Prime Minister inaugurates new Municipal Complex in Vacoas-Phoenix

Government ensures that every citizen takes advantage of the benefits of the process of democratising the economy and modernising the country. This new complex translates our vision into reality as it offers many services under one roof so as to improve the standard of living of the people of Vacoas-Phoenix.

This statement was made on 15 May 2013 by the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, while inaugurating the new municipal complex of Vacoas-Phoenix in the presence of various eminent personalities.

The Prime Minister enumerated various projects undertaken by Government towards making Mauritius a first world country, and called for a change in mindset so as to drive the country forward.

The new municipal building to the cost of around Rs 144 million has been partly funded by the Central Government through the Local Infrastructure Fund.
to a tune of Rs 36.8 million and the Council’s own fund of Rs 107.2 million.

The building is located at Independence Avenue, Vacoas, opposite the Vacoas Fair, and the first phase of the project covers 5000 m². The building is a spacious and modern one equipped with one lift, escalator and parking spaces at the basement. The aim of putting up the new building is to have different government services scattered within the town centre under one roof for the benefit of the inhabitants of the locality.

Office spaces have been allocated to the following Ministries and organisations: Civil Status Division of the Prime Minister’s Office; Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reforms Institutions; Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment; Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare; Mauritius Post Ltd; Central Water Authority; and part of the available spaces at the first floor has been earmarked to be used for the National Identity card project by the Civil Status Division.

This year the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix is also celebrating its 50 years of existence (1963-2013). The theme of the celebrations is **50 years of Dedicated Service**.

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**Registrar-General Department Implementation of the Mauritius eRegistry Project**

The Registrar-General Department (RGD) is embarking on the implementation of the Mauritius eRegistry Project (MeRP) in a bid to transform the RGD from a Service to an e-Service organisation.

The eRegistry Project is being jointly funded by the Government of Mauritius and the Investment Climate Facility for Africa to the tune of around Rs 170 million and will be implemented in two phases over a period of two years, hence enabling the RGD to have an integrated system for its customers. It will harness the latest technologies and solutions that can provide integrated workflows and options for businesses, professionals and members of the public to conduct transactions with the RGD online.

The first phase pertains to the modernisation of RGD by implementing the eRegistry software system whereby most of the automated tasks will be implemented and services will be provided through sophisticated software tools. The integrated eRegistry System will comprise of: Integrated cashier and registration module; Integrated search engine for registered document (movable); Taxation module; Reporting engine; User and security administration module; and Digitisation of Land Archive (immovable).

The second phase will focus on transforming the services to electronic mode. The key objective is to provide the RGD and stakeholders an electronic dashboard through which they can perform the following tasks: eSubmission of documents; ePayment of fees; eRegistration; eSearch; and eDelivery of registered documents.
AU Summit
Mauritius to offer 50 Scholarships to African nationals, PM announces

The Mauritian Government will offer 50 scholarships to nationals of the African Union (AU). This announcement was made by the Prime Minister, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam on 25 May 2013 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia at the opening of the conference within the AU Summit celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU).

The Prime Minister stressed the importance of the development of human resources in Africa as an essential condition for the economic success of this continent. It is in this context, he said, that the Mauritian Government will offer 50 scholarships to African nationals. The President of the AU Commission, Mrs. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, congratulated Mauritius for this initiative, at the closing of the first round of discussions.

Several Heads of States and Governments of Africa participated in the AU Summit in Addis Ababa. The US Secretary of State, John Kerry, French President François Hollande, the Prime Minister of Jamaica, Ms Portia Simpson Miller, and Indian Vice-President Mohammad Hamid Ansari were also present for the celebrations of the 50 years of the creation of the OAU.

50th Anniversary of the formation of the OAU

The event was anchored by the theme ‘Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance’.

The focus for the anniversary celebration was on facilitating and celebrating African narratives of past, present and future that will enthuse and energise the African population and use their constructive energy to accelerate a forward looking agenda of Pan-Africanism and renaissance in the 21st century.

It is recalled that the OAU was founded on 25 May 1963. The OAU’s initiatives paved the way for the birth of AU. The African continent witnessed the transformation of the OAU to the African Union in 2002.

Mauritius and OAU

Mauritius joined the OAU in 1968 and has always demonstrated its full commitment for the advancement of the African continent and its people at large. The country has always participated in the decision-making processes aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the OAU/AU. Mauritius hosted the OAU Summit in 1976.

The special programme to mark the 50th Anniversary of the OAU/AU included: talks, forums and round table on the OAU/AU; diplomatic reception; launching of African Peer Review Mechanism Report for Mauritius; exhibition of panels of African Natural and Heritage Sites; films screening on Africa, African figures and history of Africa; and issue of commemorative stamps.
The Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Mauritius and Turkey, aiming at consolidating bilateral ties and spurring Mauritian stakeholders to export to Turkey, is coming into force on 1st June 2013.

Under the FTA, provision is made by Turkey for:

- Duty free access to Mauritian exporters on all industrial products, with the exception of 70 textiles products where tariff will be phased over four years. Mauritian operators will also enjoy from more flexible rules of origin including the single transformation rule for garments and tuna.

- Preferential access for Mauritian exporters on a list of 46 agricultural products including chilled fish, cut flowers, tropical fruits such as pineapples, mangoes and guava, vegetables, preserved tuna, sweet biscuits amongst others.

The FTA also contains a market access offer allowing imports from Turkey to obtain preferential access into Mauritius. The Mauritius offer includes a list of sensitive products which will be excluded from liberalisation, such as biscuits, meat, pasta, paints, soap and article of iron and steel, amongst others.

It is recalled that negotiations for the FTA, which provides a platform to consolidate trade ties as well as create more synergies for the business community of both Mauritius and Turkey, started in June 2009 and were completed in January 2011 after five rounds of discussions.

The Agreement was signed on 9 September 2011 by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Dr Arvin Boolell, for Mauritius, and by Mr Zafer Caglayan, Minister of Economy of Turkey.

To export fish and agricultural products to Turkey, operators will have to meet the relevant regulations imposed by the Turkish authorities. Moreover, Mauritian exporters need to ensure that their Turkish counterparts have obtained an import licence from the Ministry of Economy of Turkey.

Trade Figures

For Mauritian companies, Turkey is a large market nearing 90 million people with companies having a strong global orientation and a business culture that values quality. The country also has extended outreach to the Balkans, East Europe and Central Asia. Mauritius with its links to the SADC and COMESA regions represents an important market of more than 500 million inhabitants.

Turkish investments in Africa have reached more than USD 5 billion in 2011 and have also accelerated in Sub-Saharan Africa in the last couple of years, mainly in South Africa, Nigeria, Sudan, Ethiopia, Cameroon and Uganda. Turks invest mainly in contracting (e.g. infrastructure, housing, and roads); construction materials; energy; textiles; machinery; furniture; home appliances and the mining sector.
Public Sector
Errors, Omissions and Anomalies Report released

The Errors, Omissions and Anomalies Report 2013, which follows the Pay Research Bureau (PRB) 2013 released in October 2012, was approved by Government and released on 20 May 2013 by the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam.

The report covers around 84,000 employees and 25,000 public service pensioners and is to cost the Government an additional Rs 1 billion for its implementation, which combined with the PRB Report 2013, will amount to a total of Rs 5.6 billion.

The report has addressed the issue of main concern to the employees relating to the marked difference between the salaries of the top earners and the low earners in the civil service, restoring the ratio between the top earners and the low earners from 1 to 8.6 as at July 2008 to 1 to 7.5 at date.

A salient feature of the Errors, Omissions and Anomalies Report 2013 pertains to the salary scale of a General Worker which has been revised. The long standing problem of salaries of the teaching staff in primary and secondary schools has also been addressed in addition to a number of issues in the health sector, more particularly that of the Nursing cadre.

The most fundamental recommendations in the report are the re-engineering of the public sector in line with Government programme for both Mauritius and Rodrigues on the theme A New Road Map for a Modern and World Class Public Sector.

Maurice Ile Durable
9,000 people register for Household Compost Scheme

Some 9,000 people have registered for the Maurice Ile Durable (MID) Fund’s Household Compost Scheme, a project developed to encourage the population to use composters as well as persuade residents to undertake their share of responsibility in favour of the preservation of the environment.

Several conditions are attached to the scheme. For instance, an applicant should have a garden and should pay Rs 200 to cover expenses for training. In addition to attending a two-hour training session on composting, the applicant should sign a Charter agreement with the MID Fund. Upon completion of the training, each beneficiary will receive a free 220L compost bin, a DVD and a leaflet.

At the heart of the Scheme is the principle that reducing the volume of waste produced is better than recycling and disposal. In 2011 Mauritius produced more than 400,000 tonnes of household waste which costs around Rs 2,500 per tonne to collect and dispose of.

Statistics show that over 90% of waste are sent to the landfill sites, and organic waste constitutes between 40% - 50% of municipal solid waste in Mauritius. Treating waste in an appropriate way contributes significantly to the sustainable management of resources and compost can be used in agricultural and horticultural activities to maintain or restore the capacity of soils.
Penalty Points System in force since 10 May 2013

The Penalty Points System (PPS), introduced with the adoption of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill last year, has been proclaimed and is being enforced since 10 May 2013.

The PPS is meant to deter road traffic offences by assigning penalty points on conviction for certain road traffic offences. It is in line with Government’s strategy to increase road safety and to comply with international norms, and subsequently, reduce casualties on roads.

The PPS coincides with the installation of new speed cameras at different high risk spots along the motorway and other roads. According to available statistics, there is an average of 150 casualties and some 3,500 injured following road accidents each year. For last year only, there were about 210,000 contraventions.

Penalty points attributed to an offence will remain effective for a period of three years. The PPS may cause a driver to have his driving licence suspended for at least six months if he has exceeded the threshold limit of 15 penalty points. On a second disqualification, the driving licence will be cancelled. Under the proposed Mauritian system, the counter will start at zero, and points will be totalled cumulatively for each and every offence.

Penalty points will be imposed by the Court, in addition to other sanctions such as monetary fines, and used especially to tackle the most dangerous safety related road traffic offences committed by drivers. The range of points provided varies from 2 to 10 in relation to the severity of the offence.

Launching of an Activity Book on Road Safety for pupils of Standards III and IV

An Activity Book on road safety for pupils of Standards III and IV was launched on 8 May 2013 at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute Auditorium in the context of the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety.

Road safety education, as a pilot project, was introduced in 2000 in 12 primary schools, and given its success, Government approved the extension of this project to all primary schools, including Rodrigues. Consequently, in 2006, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping formalised the first Road Safety Activity Book (RSAB) with the collaboration of the Mauritius Police Force and the Mauritius Institute of Education. This year, the updated version of the RSAB has been prepared by the Ministry, the Prime Minister’s Office, the Mauritius Police Force and the Ministry of Education and Human Resources.

The RSAB has been elaborated with a child-friendly frame of mind, and with the input of expert pedagogical help, it has been devised to include helpful data about how children as well as accompanying adults should keep safe on the roads. The RSAB aims to inculcate pupils of Standards III and IV about the intricacies of road safety and how to behave safely in an ever-changing road environment, especially along the school-home route.
EU grants Rs 18 million to three Mauritian Non-State Actors

Three Non-State Actors (NSAs) received, on 7 May 2013 in Port Louis, their grant award certificates to the tune of Rs 18 million under the European Union (EU) thematic programme Non-State Actors and Local Authorities in Development.

These NSAs’ projects provide concrete assistance in developing the people’s (from mainland Mauritius, Rodrigues and Agalega) potential, especially the potential of women, children and the disabled.

The three beneficiaries of the grant award certificates are the Roman Catholic Education Authority (Rodrigues), Environmental Protection and Conservation Organisation and the Society for the Welfare of the Deaf.

EU’s NSA Programme

Since 2007, the EU has introduced a new thematic programme, the Non-State Actors and Local Authorities in Development, to co-finance initiatives proposed and/or carried out by NSAs and local authorities. This is done through a specific budget line of the EU and in addition to possible bilateral programmes.

Last year, the EU Delegation in Mauritius was granted a budget of € 500 000, around Rs 20 million, to finance implementing actions of NSAs in Mauritius. This programme is a complementary programme with the Decentralised Cooperation Programme co-financed by Mauritius and the EU.

Funds are disbursed to local NSAs following a system of call for proposals.

Assistance to needy children
Signature of MoU between NEF and 12 NGOs

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the Pre-Primary Schools and Primary Schools (PPS&PS) Programme was signed on 2 May 2013 between the National Empowerment Foundation (NEF) and twelve Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). The main objective of the PPS&PS Programme is to provide a balanced and healthy diet lunch to school children residing in pockets of poverty throughout the island.

The School Feeding Programme has been an ongoing project since 2008, under the Eradication of Absolute Poverty Programme, and is now being piloted by the NEF. The Programme consists of providing educational support to the needy children of Mauritius and Rodrigues in order to ease education access among the needy families since the pre-school age.

The Programme is also designed to see that parents are trained to get a job with sustainable income. In addition, parents and children are given appropriate training in life skills management under the Programme and families are monitored to see if they have adequate infrastructure.

Moreover, the PPS&PS Programme provides for a follow up through case management (Accompagnement Scolaire) to NEF beneficiaries attending ZEP Schools. Funds are being disbursed to registered NGOs in Mauritius for the provision of meal, transport and case management to the needy children. The NEF has also taken the responsibility to pay the school fees to each private pre-primary school on a monthly basis.

Under this Programme, the children continue to have the incentives (meal and case management) up to Standard II. The number of beneficiaries for the year 2013 amounted to 1 700 compared to 1 169 in 2012 and 903 in 2011.
World Football
FIFA holds 63rd Congress in Mauritius

Mauritius was the venue for the 63rd FIFA Congress which was held on 30 May 2013 at the Swami Vivekananda International Convention Centre, Pailles.

The opening ceremony was marked by a gala performance of local and world famous artists depicting the rich ethnic and cultural diversity of Mauritius. Several eminent personalities, including the President of the Republic, Mr Rajkeswur Purryag, the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, and FIFA President Joseph S. Blatter graced the event.

The show was also marked by a display of the 209 member associations’ flags carried by 450 Mauritian children at the sound of the FIFA hymn. A commemorative stamp the ‘Blue Mauritius’ printed especially for the FIFA Congress was presented to FIFA’s president.

In his address at the opening ceremony, the Prime Minister highlighted the importance of sports especially football which, he said, transcends all barriers and fosters unity and national pride.

Dr Ramgoolum expressed hope that the holding of the 63rd FIFA Congress in Mauritius will mark a new era for our football, with the setting up of a semi-professional league as a medium-term objective, and participating in the World Cup one day not too far ahead.

For his part, FIFA President Joseph S. Blatter expressed his joy at having brought FIFA Congress to the shores of Mauritius and enjoying the hospitality of a country which he said feels passionately for football. ‘Mauritius symbolises exactly what FIFA stands for: developing the game, especially for the youth, and, through the sport, helping the youth enjoy a healthy life, not only now but when they are mature’, he said.

The 63rd FIFA Congress

Two-hundred and eight FIFA member associations – except Bhutan, due to national elections in the country – participated in the 2013 Congress. Some 1 300 delegates were in attendance. For the very first time, FIFA formally elected a woman to its Executive Committee.

Issues on the agenda comprised strategic and sports-political matters and update on reforms based on the 2011 and 2012 congresses. The delegates also received reports on FIFA’s football development programmes.

The Congress approved FIFA’s resolution on the fight against racism and discrimination. The resolution is based on three major principles: education, prevention, and sanctions, which include sporting sanctions, such as point deductions and relegation.
A workshop aiming at elaborating on Government’s strategy towards road safety from an ICT perspective was held on 17 May 2013 at Cyber Tower 1, Ebène, to mark World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD) 2013, the theme for which was ‘ICTs and Improving Road Safety’.

The objectives were to sensitise participants on emerging technologies, such as intelligent transport systems, as a solution of how ICT can improve road safety and discuss on the impact of using ICT (mobile phones, tablets) while driving. The focus was on the following: Government Policy to use ICT for improving road safety; Driver Distraction using ICT; Intelligent Transport Systems; Emerging technologies for road safety; and, existing technologies used to improve road safety.

In his address, the Minister of Information and Communication Technology, Mr Tassarajen Pillay Chedumbrum, said that road traffic safety is a global concern not only for public health and injury prevention but also to improve efficiencies in traffic management as a means of combating the effects of climate change.

According to the Minister, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has been leading worldwide efforts in developing state-of-the-art ICT standards for Intelligent Transport Systems and driver safety that utilise a combination of computers, communications, positioning and automation technologies, including in-car radars for collision avoidance.

A wide variety of e-Safety technologies are in use today, some of which are fitted to vehicles increasingly as standard equipment, observed Mr Pillay Chedumbrum. These technologies now need efforts from policymakers to ensure their rapid application and deployment, he added.

Road Accidents - Statistics

According to the UNRSC report released by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, 1.3 million people die each year in traffic related accidents and another 20 to 50 million people are injured mainly in developing countries around the world. As a result, Governments and individuals suffer an estimated USD 518 billion in global economic loss.

In Mauritius, statistics show that there were 152 road deaths and 3,422 casualties in 2011. In 2012, the country registered 156 road deaths.

Signature of MOU with Microsoft in the field of Education and Training

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Cooperation in the field of ICT Education and Training, aiming to promote closer collaboration between the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (MICT) and Microsoft Indian Ocean Islands on issues relating to ICT, was signed on 10 May 2013, in Port-Louis.

The MOU covers the following: Microsoft’s collaboration for the setting up of an ICT Academy known as ICT Centre of Excellence; annual subscription of the ICT Centre of Excellence to the Microsoft IT Academy program; access to Microsoft School of Government Curriculum; access to Microsoft DreamSpark for free Microsoft developer software and tools; and enhanced cooperation in terms of research and expertise development in ICT with the establishment of a Think Tank and an ICT laboratory.

Under the MOU, the ICT Academy will serve in the first instance as a coordinating mechanism with existing stakeholders in ICT education and training.

As regards the Subscription of the ICT Centre of Excellence to the Microsoft IT Academy Program, it enables academic institutions to train and certify students and faculty on Microsoft technologies and prepare them to the job market.

As for the Microsoft School of Government Curriculum, it is a series of modules covering the major issues facing governments as they integrate ICT into government programs, and the ICT policies that are needed to ensure success. This program is aimed at government officials, policy makers, educators and organisations that are implementing or advising on e-government projects, and drafting or advising on ICT policy frameworks.
HRDC
Placement Programme for 22 Rodriguan Entrepreneurs in Mauritius

The Human Resources Development Council (HRDC) launched a four-week placement programme, in small and medium enterprises in Mauritius, for 22 entrepreneurs from Rodrigues, on 16 May 2013 at NG Tower, Ebène in the presence of the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Dr Vasant Bunwaree, and the Chief Commissioner of Rodrigues, Mr Serge Clair.

This training programme, a collaboration between HRDC, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly (RRA) and the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Authority, aims to ensure that these 22 entrepreneurs receive practical training that will give them the necessary skills to promote and sustain entrepreneurship in Rodrigues.

Following the opening of a HRDC office in Rodrigues last year, the HRDC has intensified its efforts to promote the development of human resources in Rodrigues and this placement programme is part of the HRDC’s and the Rodrigues Regional Assembly’s strategy to promote the creation and sustain the growth of small and medium enterprises on the island.

Regional fishing
Mauritius re-elected Chair of the IOTC

Mauritius has been unanimously re-elected as Chairperson of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) for the period 2013-2015 during the 17th Session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission Meeting held from 6 to 10 May 2013 at the Grand Baie International Conference Centre.

Several topics were discussed during the session, namely, the work of the Commission, reinforcing and improving the catch documentation scheme, elimination of illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing, data reporting along with conservation and management measures to ensure sustainability of the resources in its area of competency. The Commission also reviewed the report of its Scientific Committee on the status of the various resources of tuna and tuna-like species in the Indian Ocean.