Prime Minister highlights strategies to harness potentials of tourism sector

In the wake of growing uncertainties prevailing on the global tourism market, Mauritius intends to harness the potentials of the industry by promoting competitiveness through sustainability and digitalisation. Other strategies include integrating change and innovation for a sustainable and greener tourism industry while ensuring societal benefits to the wider community.

The Prime Minister, Mr Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, made this statement on 23 May 2018 at the opening of the International Conference on Digitalisation and Sustainable Tourism held at Le Meridien Hotel in Pointe aux Piments.

Mr Jugnauth underpinned the contribution of tourism as a key pillar of the country’s economy, wherein it contributes to some 8% of the Gross Domestic Product, 10% of total employment and 8% of investment.

Speaking about the need to make of Mauritius a clean and green destination, the Prime Minister highlighted that several initiatives are being implemented. They include: the setting up of a legal requirement for carrying out Environment Impact Assessment for industries and enterprises with significant impact on the environment; and the adoption
of eco-friendly practices such as the installation of solar system and rainwater harvesting system.

The Prime Minister also called for the public and private partnership in charting the right tourism policies based on a shared vision to address challenges and transform Mauritius into a digitalised and sustainable country.

The Conference

The conference focused on the challenges and opportunities of digitalisation for the global tourism industry. It was a joint initiative of the Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority and the Tourism Authority.

The Conference, on the theme Digitalisation and Sustainable Tourism, offered a platform for the participants to reflect on the challenges and opportunities of digitalisation for the tourism industry and share the best practices driving the global tourism industry. It brought together high-level policy makers including Ministers of Tourism, CEOs of Tourism Boards, Tourism professionals, private operators, Industry Associations, trade unions, academics and experts.

Mauritius Declaration on Digitalisation and Sustainable Tourism

The Conference adopted the Mauritius Declaration on Digitalisation and Sustainable Tourism. The recommendations include the creation of a Working Group on Digital Platforms; the promotion and diversification of sustainable tourism as well as the formulation of national regulatory and policy frameworks that require the tourism industry to protect the privacy of visitors.

The Declaration also provides for compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation of the European Union, the reskilling of workforce for the tourism industry and rigorous application of ‘Green ICT’ techniques to ensure minimal environmental impacts.

Moreover, it makes recommendations for the optimal use of geoinformatics technologies for the conservation and promotion of cultural heritage and the establishment of an Indian Ocean Agency on “Climate change and protection and conservation of the biodiversity”.

Stakeholders pledging to digitalise and achieve sustainable tourism
The Fire Safety and Emergency Preparedness Campaign 2018 was launched on 04 May 2018 at the Port Louis Fire Station in the context of the International Firefighters’ Day observed on 4 May each year.

The role of firefighters has evolved and become more challenging in the advent of climatic change and increase of natural calamities. Consequently, there is a need to implement new measures in view to improving the services offered by the MFRS.

Government acknowledges the hard work of firefighters and is committed to improve their working conditions by providing them with more equipment and facilities. Moreover, Government is envisaging the construction of two fire stations in Rose Belle and Goodlands respectively so as to provide better services to the citizens.

International Firefighters’ Day was introduced in 1999 in Australia following the death of five firefighters on duty. The Day is an opportune time to recognise and honour the sacrifices of firefighters in ensuring security and protection of the population and the environment.
Mauritius and Egypt: signing of MoUs to strengthen cultural and media cooperation

Three Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) focusing on Cultural and Media Cooperation were signed between the Government of the Republic of Mauritius and the Arab Republic of Egypt on 02 May 2018 in Port Louis in the context of the Egyptian week.

The objectives of the MoUs are to strengthen the friendly ties between Mauritius and Egypt and to share knowledge and skills in the promotion of cultural programmes and events.

They also aim at enhancing cooperation in the field of media and further deepening mutual understanding at the bilateral, regional and economic levels between the two countries.

The MoUs will also provide exchange of information on the active role of both countries in enforcing the Agenda of the African Union. They also make provision of holding informational exhibitions for the promotion of touristic, cultural and artistic propagation and investment in Mauritius and Egypt as well as providing training programmes and exchange of visits.

The MoU signed with the Egyptian Radio and Television Union of the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt will enable the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation to exchange radio and television programmes in the social, artistic, cultural, scientific and sports fields; enter into commercial arrangements for the exchange of radio and television programmes; benefit from training, visits, experiences on radio and television co-production; and receive radio programmes from Egypt for re-broadcast in Mauritius.

The Egyptian Week comprised several events in the diplomatic, cultural, gastronomic, and cinematographic field. A Prize Giving Ceremony was organised by the Government of Egypt to reward children who took part in “In the Eyes of the World Competition”.

The Egyptian Film Festival was also launched on the occasion. The projection of films, which kicked off on 04 May 2018 at MCine Flacq, enabled Mauritians to get an insight of the Egyptian traditions and culture with focus on contemporary and social problems and the role of Egyptian women.

The objectives of the Commonwealth Standards Network would be to set up a framework for capacity building, reducing non-tariff barriers among Commonwealth countries and strengthening the Quality Infrastructure of Member States based on best international practices.

The Commonwealth Standards Network would amongst others, establish an online portal to increase information sharing between Commonwealth National Standards Bodies and key stakeholders; and map out and identify Commonwealth members’ economic priorities, and establish a framework of standards that can be used to support these objectives.
School Premium Scheme encourages students to pursue education

The School Premium Scheme, an initiative of the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment, aims to empower families registered on the Social Register of Mauritius. It seeks to help reduce dropouts of students from poor families and allowing them to pursue higher levels of education. In this context, 173 beneficiaries received cash awards on 18 May 2018 during a ceremony held at the Lunch Room of the National Assembly.

The Scheme targets students who have successfully completed their School Certificates and Higher School Certificates examinations. The cash awards under the School Premium Scheme are Rs 25 000 for School Certificate level and Rs 35 000 for the Higher School Certificate level. The Cash Award will be transferred into a savings account created at the MauBank and can be withdrawn only when the beneficiary reaches 18 years old.

The objective of the scheme is to combat poverty and empower the vulnerable group with a view to ensure their social integration and improve their quality of life. Since education is an important catalyst in the combat against poverty, Government is stepping up efforts to provide education to children of low-income families.

Some 250 students from Mauritius and Rodrigues have benefitted from the School Premium Scheme to the tune of Rs 7 million in 2016.

Currently, Government has disbursed some Rs 30 million for the provision of school materials for students of Mauritius and Rodrigues.

International Day for Biological Diversity 2018

A series of activities were organised by the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security to mark the International Day for Biological Diversity 2018, commemorated on 22 May.

The activities carried out throughout the year, comprise, among others, the inauguration of an Arboretum set up at the Native Plant Propagation Centre in Curepipe where rare species of endemic plants, are propagated and planted; an open week for secondary students at the Arboretum and the Native Plant Propagation Centre; an exhibition on the native biodiversity; and planting of endemic trees in the national parks and various selected sites and distribution of native plants to all schools.

The theme for this year is “Celebrating 25 years of Action for Biodiversity”
E-Licensing Project to enhance business facilitation

A one-day conference, focusing on the E-Licensing Project and transformational initiatives to enhance the business environment, was organised on 10 May 2018 by the Economic Development Board (EDB) in collaboration with the European Union (EU) at the Intercontinental Resort in Balaclava in the context of the Europe Week in Mauritius.

The E-Licensing Project, which will be completed within three years, has been initiated by Government to address key constraints in business facilitation as regards heavy regulatory frameworks and institutional bureaucracy.

It is being co-financed by the EU under the 11th European Development Fund, Eastern and Southern Africa and Indian Ocean Regional Indicative Programme with a view to creating a favourable climate for doing business and urging investment as well as enhancing the capacities of enforcement agencies to reduce trade barriers.

The project will trigger a paradigm shift in the way of processing business licenses and provide start-ups with a better access to business related services.

It will thus play a pivotal role in realising the overall objective of an enhanced integration for Mauritius into a regional and international investment system, fostering economic development, inclusive growth and poverty reduction. The EDB has a key responsibility in positioning the country as an attractive investment centre and ensuring a conducive business environment.

The four key components of the project are namely: E-licensing Platform; Business Process Re-Engineering exercise; Regulatory Review; and Change Management Programme. The E-Licensing Platform will be the single point of entry for application of all business licenses, permits, clearances, certificates or any other type of authorisation required to start and operate a business while enabling cross-agency integration and customer-centric services powered by cutting-edge technology.

Mauritius Observatory for Parenthood launched

The Observatory for Parenthood, a collaborative platform for the exchange of information among parenthood supporting stakeholders, was inaugurated on 15 May 2018 in the context of the International Day of Families at the National Women Entrepreneur Development Centre, in Phoenix.

The role of families is key to bringing a sense of stability in any country and guiding the children towards becoming responsible citizens. Government is extending its full support to help parents face the various challenges related to parenthood and future issues.

The collaborative platform will bring together stakeholders working on issues related to the welfare of families and parenthood to develop a common strategy to better assist families and parents. The exchanges will enable the formulation of adequate policies in the field of parenthood and family welfare. Moreover, a website will be created to offer a database comprising services and activities pertaining to family welfare.

The Caisse d'Allocation Familiale of Reunion Island is providing technical assistance for the setting up of the Parenthood Observatory.
CWA projects to improve water distribution network across the country

Works relating to the Rivière du Rempart Water Supply project are expected to be completed by November 2018. To the tune of Rs 122 million, the project forms part of Government’s endeavours to upgrade modern infrastructural water systems in order to improve the water distribution network across the country.

This endeavour seeks to address issues obstructing the smooth distribution of water supply and improve the water distribution network in the region. It comprises the replacement of overused pipelines stretching over 15 km and the construction of a reservoir of 3 000 cubic metres to the tune of Rs 40 million.

Other projects

The water reform project will result in an increase in water supply pressure, reduce loss in the water distribution system, and ensure security and continuity of water supply. To this end, the Central Water Authority has undertaken the project of replacing leaking old pipes across the country, wherein around 175 km of water pipes have already been replaced to the tune of some Rs 2.1 billion.

Other projects comprise the installation of new water pumps and mobile pressure filters, water treatment plants, construction of dams and reservoirs. As for projects in the pipeline, they include the rehabilitation and upgrading of La Nicoliere Water Treatment Plant from 66 000 m³ to 100 000 m³ per day; increase in the storage capacity of La Nicoliere Reservoir; installation of mobile pressure filters and construction of 2 Pure Water Steel Storage Water Tank of a total capacity of 5 000 m³ in Mon Loisir Rouillard and Plaine des Papayes; and pipe laying from Salazie to Les Mariannes.
The Home Solar Project, in line with Government’s strategy to alleviate poverty, was inaugurated on 17 May 2018 at the residence of Mrs Manan at Cascavelle. The project aims at installing solar photovoltaic systems on rooftops of 10,000 households in Social Category tariff 110A and contributing to the national target of achieving 35% of renewable electricity in the energy mix by 2025.

The Home Solar Project is being implemented by the Central Electricity Board (CEB) and CEB (Green Energy) Co. Ltd and will be carried out in five phases over the next five years.

The CEB will bear the costs for the installation of the photovoltaic panels. Around 2,000 households will be targeted per year. The pilot phase (1,000 Solar PV Kits) has been completed at 10 different places in the region of Black River and Bramasthan.

The project is expected to bring 10 megawatts of new renewable energy capacity into the grid, resulting in savings of over USD 35 million in fossil fuel imports over the project lifetime as well as improving the energy security of the country.

A sum of Rs 350 million (USD 10 million) has been obtained as loan from the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development and the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) for the implementation of this project.

The Home Solar Project earned an IRENA Award International Recognition on 13 January 2018, as supported by the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development and the IRENA, the global platform for international cooperation on renewable energy.
Full Concrete Housing Unit Scheme: Eight families receive keys of their housing units

Eight eligible families received the keys of their housing units on 24 May 2018 at the Pont Lardier Community Centre in Bel Air Rivière Sèche. The Housing units range from 40 m² to 50m² and are equipped with all the necessary facilities and amenities.

Government has come up with the Full Concrete Housing (FCH) Unit Scheme which seeks to provide support to needy families by providing them a place of comfort and with proper amenities. The project is a joint collaboration of the National Empowerment Foundation (NEF) and the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment.

The FCH is one of the various measures to attain Government’s objectives of eradicating poverty and improving the quality of life of the vulnerable, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Prefab Housing project is also in the pipeline to ease the living conditions of low-income families as well as to strengthen social and cultural integration of these families.

The core mission of Government is to strive towards the creation of an inclusive and more equitable society by ensuring the social integration of the vulnerable groups in the mainstream society and that all strata of the society benefit from an equal economic empowerment.
Cloud Camp aims at bridging the digital divide

The first Cloud Camp of Mauritius aimed at establishing a new partnership and centred around the bridging of the digital divide and Government modernisation was launched on 10 May 2018 at Shangri-La Touessrok Hotel, in Trou d’Eau Douce.

The three-day event was a joint initiative of the Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation, and Microsoft Cloud Society, Middle East and Africa. Around 100 participants familiarised themselves with disruptive technologies such as Block-Chain, Artificial Intelligence and Internet of Things.

Cloud Camps prepare participants to be “doers” rather than just “learners” and become “agents of change” who are capable of developing cloud-based applications employing emerging technologies and making digital transformation a reality.

According to ICT-related figures, mobile penetration stands at 144% and Fibre To The Home at 100% hence positioning Mauritius on the 8th position worldwide. Mauritius will be connected to two more submarine cables in year 2019, thus making the country more resilient and equipped to host Data centres and Disaster recovery centres providing cloud computing services across the world.

Mauritius is pushing to emerge as a digital hub par excellence in the SADC region and presently ranks first in Africa and 73rd in the world on the ICT Development Index 2017.