In his address, the Prime Minister underlined that road safety remains a national priority for Government and that the situation is alarming regarding the number of fatalities caused by road accidents. He emphasised that it is high time to undertake serious actions against those not complying with road traffic legislations and Government will not tolerate non compliance with the rules of road safety.

A one-week National Road Safety Campaign on the theme “Ensam Pa Laisse Koltar Touy Nou Fami” was launched on 17 January 2018 in Port-Louis in the presence of the Prime Minister, Mr Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, the Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence and Minister for Rodrigues, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, Mr Nandcoomar Bodha, and other eminent personalities.

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Mr Jugnauth pointed out that Government will bring forth a series of law enforcement measures after consultation with the judiciary. They include: an increase in the penalties regarding fixed cumulative offenses from 11 to 24; fixed penalty charges to be increased considerably for contraveners especially those who drink and drive; suspension of driving license after six consequent offenses on the road; as well as other road safety amendments to help trigger a safe driving culture among the population.

He stressed that the National Road Safety Campaign comprises both offensive and defensive driving components with a view to raise awareness and change the mindset of every road user. The Prime Minister thus urged citizens to shoulder more responsibility with regards to their behaviour and attitude on the roads and adopt a safe driving culture.

For his part, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, reiterated that road safety is the concern every one and it is unacceptable that owing to bad driving habits, the number of fatalities on the roads is increasing. He also called for sustained severe actions over time in a bid to make the road safe for all users and to deter offenders.

Minister Bodha, underlined that it is vital to change the culture of careless driving among road users and appealed to the most vulnerable ones to exercise greater care and responsibility on the road. Speaking of the increasing number of road crashes due to poor driving behaviour involving moto/auto cycles, he announced the setting up of “Moto Ecoles” for the teaching of driving of auto cycles and motorcycles which is operational since 02 March 2018.

Road safety campaign

The road safety campaign activities comprise: Wheel Chair Rally of physically handicapped victims of road accidents; nationwide Zero-Tolerance operations by the Police Force including vehicle checks, alcohol tests and road blocks as well as the launch of a Defensive Protocol of Behaviour on Roads; an action plan on road safety to be implemented by the private sector; mass messaging on road safety through mobile applications to target the population at large; dissemination of specific messages to school students during morning assemblies; as well as distribution of road safety pamphlets to the population.

Prime Minister welcoming participants at the launching of the National Road Safety Campaign
A site visit to the Bagatelle Water Treatment Plant was conducted on 27 February 2018 by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Energy and Public Utilities, Mr Ivan Collendavelloo, accompanied by senior officials of the Ministry, the Central Water Authority, and the Water Resources Unit, to take stock of the progress of work achieved since the beginning of February 2017 by the Chinese contractor JV HWPC/First Bureau/HUPD.

The project, to the tune of some Rs 1 billion, is expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2019 and as at date, about 56% of the works have already been carried out. The project comprises the construction of the following: ozonation contact tank, flash mixer, flocculators, new rapid gravity sand filters, chlorine contact tank, and clean water tank. It is for the first time in Mauritius that ozonation and flow distribution techniques will be carried out to get rid of algae in the dam water.

The Bagatelle Water Treatment Plant is expected to produce 57 000 m³ of water daily and supply potable water at adequate pressure on a 24-hour basis to some 60 000 households in lower Plaine Wilhems and Port Louis, in the regions of lower Quatre Bornes, Belle Rose, Ollier, Roche Brunes, Stanley, Mont Roches, Rose Hill, Beau Bassin, Coromandel, and Belle Etoile.

Upon its completion, other regions will benefit from the Bagatelle Water Treatment Plant. La Marie Treatment Plant is presently exporting 23 000 m³ of water daily to regions of lower Plaine Wilhems and once the Bagatelle Water Treatment Plant is completed, 15 000 m³/day from La Marie Treatment Plant will be distributed to the south western regions such as Tamarin, La Gaulette, Roche Noires, Cotteau Raffin, Le Morne, and adjoining areas.

Furthermore, the commissioning of the 32 kms of water pipe replacement which started in Rose Hill-Beau Bassin will coincide with the completion of the Bagatelle Water Treatment Plant which will supply water 24/7 with normal water pressure.

Some delays occurred with the construction of the treatment plant due to legal proceedings and following ruling from the Supreme Court in 2016, the Bagatelle Water Treatment Plant contract was awarded and the project design, construction, testing and commissioning started as from 02 February 2017. According to the contractor, the period of notifying defects is from 26 February 2019 to 25 August 2020. From 26 February 2019 to 25 February 2020, operations and maintenance training will be conducted for CWA staff.
A School Medicine Programme aiming to promote physical fitness among students was launched on 15 February 2018 at the St Joseph’s College in Curepipe. The programme also focuses on the treatment and prevention of injuries related to sports and exercise.

The programme, an initiative of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Mauritius Sports Council, is in line with the several measures that have been implemented to promote sports and healthy eating habits in Mauritius. The measures comprise: the ban of soft drinks in schools; increase of taxes on cigarettes, alcohol and sugar; setting up of 23 Health Clubs and outdoor gyms; and implementation of physical activity programmes.

According to statistics, 23% of the adult population is diabetic, 19% is pre-diabetic, and 28% have high blood pressure. Smoking, alcohol consumption, and obesity are also major health concerns in Mauritius and the causes can be attributed to poor diet and lack of physical exercise.

In his address on the occasion, the Minister of Health and Quality of Life, Dr Anwar Husnoo highlighted the importance of regular physical exercise to maintain a healthy lifestyle, recalling that physical activity can improve health and reduce the risks of developing diseases such as Type 2 diabetes, cancer and cardiovascular complications. He added that physical activity can have immediate and long-term health benefits while regular activity can improve one’s quality of life.

With regard to Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) in Mauritius, the Minister underlined that diabetes, heart diseases, high blood pressure, and cancer have reached epidemic proportions adding that NCD account for the bulk of morbidity and premature deaths in the country.

For his part, the Minister of Youth and Sports, Mr Stephan Toussaint urged the population to adopt healthy diets and engage in moderate physical activity daily. He highlighted that the ‘Everyday 5-2-1-0’ message conveys a healthy as well as active lifestyle to the population.
The corporate identity of SME Mauritius Ltd, ‘Unlocking Potentials’ was launched by the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives, Mr Soomilduth Bholah on 15 February 2018 in Port-Louis.

The SME Mauritius Ltd, driven by new set of values and visions will shoulder the responsibilities and functions of the Ex Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) following the promulgation of the Small and Medium Enterprises Act on 18 January 2018. The institution will meet the exigencies and realities of the SME sector as well as provide institutional support to SMEs.

On the same occasion, five new schemes have been launched to support and assist SMEs respond to the expectations of consumers and infuse new competitive strengths. They are:

The Access to Market-Barcode Registration scheme which aims at providing financial assistance to SMEs with a view to upgrade their products and facilitate their access to new markets. Under this scheme, SMEs will be encouraged to adopt the Barcode Certification and use barcodes for their products.

The Green Energy Promotion-Solar Photovoltaic Rebate scheme will help SMEs to produce electricity using solar photovoltaic technology. The scheme will operate on the net metering principle which will allow eligible SMEs to produce electricity solely for their own consumption.

The Mentoring and Hand-holding Programme scheme will strengthen SMEs through hand-holding, mentoring and coaching activities. It will support innovation and share knowledge with industry experts.

The Communication and Visibility-Online Presence scheme will assist SMEs in developing and implementing the various tools and means for online presence and marketing.

The Technology and Skills Transfer-Inclusive Business scheme will encourage and stimulate best business practices for achieving higher productivity and competitiveness and accelerate the democratisation of the economy by creating additional business opportunities for start-ups and other small businesses.
Mauritius and Australia to strengthen collaboration in the field of education

The Australia-Mauritius Research and Innovation Forum (AMRIF) was held on 19 February 2018 at the Hennessy Park Hotel in Ebène, with a view to discuss the role of research and private sector partnerships for innovation and inclusiveness as a means to achieve sustainable economic development.

The forum was organised by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research and other key partners in the context of activities marking the golden jubilee of the independence of Mauritius. The main objective of AMRIF 2018 was to reinforce the cooperation of both countries in the field of education and to toughen up their long-lasting partnership in other common areas.

Some 100 delegates and 20 representatives from leading Australian universities and research institutions and Government attended the forum. Participants comprised Australian and Mauritian policy makers, researchers, academics, industry players, innovators and thought leaders from various sectors (Food security, Fisheries and Aquaculture, Agriculture, Education and training, Advanced technology, ICT, Health/Biotech, Energy and Manufacturing) of the economy.

Participants had the opportunity to learn more on the importance of innovation for emerging areas of activity and to familiarise with new funded schemes launched in Mauritius to encourage international collaborations. They also had discussions related to the implications of regional focus and perspectives in fostering economic growth and exploring joint-ventures through bilateral collaboration.

It is recalled that four MoUs were signed in 2017 with Australian universities to promote inter-institutional cooperation. Three Australian universities namely Murdoch University, Edith Cowan University and Deakin University have also granted a number of tuition-waiver scholarships for post-graduate programmes to Mauritius. Both countries are joining hands to facilitate joint research and identify new areas of cooperation between Mauritian-Australian institutions.
The Cote d'Or Multi-Sports complex set to host the 10th edition of the Indian Ocean Island Games in 2019 is poised to become the centre of sporting activity in Mauritius and also a flagship for sporting achievement and training across the East-African and Indian Ocean region.

The Prime Minister, Mr Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, made this statement during the ceremony of laying of foundation stone of the Cote d'Or Multi-Sports complex, on 21 February 2018, in Cote d'Or.

He stated that the Multi-Sports complex is a state-of-the-art infrastructure that will serve to modernise the sports landscape of the country. He also highlighted that the sports activities to be undertaken in the Complex are expected to inspire people of all ages and communities to get involved in sport, fitness, and healthy lifestyle programmes.

Also present on the occasion, the Ambassador of the People’s Republic of China to Mauritius, Mr Sun Gongyi, highlighted that the Multi-Sports complex project will be entirely under the Mauritian supervision and observed that the cooperation bears testimony to the privileged cultural and economic ties between China and Mauritius.

The project, to the tune of around Rs 3.1 billion of which a financial support of Rs 2 billion was provided by the People’s Republic of China, features an assortment of amenities of international standards. The complex will include a multi-sport stadium, an athletic track and multi-sport arena providing basketball and volleyball courts, with facilities for boxing, judo, karate, taekwondo, weightlifting, wrestling, yoga, gymnastics, a swimming arena with Olympic size pool, diving facilities and training pools.

It will also provide venues for matches, competitions, and championships and other amenities will consist of extensive training and outreach facilities and programs. The project is expected to be completed by July 2019.
Mauritius hosted the fifth Meeting of the Southern African Regional Cooperation Group on Safety of Navigation and Marine Protection (SAGNEP) on 21 and 22 February 2018 in Ebène. Some 50 local and foreign maritime experts attended the meeting and discussed matters pertaining to safety of navigation and marine environment protection as well as organising and encouraging cooperation in training for the attainment of the required standards of competence, including skills development and research.

The participation of Mauritius in the meeting underpins Government’s intent to leverage the ocean economy as an economic pillar for Mauritius and make the country the Maritime Hub of the region. In this regard, various measures are being undertaken to give a boost to the sector. These include: implementation of port development projects by the Mauritius Ports Authority; operation of the Vessel Monitoring System to prevent, deter and eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing; signing of a contractual agreement between the Ministry and the Mauritius Telecom for the provision of the maritime communication service on a 24/7 basis; and signing of agreement with the Fulcrum Maritime Limited Systems for the provision of the Long Range Identification and Tracking services.

SAGNEP is a regional cooperation group addressing issues relating to aids and safety of navigation on the African Continent. It promotes awareness of the need to establish internationally agreed aids to navigation and maritime safety information services. It groups 22 Member States namely, Angola, Burundi, Comoros, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Reunion Island, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Norway, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, United Kingdom (St Helena Island), Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The new Code of Corporate Governance for Mauritius was at the core of a one-day workshop held on 26 February 2018 at Cyber Tower 1 in Ebène at the initiative of the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities and the Mauritius Institute of Directors.

The Code comprises a set of principles and guidance aimed at improving and guiding the governance practices of organisations. It forms part of a larger body of existing laws, rules, regulations, principles and best practices that include laws of Mauritius; regulations; listing rules; standards, guidelines and codes of best practice; corporate rules and provisions; and formal documents within an organisation.

Using an “apply and explain” methodology, the Code aims to encourage high-quality corporate governance with inbuilt flexibility that allows organisations to adapt their practices to their particular circumstances. It emphasises the need for boards to focus on the effective performance of their key tasks. It covers eight governance principles namely governance structure; structure of the Board and its committees; Director appointment procedures; Director duties, remuneration and performance; risk governance and internal control; reporting with integrity; audit; relations with shareholders and other key stakeholders.

Some 50 leaders of key corporate bodies falling under the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities attended the training conducted by Dr Chris Pierce, CEO of Global Governance Services Ltd in the UK.
A three-day International Conference of the Mauritian Academic Diaspora 2018 with the objective to position the country as a major higher education destination and to create strong platforms for more interactions between Mauritius and its diaspora was held from 20 to 22 February 2018 at Auditorium Paul Octave Wiehe, in Réduit and was organised by the University of Mauritius.

The Prime Minister, Mr Pravind Kumar Jugnauth was present for the opening ceremony along with other eminent personalities.

According to the Prime Minister, the diaspora can bring to the local universities an international stance and boost their competitive edge, resulting in job and wealth creation. The conference he underlined has brought together members of the Mauritian diaspora from various academic fields to engage with their counterparts from the University of Mauritius and other local universities.

As regards to the academic diaspora, he highlighted that Government has set up a research fund under the supervision of the Tertiary Education Commission to encourage fundamental academic research. Moreover, the Economic Development Board has an incentive scheme with many important benefits intended at nurturing effective diaspora relationships and opportunities for further development of the country, he added.

He further dwelled on the immense knowledge and experience which members of the diaspora have acquired in their countries of adoption adding that these represent invaluable potential resources for Mauritius.

Also present on the occasion, the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, Mr Nandcoomar Bodha, elaborated on the various advantages of diaspora which can help shape the modern Mauritius namely: new trade investment opportunities; increase capacity building with networking; and encourage transfer of skills, knowledge and technology.

Some 30 members of the Mauritian academic diaspora were present at the conference and the topics discussed were artificial intelligence and robotics, econometrics, ICT, medicine, nanotechnology, social sciences and humanities, law, marketing, education, and international relations.
Steering Committee of the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub

The second meeting of the Steering Committee of the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub was held in Mauritius on 20 February 2018. The objective of the Hub is to act as a coordination mechanism for requests relating to technical assistance and capacity building of Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries in accessing and managing climate finance.

The meeting reviewed the progress of the Hub, took note of the challenges being faced, provided guidance on the proposed work plan and devised an outreach strategy to further promote the Hub.

Mauritius and Switzerland sign MoU pertaining to Tourism and Hospitality

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd (PML) and HTMi (Hotel & Tourism Management Institute), Switzerland in the field of tourism and hospitality on 08 February 2018 at MITD House in Phoenix. The logo of PML was also unveiled on that occasion.

The signatories were Professor Theeshan Bahorun, chairperson of PML and Mr Ian Larmour, Managing Director, HTMi, Switzerland. The MoU will provide exchanges and a win-win situation for both PML and HTMi and also opens the door for working sessions at the Montagne Blanche Polytechnic campus.