

MESSAGE OF DR. THE HON R. JEETAH, MINISTER OF INDUSTRY, SMALL & MEDIUM ENTERPRISES, COMMERCE & COOPERATIVES



I am pleased to be associated with the launching of this newsletter. In any democratic state, information about government's activities is of crucial importance to all citizens. It gives an overview of the working of government and is an indicator of good governance. Keeping in mind the need to empower people through better access to information, my Ministry has taken the initiative to issue a monthly newsletter which will undoubtedly provide valuable information regarding achievements and latest happenings to various segments of society and, by extension, raise awareness to the different services being provided. I am sure the newsletter will be an effective medium of sharing information and people will be able to better understand, appreciate and take advantage of the policies of this Ministry.

COMMERCE DIVISION NOW ISO CERTIFIED

The Commerce Division has now been ISO certified with effect from September 2007 and the certificate is valid for a period of three years. The implementation exercise was under the guidance of the Mauritius Standards Bureau (MSB) which provided the framework for implementing procedures and processes in conformity with the ISO principles. ISO Certificate provides for adherence to a set of documented procedures in the delivery of services. The new system is expected to improve service delivery. The Industry and Small & Medium Enterprises Division is the first Ministry to be ISO certified. Today, the Legal Metrology Services (LMS), the State Trading Corporation (STC) and the Assay Office of this Ministry have also been ISO certified. The remaining division, namely the Cooperatives Division, is presently in the process of implementing ISO principles and will hopefully be ISO Certified after successful implementation.

BUSINESS PLAN COMPETITION 2008

Promoting innovative business ideas among creative entrepreneurs

The Ministry of Industry, SME's, Commerce & Cooperatives is planning to organise a Business Plan Competition of students of form VI, university students and students of the vocational and technical schools.

Contrary to other countries, Mauritius is not endowed with natural resources. It is widely recognized that the country will therefore need to rely on its skilled human resources and enterprising people to meet the challenges of a global market and continue on its new growth trajectory. To this end we need to stimulate the entrepreneurial culture of our people to identify and conceive new growth poles to sustain the economic development process. The present award is designed to encourage first generation potential entrepreneurs in their thinking process and recognize their effort in contributing to the national economic development objectives.

Business ideas in various sectors namely manufacturing, agro base, light engineering, printing, health-care/medical, or services will be considered. Entries for the award will have to be submitted in the form of a well presented Business Plan. The applicant will be free to present a personalized format in preparing his business plan but it should contain a detailed input/output matrix highlighting the key aspects of the proposed project namely the economic, technical, commercial and financial aspects. Special consideration will be given to the originality of the proposals.

The terms & conditions of the competition will be announced shortly.



Business Focus

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MAURITAS

MAURITAS has been established with the objective of providing a national unified service for accreditation to all testing and calibration laboratories, certification bodies and inspection bodies. MAURITAS is the sole national authority for granting accreditation to conformity assessment bodies i.e laboratory certification bodies and inspection bodies. Accreditation will enable test/calibration reports and certificates to be accepted internationally and this will help in eliminating technical barriers to trade.

MAURITAS is an Associate Member of the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) which is the international body of cooperation in laboratory accreditation. MAURITAS is also a member of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) which is the international body for accreditation of certification bodies.

The mission of MAURITAS is to provide a national, impartial and transparent mechanism for the accreditation of laboratories, certification and inspection bodies and to achieve international recognition by being signatory to International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation and International Accreditation Forum Mutual Recognition Arrangements (ILAC & IAF MRAS).

By establishing a national accreditation body, Mauritius will be in a position to improve its competitiveness in market access. It will be able to demonstrate that its manufactured goods are in conformity with international standards as these products need to comply with quality specifications and health and safety regulations. In addition, Mauritius is now moving towards an economy based on multiple sectors ex. Sea-food, Information Technology, Land-Based Oceanic Industry. The new products and their sources will need to be compliant with international standards to be competitive on the market.

BREAKTHROUGH IN COOPERATIVES: 192 NEW SOCIETIES REGISTERED

The Cooperative movement is presently witnessing a revival. Over the last two years, 192 co-operative societies have been registered among which there are 79 women co-operative societies. Moreover, in 2007 over 65 co-operative societies have embarked on computerization projects with a grant of Rs 20,000 each from the Ministry. To stimulate honey production, 20 co-operative societies, grouping 200 persons, have each been provided free of charge 5 beehives and bee colonies. Additionally, 10 other cooperators engaged in agriculture and agro processing have benefited from a total of Rs 200,000 for the purchase of light equipment involved in their respective business activities. To kick start their activities 40 women co-operative societies have been granted a total of Rs 400,000, whereas some 15 cowbreeders have been assisted to upgrade their cowsheds and acquired new milking machines for a total sum of Rs 600,000.

2007: AN EXCELLENT YEAR FOR MSB

The Mauritius Standards Bureau is the national standards body responsible for the development of standards, testing of products for conformity assessment, calibration of measuring equipment and certification services (ISO 9001, HACCP, ISO 22000, ISO 27001).

The bureau had an excellent year 2007 where most of its objectives were achieved successfully. For example, it tested 31 651 samples in 2007 compared to 20 677 samples for the year 2006.

It has issued its first certificate of registration for MS ISO 27001: 2005 (Information Security Management System Certification) to the Passport and Immigration Office.

The bureau also reviewed its Vision and Mission Statements and core values. In addition, a strategic plan (2008-2012) was prepared.





THE PERFORMANCE OF THE EXPORT ORIENTED ENTERPRISES SECTOR IN 2007

The Export Oriented Enterprises Sector (formerly EPZ) has made a marked turnaround since 2006 after four consecutive years of negative growth, starting in 2002. Export, after contracting since 2002, picked up in 2006 and reached a record level last year. Growth has been positive during the last two years. The declining trend in employment since 2000 has been reversed in 2007 and it is estimated that employment has increased by around 3,000 at the end of December 2007.

The sector is estimated to have grown by 8% in 2007 after posting a growth of 4.6% in 2006. The positive growth trends belie the fears expressed in many quarters on the future of the sector. There are indications that this growth momentum will be maintained in 2008.

Exports, after reaching Rs 33.7 billion in 2001, had declined annually to reach Rs 29 billion in 2005. Exports picked up in 2006 and stood at Rs 33.7 billion. Data available indicates that direct exports had reached Rs 28 billion for the period January to September 2007. On this export trends, direct exports is estimated at Rs 39 billion in 2007. This would indicate an increase of 15.8% over 2006. Output of the sector comprising direct exports, exports through the free port and domestic sales is estimated to have reached a record level of Rs 43 billion in 2007.

The EU remains our main market with a share of around 77% of our exports. During the period January to September 2007 exports to the EU increased by 17.2% compared to the corresponding period of 2006. Within the EU exports to the U.K. increased by 22%, to Italy by 48% and to Germany by 77%. In contrast, exports to the US, which accounts for 12% of our exports, increased by 3.6%. Almost all the products recorded increase in exports with textile and clothing by 19%, fish and fish preparations by 16% and jewellery and processed diamonds by 7%.

Investment

2007 saw further consolidation of the textile and clothing sector. While some enterprises embarked on vertical integration, others expanded their operations and upgraded their production structures. A survey had revealed that around RS 5 billion was pledged in 2007 as investment in the sector.

Another survey made at the beginning of this year indicates that enterprises plan to invest around Rs 3 billion this year. Such investment demonstrates the high level of business confidence in the sector.

Prospects for 2008

In 2008 further consolidation of the textile and clothing sector will take place. A major spinning plant and fully integrated denim making enterprise are expected to be fully operational during the first quarter of this year. Information gathered indicates that a number of enterprises will continue to consolidate their operations, expand production and upgrade their production structures. Exports are also expected to be buoyant as order books of enterprises are full at present. On the basis of this information the total output of the sector is estimated to be in the region of Rs 50 billion in 2008 compared to Rs 43 billion in 2007.

SHORT FILM COMPETITION BY MFDC

As part of its programme to promote production of local films in Mauritius and in the context of the 40th Anniversary of the Independence of Mauritius, the Mauritius Film Development Corporation in collaboration with the Ministry of Arts and Culture has launched a short film competition on 19 December 2007. The theme is "Nou Pei, Nou Fierté". Out of 50 entries, 10 best scripts have been selected.





FASHION AND DESIGN INSTITUTE

The Ministry of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce & Cooperatives and the Ministry of Education & Human Resources are working towards the integration of existing institutions, namely the IVTB School of Design, the Textile Department of the University of Mauritius and the Textile and Apparel Development Centre (TADC), into a single institution. The Fashion and Design Institute will promote Fashion and Design through activities such as training, consultancy services, research, entrepreneurship development and fashion intelligence dissemination.

The Institute will assist enterprises to migrate towards the higher end of the market with a view to successfully confront competition. On the long term, the Institute can help develop Mauritius as a regional hub for Fashion and Design. Development of talents and expertise in the area of Fashion and Design can lead to highly rewarding and exciting careers and pave the way for development of a new class of highly flexible enterprises where innovative and creative designs and high fashion products are geared for the upper segments of the global market.

The setting up of the Institute is a bold step forward in our industrialization drive where the human capital takes a place of pride in developing a new industry of creativity. The setting up of the Institute will be a milestone in the industrialization process so that the higher aspirations of many of our youths can be met and the new vibrancy gained in the industrial sector can be stepped up to still new heights.

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ASSAYING OF JEWELLERY

The Assay Office established in 1993 is the body responsible for assaying of jewellery in Mauritius. Assaying of jewellery plays a vital role in safeguarding the interests of the consumer and enhancing consumer confidence in both local jewellery and imported jewellery. Assaying, therefore, entails hall-marking jewellery to indicate their gold content according to the requirements of the law and name of the manufacturers/dealers for the sake of traceability.

475 jewellers are registered with the Controller of Assay. From 2000 to 2007, the Assay Office has made more than 1700 inspection visits on the business premises of jewellers and carried out more than 12,000 tests for jewellers, Customs Department, Police Department and members of the public.

Assay Office provides the following services:

- Assaying of gold alloys and gold jewellery for the jewellers and the public
- Registration of jewellers
- Registration of sponsor's marks and identification marks.
- Carrying out inspection visits to ensure compliance with the Jewellery Act 1999
- Operating a documentation centre which provides a wide selection of periodicals, magazines and other relevant literature on jewellery to the business community
- Help jewellers upgrade the quality of their jewellery
- Investigation of complaints from public

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