Maritime Air Squadron of the NCG celebrates 28th anniversary

The 28th anniversary of the Maritime Air Squadron (MAS) of the National Coast Guard (NCG), based at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport in Plaisance, was celebrated on 17 July 2018.

The MAS, which constitutes a pride of the nation, has since its creation ensured security of the country. It has also stepped up its efforts and increased its strength and capacity in its service delivery to meet multiple challenges over the years.

Over the years, the authorities have continuously ensured that the MAS continues to be better equipped by increasing its assets and workforce so that it can deal with maritime threats, in particular illicit drug trafficking occurring in the seas.

In this context, the integrity and honesty of the officers are complementary to the resources of the institution, and the commitment and discipline of the workforce remain a prerequisite so as to uncover and dismantle criminality in all its forms.

The Maritime Air Squadron

The MAS, was set up in June 1990, with the aim of providing a greater surveillance cover over the vast EEZ of Mauritius; better and easier
communication to and from the outlying islands of Mauritius namely Agalega, Rodrigues, St. Brandon and Tromelin; increasing the scope of Search and Rescue operations around Mauritius; providing a means of disaster relief and casualty evacuation for the dependencies of Mauritius; and pollution control.

The first aircraft of the squadron, the Dornier DO-228 (MPCG-1) arrived in Mauritius in June 1990. The aircraft was manufactured by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, Kanpur (India). The second aircraft namely the Defender BN-2T (MPCG-2) was acquired in October 1992 from Pillatus Britten Norman, United Kingdom. The third aircraft, Dornier DO-228 (MPCG-3) was bought from Hindustan Aeronautics Limited in April 2004. The fourth aircraft, the Dornier DO-228 (MPCG-4) was acquired from Hindustan Aeronautics Limited in India and commissioned in July 2016. The MAS is also equipped with a Defender.

Assessment Study for the setting up of an Electronic Visa System

The International Organization for Migration (IOM), will provide technical assistance under the ACP-EU Migration Action to carry out an Assessment Study for the setting up, in due course, of an Electronic Visa System in Mauritius.

There is a need to set up a modern web-based electronic Visa (e-Visa) system in line with the business facilitation objective of Government and to improve the delivery of services to foreign nationals requiring a visa to travel to Mauritius. The proposed e-Visa system would also be a valuable tool for the Passport and Immigration Office to ensure a better border control and management.
The President of the People’s Republic of China, Mr Xi Jinping, was on a Friendship Visit to Mauritius from 27 to 28 July 2018. The Chinese President was accompanied by his spouse, Madame Peng Liyuan, and an official delegation comprising 11 members.

During his visit, the President had a tête-à-tête and working session with the Prime Minister, Mr Pravind Jugnauth, at the Hilton Mauritius Resort and Spa, Flic en Flac for in-depth exchange of views on further developing Mauritius-China relations. Discussions also focused on international and regional issues of common concern for both countries.

The working session was followed by a dinner hosted by Prime Minister Jugnauth and Mrs Kobita Jugnauth, during which the Prime Minister announced that China provided an additional grant to the tune of 150 million RMB (approximately Rs 750 million) to Mauritius. He highlighted that relations between Mauritius and China are excellent, run deep and are underpinned by strong people to people linkages, before thanking China for the support it has provided to Mauritius on important infrastructure projects that will help the country to grow the level of its economy.

For his part, President Xi Jinping laid emphasis on the strong relationship between Mauritius and his country. He expressed his appreciation for the gracious and warm hospitality he and his delegation received during their visit to Mauritius. The President further lauded the thriving development of Mauritius and underscored that, in recent years, the two countries have built stronger mutual political trust, expanded their practical cooperation and worked in close coordination on international affairs.

President Xi Jinping stopped over in Mauritius on his way back to China after wrapping up State visits to the United Arab Emirates, the Republic of Senegal, the Republic of Rwanda and the Republic of South Africa from 19 to 24 July 2018. He attended the 10th BRICS Summit in Johannesburg, South Africa from 25 to 27 July.
The World Trade Organisation’s Regional Trade Policy Course, a two-month programme for English-speaking African members and observers of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), was organised at the initiative of the WTO in collaboration with the Faculty of Law and Management of the University of Mauritius from 14 May to 06 July 2018.

Thirty-one African delegates and observers of the WTO participated in the first ever regional trade policy course organised in Mauritius, which was co-delivered by officials from the WTO Secretariat, trade policy specialists and academic experts from the region. Participating countries were: Botswana, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The objectives were to deepen participants’ understanding of the functioning of the WTO and its rules and procedures; develop capacity to find relevant information and documents on WTO-related issues including the use of the WTO legal texts; and enhance understanding of regional perspectives on trade policy and development.

At the end of the World Trade Organisation’s Regional Trade Policy Course, certificates were awarded to the 31 delegates on 06 July 2018 at the branch of the University of Mauritius, in Ebène, in the presence of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Mr. Seetanah Lutchmeenaraidoo and the Deputy Director-general of the WTO, Dr Frederick Yonov Agah.

The course has enabled delegates to be better equipped with knowledge and tools that will help them in their respective careers since the training received will allow them to improve the effectiveness of their work and administration. They will also be able to contribute to the active participation of their respective governments in the work of the WTO.

It is recalled that the World Trade Organisation’s Regional Trade Policy Course has recently been run in several countries around the world including Thailand, Ecuador, Kazakhstan and the last editions for the African-English speaking members were held in Botswana.
The Commonwealth Secretary-General, Baroness Patricia Scotland, Q.C, was on an official visit in Mauritius on the 02 and 03 July 2018.

**Courtesy call on Prime Minister**

During her visit, she paid a courtesy call on the Prime Minister, Mr Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, on 02 July 2018 at the New Treasury Building in Port Louis.

Discussions during the courtesy call focused on the Commonwealth Blue Charter highlighting the close linkages between the ocean, climate change, sustainable development, and the wellbeing of the people of the Commonwealth. Other issues raised pertained to the clean-up campaign launched by the Commonwealth in which Mauritius will play a significant role. Baroness Scotland also handed over a copy of the Blue Charter to the Prime Minister.

**Working session**

On the same day, the Commonwealth Secretary-General had a working session with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Mr Seetanah Lutchmeenaraidoo at La Clef des Champs in Floréal with a view to discussing the numerous innovations and contributions brought by Mauritius to the Commonwealth.

Baroness Scotland underlined that Mauritius is a dynamic and innovative country which is working hand in hand with the Commonwealth. She rejoiced that Mauritius has stepped forward together with Australia and Belize to co-lead a Blue Charter Action Group on coral reef regeneration. The Blue Charter is a Commonwealth commitment to work together to protect and manage our oceans, she said.

Her programme of visit also included: meetings with different ministers; visit to the National Women Development Centre in Phoenix; interactive session with Commonwealth Heads of Mission and Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub; courtesy calls on the Acting President of the Republic, Mr Paramasivum Pillay Vyapoory, and the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Xavier-Luc Duval.
Climate change: Workshop focuses on Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation

A two-day capacity building workshop on Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation under the Third National Communication was held on 12 and 13 July 2018 at the Ravenala Attitude Hotel in Balaclava.

The objective of the workshop was to train various Ministries and institutions on a user-friendly tool developed by the University of Mauritius to assess climate change vulnerability of seven key sectors namely Agriculture, Water, Coastal Zone, Fisheries, Biodiversity, Infrastructure and Health. It also aimed to help in creating sensitisation toolkits on how to build the adaptive capacity of four different target groups, the youths, women community, non-governmental organisations and the private sector, against climate change.

The capacity building exercise was conducted with the support of the Global Environment Facility and UN Environment and is in line with the obligations of Mauritius as a signatory of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Moreover, the workshop is a testimony of Government’s commitment towards its engagement in combating climate change and empowering the population to face its growing threats whilst contributing to its mitigation.

The World Risk Report 2017 ranks Mauritius as the 13th country with the highest disaster risk and 7th on the list of countries most exposed to natural hazards. As a result, the need is accentuated to conduct appropriate sector specific vulnerability assessment which is a key prerequisite to enable concerned stakeholders, in particular policy makers, to decide on the most appropriate socio-economic development model and to put in place the appropriate sectoral adaptation measures.

It is to be recalled that the Government Programme 2015-2019 has as objective to revive the National Environment Commission to create better synergies among various stakeholders to address important environmental concerns and issues, for which Budget 2018-2019 has injected Rs 2 billion to the National Environment Fund.

COJI 2019: Sports carnival organised to kickstart countdown

A sports carnival was organised by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, in collaboration with Comité d’Organisation des 10èmes Jeux des Îles de L’Océan Indien (COJI) 2019 and Club Maurice on 19 July 2018 at Quatre Bornes, to kickstart the 365 days countdown for the Indian Ocean Islands Games which will be held from 19 to 28 July 2019 in Mauritius.
The opening of a two-day seminar on the regulatory framework for renewable energy and bioelectricity was held on 05 July 2018 at the Hennessy Park Hotel in Ebène.

The seminar is part of the tripartite partnership agreement signed in March 2017 in Reunion Island between the Ministry of Energy and Public Services, the Agence Francaise de Développement and the Agence de l’Environnement et de la Maîtrise de l’Energie.

The central theme of the seminar was the development of an appropriate regulatory framework for more extensive use of biomass. Discussions focused on action plan for renewable energy till 2030; the regulatory framework to facilitate the integration of renewable energies in the grid; the role of the Utility Regulatory Authority; the objectives of the Commission Régulation de l’Energie to promote renewable energy in non-interconnected zones; and inventory of biomass for energy.

Emphasis was also laid on Mauritian issues pertaining to biomass in order to propose a roadmap on actions to be implemented in the short, medium and long term to encourage additional mobilisation of biomass and feed-in tariffs adapted to the local context.

Around fifty participants from the public and private sectors in Mauritius and Reunion Island attended the workshop.

The Mauritius Police Force (MPF) celebrated its 251st anniversary on 26 July 2018 at the Indira Gandhi Centre for Indian Culture in Phoenix.

Governmental endeavours to modernise and professionalise the MPF and enhance its human resource capability include: budgetary allocations to the Police; implementation of several projects such as the Safe City Project aiming at combating crimes; building the human capital through the setting up of a Police Academy; acquisition of state-of-the-art equipment; construction of new Police Stations with the required amenities; equipping all Police Stations with CCTV cameras so as to protect Officers from false complaints while at the same time ensuring a human rights compliant organisation; and provision of modern personal safety equipment for Officers.

The celebration of the 251st anniversary of the MPF was also marked by the presentation of President’s Long Service and Good Conduct Medal to 49 Police Officers and the promotion exercise of 11 Sergeants to Sub-Inspector and 160 constables to corporal on the 01 August 2018 during a ceremony held at the Line Barracks in Port Louis.

A ceremonial parade, a défilé by several branches and units of the MPF, performance by Mini Police Band comprising 139 children aged between 6 to 10 years, and a blood donation were also organised to mark the key event.
Some 102 students who have achieved outstanding grades in the November 2017 Examination session respectively at O, A and AS Levels in different subject areas and from a diverse range of schools were remitted a total of 116 awards during the 12th edition of the Outstanding Cambridge Learner Awards which was held on 26 July 2018 at Cyber Tower 1 in Ebène.

The Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research, Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun and the Head of Education Services, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Indian Ocean, Cambridge Assessment International Education (CAIE), Ms Jane Henry, were both present on the occasion.

Students who were presented with the Cambridge Top in the World and the Cambridge Top in Mauritius awards are those who have scored the highest mark in the world and in Mauritius respectively at O, A and AS levels in any subject. The High achievement Award is conferred to those who have obtained outstanding results in subjects with low candidature. During the awards ceremony, 21 students were rewarded in the Top in the World O Level category and 10 students received the Top in the World A Level award.

It is recalled that Mauritius has a longstanding partnership with the CAIE which has been offering quality education that provides prestigious qualifications to Mauritian students. The collaboration of the CAIE over the years has enabled our country to achieve its goal of fostering best practices in the field of assessment and evaluation.

Moreover, Mauritius has worked with the institution to develop new syllabuses that are relevant to the local context such as the recent Music syllabus at O Level, while there are ongoing discussions to come up with technical qualifications in the years ahead.
A Common Reporting Standard (CRS) platform focusing on Automatic Exchange of Information (AEOI) for tax purposes in a multilateral context was launched by the Mauritius Revenue Authority on 19 July 2018. The CRS has been developed by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development with the aim to combat tax evasion and maintain the integrity of the tax system around the world. As at 15 January 2018, 98 countries have signed the Multilateral Competent Authority Agreement to implement the CRS.

Mauritius with a zero-tolerance policy as regards illicit funds, is committed to exchanging tax information under CRS by September 2018 and strictly adheres to international standards with a view to strengthen international cooperation and combat cross border financial crime. The country will only engage in AEOI with jurisdictions that have a strong rule of law and ensure confidentiality of information exchanged and prevent its unauthorised use.

It is recalled that the overall rating ‘Compliant’ of the country by the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes underlines its commitment to tax transparency.

The International Cooperative Day, celebrated on 07 July each year, enables creating awareness on cooperatives and highlighting its contribution to the socio-economic development of the country. It also underscores the contributions of the movement towards resolving major socio-economic concerns and strengthens partnerships among key stakeholders.

The theme for this year is “Sustainable consumption and production”, which lays emphasis on how cooperatives can run successful businesses while respecting our natural environment and the resources it offers. The slogan selected for the celebrations of the International Cooperative Day was “Sustainable societies through cooperation”.

To mark the event, the ministry of Business, Enterprises and Cooperatives organised a three-day National Cooperatives Fair of three days and a gathering comprising cooperative societies and federations on 07 July 2018 at Paul Octave Wiehé Auditorium, Réduit.

Some 300 participants had the opportunity to showcase their products and services during the Fair as well as increase their visibility on the market. On this occasion, a Special Commemorative Cover on cooperatives and the National Awards for Cooperatives 2018 competition were also launched with a view to improving the visibility of cooperatives.
Mauritius hosted a two-day international conference on the contribution of the Indian Diaspora in nation building on the 05 and 06 July 2018 at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute in Moka.

The conference was organised as part of the Antar Rashtriya Sahayog Parishad (ARSP) India’s commemoration of the centenary of the abolition of indentured system and the celebrations to mark the 50th anniversary of the independence of Mauritius.

A delegation of some 20 members from India comprising academics, experts and former civil servants, representatives of other indenture route countries, and local academics attended the conference.

It provided a comprehensive perspective of Mauritius history and contemporary developments in political, economic, socio-cultural fields as well as its future vision.

Mauritius and India share an unparalleled relationship that transcends the socio-economic and political sides. The unity and diversity that presently reigns in Mauritius are the results of the outstanding values transmitted to the Mauritians by their forefathers who came mainly from India under the Indentured System.

The Indian Diaspora is making valuable contributions to the development process of the countries of the Indentured Labour Route and Mauritius was the first and largest recipient of indentured labour. During the colonial rule, over two million of indentured labourers were taken to the lands of South Africa, Mauritius, Trinidad and Tobago and Fiji to address labour shortages in sugarcane plantations. The indentured immigrants through their toil, sweat, unwavering determination and their struggle for a better life, have contributed significantly to shape modern Mauritius.