In this issue

50th Anniversary of Independence

Indian President’s State Visit - Highlights

Prime Minister’s Message to the Nation and students on the 50th Independence of Mauritius

National Stakeholder workshop on Branding Strategies for Origin-based Products

Info-Highway: ICT Ministry project is WSIS Prize 2018 champion

AFRA Meeting to formulate Regional Strategic Cooperative Framework

Redevelopment of the Saint Louis Power Station to meet increasing demand of electricity

Bio Farming Support Scheme launched for sustainable production practices

More
Mauritius marked, on 12 March 2018, a momentous and historic day by celebrating its 50th anniversary of Independence and the 26th anniversary of the Republic. The official ceremony of National Day Celebrations 2018 was held in the evening at the Champ de Mars, in Port Louis.

The theme that has guided this year’s celebrations, Lame dan lame, spoke of cooperation, collaboration, solidarity and togetherness. Fifty years ago, when Mauritius acceded to independence, the country had to face some stark challenges in terms of demographics and an economy reliant solely on sugar. Now, beating all odds, the country has become a beacon in this part of the world, and, those long years of struggle have forged a spirit of patriotism, of belonging, in all Mauritians.

The close and unique tie between Mauritius and India which encompasses virtually all aspects of bilateral and multilateral relations, were highlighted during the four-day State Visit to Mauritius effected by the President of the Republic of India, Mr Ram Nath Kovind, who was the Chief Guest for the National Day Celebrations 2018.

The official programme of activities comprised the Flag Raising Ceremony; parades and défilés by the Police Force and non-governmental organisations and an artistic technological show with state-of-the-art sound and light effects, video projections, and synchronised pyrotechnics.
National Day Celebrations 2018
**INDIAN PRESIDENT’S STATE VISIT - HIGHLIGHTS**

**Prime Minister Jugnauth welcoming Indian President Kovind at the airport**

*During his State Visit to Mauritius, from 11 to 14 March, Mr Kovind, led a high-level delegation comprising, his Spouse, First Lady Mrs Savita Kovind; the Minister of State in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Mr Ashwini Kumar Choubey, and Members of the Indian Parliament.*

President Kovind paid a courtesy call on the President of the Republic of Mauritius at the State House, Le Réduit. He was invited, on 12 March, to a meeting at delegation-level with the Prime Minister, Mr Pravind Jugnauth, at the Government House, in Port Louis. Both leaders exchanged views on a range of global and regional issues and agreed to continue supporting each other and cooperate closely to address common challenges.

The meeting was followed by a ceremony of exchange of Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) and Agreements and a statement to the media.

Moreover, Mr Kovind received, during courtesy calls, the Chief Justice of Mauritius, the Speaker of the National Assembly, and the Leader of the Opposition.

The Indian President also attended a State Banquet hosted in his honour by the Prime Minister.

The President’s programme of visit also included: Tribute, on 11 March, to the great Indian Leader Mahatma Gandhi and address to the Youth; visits, on 12 March, to Ganga Talao and to the Aapravasi Ghat UNESCO World Heritage Site; and, on 13 March, Unveiling of the foundation stone of the new state-of-the-art Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) Hospital and Social Housing Project; inauguration of the World Hindi Secretariat Headquarters and launching of the Early Digital Learning Programme, Student Support Programme and the Logo of the World Hindi Secretariat.

In his address to the Mauritian Youth at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute in Moka, Mr Kovind called upon young people to strive for success so as to make their country proud and to promote the values of peace, harmony and unity among the population that remain the lynchpin for the country’s progress.

The construction of the new ENT Hospital in Vacoas is benefitting Indian financial assistance to the tune of USD 500 million and a further line of credit of USD 500 million. As for the Social Housing Project, India has provided financial support for the construction of some 956 housing units at Dagotière and Mare Tabac over an extent of 26 Arpents and 10 Arpents respectively. The total project cost is estimated at USD 45 million out of which USD 20 million will be financed through a grant and the remaining USD 25 million will be met through a line of credit by the Government of India.
In a joint media statement on 12 March 2018, Prime Minister Jugnauth highlighted that the presence of the President of the Republic of India during the Golden Jubilee celebrations of Mauritius's accession to Independence, a landmark moment in the history of our country, bears testimony to the unique, privileged and special bond between Mauritius and India. This bond goes beyond government-to-government interaction, reaching the heart of our people who take pride in the shared heritage and ancestry, he stated.

Mauritius, remarked the Prime Minister has embarked on an ambitious development path wherein the Government is creating a modern country built on new pillars of growth namely, innovation, infrastructural advancement, and more importantly through an inclusive development.

According to the Prime Minister, various projects have been initiated, under financial assistance and a line of credit provided by India in November 2016 and May 2017 respectively. The Metro Express, he said, is one of the pillars of that transformation poised to change the infrastructural landscape of the country and pave the way towards modernising and redefining the public transport system of Mauritius.

Moreover, Mr Jugnauth recalled that the discussions he had with the Indian President were in parallel with those he had in May 2017 with Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his State visit to India. He emphasised that the highly productive outcomes of these discussions brought forth a new era of cooperation between the two countries, wherein we are now strategic partners in development and innovation and cooperation.

He also expressed gratitude to India for its unwavering support in the longstanding struggle of Mauritius to complete its decolonisation process so as to be able to effectively exercise its sovereignty over the entirety of its territory, including the Chagos Archipelago.

For his part the Indian President emphasised that Mauritius and India share a longstanding strong bilateral relation that is anchored in the ancestral links that has been further cemented with the exchange of
MoUs and Agreements. Based on the foundation of deep mutual trust and confidence, both countries have embarked on a new era of intensive cooperation, he added.

Mr Kovind underlined that more than 25 priority projects are underway in Mauritius with Indian assistance and that the two countries are working together on key issues including climate change. The President also announced that India will supply a petrol vessel to Mauritius under a new line of credit.

Mauritius-India
Signature of MoUs and Agreements

Both countries are inextricably knit together by abiding bonds of friendship, cultural, religious and shared historical experience. So as to further boost Indo-Mauritian ties, various Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) and Agreements were exchanged. These are:

- Renewed programme for cultural cooperation for another four years, until 2021. The Agreement will ensure exchanges in the field of culture, arts, literature and languages.

- MoU between the Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy in India and University of Mauritius pertaining to the establishment of an academic chair in Ayurveda. This will help UOM to undertake academic and research activities in Ayurveda in Mauritius.

- MoU between the Public Service Commission of Mauritius and the Union Public Service Commission of India. It pertains to an exchange of experience on modern approach to public service recruitment and selection including the use of IT infrastructure for the expeditious scrutiny and speedy disposal of applications.

- MoU for the establishment of the Nalanda University, an international institution, to be located in the Raigir, Nalanda district in the State of Bihar. It aims at fostering regional networking and collaboration with existing centres of excellence in East Asia. It also seeks to contribute to regional peace and imparting education and capacity in the domains of philosophy, language and other areas.
As Mauritius gears itself to witness the celebrations of its 50th Independence on 12 March 2018, we should all take time to reflect on the journey it has accomplished as an independent nation and a Republic.

After long years of struggle, it is today vital to consolidate unity, tolerance, peace and solidarity so that we thrive further and develop resilience to brave upcoming challenges that await us.

This was the gist of the message to the Nation of the Prime Minister, Mr Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, on 12 March 2018 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Independence Day and 26th anniversary of the Republic of Mauritius.

The Prime Minister underlined that Mauritius has laid the foundation of an inclusive and equitable nation where people of different religious and cultural beliefs live in unity. He stated that Mauritius has emerged as a rainbow nation where people with diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds live and work peacefully for the socio-economic welfare of the country. He emphasised that we should all team up for the promotion of an environmentally sustainable society, which nurtures respect of elders, valorises the role of women, inculcates values to the youth and endorses a healthy way of living.

The elderly population, he said, represent a key pillar of the Mauritian society and they should be treated with due respect for the valuable contribution in the struggle of the country’s accession to an independent nation. He pointed out that Government is providing various measures to cater for the needs of the elderly and also ensuring that they have access to good health care services and facilities.

As regards the role of women, the Prime Minister underscored that over the years the country has witnessed major progress in women empowerment. He commended the contributions of women in all societal spheres and urged everyone to give due recognition to the women for their involvement in the socio-economic development of the country.

Referring to the youth, Mr Jugnauth highlighted that they should be instilled with values and principles as they have a huge responsibility in moulding a prosperous Mauritius in the future. He cautioned the youth about the negative consequences of social scourges and underpinned the importance of learning from the experiences of the older generation and respecting their advices.

Prime Minister Jugnauth also spoke of his firm belief in investing in the children and youth of the country as it means investing in the future of Mauritius. Government, he emphasised, fully reckons the capabilities of the youth and is determined to provide them proper education and training, life-long learning opportunities and skills for life. The reform in the education and training sector has established a modern and globally-oriented education system that will help young people derive optimal benefits and acquire the prerequisites to reshape our nation’s future, he indicated.

With regard to institutional changes, the Prime Minister pointed out that new avenues for further and higher learning have to be created so that the youth unlock their potentials. Innovation, he stressed, has to be at the centre of future development in all sectors as we embark on the path towards Smart Mauritius, Ocean Economy and Education hub.
A National Stakeholder workshop on the theme Branding Strategies for Origin-based Products, organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, in collaboration with the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), was held on 22 March 2018 at Le Maritim Resort & Spa Mauritius, in Balaclava.

The workshop, attended by some 45 participants from the public and private sectors, aimed at outlining the basic elements in the development and implementation of a branding strategy for Mauritius, as well as agreeing on the responsibilities of relevant stakeholders in the next phase of a project which pertains to the promotion of branding for origin-based products.

At the request of the Government of Mauritius, WIPO has solicited the assistance of the Japan Patent Office to support the process of developing an Intellectual Property (IP) and Branding strategy for products in the agricultural and handicraft sectors.

The workshop was conducted by Mr Getachew Mengistie Alemu, WIPO expert, IP Law Consultant, United States of America and Ms Asiedu, WIPO Senior Counsellor. Presentations focused on: IP and Branding Strategies – WIPO Technical Assistance Tools and Services; Preliminary Feasibility Study; and, IP Rights Tools for Protection of Origin-based products.

Furthermore, the WIPO expert is assisting Mauritius for the development and implementation of a branding strategy. Since 13 March 2018, Mr. Alemu is having in-depth consultations with various stakeholders and relevant government actors to establish the required scope of work for the branding project which will initially focus on handicrafts (production of Dodo items), special sugars and local rum.

Mauritius has secured assistance from WIPO to promote branding for origin-based products. The main objective of the project, which is part of the recommendations of the National Intellectual Property Development Plan that was reviewed in 2016, is to capture the goodwill and reputation of specific Mauritian products on the international market.
InfoHighway, a Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation project geared towards providing a secure, scalable and robust E-services platform, the project was ranked among the top five most voted in the ‘category 7 E-government’ by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) during the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Prizes 2018 Ceremony held on 20 March 2018 in Geneva, Switzerland. It has received international recognition and acknowledged as a WSIS Prize 2018 champion.

The project was selected out of 492 nominated ICT success stories from around the globe following a comprehensive review by the Expert Group of 685 projects submitted by the WSIS Stakeholders’ community.

The main objective of InfoHighway is to provide a strong service platform to facilitate the consumption of published data amongst Government agencies and private entities so as to improve operation efficiency in public administration and business operations. It also aims at establishing links to other Ministries/Departments and institutions.

The ITU announced the top 90 ICT-related projects initiatives recognised for implementing the WSIS Action Lines, competing for the prestigious WSIS Prizes 2018. With participants coming from around the world, 72 champions were honoured and 18 winners voted in each of the 18 categories at the ceremony.

Since 2012, WSIS Prizes has been rewarding remarkable efforts made by entities and organisations from around the globe that focus on accelerating socio-economic progress of the whole world as a community.

The Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation, Mr Yogida Sawmynaden, who attended the ceremony hosted during the WSIS Forum (19-23 March) 2018 received the certificate of recognition for outstanding contribution towards strengthening the implementation of the WSIS Outcomes from ITU Secretary-General, Mr Houlin Zhao.
The formulation of a Regional Strategic Cooperative Framework (RCF) was the focus of the five-day African Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology (AFRA) meeting held in Mauritius from 19 to 23 March 2018 at Voila Hotel in Moka.

The objectives of the convention which was attended by some 40 international experts were to review the SWOT Analysis based on the critical assessment report and working document to develop strategic programmes focusing on the priority areas of Human Health, Food and Agriculture and Radiation Safety including developing key performance indicators, and to establish technical cooperation/triangular cooperation to play a critical role in enhancing African Member States capacity to benefit from nuclear science and technology including the other thematic areas (energy development, industrial applications, water resources).

The expected outcome of the meeting is an advanced draft of the AFRA RCF, based on identification and analysis of current and new regional trends, priorities and challenges in nuclear science and technology in the African region, for the period 2019-2023.

The new RCF includes adequate strategic programmes to address the fundamental of safety infrastructure that ensures a systematic and profound improvement in the safety infrastructure. It will also address human resource needs required for safe utilisation of nuclear science and technology applications through research, education and training. Moreover, the new RCF will include programmes that will lead to maximizing the impact of nuclear science and technology in the identified thematic areas.
Redevelopment of the Saint Louis Power Station to meet increasing demand of electricity

The St Louis Power Station which underwent major redevelopment in view of ensuring adequate power generation capacity to meet the increase in the demand of electricity was inaugurated on 20 March 2018 in Plaine Lauzun.

The project has been funded by the African Development Bank, and the CEB to the tune of Rs 3.7 billion and Rs 1.2 billion respectively.

The redevelopment project is in line with the country's vision 2030 and Government Programme 2015-2019 and aims to provide a reliable source of electricity in an environmentally sustainable way to the population. It consists of the construction of a new powerhouse for the installation of four Heavy Fuel Oil diesel generating sets of a total capacity of 67.4 MW.

It also comprises a 66kV gas-insulated substation, a tank farm of two heavy fuel oil storage tanks and a fuel oil treatment plant. The plant is equipped with modern features optimised for low noise and air emissions, waste heat recuperation and waste incinerations amongst others.

Bio Farming Support Scheme launched for sustainable production practices

The Bio Farming Support Scheme aiming at encouraging small registered planters for the usage of bio inputs namely bio fertilizer and bio pesticides and the adoption of sustainable production practices, was launched on 08 March 2018 at the Mauritius Cane Industry Association in Réduit.

This initiative is in line with Government’s vision of converting 50% of food crop production system to bio norms by 2020 as well as to bring the price of bio inputs at par with chemical inputs.

The Scheme with funding of Rs 5 million as enunciated in Budget 2017/2018 makes provision for up to 60% subsidy to small planters on the purchase price on bio inputs for a maximum of three crop cycles in a year.

The objectives are to enable the shift to organic farming; render the prices of organic inputs such as bio fertilizers, bio pesticides accessible to planters; prevent agricultural soil degradation; and improve the quality of land with the use of bio inputs to increase agricultural productivity. It also aims to produce safer food for the consumption of consumers; the prevention of pollution; and the promotion of environment stewardship.
First Auto-Motorcycle Driving School inaugurated

The first Auto-Motorcycle Driving School, aiming to provide motorcyclists with an in-depth training course which is henceforth a prerequisite to obtain a motorcycle license, was inaugurated in Rose Hill on 05 March 2018.

The project, a first in its kind in Mauritius, is in line with the Road Safety Campaign which kicked off in February. The driving school will be operated by the Advance Institute of Monitoring Ltd and 21 trainers as well as 14 examiners have been trained for the project.

This initiative is expected to bring a change in driving attitudes and instill a sense of discipline in motorcyclists. Road accidents statistics for last year reveal that 158 cases of road accidents involved motorcycles with an average of 61 casualties per year.

It will be compulsory for persons with learner permits to undergo the training course before applying for a motorcycle license so as to comply with the new set of regulations. Currently, 210 000 motorcyclists possess licenses while 140 000 are riding motorcycles with learner permits. Subsequently, ten such driving schools will be operational across the country to provide driving course to motorcyclists.

Mauritius hosts WHO Third Global Conference on Health and Climate

The third World Health Organisation (WHO) Global Conference on Health and Climate Change for Small Islands Developing States (SIDS), aiming to advance global action on climate change and health was held from 22 to 23 March 2018 at Westin Turtle Bay Resort and Spa, Balaclava in Mauritius.

The objectives of the conference were to review the implementation of the WHO Health and Climate Change Global Agenda; launch the WHO Special SIDS Initiative and further consult with national and regional leaders and experts on its implementation priorities in the Pacific, in the Caribbean and in the Africa and South East Asia regions; and develop a regional implementation plan for the SIDS initiative.

It also aimed to develop, in consultation with Member States and other key stakeholders, a draft action plan for the SIDS Initiative with the following areas of action: supporting health leadership in island countries to integrate health into climate change planning; producing country profiles; building climate-resilient health systems and; facilitating access to climate and health financing mechanisms such as the Green Climate Fund and the Global Environment Facility to support climate resilient health systems of island countries.

The two-day conference brought together about 65 participants from the nine SIDS countries namely Cabo Verde, Comoros, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius, Soa Tome & Principe, Seychelles, Timor-Leste and Reunion Island.