Mr K. Purryag elected fifth President of the Republic

Mr. Rajkeswur Purryag, GCSK, GOSK, was sworn in as the fifth President of the Republic of Mauritius on 21 July 2012 in front of Chief Justice Sik Yuen, at the State House, Le Réduit. The Prime Minister, Dr Navinchnandra Ramgoolam, and several other eminent personalities were present for the occasion.

Mr. Purryag was elected President of the Republic on 20 July 2012 following a motion presented at the National Assembly by the Prime Minister.

Speaking on the career of the new President of the Republic, the Prime Minister said that he has an impressive professional and political track record, with an invaluable contribution in all fields of national endeavour in a spirit of service for higher causes.

Born on 12 December 1947, Mr Purryag, familiarly known as Kailash Purryag, became an Attorney at Law in 1973 and was elected to the Legislative Assembly for the first time in 1976.
Mr Abdool Razack Mahomed Ameen Peeroo was unanimously elected Speaker of the Mauritius National Assembly on 24 July 2012 in Port Louis. He takes over from Mr Rajkeswur Purryag who has assumed office as President of the Republic.

The motion for the election of the Speaker was presented by the Prime Minister Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, after which the new Speaker took the Oath of Allegiance.

Mr Peeroo is not an elected member of the National Assembly. In fact, the Constitution provides that the Speaker may or may not be an elected member of the House.

Born on 16 April 1945, Mr Peeroo is a well-known figure, both as a barrister and as a politician. He was called to the Bar of England and Wales in 1972 and to the Mauritian Bar in 1974. He is a member of Lincoln’s Inn and was educated at the Council of Legal Education in London and at King’s College, University of London where he also studied the French Civil Law.

Mr Peeroo has had a rich political career and first stood as a candidate in the legislative elections in 1976. He was Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations from November 1979 to June 1982; Attorney-General, Minister of Justice and Industrial Relations from December 1995 to November 1996; Attorney General, Minister of Justice, Human Rights and Corporate Affairs from December 1996 to June 1997; Attorney-General, Minister of Justice Human Rights and Corporate Affairs and Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations from June 1997 to November 1999; Attorney-General, Minister of Justice and Human Rights, Minister for Reform Institutions from November 1999 to September 2000.

About Speakership

The Speakership is the most important office in the House. The first business of the House is to elect a Speaker when the National Assembly first meets, after a general election. The Speaker holds office for the duration of the life of Parliament, unless he is removed earlier on by the Assembly.
According to the Prime Minister, works are progressing satisfactorily. The new terminal is more than 70% complete - on schedule and on budget. The construction of a modern state-of-the-art terminal at SSR International Airport was deemed necessary due to the airport being saturated and not able to cater satisfactorily for the increase in the flow of passengers. The present terminal was designed to accommodate some 750 passengers at peak hours. Over the past few years, the figure at peak hours has reached 1,200 passengers. The new building will cater for current traffic as well as the projected traffic growth and will ensure a satisfactory level of service over time. With a total area of 57,000 m², the terminal will handle 4.5 million passengers a year against 2.2 million presently. It is presently among the most important projects launched in Mauritius in terms of contract value totting up to USD 300 million.

The new terminal will be connected to the existing one. It integrates an environmental and ecological dimension in line with the Maurice Ile Durable concept, with its architecture in glass and steel, the use of solar energy collected by photovoltaic cells, rainwater recovery and green space within the building. The terminal will accommodate, amongst others, 52 check-in desks, five boarding gates of which one will be A380 compatible, 26 immigration counters, five telescopic passenger boarding bridges, five baggage claim carrousels, a new aircraft parking area and a landside car park located in front of the new terminal.

Airport Terminal Operations Ltd (ATOL) is responsible for the design, building and operation of the new terminal building. ATOL is a joint venture between Airports of Mauritius Ltd (AML) and Aéroports de Paris Management and was incorporated as a private company on 24 July 2008. The mandate of ATOL consists in securing the finance for the project, managing the construction phase, ensuring the commissioning and
operation of the terminal over a period of five years within the financial resources allocated for the project.

The new terminal has been designed by ADPi, Architects and Engineers and Alain Davy, Architect. The consultants for Terminal expansion of the SSR International Airport project are the Louis Berger Group Inc. and Aéroports de Paris Ingenierie. The project is financed through a loan of USD 260 million, secured in February 2009 by the AML from Exim Bank of China at a concessionary rate of 2% for a period of 15 years. Following a tender exercise, the contract was awarded on 30 December 2009 to the firm China State Construction Engineering Corporation Ltd. Works on site started on 30 March 2011.

The project is expected to be completed by December 2012, and the new terminal to be operational by early 2013, following testing and simulations.
**Energy**

*Inauguration of four new turbines at Fort Victoria Power Station*

Four medium speed diesel generators of 15 MW each were inaugurated on 11 July 2012 by the Central Electricity Board (CEB) at Fort Victoria Power Station (FVPS) at Bain des Dames in Cassis in the presence of the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities, Dr Rashid Beebeejaun.

The FVPS Redevelopment Phase II project financed to the tune of Rs 2.8 billion will enable the CEB to ensure availability of generation capacity to meet short and medium term demands. In fact, the four Wartsila turbines will annually produce 480 GWh.

Environmental considerations were taken into account at the design and construction stages of the new power station. It is equipped with modern features optimised for low emissions, waste incineration and a 65-metre high stack. The carbon dioxide emission is about three times lower than that of a coal plant. Furthermore, it is equipped with a state-of-the-art sludge treatment technology to ensure that the level of oil in the water outlet from the power plant is below 10 PPM. In a bid to provide flexibility to meet load variation on the grid, the plant will operate on both base and semi-base mode.

The contract for phase II of the FVPS redevelopment project was awarded in January 2011 to Danish society Burmeister and Wain Scandinavian Contractor. The commissioning of the four turbines ended on 21 June 2012. With the coming into operation of the four turbines, FVPS ranks the second most important thermal power station in Mauritius, after Fort George Power Station.

**Focus is on energy savings and efficiency, says Deputy Prime Minister**

In his address at the inauguration ceremony, Dr Beebeejaun said that Government has started to focus on energy savings and efficiency. He pointed out that a change of mindset is needed because too much energy is being wasted in homes especially when appliances are kept on all the time.

As regards renewable energy, the Deputy Prime Minister recalled that Mauritius, as a small island, needs to maximise the use of space and master technologies at a cost accessible to the public. On that score, he said that several renewable energy projects are underway. However, challenges exist as far as financial resources and availability of technicians for the installation and maintenance of photovoltaic systems, he added.
Infrastructure Development
Prime Minister inaugurates Mediclinic in Plaine Verte and new bridge at Petite Rivière Noire

At Plaine Verte, the Prime Minister stressed the importance of providing improved health services to the population. The Dr Mahmoodkhan Hyderkhan Mediclinic is a modern infrastructure which will meet the needs of patients, he said. The PM made an appeal to inhabitants to use the Mediclinic judiciously and make the right choices so that Mauritius becomes a First World Country. Mauritius can be considered at par with many developed countries due to its free healthcare policy, he further added.

Investments to the tune of Rs 100 million were needed for the construction of the mediclinic. A structural provision has been made for another two storeys and lift. Situated at Nyon Street, Port-Louis, Dr Mahmoodkhan Hyderkhan Mediclinic is operational since 16 July 2012.

The services provided include: Basic health services, Family Planning, Maternal and Child Health Services, Vaccination, Well Baby Clinics, Non-Communicable Diseases Clinic, HIV/AIDS, Dental Services, Health Education, Public Health Services, Pharmacy, Community-Based Rehabilitation, Laboratory Services, Day Care Centre, Specialised (Gynaecology & Obstetrics, Paediatrics and Psychiatry) Services and Echography.

The Plaine Verte Mediclinic has a population of about 26,300 persons in its catchment area and covers among others the following regions: Plaine Verte, Cite Martial, St Francois, Cité Laval, Diego Garcia Street, La Paix Street, Dr Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Street, La Corderie Street, Remy Ollier Street, Etienne Pellereau. The yearly attendance is estimated at about 54 000 patients.

The Mediclinic has necessitated investments to the tune of Rs 100 m

The Mediclinic has been named after late Dr. Mahmoodkhan Hyderkhan, who used to give free medical treatment to patients who did not have financial means. He was also active in the fight against drug addiction.
In his address at Petite Rivière Noire for the inauguration of Notre Dame de Fatimah Bridge, the Prime Minister reiterated Government’s commitment to work towards improving road infrastructures and network throughout the country. He announced the construction of a link road between Flic-en-Flac and Tamarin, as it used to be before the building of several hotels and bungalows in the area. The new road will bridge the gap between Tamarin and Flic-en-Flac so as to allow a better traffic flow.

As for the Notre Dame de Fatimah Bridge of Petite Rivière Noire, it is the main link along the western coast from Tamarin to Le Morne through the A3 and B9 roads. The project has necessitated investments to the tune of Rs 22 million.

Up to now, road users and the inhabitants experienced unnecessary inconveniences during period of heavy rainfall and especially flash floods, with storm water from the river overflowing the road. To improve the existing infrastructure, the Road Development Authority has implemented the construction of a new 7-metre wide box culvert which has been raised 1.5 metres above the existing road level to upgrade the flow capacity and at the same time improve the road alignment and widen the road.
The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Dr Arvin Boolell, was in India from 04 to 07 July 2012 as a follow-up to the State visit of the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, to that country early this year.

This visit also provided an opportunity for the Minister to meet with a number of Indian dignitaries in advance of the meeting of the India-Mauritius Joint Working Group (JWG) on the Double Taxation Avoidance Convention (DTAC) to be held on 23 and 24 August 2012 in Mauritius.

In New-Delhi, the Minister met the Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh as well as the Minister of External Affairs, Mr S.M. Krishna, and the Minister of Commerce, Industry and Textiles, Mr Anand Sharma. Dr Boolell equally called on the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Mrs Sushma Swaraj.

During discussions with the Indian Prime Minister, both sides took note of the re-convening of the India-Mauritius JWG and felt that it would be best if the JWG could come to a mutually satisfactory and early resolution of the DTAC issues taking on board the concerns of both countries. The Indian Prime Minister was briefed on all measures adopted by Mauritius to make of it a stringent jurisdiction.

Discussions with Indian authorities also focused on the following: Ocean Economy; use of Mauritius as a platform for outward investment into Africa; use of the Line of Credit of US$250 million and a grant of US$20 million given to Mauritius by India; need to reinforce the mandate of the India-Mauritius Joint Commission and an early conclusion of the Preferential Trade Area and the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with India; cooperation to combat piracy; re-dynamisation of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation; and, effects of the global economic crisis and international political situation.

On 07 July 2012, Minister Boolell addressed the International Fiscal Association Conference in Mumbai.

During the visit, he also exchanged views with tax professionals and lawyers on the draft General Anti-Avoidance Rules (GAAR) guidelines issued by India.

Early meeting of the JWG

Due to the possibility of overriding effects of the GAAR on tax treaties signed by India with other countries, the impact of the measures announced in the Indian budget has raised concern from these countries. Hence the request from Mauritius for an early meeting of the JWG, scheduled in August 2012.
Retooling for the future requires review of constitutional regime, says PM

Retooling for the future requires the review of our Constitutional regime, said the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, in his address to the National Assembly on 27 July 2012 on the Government Programme 2012-2015.

‘Mauritius is highly acclaimed as a model of democracy. But I think we can improve the system, After 44 years of independence, we should, as a nation, look at what works and what needs to be improved, including reforms in our electoral system and the financing of political parties’, the Prime Minister said. According to him, the country deserves an electoral system which is more equitable, fair and which promotes nation-building.

Consultations have been engaged with Constitutional experts and people have given their views. The process is on and we must all endeavour to a broad agreement on the main objectives and how to attain them. Thus, each and everyone, not just in the National Assembly, but every citizen of the country, must be able to participate and have their point of view, the Prime Minister stressed. He was hopeful that, after wide consultations, a Bill on electoral reform could be presented to the House, which would go a long way towards strengthening democracy and unity.

It will be recalled that the Government Programme 2012-2015 was presented on 16 April 2012 by the then Acting President of the Republic of Mauritius, Mrs Monique Oshan-Bellepeau, at the Sir Harilal Vaghjee Memorial Hall, Government House, Port Louis. The document sets out Government’s priorities for three years and summarises key achievements and main goals for the future - both legislative and non-legislative.
A Business Angels Forum (BAF), a platform for investors to meet entrepreneurs with innovative and commercially viable projects, was held on 25 July 2012 at the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Authority (SMEDA) premises, in Coromandel.

The BAF had as objectives to allow individuals to present and discuss their commercially viable ideas with potential investor; improve SMEs’ access to early stage capital; increase awareness of the potential of Business Angels to finance projects which banks may be reluctant to finance; and facilitate the emergence of a new breed of innovative entrepreneurs.

An initiative of the SMEDA in collaboration with the various partner institutions, the BAF brought together around 20 potential and existing entrepreneurs. Projects in the following fields were submitted by participants: e-trade, bio-technology, plastic, handicraft, e-training, medical tourism, detergent, and assembly of solar panel.

The Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives, Mr J.I.M. Seetaram, the Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology, Dr Rajesh Jeetah, and the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection, Mr Cader Sayed-Hossen, were present at the Business Angels Forum.

All three Ministers commended the BAF initiative. For them, the BAF is an innovative mechanism and an opportunity for entrepreneurs to collaborate with investors and consequently to develop their start-ups. They also highlighted the need for SMEs to reflect on their capacity and increase their level of ambition as well as adopt a new mindset in terms of doing business.

Government is putting much emphasis on SMEs, especially in the last Budget. As it is, all schemes for SMEs are doing well such as the loan/grants scheme with Rs 740 million of funds approved out of Rs 1 billion. The SME sector is contributing to nearly 37% of GDP and is the largest employer.

About Business Angels

A Business Angel is a private investor who finances very small or start-up companies and provides them with his/her expertise. The Angel investor provides capital in return for a proportion of the company equity.

The Business Angel is usually a successful entrepreneur, who is willing to invest in high-risk, high-growth firms at a very early stage, and adds value by supplying hands-on business advice. Business Angels rarely have a connection with the company before they invest but often have experience of its industry or sector.

Business angels are usually looking for an ‘innovative idea with commercial potential’ that is a new and useful concept, technique, or technology that can be easily exploited for profit making.
**China/Mauritius**  
Mauritius receives Rs 270 million for development projects

A grant of Rs 270 million has been allocated to the Government of Mauritius by the People’s Republic of China for the implementation of infrastructure projects.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Mr Xavier-Luc Duval, and the Vice Minister of Commerce of the People’s Republic of China, Mr Chen Jian, signed the grant agreement on 4 July 2012 during the 9th Session of the Sino-Mauritian Joint Commission held in Port Louis.

### 9th Sino-Mauritian Joint Commission

The 9th session of the Joint Economic, Technical and Trade Cooperation Commission between Mauritius and China reviewed the Sino-Mauritian Cooperation over the last 40 years during which Mauritius has obtained around Rs18 billion in the form of grants, interest free loans and commercial loans to implement key infrastructure projects, such as airport, roads, housing and sewerage system, which have contributed positively to the economic and social development of Mauritius.

The Commission also discussed the restructuring of the Jin Fei Trade and Economic Zone project, Chinese investment in the manufacturing sector, and infrastructure development.

### Cooperation Ties

It is recalled that in 2011, bilateral trade between the two countries amounted to approximately USD 500 million, which represents an increase of 24% over the previous year.

So far, China has funded a number of infrastructure projects spanned across a wide spectrum of areas in Mauritius, among which the terminal building at SSR International Airport, the construction of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation headquarters, the Anjalay Stadium, the Barkly Bridge, the low-cost housing project and the X-ray scanners for the Customs Department.

### African Finance Minister of the Year 2012 Award goes to VPM Duval

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Mr Xavier-Luc Duval, has been conferred the African Finance Minister of the year 2012 Award by the African Leadership Magazine.

The Board juries of the African Leadership Magazine cited prudent fiscal management, economic reforms and pro-African fiscal policies and regimes as the key features to justifying the nomination of Minister Duval.
Health Care
Mauritius and Pakistan sign MoU in Ophthalmology

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), aiming to enhance existing cooperation between Mauritius and Pakistan in the field of ophthalmology over a period of five years, was signed on 6 July 2012 at the Subramania Bharati Eye hospital in Moka. Signatories were the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life and Al Shifa Trust Eye Hospital, Pakistan Institute of Ophthalmology of Rawalpindi.

According to the terms of the MoU, the Pakistani team led by the Chief Consultant/Dean of Al Shifa Trust Eye Hospital, Professor Wajid Ali Khan, will continue to operate on complex cases on a voluntary basis using state-of-the-art technology and new techniques available in Mauritius. The team will provide training to the local surgeons and the nursing staff during surgeries and will conduct seminars, workshops and clinical meetings. The MoU also makes provision for Mauritian doctors, nursing staff as well as paramedical staff to undergo short and long-term training at the Al Shifa Trust Eye Hospital.

The Pakistani team pledges to conduct operation in Pakistan on patients with eye conditions inoperable in Mauritius; to provide technical and clinical assistance without any cost; and assist the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life to recruit ophthalmologists and opticians from Pakistan on a contract basis. Al Shifa Trust Eye Hospital has further agreed to approach donor agencies to support programmes related to the development of ophthalmological and related fields in Mauritius.

A total of 46 cases of cornea grafting, vitreo-retinal and other complex ocular plastic and paediatric surgeries have been effected by the team which was in Mauritius from 30 June to 7 July 2012.

Since their first visit to Mauritius in 2008 and up to 2011, the Pakistani team has operated on 168 complex ophthalmic cases on a voluntary basis.

Access of persons with disabilities to employment
Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Act amended

The Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Act of 1996 has been amended so as to promote the access of persons with disabilities to employment. The Amendment Bill was introduced into the National Assembly on 3 July 2012.

The term ‘employer’ now includes ‘all statutory bodies with a workforce of 35 employees or more’ so as to open additional avenues for the employment of disabled persons in the parastatal bodies as opposed to its existing application to the private sector only.

Employers with more than 35 employees who are not employing disabled persons as per the prescribed 3 per cent will have to make a monthly contribution of Rs 4 000 for each disabled employee not recruited. The proceeds from the contribution will be used by the Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Board solely for the purpose of enhancing training and employment opportunities for disabled persons. In addition, for those employers who are not abiding to the law, the fine is being brought up from Rs 4 000 to Rs 75 000.

The definition of a disabled person has also been amended. A disabled person is defined as someone with a long-term physical disfigurement which gives rise to barriers or prejudices impeding his participation at an equal level with other members of society in major life activities.

According to the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions, Mrs Sheilabai Bappoo, the amendments prove Government’s commitment to move towards the building of an inclusive society where able and disabled persons alike enjoy equality and opportunities in the fulfilment of their aspirations. The new model, she explained, emphasises the abilities and competencies of persons with disabilities as opposed to the medical model which stresses on only their disabilities.
An ICT Training Academy is expected to be operational in Ebène at the start of September 2012. The objective is to fully exploit the employment potential in the ICT/BPO sector and improve human resources’ skill competencies in this sector.

The Academy would provide short-term industry-led training, ensure work placement after successful completion of training and cater for re-skilling of existing workforce to enhance capacity building initiatives. It is expected that a workforce of 29 000 would be required by 2014 to further strengthen that sector, involving the additional recruitment of around 14 000 people.

In this context, an ICT Skills Development Programme to the tune of Rs 50 million to train youth in Mauritius and Rodrigues for their eventual employment in the ICT/BPO industry, is being introduced. The ICT Skills Development Programme aims at palliating shortages of ICT professionals. It is proposed to train some 2 500 persons during the next five months.

The Skills Development Programme

The Programme is a public private partnership initiative with Government contributing 60% and private sector 40%. Trainees will be receiving an all inclusive monthly stipend with Government contributing 50% and private sector 50%. The Programme is made up of two schemes: Training and Work Placement Scheme for unemployed youth, and Work-based Learning for University Students.

Under the first scheme, unemployed youth in Mauritius and Rodrigues who have an SC, HSC, diploma and/or degree, will benefit from training and a work placement. They will follow a training course in an institution accredited by the Mauritius Qualifications Authority for two months. The monthly stipend will be Rs 6 000 for SC, HSC and diploma holders and Rs 12 000 for graduates. Persons with disabilities will also benefit from the scheme with the potential of ICT creating ‘work-from-home’ possibilities.

Moreover, in order to be eligible for the scheme, ICT companies should give a commitment to offer employment to at least 60% of the trainees after the training period and that the employees recruited through this scheme should stay in employment for at least one year.

As regards the Work-based Learning for University Students scheme, it will allow tertiary level students acquire experience through a ‘work-based learning’ concept while being a registered student in a tertiary institution. They will be able to take an internship in an ICT company for a total of three months with a monthly pay of Rs 6 000.
A multisectoral country workshop for the development of an action plan for population-based prevention of childhood obesity was held from 2 to 5 July 2012 at La Grande Cannelle in Domaine Les Pailles in line with Government’s actions and commitment to reverse the rise of overweight and obese children in Mauritius.

In fact, results from the Global school based Student Health Survey conducted in 2011 revealed that 21.2% of children aged 13 to 15 years were overweight and 6.2% were obese. The Survey also reported that only 19.4% of students surveyed were physically active for a total of at least 60 minutes per day on all seven days, and 39.4% spent three or more hours per day doing sedentary activities during a typical or usual day.

The country workshop at Domaine Les Pailles brought together around 80 foreign and local participants comprising nutritionists, pediatricians as well as representatives from field institutions and organisations of the public and private sectors.

The main objective was to build up capacity for a multisectoral team of Government officials and stakeholders in the use and applications of health tools for the prevention of childhood obesity.

In his opening address, the Minister of Health and Quality of Life, Mr Lormus Bundhoo, outlined that obesity is one of the greatest health challenges the world is facing at present. He also called for a review of our eating habits and culture, stressing the need for a survey to see what our eating scenario is going to be in the next 25 years. He recalled that according to the 2009 National Non-Communicable Diseases Survey, 34.9% of adults between 25 to 74 years of age were overweight and 16% obese.

Measures taken to combat obesity among children

Several policy decisions have been taken and action plans and programs developed in view of the rise of overweight and obese children in Mauritius. These include:

- Amendment of Food Regulations of 1999 to establish a ceiling for permissible levels of saturated fats in all foods
- Banning of soft drinks in all educational institutions in 2007 and preparation of guidelines in 2009 for the sale of food in primary and secondary school canteens

A Nutrition Surveillance system has been set up to provide regular and accurate information on the nutritional status of children from birth to age five, and on pregnant women.

Moreover, a School Health Programme established since 2007 provides for a number of activities in school settings, including an ongoing screening programme in primary and secondary schools for the early detection of disease risk factors in schoolchildren and for timely referral for further care and follow up.