National Road Safety Strategy 2015-2025
Road safety: A national urgency

The National Road Safety Strategy 2015-2025, Road safety: A national urgency, has been released in a forceful bid to improve road safety amid general concern over the high death and injury rates among road users since the beginning of the year.

The Strategy was presented at a press conference on 24 July 2015 in Port Louis by the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, Mr Nandcoomar Bodha. The main underlying objective is the significant reduction of serious road traffic injuries and fatalities.

According to the Minister, road safety is a national urgency and priority. “The present situation has become a national urgency: we cannot continue to have 150 road fatalities in a year because it is too high a price,” he affirmed.

Mr Bodha added that the National Road Safety Strategy 2015-2025 will be implemented in such a way as to ensure the participation of each and every one.

The National Road Safety Strategy 2015-2025 comprises new targets and actions to prevent road injuries and save lives on roads. It sets forth four national priorities for road safety management, namely:

- Improving safety of vehicles and road infrastructure.
• Sensitisation, prevention and training.
• Protection of the most vulnerable categories of road users.
• Fight against serious road traffic violations.

The Strategy also paves the way for the implementation of short term measures such as: programmes focusing on risk management on the road; fixing of black spots along dangerous roads; strengthening road safety legislation and enhancing protection of the most vulnerable road-users; the introduction of a new road management system where road maintenance will have absolute priority; new improved training programmes for car drivers and motorists; and a new approach in safety and prevention campaign.

PM to chair a National Road Safety Commission

A National Road Safety Commission, to be chaired by the Prime Minister, will be set up to strengthen the effectiveness of road safety measures. The Commission, which will bring together all concerned Ministries, will define national objectives and goals, and determine policies and priorities regarding road safety projects and programmes.

On the other hand, a National Road Safety Council will coordinate the activities of all departments and agencies involved in road safety: Road Development Authority, Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit, Police branch, insurance companies, car dealers, and Health and Education Ministries, among others.

Traffic Enforcement Squad

As part of the implementation of the National Road Safety Strategy, the Traffic Enforcement Squad was launched on 27 July 2015 at the Line Barracks in Port Louis, with the deployment of ten police riders on the roads. The Squad will be fully manned at 40 police riders in about three months’ time. The riders will be placed in strategic locations to book irresponsible drivers.

Road Traffic Act amended

The launching of the Traffic Enforcement Squad coincided with the coming into force of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2015 on 27 July 2015. The Act, passed on 5 May 2015 at the National Assembly, provides, among others, for the introduction of a new sanctioning mechanism for certain specified serious driving offences, and does away with the Penalty Points System. It also makes provision for the disqualification of a person who has been convicted of more than five specified serious driving offences and the cancellation of the driving licence of a person who has been disqualified a second time.
Commission of Inquiry on Drug Trafficking set up

Government’s fight against drug trafficking that includes the cultivation, manufacture, distribution and sale of substances which are subject to drug prohibition laws, intensifies as a Commission of Inquiry on Drug Trafficking has been set up.

Mr Paul Lam Shang Leen, former Judge of the Supreme Court, has been appointed to chair the Commission of Inquiry, and Mr Samiullah Lauthan, Social Worker and former Member of the National Assembly, and Dr Ravind Kumar Domun, Acting Director, Health Services, Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, will act as Assessors.

The Commission will inquire into, and report on, all aspects of drug trafficking in Mauritius, namely the scale and extent of the illicit drug trade and consumption in Mauritius and their economic and social consequences. It will also identify the sources/points of origin/routes of illicit drugs; the channels of entry and distribution of drugs in Mauritius; and the channels of entry and distribution of drugs in prisons.

The availability of new types of drugs, including synthetic and designer drugs, in Mauritius as well as the linkages between drug trafficking, money laundering, terrorist financing and other crimes will be investigated by the Commission. It will also examine the adequacy of existing legislation and the operational effectiveness of the various agencies involved in the fight against drug trafficking.

Analysing the adequacy of the existing resources, including human expertise technology and equipment, to detect and counter any attempt to introduce drug, including designer and synthetic drugs, in Mauritius, is amongst the Commission’s main objectives. Moreover, it will track funds in order to identify illicit activities and measuring whether there is any evidence of political influence in the drug trafficking trade.

The Commission will evaluate the need for fostering linkages and coordination among the various agencies and other local, regional and international entities dealing with drugs related matters for better strategic direction. Gauging the effectiveness of drug treatment and rehabilitation programmes, as well as harm reduction strategies, national prevention, education and drug repression strategies, with emphasis on youth, also falls under its mandate.

So as to fight the problem of importation, distribution and consumption of illicit drugs in the Republic of Mauritius, the Commission can take any such action as is deemed necessary and bring any statutory amendments, as may be necessary, to better safeguard the interests of the public at large.
Government recognises that one of the greatest forms of intangible heritage of Mauritius is the intellect of its hardworking students and its people. We will, therefore, leave no stone unturned to further unlock the potential of our hardworking youth for the progress of the nation.

This statement was made by the Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, on 9 July 2015, while addressing the 2014 Higher School Certificate (HSC) laureates at a reception hosted in their honour by the President of the Republic, Dr Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, at State House, in Le Réduit. Several personalities including the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research, Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun; as well as the families of the laureates and their rectors were present at the reception.

In his speech, Prime Minister Jugnauth spoke about the importance of providing equal opportunities to one and all, and stated that the norms of equity will constantly guide Government’s actions. “We want the elite to grow in numbers and at the same time, we want to ensure that all our children are adequately empowered in terms of education and training to help the nation attain new heights in socio-economic development. That is the reason why we are focusing on reforms of the education and training sector while at the same time implementing new support programmes for students from low income families”, he pointed out.

The Prime Minister also called upon the laureates to put at the service of the country the knowledge and the experiences acquired abroad and thus, contribute to the consolidation of our knowledge economy.

For her part, the President of the Republic, Dr Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, while congratulating the 2014 laureates for their exceptional performance stated that their real work starts now, especially, as they would be soon moving into the next stage of their educational life and will be on their own against all odds. She expressed confidence that as champions, laureates will strengthen themselves in order to overcome all the obstacles that may unfold.

The President also highlighted the fact that the key to success also lies with getting educated in the real world of skills, capabilities and above all, mindsets, as well as developing practical intelligence, that is, skills, attitudes and habits, beyond basic levels of academic intelligence. ‘The beautiful thing about education is that nobody can take it away from you. Education will remain important for you because it will continue to open your mind and widen your horizon’, she added.
Mauritius aims for higher economic development through Africa

Government wants to find alternatives to attract capital, investors and businesses to boost the country’s economic activity and achieve the goal of turning Mauritius into a High Income Country. Currently, Africa is the main destination where Government wants to pursue projects. In line with this strategy, Mauritius signed this month Agreements with Zambia and Senegal.

Signature of Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement with Zambia

Mauritius and Zambia signed an Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (IPPA) on 14 July 2015 in Port Louis. The Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Mr Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo, was the signatory for Mauritius and the Minister of Commerce, Trade and Industry of Zambia, Mrs. Margaret D. Mwanakatwe, represented her country.

The IPPA with Zambia is the 21st such agreement that Mauritius is signing with an African country. Though a Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement between the two countries is already in force since June 2012, the new IPPA will help boost a broader and deeper economic cooperation between Mauritius and Zambia.

The setting up of a Joint Economic Commission between the two countries in view to speed up bilateral trade and investment exchanges as well as sharing of know-how is also envisaged.

In his address at the signature ceremony, Minister Lutchmeenaraidoo underlined that Mauritius is keen to explore new growth opportunities on the African continent as part of a robust South-South cooperation. Africa is rising, and Mauritius endeavours to play an even more meaningful role in the African growth story, he said, adding that the Mauritian port is poised to play a defining role in the regional maritime trade in the light of the continent’s new economic configuration.

The Minister recalled that in line with Government’s new economic agenda, Mauritius will rely heavily on three key pillars, namely deeper cooperation and integration with the African continent, the ocean economy and the port.

Mauritius reinforces economic ties with Senegal

Mauritius and Senegal have agreed to work on the development of a designated Special Economic Zone, called DISEZ (Dakar Integrated Special Economic Zone) in Senegal.

In that connection, a delegation led by the Senegalese Minister of Economy, Finance and Planning, Mr Amadou Ba, and comprising the Minister of Hydraulic and Sanitation and the Minister of Industry and Mining, were in Mauritius from the 28 to 30 July 2015.

During the visit, two MOUs were signed on 30 July 2015 regarding the setting up of a Special Economic Zone in Senegal. The first, a framework Agreement concerning cooperation in the economic, financial and technical fields between Senegal and Mauritius, was signed by the Economy and Finance ministers of the two contracting States.

The second Agreement was between the Strategic Investment Sovereign Fund of Senegal (FONSIS S.A.) and the Mauritius Africa Fund. It relates to the establishment of a Special Purpose Vehicle to develop and promote the Special Economic Zone of Dakar.

DISEZ

DISEZ is one of the key projects to be implemented by the Government of Senegal under its new development strategy called the “Plan Sénégal Emergent” (PSE).

Senegal is poised to become a vital partner for Mauritius in terms of the manufacturing value chain playing significant role to tap in the US and European markets given its strategic location. DISEZ thus, represents an opportunity for growth for Mauritian enterprises in sectors ranging from manufacturing to services, including ICT, financial services, logistics, training and health.
The draft Action Plan for the Tertiary Education Strategic Plan, aiming at putting in place a better and improved governance of the Mauritian tertiary sector, was presented to stakeholders during a workshop on 13 July 2015 at La Cannelle, Domaine les Pailles.

Draft Action Plan

The document, funded to the tune of more than Rs 5 million by the European Union (EU), has been prepared by a team of four consultants, headed by Dr Rogier Van t'Rood. The latter is team leader at PROMAN.

It is recalled that the four EU consultants led a field mission team in Mauritius in June 2015 for the groundwork for the Action Plan. The technical assistance involved the development of a costed and implementable proposal for an Action Plan for the Tertiary Education Strategic Plan 2013-2025 with the appropriate tool for the monitoring and evaluation; and a training scheme.

The consultants have developed a draft form of the Action Plan which was discussed during the half-day workshop. The main features include: the costed Action Plan and implementation schedule; the monitoring and evaluation plan; a training needs assessment and a training plan; a resource mobilisation strategy for its financing; and the suggested amendment to relevant existing piece of legislation.

The Workshop

The workshop, organised by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research, in collaboration with the EU, brought together several public and private stakeholders from academia, as well as representatives of tertiary education institutions.

Discussions focused on: Governance, Human Resources and Financial Sustainability; Quality and Relevance; Access and Equity; Enhancing Research and Innovation; and, Internationalisation of Higher Education.

The 9th International Conference of the Society for Free Radical Research-Africa (SFRR-Africa) and the 4th International Conference of the Association of Medical and Biomedical Researchers (IAMBR), aimed at addressing research endeavours to improve health in Africa and Island States, was held from 27 to 29 July 2015 at Hennessy Park Hotel, in Ebène.

Around 110 delegates as well as more than 25 reputed scientists from USA, South Africa, Korea, UK, Germany, Japan, Portugal, Nigeria, France and India attended the three-day event which aimed to foster international development, capacity building and cooperation in scientific education, bio-based and medical research. The theme, geared towards innovation in health-related research with a broad range of topics, focused on Translational Science and Drug discovery- Impact on Health, Wellness, Environment and Economics.

The conference addressed current scientific challenges in nutrition and its impact on the management of health and diseases, therapeutic intervention, pharmaceuticals from marine flora and fauna, molecular biology and biomarkers of oxidative stress and occupational and environmental health.

Six specialised sessions focused on free radicals in health, traditional medicine applications, non-communicable diseases including cancer, diabetes and cardiovascular dysfunctions which are killer diseases in Mauritius and Island States, and, parasitic and infectious diseases with emphasis on recent outbreaks and the economics of healthcare systems in Africa and the region amongst others.
Mauritius is the 15th member country in the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) to sign the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) Compact.

The signature ceremony of the CAADP Compact, intended to assist the Government in defining and accelerating implementation of its agricultural development agenda, was held on 23 July 2015 at Westin Turtle Bay Resort and Spa, Balaclava.

CAADP is a commitment of African countries to pursue a higher path of economic growth through agriculture-led development in order to reduce poverty and hunger in the continent. CAADP countries are expected to achieve 6 percent growth in the agricultural sector of their economies and allocate at least 10 percent of the national budget to agriculture.

The objective of the CAADP process in Mauritius is to answer that call for the agricultural sector, by helping define a coherent long term framework to guide the planning and implementation of agricultural programmes, as well as identifying strategic options and sources of economic empowerment and inclusive growth for the agricultural sector.

The Compact validates the consensus on the goals and priorities that Mauritius has set for the sector and the partnerships and assistance that are required to achieve these goals. Its ultimate purpose is to increase the effectiveness Government’s efforts as well as the delivery of external assistance in the agricultural sector. It also aims to provide a solid framework under which assistance can be scaled up to help meet the short and long term investment needs in the sector.

The CAADP Compact in Mauritius sets the parameters for long-term partnership in the agricultural sector. It also specifies key commitments on the part of government and development partners. Furthermore, the Compact clarifies expectations with respect to the agribusiness and farming communities in order to ensure successful implementation of the Government Programme 2015-2019.

The Mauritius Systematic Country Diagnostic (SCD) aimed at analysing the country’s most critical constraints and opportunities in accelerating progress towards the goals of ending extreme poverty and promoting shared prosperity in a sustainable manner, was issued on 2 July 2015 by the World Bank.

The SCD identifies a number of major social and economic challenges facing the country and proposes a prioritisation based on relevance, impact and timeline needed to help Mauritius successfully pursue its development ambition of reaching high-income status in the next five years.

Developing a new growth model for Mauritius will require improving productivity at the firm level to raise the country’s competitiveness. The SCD identifies three main areas that are holding back the potential of the economy to accelerate economic growth: limited and inadequate skills, limitations for technology absorption, and inadequate trade facilitation.

A more competitive economy centred on higher valued-added sectors

According to the key findings of the SCD, Mauritius needs, in the short term, to accelerate economic growth and employment by unlocking sector-specific constraints to boost domestic investments and employment generation; improving trade facilitation to increase potential for export of services, such as ICT and tourism, and to absorb job losses in traditional sectors; and improving the quality and quantity of the skilled workforce.

In the medium to long term, it further suggests that the country could work on building a more competitive economy centered on higher valued-added sectors, through innovation policies and labour market institutions; improving governance in utility companies by establishing sustainable tariffs, and increasing investments to sustain quality of services; and investing in the quality of education in general.
So as to ensure the effective participation of young people in the development process for the social transformation of Mauritius, a National Young Volunteers Scheme (NYVS) was introduced on 20 July 2015 to engage youth in volunteer activities at regional and national levels so as to help attain this transformative goal.

It is expected that through volunteer actions young people, aged between 18 and 29 years, can bring in their energy, passion, creativity as well as innovative solutions to pressing issues relevant to them as well as to society. The vision is to have a generation of patriotic youth who appreciate the significance of volunteerism and its contribution to development.

Officially launched at the Municipal Council of Port Louis by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the NYVS will cover the following aspects: Values and Discipline; Rights and Responsibilities; Communication and Outdoor Leadership; Community Service; Environment Preservation; First Aid and Life Saving; Emergency Rescue Techniques; Climate Change and Disaster Response Outdoor Leisure Activities Organisation; and Care of Elderly People/Disabled.

Around 500 youth will be trained, through residential and non-residential training workshops, during the period 2015/16 and a pool of volunteers will be constituted in each Youth Centre of the country. The young volunteers will be given the opportunity to put their knowledge into practice and contribute in activities and projects at the level of Youth Centres, Youth NGOs and also during national events such as National Youth Day and Spécial Vacances.

After completing this cycle of training and practical placement, young volunteers will be given due recognition through the presentation of certificates, badges and awards.

This project also involves the production of a training manual and kit for youth volunteers and an action plan for 2015/2016. A comprehensive list of volunteers by region will moreover be published.

The Economic Development in Africa Report 2015, subtitled Unlocking the Potential of Africa’s Services Trade for Growth and Development, was launched on 9 July 2015 by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Mr Etienne Sinatambou, in Port Louis.

The Report examines some of the major policy issues that underlie Africa’s services sector and provides policy guidance on how services could contribute to Africa’s regional integration and generate inclusive growth and employment.

More broadly, it discusses how services can contribute to sustainable growth and development continent-wide, especially given the enabling role of services and their capacity to link with other sectors. Africa needs to boost services trade and become better integrated in global value chains.

The Report makes specific and actionable policy recommendations on how to better leverage Africa’s services trade and the related development, employment and growth benefits. It also emphasises the need for greater policy coherence at the national, regional and international levels to address services sector and trade policy disconnects.

According to Minister Sinatambou, services are an important piece of the development puzzle and they are important, regardless of the level of development of a country, whether in Africa or beyond. He underscored that any development strategy that a country may be contemplating, be it based on commodities or manufacture, or even as countries become part or move up global value chains, services are a critical part of that strategy.

The Minister stated that Mauritius as a member of the African Union has managed to leverage its trade and the related development, employment and growth benefits. He also emphasised on the need for greater policy coherence at the national, regional and international levels to address services sector and trade policy disconnects in Africa more broadly.
The socio-economic and infrastructural advancement of Rodrigues, was the focus of the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Mr Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo’s visit to the island from 25 to 29 July 2015. He was accompanied by senior officials of his Ministry, the Mauritius Ports Authority and the Road Development Authority, among others.

The main measures announced by Minister Lutchmeenaraidoo to help forge a path of development for Rodrigues, are namely, the setting up of a Smart SME Village; the creation of a Technopole; the building of new fishing ports; and the development of Port Mathurin Port, amongst others.

Setting up a Smart SME Village

A Smart SME Village, an innovative concept in the economic development strategy, will be set up in Malabar. It will be a new center of economic activities designed on a concept of clustering and will offer various support services operators. The Board of Investment, the new SME Bank and Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority, among others, will be present at the Smart SME Village in order to support entrepreneurs.

The Smart SME Village is inspired by the Smart Cities model that Mauritius is currently developing as part of a new urban philosophy, that is work, live and play in the same place. There exists at Malabar all necessary components and installations to replicate this model. Moreover, an SME Stimulus Fund amounting to Rs 200 million to support entrepreneurs will be created.

Establishing a Technopole

A Technopole will be established within six months to develop the sectors of technology and knowledge, including research and development. It will be the sixth Technopole project of the Republic of Mauritius, and will be developed by the Business Parks of Mauritius. The Technopole will provide to young researchers and designers the necessary facilities for them to explore new ideas and develop prototypes in an environment conducive to research and innovation.

Building of new fishing ports

A new and fully equipped fishing harbour will be constructed at Pointe L’Herbe for Rodrigues to encourage fisheries industry development projects. Consequently, it is expected that the fishing activity will be revitalised at an industrial scale with these new installations and will become one of the key growth drivers in Rodrigues. The fishing port, to be ready in three to four years, will accommodate nearly a dozen semi-industrial fishing boats and comprise of seafood processing facilities, warehouses and cold stores, a seafood market and parking areas for cars and trucks.

The port of Port Mathurin will undergo a major transformation
Moreover, another smaller fishing port will be built within a year at Pointe Monier, Port Mathurin, to accommodate five fishing boats. It will have the necessary equipment to give new impetus to industrial and semi industrial fishing in the island. The Rodriguan Authorities expect a positive impact in the short term with the port of Pointe Monier pending the entry into operation of the new facility in Pointe L’Herbe.

Further developing the Port Mathurin Port

The main port of Port Mathurin will also know a major transformation in the coming years since the Mauritius Port Authority plans to deepen and enlarge the passage of ships to allow the arrival of larger ships including cruise ships in Rodrigues. This will help boost the development of the tourism industry on which Rodrigues relies heavily. An artificial island will also be built to house fuel storage facilities.

Other measures

Other measures to provide Rodrigues with modern economic infrastructure and quality include the development of Port Mathurin; the expansion of the runway at the Sir Gaetan Duval Airport; the installation of an optical submarine cable between Mauritius and Rodrigues; the extension of the road network; and the renovation of the central market of Port Mathurin.

Japanese funding for weather radar project

Mauritius will benefit from an additional funding of 190 million Japanese Yen from the Japanese Government under the project for the improvement of the Meteorological Radar System Phase 2.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed to that effect on 30 July 2015 at the Mauritian Embassy in Antananarivo in Madagascar, as well as a grant agreement with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

The project consists of the acquisition and installation of an “S-Band Doppler Solid State Radar” as well as the construction of a new tower at Trou aux Cerfs which will house the new Radar and its communication systems.

This new funding is in addition to the two previous MoUs signed in June and December 2013. Following this third signature, the total amount granted by the Government of Japan to Mauritius for the realisation of phases 1 and 2 of the project amounts to 1.34 billion Japanese Yen, equivalent to Rs 387 million.

Several important decisions were taken to boost the economic takeoff of the island. Some key measures already being implemented include: fall in the price of the plane ticket for Rodriguans travelling to Mauritius; direct flight Rodrigues - Reunion operated by Air Austral; and guaranteed contracts to Rodriguan farmers by the Agricultural Marketing Board for the sale of their products in Mauritius.