



National Day Celebrations 2008

40th Anniversary of Independence and
16th Anniversary of Republic

- RED** the struggle for freedom and Independence
- BLUE** the Indian Ocean in the middle of which Mauritius is situated
- YELLOW** the light of Independence shining over the Island
- GREEN** the Agriculture of Mauritius and its colour throughout the year

National Flag Campaign

A flag is of great significance in terms of symbolism and patriotism in the life of a nation. The national flag is the symbol of the motherland that we must cherish and respect all the time. The Mauritian Quadricolour was hoisted for the first time at Champ de Mars on 12 March 1968. The Union Jack was then lowered.

Wherever the national flag is flown, it should occupy the position of honour and be distinctly placed.

Mauritians, feel proud to float the national flag on your house, car, motorcycle or bicycle from 7 to 12 March 2008!



Flag on buildings



Flag on bicycles and motorcycles



Flag on vehicles

National Anthem

MOTHERLAND

*Glory to thee
Motherland, O Motherland of mine
Sweet is thy beauty
Sweet is thy fragrance
Around thee we gather
As one people
As one nation
In peace, justice and liberty
Beloved country may God bless thee
For ever and ever*



Coat of Arms Star and Key of the Indian Ocean

The Coat of Arms portrayed above was granted to Mauritius by letters patent of King Edward VII at St. James on 25 August 1906. The shield is quartered: in the first there is an ancient galley in gold on a blue field, in the second three palm-trees on gold, in the third a red key on gold and in the fourth a reversed pile and five-pointed star in white on blue.

The Sugar Cane representing the island's staple crop is supported by the Dodo and the Sambar Deer which are typically Mauritian. On a scroll beneath is the motto "Stella Clavisque Maris Indici" which freely translated means 'the sign is a star and the key of the sea'. This proud motto evokes the Island's heroic past: "Star and Key of the Indian Ocean".

Trochetia Boutoniana (Boucle d'Oreille) was declared the National Flower on the 12th March 1992, when Mauritius achieved the status of Republic. Named after the famous French botanist, Louis Bouton, it is endemic to Mauritius and is found in only one locality in the wild. It is a magnificent shrub reaching about 2-3 metres in height, with reddish- orange flowers. Adapted to dry condition, it commonly flowers from June to October.





The Dodo *Raphus cucullatus* is the most famous symbol of extinction, and as the national emblem, it has highlighted Mauritius on the world map as early as the 16th century. The Dodo was a flightless pigeon, which existed only on the island of Mauritius when the latter was discovered by Portuguese and Dutch sailors in the 16th century. However it became extinct within less than a century after its discovery. The

physical appearance of the Dodo is known only from 17th century Dutch paintings and one Indian miniature. Fossil material was unknown until 1865 when a railway engineer Higginson noticed labourers extracting bone materials at the Mare aux Songes. The bones were sent to Europe for identification and the study by Owen confirmed their attribution to the Dodo.

Apart from the Mare aux Songes remains, the Natural History Museum has a unique Dodo skeleton discovered in 1900 by the amateur naturalist Emile Thirioux in the Port Louis region. In 2005 and 2006, archaeological excavations at the Mare aux Songes site resulted in the discovery of about 4000 bony elements including the Dodo. These fossil remains were designated as national heritage. More recently in July 2007, a new Dodo skeleton was discovered in a lava tunnel cave in the south, suggesting that the Dodo was not restricted to the littoral region of the country but on higher lands as well.

Consequently, the Mauritius Museums Council has among its prime scientific and cultural objectives, the project of setting up a permanent Dodo Gallery at the Mauritius Institute, which will be exclusively dedicated to the World of the Dodo, a long overdue homage to this iconic bird of Mauritius.

The Dodo Gallery Project intends to highlight aspects surrounding the World of the Dodo: geology, natural history, evolutionary history, palaeontology and biodiversity through new exhibits such as mounted skeletons, paintings, dioramas, animatronics (moving models), multimedia displays, and educational set-ups all of which will contribute as attractions.