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Prime Minister attends US-Africa Summit in Washington

Prime Minister with the President of the United States of America, Mr Barack Obama, and his wife

The Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, participated in the United States-Africa Summit from 31 July to 7 August 2014 in Washington. He also attended the Business Forum which brought together leaders and the business community of the continent and those of the United States.

Leading issues discussed relate to the promotion of trade and US investments in Africa. One of the main themes of the forum was the extension of the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) beyond 2015. In 1999, Mauritius played a crucial role in the adoption of AGOA.

A series of bilateral meetings were also scheduled during the mission of the Prime Minister to Washington.

Meetings

During the Summit, Dr Ramgoolam had a tête-à-tête with the President of the Republic of Congo, Mr Denis Sassou Nguesso. Discussions between the two leaders focused on economic cooperation between the two countries. The President of the Republic of Congo made an appeal to Mauritian investors to participate in the development of the agro-industry sector of his country and also in mining projects. Prime Minister Ramgoolam, for his part talked about the enormous potential in the exploitation
of marine resources and the possibility of Mauritian investments in the special economic zone of Congo. Both leaders also agreed that the Mauritius-Singapore-Congo axis represents an enormous economic potential.

Mauritius and Congo have finalised the terms pertaining to a Double-Taxation Avoidance Treaty between the two countries. The Republic of Congo has now to introduce the necessary legislations to conclude the Treaty.

Furthermore, the Prime Minister met the US National Security Adviser, Dr Susan Rice. The Chagos Archipelago, Mauritius-US economic relations and the United States’ active participation in research on the potential of Mauritius’ maritime resources were at the fore of discussions during the meeting.

While insisting on Mauritius’ sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, Dr Ramgoolam proposed that Mauritius be involved in negotiations due to start between the UK and the US as regards the renewal of the lease on the Chagos Archipelago ending in 2016. He also mentioned the proceedings initiated by Mauritius against the UK with regard to the marine protected area which the UK has purported to establish around the Archipelago.

The Prime Minister also referred to the various measures taken by Mauritius to assist the international community in its fight against piracy, especially the decision of Mauritius to judge pirates before Mauritian courts.

During the dinner, Mr Obama announced the extension of the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act adding that American companies will be encouraged to become more involved in the development of Africa.

During a meeting of Heads of State and Government, Dr Ramgoolam urged African leaders to follow the example of Mauritius by setting up in their respective countries transparent legal structures to ensure investments.

The Prime Minister recalled that legal structures have been set up to ensure transparency and guarantee property rights. In a bid to further reassure investors, Mauritius has maintained its recourse to the UK Privy Council, he said, adding that this has created a robust and transparent investment environment.

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Recalling that Mauritius was the first African country to sign the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA) with the United States aimed at ensuring transparency in investment, Dr Ramgoolam called on African countries to take similar initiatives.
The 16th Annual General Conference of the Electoral Commissions Forum (ECF) of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries hosted by the Electoral Commission of Mauritius kicked off on 12 August 2014 at the Paradis Hotel and Golf Club, Le Morne. The theme this year was Electoral Reforms and Electoral Processes.

Some 44 delegates from SADC countries participated in the two-day conference which gave an opportunity to member commissions that held elections in 2013 and 2014 to make presentations on electoral reforms that have been undertaken or contemplated in their countries.

The presentations facilitated commissions to take stock, consolidate and strengthen the extent to which electoral reforms are undertaken in electoral processes with the aim of achieving more efficient and effective delivery of credible elections.

In his opening address, the chief guest for the occasion, the President of the Republic of Mauritius, Mr. Rajkeswur Purryag, stated that since some time now, the wind of democratic changes have been blowing over the African continent. He highlighted that the participation of all citizens in electoral processes, make governments more accountable to the people.

Furthermore, he pointed out that in many parts of Africa, the people have demanded their rights through the ballot box. According to the President, for democracy to work, all stakeholders must be ready to accept the results of free elections. Democratic rule is inconceivable if elections are not democratic, he said.

Election, Mr Purryag stated, is a major factor in the stabilisation of emerging democracies in Africa and is an unavoidable element in the peace-keeping process. For him, Africa is currently at a crossroad and needs to deepen the democratic processes of its institutions.

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The President also cautioned on the fact that in countries where electoral commissions are weak, elections results are easily manipulated.

The ECF-SADC is an independent organisation in which each country in the SADC region is represented by its electoral management body. The ECF-SADC members include the electoral management bodies of SADC countries—namely: Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Seychelles, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, Zanzibar and Zimbabwe.

The Forum set up since 1998, has played an important role in ensuring that the management of elections in the SADC countries is improved and in building the capacity of election management bodies to fulfil their roles.

The ECF-SADC is governed by a constitution to perform the following mandate amongst others: to strengthen co-operation amongst Electoral Commissions in the SADC region; and to promote conditions conducive to free, fair, credible and transparent elections in the SADC region.
‘We are unique in the world. One of our greatest achievements is the mosaic culture we have in Mauritius’, the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam said in his opening address at the 1st International Conference on Tamil Diaspora, on 23 July 2014 at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute (MGI) Auditorium, Moka.

The Prime Minister underlined that Government subsidises all religions and sponsors the teaching of 11 languages in schools. He recalled that Mauritius is a land of diasporas where peaceful coexistence is a way of life and deeply embedded in our society.

According to Dr Ramgoolam, the most treasured right that migrants acquired is that of practising their own religion and teaching their ancestral languages to their children. ‘We must not forget the profound dedication migrants have shown to their new motherland,’ he stated.

Tamil culture, the Prime Minister said, has enriched the mosaic of Mauritian way of life. He commended the contribution of the Tamil community towards the economic, political and social development of Mauritius.

Dr Ramgoolam recalled that Government has set up a Tamil Cultural Centre to crystallize actions geared towards furthering their cultural agenda and a Speaking Union to specifically promote the Tamil language.

The 1st International Conference on Tamil Diaspora

The theme of the three-day conference, organised jointly by Ministry of Arts and Culture, the International Tamil Diaspora Association, the Institute of Asian Studies, in collaboration with MGI, was Preservation of Tamil Culture and Identity. It brought together some 200 participants from 20 countries.

The Tamil diaspora represents over 70 million people living in about 50 countries, including Mauritius, and this multidisciplinary conference sought to explore the contemporary experience of Tamil Diaspora communities. Moreover, this conference was a platform for the Tamil community across the different regions to come forward and share their experiences. It also aimed at opening new avenues of scholarship research to students and academics.
A workshop on Legal Review and MID Compliance Strategy, an initiative of the University of Mauritius (UOM) in collaboration with the Maurice Ile Durable (MID) Commission and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), kicked off on 31 July 2014 at the UOM, Rédduit.

While sustainability and the concept of MID are being implemented based on policies and relating Acts of Parliaments, it has been noted that there is no comprehensive and encompassing legal document on sustainable development itself. At the doorstep of the implementation of the MID, the need of having a Sustainable Development Act (SDA) has been felt.

This workshop is an initial step towards the drafting of the SDA. It essentially looks at the review of existing laws pertaining to energy, environment, education, equity and employment. The legal review is then followed by a review on compliance where the focus is on how the proposed legal review would be implemented and what would be the necessary policy, legal and institutional changes to materialise the legal review.

He recalled that this workshop will be a platform to review the work done after some four months by the UOM in collaboration with UNEP, where 125 amendments to existing laws pertaining to the 5E’s of the MID, namely Energy, Environment, Education, Equity and Employment, have been proposed.

This legal review, once approved and endorsed, will culminate in a MID Compliance Strategy where the focus is on how to implement the legal review which takes into account the necessary policy, legal and institutional changes needed to materialise the legal review, announced Mr Mahomed.

According to Mr Springett, Mauritius has taken a bold step in putting sustainable development in the forefront of its agenda. He underlined that creating an enabling environment for sustainable development is important, adding that it is imperative to have a legislation framework.
The 10th round of the Mauritius-Pakistan Joint Working Group (JWG) meeting on Trade and Economic Cooperation held on 16 and 17 July 2014 in Ebène, Mauritius, enabled both sides to agree on the exploration of ways and means to enhance awareness on the Preferential Trade Area (PTA) which was signed in July 2007; create more visibility of the business potential of the two countries; and expand the coverage of the PTA that will eventually lead to a Free Trade Area (FTA).

So as to enhance the effectiveness of the PTA, both countries have agreed to establish a Joint Trade Committee and a sub-committee on customs matters as implementation mechanisms. Furthermore, both sides have agreed to notify the PTA to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) under the Enabling Clause.

Mauritius has invited Pakistani trading houses and investors to participate in the 3rd Mauritius International Trade Fair scheduled in August 2014. On the other hand, Pakistan has also invited Mauritian firms and institutions to participate in the forthcoming Expo Pakistan in October 2014. Mauritius will be the sole country to have a stand at the Expo.

Pakistan has expressed the wish to support Mauritius in its efforts towards achieving the objectives of Ocean Economy. Thus, a Centre of Excellence at Karachi University is willing to offer opportunities to Mauritian students and researchers in undertaking studies and research in marine biology and ocean resources.

As regards enhancing cooperation in the services sector, both sides recognised that the yearly visit of Dr Wajid Ali Khan and his team of eye surgeons to perform corneal transplant and vitreo retinal surgery on Mauritian patients could serve as a model of cooperation in other areas of health, such as cancer and heart surgery/transplant.

Potential sectors, to attract more Pakistani investments, have been identified, namely: manufacturing (assembly of tractors, spare parts for motorcycles, agro-products and textiles), film industry, freeport, and financial services.

Mauritius, an active member of SADC, COMESA and the African Union, is currently pursuing a well defined policy pertaining to its Africa Strategy with a view to deepening the synergies pertaining to trade, investment and economic cooperation on the African continent. Mauritius would like to partner with third countries in the implementation of some of the projects under the Africa Strategy.
In this regard, the private sectors of Mauritius and Pakistan are encouraged to work together in a triangular mode of cooperation in the Mauritius-Pakistan-Africa format. Given that the private sector institutions of both countries have signed collaborative arrangements between themselves and also with their counterparts in Turkey and India, the 10th JWG highlighted the need for both Mauritius and Pakistan to explore avenues of triangular mode of cooperation, such as Mauritius-Pakistan-Turkey and Mauritius-India-Pakistan.

The JWG

Through the JWG, Mauritius and Pakistan have established a channel of structured dialogue with a view to boost bilateral trade and economic relations. The JWG meets at the level of high officials of the two countries and the meeting is held alternately in Port Louis and in Islamabad to work on the bilateral trade agenda every year. The private sector of the two countries is also involved in the consultation process.

Mauritius Hosts the 18th Annual Conference of the Association of Medical Councils of Africa

Sharing of best practices in the medical profession was the focus of the 18th annual conference of the Association of Medical Councils of Africa (AMCOA) which opened on 30 July 2014 at Le Sofitel Imperial Resort & Spa Hotel, Flic en Flac.

Around 35 foreign delegates from several African countries namely Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe attended the conference which was organised by the Medical Council of Mauritius and the Dental Council of Mauritius jointly with AMCOA.

The theme chosen this year was Task Shifting in Medical Practice, which is one method recommended by the World Health Organisation to strengthen and expand the health work force in areas where there is an acute shortage of physicians. The programme featured a combination of presentations from member countries The sub committees developed their terms of reference, mandates and responsibilities as well as defined work plans and set deliverables in line with the 2013-2018 AMCOA strategic plans.

Present for the occasion, the Minister of Health and Quality of Life, Mr Bundhoo recalled that the prime functions of a Medical Council are to ensure the highest standards in medical practice, ensure that all persons registered with the respective councils observe the code of practice at all times during their medical practice and be involved in continuous learning in order to protect, promote and maintain the health and safety of the public in general and the patients in particular.

For his part, the chairperson of AMCOA, Prof. George Magoha, pointed out that Africa is facing many challenges as far as the health sector is concerned. These include the scarcity of health professionals, brain drain, the quality of medical education, malpractice, and the increase number of litigations, amongst others. Hence, the need to ensure a common and coordinated medium through which medical regulatory authorities can share information and exchange best practices as well as devise mechanisms to uniformly address these pertinent issues of common concern.

The Mauritius Medical Council Act will soon be reviewed so as to render the Medical Council more efficient and promote good practice of medicine of highest international quality and standards, and safeguard the interests and expectations of patients, the medical profession and the public at large.
Public Service Excellence Award 2013
Petit Verger Prison bags the Award

The Petit Verger prison in Pointe aux Sables bagged the Public Service Excellence Award (PSEA) 2013. Out of the forty public service bodies which participated in the seventh edition of the competition, the Petit Verger prison has excelled in all criteria.

The theme for the 2013 edition was: Maurice Ile Durable-Adoption of modernised methods for a green Civil Service

At the Awards ceremony held on 14 August 2014 at the InterContinental Mauritius Resort, Balaclava, the Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms, Mr Sutyadeo Moutia, handed over a trophy and a cash prize of Rs 100 000 to the winning team.

A cash prize of Rs 50 000 each and a trophy were awarded to the winners in the four sub-categories, namely: the Sir Abdool Razack Mohamed State Secondary School for innovation and improvement; the Gastro Intestinal Endoscopy Unit of SSRN Hospital for being customer focused; the Forensic Science Laboratory for its effectiveness and efficiency; and the National Coast Guard for leadership and team spirit.

The Modern Social Welfare Resource Centre, the Hemodialysis Centre of Flacq Hospital, the Entomology Division and the Assay Office received special mention awards with regard to delivering timely, cost-effective and quality service to the public.

The special jury award went to the Registrar General Department and the National Archives Department, respectively.

In his address, Minister Moutia outlined the rationale of the PSEA that according to him, gives formal recognition to departments and organisations which have taken the initiative to review their business processes to innovate and provide for citizen engagement while effectively fulfilling their daily responsibilities.

Minister Moutia also called upon the heads of Ministries/Departments/Organisations to make it mandatory for at least one entity from their respective ministries to participate in the PSEA so as to promote the engagement of Government to have a modern and sustainable Civil Service.

The Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms launched the PSEA in October 2006. The main objective is to recognise excellence and innovation in the development of a quality public service. In addition, the competition motivates officers to adopt ways to meet the daily challenges and promotes a performance-oriented, responsive and accountable public service.
The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Business and Trade Facilitation Workshop, aiming at facilitating and promoting economic cooperation among IORA Member States, was held on 4 and 5 August 2014 at Hennessy Park Hotel, in Ebène. The workshop provided a platform to further emphasise the need to build complementarities of economies among Member States.

Organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, in collaboration with the IORA Secretariat, the workshop brought together more than thirty delegates from 20 IORA Member States. Participants were government regulators, policy makers, investment promotion agencies, business chamber of commerce, captains of trade and industry, private sector businesses and academics.

The objectives of the workshop were also to boost public-private sector dialogue on business and trade facilitation; develop synergies to harmonise trade practices in line with international norms and minimise barriers to trade in the Indian Ocean region; and, identify areas of cooperation among Member States.

Working sessions focused on the following: Business facilitation as a strategy for economic development; World Trade Organisation Trade Facilitation Agreement – Member states’ perspectives on implementation; involvement of private sector in policy reforms; sharing of experience on facilitation movement of business people; importance of Information Technology in business facilitation; and peer to peer learning.

The IORA region – Facts and Figures

The IORA, formerly known as the IOR-ARC, was launched in 1997 in Mauritius. The objectives of the IORA are to promote sustained growth and balanced development of the region and of the Member States, and to create common ground for regional cooperation amongst others.

The IORA region, with a population of around 2 billion, constitutes a significant market. It represents 11.6% of global trade and 13.2% of global foreign direct investment inflows. Trade amongst the IORA countries amounts to 24% of global trade. The IORA region’s GDP is expected to reach USD 9 trillion in 2016.

IORA Member States are: Australia, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen and Comoros. Dialogue Partner States are China, Egypt, France, Japan, UK and USA.
Qualifications Authorities of Seychelles and Mauritius sign MoU

The visit of two high officials from the Seychelles Qualifications Authority (SQA) to Mauritius from 15 to 17 July 2014 ended with the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on National Qualifications Framework development and systems, at the seat of the Ministry of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology in Ebène on 17 July.

The main objective of the agreement, signed between the Mauritius Qualifications Authority (MQA) and the SQA, is to promote cooperation as well as information, expertise and experience exchanges concerning quality assurance, standards setting, recognition and evaluation of qualifications, as well as recognition of prior learning.

The MoU between MQA and SQA is the outcome of the 10th session of the Mauritius – Seychelles Commission on Bilateral Cooperation held in September 2013 where provision was made for cooperation in different spheres including that between the respective Qualifications Authorities, with a view of strengthening collaboration for mutual benefit and continued successful development.

It is to be noted that the MQA has several international as well as regional linkages with other Qualifications Authorities. Hence, the Authority has established collaboration with l’Académie de la Réunion, the Commonwealth of Learning, the Ministry of Education of Ghana, the national Training Authority of Gambia, TEVETA-Zambia, the Barbados Accreditation Council and the Vocational Education and Training Authority of Tanzania.

African Development Bank grants Mauritius Rs 14 million for the water sector

The African Development Bank (ADB) has approved a grant of Rs 14 million for Mauritius under the Middle Income Country Technical Assistance Fund. The grant and the Letter of Agreement between the ADB and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development were signed on 24 July 2014.

The grant is issued for the purposes of enhancing the technical capacity of the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities in water management by providing independent experts in dam planning, design and implementation.

The project comprises two components. The first component relates to the establishment of an independent panel of experts, whose services will be more particularly involved in the design and construction of the Rivière des Anguilles Dam and La Ferme Dam.

The second component is Project management which relates to the expenditures during the implementation of the project.

Certificates awarded to participants of an Entrepreneurship Training Workshop

A certificate award ceremony was held on 13 August 2014 at the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) in Coromandel following the holding of the Entrepreneurship Training Workshop (ETW), an internationally acclaimed workshop, jointly developed by the Harvard University and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development through intensive research.

About 20 existing and potential entrepreneurs participated in this six-day training organised by the SMEDA and Empretec Mauritius.

The workshop aimed at helping entrepreneurs to put their ideas into action, bring an attitudinal change and build their personal entrepreneurial skills. It also gives participants the possibility to lab test their Personal Entrepreneurial Competencies and improve on them.

The ETW is an entrepreneurial capacity-building programme that provides entrepreneurship training and technical assistance for the promotion and development of SMEs. It aims at fostering individual entrepreneurial capabilities, institutional capacity building at the country level, and encouraging employment-creating investment and linkages among large and small enterprises.
Cybercrime capacity-building: Conference and Workshops on the Budapest Convention

A Conference on the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime, the first of a series of workshops on cybercrime capacity-building in the context of the GLACY (Global Action on Cybercrime) Project, opened on 11 August 2014 at Intercontinental Resort in Balaclava.

Organised by the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, in collaboration with the Council of Europe, the half-day Conference aimed to promote the use of the said Convention by stakeholders in Mauritius. More than a hundred participants, both from the public and private sectors, attended.

Discussions during the Conference focused on the following: background, purpose, structure, geographical scope, and benefits of the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime; implementation of the Convention under the domestic law of Mauritius; and role of capacity-building.

It is recalled that Mauritius is party to the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime and participates in the joint project of the European Union and the Council of Europe on GLACY. Under the GLACY work-plan for Mauritius, the series of workshops and meetings scheduled from 11 to 14 August 2014 focused on:

- Electronic evidence.
- Law enforcement training strategies.
- Judicial training.
- Criminal law measures for the protection of children against online sexual violence in line with the Lanzarote and Budapest Conventions.
- Amendments to the Criminal Code and Criminal Procedure Code as well as on Commercial Electronic Messages Bill (UCEM).

The Budapest Convention

Mauritius acceded to the Budapest Convention in November 2013. The Budapest Convention has as main objective the pursuance of a common criminal policy aimed at the protection of society against cybercrime.

The principles enshrined in the Budapest Convention will be implemented through the GLACY Project. A Project Team from the Council of Europe was in Mauritius in February 2014 for working sessions with respective Ministries/Departments to make needs assessment on how best to implement these provisions. Following this consultation process, the Council of Europe has submitted an initial situation report and a work plan for Mauritius.

The Project

GLACY is a joint project of the European Union and the Council of Europe aimed at supporting countries worldwide in the implementation of the Budapest Convention. Its specific objective is to enable criminal justice authorities to engage in international cooperation on cybercrime and electronic evidence on the basis of the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime. It is recalled that Mauritius is one among the six priority countries selected to benefit from the GLACY project.