agreement.

In the first instance, the FTA will focus mainly on trade in goods and will also contain an in-built agenda for further discussions on trade related issues such as investment, intellectual property rights as well as services which will be taken on a sequential basis once the FTA is implemented.

Moreover, both sides agreed that a triangular cooperation involving Turkey-Mauritius-EU on the one hand and Turkey-Mauritius-Africa on the other hand will be pursued.

The next round of discussions will be held in Ankara in November 2009.

Imports from Turkey represented some 1% of total imports of Mauritius in 2008, with an absolute value of Rs 911 million. The imports consisted mainly of cereals, products of milling including flour and preparations of cereals, machinery, base metals and pharmaceutical products.

In 2008, total Mauritian exports to Turkey amounted to Rs 79.7 million, representing 0.2% of the total exports. They were mainly fabrics, namely denim and coloured plain cotton weave.