Mauritius Light Rapid Transit

Agreement signed for consultancy services

An agreement for the provision of consultancy services for the Mauritius Light Rapid Transit (LRT) project was signed on 7 September 2012 in Port Louis by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping, and Singapore Cooperative Enterprise (SCE).

The agreement provides for:

- The determination of a feasible alignment for the whole Light Rail Transit corridor running between Curepipe and Port Louis as well as financial and economic analysis
- Development of concept and preliminary design to attract market interest in the project from suitably qualified delivery entities and to invite priced tenders from those entities whereby a Request For Proposals (Tender) would be prepared and internationally launched
- A high level consideration of potential future northbound and southbound extension to the Curepipe and Port Louis corridor.
The total cost of the consultancy services for the LRT project is estimated at around Rs 180 million. The preliminary works will be conducted by SCE within 13 months. The outcomes of SCE will then determine the construction cost of the LRT.

The LRT project, at a first phase, will consist of a feasible alignment for the whole Light Rail Transit corridor running between Curepipe and Port Louis covering a length of approximately 28 kilometres.

The project has materialised following the visit of the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, to Singapore in 2010. It was then decided that under the Government to Government agreement with Singapore, the SCE, together with its partners, namely, Singapore Mass Rapid Transit (SMRT) Corporation Ltd and Aurecon Ltd, would assist Mauritius in preparing a request for proposal document to be launched to potential developers. A delegation from the SMRT was in Mauritius in March 2011 to study the possibilities of introducing the LRT system.

It will be recalled that a Steering Committee was set up under the Chairmanship of the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service to examine the modalities of the proposed LRT system. Subsequently, the proposals of SCE were examined by a Due Diligence Committee comprised of local officials, with the assistance of Mr Srivastava from the Railway Industry, Government of India.

**National Energy Efficiency Awareness Week**

A National Energy Efficiency Awareness Week, with a view to fostering greater awareness of the environmental and economic benefits of improved energy efficiency in Mauritius, was held from 24 to 30 September 2012.

An initiative of the Energy Efficiency Management Office, the focus was on highlighting the potential of energy efficiency in the domestic, industrial, building, transport and services sectors so as to better sensitise stakeholders and create a synergy around the management of energy.

**Mauritius donates 100 000 USD to support natural calamities victims**

Mauritius has made a donation of 100 000 USD to Madagascar (50 000 USD) and the Union of Comoros (50 000 USD) as a token of solidarity in the reconstruction process to assist all those affected by natural calamities that hit the two countries in 2012.

These natural calamities (two severe tropical cyclones in Madagascar and heavy floods and landslides in Comoros) caused loss of lives and left many people homeless as well as many others without water and electricity.
Infrastructure Development
90 percent of Phase 1 of Ring Road Project completed

The Ring Road is a project of national importance, providing for alternative entries and exits from Port Louis at both the southern and northern ends, bypassing the City centre, and forms part of a global road decongestion programme being implemented by Government.

Moreover, the new road also provides a direct access from M1 to Swami Vivekananda International Convention Centre (SVICC), while local residents will also derive benefits from the infrastructure.

The scope of works for Phase 1 consists mainly of the following:

- Construction of about 7.0 km divided into a 4.5 km dual carriageway road from Montebello to Guibies and an access road about 0.5 km to connect SVICC to the proposed main road, and 2.0 km (acceleration/ deceleration) links
- Four roundabouts for dual carriageway
- One 4 lane grade separated junction underpass on motorway M1
- One 73m long pre-stressed concrete bridge and one 60m long reinforced concrete bridge
- Two reinforced concrete underpass/flyover

Other components include miscellaneous drainage structures, retaining walls and reinforced earth system and provision of miscellaneous road equipment and furniture such as carriageway markings, traffic signs, handrails, safety fences, and street lighting.

The alignment of this road has been chosen following a feasibility study and detailed engineering by international consultant namely Messrs DHV International (UK) and carried out by Consulting Engineering Services (India) Ltd.

Tenders for Phase 2 of the project (extension for alternative access towards the north of Port Louis) are expected to be floated by the end of the year.
The 19th edition of INFOTECH, a major annual event on the ICT calendar, was inaugurated on 12 September 2012 by the Minister of Information and Communication Technology, Mr Tassarajen Pillay Chedumbrum, at the Swami Vivekananda International Convention Centre in Pailles.

The four-day event, organised by the National Computer Board, brought together around 36 exhibitors to showcase their technology and ICT products and services. The aim was to raise awareness on emerging technologies and provide a meeting platform for local ICT operators to develop collaboration and deal with potential technology partners and clients.

Infotech 2012 included the following components: ICT Exhibition; ICT Job Fair with the participation of nine companies; Career Guidance Corner to sensitise secondary school students, school leavers and the public on career opportunities and prospects in the ICT-BPO sector; Shopping and Delivery Zone; Gaming Zone - a modern technology-driven entertainment platform for young people as well as adults; and, Thematic Conferences and Product Demos.

Mauritius – Right ICT investment destination

Mauritius is reckoned as the right ICT investment destination and outsourcing location which has successfully attracted key players of international repute to do business on the island.

The Mauritian ICT Sector is contributing to around 6.7% of GDP. Some 600 ICT companies presently operate in a vast array of activities ranging from software development, call centre operations, business process outsourcing (BPO), IT-enabled services (ITES), web-enabled services, training, hardware assembly and sales to networking, consultancy, multimedia development, disaster recovery and other support services.

BPO/ITES is a very strong segment of the ICT industry and has been the fastest growing sector over the recent years, with more than 330 companies mainly servicing export markets such as France, the USA, the UK, Belgium and other European countries.


This year’s edition was supported by the active participation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. It brought together about a hundred and fifty ICT and Outsourcing executives from across the industry and around the world seeking the very latest insights and ideas.

Participants were given the opportunity to learn about the capability and track record of Mauritius as an established ICT-BPO location as well as assess how our country can fit in the global delivery model, and evaluate its potential for investment in the ICT-BPO sector.

Special focus was on a dedicated session on Exporting ICT-BPO Services to Africa with the participation of Ministerial delegations from various African countries.
Mauritius hosts Third World Chinese Conference

The theme was: The role of the Chinese Diaspora in the shaping of the modern world.

Organised by the Federation of Chinese Societies in collaboration with the Ministry of Arts and Culture, the event also coincided with the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations of Mauritius with the People’s Republic of China and the centenary anniversary of the foundation of the Chinese Middle School.

Discussions focused on the roles and contributions of the Chinese organisations and Chinese people towards future development under the new global order; the spread of Chinese language in the word today; One China Policy and Overseas Chinese in Africa; and Diaspora and the local cultures.

In his address at the opening ceremony, the Acting Prime Minister, Dr Rashid Beebeejaun, expressed his confidence that Mauritians of Chinese descent will continue in their endeavour to further uphold the development process of the country with renewed vigour and dedication for the future of generations to come. Dr Beebeejaun also affirmed that the Chinese culture forms an integral part of our national heritage, of our pluralistic society which makes the pride of the Mauritian nation.

The World Chinese Conference featured a business forum, a cultural, historical and linguistic forum and photo exhibitions. Some 300 delegates from China, Canada, Indonesia, Malaysia, Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore, South Africa, Swaziland, Namibia, Malawi, Ethiopia, Ivory Coast, Botswana, Réunion Island, Seychelles and Mauritius attended.

The third edition of the World Chinese Conference, aiming at promoting cultural exchanges, cooperation and development among members of the Chinese Diaspora, was held from 6 to 9 September 2012 at the Grand Baie International Conference Centre.

Business Forum

The business forum, held on 6 September 2012, aimed at promoting Mauritius as an investment destination, particularly as an ideal gateway for investments going in the African region.

It also highlighted the various business opportunities in local clusters such as finance and offshore, economy and trade, tourism and education. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Dr Arvin Boolell; the Minister of Tourism and Leisure, Mr. Michael Sik Yuen; the Minister of Arts and Culture, Mr. Mookhesswur Choonee; and the Ambassador of the People’s Republic of China, Mrs Bian Yanhua were among the main speakers.
Alzheimer’s disease
First Africa Regional Conference opens in Mauritius

The First Africa Regional Conference of Alzheimer’s Disease International, under the theme Alzheimer’s disease: Medical, Social and Cultural specificities in our Region, was held on 27 and 28 September 2012 at the Grand Baie International Conference Centre.

Present at the opening, the Vice-President of the Republic of Mauritius, Mrs Monique Ohsan Agnes Bellepeau, recalled that recent scientific advances have deepened our insights into the complexities of the Alzheimer’s disease, while also helping to unravel them.

The chairpersons of Alzheimer’s Disease International and Association Alzheimer Mauritius, Dr. Jacob Roy and Dr. Ameena Sorefan respectively, were also present. Organised by Alzheimer’s Disease International and the Alzheimer’s Association of Mauritius, in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions, the Conference was attended by representatives of Alzheimer’s Associations of the African and Indian Ocean regions.

The aim was to provide a platform to share experiences and expertise, raise awareness on Alzheimer’s disease and dementia, build up a networking of professionals for research and management and come up with a Strategic Plan for the management of the diseases in the region.

Around 6,000 people in Mauritius suffer from Alzheimer, an extremely debilitating and degenerative disease, which slowly reduces the patient to a dummy. Patient becomes subject to memory loss, confusion, language troubles, apathy, mood swings and crying.

There is no cure yet for Alzheimer’s disease, although hundreds of clinical trials are being conducted. Mental stimulation, exercise, balanced diets have been proposed as preventive measures, but there is no conclusive evidence to their effect. Alzheimer’s disease costs a lot to society and according to the World Health Organisation (WHO) the estimated cost amounts to 604 billion US dollars annually.

In a report published in April 2012 “Dementia: A public health priority” WHO recommends the importance of programmes focused on improving early diagnosis, raising public awareness about the disease and reducing stigma, and providing better care and more support to caregivers.

Click for more information
Financial Services
Signature of MoU to facilitate exchange of information between Mauritius and Cyprus

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish a framework for mutual assistance and facilitate the exchange of information between the Financial Services Commission (FSC) and the Cyprus Securities and Exchange Commission (CySEC) was signed on 4 September 2012 in Nicosia, Cyprus.

The MoU was signed by the Chief Executive of the FSC, Mauritius, Ms Clairette Ah-Hen, and the Chairperson of CySEC, Ms Demetra Kalogerou. The aim is to promote the integrity, efficiency and financial soundness of Authorised Entities by improving the effective regulation, enhancing the supervision of cross-border transactions, and creating an environment conducive to the prevention of fraudulent and other prohibited practices in both Cyprus and Mauritius.

Each Authority, by virtue of the MoU, will look for opportunities to enhance knowledge in areas of enforcement and supervision of the financial market and take necessary steps to strengthen, encourage and promote cooperation and mutual assistance in areas such as research and development, training and staff development.

The FSC has, so far signed 27 such MOUs with both local and international authorities.

Salary Compensation 2013
Maximum compensation of Rs 345 for private sector employees

The quantum of salary compensation for employees of the private sector, ranging from an increase of Rs 300 to Rs 345 with effect from 1 January 2013, was announced on 13 September 2012 in Port Louis, by the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Mr. Xavier-Luc Duval.

The tripartite committee comprising representatives of Government, Employers’ and Workers’ organisations and chaired by VPM Duval, fixed the quantum for the monthly additional remuneration, taking into account three main factors. These are: the loss in the purchasing power of consumers, the rate of inflation which currently stands at 4.3%, and job preservation.

The cost of implementation is estimated at Rs1.6 billion for the private sector, and all the 350,000 Mauritian and foreign workers in the private sector will benefit from the salary compensation.

The Report of the Pay Research Bureau, due in October 2012, will adjust the salaries of public sector employees to also compensate for loss in purchasing power.

The 2013 Compensation Scale

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<tr>
<th>Monthly Basic Wage/ Salary</th>
<th>Additional Remuneration per Month</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to Rs 7 000</td>
<td>Rs 300</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rs 7 001 - Rs 8 000</td>
<td>4.3% (rounded to the next rupee)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Above Rs 8 000</td>
<td>Rs 345</td>
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Meeting of the tripartite committee
International Conference on Ridges and Hotspots around the Mascarene Islands

Around 30 foreign scientists attended an international conference on Ridges and Hotspots around the Mascarene Islands, held from 3 to 7 September 2012 at Tamassa Hotel in Bel Ombre. The five-day conference was jointly organised by the Mauritius Oceanography Institute (MOI), the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) and International Cooperation in Ridge-Crest Studies (InterRidge).

The aim was to enable the exchange of information between scientists actively involved in expeditions carried out during the last 15 years around the Mascarene Islands and also to make plans for future international collaboration with the existing data or additional data to be acquired. Another important goal was to make a presentation of a geoscientific view of the Mascarene Islands and their vicinity to the Mauritian public and develop an interest for future collaboration between the Mauritian scientific community, institutions and students and their international counterparts.

The conference focused on: mid ocean ridges processes: volcanism, tectonics and hydrothermal vents; hotspots, ridges and their interactions; and, the fate of Mascarene Islands: from construction to destruction.

Mascarene Islands

The Mascarene Islands are volcanic islands located in the Western Indian Ocean. Mauritius and Réunion Islands as well as a large part of the Mascarene Plateau have been formed by the hotspot that created the Deccan traps of India and is now lying under Réunion Island, whereas Rodrigues Island and the Rodrigues Ridge may be the result of the interaction of this hotspot with the nearby Central Indian Ridge.

All three Mascarene Islands are at different stages of their evolution and their recent history shows both constructional and destructive processes.

Plate structure of the Indian Ocean
NPF and NSF
Positive returns of Rs 95 billion at June 2012

The portfolio of investment of the National Pensions Fund (NPF) and that of the National Savings Fund (NSF) amounted to over Rs 79 billion and Rs 15 billion respectively at end of June 2012, totalling approximately Rs 95 billion. These figures were released in Port Louis on 21 September 2012 by the NPF-NSF Investment Committee.

At the same period last year, the market value of the NPF portfolio totaled Rs 73 billion and that of the NSF Rs 13 billion. Both funds showed positive returns of 7.5% for NPF and 9.3% for NSF over the 12 months ending 30 June 2012.

The Investment Committee is actively exploring opportunities to ensure that the Funds generate reasonable risk-adjusted returns under both positive and negative future market conditions in the long run.

The National Pensions Fund

The National Pensions Fund was set up in 1978. It is based on a two-tier system in which government finances payment of the universal basic pensions whilst earnings-related contributory benefits are paid to insured persons or their dependents, on the basis of contributions paid to the scheme by the insured persons and their employers.

The National Savings Fund

The National Savings Fund was set up in 1995 to replace the Employees Welfare Fund. Whereas the NPF is a benefits scheme, the NSF is a contribution scheme. At retirement age, the beneficiaries of the NPF receive a monthly pension based on a fixed formula, whereas the NSF beneficiaries receive a lump sum not fixed by any formula and depending largely on contributions made by employers and the investment performance.
Assistance to vulnerable families  
Implementation of Prepaid Electricity Meters Project

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on 6 September 2012 in Port Louis for the implementation of prepaid electricity meters in favour of underprivileged families with a monthly income of less than Rs 6 200 who have difficulties to settle their electricity bills.

Signatories were: the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment, the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development in partnership with Mauritius Telecom (MT) and the Central Electricity Board (CEB).

Funded to the tune of around Rs 12 million from the Corporate Social Responsibility funds of MT Foundation, the project will be implemented on a pilot basis and will initially benefit some 200 vulnerable eligible households in two regions identified as pockets of poverty by the National Empowerment Foundation (NEF), namely La Valette in Bambous and Gros Cailloux in Petite Rivière.

Upon satisfactory response, this project will be extended to some 400 needy families and to customers benefitting from social-aid tariffs. The target is to provide prepaid electricity service to an ultimate number of 2 000 underprivileged households across the country so as to enable them to exercise better control on their electricity consumption and expenses.

The Prepaid Meters for Electricity Project

The project provides for the installation of a special digital electricity meter at the customer’s premises. The meter is fitted with a SIM card (similar to those used in mobile phones) and the customer can recharge his prepaid electricity account by specific amounts through a system similar to the e-voucher system for airtime on mobiles.

Recharge will be made at Orange Shops of Mauritius Telecom, at CEB counters and other commercial outlets throughout the country. The customer will be able to check his electricity consumption credit available through SMS. When the credit is nearing exhaustion an SMS and a visual signal will be generated.

The electricity supply is connected or disconnected through a mechanism in the customer’s meter. If the supply is disconnected due to unavailability of funds on the customer’s account, the reconnection is done automatically upon recharge of credit.

To ensure a better coordination and proper implementation of the project, the NEF, through the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment, will act as coordinator while MT Foundation will provide the necessary funding to MT and CEB for the various platforms and systems.

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