Ocean Economy: The bridge to the future of the country, PM says

‘The Ocean Economy is the bridge to the future of our country and setting strong foundations for its development must become a proud legacy from us to future generations’, the Prime Minister, Dr Navinjandra Ramgoolam, said at the opening of a two-day National Dialogue on the Ocean Economy held on 22 and 23 July at the Swami Vivekananda International Convention Centre, Pailles.

Organised by the Prime Minister’s Office in collaboration with the Board of Investment, the national dialogue highlighted opportunities in the ocean space and the issues that need to be considered for the successful development of the ocean economy. The objective was to encourage a wide public participation in the process leading to the adoption of a roadmap on the ocean economy and assess the commercial potential of the living and non-living resources.

In his address, Dr Ramgoolam stressed that the benefits of the ocean economy must be for all and not just a few, and that it must contribute to greater equity...
justice in the society and further democratise the economy. According to him, the development of the ocean economy will have significant positive impact on the Mauritian economy and he called on the population to take full advantage of these opportunities.

The Prime Minister emphasised the need for Mauritius to have the right regulatory regime and the level of skills required to license and supervise ocean activities and the essential knowledge to tap the ocean. He also announced the setting up of a task force comprised of representatives of the public and private sectors and the civil society to monitor the ocean related issues.

It is recalled that Mauritius has already embarked on two projects to tap the potentials in the ocean namely, the exploitation of deep sea water which can be used for various applications ranging from bottled drinking water, air conditioning, aquaculture to thalassotherapy and the drafting of a national long-term strategy to develop Mauritius into a petroleum hub.

The National Dialogue

One of the key outcomes of the dialogue has been a strong statement from various scientific bodies on the possibility of hydrocarbon deposits both in the Exclusive Economic Zones and the area of our continental shelf jointly managed by the Republic of Seychelles.

Discussions also focused on the development potential of new economic sectors and the synergies that exist between ocean-related activities and other strong pillars of the economy, including financial services, ICT and the sugar industry.

Among the recommendations, opportunities were identified in living, abiotic and other ocean-related activities including established sectors such as seafood, fisheries and tourism, emerging sectors such as bunkering and marine biotechnology, and new sectors such as marine ICT and finance or oil and gas. Established marine sectors in Mauritius have significant growth potential with a target of increasing seafood exports from 18% to 25% of total national exports and achieving an annual aquaculture production of 10,000 tonnes by 2020.

Following public consultations over the next couple of months, a Road Map will be published and a Task Force will oversee its implementation.

Mauritius EEZ

Mauritius has one of the largest Exclusive Economic Zones in the world. Moreover, in 2012, the United Nations approved the coordinates submitted jointly by Mauritius and Seychelles for jurisdiction over an area of our continental shelf extending over 400,000 km². Mauritius has now a total area of 2.3 million km² over which it can exercise several economic rights.
IOR-ARC’s First EBC Conference
Deepening Economic Linkages for Balanced, Inclusive and Sustainable Growth

The Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC) first Economic and Business (EBC) Ministerial Conference on the theme Deepening Economic Linkages for Balanced, Inclusive and Sustainable Growth was held in Mauritius on 4 and 5 July 2013.

The EBC, co-hosted by the Governments of Mauritius and India, brought together some 10 Ministers and more than 250 delegates from 20 IOR-ARC Member States including policy planners/decision makers of government/public agencies and captains of trade and industry/private sector businesses. The Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, delivered the keynote address.

The Prime Minister observed that now that the IOR-ARC has consolidated its institutional base, there is a need to focus on concrete deliverables. The organisation of this Economic and Business Conference comes at an opportune time and the theme chosen could not be more pertinent, he said. ‘Underlying this theme is the explicit recognition that development models based on unfettered market forces are not in line with the aspirations of people everywhere. Economic efficiency and social justice are two sides of the same coin,’ Dr Ramgoolam stressed.

Discussions focused on: unlocking the potential of the services sector in the IOR-ARC region (ICT, Tourism and Financial Sector); enhancing trade and investment in the IOR-ARC region; creating agri-business linkages; addressing food security and sustainable development; and harnessing the potential of the Ocean Economy.

The Ministerial Conference - The Communiqué

In its final Communiqué, adopted on 5 July 2013, the Conference agreed on a multi-pronged approach centred around the following:

- Trade should be an integral factor in promoting economic cooperation and development in line with the concept of ‘Open Regionalism’
- Ocean economy constitutes an important pillar to sustain development; and
- Maritime security should be addressed for the economic security of the region.

Member States were urged to foster agri-business linkages and use both land-based and ocean resources, with a view to addressing the food security situation. The Conference also agreed to the setting up of the IOR-ARC Science, Technology and Innovation Chapter and the establishment of an Ocean Economy Observatory.

Recognising the Indian Ocean as a binding force of the Association, there was also consensus for:

- Member States to harmonise trade practices in line with international norms and take steps to minimise barriers to trade in the Indian Ocean region and emphasising the need to build on the complementarities of our economies and identify key growth sectors
- Member States to identify areas of cooperation in harnessing the oceanic resources which could become a pillar to sustain development efforts.
The Prime Minister was presenting the National Identity Card (NIC) (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill. The new legislation brings amendments to the NIC Act, the Civil Status (Amendment) Act 2001 and the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) (No.2) Act 2009 in the context of the implementation of the Mauritius National Identity Scheme (MNIS) Project. The NIC Act is being amended to provide expressly that the collection and processing of personal data, including biometric information, under that Act will be subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act.

The MNIS Project is a key component of the e-government strategy which the Government has developed for implementation. According to the Prime Minister, this project will enable a more secure and effective authentication and management of citizen identity with a modern, clean and secure Central Population Database in line with our Data Protection laws, while increasing national security.

'A good set of citizen data is a cornerstone of a good e-government system for bringing greater citizen convenience and services', Dr Ramgoolam underscored. The MNIS system will ensure that current Civil Status Division citizen data remains error-free through good data governance and policies that are being established. Along these lines, a modern Government Service Platform will be set-up as part of the MNIS Project to effectively manage the flow of information in order to deliver effective and secure services to the citizens of Mauritius, the Prime Minister said.

The MNIS Project will result in the introduction of a new polycarbonate NIC containing laser-engraved particulars such as the name, NIC number, gender, date of birth, as well as the photograph and signature of the cardholder. It will also feature a contactless electronic chip which will store civil status data, fingerprints in the form of biometric information as well as electronic certificates for security purposes. The security features contained in the smart NIC will render it tamperproof, and thus visible information, as well as encoded data on the chip, will be securely stored.

In order to ensure that the photograph of the card holder and other bio-data printed on the card cannot be tampered with, this information will be engraved into the layers of the polycarbonate ID cards.

As part of the MNIS project, the Government is setting up a Certification Authority that will issue digital certificates which will secure electronic information stored on the chip inside each card as well as serve as a guarantee to ensure the reliability of that information.

Furthermore, the NIC will facilitate many transactions by reducing the number of identification documents needed. A number of e-government services like the e-health will leverage on the data and MNIS systems such as the Government Service Platform to deliver efficient and effective services to the citizens.

As part of the contract entered into with the Singaporean authorities for implementing the project, a team from Singapore will train and coach the Civil Status Division to support and maintain the systems and equipment for a period of at least nine months as part of a handing over process. In this context, the existing National Identity Card Unit is being restructured with a view to allowing the Unit to be staffed with qualified professionals, including IT personnel, to follow-up on the Project after the commissioning.
**Sugar Industry**

**Mauritius Cane Industry Authority Set up for Better Synergy**

The Mauritius Cane Industry Authority (MCIA) set up to bring together under one roof six cess funded institutions with the aim of better developing synergies among the Service Providing Institutions (SPIs) operating in the agro-industry sector, was officially launched on 25 July 2013 by the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security and Attorney-General, Mr S. Faugoo.

The setting up of the MCIA is a measure recommended by the Joint Public-Private Sector Committee set up to look into the functions of the institutions concerned in line with the agreement with the European Union for the disbursement of funds under the Accompanying Measures.

The MCIA is the apex body responsible for policy and planning, and its divisions will be in charge for the provision of the services offered so far by SPIs. The objective is also to make the services more responsive to the needs of the agricultural community. The six cess-funded institutions are the Mauritius Sugar Authority, the Mauritius Sugar Terminal Corporation, the Mauritius Sugar Industry Research Institute, the Farmers Service Corporation, the Sugar Planters Mechanical Pool Corporation, and the Cane Planters and Millers Arbitration and Control Board.

It is to be noted that a Structure Reform Plan of the cess funded SPIs of the sugar industry has been elaborated in conformity with the priorities of Government as regards the agro-industry and food security sector. It is in line with domestic and international commitments of the country. A cess is a tax levied per tonne of sugar produced so as to finance a certain number of institutions providing services to the sugar industry. This amount allows the part or total funding of the six SPIs.

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**Small Planters Receive 80 percent Advance for 2013 Sugar Crop**

The Government has granted an 80 percent advance, equivalent of Rs 13 000 per tonne to some 17 000 small cane planters for the 2013 sugar crop.

The signing and handing over of documents to small and medium planters were held on 4 July 2013 in Port Louis in the presence of the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Mr Xavier-Luc Duval, the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security and Attorney General, Mr Satish Faugoo, and the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives, Mr J. Seetaram.

On that occasion, Mr Duval highlighted the importance of the advance which is expected to help planters to better prepare their land for the next crop season. He also made an appeal to cane planters not to abandon their sugar cane cultivation as in addition to sugar, the cane sector have also other benefits in terms of value added products.

According to the Vice-Prime Minister, the different mechanisms put in place by the Government to help small cane planters sustain the external challenges in the cane sector are on the right track. The various schemes are helping planters face the difficult situation that the cane sector is confronted to especially with the Euro Zone crisis coupled with the reduction of the CESS on sugar.

Among these schemes: full VAT refund on agricultural machinery, equipment and tools; subsidies under the compost scheme; the freight rebate scheme; and the Field Operations Regrouping and Irrigation Project (FORIP).

Sugar production for 2013 is estimated to be around 425 000 tonnes with 54 000 acres of land under cane cultivation.
Global Fuel Economy Initiative Workshop to Help Decrease Fuel Consumption

The Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development in collaboration with United Nations Environment Programme organised on 22 July 2013 at Le Maritim Hotel, Balaclava, a workshop on the Global Fuel Economy Initiative (GFEI). The objectives were to help Mauritius draft a policy on cleaner and more efficient vehicles, and adopt best practices on fuel economy improvement so as to reduce transport-related carbon dioxide emissions.

This workshop kick starts the implementation of the project which will entail baseline setting and monitoring of vehicle fuel efficiency trends, proposals for additional policies based on a cost-benefit analysis for government intervention including an analysis of the “feebate system” based on rebates and taxes.

It is recalled that as a major step towards improving the quality of air and protecting our environment, the sulphur content has been further reduced to 50 ppm since March 2012. The introduction of this new diesel grade has placed Mauritius among the first countries in the African region for taking this initiative.

The GFEI initiative

The GFEI initiative is based on the “50 by 50” concept which targets a 50% reduction in fuel consumption and emission globally by the year 2050.

Mauritius forms part of the three pilot countries from the Africa region along with Morocco and Kenya to undertake this project, which aims at reducing transport-related CO2 emissions through improvements in automotive fuel economy and is scheduled for completion in December 2014.

The ultimate goal of the GFEI is to stabilise carbon dioxide levels by reducing the average fuel consumption from its current 8 litres per 100 km to an average of 4 litres per 100 km, thus resulting in a substantial decrease in carbon dioxide emissions from an average of 180 gm per Km to 90 gm per Km.

Human Rights

Mauritius Hosts inter-regional seminar to facilitate participation of LDCs and SIDS in the Human Rights Council

A two-day inter-regional seminar, organised by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in collaboration with the Prime Minister’s Office, aiming to facilitate the participation of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Human Rights Council (HRC) and its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Mechanism was held on 30 and 31 July 2013 at Le Méridien Hotel, Pointe aux Piments.

The objective was to address the needs of LDCs and SIDS in strengthening their capacity with a view to contributing to the work of and interacting with the HRC in the most constructive and mutually beneficial manner possible. The seminar helped participants enhance their knowledge on the HRC and its mechanism in particular the UPR.

The seminar which brought together around 22 delegates from LDCs and SIDS, helped participants develop a better understanding on the procedures, establish practices as well as methods of the work of the HRC in order to be better prepared to engage meaningfully in the Council’s proceedings. The seminar also enabled participants to enhance their knowledge on the HRC and its mechanism in particular the UPR and be in a better position to consolidate and streamline the preparations for the UPR review of their respective countries.
The e-Government Strategy has been formulated by the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, through the services of the CIB, after wide-ranging consultations. It aims at reviewing the actual needs and making recommendations for a more effective, secured and efficient delivery of Government services to citizens and businesses. The e-Government Strategy also has as objectives to increase the participation of citizens in decision making processes, enhance interactions of citizens and businesses with the Authorities and boost transparency and accountability in Government operations.

It is expected that the Strategy will thrust Mauritius in the Top 50 leading countries as measured by the UN e-Government Index by 2017 and lay the groundwork for the country’s transformation into a High Income Country by 2022.

G2C:
- Marketing and creating awareness of Government Portal and e-Services
- Setting up a Government Call Centre to provide information on Government Services
- Implementing new e-Services as per Citizen’s needs (Facility to enrol as elector; Online publication of examination results; Facility to request for transfer of students; Facility to make declaration of theft to the police, amongst others)
- Promoting e-Participation initiatives such as online consultation on draft bills, regulations

G2G:
- Developing and implementing Green ICT Measures Guidelines (Procurement of sustainable ICT resources, and reduce power consumptions of data centres and server rooms)

G2B:
- Promoting the use of the Card Validation service and fingerprint readers by businesses to validate the identity of citizens
- Implementing measures to make digital certificates affordable.
Passing out Parade for 598 Police Recruits

598 new recruits have been inducted into the Mauritius Police Force after having successfully completed the 24-week foundation course. The Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, was the chief guest at the passing out parade on 18 July 2013 at the Gymkhana Sports Complex, Vacoas.

In his address, Dr Ramgoolam recalled that in 1998 a vast reform programme of the police force was launched, and that the new philosophy now is to be more customer-oriented and service-oriented.

“Today the public is more demanding and expects more professionalism. The public too must respect police officers”, he said, adding that the laws have been strengthened to better protect police officers from insults and assaults. The police needs constant training and has to be properly equipped in terms of manpower, the Prime Minister stressed, stating his intention to make more training abroad available to police officer so as to enhance their skills.

Dr Ramgoolam pointed out that the Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) Bill, the new legislation which will give more powers to the police and provide for a strict code of conduct so as to protect both the police and the suspect, will be debated in the next parliamentary session.

The Prime Minister made a strong statement that the law must prevail at all costs and that every Mauritian is equal before the law. He expressed satisfaction that the crime rate has gone down since 2007. Government is determined to stop illicit drug trafficking, he underscored, adding that there is need for better coordination and exchange of information among different units and institutions.

Informal Carers Receive Training to Hone Their Skills

A total of 50 carers are being trained during four half-days in each region to help them better tend to their elders at home.

In this context, a training programme for informal carers was launched on 25 July 2013 at Wooton Community Centre, in the presence of the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions, Mrs Sheilabai Bappoo.

The training programme makes provision for capacity building and training to people who look after the elderly and the handicapped. It will also help ensure that those involved in elderly care have the required basic skills. A carer is someone who looks after a person in need of assistance as a result of illness, frailty or disability.

The elderly represent almost 13% of the total population, and in view of the ageing population, the Ministry proposes to train some 500 carers and informal carers. Government has, since 2010, embarked on a six-month training programme for formal carers and as at date, a total of 160 have been trained.
The Financial Services Commission (FSC) signed the European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA) Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on 17 July 2013 at the FSC House in Ebène.

The MoU testifies and reinforces the cooperation agreements between the FSC and regulators of European Union (EU) Member States for the supervision of hedge funds, private equity and real estate funds under the Alternative Investment Fund Management Directive (AIFMD).

Furthermore, under the ESMA MoU, the cooperation between the FSC and the ESMA will enable Mauritius-licensed funds to continue to market in Europe under the private placement regimes of EU Member States after the introduction of the AIFMD on 22 July 2013. The MoU will further contribute towards sustaining the Mauritius International Financial Centre as an attractive jurisdiction for basing funds.

Mauritius was in the first tranche of 34 foreign jurisdictions such as the United States of America, Singapore, Hong Kong, Switzerland, India, Dubai and Australia to receive ESMA’s approval on 22 May 2013. With the approval of the ESMA MoU by EU Regulators, Mauritius has satisfied all the conditions under the AIFMD for Mauritius-regulated funds to continue to market in Europe under the private placement.

Mauritius and Gabon signed on 18 July 2013 in Port Louis a Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA), and an Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (IPPA) to enhance economic ties and provide greater tax certainty for businessmen between the two countries.

The DTAA will give a further spur to the positive evolution of economic ties between the two countries while making clear the taxing rights of Mauritius and Gabon on all forms of income arising from cross-border economic activities between the two countries. Under the agreement, double taxation which is an impediment to cross-border activities will be eliminated. It also provides for reduced taxation at source or exemption on various sources of income.

As regards the IPPA, it will give a boost to cross-border investment by protecting investors from direct or indirect double taxation and enhance the commercial and economic relations between the two countries and broaden investment opportunities for the business community. It will also be easier for investors from both countries to invest their capital and repatriate their investments and profits to their respective countries.
Criminal Appeal Act amended to improve Criminal Justice System

The Criminal Appeal (Amendment) Bill was voted in the National Assembly on 24 July 2013.

The Bill is a continuation of the reform process to modernise Mauritius’ judicial system. The Criminal Appeal Act has been amended to provide:

- that the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) may appeal to the Court of Criminal Appeal not only against a sentence by the Supreme Court but also against an acquittal or a conviction for a lesser offence by the Supreme Court; and

- that the DPP or a convicted person may apply to the Court of Criminal Appeal for a review of the proceedings relating to a conviction or acquittal before the Supreme Court, and the Court of Criminal Appeal may, in the course of the review proceedings, quash the conviction or acquittal and order a retrial.

The amendments are designed to improve the criminal justice system generally by ensuring that offenders are brought to trial and that convicted persons are retried when there is fresh and compelling evidence.

The Bill removes a major lacuna in the law by restoring the right of Appeal to the DPP in relation to cases heard by the Criminal Division of the Supreme Court. The right of appeal by the DPP against an acquittal following a jury trial will however not be unlimited but will be subject to specific circumstances as defined in the new legislation.

In his intervention on the Bill, the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, said that the right to a fair trial is a cardinal requirement of the rule of law. ‘But fairness means fairness to both sides. We should not forget the victims and the families of the victims in all this. They too have rights’, he stressed.

‘The guilty should not be allowed to walk free even one day more than he should and the innocent should not be allowed to languish in jail even if it is for one day more than he should,’ the Prime minister said quoting an eminent jurist of the UK Appeal Court. The interest of justice demands that neither should be the case, the Prime Minister held.