A relation that transcends traditional diplomacy and is built on a bedrock of fundamental values and shared ideals: This is the backdrop against which Prime Minister Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam situated his State visit to India from 6 to 9 February 2012 where he pledged, with his Indian counterpart Dr Manmohan Singh, to take the two countries’ relationship to a still higher plane in the light of the new geo-political and economic landscape shaping up.

The Prime Minister was at the head of a delegation including Dr A. Boolell, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Mr S.C. Sayed-Hossen, Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection, Dr A.K. Jagessur, Mauritius High Commissioner in India, and representatives of the private sector.

Dr Ramgoolam had two meetings with Dr Manmohan Singh, that is, a restricted meeting followed by delegation-level talks. During the meetings, Dr Manmohan Singh announced an offer of an economic package comprising a line of credit of US$250m and a grant of US$20m. The two Prime Ministers discussed the latest developments on the Chagos issue, the Double Taxation Avoidance Convention, terrorism and
piracy, cooperation to enhance security in the Indian Ocean Region, the development of an effective legal framework against piracy, and the need to intensify cooperation to tackle the challenges faced by the Indian Ocean Rim Countries.

Regarding the Double Taxation Avoidance Treaty, the Prime Minister made a set of proposals to his Indian counterpart, with a threefold objective: ensuring that there is no misuse of the Convention; finding ways of addressing the concerns raised by India whilst ensuring that business under the Double Taxation Avoidance Convention remains meaningful; and evolving a mutually acceptable win-win package for both India and Mauritius and which provides certainty to the operation of the Double Taxation Avoidance Convention.

In a broader perspective, he hoped for an early conclusion of the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement. The Prime Minister of India agreed and suggested that the Joint Commission should meet at an early date to look into the matter.

Dr Ramgoolam also requested his Indian counterpart to consider the grant of the same visa facilities for entry of Mauritian nationals to India as those granted by Mauritius to Indian nationals.

During his visit, the Prime Minister called on the Indian President, Mrs Prathiba Devisingh Patil, Vice-President Mohammad Abdul Aziz Ansari, and the Chairperson of the United Progressive Alliance, Mrs Sonia Gandhi. He also had meetings on bilateral issues with a number of Ministers.

### MOUs Signed

The visit was marked by the signing of five Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) in the fields of: (i) science and technology; (ii) education and youth and sports; (iii) cooperation between the Ministry of Textiles of India and the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection of Mauritius; (iv) Education Exchange Programme for 2012-2016; and (v) the Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre Trust Fund and the National Council of Science Museums of India.

**Mauritius and India have the advantage of sharing common views on many a critical issue on the regional and international agenda and which has enabled us to stand united on these common concerns. Mauritius will always stand by India because of the unique relations we share. The golden thread which binds the men and women of our two countries have been woven during the course of whole generations for nearly two centuries and it can never be broken.**

*Prime Minister Dr Ramgoolam at the State banquet hosted in his honour by Dr Manmohan Singh*
Business Meeting with Private Sector

Other salient features of the visit were two high-profile business meetings by the Mauritian private sector with major captains of the Indian industry in New Delhi and Mumbai. More than 250 prominent members of the Indian Business Community attended.

Addressing the business community, Dr Ramgoolam, mentioned that the African Economic Renaissance can take Indo-Mauritian economic ties to completely new heights and he invited Indian businessmen to seize the new opportunities that are unfolding in various sectors of the Mauritian economy.

“Investing in Mauritius is not only about doing business for its population of 1.2 million. It is most importantly about producing for the entire African market of around one billion people. By operating from Mauritius they benefit from a solid, safe and reputable economic platform”, he pointed out. It is forecast that by 2015, out of the top 10 performing economies, seven will be African, he said.

Guest of Honour - Kurukshtera University

On the last leg of his visit, the Prime Minister was the special Guest of Honour for the 29th Convocation at Kurukshtera University. He was conferred the Honorary Doctor of Laws (LLD) of the University in recognition for his contribution to the socio-economic development and modernisation of Mauritius and in regard to the consolidation of relations between India and Mauritius.

Mauritius to host SADC Ministers of Tourism Meeting

Mauritius will host on 29 March 2012 the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Ministers of Tourism Meeting. The Meeting will be preceded by the Senior Officials Meeting and the Regional Tourism Organisation of Southern Africa (RETOSA) Executive and Board Meetings from 26 to 28 March 2012.

Some 150 delegates from 14 Member States of SADC including Mauritius are expected to attend this meeting which will be held at the Grand Baie International Conference Centre.

One of the objectives of the Meeting will be to review the state of tourism in the SADC region and provide guidance to the SADC Secretariat and RETOSA on future initiatives to enhance our global market share.

The RETOSA, established in 1996, is the official marketing and promotion arm of the tourism sector of SADC. The mandate of RETOSA is to market and promote Southern Africa in close cooperation with the region’s national tourist bodies and the private sector. Its aim is to create a clear and recognizable brand identity that will enable the sub-continent to compete effectively within the global arena.
The 177th Anniversary of the Abolition of Slavery in Mauritius was marked by an official ceremony at Le Morne on 1st February 2012. The Vice-President of the Republic, Mrs Monique Agnes Ohsan Bellepeau, and the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, were present.

In her address, the Vice-President stated that while slavery was the exploitation of men by men and a crime against humanity, slave descendants have all the reasons to be proud of their ancestors because those people have toiled for the development of Mauritius.

Today, we have the duty to remember those slaves and understand the importance of this commemoration, she said. Moreover, this tribute is a means to acquaint the young with the history of the country, she added.

For his part, the Prime Minister emphasised the importance of building a nation in which people overlook the animosity and humiliation of slavery and work together for the betterment of the country. Dr. Ramgoolam recapped the key episodes of the history of slavery in Mauritius and recalled that Le Morne Cultural Landscape was inscribed on the World Heritage List in July 2008 at the 32nd session of the World Heritage Committee in Quebec City, Canada.

According to the Prime Minister, the Truth and Justice Commission Report is another important document which unveils part of Mauritius’ history. Most of the descendants of ex-slaves live in total ignorance of the history of their ancestors, he said. He also commended the introduction of the Kreol Morisien in Standard One since January this year while adding that Kreol Morisien apart from being the lingua franca of the country, also reinforces the cultural identity as a nation.

Among the activities organised to commemorate the event were a wreath-laying ceremony at the Monument aux Esclaves, donation of laptops to students of Le Morne who have excelled in the Certificate of Primary Education examinations 2011, a prize giving ceremony to reward winners of a ‘Model’ Competition on Le Morne Cultural Landscape and a cultural show on the public beach of Le Morne.

According to historical records, Le Morne was used as a shelter by runaway slaves and maroons through the 18th and early 19th centuries. Slavery was abolished on 1st February 1835.
The Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, led the Mauritian delegation. Addressing the conference, he pledged Mauritius’ strong commitment in the fight against piracy in the Indian Ocean. He underlined that the country had demonstrated its concern through various actions. These include: an Agreement signed with the European Union for the transfer of suspected pirates for investigation, prosecution, trial and detention in Mauritius; and the provision of a proper and adequate legal framework for that purpose.

As regards the Somalia issue, Dr Ramgoolam stressed that it was vital for the Somali authorities to demonstrate their determination and take bold and decisive measures for the early implementation of the road map adopted in September 2011. He recalled that the piracy scourge has cost nine billion US dollars last year in disrupted trade besides human tragedy. “The more so as maritime security holds the key to economic development in the region”, he said, adding that the issues of plundering of fishing stocks by illegal fishing and the dumping of toxic wastes should also be addressed.

The objectives of the Conference were to tackle the many issues facing Somalia, the region and the international community, and discuss a road map for the reconstruction and development of Somalia, as well as how to address the issue of piracy in a coordinated way.

Some 50 countries, including 16 Heads of State and Government, as well as, Mr Ban Ki Moon, UN Secretary General, Mrs Hillary Clinton, US Secretary of State, Baroness Catherine Ashton, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and Mr Alain Juppé, Foreign Minister of France, participated in the Conference.

Discussions with British Prime Minister

During discussions which the Prime Minister had with British Prime Minister David Cameron, the latter expressed the wish that Mauritius sign a MoU with the UK on the conditions of transfer of suspected pirates and seized property. Dr Ramgoolam explained that Mauritius had to study the policy and security implications before formal bilateral discussions could start.

Chagos Issue

In London, Dr Ramgoolam also attended two meetings on 21 and 24 February 2012 with external lawyers of Mauritius, namely, Mr Philippe Sands, Mr Paul Reichler and Mr James Crawford, on the Chagos issue and reviewed progress in the proceedings before the Arbitral Tribunal and discussed various options.

He also attended a meeting with a team of International Consultants and discussed with them the current proposals for the reform of the present electoral system to ensure that such reforms would bring about fairness and equity.

Other Salient Features

During his visit, the Prime Minister had a bilateral meeting with UN Secretary General Mr Ban Ki Moon. The problem of piracy in the Indian Ocean and the escalating terrorism in the Middle East were raised. Dr Ramgoolam invited Mr Ban Ki Moon to attend the Global Forum on Migration and Development scheduled in Mauritius in November 2012.

In the margins of the Conference, the International Maritime Organisation organised a meeting on the theme Moving Forward on our Shared Agenda to Tackle Piracy off the Coast of Somalia. Another Meeting was held under the Chairmanship of Mr Henry Bellingham, UK Minister for Africa, to discuss mainly the draft statement of principles on Regional Burden Sharing which the UK had circulated to four countries of the region namely, Mauritius, the Seychelles, Kenya and Tanzania. A meeting on Humanitarian Issues was also held to discuss the humanitarian crisis in Somalia and efforts undertaken to improve the effectiveness of international response.
The Agreement establishes the principles and the rules governing economic, financial and scientific cooperation in the fisheries sector with a view to guaranteeing the conservation and sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources and developing the fisheries sector in Mauritius. Furthermore, the Agreement will cater for fishing opportunities, financial assistance and the promotion of responsible and sustainable fisheries in Mauritian waters.

It also provides for fishing opportunities and conditions that will apply for three years and will provide for a total financial contribution of EUR 1,980,000. The amount corresponds to EUR 357,500 per year, corresponding to the fishing access right equivalent to a reference tonnage of 5,500 tonnes and EUR 302,500 per year, corresponding to a specific amount for the support and implementation of Mauritian sectoral fisheries policy aiming at promoting sustainable fishing in Mauritian waters.

In addition to the economic benefits, the Agreement provides a policy framework and an effective instrument for both parties to oversee and enforce observance of responsible fishing by the operators, and thereby ensuring the sustainability of the tuna fishery in the South West Indian Ocean.

Through this Agreement, Mauritius will also gain support from the EU to implement the Fisheries Master Plan. The Plan will focus on sustainability and profitability of small scale fishermen and sustainable management and development of tuna and other highly migratory resources in the region.

Provisions to avoid any adverse effects on the small scale fishermen’s activities have also been considered. The fishing activities of the EU fleet will take place only beyond 15 nautical miles of the coast and the possibility of embarking 10 Mauritian qualified seamen on board of EU vessels when operating in Mauritian waters is foreseen.

Agreement will help promote sustainable fisheries
World Wetlands Day
Pointe D’Esny inaugurated as the third Ramsar Site in Mauritius

After the Rivulet Terre Rouge Estuary Bird Sanctuary and the Blue Bay Marine Park, Pointe d’Esny has been designated as a Ramsar Site of International Importance.

Pointe D’Esny was inaugurated by the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Industry, Mr S. Faugoo, as the third Ramsar Site in Mauritius on the occasion of the celebration of the World Wetlands Day on 2 February 2012.

The site, which was proclaimed in September 2011, harbours a rich mangrove forest ecosystem which acts as breeding nursery for marine fishes and crabs. It plays a vital role in supporting the marine ecosystem as well as abating natural calamities such as tsunami.

Mauritius became a signatory party to the Ramsar Convention on 30 September 2001 through the designation of its very first Ramsar Site; the Rivulet Terre Rouge Estuary Bird Sanctuary. The other two Ramsar Sites of international importance designated in Mauritius are: Blue Bay Marine Park and Pointe D’Esny mangrove site.

The World Wetlands Day is celebrated on 2 February of each year as it marks the date of the signing of the Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971 in the Iranian City of Ramsar, hence the Ramsar Convention. The theme for this year was “Wetlands and Forests: Forests for Wetlands and Water”.

World Wetlands Day was celebrated for the first time in 1997 and since then government agencies, non-governmental organisations and groups of citizens at all levels of the community have taken advantage of the opportunity to undertake actions aimed at raising public awareness of wetland values and benefits in general and the Ramsar Convention in particular.
Managing water resources
CWA enforces regulations to prevent wastage

The Drought Period Regulations 2011 under the CWA Act are being enforced since 10 February 2012 with a view to better managing water resources in the wake of the prevailing dry season, especially in the Mare-aux-Vacoas catchment area. The water level at Mare-aux-Vacoas reservoir stood at 29.3% at the end of February.

With the enforcement of these regulations, it is illegal to wash a vehicle, pavement or building and water any hedge or lawn through a hosepipe, sprinkler or similar apparatus in a wasteful manner. All those who contravene these regulations will be liable, in the case of a domestic consumer, to a fine not exceeding Rs 50 000 and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years. In any other case, the prescribed penalty is as follows: a fine not exceeding Rs 200 000 and imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years.

Harnessing additional water resources

Besides, other measures are being taken to address water management in the country as well as sensitise the population at large regarding the critical situation the country is facing due to scarcity of water in reservoirs.

Among these measures: the setting up of small dams across rivers like Rivière Sèche, Rivière Rempart, Rivière du Poste, Rivière Terre Rouge and Rivière Profonde to harness more water by means of additional resources in the vicinity of La Marie Treatment Plant and Mare Aux Vacoas (MAV). These additional river sources contribute to a volume of about 8 000 m³/day.

Moreover, with the commissioning of the Mare Longue pipeline project, a total volume of 20 000 m³/day is supplemented to MAV, hence bringing the volume of water released from MAV from the present 55 000 m³/day to 35 000 m³/day. With a view to improving the quality of water, the CWA has also invested Rs 15 million for the acquisition of five mobile water treatment plants. Two mobile treatment plants each of treatment capacity of 1200m³/day have been installed at Côte D’Or reservoir.

Another major project relating to the transfer of some 20 000 m³ from Midlands reservoir to Didier reservoir at Curepipe will be undertaken on a fast track basis. The CWA is also considering the transfer of some 10 000m³ of water from Tamarind Falls upstream to La Marie.

Hotels, Integrated Resort Schemes and restaurants have been called to use non-potable water for non-potable purposes and to set up desalination units. Furthermore the population is being encouraged to practise rain water harvesting. The CWA is intensifying its media campaign through a distribution of posters, leaflets, drawing and project writing competitions and advertising.
An increase in the pass rate for the Cambridge Higher School Certificate (HSC) examinations has been registered for the year 2011 that is 79.31% as compared to 78.47% in 2010, following the proclamation of the HSC results on 6 February 2012. The names of 31 laureates were also announced.

Out of the 125 secondary schools where students took part in the examinations, 29 have scored a pass rate of more than 90%, with three schools recording a pass rate of 100%

A new Bursary Scheme comprising eight Bursaries is being implemented by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources for the benefit of students from families with monthly household income of less than Rs 5 000. In this context, the Ministry is currently working on the list of meritorious candidates for this support.

It is recalled that in line with Government Programme 2010-2015 and for greater equity and inclusiveness, the Government Scholarship Schemes, also known as the Laureates Scheme has been reviewed with a view to awarding scholarships to a larger number of students, particularly meritorious candidates from modest income families. Furthermore, the number of Scholarships will subsequently increase from 30 to 60 and will become operational as from 2012 and applicable to laureates proclaimed in 2013.

The Additional Scholarship Scheme will also be reviewed to cater for 30 additional scholarships, out of which 16 will be awarded based on a combination of academic merit and social criteria. Laureates will be encouraged to undertake their first degree studies in a local tertiary education institution, duly registered with the Tertiary Education Commission, and thereafter benefit from a postgraduate scholarship.

As regards Cambridge School Certificate, 17 192 students sat for the exams in 2011 and a pass rate of 76.74% was registered.

Mauritius and France sign Avenant

Mauritius and France signed during the last week of January an Avenant for the year 2012-2013, which spells out the technical modalities and financial procedures for the implementation of the different programmes pertaining to education and training, as well as the technical and vocational sectors.

The signing of this Avenant which forms part of a Convention-Cadre de Coopération Éducative between the two countries has helped set up new avenues of collaboration mainly in areas like teacher training, renewable energy, tourism and hospitality, and textile.

In the context of a bilateral cooperation between Mauritius and France in the field of education, a Convention-Cadre de Coopération Éducative has been regularly signed since 2002 between the Ministry of Education and Human Resources and the French Authorities. The latter defines the field of cooperation in the education sector and the modalities thereof between the ministry, the French Embassy and the Académie de la Réunion. The programme of cooperation between the above three parties is further defined in a biennial Avenant.

The Convention-Cadre signed in December 2009 covers a period of four years as from 1st January 2010. The agreement also made provision for a biennial Avenant for the period 2010-2011. Upon its expiry in December 2011, the Avenant is being renewed for a further period of two years.
Mauritius was represented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Dr. Arvin Boolell.

Issues at the forefront of discussions include Climate Change; Adoption of the African Consensus Statement on Sustainable Development in the context of the Rio+20 Summit; Peace and Security in Africa; Election of Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the AU Commission as well as the Eight Commissioners; Election of Ten members of the AU Peace and Security Council; African Peer Review Mechanism; and Aid Effectiveness.

Mauritius and Uganda sign Agreement on the Transfer of Prisoners

The Summit was also the backdrop for the signature by Minister Boolell and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uganda on 29 January 2012 of an Agreement on the Transfer of Prisoners between their respective countries. The main objective of the Agreement is to provide a Framework of Cooperation between Mauritius and Uganda for enabling the transfer of prisoners. Dr Boolell also requested for the appointment of Honorary Consuls of Mauritius in Uganda.

Bilateral meetings with several delegations

In the margins of the Summit, Minister Boolell had bilateral meetings with several delegations, including those of UK, South Korea, Bhutan, Serbia, Iran, Zimbabwe and Madagascar.

The Chagos Archipelago and the meeting on Somalia convened by the British Prime Minister were also evoked between Minister Boolell and the British delegation led by Mr. Henry Bellingham, Minister for Africa in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. With his Iranian counterpart, Dr Boolell discussed cooperation in the context of Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC).

With the Malagasy delegation, the Mauritian Minister welcomed the positive developments in that country and pressed the need for Madagascar to follow the SADC Roadmap. The Minister also discussed the lifting of sanctions imposed by the AU and other partners as according to informed sources, sanctions caused the loss of more than 400 000 jobs in Madagascar.

With the Korean (South Korea) and Bhutanese delegations, discussions focused on their respective bids for a seat on the UN Security Council. The Minister also invited the Korean authorities to send an investment prospection mission to Mauritius.

Non-Aligned Movement
Mauritius elected Vice-President of meeting on Advancement of Women

Mauritius was elected Vice-President of the third ministerial meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) on the Advancement of Women, held on 13 and 14 February 2012 in Doha, Qatar.

The Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, Mrs Mireille Martin, represented the country at the meeting which saw the participation of about 500 representatives from more than 80 NAM countries.

The meeting provided a platform for participants to learn about other countries’ experiences on how to deal with the challenges facing women and propose solutions and appropriate mechanisms. It also focused on the commitment of all NAM member-states to make every possible effort for the advancement of women and promote their participation in all spheres of life.

In her address at the meeting, Minister Martin dwelt on some of the major challenges facing Mauritian women in the globalised world such as feminisation of poverty, HIV and AIDS, gender-based violence (GBV), and gender gaps. She enumerated Government’s actions geared towards empowering women such as providing alternative economic opportunities for women, conducting activities among the high risk population living with HIV and AIDS, adoption of appropriate legislation and protective mechanisms against GBV, and ensuring equal participation of men and women in decision making processes.
A Stakeholder Workshop on Cadastral Survey Practices, Regulations and Use of Parcel Identification Number (PIN) in the context of the Land Administration, Valuation and Information Management System (LAVIMS) project, was held on 15 February 2012 at the Gold Crest Hotel, Quatre Bornes.

Notaries, land surveyors and representatives from various Government departments and local authorities attended the workshop which served as a platform for discussions on aspects related to LAVIMS generally and specifically the new survey system being put in place. Major issues facing the land administration and management sector in Mauritius were also identified.

The LAVIMS project is an initiative of the Government to modernise land administration and has a two-fold objective. Firstly the establishment of an efficient and cost-effective land administration and information system, that is, an online and dynamic cadastre; and secondly the setting up of a general valuation roll of some 300,000 residential properties, privately or State-owned. LAVIMS also has four sub-projects wrapped up in one, namely: Cadastre, Deeds, Valuation and Information Management System (IMS).

The Deeds and Cadastre components are operational since 1 July 2011; the search facility for deeds in LAVIMS has been made available to the public at the Registrar General’s Department since November 2011; and the Valuation component has become live since 16 December 2011. Arrangements are now being made for the issue of a Parcel Identification Number (PIN) for each plot of land, hence the need to sensitise the various stakeholders with the new system.

In his address at the workshop, the Minister of Housing and Lands, Dr. Abu Twalib Kasenally pointed out that one of the objectives of his ministry is to address access to and use of land in the best way possible. It is in this context that the Government has embarked on the LAVIMS project which integrates various land datasets for effective land administration by using state of art information technology in spatial domain, he underlined.

With the implementation of LAVIMS, Mauritius will have a modern, secure, transparent, affordable and efficient land administration and management system, said the Minister. He added that LAVIMS has provided the country with the essential degree of integration that was missing in the former system and has moved the technology forward from a paper-based system to a modern digital system.

In a broader perspective, LAVIMS will allow for better infrastructure planning and coordination. Through the availability of comprehensive and up-to-date record land information, assisted by accurate and reliable cadastral information, Government can better plan and proceed with major infrastructure developments, such as highways, transport and communication facilities in a manner which is less costly, more efficient and less disruptive to the community.

The long-term LAVIMS reform programme will, besides, allow Government to cope better with the growing demands for the release of affordable land for housing, effectively plan developments and the provision of infrastructure in urban and rural areas as well as provide a competitive investment climate to attract domestic and foreign investment.

LAVIMS will allow for better land and infrastructure planning.
Financial Sector
FSC signs protocol with BoM and Statistics Mauritius

A Protocol to amend the existing Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) regarding the exchange of information between the Financial Services Commission (FSC) and the Bank of Mauritius (BOM) was signed on 8 February 2012 at the BoM Tower in Port Louis.

The MoU was originally signed in December 2002 to set out the framework for co-operation between BoM and the FSC in their common pursuit to maintain a safe, efficient and stable financial system in Mauritius.

The amendments will help reinforce the framework for effective exchange of information between the two organisations and will position Mauritius on the same level as other internationally recognised financial centres and reaffirm the two organisations’ commitment to collaborate further to safeguard the stability of the domestic financial system.

Moreover it will enable Mauritius to comply with the requirements imposed under the International Organisation of Securities Commissions (IOSCO) Multilateral Memorandum of Understanding (MMoU).

The International Organisation of Securities Commissions is a global organisation and standard setter for Securities Regulations worldwide. Its core objectives are: protecting investors, ensuring that markets are safe, efficient and transparent and reducing systematic risk.

The IOSCO MMoU sets an international benchmark for cross-border co-operation which is critical in combating violations of securities and derivatives laws. The MMoU also spells out the specific requirements and modalities on the type of information to be exchanged within legal abilities.

The FSC has been complying with the IOSCO’s principles for the past years in matters of exchange of information with its counterparts but some amendments were deemed necessary within its legal framework to enable Mauritius to fully subscribe to the IOSCO Multilateral Memorandum of Understanding (MMoU).

It will be recalled that the reputation of the Mauritius International Financial Centre lies in compliance with standards set by international standard-setting organisations and international norms relating among others to the disclosure and exchange of information.

MOU with Statistics Mauritius

The FSC also signed, on 9 February 2012, an MOU with Statistics Mauritius regarding the exchange of information and collection and compilation of statistics. The MOU which sets the framework of cooperation between the two organisations will help ensure a better coordination for data dissemination and improve the national statistical system based on international norms.

So far the FSC has signed 20 such MOUs with its various stakeholders/counterparts which consist of both local and international authorities.

Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Trade
One-week course focuses on International Business

A one week Executive Development Programme on International Business was launched on February 13 2012 at the headquarters of the Mauritius Employers Federation and Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MEF-MCCI) in Ebène.

The Programme was jointly hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, through its virtual Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Trade, with the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT). The event took place as part of the India-Africa programme.

Some 40-50 participants from public and private sectors including entrepreneurs attended the course. Topics discussed included: training need analysis and competency mapping; globalisation, WTO and its impact on international business; export marketing plan; agriculture exports from Mauritius – issues and challenges; sector and market identification process; global standards and protocols; development of international logistics; building global supply chain strategies; trade policy issues for Mauritius; and, WTO and trade facilitation.

Resource persons from the IIFT were Professors Joshi, Chaturvedi, Thomas, Chacko and Singh. It is recalled that the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Trade and the IIFT have a Memorandum of Understanding since 2007.
**Occupational Safety and Health**

**Launching of guidelines for welfare of workers**

*Two guidelines relating to Occupational Safety and Health (OSH), one on training and the other on the policy for HIV/AIDS, were launched on 2 February 2012 at a one-day seminar on OSH for employees of parastatal bodies held in Port Louis.*

The guidelines on training which have been prepared through tripartite consultations will help employers in providing appropriate and comprehensive training to their employees on OSH so as to promote a safe and healthy culture at work. The one pertaining to HIV/AIDS will help to manage and mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS on the world of work and to eliminate stigma and discrimination.

An initiative of the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment, the seminar was attended by participants from the 100 parastatal organisations across the island. The aim was to sensitise them on the importance of applying OSH norms in their respective institutions. The participants were also exposed to various features of the OSH namely, preventing workers from suffering occupational accidents and diseases and work-related diseases, maintaining a safe and healthy workforce, enhancement of the quality of life of the family and society at large, as well as the improvement of the productivity and competitiveness of the enterprises for which they are working.

Topics covered during the seminar were, OSH legislations and management system, risk assessment, HIV/AIDS prevention, healthy living habits, fire safety, prevention of violence at work, alcohol, tobacco and substance abuse and stress management.

From 2009 to 2011, around 57 seminars on OSH have been organised by the Ministry and 133 training programmes on site conducted following requests from stakeholders. For the year 2012, 29 national seminars are scheduled for different sectors of the economy.

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**Access to Justice - New provisions**

- **The Bail and Remand Court is operational during weekends and public holidays since 4 February 2012.**

  The new arrangement will enhance the ready access of people to justice for the determination of their rights and remedying of their grievances.

- **As from February 2012, the eligibility threshold for legal aid has increased from Rs 5 000 to Rs 10 000 as regards monthly income and from Rs 75 000 to Rs 500 000 as regards value of property.**

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**Safer Internet Day 2012**

**Opening of a Child Online Safety workshop**

Safer Internet Day (SID) 2012 was observed on 8 February 2012 in Mauritius under the global theme **Connecting generations and educating each other**. The theme looks at the reach of the online world across all generations and cultures and encourages families to work together to stay safe online. The slogan chosen is **Discover the digital world together... Safely!**

SID is part of the global drive to promote safer internet for all users, especially for young people and is celebrated worldwide on every second Tuesday of February each year.

To mark SID 2012 in Mauritius, a Child Online Safety workshop was held at the auditorium of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute in Moka, and saw the participation of rectors and ICT teachers of State and private secondary schools. The objective was to sensitise participants about the impact of the threats and consequences that improper use of the Internet may have on the youth.

Discussions during the workshop focused on the following themes:

- Staying Safe and Protected on Social Networking Sites;
- Psychological Impact of the Usage of Internet on Children;
- Take Charge of Your Online Reputation;
- and, Legal Sanction for Misuse of the Internet.

As part of the awareness campaign on the importance of safer internet for all users, a Cyber-smart Guide for parents and children and the second edition of the e-Security Newsletter were launched. Other activities being organised to mark SID 2012 include awareness campaigns on Internet Safety; distribution of brochures; and a quiz competition on ‘Online Security’ for secondary schools’ students.
**Sustainable development**

**Validation Workshop for the RIO+20 Preparatory Process**

A validation workshop for the RIO+20 National Preparatory Process which aims at giving participants the opportunity to take stock of progress achieved in advancing sustainable development at national level was held on 13 February 2012 at La Cannelle, Domaine Les Pailles.

Participants at this multi-stakeholder workshop were called upon to formulate a set of action-oriented recommendations to transform Mauritius into a green economy. The recommendations will be enunciated during plenary sessions at the Rio+20 Conference to be held in June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro and will eventually serve as an essential roadmap to tread towards sustainable development after the Conference. The Rio+20 Conference will focus on two major themes; firstly a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication; and secondly the institutional framework for sustainable development.

Launching the workshop, the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development, Mr Devanand Virahsawmy, stated that he firmly believes that Rio+20 will provide a new and historic opportunity to define pathways to a safer, more equitable, cleaner, greener and more prosperous world. He added that the Government has already embraced sustainable development and the green economy concept.

For her part, the United Nations Coordinator for Mauritius and Seychelles, Ms. Leyla Tegmo-Reddy, underlined the excellent collaboration between the UNDP and the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development. “We expect that the report will showcase Mauritius as a model for moving towards sustainable development at such an important international forum as Rio+20, and that it will provide opportunities to attract further support from the international community for Mauritius” she added.

Regarding the approach of sustainable development, Mauritius has already embarked on different environmental projects, the most prominent one being the Maurice Ile Durable (MID) project for which a sum of Rs 500 million has been disbursed for the implementation of some 19 projects aimed at improving energy efficiency and promoting the use of renewable energy.

Moreover, consultants have already been appointed for the MID project, and the formulation of the MID Policy, Strategy and Action Plan has already started. The consultants will also review the existing institutional and legislative framework and develop indicators for monitoring and evaluating progress in sustainable development. The Final MID Policy, Strategy and Action Plan are expected to be ready in July this year.

**Film Festival on Disability**

A five-day film festival on disability was launched on 6 February 2012 at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute auditorium, Moka to sensitise the public on the issue of disability and on the value of persons with disability.

This first ever film festival on disabilities aimed at raising awareness on the issue of disability and disseminating to the public the rights of persons with disabilities as full-fledged citizens and the need for their integration in society.

Moreover, it also enabled the public to have a glimpse of the skills, potential and talents of persons with disabilities. It was also a hymn to people who have surmounted enormous obstacles and difficulties to overcome their disability. Various regional shows in different parts of the country and the projection of the film will continue throughout the year.