Maritime Security
India to assist Mauritius in an integrated development project, says PM

India will assist Mauritius in an integrated development project known as the ‘Trident Project’ which will cater for appropriate infrastructure and facilities. The project involves the construction of a new National Coast Guard (NCG) headquarters at Fort William, upgrading of repair facilities for the NCG vessels and construction of a dry docking facility with flotilla support services.

This announcement was made on 10 December 2016 by the Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, at Quay A in Port Louis, during the commissioning ceremony of the new patrol vessel, CGS Victory, and two Chetak helicopters.

The value of the project is estimated at USD 70 million and will be financed jointly by the Government of India and the Government of Mauritius at the ratio of 80:20, respectively. For this project, funds to the tune of USD 52.3 million will be provided under the Indian Line of credit and a one-time grant of USD 4 million will also be made available by the Indian Government. The remaining USD 12 Million will be financed out of local funds.

Speaking about CGS Victory and two Chetak helicopters, the Prime

Government Information Service, Prime Minister’s Office, Mauritius
Minister pointed out that the acquisition of the patrol vessel is yet another milestone in the country’s long journey towards enhancing maritime safety and security, especially in the combat against poaching of our marine and fish resources, illicit activities in our seas, including drug trafficking and other types of transnational crimes.

“Our Exclusive Economic Zone and territorial waters, our surrounding islands, national interests and security imperatives, regional commitments and an extremely dynamic geostrategic environment are giving rise to many challenges,” he said.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth stated that with this latest induction, a new dimension is being added to the country’s maritime domain, with the Mauritius Police Force and the NCG better equipped to meet the emerging challenges in the maritime security environment, especially taking into account the vast expanse of ocean that surrounds Mauritius. The NCG which was formally set up in 1988 has been growing at a very steady pace and acquiring assets to meet the challenges resulting out of our geographical set up, he added.

For his part, the Defence Minister of India, Mr Manohar Parrikar, who was also present at the ceremony said that the induction of CGS Victory and CGS Valiant next year will considerably enhance the EEZ surveillance and patrolling capabilities of the NCG of Mauritius. The supply of the two Chetak helicopters is in line with India’s commitment to augmenting the capacities of the Mauritius Police Force, including in the critical area of search and rescue, he added.

Speaking about the intensification of close ties between the two countries in the coming years, Mr Parrikar pointed out that it will be marked by the implementation of major projects such as the Metro Express, the construction of the new building of the Supreme Court, the headquarters of the NCG of Mauritius, the construction of the new ENT Hospital, supply of digital tablets to primary school children and the social housing project.

CGS Victory and Chetak Helicopters

CGS Victory, built by Goa Shipyard Limited, is equipped with state of the art machineries and cutting-edge technology. Its induction into the NCG will greatly benefit the country in providing maritime security in our waters.

This 50-metre patrol vessel displaces about 288 tons in full load condition and is capable of attaining a maximum speed of 35 Knots. At economical cruising speed, it has an endurance of about 2,000 nautical miles. It can thus service certain of our outer islands as well. The ship is equipped with modern navigation systems, advanced machinery control systems and one Close Range Naval Gun Mount along with an optical fire control system for day and night usage.

The Chetak helicopters, which will form part of the Police Helicopter Squadron, are high performance, multi-role helicopters with tricycle undercarriage. At a maximum speed of maximum 113 kts, they can respond swiftly to any situation and have an endurance of 2 h 24 minutes.
End of Year Message 2016
Hard work and discipline to single out Mauritius from its challengers, says President of the Republic

In this world nothing can be said to be certain. Hard work, continuous efforts and discipline are needed to pave the way for the development of a culture based on merit, productivity, quality and excellence. These are values that will differentiate Mauritius from its competitors.

The President of the Republic, Dr Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, conveyed this message to the population in her end-of-year address on 25 December 2016. She also spoke of her faith in the capacities of the Mauritian youth in helping to transform the country, and who not only represent the future, but likewise, constitute an important component to make the Prime Minister’s Vision 2030 a reality.

Mauritian citizens, Dr Gurib-Fakim stressed, have to understand that there are great efforts to make if the country is to stand up to the challenge of achieving Vision 2030 which has identified several pillars (ocean economy, green energy, education, agriculture and science) to sustain the economic development of Mauritius. She called for the need to mobilise all resources, talents, and to involve young people but also the diaspora in that endeavour.

Dr Gurib-Fakim observed that 2017 will constitute a year where trust, courage and determination will be required as the country is going through a new transition phase. ‘To ensure the advancement and progress of our country, we have to improve the way our institutions operate and we must encourage the development of a culture based on transparency, competency, aptitude and good governance’, she pointed out.

Moreover, the President recalled that 2016 was a year full of challenges especially on the economic standpoint and several projects announced by Government have already been implemented with others starting shortly. She invited the Mauritian diaspora and those residing abroad to bring in their contribution for the socioeconomic progress of the country.

Speaking about Mauritius’ future, the President dwelt on the African continent which, with its nearly 1.2 billion inhabitants, represents a commercially viable market for the country in the future. Certain African countries are already making enormous progress in terms of governance, women’s representation and education with focus on science, technology and innovation, said Dr Gurib-Fakim.

Mauritius has to make the most out of its cultural, political and geographical proximity with Africa and also with Asia. We have to prepare our young talents so that Mauritius can act as interface with the African continent, she added.
EU and Mauritius sign Financing Agreement worth Rs 80 million for Technical Cooperation Facility

A financing agreement amounting to Euro 2 million, which is approximately Rs 80 million, for Technical Cooperation Facility under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF) was signed on 8 December 2016 between the European Union and the Republic of Mauritius in Port Louis.

The signatories were the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Mr Pravind Jugnauth and the Head of the Delegation of the European Union (EU) in Mauritius, Mrs Marjaana Sall.

The funding under the Technical Cooperation Facility forms part of the financial envelope of Euro 9.9 million which Mauritius has received under the 11th EDF and will run until 2020 to finance technical assistance and capacity building in the Tertiary Education sectors, Research and Innovation and in the implementation of the Government Programme. The remaining Euro 7.9 million have been earmarked for projects in the polytechnics sector and nanotechnology, amongst others.

EU-Mauritius Partnership

The EU-Mauritius partnership covers a wide range of policy areas, including: maritime security, trade and investment opportunities, environmental protection, climate change mitigation, migration and culture.

The 11th EDF National Indicative Programme signed in June this year, will steer the EU-Mauritius bilateral cooperation until 2020. The objective of this bilateral cooperation, endowed with 9.9 million EUR, is to accompany Mauritius to evolve from an Upper Middle Income to a High Income Country in line with Government priorities.

Furthermore, Government will also be able to use this Facility to finance technical assistance, studies, analytical work, training, seminars, peer to peer learning and knowledge-sharing initiatives.

The Facility will also support Government priorities to improve the human capital base and contribute to unlock growth, target the higher education sector with emphasis on Research and Innovation.

Elaboration of a Marine Spatial Plan for the EEZ of the Republic of Mauritius

A Marine Spatial Plan for the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the Republic of Mauritius has been elaborated in view of the increasing demand for marine space in the EEZ for various purposes, particularly, agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture, tourism and leisure.

The main purpose of marine spatial planning is to identify the utilisation of marine space for different sea uses in accordance with national policies and legislation, while taking into consideration the preservation, protection and improvement of marine environment, including resilience to climate change impacts.

It will also contribute to the effective management of marine activities and the sustainable use of marine and coastal resources through the creation of a framework for consistent, transparent, sustainable and evidence-based decision making.

The elaboration of the Marine Spatial Plan is in line with the implementation of the 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
MOST project to transform Port Louis into a leading regional petroleum hub, says PM

The Mer Rouge Oil Storage Terminal (MOST) project is a testimony of the commitment to implement the Government programme 2015-2019 and the Vision 2030 Economic Mission Statement which aim, amongst others, to transform Port Louis into a leading regional petroleum hub.

The Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, made this statement on 27 December 2016 at the laying of foundation stone ceremony of the MOST project in Mer Rouge, Port Louis. He recalled that the MOST project will propel Mauritius into the next phase of development and will contribute to transforming the country into a full-fledged maritime hub in the years to come.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth underlined the close linkage between the private and the public sectors while highlighting Government’s commitment to facilitate implementation of private-led projects that impact on the economic stature. He also pointed out that all development projects are being fast tracked in a bid to bring Mauritius closer to high league countries.

Speaking about port transformation, he pointed out that the port has embarked on a transformational strategy which comprises the injection of public sector investments of over Rs 8 billion to enable the emergence of a state-of-the-art port infrastructure.

The MOST project forms an integral part in the emergence of Mauritius as a petroleum hub. Bunkering activities coupled with the storage of petroleum products for re-exports to the region remain key components for the development of Mauritius as a petroleum hub, the Prime Minister said.

“Our country is strategically located in the South-South trade route with over 30,000 vessels passing through its maritime zone annually. The bunker segment has experienced a sustained average growth of 7% per annum since 2004 to reach some 280,000 metric tonnes in 2015. This volume represents roughly 6% of the current regional demand, estimated at 5 million metric tonnes. Our target is to capture around 20% of the current regional demand by increasing the bunker volume sales at Port-Louis to one million metric tonnes in the medium term”, he said.

MOST project

The MOST project derives from a joint venture between the State Trading Corporation and four international petroleum companies present in Mauritius namely Engen, Indian Oil, Total and Vivo Energy.

The petroleum terminal, which will be constructed to the tune of Rs 600 million, will come into operation at the end of 2017. It will comprise five tanks of 5,000 metric tonnes each. Three tanks will be used for storage of motor gasoline and the rest for gas oil.

The project comprises the erection of the dyke area; three MOGAS and two diesel tanks; hydrocarbon pumping station equipped with five pumps and hydrocarbon piping network; and firefighting station fitted with water and foam pumps and piping network. The proposed oil farm will be operated by processed controllers and associated instrumentation.
UNESCO inscribes Bhojpuri Folk Songs on Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

The Mauritius Bhojpuri Folk Songs, ‘Geet Gawai’, have been inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity at the 11th session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage held from 28 November to 2 December 2016 at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

After the inscription of the Séga Tipik on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2014, Mauritius has now another nomination which is the dossier of the Bhojpuri Folk Songs ‘Geet Gawai’.

The dossier of the Bhojpuri folk songs was presented to the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage along with 36 other candidatures to be included on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

‘Bhojpuri folk songs brought to Mauritius by the indentured labourers some 182 years ago is best understood as a very broad term that includes many different types of singing and songs of many periods as performed by the singers. Hailing from Bihar and Calcutta, ‘Geet Gawai’ is also a combination of folk songs and dances, accompanied by clapping hands, to the rhythm of musical instruments.

Mauritius has two UNESCO World Heritage Sites namely the Aapravasi Ghat and Le Morne Cultural Landscape inscribed in 2006 and 2008 respectively.

Mauritius has air service negotiations with 12 countries

During the International Conference on Air Services Negotiations Event, organised by the International Civil Aviation Organisation from 5-9 December 2016 in the Bahamas, Mauritius had air service negotiations with 12 countries, namely, Brazil, Canada, Cambodia, Ivory Coast, Greece, India, Republic of Korea, Namibia, Poland, the Seychelles, Spain, and United Republic of Tanzania, initialled nine Bilateral Air Services Agreements, and signed nine corresponding Memoranda of Understanding/Agreed Minutes.

A new Memorandum of Understanding was also signed between Mauritius and India, where provisions have been made for domestic codeshare rights between the designated airlines of Mauritius and India. During the conference, the Mauritius delegation also had informal meetings with the representatives of Ethiopia, the United Arab Emirates and the United States of America.

Furthermore, Government has agreed to set up a Ministerial Committee to look into how best to expand the air routes of Mauritius.

Trust Fund for Specialised Medical Care opens new wing in Victoria Hospital

The Trust Fund for Specialised Medical Care has set up a new wing of the cardiac centre at Victoria Hospital in Candos.

The new wing comprises an eight-bedded Intensive Care Unit, two operating theatres equipped with sophisticated medical facilities, an eleven-bedded post-operative care unit, and other administrative and operative services. It is an extension of the cardiac centre and is in line with Government’s objective to decentralise medical facilities and services.

In 2016, some 1870 patients have been treated at the Cardiac Centre in Pamplemousses: 1286 patients underwent angiography and 446, angioplasty. The recent facility in Victoria Hospital will be catering for patients coming from the southern region of the country.
The 20th periodic report on the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) was held on 7 December 2016 at Gold Crest Hotel in Quatre Bornes.

Organised by the Prime Minister’s Office and United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the workshop aimed to have an interactive dialogue with stakeholders from ministries and departments, the private sector, civil society and National Human Rights institutions on the two reports.

The draft reports have been prepared after wide consultations within the Government set-up. The aim of the consultative workshop was to gather inputs from other stakeholders so as to further consolidate the reports from a wider perspective. The ultimate objective is to have National Reports which reflect the views from a very wide spectrum of the Mauritian society.

The two national periodic reports

The 5th periodic report on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Right covers the period of June 2010 to December 2015. It documents the progress made by the country in the implementation of the provisions of the Covenant since the last review in May 2010. The report includes the actions taken by the State to implement as far as possible, the concluding observations made by the Committee following the consideration of the combined 2nd to 4th periodic reports of Mauritius during the last review.

The 20th periodic report on the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination report which covers the period of February 2013 to December 2016 focuses on the progress made by the country in the implementation of the provisions of the Convention since the last review in February 2013 by the Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination.

Upon finalisation, these two reports will be submitted to the UN Treaty Bodies early next year.

Human Rights: Workshop focuses on the finalisation of two State Reports

A one-day consultative workshop aimed at finalising two State reports on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights (ICESCR) and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) was held on 7 December 2016 at Gold Crest Hotel in Quatre Bornes.

A Cheque Remittance Ceremony in the context of Roof Slab Grant Scheme was held on 8 December 2016 at Sir Harilal Vaghjee Hall in Port Louis. Some 257 low-income families were handed cheques for the casting of slabs as part of their housing project.

A budget of Rs 16 million was earmarked by the Government for this initiative. It is recalled that for the last two years, 2980 families have benefitted from this project, at a cost of Rs 183 million.

Coupled with this initiative, various measures have been devised to enable needy families to benefit from a host of schemes granting additional financial aids to undertake housing constructions. These measures include: an increase in the grant for casting of roof slab from Rs 65 000 to Rs 75 000; broadening of the categories of households eligible for the grant to families earning between Rs 10 000 to Rs 15 000 monthly; extension of the size of new social housing units from 39 m2 to 50 m2, and; an upcoming construction of 1 200 social housing units.

The Roof Slab Grant Scheme is an on-going project of the Ministry of Housing and Lands in collaboration with the National Housing Development Company. Under this initiative, Government aims at backing up the efforts of struggling families in acquiring a decent house with adequate amenities to live in dignity.
Mauritius and India undertake Joint Hydrographic Survey

A Joint Hydrographic Survey, carried out in the context of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of India and Republic of Mauritius on Hydrographic Cooperation, was undertaken by Indian Naval Ship (INS) Darshak in Mauritian waters. The vessel was on a month long deployment from 3 December 2016 to 3 January 2017.

The main objective of the deployment of INS Darshak was to collect data for publishing two new charts as per enhanced charting scheme presently being executed by the National Hydrographic Office, India. The first chart covering entire mainland Mauritius including islands in the north will be based on latest bathymetric data collected by Indian Ships over the years.

The chart will be of immense value to various stakeholders, especially those planning development activities along the Eastern part of the island, where until now, very limited data was available. The second chart covers the islands north of mainland Mauritius, Grand Bay and adjacent areas and would be useful for tourism industry and pleasure crafts operating in these areas.

Apart from surveys for nautical charting, the ship also carried out data collection for scientific research off Agalega and North East of Mauritius, Aquaculture Project Site off Anse La Raie and Deep Ocean Water Applications project.

Back To Work Programme:
Thirty women awarded Certificates

A first batch of 30 unemployed women received their certificates under the Back To Work Programme (BTWP) on 5 December 2016 at the seat of the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training, in Port Louis.

Unemployment rate being higher for female compared to male, Government has put in place the Back To Work Programme (BTWP) in June 2015, with the aim to bridge the gap, create job opportunities for women and ensure that the needs and aspirations of jobseekers and employers are met.

The BTWP is a placement and training programme for women above the age of 30, initiated by the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training in collaboration with the Human Resource Development Council and the Skills Working Group.

The purpose of the BTWP is to help women integrate or re-integrate the labour market by undergoing a training programme designed to build or re-build self-awareness, self-esteem, social responsibility and entrepreneurial skills and strengthen interpersonal and communication skills. After the training, these women are placed in private enterprises or with individual employers and subsequently, they may be employed.

The programme targeting some 1000 participants, has been organised at a regional level at Rivière du Rempart and will be organised in other regions across the island to encourage greater participation.

Process to regularise squatters is on-going

Letters of intent have been issued to 36 families from Port Louis and 28 families from Camp Carol in Mon Desert Mon Trésor in line with Government’s commitment to address the problem of squatting in an efficient and effective manner while at the same time, providing the squatters security of tenure and rendering them eligible for loan facilities.

The remittance of the letters of intent for sale of State Land to squatters in the region of Port Louis and Camp Carol was held on 1st December 2016 at Sir Harilal Vaghjee Hall in Port Louis. The benefiting families will have to disburse some Rs 2000 to obtain ownership of the land they have been occupying for several years.

It is recalled that a mechanism to ensure transparency, equity and proper monitoring of the regularisation of squatters was set up at the level of the Ministry of Housing and Lands whereby a survey was carried out to identify the number of families occupying State Land without authorisation.

A cut-off date of 1 July 2015 was adopted so that the issue of squatting can be effectively monitored and addressed either through regularisation in situ or relocation. A total of 1174 cases of squatting on State land were thus registered and some 347 squatters were found in the region of Port Louis.
The Case Noyale 66/22 kV Substation, to the tune of Rs 520 million, designed to cater for the load growth in the region for the next 20 to 25 years to sustain the economic and touristic growth, was inaugurated on 15 December 2016.

The connected load will be around 20 MVA and will supply hotels, IRS/ERS projects and several other shopping complexes and offices. With this substation, Central Electricity Board (CEB) customers will benefit from a reliable and good quality of electricity supply.

Other benefits include: reduction in line losses with shorter feeders from the substation and decrease in fault finding time with shorter feeders as compared to long lines of more than 25 km. Moreover, the pressure on the Henrietta and Combo substations will be relieved.

Project Implementation

In 2015, the civil works following an open tendering exercise started.

The civil works were completed end August 2016. In parallel, the 66 kV network which in total is around 56 km long, consisting of 47 km overhead line and 9 km underground, was already in the implementation stage.

Erection of equipment started in July 2016 and was completed end November 2016. Thus, the erection and commissioning process for the whole substation spread over just five months. New 66 kV bays were also constructed at Henrietta and Combo substations to connect the new 66 kV lines to the existing grid.

Best Mauritian Scientist Award recognises work of Mauritians in the field of Science

The Best Mauritian Scientist Award has gone this year to Dr Ponnadurai Ramasami, Professor in Chemistry from the Faculty of Science, University of Mauritius.

The Award covers all forms of sciences, including Natural, Technology and Social Sciences. It aims to recognise and reward the work of the best Mauritian scientist and researcher.

The Award ceremony was held on 12 December 2016 at Ebène Cyber Tower 1. The Awardee for this 3rd edition receives a cash prize of Rs 200 000, a Trophy, a Recognition Certificate and a support of Rs 50 000 for a study tour. The Jury, comprising local and international eminent intellectuals, also made a Honorary Mention which carries a cash prize of Rs 50 000 to Dr Pierre Clarel Catherine for his early career achievements.

Alongside Dr Ramasami, three other participants were nominated this year, namely: Dr Pierre Clarel Catherine, Associate Professor Boopen Seetanah, and Dr Shamimtaz Sadally. The Nominees were presented certificates during the Award ceremony.

First organised in 2011, the Best Mauritian Scientist Award is an initiative of the Mauritius Research Council.
Live Broadcasting of National Assembly Proceedings

Live broadcasting of the proceedings of the National Assembly started on 15 December 2016.

‘With this landmark development, we are writing a new page in the history of our parliamentary democracy by bringing Parliament closer to the people’, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Ms S. Hanoomanjee, said on the occasion. It is her firm conviction that in allowing real time transmission to the citizens, live broadcasting will improve the perception of the public of the Proceedings of the House.

The required legal framework had to be put in place to enable the live broadcasting of the proceedings of the House and the Standing Orders were amended to make provision for the setting of a Broadcasting Committee.

Pending the full implementation of the project in March 2017 the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation will continue the coverage of the proceedings of the National Assembly.

The live broadcasting project is a complex ICT project which requires interfacing with different existing systems to ensure compatibility and workability and involving the integration of a multitude of state-of-the-art technology, platforms as well as skills and expertise.

Green Climate Fund to help transform Mauritius in a low carbon economy

The Green Climate Fund has approved a grant of $28.21 million (about Rs1 billion) for the implementation of a project entitled Accelerating the transformational change to a low carbon economy in the Republic of Mauritius.

The project will be implemented in two phases and comprises, among others:

(a) the strengthening of the Mauritius Renewable Energy Agency, and the Utility Regulatory Authority;
(b) the installation of battery, and the strengthening of the grid of CEB; and
(c) the installation of 300 kW solar PV in Agalega.

It is expected that some 2 000 jobs will be created in the implementation of the projects.

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