

# e-Newsletter

Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms



Republic of Mauritius

A professional public service committed to excellence

Special Issue March 2021

SPECIAL EDITION



MAURITIUS



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### Disclaimer

Articles appearing in this special edition e-Newsletter reflect the views of the authors and not necessarily those of the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms (MPSAIR).

The MPSAIR would like to place on record the valuable advice and support from Mr Pradeep Goburdhone, Principal Information Officer, Government Information Service (GIS).



## MESSAGE OF THE MINISTER OF PUBLIC SERVICE, ADMINISTRATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS

Hon Teeruthraj Hurdoyal

My Dear Public Officers,

I congratulate you all and convey my best wishes to all of you on the occasion of Independence Day 2021.

This auspicious occasion is a moment to reaffirm our pledge to continue pursuing the vision of our ancestors who struggled for the independence of our country and believed in making Mauritius a paradise Island for the future generations.

In our efforts to reach our destination, this government is diligently working to give this country a system of governance, which conforms to the ideals and objectives of independence.

This year, we celebrate our nation's Independence in the throes of a pandemic. Together, we have done well in managing the crisis last year, through the hard work of our front liners and the support and cooperation of each and everyone.

I am convinced that, if we stand as one nation against the pandemic, Mauritius can be Covid-Safe again. As American Philosopher Mattie Stepanek rightly said, "Unity is strength. When there is teamwork and collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved."

As you all know, the pandemic has given rise to new challenges, both at national and international level. This country is relying again on Public Officers to overcome the challenges that are plaguing the world as well.

It is the responsibility of all of us to support the Government programme to defeat this pandemic. Let us all pledge to make Mauritius continue to advance as an independent, sovereign and democratic state.



## MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

Swaminathan Ragen

As Secretary for Public Service, I am delighted to be associated and contribute to this special edition of the e-Newsletter of the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms in the context of the National Day Celebration. The theme chosen this year is 'nou linite, nou lafors'.

Let me warmly thank all the contributors of this e-Newsletter who have kindly accepted to be part of this laudable initiative. Being respected members of the society for their contribution, knowledge and expertise in their respective field, I have no doubt that you will find their valuable insights of the different facets of the socio economic development of our country since independence meaningful and pertinent.

Indeed, since Independence in 1968, our people have, through perseverance and determination, transformed our country from a monocrop low-income economy to a strong, diversified and services oriented one. Moreover, tremendous progress has been made in Infrastructure Development, the Health and Education sectors as well as in providing unmatched social protection to the elderly and the vulnerable.

These enduring achievements have undeniably contributed to cement a rainbow and inclusive nation underpinned by our quintessential Mauritian creed.

However, after uninterrupted economic growth and progress made over the decades, our country is, like many other countries in the world, facing the harshest economic downturn of its history caused by the devastating effects of the Covid 19 pandemic.

Are we going to come out of this extremely difficult situation? The inspiring articles of the e-Newsletter provide us a clear indication that we have risen more than we have fallen in the 53 years of our Independence which we obtained from the United Kingdom after a lot of struggle and sacrifice.

While we are hopeful that we shall bounce back stronger than ever, there is an existential threat that if we do not embark on radical changes in every aspect of our economy and society, our ability to stimulate and sustain growth for economic recovery will falter.

Indeed, the recession hitting our country at an unprecedented scale has crudely exposed the weaknesses and rigidities of a system that has outlived its purpose. There is therefore a need to reinvent a new model of socio economic development which is more resilient and responsive to the exigencies of the 'new normal' while leveraging on the potential of innovative digital technologies. Obviously, the Public Service is no exception to the inescapable transformation journey ahead of us.

We have therefore a timeless mission to pull together to rebuild our country and leave a legacy for the future generation.

A radical transformation of our socio economic development model is therefore inevitable .... or perhaps it has already begun?

I wish you a pleasant reading!





**Vijayalakshmi Teelock**  
G.O.S.K

The Republic of Mauritius, today comprising of the islands of Mauritius, Rodrigues, Agalega, Chagos archipelago, Tromelin and St Brandon, has had a relatively short history when compared to the histories of most other countries. We do not have a 'precolonial' past, as our 400+-year-old history is the product (until 1968) of colonial rivalries in the Indian Ocean and the capture of uninhabited islands to serve as transit stops and bases. 'Mauritius' was created out of colonialism. This was the time when European powers roamed the world in search of products to trade and found cultures and civilisations they never imagined existed. Although they explored the Indian Ocean from the 15th century onwards and some even visited Mauritius, not many of them chose to take possession and settle on the island.

### The Dutch settlement

The Dutch first reached Mauritius at Vieux Grand Port in 1598 but the Dutch East India Company only sent settlers to live in 1638. The French took possession in 1715 but they too only settled in 1721. These two early phases of colonisation were strangely similar, as many historians have observed. Both Dutch and French administrations and the settlers were confronted with natural disasters, long waits for shipments of food supplies, equipment, seed and clothes and attacks by maroon slaves. The ecological damage caused by heavy exploitation of forests and wildlife which started under the Dutch East India Company and continued by later colonial powers has been well documented by several authors.

### French colonisation

It is only with the massive importation of slaves, from around the Indian Ocean and West Africa as well as the arrival of contract workers (engages) from France, Madagascar and Pondicherry that French colonisation really began to be 'successful'. The thousands of free and unfree labour built the infrastructure required for a capital and a harbour; they farmed subsistence and cash crops, kept hundreds of domestic households running, transported men, women and children within Mauritius in palanquins, carts, mules and horses. Many served in the French Army and Navy and assisted in the Anglo-French wars, thus helping to maintain the French Empire in the Indian Ocean. Ile de France (as Mauritius was then called) also served as a naval base for the French expansion in the Indian Ocean from 1734 to 1810.

Mauritius was preferred by the French to La Reunion for various reasons. Governor Labourdonnais' vision was to create a division of labour between the two islands. One (La Reunion) was to be the food supplier as there were many small farmers, while Mauritius would serve as the commercial and naval base because it possessed the safest bay of the two islands (Trou Fanfaron) and would be the 'warehouse' of the Indian Ocean. This policy has continued throughout the French period, British and even in modern day Mauritius (with the idea of the duty-free shopping paradise).

### The British takes over

The British who conquered the French and transformed the Indian Ocean into 'a British lake' from 1810 onwards were less inclined towards trade. Labourdonnais' British equivalent, Sir Thomas Farquhar set the policy for Mauritius for the next 150 years. Although he labelled Mauritius as a 'little rock' in the Indian Ocean, he believed it was a most 'important little rock'. He preferred agriculture over trade and sugar above all other crops. His campaign to abolish preferential tariffs for Caribbean sugar paid off and Mauritian sugar secured its place in the British Empire.

### Indentured labour

But for sugar planters and the labour forced to work on the sugar fields, the taste of sugar was bitter indeed. For the planters, the British abolition of the slave trade and slavery altogether later in 1833 deprived them of labour; while for the slaves, especially the women, they were forced to leave their traditional occupations and families to enter the harsh world of plantation slavery.





To overcome potential shortages of labour, the British resorted to the introduction of several categories of labour: convicts from India, contract labour from India and China and Liberated Africans from Madagascar, Comoros and Mozambique. But it was indentured labour that was to provide the bulk of plantation labour to enable Mauritian and British planters to expand production of sugar. By the end of the 19th century, Mauritius exported sugar not only to the United Kingdom, but increasingly also to India and Australia.

In the same manner as the introduction of thousands of enslaved men and women transformed the colonial economy and society of Ile de France, so the introduction of indentured workers transformed 19th century society and economy. By the beginning of the 20th century, mass immigration had ceased and a 'Mauritian' society with a majority of Mauritian born persons present. They were more literate and more securely implanted in Mauritian society, but they were not necessarily all at ease with each other yet, given the cultural and class differences. Managing a multi-cultural society was to be a challenge for the British colonial administration and this aspect of our society continues to provide us today with one of the most enduring and seemingly intractable legacies of our colonial past.

### General Strike of 1938

The various political struggles, which started with the campaign for municipal elections in 1840s demonstrated the class divisions present in contemporary colonial society and the wide disparities in wealth that existed in 19th century Mauritius. The working-class struggles, 100 years later, of the 1930s and 1940s, culminating in the first General Strike of 1938 demonstrated the

continuation of these class differences and the silent complicity between the colonial state and the local economic interests. These conflicts also brought out starkly urban/rural cleavages. The Great Depression, the two World Wars also affected our economy adversely and there was increasing pressure on the British colonial government to reform: improve the working lives and living conditions of Mauritian working classes and improve health care, housing and provisions for the aged, extend education and allow the multiple cultural preferences of Mauritians to flourish, rather than attempt to 'westernise' the multi-racial population.

### Self-governance and independence

Despite the many reforms undertaken during the colonial period in the 1940 and 1950s, this was not sufficient for the new breed of young, highly educated, professional and informed Mauritians emerging in the 1950s and 1960s. They wanted the right to take decisions as they believed themselves to be the true representatives of the Mauritian people. The demands to extend the franchise led them to also seek self-government and eventually, independence. These movements in Mauritius were no different and were very much part of the anticolonial movement sweeping across the British Empire in the 1950s and 1960s.

Many young Mauritians keenly followed and even participated in the independence movements in Africa and Asia during their travels and studies in Europe Africa and Asia. But it was the Second World War that sealed the fate of the British Empire. The pace of decolonisation increased but for Mauritius, this came with a heavy price, as Diego Garcia was forcibly excised

from the future independent Mauritius. This constitutes another one of those legacies of our colonial past and a legacy that successive independent Mauritian governments are struggling to overcome, with the help of friendly powers.

On 12th March 1968, the last remaining powers such as Defence, External Affairs, Public Order and Public Safety and Police Force were passed on from the Governor to the Cabinet. The post of Governor became known as Governor-General, representing the Queen. The decolonisation of Mauritius was not however totally complete as the Queen, Elizabeth II, was still the Head of State of Mauritius. It was only on 12 March 1992 that Mauritius became a Republic. The last Governor General was Sir Veerasawmy Ringadoo and he became Mauritius' first President.

### Improving the social and economic conditions of Mauritians

Despite the dire warnings of many scholars at the time of independence, about Mauritius' destiny, the immediate concerns of the new leaders of independent Mauritius were to improve the social and economic conditions of Mauritians, most of whom were at the very bottom of the ladder and terribly exploited. The spectre of a population explosion was thwarted by family planning programmes, while forward-looking public health policies led to malaria being eradicated and the health of school children being gradually improved through regular school medical inspections of every child. Unemployment was rife however, and workers and students protests occurred in the 1970s and partly as a result of this, secondary school education became free. To combat unemployment and to diversify the economy, an export-oriented sector was created and import substitution encouraged. Many women entered the workforce as industrial workers. Although families benefitted financially, there were social consequences affecting family life and the health of women due to the long hours of work and poor nutrition.

Tourism became another economic avenue to explore, but its vulnerability and sustainability has been put into question several times and even more so in the past year, with the COVID 19 pandemic and the Wakashio oil spill. The impact of both unfortunate events on the environment and people are being studied and it is clear to all that a more sustainable tourism policy needs to emerge.

### Challenges ahead

Being a small island and a 'small state', Mauritius continues to face many challenges, compared to larger mainland countries with more resources and larger populations. Inward and outward migration continues to be part of the Mauritian story. More recently, our geographical isolation has proven to be a blessing

in disguise during the COVID pandemic as we are located far away from COVID hotspots. We are not however, spared the economic crisis that has afflicted almost all countries in the world.

Our challenge is that as decision-makers, as members of civil society, as administrators, educators or economic and financial players, 're-inventing a post-Covid Mauritius' must be a priority. In doing so, we must learn from the lessons of the past and inspire ourselves from the decisions and experiences of those who faced far greater challenges than we do today. More than ever before, we as Mauritians need to listen to each other more, respect each other's differences, be it cultural, economic or social, share wealth better and accept that a more just and equitable society is the only sustainable way to go.





Until Year 2020, Mauritius has been growing its economy since 1982, that is 38 years of uninterrupted economic growth, a feat never achieved by any other country. Last year when COVID-19 put a brake to Australia's long economic growth cycle putting an end to a recession free run of 29 years, Bloomberg wrote that this was the developed world's longest uninterrupted economic growth streak. The claim can undoubtedly be challenged in the light of the performance achieved by our country.

**Mr Georges Chung Tick Kan**

### James Meade and VS Naipaul were wrong

It is not the first time our country has severely been hit by exogenous factors. Each time, thanks to our resilience, our nation has recovered and sometimes with strong renewed vigor. The 2020 downturn, though harsh and in many ways unprecedented, must however be put into perspective with respect to the one we experienced in the late seventies and early eighties. For us, the memory of the collapse of the economy and social conflicts that ensued in 1979-1982 must remain as a painful but precious lesson learnt going forward in our quest to put our country back on track. Indeed, at the peak of the then recession, a quarter of the labour force was unemployed while the foreign reserves could only last the equivalent of 2 weeks imports. It was reminiscent of the predictions made by James Meade in 1961 and VS Naipaul in 1972, both Nobel Prize recipients. To Meade and Naipaul, the future of Mauritius can only be dismal. 'Disaster lies ahead' in post-independence Mauritius, wrote VS Naipaul, a year after winning the Booker Prize. Yet in 1982 and onwards, we proved that the prognosis made by the 2 famous Nobel Prize winners were wrong and convincingly misguided.

Indeed from 1982 to 1988, it took us only 6 years to transform a country on the brink of economic bankruptcy to an economy of full employment and balance of trade surplus. While it has been unable to sustain full employment, the country radically transformed its landscape from a mono-crop society dominated by sugar to a well-diversified multi pillar economic structure.

### Public-private sector effective partnership

The sustained opening of the country to foreign trade and investment, transfer of technology and public-private sector effective partnership together with strong economic and social policies have been major factors

behind what many have coined as an economic miracle. In 1968, when our country became independent, nearly 90% of our foreign currency earnings came from the sugar sector employing more than a third of the then active population while its share in the accounting of the Gross National product (GNP) was close to 30 %. We were classified as a third world under developed Nation by international institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The population suffered from all the ills of a poor country such as sub-standard nutrition, lack of adequate water and electricity supply, low housing ownership and poor health care resulting in high birth mortality rate and low life expectancy. Income per capita barely exceeded 250 dollars, considered a pitiful level at the time.

### A newly developed economy

Fast forward, half a century later, we are at the doorstep of joining the select group of newly developed economies. In a recent report of the World Bank and the IMF, our GNP per head has surpassed the world average putting Mauritius as one of the most developed in the 50 plus Nations of the African continent. Being independent in all our entire decision-making process has been key to the transformation of our country. Sustained efforts at economic diversification have produced significant results enabling the country to move from a sugar-based economy to textile, tourism, financial services and other broad-based services while substantial measures have been taken to improve human development with significant expenditures being ploughed into the educational, health and housing sectors. We have been able to craft for ourselves a strong outward looking economy, praised by many institutions, emerging as an example to emulate, while all the major surveys consistently rank Mauritius as one of the top destinations for tourism as well as the top African country for ease of doing business.





## Vulnerability to external shocks

Despite our success, however, we have been reminded once again that we are still vulnerable to external shocks even though we have been able to avert some of the world most severe recent economic downturns such as the Asian crisis of the 1990's and the Great Recession of 2008. The Covid-19 pandemic has indiscriminately and seriously damaged the world economy and tourism, one of the most important pillars of the world economy, is certainly the hardest hit with sometimes serious knock on effects on the rest of the economy. According to a recent report by OECD, international tourism would drop by 80% in 2020 and those destinations, such as Mauritius, relying on tourism will continue to face serious challenges until the industry returns to normal. Economists predict that this will happen by 2023, in the light of the encouraging news regarding the acceleration of population vaccination rate across all countries of the world.

## Post Covid-19

Meanwhile businesses throughout the tourism ecosystem worldwide, including Mauritius, will continue to rely on financial support schemes and most governments have taken unprecedented measures to minimise job losses and to ensure recovery in 2021. However the various stakeholders need to do more in order to restore travelers' confidence. The fact that our destination remains COVID-19-safe should prove to be a strong marketing argument in that respect. Other measures have to include the building of a more resilient and sustainable green tourism product and a more effective private-public partnership.

Like all crises, the pandemic is an opportunity to rethink our economy. The measures put in place today will no doubt shape the society of tomorrow. The public sector and the civil servants in tandem with the private sector are determining factors in defining the future of our country. This is also the lesson we learnt throughout the long economic cycle we referred to earlier. Together we will no doubt start rebuilding a stronger and a more resilient economy once we resume economic growth.



The new normal is shaped by the COVID 19 pandemic. What has been primarily seen as a health issue has been followed by severe socio-economic impacts.

**Mr Kevin Ramkaloan**  
**CEO Business Mauritius**

### Health-related impact of the pandemic on the new normal

Health concerns, on the severity of Covid-19 transmission and inability of our health systems to cope with acute cases, has caused many countries to adopt stringent lockdown measures, renewed as the frequency of locally transmitted cases go out of control. Limits of restricting the transmission is linked to nations' ability to implement cooperation models (as opposed to competition ones). Nations best used to cooperation models, where the common good prevails over individualistic needs, have shown limited transmission and/or less severe lockdowns. As part of the new normal, we should give precedence to cooperation models in our economies, starting with schooling, where team-play, civic duties and nation-building are given priority over grade-related outcomes.

The pandemic has also shown how vulnerable our globalized economies are. The undeniable cross-border benefits of greater integration in the global supply chains also mean that our interest among trading nations must go beyond rules of bilateral or multilateral trade and investment agreements to true partnerships on economic development.

COVID 19's particulars may be unique - quickly transmitted, originating and multiplying through connectivity hubs and difficult to medicate. However, it is less fearful than say an Ebola variant that would be as easily transmissible and breaking out in densely populated and connected centres. Therefore, the current pandemic can provide important lessons to be learnt on health partnerships at global and regional levels, as well as the rapidity in which we have been able to develop vaccines combined with the relatively slower production capabilities for their roll-out.

This rapidity could be put to use for tropical diseases and NCD such as diabetes where greater medical

research attention and breakthrough can truly change the world health situation. Production processes must also be examined to provide greater agility in the future, say by setting up new norms for fast accreditation in pandemic situations.

The COVAX partnership for access to vaccines, with all its current limitations, can also truly become a model of strengthened cross-border, regional health partnerships. Indeed, with globalised trade and investments, can first world wealthy nations whose food and basic necessities production depend largely on global supply chains, be sustained without developing and lesser developed partners? All this points to the need for centralised global and regional healthcare policies in the new normal – we need the World Health Organisation more after COVID 19 pandemic and not less. Strengthening of its capabilities and regional reach should be seen as a global priority.

### Economic impact of the pandemic on the new normal

According to IMF World Economic Outlook, January 2021, the pandemic has led to a severe collapse in 2020, estimated at -3.5 percent, that has had acute adverse impacts particularly on women, youth, the poor, the informally employed, and those who work in contact-intensive sectors. Although recent vaccine approvals have raised hopes of a turnaround in the pandemic later this year, renewed waves and new variants of the virus pose concerns for the outlook.

For Mauritius, the contraction in 2020 is estimated at approximately 15% and has affected all sectors of the economy except for ICT and financial services, placing us as the most affected economy in Africa apart from Libya (IMF WEO Oct 2020).

For 2021, the growth estimates converge to positive recovery in the range of 6.5% to 7.9% (MCB Focus and





Bank of Mauritius respectively). However, against the backdrop of a sharp contraction in 2020, and amid exceptional uncertainty regarding the global situation as well as the challenges of setting up our vaccination programme, we would most likely not return to the 2019 level for at least two to three years.

On the vaccination programme, a partnership between Government and the business community may be necessary as a new normal for annual COVID-19 vaccinations to ward away the potential variants until worldwide herd immunity is achieved which would simultaneously reduce the occurrence of new variants.

With regard to markets, a study carried out by Business Mauritius, with the help of Statistics Mauritius and the UNDP at the end of last year shows that more than 30% of respondents admitted to having recorded a drop of around 50% in their turnover in 2020 due to COVID-19. The new reality has pushed many businesses to look for ways to reduce their costs and adapt to the challenges posed by the crisis in order to maintain their operations.

Therefore, in the new normal, we would expect major innovations in the arena of cost-savings and ensuring that logistics and supply chains are resilient. Recruitments in formal private sector employment would be on an as-needed basis with lower possibility for supply-side investment and employment strategies to trigger growth.

To accelerate economic recovery, it is therefore important to develop new and emerging activities. Energy transition is especially important since it has the possibility to trigger significant investments and

jobs whether in the solar, biomass or other types of renewable energy.

Furthermore, the circular economy also offers sustainable growth opportunities, including waste management and optimisation of natural resources but also better ways of structuring the supply chain to address inherent vulnerabilities that have been brought to the surface following the lockdown. For example, it will be important to review our national agricultural commitments linked to food security. Some projects such as substitution of imported agricultural products, have already been initiated but must be accelerated.

Other new sectors would encompass e-health and e-education among others.

With the continental free trade area in Africa, the free trade agreement with China and the signing of CECPA with India, the opportunities for Mauritius as a platform between Asia, Europe and Africa are more than ever present for an increased trade in goods, services and cross-border investments.

Whilst we look at economic recovery, we should not ignore the ground swells that are climate change and inclusive development in order to rebuild our economy in a better way. For the business community, these are extremely important issues and the reason for launching our Signatir pact, a set of sustainability commitments, to help Business Mauritius members adhere to sustainable and inclusive growth objectives.

Some of the major issues of sustainable and inclusive development that will require attention include:

- Climate risk and de-carbonation strategy to better understand and quantify the carbon emissions in our activities
- Review of the local labour structure to transition towards new skills needed by enterprises competing on the international market. These may include AI and new technologies, which are needed even in traditional pillars such as agriculture, manufacturing and finance

Right now, the priority for us is on the job market taking into consideration everything related to productivity, “skilling” and “reskilling” as well as youth and gender issues. In the new normal, we would also expect an enhancement of policies to incentivise and support women, youth and the informally employed into the productive economy. Special attention would also need to be given to the integration of the disabled in the productive economy.

The way we work is also likely to change, with work from home becoming increasingly part of the mainstream. For this, some laws and regulations will need to be improved.

In addition, there is an urgent need to make the business environment in Mauritius not only more resilient but also more transparent, with strengthened institutions and even more sustained public-private collaboration in the fight against corruption. E-licensing, regulatory impact assessment and regulatory review projects funded by the EU will assist. It will also be necessary to speed up e-procurement and ensure compliance to all the systems being put in place.

Furthermore, we cannot talk about governance without talking about the financing of political parties which has been a key demand of Business Mauritius for years.

In addition, while appreciating all the work done by the judiciary, we are also in favour of a system where there is faster justice. This requires giving ourselves the means to do so, which should be a priority.

It will also be necessary to accelerate the culture of innovation while recognising the excellent programmes already being run by the MRIC. However, we also need to think about long-term changes regarding our education system and advanced technical training that will take at least ten years to show results with higher-value innovation and entrepreneurship. This is why it will take strong institutions around education and training to stay on course.

## Conclusion

In addition to the health crisis, Covid-19 has triggered a revolution that has affected and continues to affect the economy and overall business community. This is a transformative process that will have a profound and lasting impact on the business world. Industry, consumption, management, digitalisation, the role of the State, the utmost importance of governance, social and work relations, the concepts of sustainability and inclusive growth, are all going through this transformation.

The new normal forces us to reassess fundamentals that we took for granted - such as greater efficiency and just-in-time - with additional criteria including resilience, inclusiveness and sustainability. Nevertheless, it is my conviction that the business community has the capacity to reinvent itself by learning and adapting to the human and strategic lessons of recent events to project itself into the new normal with as much agility as possible.





This is a special paper in the margin of the 53<sup>rd</sup> Independence anniversary of Mauritius to showcase how Mauritius has been a global champion for the management of its environment and has been cited as a model by both United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Bank at both the Earth Summit in 1992 and at the Global conference on sustainable development of Small Islands States conference held in Barbados in 1994, respectively.

Mr Raj Hemansing PRAYAG,  
PDSM

It all started at the Stockholm conference in 1972 which Mauritius had attended. Effectively, the words “human environment” and “sustainable development” were coined at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (also known as the Stockholm Conference, held in Stockholm, Sweden from June 5-16, 1972). It was the UN’s first major conference on international environmental issues, and marked a turning point in the development of international environmental politics.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was created to be responsible for coordinating responses to environmental issues within the United Nations system. It was established by Maurice Strong, its first director, after the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in June 1972.

### National Environment Action Plan

Environment was mainstreamed in the Government’s agenda and policies in the mid-80s. The Government of Mauritius worked closely with both UNEP and the World Bank to prepare a national holistic strategic plan, for the sustainable development of the island state with “environment” at the centre of all decision making. Mauritius was one of the first countries in the world to adopt the “integrated approach to environmental management” which thereafter would be replicated by other countries.

The National Environment Action Plan published in 1988 was considered as a model by UNEP and was the subject of a UNEP film which was broadcast at RIO’s conference in 1992.

As unbelievable as it might sound after the Wakashio oil spill event, UNEP had assisted with the publication of the Mauritius Sensitivity Atlas to go with the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan (NOSCP) in 1988. The

World Bank was inspired by the Mauritius NOSCP so much so that it decided to fund a regional OSCP project so that all other Islands and coastal States of the Western Indian Ocean have a similar oil spill contingency plan in 1998.

### Creation of a fully-fledged Ministry of Environment

The World Bank financed the Mauritius Environment Invest Programme to the tune of \$13 million USD that ran from 1990 to 1995. Under this EIP project, a fully-fledged Ministry of Environment was created under the Environmental Protection Act of 1990, to provide for the **protection** and management of the **environmental** assets of **Mauritius** so that their capacity to sustain the society and its development remains unimpaired and to foster harmony between quality of life, **environmental protection** and sustainable development for the present and future generations.

This legislation the Environment Protection Act 1991 at the time was again a first in the world as it was totally apolitical and was greatly applauded internationally. It was all to the great credit of our visionary leadership at that time.

### The Earth Summit

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) also known as the EARTH SUMMIT was held in RIO from 3-14 June 1992 and its main product was the adoption of the AGENDA 21, which is a non-binding action plan of the United Nations with regard to sustainable development.

This global conference was held on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the first Human Environment Conference in Stockholm, Sweden in 1972 and brought together political leaders, diplomats, scientists,

representatives of the media and non-governmental organisations from 179 countries for a massive effort to focus on the impact of human socio-economic activities on the environment.

The RIO's conference highlighted how different social, economic and environmental factors are interdependent and evolve together, and how success in one sector requires action in other sectors to be sustained over time. The primary objective of the Earth Summit was to produce a broad agenda and a new blueprint for international action on environmental and development issues that would help guide international cooperation and development policy in the 21st century.

The Earth Summit concluded that the concept of sustainable development was an attainable goal for all people of the world, regardless of whether they were at the local, national, regional or international level. It also recognised that integrating and balancing economic, social and environmental concerns in meeting our needs is vital for sustaining human life on the planet and that such an integrated approach is possible. Furthermore, the conference also recognised that integrating and balancing economic, social and environmental dimensions required new perceptions of the way we produce and consume, the way we live and work, and the way we make decisions. This concept was revolutionary for its time and it sparked a lively debate within governments and between governments and their citizens on how to ensure sustainability for development.

## AGENDA 21

One of the major results of the UNCED Conference was the AGENDA 21, a daring program of action calling for new strategies to invest in the future to achieve overall sustainable development in the 21st century. Its recommendations ranged from new methods of education, to new ways of preserving natural resources and new ways of participating in a sustainable economy.

During the preparatory meetings of the UNCED in 1992, representatives of SIDS put up a strong case at inter -regional preparatory meetings held in Abidjan and in Kuala Lumpur that the Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) ecosystems being highly sensitive and fragile would be the most impacted by Climate Change and that these concerns had not been given proper attention in Agenda 21.

Chapter XVII of Agenda 21 is about the protection of the oceans, all kinds of seas, including enclosed and semi-enclosed and coastal seas, and coastal areas and the protection, rationale use and development of their living resources. It is noteworthy that the Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) was nowhere mentioned in Agenda 21

## SIDA Conference in Barbados (1994)

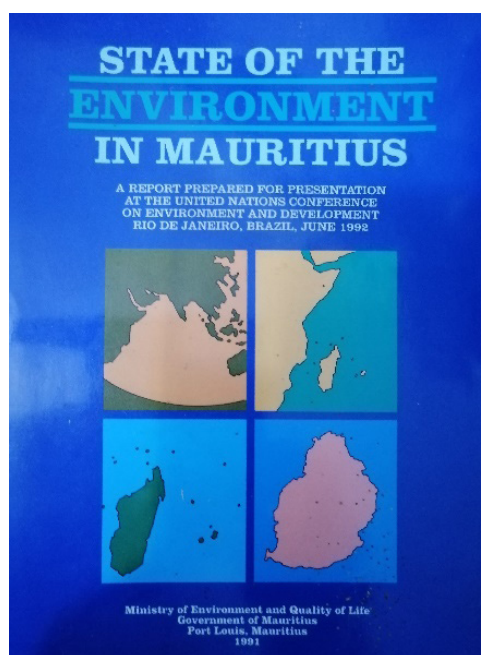
In 1992, SIDS lobby led to the UN agreeing to the organisation of the Global Conference for Sustainable Development of Small Islands Developing States (GCSDSIDS) in Barbados in 1994.

History shows that Mauritius was amongst the first five countries in the World to have signed the Biodiversity and the Climate Change Conventions at RIO.

The first State of the Environment Report was prepared in 1992 for submission to the United Nations in the margin of the Earth Summit. This document saw the contribution of all environmental partners from all sectors and walks of life and was a mammoth achievement in terms of data collection and collaboration. The report constitutes the baseline reference for the environment against which are monitored the evolution of the environment since then.

The 1994 Barbados conference dealt solely with SIDS specific issues, the impact of Climate Change and in particular the international mechanism for funding the relevant mitigative and adaptation measures for SIDS.

## Mauritius: the leader of SIDS for Africa



Mauritius was a leading light during the preparatory process leading to Barbados. Mauritius was the leader of the SIDS for Africa and the Mediterranean countries and had the honour to prepare the first draft of the Barbados Program of Action (BPOA) covering 14 priority areas (see below the 14 priority areas) affecting the SIDS. Mauritius chaired and presented the first inter-regional meeting between Africa and the Pacific in Vanuatu. The Mauritian draft stood the scrutiny of the Caribbean SIDS and went on to achieve global consensus at the inter -regional consultative meetings





as well as at the UN Geneva and New York meetings before it was presented and adopted at Barbados.

The Barbados Conference reaffirmed the principles and commitments to sustainable development embodied in AGENDA 21 and translated these into specific policies, actions and measures to be taken at the national, regional and international levels. The Conference also adopted the Barbados Declaration, a statement of political will underpinning the commitments contained in the BPOA.

The priority areas were:

- climate change and sea- level rise
- natural and environmental disasters
- management of wastes
- coastal and marine resources
- freshwater resources
- resources
- energy resources
- tourism resources
- biodiversity resources
- national institutions and administrative capacity
- regional institutions and technical cooperation
- transport and communication
- science and technology
- human resource development

The BPOA further identified cross-sectoral areas requiring attention: capacity building; institutional development at the national, regional and international levels; cooperation in the transfer of environmentally

sound technologies; trade and economic diversification; and finance. The comprehensive structure of the BPOA elaborates principles and sets out specific strategies at national, regional and international levels over the short, medium and long terms in support of the sustainable development of SIDS.

### Mauritius ahead of its time

It is to be noted that once again, Mauritius was ahead of its time as even before the Earth Summit, it had already put the legislative and institutional arrangements in place through the 1991 EPA and the setting up of the Ministry of Environment and specifically the Department of Environment. It had also already embraced the integrated environmental management concept for a holistic approach to developmental projects.

To show its commitment at the highest level of the State, the National Environment Commission was chaired by no less than the Prime Minister. Various mechanisms such as the inter-ministerial environment coordination committee was set up to ensure collective decision making and the Environment Impact Assessment was made mandatory for scheduled activities likely to have adverse impacts on the environment.

Over the years, Mauritius has revisited the EPA e.g., in 2002 and created new divisions within the department of environment to deal with new and pressing challenges posed by the Climate Change, for example.

### SIDS-specific challenges

The Environment Investment Programme 1990 – 1995 (EIP), funded by the World Bank laid down the foundation for the sustainable development of Mauritius. One of the main objectives was to eliminate

land use conflicts as it defined boundaries between various conflicting activities, The National Physical Development Plan (NPDP) defined boundaries for specific activities which was further supported by the detailed Outline Schemes.

The NPDP defined zones for specific activities such as the tourism, industrial, agricultural and residential built-up areas to eliminate at source any conflict. Each zone was provided with the relevant infrastructures to support its activities. Industrial estates were created for wet and dry activities on the outskirts of residential zones to create employment and control migration of rural population to urban areas.

EIP also led to the preparation of the National Master plans for (1) the Solid Waste Management, leading to the creation of sanitary landfills and (2) Waste Water Sewage management, a network of sewage at national level including secondary treatment prior to discharge at sea or tertiary treatment before release for irrigation purposes.

Another key decision and action taken was the setting up of standards for drinking water, air, for effluent discharges etc. for the protection of aquifers, and coastal waters. The National Environmental Laboratory (NEL) was set up in Reduit in 1996 to monitor and collect data for monitoring and evolution of the standards.

### Maurice Ile Durable (MID)

In 2013, the Maurice Ile Durable (MID) was set up following a report by Mott MacDonald as the government's response to the global energy crisis of 2007. MID's aim was to facilitate economic growth that respects the limitations of natural resources, on growth that is delivered by an empowered population, able to grapple the new opportunities of a green economy and to distribute wealth equitably.

MID's goal was to promote sustainable development in general but more specifically the five "Es" namely:

**ENERGY:** to ensure that the Republic of Mauritius is an efficient user of energy with its economy decoupled from Fossil fuel

**ENVIRONMENT:** to ensure sound environmental management and sustainability of our ecosystem services

**EMPLOYMENT/ECONOMY:** to green economy with decent jobs, offering long term career prospects

**EDUCATION:** to have an education system that promotes the holistic development of all citizens

**EQUITY:** to ensure that all citizens are able to contribute to the Republic of Mauritius continuing growth and share its combined wealth.

However, MID was done away in 2015.

Today, reliable data are available on the state of the environment to monitor and report periodically so that appropriate policies and actions may be put in place.

Mauritius is an excellent example where being a small developing island is not a constraint, BUT its success is proportional to the vision and ambition of its leaders and its people.



## L'émancipation des Mauriciennes

### Un survol de l'évolution des droits de la femme



Le 12 mars 1968, les Mauriciennes étaient encore des citoyennes de seconde zone et elles ont attendu 27 ans pour être émancipées juridiquement. Mais on en sont-elles aujourd'hui ?

**Mrs S. Aumeeruddy-Cziffra**

#### La Constitution

L'article 3 de la Constitution précisait qu'à Maurice il n'y avait aucune discrimination concernant les droits humains et les libertés fondamentales à condition de respecter les droits et libertés des autres et l'intérêt public. Il s'agit de la discrimination fondée sur la race, les origines, les opinions politiques, la couleur, la croyance et le sexe.

Cependant l'article 16 (3) qui définit la protection contre la discrimination introduit le terme caste et ne mentionne pas le terme sexe.

La Cour Suprême a statué que l'omission du terme sexe était voulue par le législateur, confirmant que les discriminations en fonction du sexe qui affectaient surtout les femmes étaient permises par la Constitution.

En 1995, grâce à la pression internationale qui a précédé la Conférence de l'Organisation des Nations unies (ONU) organisée à Beijing, le terme sexe a été ajouté à l'article 16 de la Constitution. Ce qui a eu des conséquences notamment sur la citoyenneté des femmes et de leur descendance. Auparavant, un enfant né d'un père mauricien, même à l'étranger, pouvait obtenir la nationalité mauricienne en vertu du droit du sang. Les enfants nés d'une mère mauricienne ne devenaient mauriciens que s'ils étaient nés à Maurice, c'est le droit du sol.

En 1977, des amendements adoptés concernant l'immigration et l'expulsion des maris étrangers constituaient une discrimination flagrante contre toute Mauricienne qui avait épousé un étranger. L'affaire a été portée devant la Commission des droits de l'homme de l'ONU, qui a donné un avis défavorable sur ces lois et notamment sur leur aspect sexiste. En 1983, les lois concernées ont finalement été amendées dans le bon sens. En 2002, un Sex Discrimination Act a été voté,

suivi en 2008 d'un Equal Opportunity Act qui interdit toutes les formes de discrimination.

#### Droits civils

A Maurice, nous avons hérité du Code Napoléon de 1804. La majorité des femmes mariées étaient alors quasiment des « mineures » privées d'autonomie. Les notions d'autorité maritale et de puissance paternelle permettaient au mari de prendre toutes les décisions familiales. La femme avait besoin de l'autorisation de son mari pour tout faire : travailler, toucher ses salaires, avoir un compte en banque, obtenir un passeport, etc. Evidemment, tous les maris ne se prévalaient pas de ces privilèges d'un autre temps, mais à partir de 1979, une réforme en profondeur a mis les deux époux sur un pied d'égalité.

Beaucoup de familles faisaient pression pour que les jeunes filles se marient le plus tôt possible. L'âge du mariage était de 15 ans pour les filles et de 18 ans pour les garçons. Souvent, les filles se mariaient religieusement plus jeune encore. En 1981, l'âge du mariage est passé à 18 ans, puis il a été abaissé à 16 ans en 1984. Le Children's Bill de 2020 a rétabli l'âge de mariage à 18 ans et punit toute personne qui forcerait un mineur à se marier, y compris religieusement, ou à cohabiter avec quelqu'un.

#### Mobilisation des femmes

Dans les années 70-80 les Mauriciennes ont pris conscience du caractère inacceptable de leur « condition » et dans le monde entier, des voix s'élevaient pour condamner les discriminations flagrantes à l'encontre des femmes. Grâce à la pression des femmes sur toute la planète, l'ONU a proclamé 1975 Année de la femme. Deux décennies plus tard (1975-1985 et 1985 -1995), UN PLAN D'ACTION MONDIAL SUIVANT la Convention internationale sur

l'élimination de toutes les formes de discrimination à l'égard des femmes (CEDAW) DE 1979 a été adoptée à la Conférence de Beijing. La mise en œuvre de cette convention ET DU PLAN D'ACTION par chaque Etat signataire, dont Maurice, est suivie de près.

## Les femmes et la politique

Avec les premières élections post-indépendance de 1976, une solidarité exceptionnelle entre les femmes leur a permis de faire évoluer leur situation. Les Mauriciennes pouvaient participer librement aux élections, mais elles étaient peu nombreuses à se porter candidates. En revanche, les femmes constituaient une force électorale avec une majorité de 52 %. Les partis politiques voyaient bien leur poids politique potentiel. Déjà en 1975, après le décès d'un député désigné par le système de Best Loser, c'est une femme qui avait été nommée à sa place. Elle était devenue par la même occasion ministre de la Condition féminine, des prix et de la protection des consommateurs. Mobilisée par l'inflation galopante de cette époque, elle n'avait pas eu le temps de mettre en place une politique et une stratégie en faveur des femmes. Mais le grain était semé. On reconnaissait l'importance d'un ministère dédié à la cause des femmes. Et c'est en 1982 qu'un ministère à part entière doté d'un budget et d'un personnel séparés a vu le jour.

Concernant la parité en politique, le Local Government Act a été amendé en 2011 pour que chaque parti politique présente au moins un tiers de candidats hommes ou femmes. Il n'existe pas encore de mesure semblable pour les élections législatives.

Aujourd'hui, il y a 14 femmes députés sur 72, trois femmes sur 22/24 ministres et une seule femme maire sur cinq. Sur ce plan, notre pays est en retard sur le reste de la région d'Afrique dont il fait politiquement partie, alors qu'il est plutôt en avance du point de vue de la démocratie et du développement.

Dans le Global Gender Gap Index du World Economic Forum, Maurice était 115<sup>ème</sup> sur 153 pays en 2019. L'évaluation se fait en fonction de quatre critères : la participation économique, le niveau d'éducation, la santé et la survie ainsi que l'autonomisation des femmes.

## L'éducation des filles

Traditionnellement, beaucoup de filles s'occupaient de leurs frères ou sœurs plus petits et du ménage. La scolarisation des filles a progressé avec l'introduction de la gratuité de l'enseignement secondaire en 1976, puis de l'éducation obligatoire jusqu'à 16 ans en 2004. Selon le Gender Parity Index (GPI), il n'y a aucune disparité entre filles et garçons au préscolaire et au primaire. Au secondaire, elles sont légèrement plus nombreuses et abandonnent moins l'école que les garçons. Elles ont de meilleurs résultats en fin de cycles

primaire et secondaire. Elles sont plus nombreuses à commencer des études supérieures, mais moins nombreuses en doctorat et dans les matières scientifiques et techniques. Ce qui est reflété par leur faible présence dans les secteurs les plus porteurs.

## Droits économiques des femmes

L'autonomie est aussi économique. La masse ouvrière était très organisée depuis les années 70. Les femmes étaient employées en grand nombre dans le secteur agricole, où elles étaient chargées des tâches les plus ingrates, difficiles et mal rémunérées. Au moment de l'apparition de la Zone franche industrielle, beaucoup de femmes ont été embauchées et formées. Celles qui consacraient leur temps au travail domestique non rémunéré ont immédiatement voulu travailler en usine, même si les conditions y étaient particulièrement difficiles et qu'elles n'étaient pas protégées par la loi comme dans les autres secteurs. Certaines continuaient à faire la double journée en rentrant même très tard. Mais au moins, elles sortaient de leur isolement et pouvaient socialiser, s'enrichir au contact d'autres cultures, se syndiquer et apprendre à défendre leurs droits.

Les employées de la zone franche connu des débuts difficiles, mais cela a quand même été très libérateur pour les femmes et le pays. Les familles modestes ont soudain disposé d'un nouveau pouvoir d'achat. Les femmes ont été formées en fabriquant d'abord des produits textiles de base et ensuite des articles de grande qualité. Le plus difficile était la garde des nourrissons. Certaines municipalités ont ouvert des crèches. Ensuite, les « ti lekol » ont été modernisées par le ministère de l'Education. Le ministère de l'Egalité du genre s'est impliqué dans ces pre-schools, ce qui a libéré les femmes salariées du bas de l'échelle. **Même si le Labour Act de 1975 accordait aux femmes qui venaient d'accoucher une heure ou deux fois une demi-heure par jour pour allaiter leur nourrisson, cette mesure restait lettre morte faute de crèches sur les lieux de travail.**

Des femmes étaient aussi employées pour accomplir les tâches ménagères rémunérées. La Domestic Employees Union est née dans les années 70 et un Remuneration Order qui garantissait leur salaire et leurs autres conditions de travail leur a enfin apporté une dignité.

En 2018, ces employées de maison et celles de la Zone franche touchaient moins de Rs 5000, ce qui était sous le seuil de pauvreté. A la suite d'une grève de la faim, le gouvernement a introduit un salaire minimum pour tous fixé à Rs 8 500, revalorisé à Rs10 075 depuis le premier janvier 2021.

**Le droit du travail a évolué en faveur des femmes enceintes. Dans le secteur public à partir de mai 2015, le congé de maternité est passé de 12 à**

**14 semaines. Le discours du budget de 2019 a annoncé qu'il n'y aurait plus de restriction sur le nombre de fois qu'une employée pouvait prendre ce congé payé, qui était réservé à trois accouchements auparavant. De plus la facilité pour allaiter est étendue au secteur public.**

**Dans le secteur privé, Le Workers' Rights Act 2019 étend le congé de maternité à 14 semaines et introduit un congé de paternité de 5 jours continuellement à condition que le père déclare qu'il vit avec sa femme sous le même toit. Cette loi interdit toute discrimination fondée sur le sexe entre autres. Elle introduit aussi l'égalité des salaires pour un travail de la même valeur, concept qui vient de l'Organisation internationale du travail (OIT). Tout dépend de l'évaluation des postes.**

Mais il semble que globalement, l'inégalité des salaires existe à tous les échelons. Globalement, les femmes gagnent 30 % de moins que les hommes

### Les femmes dans les postes de décision

Dans le secteur public, les femmes se sont fait une place plus intéressante. Au départ, elles étaient sténodactylographes. Quelques années avant l'Indépendance, une première femme est arrivée au grade d'AS. En 1982, la première femme PAS a été nommée au nouveau ministère des Droits de la femme et de la famille. Aujourd'hui, nous avons 39 % de femmes Senior Chief Executives, Permanent Secretaries, Deputy Permanent Secretaries, Managers, directrices, magistrates et juges.

De plus, elles sont nombreuses dans les professions libérales avec des spécialités toujours plus variées.

La situation est moins brillante dans le secteur privé : 8,7 % de femmes siègent au sein d'un Conseil d'administration, et deux femmes seulement dirigent une grande entreprise. Le Code de bonne gouvernance encourage la diversité et prévoit la présence d'au moins une femme dans chaque Board. Le Financial Reporting Act de 2004 impose le respect de ce quota somme toute très faible. Mais il y a toujours le plafond de verre pour la grande majorité des employées.

En revanche, les autorités ont beaucoup encouragé les petites et moyennes entreprises ou de nombreuses femmes s'épanouissent, même si elles choisissent des occupations plutôt traditionnelles.

### Les obstacles

Un poids social et culturel pèse encore négativement sur la majorité des femmes. Un certain conservatisme perdure. Beaucoup de femmes n'ont pas vraiment intégré leur propre statut et leur rôle dans la société. Le regard des hommes pèse toujours lourdement sur elles. Certaines se retrouvent dans des relations amoureuses

toxiques. La violence conjugale, qui existe dans toutes les communautés et les classes sociales, est loin de reculer malgré d'énormes efforts des autorités et des organisations non gouvernementales. Les femmes ont certes conquis des droits, mais elles demeurent vulnérables. Certaines se retrouvent à devoir nourrir leur famille presque sans moyens, d'autres meurent victimes d'une violence transgénérationnelle. Il faut se remobiliser pour inverser cette tendance qui peut s'aggraver. Un soutien des hommes progressistes ne serait pas un luxe car il y va de l'avenir de notre société. En effet, chacun sait que le progrès des femmes est primordial pour le développement d'un pays. Ne gaspillons pas cette ressource en attendant le Gender Equality Bill annoncé pour bientôt.

## The Development of Industrial Relations in Mauritius: A Brief Chronology



After the abolition of slaves in 1834, indentured labourers were brought in to boost up the plantation economy from 1835 to 1937. Almost 100 years was a period of abject subjugation, intense misery, exploitation and suppression of workers' rights. There were frequent glaring instances of unsound industrial relations in the workplace, and there was also a lack of an institutionalised dispute resolution system.

**Professor Ved Prakash Torul**

**Consultant, Employment Law and Industrial Relations**

The promulgation of the Industrial Relations Ordinance 1938 set an important landmark in the statutory relations system in Mauritius, allowing the workers for the first time, to legally form an association so as to safeguard and promote their interests. At the same time, in 1938 the Department of Labour and Social Welfare was created with a view to monitoring and improving the terms and conditions of employment, deciding on appropriate remuneration, and resolving labour disputes.

### Legislative enactments

Since 1938, the Government of Mauritius has enacted successive laws creating adequate machinery for effective regulation of remuneration and other conditions of employment in any trade, industry or occupation. These legislative enactments were:

- Registration of Association Ordinance 1949
- Minimum wage Ordinance 1950
- Regulations of wages and conditions of Employment ordinance 1961
- Trade Dispute Ordinance 1966
- Wages and Salaries Act 1972
- The Industrial Relations Act 1973
- The Labour Act 1975
- The Employment Relations Act 2008
- The Employment Rights Act 2008
- The Employment Relations Act 2008, as amended, 2019
- The Workers' Rights Act 2019

All these laws successively gave effect to:

- building a sound industrial relation between the social partners;

- setting up institutional structures such as the Industrial Relations Commission which was later replaced by the Commission for Conciliation and Mediation, the National Remuneration Board, and the Permanent Arbitration Tribunal which was later replaced by the Employment Relations Tribunal; and

- transforming the Mauritian industrial society making employment relations emerge from its narrow confines of seeing employees only as an economic commodity programmed to increase productivity and enhancing profit for the enterprise to a greater supportive approach in which the focus is more on building a broad-based commitment between the employer and the employee through a participative culture and a more democratic industrial society philosophy.

### From here, Quo vadis industrial relations in Mauritius?

#### Quo Vadis Industrial Relations in Mauritius?

After the onslaughts of globalization, successive economic recessions and the unprecedented incidence of Covid-19 resulting into closure of enterprises, retrenchments, redundancies, transfer of undertakings and mergers, phenomenal changes have taken place in industrial relations in Mauritius. The world of work has suddenly undergone rapid changes with spiraling adverse impact on industrial relations. Without any negotiation or bargaining, employers are aiming at more systematic appraisals of organisational structures and redefining the employees' core activities.

The long tenure industrial labour market of the last two decades is now under pressure with lifelong careers gradually paving way to shorter and more varied forms of contracts of employment.



The quality of employment relations which form the basis of a series of expectations contained in the Code of Practice of the Employment Relations Act 2008 and 2019, are seriously being put to test. The ideals of meaningful negotiation and good industrial relations are seriously being eroded. Following questions are a matter of deep reflection:

- Are the employers and the trade unions engaged constructively and committed to develop the necessary conditions conducive to harmonious employment relations at work.
- Are they addressing employment relations and human resource management issues in a spirit of openness, trust, honesty, mutual respect and understanding?
- Are they adopting the right mind-set to address conflict with a view to reaching a win-win situation through compromise or consensus?
- Are they agreeable to accept and be recognised as social partners on the same footing?

## The Way Forward from Traditional to Strategic Industrial Relations in Mauritius

At this moment of grave expediency, industrial relations in Mauritius should be more engaging to reflect the changing work environment and recognise the worker as a valued asset, and the trade union to be accepted as an equal social partner.

The following can be recommended as possible measures to address the new workplace and social issues and build better industrial relations:

1. The state should maintain its traditional role of executing social justice premised on
  - Substantive justice – fairness of an outcome;
  - Procedural justice – respect of procedural propriety and reasonableness;
  - Distributive justice – examining ways of evaluating substantive outcomes;
  - Compensatory justice – a remedy for unequal distribution of resources; and
  - Restorative justice – a redress for injury and suffering and restoring relationships
2. The new National Employment Policy and Strategies, through its programme such as the Decent Work Country programme, should be able to develop, promote and monitor employment laws, regulations and policies governing wide range of issues including:
  - improved economic efficiency and productivity;
  - skills development and facilitation of employment growth

- tripartite social dialogue and sound industrial relations;
- enhanced occupational health and safety awareness and compliance in the workplace;
- promotion and protection of workers' fundamental rights, in particular equality of treatment and non-discrimination in the workplace; and
- sensitisation of both the workers and employers on their rights and responsibilities;

3. In order to achieve the set objectives laid down in the new National Employment Policy and Strategies, it is imperative, in the present context, to work in close collaboration with the social partners, other Government institutions, non-governmental organisations. In line with the ILO Convention, 1976 (No. 144) the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training need to place productive employment and decent work priorities at the heart of the immediate and/or medium-term strategy to promote an appropriate and safe working environment so as

- to provide employment and ensure job security;
- to raise living standards through improved conditions of employment;
- to increase employment opportunities;
- to enable employers to be more competitive and maximize their profitability;
- to minimize conflicts through meaningful negotiation and effective dispute resolution processes.

## Conclusion

Industrial relations in Mauritius is indeed at its developing stage where the modalities of relationships between the state, workers and trade unions have to be seen beyond the traditional format to conform to a progressive human resource approach based on teamwork, devolution of responsibilities, social dialogue, joint consultation and problem solving.

I conclude with a befitting quotation describing the approach needed to create a sound industrial relations environment:

***Ego, not content, causes the most communication stayoffs. Contrary to what is commonly believed, most disagreements are caused not by conflict over what people need but how they actually talk and act about those needs.***

**Capucine de la Rosa**

## Shaping the Trajectory for a Knowledge-Based Society: Education Across the Decades



The historical development of Education in the Republic of Mauritius right from the early days, and especially so in the post-independence phase, has reflected some basic but wide ranging and heavily impacting truths. For one thing, the social demand for education has relentlessly been increasing over time, it being seen as a *sine qua non* for improved conditions of life and a leverage for social mobility and gain in status.

**Mr Raj Dansinghani**

**Senior Advisor, Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology**

For another, the adage 'Your education today is your economy tomorrow' holds true to this day. In fact, the significance of education in contributing to the development of the country has been traditionally recognized. Thus, as far back as the early years of post-independence, the five-year plan for social and economic development 1975-1980 proposed measures for economic development to meet the socio-economic needs of the country. And education figured prominently there and has since remained a central driver of the economy.

### Free education

And why not? Back in the 1940s, primary education which was seen as a window of opportunity for a literate and adaptable workforce, resulted in near universal enrolment at this level-- long before it was made compulsory in 1982. This consequently led to a high demand for secondary education. Policy makers explored the idea of extending free education to cover secondary education, whose provision was predominantly private. This became a reality in 1977 and is till today considered as a watershed year in the history of education in Mauritius.

### Improving school infrastructure and higher education institutions

Accordingly, the post-1968 to the '80s period saw massive government spending resulting in the expansion of school facilities and improvement of school infrastructure. The construction of new state secondary schools aside, that period also proved salutary for the setting up of such Higher Education Institutions as the Mahatma Gandhi Institute (MGI) (1970) and the Mauritius College of the Air (MCA) (1971) that was later to be transformed into the Open

University of Mauritius (OU) and the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE) (1973).<sup>1</sup>

Driven by its commitment to provide greater parity in the provision of quality education, the State continued on its journey of building the future of high-quality infrastructure. Thus, the process of infrastructural development continued beyond that period, with the 2000s witnessing an unprecedented construction of state secondary schools (from 34 in 2001 to 63 in 2003) as well as the setting up of the UTM in 2000 and the Rabindranath Tagore Institute in 2001.

### Regulatory and operational support institutions

Mauritius chose to decentralize important and essential functions of education, like teacher training, conduct of examinations, the promotion of science and tertiary education among others to quasi-autonomous institutions. Accordingly, institutions meant to provide regulatory and operational support to the education system also saw the light of day: the Private Secondary Schools Authority (PSSA) in 1978<sup>2</sup>, the MES and the Pre-School Trust Fund in 1984, the Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre (2004) and TEC for the development of the Tertiary sector (1988)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The University of Mauritius (UoM) had already started its operations in 1965 and has since been instrumental in building the human capital and professionalizing the workforce.

<sup>2</sup> The PSSA itself an emanation of the report of a 1974 Commission chaired by Justice Ramphul "Government Aid to Private Secondary Schools" and restyled the Private Secondary Education Authority, a body corporate, established under the Private Secondary Education Authority (PSEA) Act No 20 of 2016.

<sup>3</sup> As from 2020, the TEC has given way to two separate statutory bodies, namely the Higher Education Commission as the regulatory body for higher education and the Quality Assurance Authority that, as its name indicates, aims at, *inter alia*, enhancing quality assurance of the higher education provision in line with international standards.

## A future — focused system

What is interesting to note is that successive Governments invested in education not simply to sustain a free and equitable system but also because they saw education as a public good, responding to the developmental needs—both existing and emerging—of the country. This explains the central position education has occupied in the national priorities enunciated by successive governments in Mauritius. Quite understandably, because of the defining role it plays in socio-economic, cultural and human development, it has generated a huge consensus and successfully cut across political party lines.

Which explains the commonality in the overarching visions spelt out over the years<sup>4</sup>. Because all development ultimately is founded on primarily the human capability, human resource development has remained the central and critical strategy for development.

Hence the common emphasis across the years of all reforms undertaken was on the pillars of Access, Equity and Inclusion, Relevance and Quality—albeit the strategies deployed to achieve these fundamental goals have been different for different decision-makers.

## Major Milestones

1977	Free education at secondary level
1980	Introduction of the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) at the end of the primary cycle in replacement of the Primary School Leaving Certificate and the Junior Scholarship Examination
1988	Compulsory Primary Education for all children
1991	Amendment of the Education Act: Compulsory primary education for all.
1994	Redesign of CPE examination in terms of essential and Desirable Learning Competencies
2002	Abolition of ranking and Introduction of a grading system at CPE

2003	Launching of Zones d'Éducation Prioritaire (ZEP) Regionalisation Policy of Admission to Form 1
2004	Oriental Languages reckoned as par with core subjects for the CPE Examination in 2004
2005	Amendment to the Education Act to make education compulsory till the age of 16 Free school transport
2006	Launch of 'Bridging the Gap' project now replaced by 'Primary School Readiness Programme'
2012	Introduction of Kreol Morisien as an optional subject in Standard 1
2013	Introduction of Re-sit in one subject for those having passed in 3 subjects
2017	Primary School Achievement Certificate (PSAC) replaces the CPE at the end of Grade 6 Proclamation of the Higher Education Act
2019	Introduction of free higher education in public Tertiary Education Institutions for a first certificate, a first diploma or a first undergraduate degree only Setting up of Special Education needs Authority
2021	1 <sup>st</sup> National Certificate of Education (NCE) assessment

Translated in action, it thus makes sense that, systematically, efforts have, over the years, converged on measures to prevent the loss of this human resource. Hence, to forestall all potential wastage in the system, recourse has been had to such recuperative programs and projects as the ZEP/ Fortified Learning Environment or the re-sits at the end of the primary cycle or, again, the provision of a second chance to those not making it academically. From Basic Secondary Schools to project schools, from Pre-Vocational Classes to the Extended Program, such policies shared the common need to recuperate those who would otherwise have been marginalized in the system.

At the upper end, highly skilled and knowledgeable human resources came to be seen as an effective leverage for participation in a globalized world. Again, since the higher education sector was called upon to be an important growth pillar of the Mauritian economy,

<sup>4</sup> The Education and human Resources Strategy (2008-2020) spells out its vision thus: "To transform Mauritius into a highly skilled nation in the vanguard of global progress and innovation."

In the current reform programme, the vision is "To create the next generation of forward-looking and innovative leaders contributing to the transformation of the Republic of Mauritius into a high ranking, prosperous nation".



it needed to be developed into becoming an essential ingredient in the transformation of Mauritius as a Knowledge Hub. This increased the appeal of Tertiary Education<sup>5</sup> with the Gross Tertiary Enrolment Ratio (GTER) moving from 5.6 in 1995 to 15.2 in 2000 to 48.9 per cent in 2019<sup>6</sup>

## Challenges

Changes, reforms and transformations that run as a thread across the post-independence history of education in Mauritius were as much due to challenges that needed to be confronted and overcome as to the conscious will to modernize the sector in response to the pressing demands of a fast-developing world. After all, the late 20th Century and especially the 21st Century demanded a new mindset and a new skill set.

Challenges have traditionally been equity-based as in the case of overcoming disparities in the pre-school sector or again providing alternative learning responses for children from vulnerable and poverty – stricken areas<sup>7</sup>.

Elsewhere, the challenge arose from the prevalence of the “rat-race” for the best seats in elite secondary schools and the institutionalization of private tuition that the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) came to represent, a condition that placed academic pursuit on a high pedestal and marginalised non-examinable subjects that are instrumental in the whole person development.

Without forgetting the frustration that this competition engendered among private publicly-funded providers of secondary schooling, many of whom also saw the declining student population as a threat to their very existence.

Another challenge lay in the enhancement of learner performance. Low transition rates from primary to secondary inevitably had an impact on the GTER. Public expenditure on education thus needed to become more cost-effective.

But perhaps the biggest challenge has been the lack of consensus over policies and their implementation processes.

<sup>5</sup> Epitomized by the “One Graduate Per Family by 2020” slogan

<sup>6</sup> Unlike the computation of UNESCO that excludes all local students studying overseas, the HEC takes on board exclusively Mauritian students, irrespective of whether they are studying locally or overseas.

<sup>7</sup> A number of measures have over time been resorted to in a bid for greater equity in the system through the early detection of children with special needs, Pre-Primary grant for all enrolled Pre-school children, the provision of free meals and textbooks to needy students, free transport, the payment of exam fees and fee-free studies for first-time enrolment in post-secondary education, among others. Lately, Support Teachers have also been enlisted to do away with the accumulation of learning deficits right from an early age.

## Education Policy documents

Over the decades, successive Governments have come up with documents or commissioned reports that have laid down the policies that would dictate the orientation of education. (Box 1). Thought leaders were constantly reorienting education to address the challenges of sustainable development.

Sound and well-meaning though, that many of these policies and re-orientations had been, the flip side resided in the frequent inability to generate consensus about the implementation strategies and processes associated with them. A typical reality in the Mauritian context has been to see a policy document as carrying the imprint of the government of the day and its orientations therefore potentially slated to be shelved when a new government is sworn in. Such is the sensitive nature of education that the vested interests, the beliefs and the fear of change among the diversity of stakeholders, coupled with the unintended consequences of meaningful change, have often resulted in undermining the implementation of reforms.

### Box 1

#### Major Policy Documents on Education

- The Road Ahead: Post –Primary and Secondary Education in Mauritius (1978)
- Laying the Foundations: Pre-Primary and Primary Education in Mauritius (1979)
- We Have All Been Children (1983): Report of the Commission of Enquiry on Education
- First White Paper on Education (1984)
- The Private Costs of Education in Mauritius (1988)
- Education System in Mauritius- Proposal for Structural Reform (1990)
- Master Plan for the year 2000 (1991)
- Report of the Committee to review the structure of the secondary School System (1995)
- White Paper on Pre-Primary, Primary and Secondary Education (1997)
- “Action Plan for a New Education System in Mauritius,” 1998
- Ending the Rat Race in primary education and breaking the admission bottleneck at secondary level: the way forward (2001)
- The Education and Human Resources Strategy Plan 2008-2020
- Inspiring Every Child - Policy document on Nine Years of Continuous Basic Education (2016)

## The Education Landscape today

There is no doubt that the educational transformations ushered in across the system, starting with the Nine Years of Continuous Basic Education, are meeting some of the major imperatives that pave the ground for optimism.

Thus, the realization has now seeped in that the current model of schooling is fast becoming outdated, that the traditional one-size-fits-all model in classroom pedagogy does not recognize the individual learning styles of students. Education is today more than ever moving towards being more student-centered, needing as we do learners with the capacity for logical and critical thinking and the development of other life skills.

## Post COVID-19 era

On the other hand, the professional capacity of teachers is being built such that they can develop the agility to, 'extempore', move away from the "talk and chalk" model and resort, among other means, to EdTech. Technology is fast taking center stage in the education world<sup>8</sup>. Indeed, in the post-COVID-19 world, recourse to remote learning, like remote work, is more than likely to be the 'new normal'. In an Industry 4.0 era, we are now ready to supplement the education delivery with remote/ blended learning, that has now become more mainstream, more acceptable and more respectable.

We are also at a point where we cannot build skills exclusively for the present—we need to build skills for the future as well. Hence, technical education that has so far been much-traduced and much maligned is being re-orientated, rebranded, and opportunities and options expanded so that young people have the right attitudes and marketable high-quality skills tailored to suit industry needs. Polytechnics are now, by sheer determination and relevance, creating a legitimate space for themselves in the education and skills development landscape.

Hence, the educational transformations being witnessed boil down to getting the development model right—a model that addresses the issues of inequity, that re-orientates technical education, that produces people with the right attitudes and skills, that rethinks the new roles and the internationalization of Higher

Education, among others. And that is being done while simultaneously dealing with on-going challenges posed by burning issues like skills mismatch and youth unemployment, climate change and the like.

## Conclusion

"Suppose someone were to describe a small country that provided free education through university for all its citizens, transport for school children and free health care – including heart surgery for all. You might suspect that such a country is either phenomenally rich or on the fast track to fiscal crisis". This is the opening statement made by Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz ten years ago in his article on Mauritius' successful journey since independence in 1968. Often cited as one of Africa's most-praised nations, Mauritius has, for more than half a century, consistently invested in its human resource, its most precious asset, and modernized the education system to provide high standards of education to all citizens.

Looking back over the past 53 years since independence, the international community recognizes the proven track record of the provision of education in Mauritius, built on the principles of equity and justice, inclusion and quality.

And today, there is no doubt that Mauritius is well-poised to produce future-ready students capable of coping with the demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and of contributing to the sustainability of a strong nation.

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8 There have been since the early 2000s incursions made in the domain of technology: the introduction of the School Information Technology Project (2002) and the Sankore Project (2011) along with the provision of interactive projectors and laptops. Lately, the Early Digital Learning Programme, which aims at integrating ICT in teaching and learning through the use of adapted tablets, has been implemented in Grade 4 in academic year 2020-211.



Mauritius has witnessed a remarkable development of its infrastructure since its independence, and in particular over the last twenty years or so, all of which is clearly visible. Such developments are also evidenced by growth of the local construction sector which has seen a boom in construction activities lately

**Mr Ram Bahadoor**

**Director, Construction Industry Development Board**

The term infrastructure refers to the basic physical systems of a country that are a prerequisite for its economic development and prosperity. Such systems include transportation systems, communication networks, water supply and sewerage systems, as well as electricity supply, among others. Infrastructure developments usually involve heavy investments and are thus capital intensive. Some of the key components of a country's infrastructure include roads and bridges, railway tracks, harbour and airport facilities, buildings, power generation installations, water supply networks, and wastewater disposal systems.

### Evidence of Infrastructure Development

There is ample evidence of major developments in infrastructure that have taken place since Mauritius gained its independence. Any local resident travelling across the country, or returning visitors to Mauritius, will inevitably notice the remarkable transformation of the country over the last two decades or so. It is undeniable that Mauritius is gradually becoming endowed with new and more sophisticated infrastructure. The most obvious development that stands out is the significant improvement in road infrastructure. Indeed, major roadworks have been carried out involving upgrading of existing roads, construction of new roads, motorways, bridges, as well as several link roads, bypasses and flyovers, all with a view to alleviating traffic congestion and improving the smooth flow of traffic. Besides roadworks, it is also evident that new office buildings, residential blocks, shopping malls, housing units as well as the Ebene Cybercity now exist which are all fully operational. Such developments are a clear sign of modernity and economic prosperity for Mauritius. They are bound to continue as the local population aspires to enjoy higher standards of living, with improved amenities for all to live and work. Other significant

developments include new port and airport facilities, as well as a vastly improved telecommunications network.

### Construction sector's growth rate and contribution to GDP

Figures from the Statistics Mauritius office indicate that the construction growth rate was at its peak during the years 2007 and 2008 whereby the construction growth rate was +15.2% and +11.6% respectively. Subsequently the construction growth rate started to decline and went below +10% during the years 2009 and 2010 where it was +4.3% and +5.9% respectively. Thereafter, the construction sector in Mauritius experienced one of its worst periods in its history with the construction growth rate going below 0 % thereby generating negative growth over the period 2011 to 2015. The worst year was 2013 when the growth rate fell to -9.4%. In year 2016 the growth rate was zero.

However, the construction sector regained its momentum in 2017 when the construction growth rate started to increase, reaching +9.5% in 2018. In 2019, there was a slight decrease with the growth rate reaching +8.5%. Statistics Mauritius forecasted that the construction growth rate would experience a sharp decline to -25.4% for the year 2020 in the aftermath of the covid-19 pandemic.

Over the last 20 years, the contribution of the construction industry to the GDP of Mauritius was highest during the period 2009 to 2010 at around 7.0%. The contribution had been declining since 2011 from 6.6% to reach 4.2% in 2016. However, an increased construction growth rate was noted lately, due to government's massive investments in major infrastructure projects, namely the Metro Express





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project and the Road Decongestion Programme. Other government projects, such as the construction of a sports complex at Côte d'Or, construction of Bagatelle Dam project including treatment plant and other associated works, NHDC housing projects, port development, and utilities projects, have had a significant part to play in the higher growth rate. The higher growth rate is also attributable, to some extent, to the heavy investments by the private sector, mainly under the Smart Cities Schemes.

At this pace, it was expected that the construction growth rate would hit a two-digit figure in the forthcoming years. Unfortunately, the unexpected advent of the COVID-19 pandemic seriously hampered the expected growth, and a sharp decline was noted in 2020. But construction activities have now resumed, and major investments have been made to enable continuity of the projects that had been halted on account of the covid-19 lockdown. Some of the main infrastructure developments will be highlighted below.

### Social Housing Projects

Since the construction sector is being relied upon as the engine for growth and economic recovery, nearly Rs 40 billion was earmarked in the recent budget for the infrastructure works associated with on-going and future projects. One of the major investments involves the construction of 12,000 social housing units across the whole island in the next three years for families earning an income of up to MUR 60,000.

### Water Supply

In line with the UN Sustainable Development Goal No. 6, that is access to clean drinking water and sanitation, a lot of investment has been made in the

storage and treatment of surface water. With a view to remedying drinking water shortages in the Port-Louis and Lower Plaines Wilhems areas, the Bagatelle Dam was constructed in 2017 having a storage capacity of 14 Mm3.

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the critical importance of sanitation, hygiene and adequate access to clean water for preventing and containing diseases. Accordingly, other projects will also be implemented in the near future as follows:

- Construction of the Rivière des Anguilles dam at an estimated cost of around Rs 7.5 billion.

- Rehabilitation of La Ferme Reservoir to improve the distribution of irrigation water to the west of the island.

- Construction of new water treatment plants at Pont Lardier and Rivière des Anguilles.

- Upgrading and rehabilitation of existing water treatment plants at Piton du Milieu, Rivière du Poste and Mont Blanc.

- Completion of pipe laying and other associated works at the Bagatelle Water Treatment Plant.

- Drilling of additional boreholes at Piton, Petite Retraite, Camp Thorel, Petit Paquet, Valriche, St Martin and Moka.

- Installation of mobile treatment plants in Mare d'Australia, Poudre d'Or, Tyack, Britannia, Beau Songes, Rivière du Poste, Beau Champs, La Marie, Valetta, Vuillemin and Goodlands.

To reduce water losses and improve the distribution of water, old water pipelines as well as defective water meters have been and are still being replaced across the island. Provisions for additional service reservoirs

have also been made in some specific regions in the island. Moreover, the government has come up with a Water Tank Grant Scheme which should prove beneficial for some 12,500 households.

### Railway and Metro Express

The first railway in Mauritius was in operation in 1864 between Port Louis and Grand River South East, covering a distance of about 50 km. By the early decades of the 20th century a network approaching 200 km of standard gauge line had been established. This mode of transport greatly facilitated general communications on the island, and movement of passengers and general freight at that time. However, following the Second World War, the railway industry came to a complete closure in 1964 due to decrease in traffic in the face of road competition and the decline in sugar cane production.

About half a decade later, the railway system re-surfaced in Mauritius connecting Port-Louis to Rose-Hill for a distance of about 13 km through the light rail transit system known as the Metro Express. The main objective of this project is to provide an alternative mode of transport to reduce traffic congestion which costs Mauritius about MUR 4 billion a year. The second phase of the Metro Express is expected to connect the other three main towns in Mauritius namely, Curepipe, Vacoas and Quatre-Bornes by 2022. The total value of the project is estimated at MUR 18.8 billion.

### Roads and Bridges

In 2015, projects at an estimated cost of Rs15.5 billion were earmarked under the new Road Decongestion Programme (RDP) with a view to alleviating traffic congestion along the main roads across the country. The following projects under the RDP are already under-construction with some nearing completion:

- The grade-separated junction at Pont Fer, Jumbo and Dowlut Roundabouts
- The A1 and M1 link Road linking Port Louis-St Jean Road at Chebel (A1) through an approximately 330 m long bridge spanning over the Grand River North West valley to Motorway M1 and the existing Ring Road Phase 1 at Sorèze.
- La Vigie – La Brasserie – Beau Songes Link Road

For the year 2020-2021. The Road Development Authority (RDA) has been provided with Rs 600 million for road maintenance, including construction of pavements and restoration of road markings and signage.

### Other major projects

Besides the above-mentioned projects, there are numerous other ongoing or planned projects. These may be summarised as follows:

- Conversion of the main bus terminals along the Port Louis – Curepipe corridor into multi-modal Urban Terminals. The Victoria Urban Terminal, which is the first such development, is already well under way and involves an investment of some MUR 1.955 billion.
- Construction of a Cruise Terminal Building at Port Louis harbour
- Miscellaneous community development projects across the island comprising such facilities as market fairs, sports centres, leisure parks, and multipurpose complexes.
- Several real estate projects comprising residential development under PDS, IRS, RES schemes, commercial and office complexes, as well as business and industrial parks.
- Several smart city projects such as Moka City, Unicity, Mon Trésor Smart City, Cap Tamarin, Beau Plan Smart City, Mont Choisy Smart City, Hermes Properties, as well as the Mauritius Jinfei Economic Trade and Cooperation Zone.

### Conclusion

The landscape of our island has been completely transformed over the 53 years since Mauritius gained its independence. Amidst an unprecedented economic backdrop due to the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasis is now being laid on boosting public investment in infrastructure projects to revive domestic economic activity. This will help to upgrade further our existing infrastructure, pending resumption of economic activities worldwide to its full-fledge capacity. Such developments will at the same time create employment and growth opportunities in the construction sector, and serve as a much-needed engine for economic growth.



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The terms Public Sector and Public Service are, interchangeably, bandied about as if they were monolithic wholes. On proper scrutiny, however, the expressions are found to refer to a wide array of institutions each with its own portfolio of services headed by a politician who is assisted by hundreds of officers in a complex hierarchical structure with clearly finely defined jobs and schedules of duties. Each office or department has now drawn its vision, its mission statement and its effectiveness areas. Thus, when an officer in a distinct departmental job performs below standard, the blame is thrown wrongly at the whole public sector and public Service. On closer analysis it is found that it is only a section of a large department that is involved. An individual officer in that department may have faulted and, as a result, he and his supervisor are being taken to task. A classic example is a medical officer who is found under pressure of work to have been guilty of gross negligence. He will either be charged before a tribunal or investigated by a disciplinary board leading to punishment.

### Public vs private

Why the necessity for the emphasis on **public**? This is clearly to differentiate it from the private sector which covers all private-funded activities whose main aim is to run a commercial undertaking. How many services would have been closed to the lower middle class who do not make enough to compete for private health? In the case of the vulnerable groups the situation would have been more critical. Also, in spite of their best endeavor, the private sector will never be able to afford all sorts of services. But in the field of medical services, one can observe the fair competition between the two sectors. Even, if in some countries, public services such as prisons have been partly privatized, it would be well-nigh impossible for the private sector to provide the whole gamut of services which the public sector can. Without the protective cover of the public sector, citizens would have been deprived of essential services such as education, social security, police protection, legal assistance and what not?

### Public sector's reach

Thus, the public sector's reach is immeasurable. Its services now reach the poorest and most outlying places. The state which used to be solely of a maintenance or regulatory nature, dealing with basic services such as the police, defence of the frontiers and the collection of taxes, has now taken on a broader gamut of services with the development of the welfare state. One Constitutional and Administrative Law expert remarked

that, in the distant past, a citizen could go through life never having had any contact with public agencies. But, nowadays, whatever he does is closely controlled by the state. The public sector has developed into a mammoth organisation whose presence is felt in every walk of life. The three main divisions of the public service are the Legislature, the Executive and the Judicature. The doctrine of the separation of powers ensures that there is no interference between these powers. Such non- interference is strictly maintained between the Legislature, the Executive on the one hand, and the Judicature on the other hand, but, in so far as the two other powers are concerned, a strict separation would grind the administration to a halt. Ministers represent the executive arm of the government and also sit in parliament where they are legislators approving acts of parliament and also in their individual offices where, with the help of the officers of the Attorney General's Office and their own administrative officers they make Regulations, Orders etc.

### The Public Service: responsive to development needs of the country

The Public Service has successfully responded to the development needs of the country. Where this has become too onerous, the state has encouraged a process of decentralisation where local government and public enterprises have been put in place with maximum autonomy. The latest case in date is the Rodrigues Regional Assembly which saw the light in the



# PUBLIC SECTOR TRANSFORMATION

year 2001. Besides, for their greater effectiveness and accountability, public corporations have been created with more or less independence of action. Institutional building and restructure have always characterized the public sector. Thus, after a general election, acting on the recommendation of a new Prime Minister, His Excellency, The President of the Republic may, without prejudice to the integrity of the public service, proceed to the reshuffling of portfolios. A classic example is Rodrigues which used to have its own minister, but is now in the Prime Minister's Office. Many of its former responsibilities have now been transferred to the autonomous Rodrigues Regional Assembly which acts as the agent of the central government. Likewise, many other departments have witnessed the removal or addition of responsibilities. Arts and culture which, since independence, used to be an integral part of the Ministry of Education, has now become a separate department. This shows the responsiveness of successive governments to the development needs of the country. The emergence of public corporations and authorities, parastatals, public companies and at a different level, a large panoply of Local Government bodies under the local Government Act again demonstrate the Public Sector's resilience and capacity to innovate and to adapt. While the private sector has not lagged behind and is now well organized in powerful bodies such as The Mauritius Employers Federation, and what's more, there is now a number of initiatives on both sides to promote a symbiosis between the two sectors.

## Transformation in the Public Service

The Public Sector or Service has undergone profound changes of a different nature. Most of public departments have customised their services. Instead of always insisting that people should be physically present to benefit from services, many of these are now taken to their doorsteps. The Ministry of Health has broken fresh grounds; elderly and disabled persons

benefit from domiciliary visits in the privacy of their homes and recently, during the Covid-19 confinement, food rations were distributed to the homes of the recipients of old age pension (BRP) and the severely disabled.. Apart from these supplementary services, the ministry provides primary education to more than 95 % of the children of school-going age, while secondary education is available for the majority of boys and girls who do not drop out of the academic stream for vocational education. There are also now technical schools for those who would like to start a job in a couple of years. The University of Mauritius started in the wake of independence as a development institution geared towards meeting the development needs of the country. There is no doubt that the University provided the essential cadres, administrative and technical, which enabled the country to break away from the bondage of years of colonialism.

## The post -independence era

Thus. the post -independence era has seen the mushrooming of public and private institutions. Cases in point have been the Waste Water Authority, the Central Water Authority, the Central Electricity Board, the Mauritius Institute of Education, the Open University and others in the field of the preservation of the environment, the protection of consumers, food security, law and order, the arbitration of private disputes, the exploration and exploitation of the living and non-living resources of our Exclusive Economic Zone as well as our Territorial Sea. The Judicature is well organised in a hierarchy of courts and tribunals with a possibility of appeal to higher courts. To ensure that people have a decent house, the Ministry of Housing and Land provides low-cost houses to the most vulnerable groups whose costs are refunded by beneficiaries over long periods of time. The ministries deliver services on a daily basis. The hospitals, dispensaries and Health and Community Centres are

crowded places where hundreds of nurses and medical officers are seen providing care to the sick. The ICU in all the hospitals deals with serious emergency cases almost every day.

### Dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic

COVID-19 has demonstrated the efficiency of our public services. The Prime Minister's Office took the lead and set up important protocols for the control of and fight against the pandemic. The government set up a monitoring committee with senior doctors and ministers which communicated with the population on a daily basis. This had the important effect of preventing panic and giving encouragement to the population to follow health directives. All this explains why the pandemic did not affect the local people on a wider scale than in the advanced countries. In the recent past the Wakashio shipwreck and the consequential

oil spillage in our southern lagoon saw the authorities deploying large numbers of private volunteers and others from the police authorities to clean the waters and marine fauna in the south. Quarantine measures have been strictly observed and continue to be in the hospitals and some hotels. While the pandemic has been working havoc in other countries, here in Mauritius, our public service has almost weathered the storm and the progress of the pandemic and our fight to contain its effects is closely monitored.

The Public Service, with the help of its partners from the Private Sector is set to face the future and the international community with confidence with the help of our traditional allies such as India, China, the USA, the UK and France. We do not forget our and close friends on our continent, in particular, those gallants one who helped us to consolidate our sovereignty at the UN and its agencies.



Mrs Soorya Nirsimloo-Gayan, GOSK

Culture includes Symbols, that are used to 'represent a particular shared meaning', Language, that enables people to communicate with one another, Values that define principles goodness, Art forms and practices, Beliefs, Customs, and Norms, that are rules that guide the conduct of members of a society, all of which shape perception of others and of self.

Fundamentally, the 'I' and the 'we' are mutually constitutive, through the constant interplay between how we behave as individuals, guided by the above, and how in turn society and the state behave towards us as individuals.

We, as Mauritians, are particularly aware of consciously participating in the building of our culture. This is inherited from the status of a colony with a peculiar mode of peopling that has resulted in a rich mix of peoples, with their customs, languages, dress and cuisine, beliefs, symbols and norms, all of which have been substantially redesigned over three centuries of hierarchically conditioned interaction.

## Introduction

The half a century or so that has passed since our independence has seen significant change in our collective behaviours, preoccupations, states of being and modes of doing.

The accelerated pace of change or transformation that has been imposed by globalisation, continues to be a ubiquitous surge. Few corners of the planet have resisted or even wished to resist the march of a triumphant Western civilization, carried by an overflow of information.

We shall not go here into what may have been lost or into wistfully thinking about 'what might have been'.

Across the world, we are living in our own ways the transformations that have been brought about, and in many ways, these changes are led, consciously or unconsciously, by the younger generations who have to deal daily with the onslaught of images, comments, counter-comments on events, that leave little time to time: responses have to be immediate.

Against this fidgety background, there are a few culture-related issues that we may ponder briefly as we prepare to celebrate the 53<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of Independence and the 29<sup>th</sup> anniversary of accession to the status of a republic.

## Culture and national ethos

It is a cliché to recall that one often hears it said that we do not feel Mauritian until we are abroad. Our personal and group identities interact in a situated manner with our sense of national identity.

To be and feel Mauritian is an elusive phenomenon. This does not mean that national feeling is absent. It is an emotion that needs no iteration. Until we are in situations that demand such a declaration, for example at international sports events, when national pride takes precedence.

Similarly, when the country is hailed as an economic success story, or when it is criticized for lack of transparency in financial transactions environments, 'we' as a nation are being scrutinized, not some abstract entity called Mauritius.

It is not inappropriate therefore to remind ourselves that culture is also about values. Our personal values determine individual behaviours and actions, but they also fashion the collective, national ethos.

Institutions of good governance are the watchdogs, but it is in the citizens that reside the responsibility and the ability to collectively construct the national ethos.





## Culture and language

In a diverse society, languages constitute a highly political and politicised issue. It impacts on nation-building, on individual educational performance and on employment prospects.

An ideal ground for contestation, as has been demonstrated on so many occasions through various manifestations of the *querelle des langues* in Mauritius.

Today, there is a degree of quietude as the sense of threat to group identities seems to be expressed through the mobilization of a whole range of strategies. Socio-cultural organisations as well as the Cultural Centres and Speaking Unions that have been set up under the Ministry responsible for Culture, continue their sustained efforts at nurturing a cultural environment conducive to learning 'ancestral' languages.

The national curriculum provides ample opportunity for the study of the language/s of one's choice. Inevitably however, the exercise of that choice is circumscribed by parental, social, economic and political considerations. And, to that extent, there is a sense of fear at the loss of ground of several of the 'ancestral' languages.

Furthermore, the formal educational provision is also increasingly challenged by new media exposure. Challenged because of the sheer power of the media to effectively establish norms in practice. The challenge is double-sided, since on the one hand, the new technologies may tend to undermine what is formal, and on the other, may be used to further the objectives of the formal curriculum for language education.

The very wide presence of Hindi/Hindustani through films and film songs is a source of exposure that no textbook can match, especially when it comes to oral skills in language learning. This is a mere opinion, but it seems to the present author that spoken Hindustani has gained ground, in several workplaces, among Mauritian and co-workers coming from the Indian sub-continent, the proximity of the new migrants and the familiarity brought about by audio-visual exposure working in tandem.

The register of Creole as used in social media is distinct from the standardized textbook version of the language and is far removed from the literary use of the language. How to broaden the exposure of learners to varieties of language remains a challenge, especially in an age when 'reading' - in the sense of reading full-length works, whether in print or electronic versions - seems to lose ground to brief, replicable, instantaneous, formulaic texts available, literally, at one's fingertips on a touchscreen.

Languages, whichever they are, are being shaped and given new characteristics and nuances.

Meanwhile, such ready daily exposure to several languages may be supporting a multi-lingual Mauritius in fresh ways, removing some of the languages out of the 'ancestral' box, creating for some new learning modes, new opportunities for oral communication and new impetus for creativity.

## Culture and heritage

The vision of the Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage is:

'To foster a balanced and harmonious Mauritian Society through consolidation of existing pluralism, promotion of creativity and the celebration of cultural values'

The appellation of the Ministry responsible for culture and the arts has been modified a few times over decades. Until 2019, Mauritius had a Minister of Arts and Culture. We now have a Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage. Such changes are revealing of changes in emphasis, at least in principle.

One may ask: Why this emphasis on heritage in the appellation of the Ministry? Is it inspired by a policy that would focus on developing a sense of national harmony through a shared understanding of the 'plural' heritage? A policy turned towards nation-building? Or does it aim at heritage as a resource to promote creativity? Creativity to support, possibly, a diversified tourism industry, or the emerging cultural Industries?

Either way, heritage holds promise. But building the awareness of a shared cultural heritage

would precede and enhance its attractiveness and efficacy in strategies having economic development objectives.

The post-independence approach, with its emphasis on the ancestral legitimacy of pluralism with regard to language and culture, rested on concepts of multiculturalism in the management of a freshly independent diverse society. This approach has provided an enabling environment for a multiplicity of cultural practices to thrive and for offering meaning and presence to all components of Mauritian society, within distinct identities.

The carvings of monuments, bridges, places of worship, historical buildings, have a different affective charge depending on one's social and cultural vantage point. The rituals, the dress, the artefacts used for ceremonies have distinct meanings and values. Our differing responses express our grasp on our plurality.

But would we differ in essential ways in the meaning that Malcolm de Chazal, the foundational imaginaire of his literary landscape, his social and philosophical thought, his art, has for each one of us? Where do we situate Basdeo Bissonndoyal, Le Bienheureux Père Laval, Serge Constantin or Murthy Nagalingum? Or Abhimanyu Unuth?

In a similar thrust, should we not be introducing the young to some of the ground-breaking productions of yesteryears, like Zozef ek so palto larkansiel, Pani Naiba, A Hymn to Woman, or other high watermarks of the Mauritian stage? Such gems as Crapo crié, the delicious hier osoir ti invité moi pou nou al dans qawal camp caval, the moving Garçon premier lot, Bel bato, that transcend language, musical or literary encasing, and ideological divide, as works of art. These are but a few glimpses into the treasure trove.

No one will dispute that Ti frer is a national heritage and a national pride: he should not remain an isolated case.

With an eye on the young, it is possible to curate this heritage, using state-of-the-art technology to respond to 21st century norms of attractiveness.

Imagine the decades of repertoire of the Plaza, the Port-Louis Theatre, the MGI Auditorium, the major art exhibitions, unfolding before our eyes as a pageant of the creative efforts of epoch-making artists.

## Culture and the arts

Un champ in need of attention.

The status of the artist is, possibly, the core of the challenge.

Recognition remains a thorny issue. Support remains

a source of dissatisfaction. The hurdles of piracy, of stable revenues, of clear parameters to gauge the value of artwork in financial and economic terms, the lack of objective data, make it difficult to articulate effective policies that support the artist.

The recognition of traditional art forms, Ségga Tipik, Geet Gawai, as part of our intangible heritage, while invaluable for national pride, need to go hand in hand with support to newer inspirations.

On another note, perhaps what is still missing is our own ability to perceive the gel that would make all these seemingly disparate elements coalesce into an identifiable and unique 'feel to the touch', unseen but there nevertheless.

Something of a Mauritian sensibility in the making, be it in terms of a 'compositeness' that defies categorization, be it in terms of an island or maritime 'atmosphere', 'mood', 'ambiance', that does not succumb to the temptation of an easy 'exoticism' (that would be uncomfortably reminiscent of late modernity), be it in terms of highly individual ways of engaging with global artistic movements in painting, sculpture, in architecture, in design generally.

Meantime, at popular levels, the mixing and kneading goes on with verve. Who knows what may come out of it all?

## On symbols

A sense of nationhood is also built on strong symbols.

If I may be allowed a small anecdote, I am reminded of a conversation with a 13-year-old a few days ago. We were discussing the lyrics of the national anthem. She asked, somewhat despondent: 'where is peace (of mind) with unresolved crimes and violence? Where is justice if the perpetrators are not brought before the law?'

She expressed a sense of bafflement at the wide gap that she saw between the words of the national anthem and her understanding of immediate reality.

National symbols cannot be devoid of substance, the national anthem cannot be a mere slogan, if our hearts are to sway with the colours of the flag. Our proverbial 'vivre ensemble' has to grow deeper roots. All this depends on how as individual citizens we conduct our daily business and our daily lives.

There are few certitudes relating to the present. There are many and gaping uncertainties about the future. Doubt breeds scepticism. Without ideals, hope falters.

The national anthem's celebration of peace, justice, liberty, along with national unity, articulates the values that, in principle, underpin individual as well as collective life. And that, in short, puts in clear terms our shared cultural aspirations and our shared national ethos.



Relater près de 75 ans d'histoire du sport à Maurice en quelques lignes ne peut que s'avérer fastidieux et présomptueux. C'est pour cela que l'on se contentera de retracer les faits saillants qui ont marqué son développement, les événements majeurs qui ont jalonné son évolution ainsi que les épreuves qui ont pu ralentir ou freiner son avancement. Le but principal de cet article se veut être un bref survol de ces moments qui ont fait l'histoire du sport à Maurice.

Mr Jacques Malié

### L'ère pré- indépendance

Et si on remontait quelque peu à l'ère pré- indépendance et aux premiers jalons du sport local. A l'ère coloniale, le sport était avant tout pratiqué par une élite, voire quelques institutions étatiques – une sorte d'héritage légué principalement par la vieille Albion : il existait très peu de clubs, mais ceux-ci étaient déjà bien structurés et organisés ; quelques disciplines sportives, principalement les sports d'équipe, (le football, le rugby, le hockey sur gazon et le cricket) et des sites de compétition sur un gazon anglais verdoyant, situés dans la région du Gymkhana à Vacoas et du centre-ville à Curepipe. Fait remarquable : certains des tout premiers clubs à évoluer en Division Supérieure étaient issus des collèges- phares de l'époque, à savoir le Collège Royal de Curepipe, le Collège St. Joseph et le Collège du Saint- Esprit qui briguaient et remportaient même les titres.

### Création de la Mauritius Sport Association

Très vite, le besoin d'une véritable structuration et de fédération se fit sentir, et c'est ainsi qu'en 1952, la Mauritius Sport Association prit naissance avec pour siège le Stade George V où se déroulaient les Assemblées Générales, les sessions du Comité Exécutif ainsi que les différentes compétitions. Même les premières épreuves d'athlétisme, avec comme pôle d'attraction les relais inter- clubs, s'y déroulaient en lever de rideau des rencontres de football. La MSA, comme le sigle l'indique, regroupait quelques disciplines sportives très prisées mais le sport de prédilection demeurait le football. C'est la toute première 'fédération' à s'octroyer une reconnaissance internationale (1965). La MSA s'occupait de la gestion de toutes les autres associations existantes, regroupées en des sous-commissions individuelles mais pas encore autonomes.

Les années 1960 allaient très vite voir s'émerger de nouveaux clubs qui étaient avant tout des clubs omnisports, certains dotés de leur propre siège ou club-house. Autre caractéristique majeure à signaler ; ces clubs, à caractère communal pour la plupart, étaient financés par les quotités de leurs membres et tous étaient marqués par le sceau de bénévolat. Les dirigeants, comme les joueurs qui évoluaient au sein des différentes équipes, n'étaient motivés que par pure passion.

### L'émergence du sport scolaire

Parallèlement, les années 1960 allaient voir l'émergence du sport scolaire avec l'Association de quelques collèges fondateurs grâce à l'apport de quelques éducateurs (les 'P.E Teachers'), extrêmement dévoués et engagés. Il est vrai qu'au tout début, il n'y avait qu'un nombre restreint de collèges- participants mais très vite, la MSSSA allait connaître un essor fulgurant et le sport scolaire allait connaître un engouement jamais égalé dans beaucoup de pays, aux dires mêmes des experts qui nous visitaient en matière sportive. Ce fut un temps où le sport faisait partie intégrante de l'éducation et était conçu comme vecteur d'enseignement de valeurs, où sport rimait avec joie et fête. Le vieux stade de Rose-Hill, gorgé d'étudiants de tout bord en pleine effervescence, pouvait témoigner. Et au- delà de cet esprit imprégné du sens d'appartenance à son institution, de la fierté de porter tout haut ses couleurs, il faudrait surtout mettre en exergue la contribution de ces jeux au plan purement sportif. Les Joutes épiques de ces Inter-collèges, toutes disciplines confondues ont longtemps été le fournisseur intarissable de talents au niveau national, un vivier pour les différentes sélections représentant le pays pour tous les groupes d'âge, bref une pépinière de jeunes sportifs doués, dont les performances et autres





records résonnent encore. Nulle surprise que ces compétitions, ces jeux d'athlétisme étaient fortement médiatisés et mêmes retransmis en direct alors que la télévision nationale elle-même était à ses premiers balbutiements.

### Pelé, Eusebio, Platini et les autres au stade Georges V

Cette période faste qui allait durer quelques 35 années demeure un des temps forts du sport mauricien. Elle allait aussi coïncider avec une période fructueuse en termes d'échanges. Entretemps, la MSA avait engagé des négociations avec le Comité International Olympique. C'est ainsi que le CNOM fut fondé en 1971, reconnu par le CIO en 1972. Maurice a participé à tous les Jeux Olympiques depuis 1984 et a remporté une unique mais précieuse médaille de bronze (Bruno Julie – 2008). Le CNOM allait continuer à opérer sous l'égide de la MSA et le football allait demeurer la discipline sportive privilégiée. Et la MSA, forte de ses nouvelles relations au niveau international et de son avance en matière d'organisation sur le continent Africain, allait devenir un pôle d'attraction hautement prisé. Toujours en football, on retiendra surtout le tournoi triangulaire Maurice- Réunion- Madagascar, un peu le prélude aux Jeux de L'Océan Indien. En 1974, pour la seule fois de son histoire, l'équipe nationale de football fut qualifiée pour la Finale de la Coupe Africaine des Nations. Plusieurs grandes équipes venant d'Angleterre (Tottenham, Burnley, Cardiff), de L'Inde (Mohun Bagan F.C), de la Suisse (F.C Sion, F.C Lucerne) ou encore de France (l'équipe Militaire, le Variété Club) allait rencontrer nos sélections nationales et autres équipes de 1ere Division au stade George V. Et que dire des légendes à avoir foulé ce même terrain : Pelé, Eusebio, M.Platini, Pat Jennings, John Charles etc.

### Une nouvelle politique sportive

La véritable révolution dans le monde du sport allait s'opérer dans la première moitié des années 80 avec tout d'abord une nouvelle politique sportive : l'entrée en vigueur des 3 <D>

- Démocratisation (rendre le sport accessible à tous)
- Décentralisation (avec un accent prononcé sur la régionalisation, notamment en matière d'infrastructure) et
- Décommunalisation (l'ouverture des clubs à caractère communal à d'autres communautés)

Dans le sillage de ce vaste chantier, le gouvernement allait venir de l'avant avec le **Sports Act de 1984** qui avait principalement pour but la création des Fédérations sportives autonomes et une séparation des pouvoirs. Ainsi la MSA serait désormais connu comme la MFA. Toutes ces décisions majeures étaient pourvues de bonnes intentions, visant à aider toutes les disciplines sportives à une meilleure gestion, une organisation sans faille et une popularité accrue.

### Jeux des îles de L'Océan Indien

Et comme pour donner un nouvel élan à ce vaste mouvement, L'île Maurice allait se porter candidate à l'organisation des 2emes Jeux des îles de L'Océan Indien – qui eurent lieu en 1985. Auparavant, L'île de la Réunion, forte de l'aval du CNOSF et de l'aide financière substantielle de la France avait pris la louable initiative d'organiser les 1ers Jeux en 1979. La Charte des Jeux, elle, avait été signée en 1978 et allait, par la suite, donner bien des soucis aux différents pays membres, surtout en ce qu'il s'agit de l'Article 28 ayant trait à la nationalité des participants. Qu'importe, les objectifs de ces jeux étaient fort louables : au- delà de

servir la cause sportive, la jeunesse en particulier et créer un esprit de solidarité et d'amitié entre les peuples inter-îles, les Jeux offraient une occasion unique pour doter ces îles d'infrastructures sportives. Ce dont allait profiter Maurice avec la construction de la première piscine olympique, l'aménagement des gymnases pour les différentes disciplines au programme et la rénovation des stades. Même si Maurice ne remporta pas ces Jeux, l'île allait sortir grandie. C'est à juste titre qu'elle allait être décernée la médaille d'Or de l'hospitalité malgré le peu de moyens dont elle disposait, notamment en sites d'hébergement : (les écoles et collèges du Centre de Rose-Hill avaient été transformés pour les besoins). Mais ce qui devait retenir l'attention de tous, c'était l'ambiance et l'effervescence qui y régnaient. Jamais auparavant, l'île avait connu un tel élan patriotique. Ce devait être de même en 2003 lors de la 6ème édition chez nous à Maurice, et tout récemment en 2018. Au fil des années, ces Jeux allaient se pérenniser : ils font désormais partie intégrante du paysage sportif dans les îles, malgré quelques signes d'essoufflement pour ce qui est de l'intérêt général des pays qui y participent.

### L'Année – Phare 1985 :

L'année 1985 aura donc été une année charnière dans l'histoire du sport : au-delà du succès retentissant des Jeux, le sport aura pris son véritable envol. Les Fédérations, désormais indépendantes, étaient prêtes à prendre en main leur destinée et surtout à collaborer avec le Ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports pour une nouvelle politique sportive avec comme base de la pyramide, la formation des jeunes : les écoles de sport, les Centres de Formation, avec à leur tête les Directeurs Techniques Nationaux étrangers, allaient prendre naissance et très vite accueillir une jeunesse prête à émuler leurs aînés qui les avaient fait vibrer. Grâce à l'apport des DTN et de leurs nombreux contacts à l'étranger, les sélections de jeunes pouvaient participer avec succès à des compétitions en France. La récolte en termes de médailles aux Jeux d'Afrique pouvait commencer et Maurice pouvait encore une fois montrer son savoir-faire en termes d'organisation : à titre d'exemple, le 8ème championnat d'Afrique Junior de football en 1993 sur nos terres, avec à la clé, une mémorable victoire sur le Cameroun (2-1). En athlétisme, l'organisation des championnats d'Afrique attirait un nombre considérable des pays du Continent, avec des athlètes de renommée mondiale. Et pour couronner le tout, les plus doués de nos sportifs pouvaient, dès lors, évoluer au sein des équipes professionnelles en France, en Corée ou encore aux Etats-Unis. Certains y ont élu même domicile et ne sont jamais revenus. Malheureusement, en sport, il n'y a pas que des victoires. Il faut aussi son lot d'échecs et le nouveau siècle allait apporter bien des changements et ceux-ci pas toujours favorables. A siècle nouveau, nouveaux défis, serait-t-on tenté de dire.

Les Jeux Inter-collèges étaient victimes de leur succès et de leur gigantisme. Avec le nombre grandissant d'institutions y participant, l'impossibilité d'imposer une organisation digne de ce nom devenait évidente. Les autorités essayèrent bien de mettre bon ordre avec une nouvelle configuration et une nouvelle orientation axée sur la régionalisation mais rien n'y fut.

### Arrêt du football et retrait des clubs à caractère communal

Le monde footballistique allait connaître, à son tour, bien des déboires. 1999 nous ramène à des souvenirs sombres et tristes, car elle a été marquée par des scènes de violence au stade lors de l'ultime rencontre du Championnat et de la tragédie qui s'ensuivit à l'Amicale. Tous ces événements allaient entraîner l'arrêt pur et simple du football pendant plusieurs mois. La reprise, une fois de plus axée sur une base de régionalisation, et le retrait des clubs à caractère communal n'aura pas connu de résultats probants : la faute surtout à une crise identitaire. Il y a bien eu l'espoir suscité par ce qu'on a appelé la " professionnalisation " du football pour la saison 2014-2015 mais force est de constater que cela a aussi été un échec, car un club professionnel ne peut dépendre que des subsides que les autorités mettent à sa disposition. Le concept demande plus d'implication et une structuration professionnelle complète à tous les niveaux, avec une attention toute particulière à la formation.

La contradiction veut qu'aujourd'hui il existe à travers l'île des aménités sportives de qualité, que la plupart des Fédérations bénéficient de sources de financement de l'état, de la prise en charge des jeunes et de l'élite, des facilités de formation à travers les stages à l'étranger.... Mais les résultats tardent à se manifester.

On pourrait longuement épiloguer sur le désintéressement, voire l'indifférence totale de la population pour le mouvement sportif dans son ensemble – hormis les Jeux des îles 2018 – et évoquer le manque d'investissement au sein des équipes, les transformations de société avec l'apport de la technologie, les retransmissions des matches en direct des différents championnats étrangers, les nombreux loisirs qui attirent nos jeunes, la gestion même des clubs, l'absence de dirigeants formés mais tout cela susciterait bien des débats.



**Jean Lindsay Dhookit**

Mauritius is set to launch its first satellite in May. By setting our foot in space we shall be able to start exploring what space/satellite technology has in store for us. The first thing that comes to mind is the exploitation - to the full! - of the stream of images that our satellite (MIR-SAT1) will be sending as it passes over our region (four to five times daily). This first Mauritian satellite will also enhance communication with the neighbouring islands while allowing us to explore new job opportunities in the satellite/space sector.

But perhaps the greatest challenge for our new republic lies more down to earth – in the literal sense of the word! Our demand for petroleum products keeps rising annually by some 5% to 6.5 % and for last year alone they amounted to nearly 900 million US \$. No modern economy can get along without electricity and a fair amount of our petroleum imports goes to the production of that vital form of energy - after the propelling of vehicles (so essential to the mobility of people, goods and services.)

An alternative to petroleum products for the production of electricity is obviously renewable sources of energy (solar, biomass, wind, hydro and tide waves.) Although bagasse (sugar cane waste) is currently the leading source of renewable energy, solar and wind are catching up and right now there are 11 solar photovoltaic farms and two wind farms over the island.

Unfortunately the production of electricity from sun and wind often takes place in an intermittent manner. (When the sun is not shining and the wind is not blowing, no electricity can be generated!) This would not have been a problem if an efficient technique had been found to store the excess electricity produced during periods of 'plenty' and use it during periods of shortage. But until then, we must find a way to maintain the balance

between supply and demand (at all times!) so as to avoid power outage and its resulting cascading problems.

Copenhagen (a big city of 80,000 inhabitants) produces more than 50% of its electricity from renewable sources and aims to be completely fossil free by 2050. It makes use of Smart Grids to regulate any imbalance between supply and demand. There should be no reason, then, why sun-drenched Mauritius (a 'big city' of 1.2 million inhabitants) – that gets far more sunshine than Copenhagen - cannot emulate that Danish city!

Our current grid transports electricity in only one direction – because electricity can only flow from power plants to consumers – and at all times, a human controller has to equilibrate supply and demand by making use of statistical models relying on past data. For example, a higher flow of electricity would be transmitted during peak hours (when all factories of the 'zone franche' are running at full capacity) and a lesser flow would take place after midnight – when most of us are in bed!

The Smart Grid, on the other hand, is superior in two ways. First, it allows electricity to flow in both directions between power plants and consumers. Thus if I am producing my own electricity by means of solar panels, the Smart Grid will transfer the electricity produced in surplus to the power grid on very sunny days while recuperating electricity from the grid on cloudy or rainy days. Secondly the grid does so without human interference. It gets the ability to think on its own by means of computers and sensors at various points along the transmission line – hence the appendage "smart"!

If no modern economy can get along without an efficient management of electricity, it should also not fail to pay due care to the health of its inhabitants. The Covid-19 is just a stark reminder that we are not masters of nature and it might well be the first in the long line of tiny, microscopic viruses that can bring economies (even mighty ones!) to a halt. But need we be powerless?

There are vaccines, of course. However, more often than not, we resort to vaccines when it is a wee bit too late and a better way, perhaps, to control any pandemic is to make use of surveillance tools – well before it starts to become a real troublemaker (by forcing us to resort to a lockdown and bring the economy to a halt!). And this is where the smartphone steps in!

By touching the screen of a smart phone and clicking on a link, an individual can make a government aware of his body temperature, blood pressure, and location.



The ruling organisation will know that this person is sick even before he knows it! and by taking the right steps it can drastically shorten the chain of infections, if not cutting it altogether. If this mode of detection becomes a compulsion (by a decree), there will inevitably be roars of protest. But given a choice between privacy and health, any sensible population will choose health. And of course, people when told about scientific facts (through the Radio/TV) will usually comply without Big Brother watching over their shoulders. I don't see why we should be an exception!

It is also no secret that our hospitals are always overcrowded. Doctors have barely a minute to attend to their patients and some (so I've heard but which I find hard to believe) don't so much as cast a glance to the sufferer before issuing the standard prescription of Panadol! But here once more, the smartphone can come to our rescue. For, we may well be nearing the era of telemedicine when, by means of an appropriate software lodged inside a smart phone, a patient will be able to send crucial medical information (ranging from vitals to glucose levels) to a doctor – thereby permitting the latter to make a diagnosis without the patient setting foot in hospital! Better still, before liaising with the doctor, the patient might even consult a central computer – once more through her smartphone – to get a pre-diagnosis. This will inform whether her state of health is so serious, as to need the attention of a doctor.

If the Smartphone can come to our rescue by helping us to combat pandemics or consult a doctor in the comfort of our home, nonetheless we must not let it take undue control of our lives. Right now, people working on the same floor of a building communicate with each other just by typing messages on their smart phones. They are so busy replying to emails/messages or reading articles that have gone viral on Facebook (the more fake an article is, the more likely it will go viral!) that they don't even notice others around. Or consider the family who sits for dinner around a table where father, mother, son and daughter, have their smartphones glued to their ears, scarcely aware of each other's presence and just chomping mechanically – their taste buds no longer receptive to the tasty dish that has taken hours to get cooked in the kitchen, if it is not a pizza ordered from the local Pizzeria through a smart phone! And during recess in the school yard, no more running, hide and seek, rope skipping (just to mention these few) or laughing. So busy are these small kids engrossed with their smart phones. Need we go on?

But why end on this sombre note? There is hope. We have a vibrant youth that can choose the right habits if only given the opportunity. Gymnasiums and fitness centres are popping all over the country and it is to be hoped that Mauritius will soon be endowed with a network of bicycle lanes. Instead of commuting by

public transport (or vans!) kids can ride their bikes to go to school – the more so, if the school lies in the catchment area! Furthermore, every school should be encouraged to have its own garden patch; thus, after having followed theoretical courses on agriculture in the classroom, the primary or secondary student will be able to exert her muscles - in the open air! - by putting in practice what she has learnt (about the latest technology of soil and crop cultivation).

Science and technology goes hand in hand. Fifty years ago, Korea was one of the world's poorest countries but it is now "the home of Samsung, Kia and Hyundai" – and if this country has experienced such an extraordinary economic rise, it is thanks to science! In Mauritius, however, science does not seem to enjoy "la côte d'amour". Only a meagre percentage of our students are opting for Physics, Chemistry and Biology at SC level and this low enrolment in science subjects is – to say the least! - rather worrying!

Should we just blame the students or should we tackle the problem at the roots? Well, how do we go about in the teaching of science? Are we not just focusing on the "didactic" aspect where the aim (in a nutshell!) is to teach and convince the student rather than excite his interest? Should only the teacher be the "knower" while the student just sits passively, listens and takes notes. Shouldn't the student be encouraged to discuss about what he is being taught rather than just gobble it? Shouldn't we make science more fun by connecting it to everyday life? We could go on and on. But this is an urgency that should be quickly addressed – and is that asking too much if we were to take the cue from Korea or Singapore?

Jean Lindsay Dhookit