

**ADDRESS BY HON D GOKHOOL
MINISTER OF INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND
RESEARCH**

**Launching of the Basic Jewellery
Design Using Cad**

**Tuesday 16 June 2009
at 16 00 hrs**

IVTB Lecture Theatre, Phoenix

Mr S. Ragen, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Industry, Science and Research

Mrs Sadhna Sokhal, Chairperson of the Jewellery Advisory Council

Participants

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good afternoon to you all.

It gives me great pleasure to be among you this afternoon for the launching of this training course on 'Basic Jewellery Design using Computer-aided Software'. I would like to commend the initiative of the IVTB which has collaborated with the Jewellery Advisory Council in organising this course. I would also like to thank the twelve participants who have availed themselves of this training opportunity provided by Government.

The training course in Computer Aided Design (CAD) is the second one being financed under MASMED Fund. The first one was in diamond setting. I am given to understand that this training course consists of two components: the first one which is to be launched today is a basic course conducted by local trainers, and the second one scheduled for September 2009 will be the advanced component which will be conducted by Mr Mark Watkins of the Birmingham Institute

of Art and Design. The objectives of the present course are to impart knowledge in computer-aided designing, hand-on experience on the use of computer to design jewellery pieces and develop creativity. Undoubtedly, this course will assist participants to acquire skills in design and create new innovative jewellery with the use of CAD software. Hence, it is expected that the level of quality and variety in design of jewellery will be enhanced.

Jewellery Sector

As you may be aware, jewellery and processed diamonds is the third most important export product-group, after textile and clothing and fish and fish products. The jewellery and diamond sector comprises around 340 domestic oriented establishments and 42 export oriented enterprises of which 12 are engaged in the processing of diamonds. Employment in the sector is estimated at around 3,500 of which the export oriented firms account for some 1,760 employees. Exports stood at Rs 2.1 billion last year. Unfortunately the financial and economic crisis has impacted negatively on exports as provisional data available indicate a drop in exports.

The production of jewellery is an old activity, where Mauritians have used their traditional skills, craftsmanship and dexterity to transform precious metals, in particular gold, into ornaments. However, Mauritian ingenuity has not been fully utilised to develop a strong export oriented industry or even to sell to the growing number of

tourists visiting the country. Most of our local enterprises are small and still inward-oriented, mainly producing for the domestic market. They are not adequately equipped in terms of equipment, know how, design capability, marketing and managerial skills to face a more competitive environment. We will assist those which are willing and capable to upgrade their production set-up and produce high quality jewellery. Indeed, most of the actions relating to training, development of export capability, and providing marketing infrastructure aims at assisting the enterprises to cope with the evolving business environment. As the operators are in a better position to know their needs, they should work together with the IVTB and other support institutions to organise more such training programmes.

Capacity Building

The acquisition of knowledge, skills and competencies, obviously through training, is critical to improve performance of our jewellery enterprises, upgrade the quality of their products and manufacture new and innovative products. Today enterprises, which ignore the importance of training, run the risk of losing their survival advantages. It is only training in new concepts, techniques and methodologies which can bring about the fundamental changes required to confront the new business environment. As we move further towards a more liberal trading environment, the traditional way of producing goods and services and doing business has to

change. We simply cannot apply old solutions to new problems of the day.

It may be pointed out that longstanding trade preferences, by providing ease of access to markets, created an environment that was not conducive to stimulate innovation, encourage efficiency and produce competitive products. To adapt to a new era characterised by a fiercely competitive environment, two key success factors are customer focus and product innovation. While customer focus entails identifying your customer and his needs and delighting him with your products and services, product innovation means producing goods and services that incorporate creativity, new designs and satisfy new needs. Basically, it would mean something different from the run-of-the-mills goods that one often sees. It is only through rigorous training that one can acquire skills to be more focused on the customer and to produce innovative products. The training being organised will no doubt contribute to address one of the key success of factors that is to produce new and innovative products.

Support Measures

The sector has received considerable fiscal and institutional support since the mid 1980's in terms of exemption of duty of production equipment and raw materials, the enactment of the Jewellery Act, the establishment of the School of Jewellery, the Jewellery Council and the Assay Office. Despite these measures, the development of the

sector has not met expectations in terms of investment, employment and creativity.

The New Jewellery Act introduced in 2007 provides a new framework for the development of the sector. More specifically, it aims at enhancing the credibility of the jewellery produced in Mauritius, provides for the control of silver and platinum jewellery and verification and grading of precious and semi precious stones. This Jewellery Act also aims at improving and expanding the services of the Assay Office. In March this year a Gemmology Laboratory has been set up to provide the jewellery sector and the public with an independent objective opinion regarding the authenticity and quality of the precious and semi-precious stones, thus ensuring public trust and confidence.

As the jewellery sector has been undergoing major challenges, a survey was conducted in November/December 2008 to assess the needs of the sector in view of preparing our action plan. The main findings of the survey relate to lack of expertise in design, stone setting, casting and inadequate training offered by IVTB. The Ministry has made proposals and is working jointly with IVTB and the HRDC to address these issues. Hence a number of measures have been formulated to support both the local and export-oriented jewellery, namely (i) re-organising the School of Jewellery through hiring an expatriate as project manager, train trainers, carrying out

short training courses for jewellers and setting up a monitoring mechanism to adjust training courses at regular intervals, (ii) organising local jewellery fairs; (iii) setting up a jewellery village; and (iv) in-plant interventions whereby EM will assist jewellery units to upgrade their production and export capability.

The development of capabilities in design among Mauritian trainers should be fostered to create a pool of talents who could help the industry to have a competitive edge. With regard to apprenticeship, it would appear that jewellers are not keen to take them on as the performance of the School of Jewellery is not well rated. So once the School of Jewellery is overhauled, we expect that the issue of apprenticeship will take a different outlook.

Enterprise Mauritius will shortly mount a local fair at Grand Bay before the end of the year. This fair will act as a show case to tourists and Mauritians and I sincerely hope that the local manufacturers will take the challenge of displaying their know-how and creativity. The Fashion and Design Institute (FDI) which will be operational soon will be an organisation fully dedicated to the development of creativity and design in Mauritius. Since the production of jewellery is underpinned by creativity and design, the FDI will play a critical role to boost the jewellery sector.

We at the Ministry are conscious that in the present context of the economic downturn, jewellery as a luxury item is not a priority for the consumer. The sector is presently going through a difficult phase and we sincerely hope that operators will seize this opportunity to take stock of the situation and adapt to the new environment. It is often said that the time for upgrading is during an economic downturn rather than during a time of prosperity.

Jewellery Village

Following the request from jewellery association and manufacturers to be housed under one roof to be able to offer a larger variety of jewellery to tourists, it was decided to set up a Jewellery Village. The Ministry of Industry has acted as a facilitator in locating a plot of land of 3A41 situated near the market fair in Rose Belle. A number of jewellers have expressed interest in the project which is being conceptualised with other stakeholders. The project, I am convince, will form part of a modern marketing infrastructure to support the jewellers to boost their sales

Ladies and Gentlemen

Jewellery manufacturing is probably one of the most creative industries one can come across. This, therefore, provides enormous opportunities to experiment, innovate and come up with creative design and new products. It is evident that jewellers who can master creativity can expand their business. The jewellery associations

should focus on developing the capability of its members in innovation and creativity. And Government is committed to provide the necessary assistance.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have now the pleasure to launch this training course which will be followed in due time by several other courses.

Thank You.