

Speech of
Honourable Marie Cyril Eddy Boissézon
Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms
Launching of Mechanical Workshop
Monday 14 August 2017

➤ **Mr Appadoo, Commissioner of Prisons**

Mr Heeramun, Chief Prison Welfare Officer

➤ **Mrs N. Tiroumalechetty Deputy Permanent Secretary,
Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms**

➤ **Mr Coolen, Director of the Safety and Health Unit, Ministry
of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms**

Officers of the Prison Department and of my Ministry

Members of the Press

➤ **Ladies and Gentlemen**

Good Afternoon

It is a great privilege to address you this afternoon on the opening of the renovated Mechanical Workshop at the Mauritius Prison Department, Beau Bassin.

This workshop will I am sure be put to good use by all those using it. It has been the outcome of the work done by the Safety and Health Division of my Ministry.

It is worth mentioning that many a time recommendations proposed to various Ministries/Departments by Safety & Health Officers of the Occupational Safety & Health Division to facilitate compliance with provisions of the OSH Act 2005, was left unattended due to recommendations made not being considered a priority business for those Ministries and Departments.

However, my Ministry being a responsible employer, is committed to provide decent workplaces to public officers, The “Enhancement of

Work Environment Programme” is thus the result of this commitment so that we can assist Ministries and Departments, to move forward, by providing funds to enhance their workplaces.

There is no doubt, the EWEP, has widely been recognized over the years, for having greatly contributed in upgrading and modernizing the physical and structural layouts of several workplaces across the Civil Service and rendering the work environment more conducive for public officers.

Each year a sum of money is budgeted under the OSH Programme to fund safety and health related projects for Ministries/Departments and so far, **110.2M** has been released to fund 522 projects.

In line with the above, under the EWEP Programme, the Mechanical Workshop which was an old building built in 1962 has been able to be upgraded and renovated at the cost of Rs 642,631.04.

On 13th of July 2015, a Safety and Health Audit was conducted by Safety and Health Officers from my Ministry here, at this workshop and the following health and safety issues were identified:

- rusty iron sheets in Offices & Workshop giving rise to water leakage and accumulation of water;
- outdated electrical installation without safety device which may give rise to risk of electrocution;

- poor level of ventilation;
- defective filing cabinets, lockers and damaged chair.

Since this Workshop is manned by many Mauritius Prison Service (MPS) officers as it is where they conduct maintenance and the repairs of vehicles, we concluded that the building represented a serious risk to their safety and health.

Under the EWEP, we financed the acquisition of building materials needed for the renovation while the Mauritius Prison Service met the costs related to labour.

I have been informed inmates were employed in this task and so I warmly thank them for being of service to society.

In a time when the country is actively fighting against drugs in and out of our prisons, we need to encourage prisoners who are willing to contribute to society's progress.

In fact progress not only means providing this country with new infrastructure but also our capacity of renovating and upgrading the older ones. Some call it, renovation economics. This does have a pleasant effect on all, beginning with the employees, who I do hope are satisfied with what we have provided them with.

Safety and health in the workplace matters to this government. This is why we have invested in a project such as this one and will continue to do so. My Ministry also disbursed, under the fiscal year 2015/2016, Rs 453, 600 for the purchase of solar water heaters for the MPS.

The Prison department, under the EWEP, was also able to renovate

its messroom at Grand River Northwest Remand at the cost of Rs 97,926, the acquisition of 3 air conditioning units for Rs 84,180 and first aid boxes for Rs 8,400.

I would like to thank the Occupational Safety and Health Division of Ministry for the good work that they have been doing so far.

However, I call on them to play a more proactive role in the identification and elimination of safety hazards. We cannot afford to put the lives and health of our civil servants at risk in their workplaces. I will not tolerate any negligence in this matter as a Minister.

Since my arrival in office, I have had regular meetings with officers of this department to take stock of the challenges they face. And I must say that our bureaucracy and our system of overlapping institutions are making their recommendations hard to be acted upon.

Very often, heads of departments see safety and health as a minor issue and are reluctant to invest in meeting safety and health standards prescribed to them by law.

This must change.

Fires and floods will not give notice before hitting us.

At the beginning of the year, my Ministry released a Protocol on Torrential Rainfall to ensure the safety of civil servants in case of floods. It is because the safety of this 61,000 strong workforce matters to us.

I call upon all Ministries and governmental departments to work hand in hand with the safety and health officers of my Ministry, to adopt the recommendations that they make for the good and welfare of everyone.

To come back to today's event, it is with great honour and pride that I am launching the reopening of this Mechanical workshop. May it be of good use to our prison officers in the delivery of their services to the Nation. And let this building stand as a symbol of this government's determination to care for the safety and health of its employees, in the years to come.

Thank you.