Prime Minister’s visit to Rodrigues

Several key projects will be implemented in Rodrigues with the full support of Government so as to give further impetus to both economic and social development of the island and prepare it for future challenges.

The Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, made this statement as the Chief Guest at the official celebrations of the 13th Anniversary marking the Autonomy of Rodrigues on October 12, 2015.

The Prime Minister stated that no stone will be left unturned to help the country achieve further progress and allow Rodriguans to live a better life. He reaffirmed that his very presence in the island bears testimony to the importance Mauritius attaches to Rodrigues and that Rodrigues has always occupied a special place in his heart.

He also lauded the various achievements of Rodrigues in the different economic spheres with emphasis on initiatives adopted by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly pertaining to the ban of plastic bags and the closing season for octopus fishing over a certain period of time.

He encouraged Rodrigues to continue on this path and expressed confidence that its economy will flourish with the support of the Government. To this effect, he announced that a capital Grant of Rs 950m has already been...
approved for the projects earmarked in Rodrigues. He further underlined that he will personally look into the request of increasing this amount made by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

The priority projects initiated to trigger economic development in Rodrigues are: the development of the port and airport; improved connectivity; ensuring a proper distribution of water; installation of an optical submarine cable between Mauritius and Rodrigues; the extension of the road network; tourism development; creation of new markets; development of a dynamic private sector; encouraging young people to engage in agricultural production especially bio-farming; the health sector with the posting of a gynaecologist on a full-fledged basis in the island and reinforcing law and order.

During his visit from 10 to 13 October in Rodrigues, Sir Anerood Jugnauth also inaugurated the Route des Limoniers to Graviers, built to the tune of Rs 128 million.

According to the him, this road will ease the transportation of agricultural products across the island and is a long term investment for a better future for the Rodriguans. He also listed out new road infrastructure projects that are in the pipeline namely: Phase 1 of a new road linking Le Chou to Soupir; Montagne Cheri to Mourouk; and Phase 2 of the road Saint Gabriel; among others.

During his visit, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, attended, among others, the official opening of “Le Flamboyant” hotel; and the Hindi Diwas 2015 organised by the Rodrigues Hindi-Speaking Union.

He also had a working session with the members of the Executive Council of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly who raised a number of issues, including –

(a) amendment to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act in order to address a number of perceived weaknesses and omissions;

(b) the development of the Airport of Rodrigues and the extension of the runway so as to receive A319 aircraft;

(c) the posting of a Gynaecologist to Rodrigues on a full-time basis to ensure continuous treatment to pregnant women and the setting up of a fast track system for cardiac patients and those needing eye treatment in Mauritius; and

(d) the review of the recommendations made by the Truth and Justice Commission in respect of Rodrigues.


The conclusion of the agreement, a requirement under the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), will, among others, –

(a) facilitate compliance with the EPA Cumulation Provisions collectively by the ACP;

(b) establish an enabling environment signed, in common, by all ACP countries and facilitate regional value chain; and

(c) empower the various Customs Administrations of the ACP/EPA signatory parties and Overseas Countries and Territories to interact with one another.
The components of the New Road Decongestion Programme of a total estimated cost of about Rs 15.5 billion, and which will be entirely financed by the Government, was presented on 15 October 2015 at a joint press conference in Port Louis by the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, Mr Nandcoomar Bodha, and the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Mr Seetanah Lutchmeenaraidoo.

The different components of the new Road Decongestion Programme comprise:

- the construction of a grade separated junction at Jumbo/Phoenix/Dowlut Roundabouts (estimated cost Rs 2.4 billion);
- the construction of A1-M1 New Road, Bridge and Interchange at Sorèze to link Coromandel A1 road to Motorway M1 (estimated cost Rs 2.3 billion);
- the construction of Port Louis Ring Road Phase 2, including a 1.2 km tunnel with entrance at Quoin Bluff and exit at Champ de Mars at Boulevard Victoria (estimated cost Rs 5 billion);
- the construction of Port Louis Ring Road Phase 3 linking Boulevard Victoria to Motorway M2 including a viaduct (estimated cost Rs 2.9 billion); and
- the construction of A3-A1 Link Road from Gros Cailloux to Coromandel to enable rapid connection of traffic from the West to the City Centre and to the North via the new A1-M1 Link Road (estimated cost Rs 0.2 billion).

The Road Decongestion Programme will be implemented over a period of five years, with a yearly investment of Rs 3 billion, as from financial year 2016/2017. Tenders will be launched by January 2016, and it is expected that the first sod will be turned by July 2016.

The necessity for high quality of work with regards to the various construction projects was stressed by Mr Bodha, who said that poor performance and cost variations on projects will not be permissible. He added that the street furniture as well as road signs and signals for the various components of the Road Decongestion Programme will be in line with international standards.

He also detailed several conditions that would underpin the various construction projects. Hence, the importation of plants and machinery already available in Mauritius will not be allowed.

Also, the Construction Industry Development Board and the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development will be running training programmes for Mauritians with a view of having a pool of local qualified employees working on these construction sites.

For his part, Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo said that the new Road Decongestion Programme has been adapted to the various upcoming project developments that will be taking place in Mauritius soon, especially the implementation of the Highlands Administrative City Project.

He affirmed that the new vision on road infrastructure, as proposed by the Road Decongestion Programme, will contribute to alleviate traffic congestion along the main arteries of the country which will be beneficial to the economy.
Prime Minister attends the India-Africa Forum Summit

The India-Africa Forum Summit epitomises the determination of our two continents to embark on a renewed journey of rising tides of prosperity and still waters of peace. There is a need to further nurture the existing partnership that India and Africa are building together in a spirit of South-South cooperation.

The above statement was made by the Prime Minister, Sir, Anerood Jugnauth, at the 3rd India-Africa Summit on 29 October in New Delhi, India, where he called for India’s continuous support to help Africa tread the path of success.

The tide of the World Order has now changed as Africa is rising resolutely towards a brighter future and is poised to become a powerful magnet for investment, job creation and sustainable development, he stressed.

The Prime Minister lauded the economic progress of India over the recent years in the fields of technological advances, including ICT sector, which he said, is inspiring and can help Africa bridge the infrastructural deficits while unlocking the development potential that the continent bestows.

He recalled that the countless bilateral agreements, huge imports from India, constant increase in tourist arrivals in Mauritius and the trade facilities between India and Mauritius bear testimony to the special ties between the two countries.

In his address at the launching of the Board of Investment (BOI) office in New Delhi on 30 October 2015, the Prime Minister stated that the choice for locating the BOI India office in the premises of the Mauritius High Commission is deeply-rooted in the belief of making this office the first point of contact for the Indian business community.

He recalled that Mauritius exports to India averaged USD 17 million annually over the past 5 years and for the same period, FDI inflows from India to Mauritius averaged USD 30 million per year. Mauritius has consistently been one of the recipients for Indian outbound investments, the Prime Minister said.

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The BOI presence on the Indian soil will galvanise and exponentially grow investments, trade and exchanges between our two nations. But since tourist arrivals from India have increased by 49 percent in the last 5 years, it is of paramount importance that the BOI maintains an attentive and responsive presence here, in proximity to the Indian people and business community, added Sir Anerood Jugnauth.
A one-month awareness campaign for the rights of the child kicked off on 20 October 2015 to commemorate Universal Children’s Day, celebrated on 20 November each year. The event was jointly organised by the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, the National Children’s Council and Kolektif Drwa Zanfan Morisien, a grouping of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Associations working for the welfare of children.

The objectives of the one-month national campaign was to raise the awareness of children on their rights but also their responsibilities which are protected by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; inform social workers, the media and the public at large on these rights as well as their vital role in ensuring that children’s rights are respected and upheld. The campaign included radio and television spots, launching of song and accompanying clip by local artist and ambassador, and the holding of a day of activity across the country with games and events for children.

The United Nations’ (UN) Universal Children’s Day, established in 1954, is celebrated on 20 November annually as a day of worldwide fraternity and understanding between children to promote international togetherness, awareness among children worldwide, and improving children’s welfare. The date 20 November is important as it marks the day on which the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, in 1959, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in 1989. The rights of the child include the rights to survive and thrive, to learn and grow, to make their voices heard and to reach their full potential.

A grant of approximately Rs 20 million has been awarded to Mauritius by Agence Française de Développement (AFD) for the development of the port area and the Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd as well as for the financing and the provision of expertise regarding priority projects.

The agreement was signed on October 9 in Port Louis by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Mr Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo, and the Head of the European Delegation in Mauritius, Mrs M. Sall, in the presence of the Ambassador of France in Mauritius, Mr L. Garnier.

In his address, Minister Lutchmeenaraidoo stated that the transformation of the port is a major component of the ongoing initiative to strengthen the economy so as to achieve the second economic miracle and is in line with the vision of the Government to make the Port Louis Harbour a modern bunkering hub in the region.

He also welcomed the position of Mauritius regarding the various rankings on the African level and added that the goal is to be the first among the middle-income countries in terms of ease of doing business and also to increase economic competitiveness.

It will be recalled that AFD has already approved on 25 June 2015, a loan of about Rs 1 billion in favour of Mauritius for the development of its port area, during the visit of Minister Lutchmeenaraidoo in Paris. The loan was also accompanied with a grant of around Rs 48 million.

Part of the funding will be used to acquire sophisticated equipment for the Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd for its modernisation process. Besides, the funding will be used towards expanding the dock at the Mauritius Container Terminal so as to enable and facilitate bigger carriers to embark and disembark goods in a shorter period of time.

AFD is a major development partner for Mauritius and has contributed principally in various sectors of the economy encompassing the growth of the energy sector, development of roads and preservation of the environment. These initiatives, he said, reflect the firm commitment of the AFD to address issues of sustainable development in Mauritius.
Open Data Readiness: Mauritius well positioned to start implementation

An Open Data Readiness Assessment (ODRA) conducted by the World Bank in June this year in the context of the Open Data programme for the country reveals that Mauritius is well placed to implement an open data initiative and demonstrates strong top-level commitments to transparency and to innovation.

Organised by the Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation (MTCI), an Open Data Readiness validation workshop held on 28 October 2015 at the Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre, in Bell Village. During the workshop, ODRA findings were presented and stakeholders from several sectors validated the World Bank’s assessment of the country’s situation on open data readiness.

The ODRA reveals that Mauritius is well poised to open up datasets. Some 15 datasets spanning budget data, expenditure data, labour statistics, education and health statistics and many more are ready to be made available in machine readable format and so released as open data, that is, data that can be used, reused and redistributed freely.

Other main findings also show the following: there is a strong demand for open data from developers, private sector and researchers; and, Government could move quickly with an open data since it already publishes statistical data, but needs to conform to requirements of open data (terms of use and format).

In order to implement a sustainable programme, the ODRA recommends the importance of a strong and sustained leadership across Government. It also notes that the MTCI and Statistics Mauritius are well placed to lead change at operational level with the support from the Reforms Steering Council and Ministries.

National Assembly: PM presents Motion on live broadcasting of proceedings

A motion on the report of the Select Committee on live broadcasting of the proceedings of the National Assembly was presented by the Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, on Friday 23 October.

The Prime Minister, in his statement, outlined that the motion is in line with the vision of Government to bring Parliament nearer to the people and broaden the democratic space. Reiterating the pledge made to the nation to strengthen and modernise parliamentary democracy, he stressed the motto of the Government which is to govern for the people, with the people and conduct business on the principles of discipline, transparency, accountability and exemplary governance.

The framework for live broadcasting proposed by the Select Committee has not only been benchmarked against the best international practices, but has also taken into account the local context and realities, underlined Sir Anerood Jugnauth.

He recalled that on 28 April 2015 he presented a Motion for the appointment of a Select Committee of the Assembly to consider the live broadcasting of the proceedings of the House. The Motion was approved and a Select Committee was subsequently constituted on 5 May 2015. The Committee submitted its report on 29 September 2015 after examining all issues and apprehensions in the light of the experiences in live broadcasting in foreign legislatures. The Select Committee also exchanged views with stakeholders and sought expert advice before framing its recommendations.

After assessing the pros and cons of live broadcasting, the Committee has concluded that the advantages thereof far outweigh its disadvantages and recommended that the National Assembly should proceed to introduce live broadcasting of its proceedings. Moreover, the Committee has proposed a model that suits the local context, stated the Prime Minister.

The salient features of the report of the Select Committee make provisions for the following: Responsibility for Broadcast, Production and Editing; Regulatory, Procedural and Legal Aspects; Rules of Coverage and Guidelines for use of signals; and Monitoring.

By commending the motion to the National Assembly as another meaningful change, the Prime Minister highlighted that this initiative bears testimony of Government’s commitment to the deep respect for the rights of the citizens to watch Parliament in action, live and direct, and form their own opinion, without any media interference.
Around 350,000 ‘gueule pavée’ juveniles have been released in the month of October 2015 at suitable sites in the lagoon around the island. A first batch on 25,000 ‘gueule pavée’ was released on 5 October 2015 in the lagoon of Albion by the Albion Fisheries and Research Centre in line with the marine ranching programme of the Ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands.

Marine ranching is a process whereby seeds of desired species of marine animals are collected or produced, reared and released in the sea to enhance the natural population. The fingerlings/juveniles are grown to a predetermined size, released in the sea in view of replenishing the lagoon for their eventual capture at marketable size by the local fishers.

The Ministry has embarked on a marine ranching programme whereby fish fingerlings are being produced at the Albion Fisheries Research Centre for release at selected sites in the lagoon to increase the stock potential. Species targeted for marine ranching are the ‘cordonnier’, mud crab, ‘gueule pavée’, and marine shrimp.

At the Albion Fisheries Research Centre, two methods are presently being used for fish propagation namely harvest type and recruit type. In harvest type, fry are collected from the wild during the spawning season in November and December. The fry are then reared in the ponds at Albion until they attain an average weight of 10g and size 8cm. These fingerlings are then released back to the lagoon around the island.

In the recruit type method the sea bream (gueule pavée) are induced to spawn the hatchery. The fry obtained are then cultured for about two months prior to releasing the fingerlings at sea.
Mo Ibrahim Index 2015: Mauritius remains the top ranking country in overall governance in Africa

Mauritius remains the top ranking country in overall governance in Africa for the ninth consecutive year according to the Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG) 2015 released on 5 October 2015.

With a total score of 79.9 points, the country ranks first in Africa followed by Cape Verde with 74.5 points and Botswana with 74.2 points at the second and third positions respectively.

Among the 54 countries rated by the Foundation, Mauritius scored the highest overall points with the average score for the continent being 50.1 and Southern Africa remaining the best performing region, with an average score of 58.9.

According to Mo Ibrahim Foundation, during the period 2011 to 2014, the African average overall governance score in the IIAG increased slightly with considerable changes in performance during the last four years at all levels of the Index, both at country and at category level.

It further points out that Mauritius which has scored the highest points with regards to global governance has maintained its position for the past 15 years.

However, a slight decline has been noted in more than one governance component which it qualified as not so dramatic for the country.

With regards to the African continent, it concludes that overall governance progress in Africa is stalling as the whole improvements in participation and human rights and in human development are being outweighed by deteriorations in safety and rule of law and sustainable economic opportunity.

According to Mo Ibrahim, Chair of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, while Africans overall are certainly healthier and live in more democratic societies than 15 years ago, the 2015 IIAG shows that recent progress in other key areas on the continent has either stalled or reversed, and that some key countries seem to be faltering.

The IIAG provides a comprehensive assessment of governance performance for each of the 54 African countries and is the most comprehensive collection of data on African governance.

The 2015 IIAG combines 93 indicators into four categories namely: Safety and Rule of Law; Participation and Human Rights; Sustainable Economic Opportunity; and Human Development. It also covers a 15-year data period from 2000 to 2014.

IIAG was established in recognition of the need for a robust, comprehensive and quantifiable tool for civil society to track government performance in Africa.

It is Africa’s leading annual assessment of governance established to inform and empower the continent’s citizens and support governments, parliaments and the civil society to assess progress.
Government aims at promoting the ocean economy as one of its main pillars of development. However, protecting the ocean territory is also a major challenge Mauritius has to face as it has a total maritime zone of 2.3 million square kilometres with an Exclusive Economic Zone of 1.96 million square kilometres and a continental shelf of 396 000 square kilometres co-managed with the Republic of Seychelles.

Consequently, some 166 Fisheries Protection Officers from the Fisheries Protection Service (FPS) have been empowered through a course in capacity building, spread over 90 hours which was held from November 2014 to May 2015.

An award of certificate ceremony was organised for those 166 Officers on 29 October 2015, at the University of Technology, Mauritius in Pointe aux Sables.

The course was designed to help Fisheries Protection Officers better understand their duties and responsibilities. Several themes were discussed during the training programme namely Port State Control, boarding a ship, international law of the sea, good governance, information technology, enforcement and prosecution. Trainers were from the judiciary, the Police, and the Ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands, amongst others.

The Fishermen Protection Service

The FPS is a full-fledged enforcement arm of the Ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands.

It caters for the efficient control over fishing activities not only in lagoon and off lagoon but also in respect of regional fishing under bilateral conventions and regional cooperation with joint patrol under the Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Programme in the Exclusive Economic Zone and over territorial waters of Mauritius.

Apart from the Head Office in Port Louis, officers of the FPS operate at four regional headquarters with a number of Fisheries Posts under each regional headquarter and its Flying Squads.

The services provided include: overall control on all fishing activities around the island; enforcement of the provisions of the Fisheries and Marine Resources Act with a view to combatting illegal fishing; responding to calls from the public on alleged malpractices in the fishing sector; protection of controlled marine species; tracking defaulters in the fishing sector throughout the lagoon; and entertaining applications for registration of fishermen, use of fishing nets and other related services.
Report on the Project for Capacity Development on Coastal Protection and Rehabilitation

The Report of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) on the Project for Capacity Development on Coastal Protection and Rehabilitation in the Republic of Mauritius. The object of the Project is to conserve the coast of Mauritius in appropriate manners through the identification of affected sites of coastal erosion, the formulation of a coastal conservation plan, the selection of the priority coasts which are necessary for preventive measures and the conduct of detailed study, demonstration projects and continuous monitoring.

The main findings of the Report are –

(a) 17% of the coast has been eroded; there has been sand accumulation in 23% of the coast; and 59% of the coastal strip is stable. Severe erosion has been noted at Albion, Mon Choisy Public Beach and Bel Ombre; and

(b) the average percentage of living corals in the lagoon has been estimated to be 27%. Remedial works, i.e., improvement of hard structures, enhancement of beach nourishment, promotion of coral transplantation and enhancement of ecosystem have been proposed in respect of 14 highly impacted sites.

MAURITIUS-SEYCHELLES: NEW CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMME

The Ministry of Arts and Culture and the Ministry of Tourism and Culture of Seychelles will sign a new Cultural Exchange Programme for the years 2015 to 2018.

The Programme will provide, for:

(a) exchanges of artists, expertise and knowledge and cultural delegations;

(b) joint publications in creole, cooperation in the development of cultural tourism and the creative industry; and

(c) cooperation in the preservation, development and promotion of cultural heritage of Mauritius and Seychelles.

A 10-year Master Plan for the SME Sector

A study for the development of a 10-year Master Plan for the Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Sector has been commissioned by the Ministry of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives.

The main objectives of the Master Plan will be to address the challenges faced by SMEs, and create a conducive environment that will unleash their full potential in various sectors so that they contribute significantly to employment and wealth creation, export, the democratisation of the economy, and poverty alleviation.