PM receives Overseas Bencher Award of the Inner Temple

The Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, received on 28 July 2011 the Overseas Bencher Award of the Honourable Society of the Inner Temple during a ceremony held at the Trinity Term Call Night in London, United Kingdom.

Dr Ramgoolam was unanimously elected overseas bencher on 3 March 2011 at a meeting of the Inner Temple’s Bench Table. This is the greatest honour that the Inn bestows on its overseas members who have attained distinction in legal and public life within their home jurisdictions. The Prime Minister becomes the first Mauritian upon whom the Inner Temple has conferred this prestigious title.

In his speech at the award ceremony, Dr Ramgoolam said that he was immensely proud to have been elected an Overseas Bencher of the Inn. ‘This honour is an abiding source of pride not only for myself but also for my country’ he stressed.

The Prime Minister recalled that one of his priorities during his first term as Prime Minister was judicial reform. ‘I was committed to the modernisation of my country’s economy and institutions. I firmly believe that a modern State must have an efficient and accessible judiciary. I asked the former Lord Chancellor of Britain, Lord Mackay, to chair a Commission on the reform of the judicial system. And we were honoured and privileged that he did accept’, he added.

During his stay in London, the Prime Minister also had a working
session with Mr Philippe Sands, QC, with whom he reviewed recent developments entered by Mauritius under Annex VII to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and, in particular, developments relating to the challenge of Judge Christopher Greenwood by Mauritius.

Dr Ramgoolam had a working session with Lord Phillips of Worth Matravers, President of the UK Supreme Court, and Lord Hope of Craighead, Kt, Deputy President of the UK Supreme Court. Both judges expressed satisfaction at the continuing relationship between Mauritius and the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council and stated that the Judicial Committee would be pleased to sit again in Mauritius.

He also had a meeting with Baroness Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, on issues surrounding the application of Mauritius of the Eastern and Southern Africa-European Commission Interim Economic Partnership Agreement, negotiations for the conclusion of a full and comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with the EU, and piracy in the Indian Ocean. Baroness Ashton has agreed to look into the issues raised by the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister also attended the signing ceremony of the Agreement between the Government of Mauritius, the Mauritius International Arbitration Center Ltd (MIAC) and the London Court of International Arbitration establishing Mauritius as a venue for international arbitration.

The Prime Minister’s mission also took him to Paris, where in his capacity as current Chairperson of the Indian Ocean Commission, he had a meeting with Philippe Leyssenne, Ambassadeur et Délégué à la Coopération Régionale and Mrs B. Lederle, Counsellor at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with whom he discussed matters relating to regional cooperation in general and, in particular, the role of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) as well as the appointment of the Secretary General of the Commission in 2012, who would be a Mauritian. Discussions also focused on the need to make an optimum use of the excellent bilateral ties between Mauritius and France with a view to pushing forward the regional Agenda for the benefit of IOC Member States.
Maritime Piracy
Mauritius and EU Sign Agreement for Investigation and Prosecution of Suspected Pirates

Mauritius is collaborating with the European Union to fight maritime piracy. The two parties signed, on 14 July 2011, an Agreement defining the conditions and modalities for the transfer of suspected pirates for detention, investigation, prosecution and trial in Mauritius.

Maritime piracy in the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean, particularly off the coast of Somalia, poses a real threat to countries in the region in terms of maritime security, international trade and national security.

The Agreement sets out the conditions of transfer of suspected pirates and associated seized property from the EU-led naval force to Mauritius and the conditions of suspected pirates after transfer. It will enable Mauritius to investigate and prosecute Somali citizens suspected of piracy. The Agreement also covers the conditions under which suspected pirates are handed over and treated after they are transferred. It ensures that suspects transferred are given a fair trial and treated in accordance with international human rights law standards whilst in prison.

Under the Agreement, a new prison and a new court will be built for the detention and trial of suspected pirates. As regards their trial, the Attorney General’s Office is currently working on a new legislation which will soon be introduced into the National Assembly.

In October last year, Mauritius hosted the Second Regional Ministerial Meeting which adopted a Regional Strategy in view of the setting up of a regional framework to prevent and combat piracy and promote maritime security and a rolling Plan of Action setting out short-term, medium-term and long-term measures.

EU has agreed to provide financial support for the implementation of the Transfer Agreement. In this context, the Government and the EU signed an addendum to the Country Strategy Paper and National Indicative Programme with the European Commission. This addendum provides for an additional grant money of around Rs 125 million (3 million Euros) to Mauritius in the fight against maritime piracy.

This amount will be disbursed as budget support and is over and above the 43.5 million Euros allocation already secured. Another amount of Euro 1 080 000 financed under the Instrument for Stability of the EU will be made available to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes to implement the short-term assistance package worked out between the EU and Mauritius.
Mauritius - Congo-Brazzaville
Towards closer economic cooperation

The State visit of the President of the Republic of Congo, Mr Denis Sassou-N’Guesso, to Mauritius from 9 to 11 July 2011 gave the opportunity to both countries to discuss various important economic and trade issues, in particular the setting up of four Special Economic Zones in Congo-Brazzaville with the assistance of Mauritius and Singapore. President Sassou-N’Guesso led an important delegation comprising four Ministers and around 70 high officials.

During his visit, Mr Sassou-N’Guesso was received by the Acting President of the Republic, Mrs Monique Ohsan Bellepeau, and had a working session with the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam. He also met members of the local business community at the Grand Bay International Conference Centre.

Need for a free trade area
Mauritius and Congo are deeply engaged on the path of progress and modernisation and the logical follow-up should be the establishment of a free trade area between both countries. Such is the view expressed by the Prime Minister in his speech at the State banquet offered in honour of President Sassou-N’Guesso at the Swami Vivekananda International Convention Centre, Pailles.

‘We have great ambitions for our countries. We want to accelerate the transformation of our economies and enhance the competitiveness of our enterprises in respect of environment, democracy and citizens’ rights’, remarked the Prime Minister.

According to Dr Ramgoolam, the privileged relation between Mauritius and Congo and parallel aspirations find their expressions in the triangular partnership project between both countries and Singapore. In his view, this ambitious project will favour a new dynamism while the finality of the triangular partnership project is in line with the latest indications in terms of foreign direct investments.

Signature of two Agreements
Two agreements, namely on the creation of four Special Economic Zones in Congo-Brazzaville and on cooperation in the field of Information and Communication Technology, were signed between the two parties at Clarisse House.

During the working session held at the same venue, discussions between President Sassou-N’Guesso and Prime Minister Ramgoolam focused on the project of triangular cooperation Congo-Singapore-Mauritius as well as on economic transformation.
Mauritius and France Sign Agreement on Search and Rescue

Mauritius and France signed on 21 July 2011 an agreement on search and rescue (SAR) providing for an enhanced cooperation in the field of maritime, sanitary, civil and public security. The agreement was signed by Mrs Fong Weng-Poorun, Permanent Secretary at the Prime Minister’s Office, and Mr. Jean François Dobelle, the French ambassador.

The agreement makes provision for the exchange of SAR information with regard to real or potential distressing situations, for mutual assistance by sharing facilities in the conduct of operations in areas of SAR. It also provides for the sharing of information about available SAR resources of each country, the organisation of periodic simulation exercises and the exchange of documents on procedures and operations for better mutual understanding.

During the signing ceremony, Mrs Fong Weng-Poorun stressed the fruitful collaboration between the two countries, adding that the agreement is a testimony of the strong bonds of friendship and cooperation existing between Mauritius and France. She underlined that the agreement will provide for a better exchange of information and knowledge as well as enhance capacity building in terms of SAR.

The Permanent Secretary recalled that the agreement is a result of the visit of the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, to Reunion Island in January 2011 when an agreement was signed for the creation of a Working Group co-chaired by the Préfet of Reunion Island and the French ambassador in Mauritius as well the Secretary of Foreign Affairs in Mauritius. The Group had its first meeting in March 2011 during which the need for more cooperation and collaboration in terms of SAR between Mauritius and Reunion Island was underlined.

For his part, the French ambassador pointed out that the agreement lies in the context of the excellent relations of trust and friendship between the two countries. This agreement is the second of the type which has been signed in the Indian Ocean region, the first one was between France and Australia. By virtue of this agreement, the structures and systems of both countries will be in conformity with the provisions of the International Maritime Organisation.

Interactive Business Meet

A business meet, aiming to provide a platform for Congolese and Mauritian investors to discuss business opportunities and to encourage them increase their operation in the region, was held at the Grand Bay International Conference Centre on the last day of President Sassou-N’Guezzo’s visit.

Several proposals were made so as to maximise the benefits as regards agreements signed by the two countries. Among these:

- An action plan to be put in place jointly to ensure an adequate follow-up
- Regular exchanges between the two Governments particularly between each country’s private sector
- Enhancement of the business climate in Congo through Mauritius’ expertise
- Support of the BOI in the creation and operationalisation of an Investment and Promotion Agency in Congo

and enhancing competitiveness of enterprises. Other issues discussed were collaboration in the tourism and ICT sectors, and the development of joint business ventures between Mauritius and Congo-Brazzaville.
Tertiary Education for All
New university campus to be set up in Montagne Blanche

A 70,000 square feet new university campus will be set up over 50 acres of land in Montagne Blanche as part of Government’s objectives to improve access in the local tertiary education sector. The foundation stone was laid on 7 July 2011 by the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, in the presence of the Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology, Dr R. Jeetah, and other personalities.

This university campus project forms part of initiatives geared towards reaching the target of one graduate per family through the physical expansion of existing institutions and the setting up of new university campuses island-wide. Some Rs 1 billion have been earmarked for the construction of additional university campuses across the island, namely in Rose-Belle, Piton, Pamplemousses, Camp Levieux and Curepipe.

The role of education in achieving progress at country-level and enabling each citizen to reach his full potential was highlighted by the Prime Minister in his speech. Education is essential for human development, social justice and economic efficiency, he said. Dr Ramgoolam reiterated Government’s commitment towards promoting access to tertiary education and bringing universities to the doorstep of every citizen.

Increasing gross tertiary enrolment rate

In Mauritius, gross tertiary enrolment rate presently stands at 47%. The Ministry of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology endeavours to increase this rate to over 70% by 2015. A series of measures have been introduced to achieve this target. As such, several reputed foreign educational and training institutions are encouraged to set up local branch campuses. Already, Middlesex University, Amity University, Curtin University, amongst others, have established branches in Mauritius. The Indian Institute of Technology has also shown interest in setting up an institution here.

In addition, Government is in the process of setting up the Open University of Mauritius. It is expected that the Bill providing for the entity to be operational will be proclaimed soon while the formalities regarding the premises to house the institution are being finalised. This initiative aims at promoting a new culture of open and distance learning and increasing students’ enrolment rate, especially among the working population.

The Ministry has also launched Study Mauritius office, a one-stop-shop for tertiary education, at the Cybertower in Ebène in February. Its main function is to facilitate access to information for both potential local and foreign students as regards institutions, courses offered, mode of learning, costs and financing as well as other facilities available.
Mauritius-China MoU to Enhance Cooperation in Ocean Research

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at enhancing cooperation in the field of ocean research was signed on 12 July 2011 between the Mauritius Oceanography Institute (MOI) and the Second Institute of Oceanography, State Oceanic Administration (SIOSOA) of the People’s Republic of China. The signature ceremony was held at the headquarters of the MOI in Quatre Bornes.

The five-year MoU aims at establishing contacts and reinforcing the bond of mutual cooperation between the MOI and the SIOSOA. It will promote the exchange of personnel and scientific information in areas of mutual interest, develop joint research projects to support the exchange of high level qualified researchers, and ease access to infrastructure within cooperative projects in the South West Indian Ocean. By virtue of this agreement, emphasis will also be laid on the mutual benefits that can arise from collaborative scientific and technological efforts combined with open exchange of ideas and information.

About SIOSOA

The Second Institute of Oceanography (SIO) was established in 1966 as a non-benefit oceanographic research institute directly under the State Oceanic Administration (SOA). It is engaged in ocean scientific research in the China seas, the Indian and Pacific Oceans as well as the polar region.

The SIOSOA currently employs 300 scientists and technicians. It is known for its achievements in areas related to geosciences, satellite oceanography, ocean environment dynamics, marine ecology, biogeochemistry and engineering oceanography.

The Institute is also a major agency in the field of marine remote sensing and has the capacity to receive, process and analyse satellite data on the marine environment on a real-time basis. Some of the activities that the SIOSOA is currently engaged in relate to sea floor research and geodynamics, ocean circulation and dynamic processes, marine disaster evaluation study, marine remote sensing, coral reef ocean acidification monitoring, marine ecology and aquaculture, oil spill disaster warning system, polar expedition and study and engineering oceanography.

• The ‘Centre de Formation Artistique’ at Goodlands will open in October 2011. Three such Centres are already in operation at Paillote, Plaines des Papayes and Mahebourg and provide short-term training in various art forms.

• Government has agreed to a project for the deployment of Wireless Fidelity (WiFi) networks across Mauritius and Rodrigues. In the first phase of the project, Base Transmission Stations to provide WiFi service will be installed on the premises of the five Municipal Councils, the four District Councils and the Administrative Building in Rodrigues. The installation of Base Transmission Stations will at a later stage be extended to schools, public buildings and Government offices.

• The Minister of Youth and Sports and the Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports of the Republic of India, who is expected to visit Mauritius shortly, will sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation in the field of sports and youth affairs. The MoU provides for the necessary framework for cooperation in the field of research and science applied to sports, and exchange of programmes, experiences, skills, and techniques.
ICTA
Workshop on Electromagnetic Field Safety


The objective of the three-day workshop was to sensitize operators and other key stakeholders on the application of the deployment standard. The workshop also aimed at providing operators with case studies for preparing or amending their procedures as well as with Electromagnetic Dosimetry techniques that may be applied for verifying site compliance, particularly for measuring the dosage of radiation absorbed by people. The lead facilitators were Dr Vikass Monebhurrun, Professor at the École Supérieure d’Électricité (Supélec), France, and Mr Matt Evans, Programme Manager of Mobile Carriers Forum, Australia.

In his opening address, the Minister of Information and Communication Technology, Mr T. Pillay Chedumbrum, stated that Government and the ICTA have adopted a precautionary approach in handling radiofrequency and EMF to protect any effect the telecommunication field masts might have on life and property. He said that ICTA has been conducting regular measurements of the amount of radiation emitted from telecommunication towers in Mauritius, and that radiation level is well within the safety limits as per recommended standards. He added that it is good to note that very often the radiation level is up to 50 times lower than the average emission from a standard home microwave oven.

The minister reassured the public that they need not worry of any adverse effects as several steps have already been initiated. These include the adoption of international safety guidelines, continuous monitoring by the regulator to ensure that international guidelines are strictly followed, a new Planning Policy Guidelines for telecommunication operators in the establishment of masts, structures, and antenna system for telecommunication system in Mauritius, and the industry code to be implemented by operators in September for the Deployment of Radiocommunication Infrastructure Technical and Administrative Standard for EMF Safety.

In Mauritius, the ICTA is mandated to ensure the safety and quality of every information and communication services including telecommunication service and, for that purpose, determine technical standards for telecommunication network, the connection of customer equipment to telecommunication networks. As such it carries out the evaluation of radio communication installations already in place by way of in-situ measurements or prior to operators placing them in service. The evaluations are in accordance with ITU-T Recommendation K.52 and international best practices as well as with the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) limits for the reference levels in its evaluation process. These limits are recognised by the World Health Organisation.

Electromagnetic fields (EMFs), though invisible to the human eye, are present everywhere in the environment. EMFs are low energy radiations that come from the interaction of electric and magnetic fields. EMF emissions are both natural and man-made. Radio and TV transmitter stations/towers, electric power lines, police speed controls, radio, television, computers, microwave ovens, radars, mobile phones, and other equipment used in industry, medicine and commerce are emitters of electromagnetic radiation. Over the years, concerns about possible health risks associated with the use of man-made electromagnetic fields have grown leading to measures to regulate and limit electromagnetic radiation of devices and sources.
The Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies Bill

The National Assembly adopted on 19 July 2011 the Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies Bill in view of the establishment of an Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies for promoting proficiency and ensuring the maintenance of standards in the Judiciary, among law practitioners and legal officers so as to enhance the judicial system.

The setting up of the Institute is in line with the recommendations of the Presidential Commission set up in 1997 to examine and report upon the structure and operation of the judicial system and legal professions of Mauritius and other related matters.

Commending the Bill in the National Assembly, the Attorney General, Mr Yatin Varma, stated that our present legal system does not have the appropriate institutional framework to enable members of the legal profession to undergo continuous training in order to improve their skills and meet the changing needs of their profession, which is day by day proving to be extremely demanding with the phenomenon of globalisation and the increasing need for sharing of information and specialisation in certain areas of the law which can, very often, be quite complex.

The Institute will serve to promote, through continuous training and specialisation, transparency and consistency in the sentencing of offenders, and the award of civil damages, by making recommendations to the Chief Justice for the issue of guidelines.

Another objective will be to foster continuing judicial and legal education. The Institute will be responsible for conducting or supervising courses, seminars or workshops for the continuing training of judicial and legal officers. It will have to devise, organise and conduct Continuing Professional Development Programmes for law practitioners, including legal officers, and courses for prospective judicial and legal officers and law practitioners who qualified as such in a State other than Mauritius.

The Institute will identify areas of need and interest where specialised knowledge is required and promote and coordinate research and development in the judicial and legal sectors, as well as establish areas of cooperation and linkages with local, regional and international bodies. It will also conduct a regular review of, and advise on compliance with and amendments to, the Guidelines for Judicial Conduct and formulate, adapt and monitor best practices in the administration of justice.

The Institute will be responsible to arrange for the dissemination of information and documentation among judicial and legal officers and law practitioners and where appropriate, organise and conduct courses for police and public officers, Court staff and persons employed by law practitioners, with a view to improving the administration of justice.
The Protection from Domestic Violence (Amendment) (Amendment) Bill was voted on 19 July 2011 in the National Assembly. The Bill empowers the Chief Justice to make rules for the purposes of the Protection from Domestic Violence Act, including rules for the hearing of applications for occupation and tenancy orders, and to provide for other related matters.

The Act

The Protection from Domestic Violence Act was passed in 1997. Amendments were brought to the Act in 2007 but were not proclaimed. But the rules made under the 2007 Act were to apply only to applications for Protection Orders and not to applications for Occupation and Tenancy Orders, thereby creating two types of procedures under one piece of legislation.

It was, therefore, essential to have uniformity and consistency in procedure and also appropriate that the rules to be made encompass all applications, be they for Protection Orders, Occupation Orders or Tenancy Orders. The present amendments address these issues.

Commending the Bill in the National Assembly, the Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, Mrs Sheilabai Bappoo, stated that years after the enactment of the Protection from Domestic Violence Act, the weaknesses in the Act itself and the difficulties around its enforcement have become very apparent and victims of domestic violence complain of the difficulties they encounter in seeking the protection they need.

‘Whilst the law cannot be used as a panacea for the ills of a complex social phenomenon such as domestic violence, it is however necessary that when victims of domestic abuse do turn to law for protection, the law should be efficient and effective in its purpose’, she stressed.

The Excise Act amended to provide for CO₂ levy

The Excise (Amendment) Bill was voted on 12 July 2011 in the National Assembly. The main object of this Bill is to amend the Excise Act to provide, in addition to the excise duty chargeable on motor cars, for a CO₂ levy on motor cars or for the granting of a CO₂ rebate from the excise duty payable on motor cars, as the case may be.

Thus, a CO₂ levy or CO₂ rebate around a dynamic CO₂ threshold is being introduced. The levy will be payable if the CO₂ gramme per Km of a motor car exceeds the CO₂ threshold of 158 CO₂ gramme per Km.

The 158 gramme per km threshold is the average CO₂ emission of new motor vehicles classified as motor cars imported into Mauritius in 2010, using the UN ECE 101 international measurement standard.

A graduated CO₂ levy rupee rates will apply as follows:

- Rs 2 000 per gramme/km, for Cars from 159 to 190 CO₂ grammes/km
- Rs 3 000 per gramme/km, for Cars from 191 to 225 CO₂ grammes/km
- Rs 4 000 per gramme/km, for Cars from 226 to 290 CO₂ grammes/km
- Rs 5 000 per gramme/km, for Cars above 290 CO₂ grammes/km

The CO₂ threshold will be reviewed in subsequent years to reflect the average pattern of import of new motor cars.

The CO₂ levy/rebate system is being applied, in the initial stages, to all cars purchased, whether new or second-hand, save for electric cars and hybrid cars. In fact the CO₂ standard emission of electric cars is zero, while a preferential rate of 50% duty reduction duty already applies for hybrid cars. Government intends, at a later stage, to review the whole system.

As regards excise rates to be levied on import prices of vehicles, the Excise (Amendment) Bill provides for a third intermediate rate, that is 75%, in addition to the existing 55%, and 100% rates, all based on engine capacity.
In a bid to promote a better understanding of Intellectual Property (IP) and its issues among Mauritian, two events were held at the Cybertower in Ebene, namely a consultative meeting on 1st July 2011 and a training of trainers programme from 5 to 8 July 2011.

Both events were an initiative of the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) in collaboration with the Mauritius Research Council, the Ministry of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade.

Validation of IP and Innovation Assessment Report

The one-day consultative meeting focused on the dissemination and validation of an IP and Innovation Assessment Report in the context of the setting up of the IP asset identification, protection and management system as defined in the Intellectual Property Development Plan (IPDP).

The IP and Innovation Assessment Report analyses the present local IP legal and institutional framework, technology management status, and the needs of the country in terms of the use of the IP system in support of innovation and research for development.

Resource persons were Professor M. Shariff, Director, Innovation and Commercialisation Centre, University of Putra, Malaysia, and two representatives of WIPO, namely Mrs Y Hamano, Senior Programme Officer, Patents and Innovation Division, and Mrs N Nyerere-Drago, Senior Programme Officer, Regional Bureau for Africa.

Participants, comprising representatives from the public and private sectors, were briefed on IP, the roles, responsibilities and functions of WIPO and on leveraging IP in innovative endeavours as a power tool for economic, social and technological development. The session also provided a platform for the presentation of the findings and conclusions of the assessment report as well as for discussions and additional input by participants.

Training of Trainers Programme for SMEs

The WIPO’s four-day training of trainers programme on effective IP asset management by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) targeted not only existing and emerging SMEs, but also research institutions, universities and organisations involved in the economic development of the country.

Its main objective was to enable participants develop a fundamental understanding of the ways in which various forms of IP can be deployed to protect creativity and investment undertaken by enterprises and enhance the competitiveness of SMEs. The programme delved on branding, IP audit and IP due diligence, copyright, collective marketing, IP Law and Administration in Mauritius, IP in the digital economy and international business, exploiting IP assets, amongst others.

Intellectual Property Development Plan - IPDP

The initiatives of WIPO in increasing the wider know-how and use of IP are in line with the IPDP for Mauritius. The Plan, which was adopted in 2009, is intended to provide a working framework between WIPO and Mauritius on all matters relating to supporting the national IP system. The IPDP ensures that technical support from WIPO is coordinated, structured and aligned with the national development objectives and priorities.

Recommendations in the framework include the establishment of IP helpdesks within organisations to provide information, financial and technical support to businesses as well as research and academic communities and the setting up of an IP asset identification, protection and management system.
A validation workshop focusing on the ‘Draft Protocol and Guidelines on Family Planning for Service Providers’ was held on 11 July 2011 at Clos St Louis, Domaine Les Pailles. It was organised by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life in the context of the World Population Day. Gynecologists, obstetricians, community physicians and midwives from both the public and private sectors participated.

The different service providers were presented with the document which sets the guidelines for family planning. The aim was to enable them to discuss and make proposals, recommendations and amendments in view of finalising the Protocol and Guidelines on family planning. The document contains data on existing methods of family planning, indications and contraindications of these methods, and how to manage side effects and other problems associated with their use.

Mauritius is often cited as a success story in the field of population control and reproductive health. Statistics show that population growth rate increased from less than one per cent yearly during the 1940/1950 decade to about three percent yearly during the 1952/62 decade. This was possible due to the policy of providing a coherent, well adapted and sustainable Family Planning programme, coupled with access to education and employment opportunities to women.

It is to be noted that with the reinforcement of the Reproductive Health Services over the last few years, the reproductive health indicators in Mauritius have improved significantly. The maternal mortality ratio has dropped from 176 per 100 000 live births in 1962 to 28 in 2010; the infant mortality rate has dropped from 60.1 per 1 000 live births in 1962 to 12.4 in 2010 and fertility among adolescents which was 107.3 per 1 000 women in 1962 reached 29.3 in 2010.

The impact of such changes is reflected by impressive gains in life expectancy for both sexes, particularly for women as their life expectancy has increased from 62 years in 1962 to 77 in 2010, while that for men has improved from 58 in 1962 to 70 years in 2010.

Family Planning: Measures to respond to challenges

The Ministry of Health and Quality of Life has taken several measures to respond to challenges such as teenage pregnancies and the decline in the number of users of Family Planning methods. These measures are: the re-engineering of the Family Planning Unit and the reinforcement of the reproductive health programme; and the implementation of the Sexual and Reproductive Health strategy and Plan of Action.

Other measures include:

- Focusing of family planning services in deprived areas with the collaboration of the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment
- Developing a guideline and protocol on family planning for service-providers to ensure quality and standardisation of services
- Intensifying campaign among teenage mothers on the ill effects of early childbearing
- Reorienting health education and services to meet the needs of young people both in and out of school.
Corporate Social Responsibility Forum enhances partnership between stakeholders

The second annual Espace Rencontre Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) meeting aiming at facilitating the emergence of a synergy between the two principal partners of the CSR, namely enterprises and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), was held on 18 July 2011 at the Freeport in Mer Rouge.

The Espace Rencontre CSR - a forum grouping NGOs, enterprises and various other stakeholders - also aims to create a proper platform where private companies contributing to the CSR programmes can interact with NGOs in order to implement social projects for needy families.

This year, the focus was on projects geared towards helping vulnerable children, namely those in the phase of early childhood. As such, the Espace Rencontre CSR targeted projects for Child Care-Giving for children from poor families, children in distress, handicapped children, street children, victims of abuse, and prisoners’ children, amongst others.

More than 500 NGOs are currently registered at the National Empowerment Foundation (NEF), out of which 100 are providing assistance to implement projects for vulnerable children.

About CSR

CSR is a concept whereby companies act to balance their own economic growth with the sustainable social and environmental development of their areas of operation. It will be recalled that the current Corporate Social Responsibility programme for profit-making companies is being implemented since October 2009.

All profitable firms are required to spend 2 percent of their profits on CSR activities approved by the Government or otherwise allocate the funds for use in the fight against poverty.

CSR Guidelines

The Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment is revising the existing guidelines to bring necessary amendments taking into account the evolution in the field of poverty in Mauritius. The NEF has already put in place a special programme for vulnerable children, the Child Welfare Programme, to help children from poor families to integrate mainstream society.

Around 2000 companies will contribute towards the CSR initiative in 2011. Areas of intervention comprise socio-economic development, including gender and human rights; health, education and training; leisure and sports; and environment and natural disasters.