National Day Celebrations

ENN PEI, ENN NASION, ENN DESTIN

The official ceremony marking the 46th Independence anniversary and 22nd anniversary of the Republic of Mauritius was held on 12 March 2014 in the evening at the Anjalay Stadium.

The Chief Guest was the Minister of International Trade and Industry of Malaysia, Dato’ Sri Mustapa Mohammed who represented the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato’ Sri Mohd Najib Tun Abdul Razak.

The theme chosen for this year’s National Day celebrations was ‘ENN PEI, ENN NASION, ENN DESTIN’. The programme comprised the flag raising ceremony, a fly past by Dornier and a demonstration by Police helicopters, a march past by the Disciplined Forces and uniformed organisations, followed by a défilé of vehicles. A high level cultural show, under the theme ‘Pays de Lumière’, was held. The show depicted the cultural diversity of Mauritius in a globalised world.
NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATIONS - SNAPSHOTS
**Mauritius-Malaysia**

Towards deepening collaborative relations

The official visit of the Minister of International Trade and Industry of Malaysia, Dato’ Sri Mustapa Mohammed, to Mauritius from 11 to 13 March 2014 was marked by a courtesy call on the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, at Clarisse House in Vacoas. The Malaysian minister was in Mauritius in the context of National Day celebrations 2014.

The meeting with the Prime Minister on March 11 enabled both parties to discuss ways to further deepen ties between Mauritius and Malaysia. Areas of collaboration pertaining to the ocean economy, as well as economic cooperation and the issue of visa, were amongst topics raised. Discussions also focused on increasing the number of Mauritian students who go to study in Malaysia, and on the Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology (MIGHT), which is positioned as the lead agency for the internationalisation of science, technology and innovation.

The Programme of Visit

The Minister of International Trade and Industry of Malaysia also paid a courtesy call on the President of the Republic, Mr Rajkeswur Purryag, at the State House in Réduit.

A working session, on bilateral, regional and international issues of common interest to Mauritius and Malaysia, was held in the evening of March 11, in Port Louis. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Dr Arvin Boolell, led the Mauritian side, which also comprised the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection, Mr Cader Sayed-Hossen.

Moreover, a business meet, aiming to provide a platform for Mauritian and Malaysian entrepreneurs to discuss business opportunities, was held on 12 March in Grand Baie. The event provided a platform for Malaysian businessmen to network with Mauritius and to identify how to tap into the potential of Africa while using Mauritius as a gateway.
The Mauritian delegation was led by the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Mr Xavier-Luc Duval, and the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection, Mr Cader Sayed-Hossen.

Some of the prospective sectors for investment evoked during the forum include: finance and banking, oil and gas, rubber, tourism, science and technology, processed food, non-metallic and chemical products.

Malaysia in top ten trading partners for Mauritius

Malaysia remains among the top ten trading partners for Mauritius. Both countries share common vision of graduating to a high income economy by 2020. In 2013, total imports from Malaysia stood at around USD 130 million representing 2.4% of total imports for the country. Main goods imported include: building materials, copper wires, foodstuffs and palm oil among others. As for Mauritius’ exports to Malaysia which consist of mainly fish and fish products, amounted to USD 5 million in 2013.

At date several Malaysian companies have invested in Mauritius across various sectors including banking, financial services, business service delivery, education and training, hotel and tourism as well as food processing.

It will be recalled that trade relations between Malaysia and Mauritius go back as far as 1848 when four palm oil seedlings were brought from Africa via Mauritius to be planted in the Botanical Gardens in Java and later on in Kuala Lumpur.

In 1988, diplomatic relations were established through the setting up of the High commission of Mauritius in Kuala Lumpur. In 2008, the Malaysian Government appointed a Honorary Consul in Mauritius. Relations between the two countries were further consolidated in 1992 with the signature of a Double Taxation Agreement ratified in 1993.
In his National Day message on 12 March, the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, announced the imminent publication of the White Paper on Electoral Reform.

The White Paper, stressed the Prime Minister, is an essential element of any constitutional reform, as the Constitution which dates back to 1968 has to be updated to meet the exigencies of the 21st century.

The PM underlined that he would be in favour of a debate on the essential points of the proposed electoral reform so as to enlist broad consensus nationwide, while seeing to it that women are given due recognition.

All efforts are, and will be geared, towards consolidating national unity and democracy and building a modern Mauritius, Dr Ramgoolam stated, adding that after 46 years of independence, it is time to think in terms of people in Mauritius and not in terms of community.

The PM referred to the various achievements of the country on both the economic and social spheres which have triggered economic growth since independence and make the country where it stands today. Among the measures: free education, developments in the manufacturing and tourism sectors, free transport, increase in the health and education sectors budget, massive investment in infrastructure namely at the Port, the new Terminal at the SSR Airport and major road developments.

In a bid to continue on the path of modernity and better serve the interests of society, Dr Ramgoolam underlined, Government has already embarked on a strategy to diversifying the economy. The focus, he said, is on targeting the African continent and the Ocean Economy which are the main pillars towards a brighter future for generations to come.

Other projects which the PM mentioned as long term vision for the development of the country are the Light Rail project, the transformation of the Port Louis Harbour as a main transshipment port in the region, and developing Mauritius as a Centre for research and development. Dr Ramgoolam also emphasised the importance of culture and his vision of making Mauritius a unique and universal cultural destination.

The future of Mauritius rests not on one person but on unity and solidarity and the contribution and hard work of one and all, he concluded.
March 2014

Welfare of the Elderly and the Disabled
PM Inaugurates Lady Sushil Ramgoolam Recreation Centre

Government has made the choice to invest massively for the welfare of the elderly, said the Prime Minister in his address. Top priority has been given in providing the best facilities, be it in the infrastructure, health, transport or leisure sectors, to our senior citizens who have worked hard and made painful sacrifices to spur the socio-economic development of our nation, he emphasised.

According to Dr Ramgoolam, social justice is one of the goals towards which the Government strives to achieve. This is accomplished by providing opportunities to each and every one so as to build their capabilities and develop their skills and talents, including the disabled, he added.

The Centre - Amenities

The Recreation Centre is the third one in Mauritius which provides residential and recreational facilities to senior citizens. It houses 60 twin bedrooms, a dinning hall with an industrial kitchen catering for vegetarian and non-vegetarian cuisines, an auditorium and an amphitheatre, a swimming pool (heated in winter), two lifts, and a computer room. It can accommodate 120 persons at one time.

The two other recreation centres operated by the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions are the Dr James Burty David Recreation Centre for Senior Citizens located in Pointe aux Sables and the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Recreation Centre for Senior Citizens in Belle Mare. Both centres provide residential and recreational facilities for some 22,000 elderly and disabled persons yearly at a subsidised rate. With the inauguration of the new centre in Pointe aux Piments, the number is expected to increase to 34,000 per annum.

A similar recreation centre for the elderly is to be set up in Riambel with a view to cater for the growing number of elderly. The population of senior citizens in Mauritius, people aged 60 and above, presently stands at 177,302.
The Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, made this statement on 21 February 2014 while inaugurating the Quartier Militaire Road (B6) from Quartier Militaire to Belle Rive. The Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping, Mr. Anil Bachoo, was also present.

Improving road infrastructure remains a priority for the Government, as it is a key factor to boost the economic development of a country and also to meet the growing trend in the fleet of vehicles on our roads, observed Dr Ramgoolam.

According to him, the new road will ease the traffic flow in that part of the island while promoting public benefits as well as social and economic well being for both the inhabitants in the vicinity and the population at large.

Dr Ramgoolam recalled that from August 2007 to February 2014, the Road Development Authority (RDA) has implemented 41 major projects to the tune of some Rs1.2 billion among which the Terre Rouge-Verdun and Verdun-Trianon Link road, which was inaugurated in December last year. In addition to road developments, said the Prime Minister, significant investments have also been made as regards the modernisation of the airport, port, hospitals and university campuses for the benefit of one and all.
Prime Minister Attends Passing Out Parade of Trainee Prison Officers

A Passing Out Parade for 122 Prison Officers including two female officers enlisted in May 2013 was held on 19 February 2014 at the Prison Training School in Beau Bassin. The Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, attended for the first time a passing out parade of Trainee Prison Officers.

In his keynote address, Dr Ramgoolam exhorted the recruits to perform their duty with sincerity and pride and cautioned them to keep the department’s standards high. This career, he said, requires a high standard of honesty, moral integrity and sense of devotion as well as constant vigilance and discipline.

He said that one should discharge one’s duties in a disciplined and efficient manner without fear, adding that sanctions should be taken if one fails in one’s duty. Dr Ramgoolam recalled that the Prison Service is an important component of the criminal justice system and that its aim is to serve society by keeping detainees in safe, humane custody while preparing them for a useful life. He pointed out that the Mauritius Prison Service gives priority to rehabilitation, which is a key feature of a modern prison service.

Reform of the Prison Service

Speaking about the reform of the Prison Service, the Prime Minister said that it is high on the Government agenda, adding that focus is on efficient management, dynamic rehabilitation and reintegration, as well as training of staff. The budget earmarked for the Mauritius Prison Service has increased significantly from Rs 276 million in 2005 to Rs 800 million in 2013. Several major reform projects are being implemented, namely infrastructural projects, development of a coherent training strategy for prison staff, numeracy and literacy programmes for detainees, and the reinforcement of prison staff.

Other penitentiary projects include construction works at Beau Bassin prison to accommodate sea pirates; construction of a new Open prison for female detainees; installation of CCTV cameras and jamming system in prisons; setting up of digital radio systems within and outside prison walls; and the completion of Phase 1 of the e-prison project.
Confluences 2014
International Book Fair Inaugurated by Prime Minister

The second edition of Confluences, an International Book Fair organised by the department Culture & Avenir of the Prime Minister’s Office, was inaugurated on 6 March 2014 by the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, at the Swami Vivekananda International Convention Centre, Pailles.

Held from 6 to 9 March 2014, Confluences 2014 saw the participation of several authors from different parts of the globe. Mauritian authors living abroad were also present as well as several foreign and local publishing houses and international book-related specialists and professionals.

In his opening address, the Prime Minister stated that Confluences provides book lovers with a forum favouring cultural encounters, while bringing together writers from different countries in Mauritius.

Confluences, said Dr Ramgoolam, is an occasion where the actors evolving in the literary sphere are able to convey to the Mauritian people the literature of major continents, and at the same time reveal the meanders of their imagination. The International Book Fair will become an annual cultural meeting place of the region, hence positioning Mauritius as a full-fledged cultural destination, he added.

Raising Awareness on Strategic Approach to Chemical Management

The Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) was the focus of a workshop held on 24 February 2014 at Sofitel Imperial Resort & Spa, Flic en Flac at the initiative of the Mauritius/United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) partnership.

Around 60 stakeholders from the public and private sectors, academia, trade unions and nongovernmental organisations attended the workshop which aimed at raising awareness on the management of chemicals. During the workshop, deliverables were presented and the project was officially closed. Participants also took cognizance of the salient outcomes of the whole process of implementation.

Launched in April 2013, the Mauritius SAICM project which is funded by the Quick Start Programme to the tune of $231 000 was signed in May 2010 and all deliverables have been finalised by January 2014. The project was implemented under the aegis of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life through the Occupational Health Unit.

The key deliverables which were presented were the National Chemicals Profile, the Inventory of mercury releases in Mauritius, the Mainstreaming Road Map, and the National Action Plan for mercury.

The SAICM Project

SAICM is a policy framework to promote chemical safety around the world. Its overall objective is to achieve sound management of chemicals throughout their life cycle so that by 2020 chemicals are produced and used in ways that minimise significant adverse impacts on human health and the environment.

The objectives of the SAICM project are to work with the UNDP/UNEP partnership initiative for implementing key steps to strengthen the domestic Sound Management of Chemicals (SMC) regime consistent with SAICM.
The 11th Regional ACP-EU JPA

The Meeting, held from 12 to 14 February 2014, saw the participation of the Speaker of the Mauritius National Assembly, Mr Abdool Razack Peeroo, the Acting Co-President EU side, Mr Patrice Tirolien, and, Jamaica MP, Co-President ACP side, Mr Fritz Jackson, amongst others.

The ACP-EU JPA provided a privileged forum to highlight and discuss the regional dimension of the four-decade old model of North-South Cooperation. The meeting also enabled participants to be more familiar with the specificities of small islands, their vulnerabilities, the aspirations of their people as well as the measures taken to improve their standards of living and make respective countries more competitive on the global market.

Discussions during the three-day meeting focused on the following: Progress and challenges of regional integration in the region, including Economic Partnership Agreements and the EDF Financing; Regional infrastructure development; Conflict and terrorism prevention; Piracy; Urbanisation challenges, waste management and development; The services industry and its contribution to development; and, Improving democratic accountability through strengthening institutions for democracy.

The Meeting concluded with the adoption of the Port Louis Communiqué which underscored the importance of regional integration in creating an enabling environment for economic growth, employment, development and poverty reduction, and called for the harmonisation and rationalisation of regional integration processes given the multiple and overlapping memberships of regional organisations, which could compromise the objective of integration.

The Communiqué also highlighted ACP Members concerns on the elimination of EU sugar quotas scheduled for 2017, and their call for additional time to complete their adjustment processes.

Mauritius Urges the Reviewing of the Decision to Abolish Sugar Quotas

The President of the Republic of Mauritius, Mr Rajkeswur Purryag, at the inauguration on 12 February 2014 of the 11th Regional Meeting (East African Region) of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA), made a plea for the European Parliament to consider reviewing the decision to abolish sugar quotas. The meeting was held at the Sir Harilal Vaghjee Memorial Hall.

According to Mr Purryag, reviewing this decision would prove beneficial for countries like Mauritius since the restructuring, modernisation and transformation of the country’s sugar cane industry have not been completed yet.

The President also stated that it would be appreciated if parliamentarians supported a decision to allow the allocation and reallocation of all the resources available in the EU Budget for the Accompanying Measures to be fully utilised post-2014.
World Cancer Day
Formulation of a Strategy for Selective Screening Programme for Women

Around 60 health professionals participated in a one-day workshop aimed at developing a protocol for the selective screening of high risk patients for breast cancer by digital mammography, on 4 February 2014 at La Cannelle, Domaine Les Pailles, in the context of the World Cancer Day 2014.

Discussions centered around the criteria for high risk patients in the Mauritian context, as well as a strategy to carry out the selective screening programme for all women who are at risks of developing breast cancer.

On this occasion, the Minister of Health and Quality of Life, Mr Lormus Bundhoo announced that a new state of the art Radiotherapy and Oncology Centre will be built at Victoria Hospital and that the National Cervical Screening Service which screens all women above 30 years on a regular basis will be revamped.

Furthermore, a National Cancer Agency will be set up to act as a Centre of Excellence for the region for management, capacity building, research and palliative care in cancer. It will work in collaboration with international cancer institutions and will be managed jointly by the public and private sector.

HIV/AIDS
Training Workshop for SADC Senior Officials

The domestication of harmonised policies and regional minimum standards for HIV/AIDS was the focus of a five-day training workshop, held from 17 to 21 February 2014 at Gold Crest Hotel, Quatre Bornes.

Around 44 senior officials and trainers from 11 English-speaking countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) attended the workshop.

The training programme, a joint initiative of the MIH and the SADC, was conducted by a team of consultants from MIH. The objective was to train senior officials and experts in the regional minimum standards for HIV testing and counseling (HTC) and the prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV/AIDS (PMTCT) so that they can advocate for the domestication of these minimum standards and also provide appropriate training to national practitioners.

In the course of the training, focus was on five main core units: SADC integration agenda, regional minimum standards for HTC and PMTCT, emerging issues in HTC and PMTCT, advocacy and domestication of regional minimum standards.