Port Louis Harbour set to become the fastest growing sector of the ocean economy, says PM

Government is investing massively in the infrastructural development of the Port Louis Harbour into a preferred maritime hub which offers a spectrum of associated services in the Indian Ocean. The Port Louis Harbour is set to become the fastest growing sector of the ocean economy and will play a key role in the coming years.

The Prime Minister, Mr Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, made the statement at the opening of the Mauritius Maritime Week 2018 (MMW) on 24 January 2018 at the Ravenala Attitude Hotel in Balaclava.

The MMW is an international trade event, aiming at promoting transportation and logistics in the Indian Ocean.

Mr Jugnauth also underlined that the aim of the MMW is to promote the Port-Louis Harbour as an integrated platform for five main sectors namely, container transhipment, bunkering, cruise tourism, seafood and ancillary port services.
He also recalled that the quay extension project has enabled to position Mauritius as a full-fledged transhipment hub adding that major shipping lines have already expressed their interest to increase their container transhipment volumes.

Prime Minister Jugnauth further listed out major projects that are in the pipeline: the development of the Riche Terre Special Economic Zone, an Island Container Terminal at Mer Rouge and a Cruise Terminal building.

**MMW-related activities**

The MMW which was held from 22 to 26 January 2018, was organised by the Transport Events Management Limited of Malaysia in collaboration with the Mauritius Ports Authority.

The 12th Indian Ocean Ports and Logistics 2018 Conference and Exhibition also featured on the agenda. Some 35 International Conference Speakers discussed topical issues and challenges on global transportation and logistics. Around 300 delegates from both the African Union and the Indian Ocean region participated in the event.

The event also comprised some 30 International Exhibition Stands including leading shippers, cargo owners, importers/exporters, shipping lines, freight forwarders, logistics companies, ports, terminal operating companies, railway operators, port equipment and service suppliers from the Indian Ocean islands and countries from Africa, Europe, and Asia.

**Mauritius to ratify the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption**

Mauritius will ratify the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption.

The Convention aims at promoting and strengthening the development in Africa by each State Party, of mechanisms required to prevent, detect, punish and eradicate corruption and related offences in the public and private sectors.

The objectives of the Convention are also to coordinate and harmonise the policies and legislation between State Parties for the purposes of prevention, detection, punishment and eradication of corruption on the continent as well as establish the necessary conditions to foster transparency and accountability in the management of public affairs.

The Independent Commission Against Corruption would be designated as the national agency of Mauritius for the purpose of the Convention.
The ICT Strategy for the Education Sector, an integral part of the reform for the learning sector in Mauritius, was presented on 29 January 2018. The Strategy takes into account the pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary education sub-sectors and englobes four ICT areas of focus/clusters: Infrastructure and Connectivity; Enhanced Teaching/Learning and Pedagogical Content Development; Education Management; and, Capacity-building and Professional Development.

The Early Digital Learning Programme (EDLP) for Grades 1 and 2 has been developed under cluster one and is expected to promote an early culture of IT use and practice, as well as improve learning outcomes in ways appropriate to pupils’ developmental level, aims at aligning the integration of ICT into teaching and learning of pupils in the primary education sub-sector through the use of adapted tablets. These tablets contain digital pedagogical contents such as videos and e-books, interactive animations, hands-on activities, and drawing and creativity tools.

Moreover, the Ministry has already distributed 26 800 tablets and headsets across all primary schools, along with 250 wireless projectors and screens and 1 340 rack chargers.

As regards the secondary education sub-sector, the Student Support Programme (SSP), which is a web portal of free educational resources accessible from multiple platforms, is available to students of Grade 7. The SSP has been developed by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius, Mauritius Institute of Education, Mahatma Gandhi Institute and the National Council of Education Research and Training of India. The objective is to support students, through additional tutoring, in their quest to achieve academic and personal success irrespective of their economic and social backgrounds, and inculcate a culture of autonomous learning among them. Materials for Grades 8 and 9 will be available in 2019 and 2020 respectively.

With regards to primary education, cluster two includes the teaching of ICT as a non-core subject with two periods weekly. Pupils in Grades 5 and 6 will undergo school-based assessments in view of the Primary School Achievement Certificate in 2018. Higher Education Institutions initiatives pertaining to Cluster two comprise the elaboration of a National Open Education Resources Policy with the support of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL).

Under Cluster three, an Education Management Information System will be developed and will include the creation of an e-Timetable Software and a Document Management System. The Document Management System will be implemented as a Pilot project in the Tertiary Education and Scientific Research Division. For the Tertiary Education Sector, an integrated Campus Management System will be implemented for an increased collaboration within and outside of the University and for an efficient administrative set-up.

The fourth Cluster, Capacity-building and Professional Development, englobes the training of staff (Academics, Educators and administrative staff), and enlistment of the support of key stakeholders and linkages: Microsoft, Oracle, EDCIL, NCERT, World Bank, COL, MBC and UNESCO.
International Customs Day 2018: MRA launches Corporate Plan 2018-2020

The Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) Corporate Plan 2018-2020 which elaborates its strategic initiatives was launched on 26 January 2018 at the Custom House, Mer Rouge by the Prime Minister, Mr Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, to mark the International Customs Day 2018.

In his address, the Prime Minister spoke of the importance of the Corporate Plan and elaborated on the strategic initiatives and projects over a three year period projects to be undertaken by the MRA. He underlined that it is only by charting the road ahead that the Customs can meet the ever growing aspirations of stakeholders. On this score, he encouraged different parastatal bodies to adopt the three year strategies plan to meet to their objectives in time.

Mr Jugnauth commended the crucial role of Custom officials and agencies in maintaining border security and focused on the working conditions and challenges that Customs officers face in their jobs. He reiterated that the fight against drug trafficking and smuggling is a perpetual one and that is why Government has invested massively in the latest-of-the art technology and equipment to reinforce the Customs’ capacity and ability. The use of drones to reinforce security of the country’s borders by Customs is one among the various projects which have been earmarked, he added.

Focusing on the slogan chosen for 2018: A secure business environment for economic development, he highlighted that the theme is in line with Government’s vision for economic development where high and sustained economic growth rates should be achieved to ensure that every citizen reap the benefits of economic prosperity.

The setting of a National Drug Council and the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission of Enquiry on drugs, the Prime Minister highlighted will bear testimony to the country’s “zero tolerance” strategy on drug trafficking. He recalled that the MRA has re-engineered its business process by applying modern techniques and that in the years to come it will become more efficient and effective by ensuring that clearance of goods are conducted in the most seamless way without compromising on security and infringement of laws.
Health: Hexavalent Vaccine launched to protect children against preventable diseases

The Hexavalent vaccine, which provides immunity against six important preventable childhood diseases, was launched on 9 January 2018 at Dr Mahmoodkhan Hyderkhan Mediclinic in Plaine Verte. The Vaccine has been introduced in the National Expanded Programme of Immunisation, and will be done with a single injection at each visit.

The Hexavalent Vaccine reduces the number of injections needed by ensuring protection against more diseases with fewer injections, injected separately. A dose of the Hexavalent Vaccine costs around Rs 3 000. The six-in-one vaccine against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), poliomyelitis, Haemophilus influenza type B and hepatitis B will be administered to babies in a 6-, 10-, 14-week schedule along with the pneumococcal vaccine.

The Ministry of Health and Quality of Life is carrying out continuous awareness campaigns for pregnant women and mothers, and vaccines free of charge in line to promote vaccination coverage in Mauritius.

The population can also benefit from the Influenza Vaccination during the upcoming campaign in March and April. The key projects outlined in the health sector for 2018 are namely, the coming into operation of the first intensive care unit for children and the inauguration of a neonatal intensive care unit at Dr Abdool Gaffoor Jeetoo Hospital; ongoing training for nurses and doctors; and the opening of a health centre in St François in Port Louis.
Allocation of floating cages to maximise fish harvest

Some 10 floating cages were allocated to various Fishermen Cooperative Societies across the island with a view to maximise the amount of fish production. Consequently, the first harvest of fish was held on 23 January 2018 at the Fisheries Post Grande Rivière South East and was carried out from the floating cage of Quartier Ville Noire Gill Net Cooperative Society Ltd. The fish production was estimated at around 1.5 tons.

The floating cages, each with a diameter of 12 meters, were installed at Bambous Virieux, Grande Rivière Sud Est, Quatre Soeurs, Grand Gaube and Poudre D’Or. Some 20 000 fish juveniles may be stocked in each cage and may yield some 10 tons of fish per cage. Presently, the cages are stocked with some 40 000 of fish juveniles.

This initiative is part of Government’s policy to promote the sustainable development and management of aquaculture following a decrease in fish production. These floating cages help to ensure sufficient fish production for the consumption of the local population and also decrease the impending risks faced by fishermen at sea.

The cooperative societies were also provided with technical support regarding the implementation of the Small Scale Floating Cage Project. The fishes in the floating cages are mainly fed with macro algae and fish feed supplements. Underwater ecological surveys conducted at the floating cages sites, so far, have showed no impact on the marine ecosystem in terms of pollution, overgrowth of macro algae, both in the sea bottom and water column.

Mauritius receives Rs 350 million from ADFD and IRENA for Solar PV Projects

The leading national entity for development aid, the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD), and the global platform for international cooperation on renewable energy, the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), have granted Mauritius a concessional loan of Rs 350 million (USD 10 million) for solar PV projects. The announcement was made on 13 January 2018 at the Eighth Session of the IRENA Assembly held in Abu Dhabi in the United Arabs Emirates.

The Solar PV projects have the potential to significantly transform the lives of Mauritians by providing energy at an affordable cost to low-income communities. The ADFD loan will help the Central Electricity Board install solar PV systems on rooftops of some 10 000 households as well as contribute to the national target of achieving 35% of renewable electricity in the energy mix by 2025. It is estimated that as part of Government’s efforts to alleviate poverty, around 35 000 low income communities will benefit from low cost electricity bills.

Moreover, the Solar PV projects will bring 10 megawatts (MW) of new renewable energy capacity online, resulting in savings of over USD 35 million in fossil fuel imports over the project lifetime and improvements in the energy security of the country. The renewable energy will have a positive impact on the whole sustainable development spectrum by improving health and education outcomes, providing better livelihoods and working conditions, and also decrease air pollution.
Mauritius and Seychelles agreed to the conduct of a geotechnical study in the extended continental shelf management area.

Mauritius-Seychelles Joint Commission signed an agreement on the Extended Continental Shelf and Spectrum ASA on 11 January 2018 at the Treasury Building in Port Louis. The main objective of the agreement is to conduct a geotechnical study in the extended continental shelf management area of the Mascarene region, as part of the joint jurisdiction between Mauritius and Seychelles for an additional area of 396,000 km² on the Mascarene Plateau.

The agreement will allow both Mauritius and Seychelles to work as partners to unlock the shared economic potential of the Extended Continental Shelf and its ocean resources. An institutional framework has also been set up with regard to the joint management of the extended Mauritius-Seychelles continental shelf.


This area lies beyond the boundaries of the two countries’ exclusive economic zones and opens the door to new opportunities for cooperation between the two countries, especially in terms of seabed resources with oil and gas, mineral deposits and living marine organisms. Two treaties pertaining to the joint exercise of sovereign rights by Mauritius and Seychelles on the continental shelf and the management of the seabed were signed back in 2012.

To elevate this cooperation to a higher level, the Joint Commission had issued a call for tenders for an exploratory study in the area in order to understand and explore the area for its potential for oil and gas. The two-year study will comprise detailed sea-band imagery and provide high quality seismic data to better understand the geology of the area. These data will eventually be of interest to oil and gas companies.
The third round of discussions on the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA) between India and Mauritius was held in Mauritius from 22-24 January 2018 at Le Méridien Hotel, in Pointe aux Piments. The last two rounds were held in Mauritius in September 2016 and in New Delhi in September 2017.

The Indian delegation comprised officials from the Indian Department of Commerce, the Department of Revenue, and the Indian Research and Information System while the Mauritian delegation was led by the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Mrs U. C. Dwarka Canabady, and comprised the Director, Trade Policy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Mr N. Boodhoo, as well as representatives from both the public and private sectors.

Discussions centred on taking cooperation forward on four pillars of the CECPA that is, trade in Goods, Trade in Services, Investment and Economic Cooperation. The discussions covered the areas of further liberalisation of tariff lines, rules of origin and priority areas for cooperation in the services sector. Moreover, the prospect of using Mauritius as a hub for Indian companies to reach out to the African continent and of enhancing economic cooperation was at the core of discussions.

The CECPA is expected to open opportunities for producers in Mauritius to trade in India and will thus promote liberal trade relations between both countries.

The finalisation of a Joint Study Report will enable both countries to set the basis and the parameters for negotiations regarding trade in goods and trade in services to take place. Indeed, the conclusion of the CECPA will move the commercial relations between both countries to a higher level and provide a platform to address any barriers in trade.

The next meeting is expected to be held in March 2018 in New Delhi, India.
Education Ministry to implement Student Support Programme

The Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research has developed a Student Support Programme that would provide additional, after-school-hours academic support, through the use of digital technology, to students of Grade 7, as from this year.

The programme aims at providing students access to an online platform of digital contents which can be accessed at any location and from various digital devices. The objective of the Student Support Programme are to support students through additional tutoring, in their quest to achieve academic and personal success irrespective of their economic and social backgrounds. It also aims at giving students the opportunity to have access to the best learning materials without any cost.

National Road Safety Campaign

A National Road Safety Campaign was organised in collaboration with the various stakeholders from 22 to 28 January 2018.

The theme of the Campaign was “Ensam Pa Laisse Koltar Touy Nou Fami”. The Campaign was officially launched on 17 January 2018 with a Wheel Chair Rally of physically handicapped victims of road accidents.

Workshop on New Plant Breeding Methods for Sustainable Use of Genetic Resources and Security of Food Production

A Workshop on New Plant Breeding Methods for Sustainable Use of Genetic Resources and Security of Food Production was organised by the University of Mauritius, in collaboration with the University of Western Australia, from 29 to 31 January 2018.

The objectives of the workshop were to review the existing plant breeding methodologies and evaluate new ones and identify barriers to the successful adoption of the new plant breeding methodologies.

The workshop also served as a platform to facilitate capacity building of local and regional scientists and research students in quantitative genetics and breeding. Participants from the United Kingdom, Australia, Kenya, Uganda and Mauritius attended the workshop.
Implementation of four new schemes for SMEs

Four new schemes for SMEs, in line with the Key Actions recommended in the 10-Year Master Plan for the SME Sector have been implemented since January 2018.

The schemes aim at providing financial assistance to SMEs with the objective to encouraging and motivating them to use barcodes for their products as well as encouraging leading SMEs, through a SME Partnership Programme, to integrate other Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises into their supply and value chain.

Moreover, the new schemes aim at strengthening the start-ups by providing management, technical and other support through a SME Mentoring Programme and providing assistance to SMEs in developing and implementing the various tools and means for online presence and marketing through a SME Grant for Web Design and Development.

Mauritius and China to cooperate in the fields of MSMES

The Ministry of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives will sign a Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation with the State Administration for Industry and Commerce of the People’s Republic of China in the fields of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and Cooperatives Development.

The Memorandum of Understanding would establish a general framework for bilateral relations and provide for cooperation in the following main areas:

- capacity building for developing policy and institutional framework through exchange of experts for the development of MSMEs and Cooperatives;
- exploring the possibility of holding joint workshops and conferences on issues of mutual interest and best practices in the fields of MSME and Cooperatives Development; and
- training of entrepreneurs in various fields such as crafts or handicrafts.