

OPENING CEREMONY

Vandermeerch – Redit Link Road

Venue: Ebène Fly-over Bridge (Towards Rose Hill)

Date: 17 August, 2005

Time: 16.00 hours

My colleague, Sylvio TANG WAH HING, Minister of Youth & Sports

Parliamentary Private Secretaries (PPS)

Members of the National Assembly

Mr Ponnusamy, Chairman of Road Development Authority and Senior Chief Executive of my Ministry

Mr Duva Pentiah, Permanent Secretary, of my Ministry

Mr Moreea, Officer in Charge, Road Development Authority

Officers of my Ministry and Road Development Authority, Distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to be amongst you this afternoon for the Opening Ceremony of the Vandermeerch – Redit Link Road.

The main features of the link Road are the following:-

- Construction of about 450 metres of road in asphaltic concrete inclusive of footpaths and cycle track;
- Construction of a new super-structure and the strengthening of the existing masonry bridge;

- Provision of a cycle track from the bridge to the roundabout near Ebene SSS;
- Construction of a major roundabout at the junction with Vandermeersch street;
- Construction of footpaths and drainage structures;and
- Provision of street lighting

The overall cost is around Rupees 95 million.

The Link road will also provide direct access to 3000 acres of land at Ebene and belonging to State Land Development Corporation where a major development is being envisaged.

With the opening of the Vandermeersch-Ebene link, traffic flow will be smoother and the Rose Hill Town Centre will experience less traffic congestion.

At the same time this new route will relieve congestion at the Redit Roundabout for University or Eastbound traffic. The section of road through the University Campus presently essential in the morning peaks will be closed.

Traffic congestion on Port Louis-St Jean Road (A1) at Rose Hill and Belle Rose will also be relieved since part of the traffic coming from the upper Plaines Wilhems will be diverted via the Motorway (M1) at Trianon.

The new road network in this area which includes the Ebene-Trianon Link Road will service the Cyber City and which will service two Cyber Towers, a supermarket, Office Blocks, the site for the African court of Justice and associated commercial facilities, hotel. It will also provide a better access to the University and will generate other developments in the area.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Roads can be compared to the main arteries and veins of the body. Just as a body cannot exist without nerves and veins, a country cannot exist without a good road network.

As you may be aware, the transport system in Mauritius, as in any country, is very important, since its efficiency affects the quality of life of everyone. It influences access to education, jobs and social opportunities; it affects the price of goods and services; and it has a major impact on the environment, including safety, air pollution and noise.

Mauritius has an open economy, with Foreign trade playing a crucial role in the economic development of the country. The increasing volume of economic activities

dictate the need for Mauritius to have efficient transport links both internally and with the outside world.

The Road Development Authority is responsible for over 1000 km of classified roads. Very often it also takes under its responsibility non-classified roads. Every year the RDA is spending over about Rs500 million rupees on road works.

We are constantly improving our roads with a view to reducing traffic congestion, travel time improve road safety and providing better access to the different regions.

Mauritius has a road density which is among the highest in the region and I am told that our road system is among the best in this part of the world and we shall continue to invest massively in the maintenance, upgrading of existing road and the construction of new roads to facilitate investment and growth in areas so far neglected.

Phoenix – Beau Songes Link Road

Those who live in the region of Quatre Bornes and Palma know the difficulty of travelling during peak hours in these areas, and the traffic congestion has worsened during the last years. This situation can no longer be allowed to continue, tolerated especially when we realize that it is a sensitive region where there is one of the biggest regional Hospitals. It is proposed to construct a new road from Phoenix roundabout near Jumbo hypermarket, across Candos-Vacoas road and up to Palma roundabout. The length of the proposed road is about 6km.

The aim of the project is to remove traffic congestion at La Louise-Palma region and at the same time increase road safety by providing a bypass to the area. As a second phase it is envisaged to construct a grade separated junction with the motorway at Pont Fer.

This new Government will have to face with daunting challenges from all fronts. We are putting “People” at the centre of all development. It means that the Government will leave no stone unturned to improve the quality of life of the people and the general welfare of one and all and involve the population in the conception of our projects.

In line with the above, we need to invest heavily in the construction of roads, housing projects, hospitals, schools, sports complex and high technology agriculture and other vital infrastructure projects.

Just beside us is the Cybertower whose activities will continue to expand. This will contribute to fulfill the vision to transform the country into a Cyber island. It will help to create employment, consolidate the economy and take us to heights of developments.

Just putting huge buildings will not solve our problems. We need to boost up almost all the key sectors of our economy through proper institutions and capacity building

It is also important to mention that we are to-day living in a fast-changing environment, both internal and external and the frontiers of knowledge are being stretched beyond our imagination.

We have to face a lot of changes and challenges. Without imagination for the future, the new generation will face lot of hardships. This Government is sincerely committed to provide new hopes and horizons for the future generations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Another major portfolio of my Ministry is the Land Transport Sector. Despite the improvements made to the road infrastructure, the number of road accidents has been on the rise. I am greatly worried by the number of fatal accidents that are occurring on our roads.

I have always been concerned with the issue of road safety, both as a citizen of this country and a doctor and now as a Minister.

I am really aggrieved when I learn of fatal accidents on our roads almost every week. Roads normally facilitate the life of the people but without discipline the number of accidents will continue to increase and the death toll will also increase.

I have myself personally seen vehicles speeding up to 100-120 kmph on certain roads, where we have speed limits.

In Mauritius an average figure of 18,374 accidents are recorded every year out of which, an average of 150 people are killed.

As a result of economic growth, the number of registered vehicles in Mauritius is currently increasing at 5.0% annually attaining the figure of 291,605. Road traffic is therefore growing at a fast rate and the socio-economic development in our country is generally increasing pressure on our road capacity. There is a constant need for all of us to be conscious of road safety principles.

The causes of fatal road accidents have been attributed to speeding, careless and dangerous driving and driving under the influence of alcohol.

My Ministry is working on a package of measures including a vigorous road safety campaign to bring relief to the present situation.

Another important transport issue facing Mauritius is the chronic traffic congestion in the Port-Louis/Plaine Wilhems conurbation; which has already attained an almost saturation level. In some places congestion is so bad that traffic management measures will not be adequate to alleviate the problem.

Traffic congestion is a world-wide phenomenon and constitutes a major problem which causes a lot of hardship to the travelling public and it also results in significant economic wastage and losses.

A ministerial committee has been set up at the level of the ministry to address the problem of traffic congestion.

The following schemes are currently under study:

- Bus lane along St. Jean Road.
- Bus lane from Trianon to Port-Louis.
- Traffic management schemes for the South bound traffic at the northern entrance of Port-Louis.
- Use of the grade separated junction (Auto Pont) at Pailles for vehicles using the third lane to Port-Louis.
- La Louise Traffic Management Scheme.
- Synchronisation of traffic lights at the entrance of Port-Louis.

The project which we are inaugurating today will add to the overall development of the country and constitutes another milestone in our road development strategy. I express my sincere thanks to all the stakeholders involved in the realization of this project. Let us wish that effective and judicious use be made by road users and the public in general. On behalf of the Government, it is with a sense of great pride that I officially open the Vandermeersch – Redit Link Road.

Thank you for your attention.