

GIS Newsletter

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PM: MID project belongs to whole nation

'The Maurice Ile Durable (MID) project belongs not to its conceptors or to Government but to the whole Mauritian nation. It is a social project and not just a renewable energy project. MID is essentially a vision that seeks to transform the environmental, economic and social landscape of the country'.

Such was the message conveyed by the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, in his address at the opening ceremony of a two-day workshop on Maurice Ile Durable on 1st December 2010 at Swami Vivekananda International Convention Centre, Pailles.

The MID project, the Prime Minister stressed, rests on five designated

pillars '5Es' namely, Education, Environment, Energy, Employment and Equity, and the Government will spare no effort to raise awareness among the population so that they adhere totally to the project.

The workshop was held at the initiative of the Prime Minister's Office and l'Agence Française de Développement (AFD). The objective



The Prime Minister: A strong message to the population

of the MID programme is to consolidate and further move Mauritius along a sustainable trajectory and into a green future. While initially the focus was on reducing the country's dependence on fossil fuels, increasing energy efficiency and mitigating climate change, the project now embraces concepts of becoming self sustaining and promoting sustainable development in other fields such as transport, waste management, agriculture, tourism and biodiversity.

In the context of the MID programme, the Maurice Ile Durable Fund was set up in June 2008 with a starting budget of Rs 1.3 billion to finance sustainable development projects. During the past three years, the Fund has focused its attention on renewable energy and energy efficiency programmes. It has funded a wind farm in Rodrigues, which is

operational since last September. By the end of next year, two wind farms will be operational in Mauritius, namely at Curepipe Point and at Plaine des Roches.

A new hydropower station is operational along Nicolière Canal and another one will be operational at Midlands by the end of next year. A landfill gas to energy project is being implemented at Mare Chicose. Government will contribute Rs 100 million, over a period of five years, to enable the CEB to buy electricity from the landfill gas plant.

It will be recalled that Mauritius has moved from 58th in 2008 to 6th in 2010 in the World Economic Forum Environmental Performance Index. The country ranks first in Sub Saharan Africa.

Protection of Children Preparation of the Consolidated Children's Bill

The preparation of the Consolidated Children's Bill, aiming to harmonise all laws pertaining to children issues in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), is underway.

A consultative workshop, the first of a series of ten, on the preparation of the Bill was organised by the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare on 18 November 2010 at La Cannelle, in Domaine Les Pailles. It grouped some 30 participants from different Ministries and departments, Non-Governmental Organisations, and the Attorney-General's Office.

The workshop aimed to provide a unique opportunity for all stake-

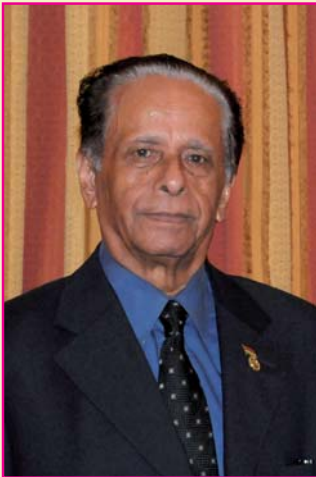
holders to work together to attain the common goals of development and the protection of the child. It also had as objective to kickstart consultations to stimulate dialogue, encourage collaboration and promote national research.

The Government has initiated several measures to amend existing legislations and to introduce new laws to comply with the CRC and translate its provisions into local laws. Twenty-three pieces of legislation pertaining to children that form part of Child Protection Act, the Criminal Code Act and the Criminal Code (Supplementary) Act have already been amended.





President's End of Year Message to the Nation



The election of Mrs Monique Ohsan Bellepeau as the first woman Vice-President of the Republic is a testimony that the Mauritian society has made considerable progress with regard to gender equality.

That was one of the themes highlighted by the President of the Republic, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, in his end of year message to the Nation on Christmas Day. The year 2010 has been full of events and the smooth general elections which were held is an example of the maturity of the population showing that democracy is alive in Mauritius, he said.

Sir Anerood also commended the participation and contribution of the population, which have helped the country to overcome the challenges lying in the wake of the global economic crisis. He expressed his confidence that Mauritius can rely on its youth to bring the country to new heights of economic development.

The President recalled that the youth are the country's most precious asset and that they should stay abreast of the developments taking place in the world. Government is making investments so as to bring tertiary education within the reach of every child and parents should ensure that their children take full advantage of all educational facilities available, he continued.

According to the President, in face of the challenges lying ahead as a result of climate change, Mauritius should invest more in renewable energy. He also made an appeal to big firms and hotels to produce energy from solar power. The President underlined the need for a clean and healthy environment.

Bilateral Co-operation

Regional Multi-disciplinary Centre of Excellence fully operational in Mauritius

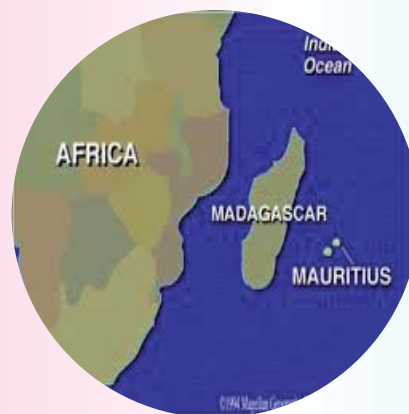
The Regional Multi-disciplinary Centre of Excellence (RMCE) will operate on a full-fledged basis with the setting up of its headquarters in Mauritius. To this effect a host agreement was signed on 8 December 2010 in Port Louis by the Government of Mauritius and the Regional Multi-disciplinary Centre of Excellence (RMCE). The agreement specifies the obligations of both Mauritius as the host country and the RMCE, a non-profit company registered under the Companies Act.

Development partners are providing financial assistance for the RMCE's operations. The European Union which is a long-standing supporter of Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) is making available a grant of € 5. 4 million to cover the major part of the activities of the RMCE over the next five years and is hiring consultants to help set up the institution. The African Development Bank (ADB) is providing for a grant to hire consultants to define and market programmes while the *Agence Française de Développement* (AFD) is offering technical assistance for mounting courses on public finance. Mauritius is providing Rs 12 million annually to meet office as well as local staff costs.

The RMCE, which is in line with the Government's objective to transform Mauritius into a knowledge hub, is governed by a board of directors comprising representatives of the three founding members, that is Mauritius, the Indian Ocean Commission and the COMESA, as well as other stakeholders.

It will serve as a platform to provide a regional response to identified common needs for capacity building in the Sub-Saharan African region in relation to designing, formulating and implementing economic development strategies and policies to transform the region into an effective Free Trade Area and eventually a common market.

It will be recalled that the idea of setting up the RMCE emanated from a proposal made in 2005 in Mauritius during the International Conference on Small Island Developing States. The RMCE started its operations in 2008. It has so far hosted six regional events with the support of COMESA, African Development Bank, the World Bank, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the AFD. By networking with various development partners, the RMCE will also serve as a vehicle for Governments of the region to build capacity in the public sector to allow for more peer to peer learning.



Mauritius and Italy Sign Protocol on Avoidance of Double Taxation



Protocol aims at amending existing convention

Mauritius and Italy signed, on 9 December 2010 in Port Louis, a Protocol to amend the Mauritius-Italy Convention for the Avoidance of Double Taxation with respect to taxes on income and prevention of fiscal evasion.

The existing Convention was signed in March 1990. The Protocol will review the exchange of information article contained in the Convention in order to align it with the updated Article 26 of the revised Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Model Convention. The amended Convention will further contribute to encourage

mutual trade and investment and reinforce the economic ties between the two countries.

As regards exchange of information and transparency, Mauritius has put in place the required legislation to implement the OECD proposed standards and has introduced new banking laws which provide the necessary mechanisms for sharing of banking information with public sector agencies, law enforcement agencies and foreign regulatory agencies. The powers of the Director General of the Mauritius Revenue Authority have also been enhanced so that relevant information can be

obtained from taxpayers for exchange with treaty partners.

Furthermore, Mauritius has actively participated in the various initiatives of the OECD in the domain of exchange of information and transparency. In addition to being among the first six non-OECD countries that formed part of the Global Forum Working Group set up to draft the Model Agreement on Exchange of Information on Tax Matters, Mauritius is part of the OECD Joint Ad Hoc Group on Accounts. During the year 2010, the country has also undergone the OECD combined phases I and II peer review on the effectiveness of the exchange of information mechanism and will endeavour to implement the recommendations made in the assessment report.

It will be recalled that to date Mauritius has concluded Double Taxation Avoidance Agreements which contain a section on exchange of information with thirty-six countries.

Mauritius Benefits from Rs 5.9 billion from the European Union

The European Union approved, on 22 November 2010, a new grant of € 139.6 million, an equivalent of approximately Rs 5.9 billion, financed under the accompanying measures for the sugar sector to support the ongoing economic reform programme in Mauritius for the period 2011-2013.

The grant which will be disbursed as general budget support under a new Multi-annual indicative programme, is the second envelope for countries benefitting from sugar accompanying measures. It follows a similar grant made to Mauritius for the period 2007 to 2010 which represents a substantial increase on an annual basis over the previous allocation and amounts to the largest share among all the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) former sugar protocol countries.

The grant will focus on four priority areas, namely restructuring of the sugar industry into a sugar cane cluster, Maurice Ile Durable initiative encompassing sustainable development and renewable energy, and socio-economic empowerment and education. As regards the sugar cane industry, emphasis will be laid on projects pertaining to the promotion of renewable energy, ethanol, reduction of cess, and the implementation of the Field Operations, Regrouping and Irrigation Programme.

Mauritius has been granted the second allocation in recognition of the progress achieved in the first phase of the accompanying measures for sugar protocol countries as regards its economic reform programme as well as the restructuring of the sugar sector into a sugar cane cluster.

It will be recalled that for the period 2006 to 2013, Mauritius has been allocated a financial assistance to the tune of Euro 281 million by the European Union. These funds combined with the 9th and 10th European Development Fund have been contributing towards supporting the country's economic reform programme.

Job Fair for Persons with Disabilities

Government has committed itself to include persons with disability in all aspects of development. In this context, a job fair on the placement and the employment of persons with disabilities was held on 30 November 2010 at the Freeport Operations at Mer Rouge. The objective was to provide an opportunity for employers and qualified persons with disabilities to meet on a common platform.

The job fair which drew the participation of around 51 enterprises and 79 qualified persons with disabilities, culminated with the employment of around 40 youths with disabilities in 27 companies. It was organised by the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment and the Mauritius Employers' Federation in the context of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities observed on 3 December.

The International Day aims at promoting a better understanding of disability issues with a focus on the rights of persons with disabilities and gains to be derived from the integration of persons with disabilities in every aspect of the political, social, economic and cultural life of communities. The theme chosen by the United Nations this year for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities was "Keeping the promise: Mainstreaming disability in the Millennium Development Goals towards 2015 and beyond".

Addressing the audience, the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions, Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun, underlined that training and education of the disabled persons remains one of the priorities at the level of the Ministry. She announced the setting up of appropriate public infrastructures with a view to facilitating access to disabled persons and encouraging them to pursue further education to the tertiary level.

The Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment, Mr Xavier-Luc Duval, also present for the occasion, urged employers to get rid of all prejudice against disabled persons and stated that there should be a change in policy on their part regarding recruitment.

ICT**Public Key Infrastructure for secure electronic transactions**

Mauritius now has the necessary tools to provide for safe, trusted and secure electronic transactions with the coming into operation of its Public Key Infrastructure (PKI). The launching ceremony was held on 6 December 2010 at the Swami Vivekananda International Convention Centre.

The PKI enables the use of a public and a private cryptographic key that ensures secure and private exchange of data and money over public networks such as the Internet. The adoption of the PKI reduces the risks of forgery, theft, or abuse of identification credentials. In this system, reliable third parties, known as Certifying Authorities (CA), issue a digital certificate. Through the digital certificate, the identity of an individual or organisation can be proven in any electronic transactions including email, e-commerce, groupware and electronic funds transfers.

The legal framework has been amended and updated for the PKI to be effective. Under the Information and Communication Technologies Act 2001, the Information and Communication Technologies Authority (ICTA) is the Controller of Certification Authorities (CCA) in Mauritius. The role of the CCA comprises the certification of technologies, infrastructure and practices of all the CA duly licensed, recognised, or approved to issue digital signature certificates to users. The Electronic Transactions Act was amended and the Electronic Transactions (Certification Authorities) Regulations 2010 came into effect on 1st December 2010 to provide for the licensing framework as well as the regulation of the CA activities in Mauritius.

The implementation of the PKI stems from the joint collaboration of India and Mauritius. It is to be recalled that in February 2009, ICTA signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Controller of Certifying Authority of India for the implementation of the PKI in Mauritius.



Electronic transactions will be more secure with PKI

Employment Statistics Employment Situation in Mauritius

The unemployment rate for the year 2010, according to forecasts of the Central Statistics Office, will edge up to 7.5%. From 9.6% in 2005, the downward trend is considered encouraging for the labour market in Mauritius especially with the euro zone crisis which is adversely affecting the local economy and the previous global economic and financial crisis.

The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment, Mr Shakeel Mohamed, revealed these figures on 9 December in Port Louis while commenting on the employment situation in Mauritius and the possibilities of employment existing in different sectors of the economy.

According to latest estimates, the total number of Mauritians in employment for 2010 is 531 100, that is 344 100 men and 187 000 women, compared to a total of 524 800 in 2009. Growth in employment figures has been mostly driven by women rather than men. Female employment increased on average by 5 200 annually from 2005 to 2010 while for males the average annual increase has been 2 900. Thus, the share of female

employment increased from 33 percent in 2005 to 35 percent in 2010.

The Minister highlighted that as at end November 2010, there were around 3 500 job seekers placed in several sectors. He added that in October 2010, 3 920 vacancies were notified to the Employment Information Centres. The highest number of vacancies was registered in the Construction and Manufacturing sectors with 1 189 and 1 027 vacancies respectively. Presently, there exists around 4 000 vacancies in various sectors.

In line with initiatives to raise awareness on the different job opportunities available on the labour market, a job fair was organised on 11 December 2010 at a first instance in Port Louis with a view to bringing together job seekers and job providers. Other such job fairs will follow across the island.

During the fair, both job seekers and employers had a first hand opportunity to know each other's expectations in the field of employment. Job seekers also obtained information on the skills and competencies required for specific jobs, the range of salary they can expect, the working conditions and the career prospects.



The job fair: A platform of opportunities for job seekers

Various ministries as well as government and private organisations and departments namely, the Human Resource Development Council, the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority, the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development, the National Empowerment Foundation, the Mauritius Maritime Training Academy and the National Women Entrepreneur Council participated in the job fair.

ICT**An information security week to mark Computer Security Day 2010**

The National Computer Board (NCB) and the Computer Emergency Response Team Mauritius (CERT-MU) organised a series of activities to mark Computer Security Day and to promote best practices in information security. Computer Security Day, an annual event, observed worldwide on 30 November, was initiated by the Computer Security Day Association in 1988 to help raise awareness about computer-related security issues.

This year, Computer Security Day proved to be the ideal platform for the NCB and CERT-MU to offer guidelines to business executives, senior management and information security professionals on information security. The activities aimed at enabling the participants to understand current and emerging information security threats that can impact on their business, to develop ways to identify if their organisation is adequately prepared to deal with disaster, to manage the challenge of regulatory compliance, policies and procedures, and to protect critical infrastructure through effective intrusion prevention strategies.

Moreover, a Cyber Security Conference organised by CERT-MU was held at the Cyber Tower, Ebène, on 30 November 2010. Presentations, which included both management and technical theory, focused on cyber security at national level and internet governance, information security risk

management for corporations and attacks and vulnerabilities.

Some 110 business executives, senior management and information security professionals were briefed on the latest developments in IT security theory and practice. They were also taught the skills to create their own robust IT Security practices and the means to fight IT security threats. Furthermore, an exhibition was held to showcase the latest computer security based products available on the local market.

Three training programmes related to computer security and conducted by Standardization, Testing and Quality Certification (STQC) of India were also scheduled in the context of Computer Security Day. These were a three-day training programme on Secure Software Development Practices, a five-day programme on Certified ISMS Implementers (CISP) and a five-day programme on ISO 27001 lead Auditor.



Mauritius and Australia Sign Tax Information Exchange Agreement

A Tax Information Exchange Agreement (TIEA) and an Additional Benefits Agreement (ABA) between Mauritius and Australia were signed on 8 December 2010 in Port Louis by the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Mr Pravind Jugnauth, and the High Commissioner of Australia in Mauritius, Mrs Catherine Johnstone.

Mauritius became Australia's 27th TIEA partner with the signing of this agreement which will further strengthen the commitment of both countries to improve the integrity of the international tax system. The TIEA will reinforce Australia's longstanding action towards the implementation of tax information exchange standards developed by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes which is currently chaired by Australia. Under the agreements, the Australian Taxation Office will also provide technical assistance and training to the Mauritius Revenue Authority.

At the signing ceremony, the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development stressed that Mauritius is looking forward to a full-fledged Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) with Australia and that the signing of the Additional Benefits Agreement and the TIEA is the first step towards the conclusion of a complete DTAA and an Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (IPPA) with Australia.

For the High Commissioner of Australia, the agreement is a significant achievement that demonstrates the commitment of both countries towards improving the integrity of the international tax system while enhancing the relationship between the two countries.

It will be recalled that Mauritius has always been active as regards information exchange and transparency and has participated in the various initiatives of the OECD in this domain. The country is among the first six non-OECD countries that form part of the Global Forum Working Group set up to draft the Model Agreement on Exchange of Information on Tax Matters.

Mauritius, which has so far signed thirty-six Double Taxation Avoidance Agreements carrying a section on exchange of information, is in the process of negotiating other Double Taxation Agreements which will include a section on effective exchange of information compliant with the requirements of the OECD. The country is also committed to developing a Tax Information Exchange Agreement with countries where there is no Double Taxation Agreement.

