Metro Express: Singapore Corporation Enterprise awarded the Operation Readiness Services

A signature ceremony of a contract for Operation Readiness Services (ORS) with Metro Express Ltd (MEL) was held on 03 October 2018 in the presence of the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Mr Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, at the New Treasury Building in Port Louis.

The contract for ORS has been awarded to Singapore Corporation Enterprise (SCE) to the tune of Rs 241 million. The ORS team will ensure that Metro Express Limited (MEL) is ready to operate the Mauritius Light Rail System as from September 2019 along the corridor Rose Hill to Port Louis.

It will assist MEL to set up the organisation structure for the operation and maintenance of the Light Rail System, and empower the team of MEL to operate the system and undertake the first level routine maintenance of the Light Rail Vehicles and Systems. The Metro Express will be capable of transporting more than 8,000 passengers per hour. Commuters can expect a short waiting time of up to between 5 to 6 minutes for a train during peak hours.

The Metro Express service is planned to start running before 5 a.m. and stop at 10 p.m. Rail services will be able to
The Metro Express project will modernise and redefine the public transport system. It will run for longer hours at times of special events, allowing the public to commute safely and reliably to and from their leisure activities. The Metro Express project has reached a crucial stage in its implementation process and works are being undertaken at 30 different sites.

In his address, the Prime Minister pointed out that the Attorney General’s Office, in consultation with the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport and with the assistance of SCE, is working on a Rail legislation and subsidiary legislations within which Metro Express will operate. He expressed satisfaction that the SCE and the Singapore Mass Transit Corporation (SMRT) is being entrusted with the responsibility to set up the operations structure at Metro Express Ltd, as far as the need for a local operations team that is well trained and ready to operate the Metro Express safely and efficiently is concerned.

The bidding process for procuring the ORS was done under the Government to Government agreements between Mauritius and India as well as between Mauritius and Singapore. Evaluation of the bids, pointed out the Prime Minister, was carried out by a team of professionals from MEL and Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport and that process led to SCE/SMRT being selected, both on the technical and financial criteria. The team of SMRT mobilised under the contract will launch the recruitment exercise for train captains, engineers and technicians, train and station inspectors and supervisors, as well as security personnel.

Furthermore, the National Transport Authority will be restructured and a new unit set up to regulate rail functions in Mauritius. The appropriate bills will be presented in the National Assembly in March next year, said Prime Minister Jugnauth.
It is the hard work, efforts and sacrifices of our elderly people during the last 50 years that has brought Mauritius to the position it stands on the African continent today, stated the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Mr Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, at the celebrations marking the International Day of Older Persons on 11 October 2018 at the Swami Vivekananda International Convention Centre, in Pailles.

Mr Jugnauth elaborated on the contribution of the elderly in Mauritius and pointed out how, despite being above 60 years old, many are still contributing in the socio-economic development of the island.

The Prime Minister highlighted that in June 2018, 16% of the population represented the elderly compared to 12.5% in 2011. It is projected to increase to 20% in 2023, going on to 33.8% in 2053. Hence, he stated, important measures must be taken to provide for the welfare of elderly so that they lead a comfortable life in the most suitable environment possible.

Furthermore, Prime Minister Jugnauth appealed to the elderly to transmit their wisdom and experience so that a righteous younger generation can take over Mauritius and that values, culture and tradition remain instilled in the society.

He underlined that the elderly plays a key role in the welfare of the family and progress of Mauritius adding that several measures are being taken to enhance support given to the elderly as well as to modernise the country and fight against the drug scourge for a better society. They include: increase of the Basic Retirement Pension; and provision for the setting up of two elderly day care centres at Bambous and Chemin Grenier.

International Day of Older Persons

The first October has been designated to be the International Day of Older Persons by the United Nations General Assembly on 14 December 1990. It has been predicted that by 2050, the elderly population above 60 years, which is actually around 700 million, will increase to around 2 billion, mostly in developing countries like Asia and Africa.

The theme chosen for the 2018 commemoration is “Celebrating Older Human Rights Champions”.

Government Information Service, Prime Minister’s Office, Mauritius
A validation workshop on the project entitled ‘National Assessment of Health Systems Challenges and Opportunities for better Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) outcomes’ was held on 02 October 2018 in Pointe aux Piments.

The World Health Organization (WHO) Country Office in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life has conducted an in-depth analysis of National Assessment of Health Systems Challenges and Opportunities for Better NCD Outcomes in Mauritius with a view to having a more integrated and horizontal approach for health on the path towards universal health coverage.

The assessment has been carried out in the framework of the project called Health Systems Strengthening for Universal Health Coverage, a project which is jointly funded by the European Union and Luxembourg and which is implemented by the WHO.

The process was initiated in July 2017 and implemented over a one-year period. A multidisciplinary team was set up to carry out the exercise using a participatory approach under the supervision of the Ministry and WHO. A preliminary report was developed and presented to wider stakeholder group during a one-day workshop held last year in November. Building on the situation analysis, preliminary report and discussions held last year in the workshop, the report has been synthesised.

During the validation workshop, stakeholders had the opportunity to provide their valuable feedback and validated the findings of the report. The report will be shared in the African region and SADC countries which share common epidemiological situation as in Mauritius.

The Health Systems Strengthening for Universal Health Coverage project

The project promotes universal health coverage in 20 African countries including Mauritius, international health partnership and assists those countries to do national health policies strategies and plans. It aims at supporting national health policies, strategies and plans to increase universal healthcare and at improving technical and institutional capacities, knowledge and information for health systems and policy dialogue.
The Pailles Guibies Sewerage Pumping station at Grand River North West (GRNW) was inaugurated on 25 October 2018 in the context of the Pailles Guibies Sewerage Project – Phase 1.

This Project, to the tune of some Rs 240 million, has been implemented by the Wastewater Management Authority (WMA) with a view to alleviate the sanitation problems in the region, following numerous complaints received from inhabitants of the locality who were experiencing recurrent nuisance problems with their wastewater disposal system due to cesspits not operating properly as a result of poor absorption capacity of the soil and high water table.

The Pailles Guibies Sewerage Project – Phase 1, consists of the construction of Trunk Sewers TS4 and TS3, as well as a Pumping station at GRNW. The works at the Pumping station comprise the supply, installation, testing and commissioning of all necessary plant and equipment, besides the associated civil works, all located next to the mouth of the GRNW river.

The total length of the sewers constructed is 3.35 kilometres and consist mostly of GRP pipes, ranging from 400 to 600 mm in diameter. The Pumping station, of capacity of 20 500 m³ per day, will collect and convey wastewater, mainly from the GRNW, Pailles and Les Guibies regions to the Montagne Jaquot Treatment Plant via the existing 1 200 mm rising main from Bain des Dames. The new Pumping station has a wet well / dry well arrangement with submersible pumps and an inlet chamber arrangement.

The project covers regions of Bonnefin Road, Michael Leal, Guibies, Morcellement Anse Courtois (Morcellement Bangladesh), Morcellement Raffray, Morcellement Fong Sing, Morcellement Le Roc, Domaine St Louis, Cite Mon Plaisir, Pailles Road, Camp Chapelon, Cite La Butte, Cite Jonction, Roshan Road, Cite St Louis, Pont St Louis, Cite La Butte, Cite Pailles Junction, Pailles Road, Cite Mauvillac, Grand River North West, Canal Dayot.

The findings and recommendations of the Integrated Biological and Behavioural Surveillance (IBBS) Survey among People Who Inject Drugs (PWIDs) which was carried out in Mauritius in November-December 2017 have been made public.

The 2017 IBBS survey among PWIDs, which is the fourth of the series, was conducted by the National AIDS Secretariat, the AIDS Unit and the Harm Reduction Unit of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life.

The main recommendations of the Survey include strengthening of the Information, Education and Communication Programme on HIV risky behaviours among PWIDs, including female PWIDs as well female sex workers; and strengthening of outreach HIV detection programmes among PWIDs. The scaling up of screening for Sexually Transmitted Infections in programmes providing services to PWIDs; and maintaining efforts to decrease the size of active PWIDs is also proposed.

In 2017, the prevalence of HIV infection among PWIDs was 32.4% as compared to 51.6% in 2011, that is, a percentage decrease of 37.2% in six years, from 2011 to 2017.
CEB makes acquisition of Grid-Scale Battery Energy Storage System 2MW

A Grid-Scale Battery Energy Storage System 2MW (BESS) was inaugurated at the Central Electricity Board’s (CEB) Amaury Substation on 25 October 2018. The BESS project, a first in its kind in Mauritius, was spearheaded with the objective of strengthening CEB’S grid in terms of frequency regulation to support the integration of variable renewable energy projects with its fast reaction time.

The project, financed by the Green Climate Fund under the project ‘Accelerating the transformational shift to a low-carbon economy in the Republic of Mauritius’, will enable high capacity storage of renewable energy to ensure access to affordable, reliable and modern energy for everyone, hence resulting in a smarter electricity network in Mauritius.

The BESS will allow more renewable energy, which are of intermittent nature such as solar and wind, to be on-boarded onto the national grid by carrying out the crucial role of stabilising the frequency and voltage of current supply to home, schools, hospitals, industries amongst others.

The CEB has two BESS installation of 2 MW power output installed at Amaury Substation and Henrietta Substation, respectively. Each BESS is made up of two containers of 20ft housing 10 racks of Lithium Ion batteries for a total energy storage of 1.12.

The initiative is in line with Government’s aim to modernise the energy sector so as to cater to the needs of the population through various facilities as well as to promote renewable energy in the country.

Other similar initiatives comprise the Home Solar Project with the installation of solar photovoltaic systems on rooftops of houses for people at the lower rung; the Henrietta Solar PV Farm aiming to accelerate the integration of renewable energy into the generation mix; the CEB Green Energy Home Solar; the SME Solar project; and additional remuneration from bagasse for small planters.
Workshop focuses on strategies for development of Oceanic Resources

A regional training workshop on Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) focusing on strategies to advance the development of oceanic resources and combat climate change issues was held from 8 to 12 October 2018 at Voilà Hotel, Bagatelle.

Some 50 technicians from French-speaking African countries including Comoros, Madagascar, Democratic Republic of Congo and Ivory Coast, as well as Reunion Island/France, Seychelles and Mauritius attended the workshop.

The workshop was a joint initiative of the Department for Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones Administration and Exploration, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, the United Nations Environment Programme and the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association. It provided a platform to examine MSP practices and allow participants to formulate tailor-made MSP applications including governance frameworks, stakeholders’ engagement and spatial zoning to their respective maritime domain.

It is recalled that in 2017, Government has agreed to the elaboration of a Marine Spatial Plan for the Exclusive Economic Zone for the Republic of Mauritius. The main purpose of the plan is to elaborate and embark into a strategy for the development of the country’s oceanic industry in accordance with national policies and its engagement for the preservation, protection and improvement of its marine environment.

Mauritius has so far established three technical working groups. These working groups are now focusing their actions on three themes: New Economic Activities addressing issues related to aquaculture sites, marina development and tourism and recreational activities; Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG14) to achieve Target 14.5, that is conserving 10% of the marine area by 2020 and provide a relevant indicator for measurement; and mainstreaming Biodiversity Project—Establishing an electronic platform depicting geographical database concerning Environmentally Sensitive Areas within the framework of our Ocean Observatory.

Launch of Gravity-Fed Drip Irrigation System to improve income generation of vulnerable farmers

The Gravity-Fed Drip Irrigation System, aiming to improve the income generation of vulnerable farmers, was launched on 24 October 2018 at Bambous Virieux Multipurpose Complex. This enhanced production of vegetable crops under gravity drip irrigation/fertigation technology is in line with Government’s commitment to protect the environment.

The objectives are to enhance irrigation water management strategies through the use of the Food and Agriculture Organisation developed Aquacrop Model and isotopic O-18 studies; and to improve crop nutrition via the development of appropriate fertigation strategies through the use of isotopic N-18 analysis.

The system which is part of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)-RAF5079 Project, requires no pump and is energy efficient unlike the pressurised drip irrigation system which necessitates an electric or petrol driven pump.

Its features are namely low pressure and low discharge of water suitable for small plots of land of up to 1 250 m² with flat topography, no wastage of water, direct flow of water to the root zone, improved crop yield and quality, low application of fertilisers through fertigation, and lower labour cost. The water tank is fixed at a height of 1.0 to 1.5 m on concrete blocks.

The IAEA’s project entitled “Enhancing crop nutrition and soil and water management and technology transfer in irrigated systems for increased food production and income generation” is a continuation of the IAEA-RAF 5071 project initiated in March 2014. The aim is to improve food security and resilience of smallholder farmer through climate change adaptation, mitigation, and coping strategies in 16 African countries.

The IAEA has financed the purchase of 25 gravity-fed drip kits, 250 m² each, and this project is being implemented by the Resource Management Division with the collaboration of the Wooton Crop Research Station at 25 sites across the island.
Mauritius hosts validation workshop on implementation of International Health Regulations

A validation workshop on the Joint External Evaluation in view of assessing the implementation of the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005), was held in Mauritius from 29 October to 01 November 2018, at Sofitel Mauritius L’Imperial Resort & Spa, Flic en Flac.

IHR, an international legal instrument, binds 196 countries across the globe, including all the Member States of the World Health Organization (WHO). The aim is to help the international community prevent and respond to acute public health risks that have the potential to cross borders and threaten people worldwide.

The new IHR 2005 has been formulated in light of events that have happened in the world particularly the outbreak of SARS Virus in 2006 and other public health emergency such as radioactivity and chemical intoxications.

This second edition includes a new foreword and the Health Part of the Aircraft General Declaration (as revised by the International Civil Aviation Organisation), as well as Appendices listing States Parties to the IHR and reservations, objections and declarations received from States Parties.

The Government of Mauritius has taken the necessary steps to reach international standards in the required 12 core capacities and will now be conducting its self-assessment by an external team. It is to be highlighted that notable progress has been made in areas such as legislation, preparedness, coordination, control at border, and chemical safety.

They include: modification of existing Quarantine and Public Health Regulation to meet the requirement of IHR 2005; formulation of action plans to respond to public health emergency; setting up of an intersectoral committee to deal with IHR related matters; modification of Quarantine law to meet the IHR requirement for border control particularly for ship sanitation and maritime declaration; and signing of an international protocol and having a response planned to deal with a chemical event.

National Innovation Framework 2018-2030 to inculcate a culture of innovation

The National Innovation Framework (NIF) 2018-2030, which aims at inculcating a culture of innovation to facilitate the transition of Mauritius from a middle-income economy to a high-income innovation driven economy, was launched on 15 October 2018 during a half-day workshop at Cyber Tower 1, in Ebène Cybercity.

The Framework, prepared by the Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation jointly with the Mauritius Research Council in consultation with various stakeholders, is the culmination of a highly consultative process involving both public and private sectors.

The NIF 2018-2030 has adopted an evidence-based approach using actual data pertaining to different innovation indicators. It was formulated based on international best practices and was strengthened with the support of two Innovation experts from Nishith Desai Ltd, India.

Some of the salient points in the document include Infrastructure, Capacity-Building, Incentives and Governance; the critical roles of the private sector and industry-academia partnerships; measures pertaining to Emerging Sectors Social Innovation, Intellectual Property and; sharing of data/information.

The NIF culminates into five major strategic directions as outlined in the Action plan for 2018-2030: Building capacity for promoting innovation; fostering regional and international collaborative mechanisms; setting up the innovation infrastructure; developing innovation incentives; and setting up the institutional and governance framework to facilitate and monitor Innovation.
A two-day international country workshop aiming at encouraging reflection on the social protection legal frameworks and concepts in Mauritius, was held from 17 to 18 October 2018 at Le Labourdonnais Waterfront Hotel in Port Louis. The theme for the workshop was Social Protection in Mauritius: International Frameworks and National Policies.

The workshop was a joint initiative of the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development, the University of Mauritius, the Southern African Social Protection Experts Network (SASPEN) and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES). It provided a platform for experts to engage in national dialogue and debates with a view to fostering a public discourse on social protection. It aimed at facilitating national dialogue and debate, the appropriation of social protection discussion by social partners and civil society, international exchange and south-to-south learning.

The workshop also addressed the Mauritian framework around social protection systems through discussion and exchange of ideas among stakeholders. Several topics were on the agenda during the workshop, namely: Social Protection Context and Framework; Social Aid, Disability and Sustainability of NGOs in Mauritius; Social Protection in Southern Africa; Leaving No One Behind - Social Inclusion Reforms in Mauritius and Africa’s Social Assistance Project; and, Building Critical Thinking and Capacities of Policy Makers and Stakeholders - The Case of TRANSFORM. Some 57 local and 13 foreign participants attended the workshop.

On this occasion, a book entitled “Evaluating the Social Protection of Women Entrepreneurs operating in the Informal Sector in Mauritius” was also launched.

The Mer Rouge Oil Storage Terminal (MOST) project which consists of the construction of five tanks with a capacity of 25 000 metric tons of petroleum products and a new pipeline, costing around Rs575 M.

The construction of the Storage Terminal has been completed in September 2018. These new tanks will now allow the country to maintain a strategic buffer stock of Mogas (essence) for 30 days and Gasoil (diesel) for 27 days, as compared to only 3 days for Mogas and 10 days for Gasoil previously.

The 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. It 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 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.
Government has taken note of the main findings and recommendations of the new Port Master Plan Report up to horizon 2040 prepared by Messrs Royal Haskoning DHV, a foreign international consultant.

The new Port Master Plan has been drafted in accordance with the Ports Act 1998 which requires the Mauritius Port Authority to prepare and periodically update a Port Master Plan for formulating its policy for port development and land use.

The consultants have also taken into consideration the potential growth of the national economy and opportunities arising from the Ocean Economy initiative which focuses on an increased contribution of the maritime sector in the Mauritian economy.

The report covers the Port Master Plan for Port Louis with focus on the traffic forecast, the bunkering and petroleum forecast, the infrastructure requirements and land use planning; the Master Plan Study for the Development of a Petroleum Hub at Albion as well as the Port Master Plan for Port Mathurin including the infrastructure requirements.

The Social Contract entered between the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment and the households eligible under the Social Register of Mauritius (SRM) will be extended to 30 June 2020.

As at June 2018, some 11,222 households, including 2,198 households in Rodrigues, eligible under the SRM, are benefitting from the payment of a monthly subsistence allowance and other support under existing Empowerment Schemes.

The beneficiaries have the obligation to amongst others, participate in empowerment and employment programmes proposed to them, ensure that their children attend school, register with the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training in the event they are unemployed and ensure that they attend health care centres for pre-natal, post-natal and preventive medical care.