



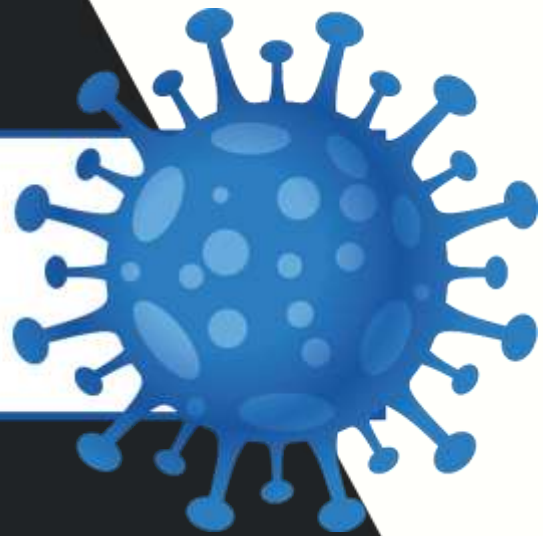
Republic of Mauritius

# ***e-NEWSLETTER***

*Issue 1 – July 2020*

***Special***

**COVID-19**



***Edition***

**Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms**  
***A professional public service committed to excellence***

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**Special Note:** The second edition of the e-Newsletter will focus on “*Business Transformation in the Public Service*”. The Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms would welcome submissions on the theme from Public Officers to be considered for publication. All submissions are to be made on [mcsa-ar@govmu.org](mailto:mcsa-ar@govmu.org).

### Disclaimer

Articles appearing in this 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

### **The Honourable Teeruthraj HURDOYAL Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms**

I am deeply honoured to be part of this very first e-newsletter. I have no doubt that it would be *'un outil d'information'* to make people aware of all activities this Ministry is undertaking.

As Minister of the Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms, I must admit that now this Ministry has a broader portfolio. And I am pleased to witness that we are relentlessly pursuing all efforts to enhance standards in Public Service Delivery and transform into a World Class Public Service.

This year, we have been hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. Nobody was prepared for such an unprecedented calamity. The COVID-19 has put to test the resilience and the capability of our public sector to face such

a unique event despite the fact that most public officers had to be confined at home. Our frontliners in the Health Sector and the Mauritius Police Force responded admirably and were on duty all throughout the crisis. I wish to seize this opportunity to pay tribute to all those who demonstrated patience and commitment in serving their country loyally.

One of our topmost priority is the implementation of the Public Sector Business Transformation Strategy. I would like to state my firm commitment, in ensuring that the transformative journey will be pursued relentlessly in our quest, to put the Citizens and the business community at the centre of Public Service delivery. We shall ensure that the Public Service is at the forefront of innovation and technology and driven by an organisational culture geared towards performance and excellence. The Ministry has already embarked upon the promotion of a lean, flexible and citizen-centric Public Service, which upholds the principles of good governance and ethics.

As soon as I took office as Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms, several initiatives were undertaken in line with the Public Sector Business Transformation Strategy.

The Strategy calls for a collective response, for a systematic, integrated and coordinated approach, to prepare the Public Service to remain efficient, resilient and responsive.

We have launched a Management Information System to enable all the 39 Transformation Implementation Committees to manage Business Transformation Initiatives in their Ministries and Departments. This system is a key tool for the Public Sector Business Transformation Bureau of my Ministry in supporting Ministries and Departments to successfully implement transformation initiatives and projects while ensuring that Key Performance Indicators set are within targets.

The forthcoming initiatives of the Ministry is to set up an innovation and incubation lab to showcase the potential of a wave of innovations that will allow us to re-engineer the Public Service. For instance, the applicability of Artificial Intelligence to improve health care and other Government services would be showcased.

Our Ministry is responsible for the training of public officers, in order to equip them with the necessary competencies. Since November 2015, the Civil Service College Mauritius has provided training to some 30,000 public officers. A plot of land to an extent of "9 Acres 13 Perch" at Le Réduit Triangle has already been identified for the construction of a new College which will have a pivotal role to play in capacity building and human resource development in the Civil Service.

The College will act as a regional Centre of Excellence for Training and Development, a Research Centre for governance and policy-related issues. Since I took office, I have urged the Civil Service College Mauritius to devise an action plan to double the intake of Public Officers for training.

My priority is to transform the Public Service into a world-class citizen-centric institution and as Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms, I pledge my utmost commitment and my unflinching support in ensuring that the public service continues to play its role.



## MESSAGE

### **Mr N.K. Ballah, GOSK** **Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service**

It is no secret that public services across the world are prone to unfair criticisms and traditionally they have not enjoyed a good press. And our own public service is no exception. Our achievements are often treated as 'fait divers' while our problems make headlines and are hotly debated in the media. Liberal commentators have been giving vent to the idea that the public service is an overhead supported by an economic surplus and that it is inherently unproductive and unmanageable.

But the COVID-19 crisis came as a stark reminder that the public service still matters a lot and it has a crucial role to play at the heart of the State in guaranteeing the safety and security of the population. COVID-19 has amply demonstrated that the public service is not a luxury or an ornament - it is an essential element of a modern society.

The global phenomenon of COVID-19 has had a profound impact on our lives, livelihood and on our overall way of life, thus giving rise to enormous challenges, not only for governments but also for their public services. Consequently, our public service has had to come up with innovative, fast, flexible and robust solutions, across the board, so as to live up to the expectations of our citizens.

Ever since the outbreak of the pandemic in Wuhan in December last, the Government in Mauritius acted with much foresight and took the right decisions at the right time. The public service, as the executive arm of the Government, showed remarkable resilience and rapidly re-engineered itself to respond to the exigencies of the new post-Covid realities. When we were called upon to wage the war against the COVID-19 on the frontline, and at the same time maintain the essential services of the State, we have had to re-invent ourselves so as to rise up to these challenges and deliver on our mandate. In an unprecedented unity, sparked by the unprecedented shared adversity, the public service took centre stage in the response to the crisis and fought the battle with zeal and determination.

The public service was also called upon to implement a host of measures in order to mitigate the impact of the pandemic, and of the containment measures, on the population and reduce their hardship, particularly of the most vulnerable families.

As public officers we have had to innovate and find ways and means to make things work in a situation we had never experienced in our lifetime. We developed the Work Access Permit to maintain the essential services and minimal economic activities, thus ensuring safety and security and reducing hardship during the curfew period. Moreover, appropriate instructions were issued to all public sector organisations to implement the recommended preventive measures so as to protect the health of all employees at the workplace, as recommended by the International Labour Organization.

Our public health services established a new type of partnership with the private sector to enhance our response to the pandemic. Hotels were requisitioned for use as quarantine centres. The contribution of private enterprises were enlisted for the manufacture and supply of hand sanitizers, face masks and other protective items for the local market.

The procurement rules were amended rapidly to enable urgent procurement of medical supplies and equipment from abroad. The concept of work-from-home, flexible working hours and the extensive use of technology in running Government business are now on top of the public service agenda. Some of these changes will certainly outlast the current COVID-19 crisis and become the new norms.

We have all along been mindful of the need to discharge our mandate in accordance with the law and respectful of the constitutional rights of our citizens. The one task that has so far proved to be particularly complex and challenging is the repatriation of all our compatriots who are stranded abroad. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, under the guidance of the High-Level Committee chaired by the Prime Minister, is doing its utmost best to bring back all stranded Mauritian nationals in a phased and orderly manner.

We can today safely say that COVID-19 is well under control in our country and this is largely thanks to the commitment, dedication, courage and professionalism of our public officers, particularly our frontliners, including first and foremost our doctors, nurses and other health care workers, police officers and employees in other essential services. They have been dedicating themselves, heart and soul, at the service of the nation in these testing and trying times. Once again I would like to pay tribute to all our heroes who led the fight against COVID-19 on the front.

We can take comfort in the fact that we have in our public service a team of very capable and dedicated men and women who have been discharging their duties with the highest degree of integrity and professionalism and have made a real difference in the lives of our people. Our public service rose to the COVID-19 challenge with its usual distinction and demonstrated that it is not only fit for purpose but is also a service which the country can be proud of.

***N. K. B***



## MESSAGE

### **Mr S. Ragen Secretary for Public Service**

I am deeply honoured to be associated with the launching of the first edition of the quarterly e-newsletter of the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms. Let me take this opportunity to thank the editorial team and all stakeholders who have contributed to this laudable initiative.

The idea of coming forward with an e-Newsletter at the Ministry emerged in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. As Secretary for Public Service, I was privileged and also moved to witness the brightest side as well as one of the most challenging moments of the history of the Public Service since independence. I am also humbled to have been requested to supervise the Ministry of Health and Wellness and help to steer Government action in the frontline at a time when the pandemic was striking our country unabatedly.

At the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms, we were receptive as well as thrilled with the proposal to capture those intense moments and share them not only within the Public Service but also ensuring its wider dissemination.

The first edition of the e-newsletter is therefore devoted towards paying tribute to the zeal, inventiveness and invaluable contribution of our selfless Public Officers during these difficult moments. Against all odds and as a team, our Public Officers were determined to go the extra mile to ensure uninterrupted services to the population.

Readers will come across the testimony of Public Officers serving in their respective Ministry or Department who have displayed the capacity to unleash their potential to produce extraordinary outcomes for a common cause, that is, to keep our citizens safe and fulfilling their needs.

The aim of the e-newsletter is also to draw the spotlight on the immense contribution of the Public Service to the socio-economic development of the country. A prominent part of the publication will focus on our strategy to embrace a transformation journey that will lead us towards achieving excellence in Public Service delivery driven by innovation and technology and an elevated organisational culture.

We will also endeavour to underscore the functioning and complexity of the Public Service and bring into perspective contemporary approaches to Public Sector Management while benchmarking on International best practices in such areas like organisational development, ethics, performance management, accountability and disruptive technologies like Artificial Intelligence and Data Analytics.

I would encourage your esteemed contribution and feedback in order to help in building strong foundations for a high-quality publication and thus making the quarterly e-newsletter recognised and referenced at regional and global levels.

I wish you all a pleasant reading!

## MAURICE SE DISTINGUE MONDIALEMENT FACE AU COVID-19

Dès l'Antiquité, les hommes ont dû faire face à des épidémies qui duraient souvent plusieurs années. La peste, qui remonte à l'Égypte pharaonique, le choléra, la variole, le typhus, la "grippe espagnole" de 1918, et plus près de nous, les virus Zika et Ebola, le chikungunya et le SRAS. Ses épidémies sont donc récurrentes depuis toujours, mais le monde moderne, habitué à tout maîtriser, les supporte mal.

La République de Maurice présente à la fois une vulnérabilité et une force, toutes deux particulières vis-à-vis des épidémies. La vulnérabilité est liée au succès de son industrie touristique, qui amène en grande quantité dans l'île, des touristes du monde entier, entre autres de Chine. Sa force tient à la protection que lui confère son insularité et un long passé de lutte contre la malaria, qui l'a doté d'un excellent service de santé public.

Maurice s'est distingué mondialement par une réponse à la pandémie particulièrement efficace, caractérisée par la prise de mesures rapides, graduées, contrôlées et coordonnées au plus haut niveau. Quotidiennement, des mois durant, un **High Level Committee**, présidé par le Premier ministre lui-même, regroupant ministres, forces de l'ordre, conseillers, OMS et hauts fonctionnaires a analysé l'évolution des situations internationale, régionale et locale, suivi la progression des connaissances scientifiques, et a pris les mesures importantes pour le pays.

Ainsi, avant le premier cas, et dès le 23 janvier, les passagers chinois et ceux venant de Wuhan, quelles que soient leurs nationalités furent mis en quarantaine. Tous les autres passaient par un contrôle sanitaire (prise de température, analyse de la fiche de santé) et une surveillance de chaque passager lors des 14 premiers jours dans l'île. Le 16 mars, les passagers en provenance de l'Europe ne pourraient plus entrer à Maurice.

Le 18 mars, le Premier ministre annonça la découverte des trois premiers cas, et dès le lendemain, des mesures radicales furent prises: confinement sanitaire avec fermeture des frontières, droit de circuler uniquement pour les personnes des services essentiels. Le 24 mars, le



confinement devint complet, avec la fermeture de tous les commerces y compris des supermarchés. Les plus démunis ne furent pas oubliés avec la distribution de 35 000 colis alimentaires. Un **Covid Fund** fut créé, des soutiens

financiers à l'emploi furent mis en place, et les personnes âgées furent vaccinées contre la grippe à domicile. Le **Quarantine Act**, et le COVID Bill donnèrent les moyens légaux pour répondre à l'épidémie. Les distances physiques, le port du masque en public et au travail devinrent obligatoires et perdurent.

“ Maurice s'est distingué mondialement par une réponse à la pandémie particulièrement efficace, caractérisée par la prise de mesures rapides, graduées, contrôlées et coordonnées au plus haut niveau. ”

La réponse sanitaire se développa vite : arrivées massives d'équipements de protection, de médicaments essentiels par avions spécialement affrétés, commandes de respirateurs additionnels et de nouveaux extracteurs pour le laboratoire, hôpitaux et hôtels dédiés aux patients infectés, *contact tracing* autour des 28 cas infectés amenant au diagnostic de 123 cas reliés et arrêtant la propagation de l'infection dans la communauté, quarantaines systématiques pour les personnes rentrant au pays, empêchant ainsi 94 personnes contaminées d'en contaminer d'autres. Des COVID *testing centers*, créés dans les cours des hôpitaux, permettent diagnostic et triage des patients symptomatiques. Sur les 337 cas diagnostiqués, 10 patients décédèrent, les autres sont guéris.

Des rapatriements de milliers de Mauriciens en détresse dans le monde s'organisent. Les hôtels de l'île accueillent en quarantaines, au frais de l'État, des Mauriciens malades, âgés ou en situation financière critique.

Maurice a su donner l'exemple d'une riposte très efficace à la crise sanitaire et fait partie du cercle étroit des pays « COVID safe », mais de nombreux défis attendent encore le pays, entre autres la réouverture des frontières et le retour des touristes, essentiels à l'économie du pays.

**Dr (Mrs) Catherine Gaud**  
Senior Adviser on Public Health Matters

## COVID-19 – A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

Future is uncertain. Hegel calls it “the old moth that works underground”. Ortega Y Gasset adds that “we do not know what is happening and it is precisely that which is happening”. The complexity of our world today excludes any simplistic prediction.

I was praying and asking God for strength and courage when the COVID-19 call for duty came on Sunday 1 March 2020 at 11.20 hrs as the deadly virus trespassed our frontiers and shook the foundations of our very robust health surveillance system.

God works in mysterious ways and **Shakespeare** in King Lear confirms “*the Gods are just and of our pleasant vices make instruments to plague us*”. Was COVID-19 God’s response to man’s abuse or folly? Time may tell. But time itself is an issue. We always complain about lack of time and suddenly we got plenty. **Lamartine’s** exclamation “*Ô temps suspend ton vol*” became almost prophetic. It is difficult to argue with **Hawkings** on time, particularly when he says that “*there is no beginning nor end*”; but on 2 June 2020, I completed a 92 days’ cycle of personal engagement, working relentlessly seven days a week, alone at Head Office assisted by a small team of senior officers working from home and another team of State Trading Corporation officers working both from home and office. Work was hectic and involved many meetings, a lot of discussions and daily decisions, often collective, sometimes individual. In such moments the Shakespearean line “*uneasy the head on which lies the crown*” from Henry the Fourth becomes most revealing.

My area was primarily, supply of essential commodities like petroleum products, LPG, Rice, Flour and ensuring price control, fair trading and consumer rights and protection, but also ancillary procurement of medicines, medical equipment and their air and sea freight. The engagement was exceptional in more ways than one. It was an enchanting vista in which nonsense, pedantry, amateurism, aloofness, haphazardness, procrastination, risk avoidance, insipidity, laziness and the other paraphernalia of the proverbial inefficient civil servant had been eradicated. Equally, no impediment, no delaying tactics, no



stumbling block, no yes but, no subject to, no blocking factor, all replaced by steadiness of purpose, convergence of views and unity in action. The portrait of a Civil Service devoid of its ugly traits, its limpness, its financial gluttony and its legendary amorphousness. A transformation which happened, to borrow the words of **T.S. Elliot** “*not with a big bang but a silent whimper*”.

The genie in Aladdin’s tale in *The Thousand and One Nights* escaped human control once it was out of the bottle. Did the COVID-19 virus also? No one knows but it is fitting to appose that **Heracitus’** response to human stupidity was always a savage laughter, which unfortunately is not a vaccine, at least not yet. Nearer in time, **William Wordsworth** expressed his despair thus “*Have I not reason to lament when I see what man has made of man?*” The pandemic has been aptly termed an invisible enemy and undoubtedly it was. As a former uniformed and army trained officer, I found that the State’s response was no less war-like and Churchillian, both in approach and action.

The small Ministerial team involved was both a War Cabinet and the Central Command. The Prime Minister’s Office was the Advanced Military Post and the Ministry of Health and Wellness the Tactical Operations Unit. Then there was the rank and file or if you would, the front liners. **Alfred Lord Tennyson** says of them: “*Theirs’ not to make a reply, Theirs’ not to reason why, Theirs’ but to do and die*”. Amen. Nothing else needs be said.

The COVID-19 pandemic was unprecedented. True, it was, but no longer. It is a real precedent. Why do I fear that it will become an “*open and shut*” parenthesis soon? That would to be too sad, too dramatic.

“*Tyrants, like plagues are great only because we are on knees*” says **De Tocqueville**. And **Sir Walter Bagehot** reminds us that “*no man can argue on his knees*”. **Hemingway**, for his part says that “*man can be destroyed but never defeated*.”

The response of tiny but mighty Mauritius to that is to be found, in the beautiful middle couplet of our Motherland. Remember, if you would “*As one People, as one Nation*”.

**J. P. Rangan**  
Permanent Secretary  
Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection



## MANAGING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The World Health Organization (WHO) had estimated that the Republic of Mauritius, an island of 2,000 km<sup>2</sup> and a population density among the highest in the world (626 per km<sup>2</sup>), had the highest risk of exposure as regards to COVID-19 in Africa. Its model projected nearly 90,000 moderate, severe or critical cases and over 800 deaths on the island. However, Mauritius recorded just 337 cases and ten deaths. The first case was detected on 18 March 2020. The last new local case of COVID-19 in the community was recorded on 26 April 2020.

**GOVERNMENT IN ACTION**

Since 22 January 2020, Government started screening passengers at Airport and Port. **Quarantine centres** were opened to accommodate passengers coming from high risk countries. **Rapid Response Team** was set up in each regional hospital to assess and admit passengers with symptoms of COVID-19. **Sensitisation campaign** started by Ministry of Health and Wellness through Radio, TV, written press, pamphlets and posters and **Flu Clinics** were instituted in regional public hospitals to separate potentially infected and symptomatic patients from other patients.

**Management of COVID-19 patients**

All positive cases of COVID-19 were managed in the New Souillac Hospital. As the number of cases increased, the new ENT (Ear, Nose and Throat) Hospital was converted into a COVID-19 treatment hospital for severe and critically ill patients. Several hotels were converted into COVID-19 treatment centre for the management of very mild cases. Health Services prioritise **contact tracing** to identify people to test, i.e people who have been in physical contact with infected patients while anybody who had been quarantined and showed symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 infection was also tested.

**Political Commitment:**

As early as 22 January 2020, the Government of Mauritius already started take actions. On 22 January 2020, 6 passengers who came from Wuhan were quarantined at the New Souillac Hospital Isolation Ward. This measure was extended

to other passengers coming from high risk countries.

Following the declaration by the Director- General, WHO that the COVID-19 is a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, the Prime Minister set up a High Level Committee which took the following decisions:

- **02 February 2020**  
Any foreign national having resided in China or with a history of travel to and from China within the last 14 days was not allowed entry or transit in Mauritius.
- **24 February 2020**  
All foreign nationals who visited South Korea or the three (3) provinces of Italy namely Lombardy, Venetto, Emilia Romagna, was not authorized to enter Mauritius.
- **28 February 2020**  
Any foreign nationals who visited or transited through Italy or Iran was not authorized to enter Mauritius.
- **16 March 2020**
  - Any foreign national who is coming from or transitted through European Union, United Kingdom, Norway, Switzerland during the last 14 days was not authorized to enter Mauritius as from **18 March 2020 (20:00 GMT)**.
  - Any foreign national who is coming from or transitted through Reunion Island during the last 14 days was not authorized to enter Mauritius as from **16 March 2020 (20:00 GMT)**.
  - Mauritian Nationals and residents will be quarantined in Mauritius upon arrival after **19 March 2020 (00:00 hrs)**.

## Measures Taken

On 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020, three (3) cases of COVID-19 were detected in Mauritius and the following measures were taken:

### 1. Closure of educational institutions

On 18 March 2020, amidst a surge in fresh cases being confirmed in Mauritius, the Government of Mauritius announced that all schools and universities would be shut until further notice.

On 19 March 2020, the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development announced the nationwide confinement measures to be effective as from 06:00 a.m on 20 March 2020, for the duration of 2 weeks in response to COVID-19 Pandemic.

### 2. Complete lock-down

On 24 March 2020, the Prime Minister announced that the country would be under complete lock-down until 31 March 2020 with only essential services such as police, hospitals, dispensaries, private clinics, fire fighters and banks being open.

### 3. Distribution of 35,000 food packs

On 25 March 2020, the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development announced distribution of 35,000 food packs to families.

### 4. Sanitary curfew

On 30 March 2020, the Prime Minister, announced that the sanitary curfew would be extended till 15 April 2020 and supermarkets, would restart operations as from 2 April 2020. Customers would be allowed to enter supermarkets as per the alphabetical order.

### 5. National Communication Committee

A National Communication Committee was set up to provide daily details concerning COVID-19 which was broadcasted live at 18hrs on MBC TV.

### 6. Legal Actions

The Government made several regulations as regard to Public Health Act in order to cope with the containment of COVID-19. The Quarantine Bill was passed.

### 7. Reopening of schools

On 12 June 2020, the Prime Minister announced that schools would be opened as from 1 July 2020. Closure of borders is still being maintained. Most of the activities have started as from 15 June 2020. However, wearing of mask remains compulsory.

**Dr V. Gujadhur**  
**Director Health Services**  
**Ministry of Health and Wellness**

## ROLE OF THE MAURITIUS POLICE FORCE DURING THE PANDEMIC

The Mauritius Police Force (MPF) was faced with an unprecedented challenge following the outbreak of the coronavirus (Covid-19) in the country. Besides responding to emergencies and contemporary policing demands, the Police were required to assist other local agencies, particularly the staff of the health sector in protecting the population from contamination and preventing the proliferation of Covid-19 disease across the island. In its quest to rise up to this daunting challenge, the whole Force was mobilised on 19 March 2020.



### Without fear and favour

Police Officers from all adjuncts of the Force hit the road to honour the oath of allegiance which they pledged in order to faithfully execute their duties without fear or favour, affection or ill will. The Special Mobile Force, Special Support Unit, National Coast Guard and other Branches and Units of the Force worked hand in hand in a spirit of collegiality to support their counterparts at the front line in the effective enforcement of the Curfew Order issued on 23 March 2020. 'Stay at home' and 'Work from home' were leitmotifs for the effective management of the crisis.

### Raising public awareness

To ensure compliance with the Curfew Order, Divisional Police reorganised their patrol schemes and embraced the concept of '*more feet on the beats*'. This new strategy has enabled our Officers at the front line to raise public awareness on



precautionary and sanitary measures which they need to observe in order to prevent the disease from gaining momentum. In addition to foot and mobile patrols, targeted operations and roadblocks were also carried out at strategic locations around the island with a view to deterring people from wandering in public places. In the same vein, access to public beaches was restricted. Police vigilance was increased at Airport and Port in a bid to preserving order and decorum. Security was also beefed up at Quarantine Centres for ensuring infected persons remain in isolation.

**“ Police vigilance was increased at Airport and Port in a bid to preserving order and decorum. Security was also beefed up at Quarantine Centres for ensuring infected persons remain in isolation. ”**

While most of us were confined and looking after our own safety, some malefactors took advantage of the precarious situation prevailing in the country to break into hypermarkets and supermarkets, temporarily closed down on the ground of public safety and security. Consequently, additional Police Officers were deployed for ensuring security over these premises and for preventing cases of looting. The Police were also present on the ground for providing assistance to the Enforcement Officers of the Consumer Protection Unit in severing traders involved in



malpractices, such as stockpiling of essential goods and price gouging.

These wide-ranging duties had inevitably placed a strain on police resources but our front liners did not relinquish their efforts in the fight against the invisible enemy which has sparked fear and causing toll of death worldwide.

**Ensuring the well-being of the needy and vulnerable persons**

Besides their enforcement role, the Police also went an extra mile for ensuring the well-being of the needy and vulnerable persons. They assisted the staff of the Postal Services in effecting door-to-door payment of pensions to elderly persons and other beneficiaries. They supported Officers of the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity in distributing foodstuffs to eligible households.

In an endeavour to ward off the perceived shortage of cooking gas and prevent panic buying, they provided assistance to employees of gas refineries in the distribution of domestic gas cylinders to various sale outlets island wide. In a wave of solidarity, they also contributed benevolently for procuring foods and beverages for the needy and destitute persons.

**“ Besides their enforcement role, the Police also went an extra mile for ensuring the well-being of the needy and vulnerable persons. ”**

Mauritius has gained the upper hand in the fight against Covid-19 pandemic. As the main law enforcement agency in the country, the Police had played a pivotal role in the battle against coronavirus. They were at all fonts during the lockdown for enforcing the new health and social regulations, while ensuring our society continues to function in a civil manner. Likewise, they left no stone unturned in attending to all public requests



while exposing themselves to the risk of contamination.

**Sacrifice and sense of patriotism**

The spirit of sacrifice, sense of patriotism and relentless efforts, and determination demonstrated by the front-liners of the MPF, who have been at the service of the nation, day and night, amid the Covid-19 have etched the mind of the entire Mauritian society. In fact, the Covid-19 crisis has brought policing back to the forefront of the public mind and has reminded us of the interconnectedness of societies. It has further strengthened the bond between the Police and the public and has led to fruitful partnerships among various stakeholders.

The war against Covid-19 is not yet over. We have to remain vigilant, maintain all sanitary measures and continue to work as a tight-knit team with one common goal - ‘*Salus Populi Suprema Lex Esto*’ (The Health/Well-being of the People is the Supreme Law), in order to make Mauritius a COVID-free country. Last but not least, we should pay tribute to all Police Officers who have remained devoted during the lockdown to safeguard the safety and wellbeing of the population. Despite they were confronted with a difficult situation that the country had never faced before and was exposed to the risk of contamination, they left their families at home in the service of the nation. They showed a lot of courage, patience and compassion in the discharge of their duties all throughout the crisis. We have only word of thanks for them and their families.

**K. Jhugroo, PMSM  
Deputy Commissioner of Police**

## MAURITIUS AMONG THE FIRST TO CONTROL THE PANDEMIC

**“Reste ou Lakaz, ena Coronavirus Dehors” has been the mantra since mid-March 2020.**

**YES! COVID-19, the new global health crisis has taken the world by surprise and has caused great fear, anxiety and distress and as the number of cases of death exponentially increased day-by-day. The Coronavirus pandemic has spread across almost all the countries in the world, leaving behind a trail of death and financial ruin.**

Be it the European countries or the US, and India, coronavirus induced-lockdowns have affected the economic conditions of every country and despite numerous efforts to combat the virus. Several States are still struggling to overcome this pandemic. Some countries are in the brink of easing their lockdowns whereas others are in their recovery phase.

**“ The main challenge during this unparalleled crisis was the management of safety, health and well-being of employees. ”**

### **Mauritius among the first to control the pandemic**

Even Mauritius has not been spared by COVID-19. However, the island has been amongst the very first African country and amongst the first 10 States in the world that have successfully controlled COVID-19 so far while other countries are still prudently fighting against this deadly virus. Whereas highly developed countries with unlimited means and expertise are still struggling to contain the infection, Mauritius has virtually won the battle against the coronavirus outbreak since the country has had no local positive case of COVID-19 since 26 April 2020 till date. This success has been achieved due to strong leadership, the unconditional contribution of our public officers in the front line who have struggled days and nights to combat the COVID-19.

The fact that Mauritius has followed all the recommendations of the World Health Organization has also been of tremendous help. The efficient enforcement of the Police Force, dedicated staff of the Health Sector and rigorous discipline of the public at large have also contributed enormously.

### **Working through the confinement period**

Officers of the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms have been working throughout the confinement period. No stone has been left unturned by this Ministry to prepare and facilitate business continuity. Its prime role was also to guide and assist the Public Service to resume work gradually. Visits to all workplaces have been regularly carried out to assist the preparation of resumption as well as to monitor the maintenance of measures to minimize the spread of COVID-19. There was an urgency to reassure Public Officers who were apprehensive to return back to work. The main challenge during this unparalleled crisis was the management of safety, health and well-being of employees.

The COVID-19 outbreak has greatly changed our day-to-day life. It has inspired a drastic change for the adoption of new means and ways of life be it in our society or at the workplace. It is surely a learning opportunity to prepare ourselves to face similar challenges ahead.

### **Patriotic obligations**

Though Public Officers have always been the target of criticism, yet we have fulfilled our patriotic obligations. Now, more than ever, we must all work as a team for the protection of the environment, strive to achieve food self-sufficiency, develop a more sustainable and resilient economy.

Mindset is extremely important. We cannot ignore the anxiety that people have felt and will continue to feel in the light of the new COVID-19 world. It is all a question of getting the right balance, using the lessons that the crisis is teaching us to create a stronger, more resilient safety, health and well-being culture.

To conclude, ***“This is the time for facts, not fear; for science, not rumours; and for solidarity, not stigma”*** as stated by Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the Director-General of World Health Organisation.

**Occupational Safety and Health Division  
Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and  
Institutional Reforms**

## THE CASUARINA HOTEL QUARANTINE CENTRE

### Protocols in managing COVID-19



**The global COVID-19 health crisis has definitely called on a different kind of frontliners to emerge: the medical frontliners and healthcare workers who, in many parts of the world, continue to be at the center of helping to control and contain this pandemic.**

The Quarantine Centre falls under the responsibility of the Regional Health Director of the respective Regional Hospital and to deal with the pandemic clear protocols have been established. They are:

- To ensure that all passengers before departure to Mauritius undergo a PCR test for COVID-19, within five days prior to boarding their flight.
- To see to it that only passengers tested negative are allowed to board for Mauritius on submission of documentary evidence to sanitary authorities prior to their departure and this reinforces our assurance for safety.
- On arrival at airport, the incoming passengers are driven to a Quarantine Centre and there should be an adequate number of medical staff and nursing personnel and attendants to provide services in the quarantine facility.
- On arrival at hotel, each quarantined person to be briefed on isolation under strict sanitary control and social distancing by the health personnel. The protocol for quarantine is also handed over to them.
- Each passenger is accommodated in one single room with incorporated facilities (bathroom and toilet).
- Daily follow up of each passenger are conducted for temperature twice daily and symptoms without the passenger leaving the room. Any doubtful passengers are screened thoroughly.
- Nursing Staff also make sure that meals are served individually to each occupant in his/her room.
- A screening test for COVID-19 is carried out on arrival, on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> day of quarantine and if the test proves to be negative, the residents are released on the 15<sup>th</sup> day.

### The team's experience

The team at Casuarina, agreed to serve humanity, as a gesture of solidarity and patriotism, although some are reluctant to join the band way.

Our families were all involved in this tough decision to be posted in Quarantine Centre. They had to be deserted so as to prioritize the wellbeing of others at risk, not knowing when we would or could ever meet again. All of us left someone precious behind, be it a spouse, a child, a newborn or an old parent. We personally reassured our parents on the last words which they told us before we left home: When will you come back home? And we simply replied - whenever you see us again. The Casuarina Quarantine Centre became our new home.



Support and psychological strength had also to be sought for oneself and for one and all. With passing days, the fear of contamination was buried deep under the ever-increasing workload and novel responsibilities.

One of the worst experiences we ever had was one day when throat swab test was done for the residents as well as staff and we were waiting for the results and thereafter we got a phone call saying that there are four residents tested positive in our Quarantine Centre without revealing their



identities over the phone. We were all scared thinking that maybe we were among them. However, it turned out that all the four contaminated cases were residents and were subsequently transferred to ENT hospital.

We had little experience about how to manage a hotel and 100 residents but we did our level best along with so many good references being posted on social media from previous residents.

**“ Each day is a new challenge which we all embrace with courage, determination and dedication. ”**

We are personally thankful to Mr. Ragen, Dr. Ramasawmy, Dr Gujadhur and Dr Potheeram for their everlasting cooperation in fighting together this COVID-19 pandemic.

Each day is a new challenge which we all embrace with courage, determination and dedication. Working at a Quarantine Centre has been an opportunity for us to prove ourselves. It was a means to an end, not an end in itself, only time will tell.

**The medical and support staff at Casuarina Quarantine Centre and Dr. Ramasawmy, Mr. Chelliah, Mr Permalloo, Mr Dinaram, Mrs Mannick, Mrs Boyedhur and Dr Ramnarain.**

## A PUBLIC SECTOR 4.0 ON THE MOVE

The Covid-19 pandemic has, undoubtedly, put to test the resilience and ignited intense innovation activity in organisations. The Public Sector has been no exception to this unprecedented situation. Indeed, the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms (MPSAIR) has been instrumental to spearhead initiatives during the period of sanitary curfew in a timely and effective manner in order to support Ministries and Departments in the provision of uninterrupted service to the citizens.

In this context, the Ministry had issued no less than 12 Circular Letters during the period of confinement to Ministries and Departments on matters ranging from guidelines on safety and health measures at the workplace, the adoption of the Work-From-Home scheme and of innovative tools and technologies to the gradual and full resumption of work in the Public Service.

**“The Ministry has adopted solutions such as video conferencing, data analytics and collaborative platforms in order to support, coordinate and direct Ministries and Departments in ensuring business continuity during these challenging situations.”**

The MPSAIR has also developed a framework for the creation of a conducive environment for the adoption of the flexible working hours as well as a Work-From-Home Scheme. From feedback gathered, these two measures have greatly contributed to improving efficiency, promote social distancing and improve on work-life balance.

**Innovative technologies**

By being at the forefront of innovative technologies the Ministry has adopted solutions such as video conferencing, data analytics and collaborative platforms in order to support, coordinate and direct Ministries and Departments in ensuring business continuity during these challenging situations.

Introduced earlier this year at the Ministry, the SMS-based communication platform has enabled this Ministry to communicate and sensitize public officers instantly on any important matter and Government decisions. As such, on 11 occasions SMS have been sent to 45,000 recipients during the past three months.

The Ministry is also experimenting a digital collaborative platform, Microsoft Teams, which has proved to be a real “game-changer” in the Occupational Safety and Health Division in terms of improving productivity, decision making and strengthening team spirit. Indeed, some 32 officers of the Division were able to carry out 1278 visits in all Government building and sites and submit reports in real-time for prompt decisions to be taken in the preparation of the gradual and full resumption of work in the Public Service in the context of the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in Mauritius.

The Ministry has also taken steps to reinforce its data analytics capabilities to harness the database of all Public Offices digitally kept on the Human Resource Management Information System and such facilities have proven to be instrumental for strategic decision making.

In the months to come, the Ministry will gear up to bring more innovative and transformative initiatives that will contribute in rethinking the present ecosystem and build a modern and technologically-driven Public Service carved on the highest standards of ethics and accountability.

**S. Ramgolam**  
Assistant Director  
Public Sector Business Transformation Bureau  
Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and  
Institutional Reforms



## COVID-19 – PANDEMIC: A NEW LIGHT ON THE ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

The Covid-19 pandemic shed a new light on the critical role played by the HR cadre in the public service where they have had to act promptly and efficiently in the face of such an unprecedented situation. Officers had to provide necessary support to Management of their Ministries/Departments in order to ensure uninterrupted services to the citizens.

### Role of HR during the confinement period

In spite of the sanitary lockdown, the machinery of Government had to function to provide the necessary strategic direction to all the sectors so as to mitigate the negative impacts on the economy and at the same time provide sustenance to the most vulnerable groups. In this context, all Ministries/Departments were required to pursue their basic core activities albeit with a skeleton staff. These staffing arrangements had to be efficiently coordinated by the HR personnel across the public sector to ensure a minimum service to the public.

**“ In spite of the sanitary lockdown, the machinery of Government had to function to provide the necessary strategic direction. ”**

Services and support provided by the HR cadre are as follows:

- to provide support to Emergency Response Teams of Ministries/Departments in regard to urgent/important decision making in the wake of emerging issues such as work from home as well as harnessing human resources to perform duties not falling within their normal scope of work;
- to work out an appropriate roster system for officers (essential and non-essential workers) to ensure that there is a minimum service in Ministries/Departments;

- to process of the Work Access Permit (WAP) to staff and follow up action;
- to implement relevant circulars issued by the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms regarding preparation for the phased resumption of work in the public Service and Work-from-Home scheme;
- to keep statistics of officers attending duty during the confinement period;
- to work out HR requirements for Budget 2020/2021; and
- to suspend the use of Electronic Time Recorders to minimize the risk of contamination and instead devise other means of recording of attendance.

### Way Forward

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the future of work permanently and has underscored the need for an acceleration of the transformation process of the Public Sector. HR professionals are the key stakeholders in assembling all the elements of business transformation to ensure that the Public Service is able to rise up and become resilient to external forces.

The pandemic paved the need for training in Health and Safety, Emotional Intelligence, Stress Management and Managing a Work-life Balance is necessary for a healthy and strong workforce and a safe workplace. Work-From-Home should be encouraged and employees have to be equipped with in-depth knowledge of IT tools and use of IT equipment. Conditions of Service should be fair and free of any ambiguity to enable effective digitalisation.

Processes should be made simple and applications streamlined so as not to waste time and resources in interpretation and unnecessary representations which can be followed by long-standing court cases. With the prevailing economic situation and employment crisis, HR professionals will have to seize the opportunity to tap the right talents and design strategies for their retention and development.

**Human Resource Management Division  
Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and  
Institutional Reforms**

## CIVIL SERVICE COLLEGE, MAURITIUS

## Learning and Working-From-Home - The 'New Normal' Environment

Training activities have not been spared by COVID-19. Staying at home during this sanitary crisis was very demanding due to uncertainties, which may at times be stressful for many of us. In this context, the Civil Service College, Mauritius (CSCM) provided freely the online Stress Management course to public officers. Prior to the lockdown, there were around 2,500 officers who have followed online courses over a period of 4 years. During the lockdown period, around 1600 public officers completed the Online Stress Management course and they were

**Online learning**

Online learning will be part of the 'new normal' and the College will be investing heavily to increase the number of courses, improve the course contents and bring innovative features to promote online learning. There are currently 24 courses available. They are supported by videos, text and text to speech features. Although online learning cannot totally replace face-to-face training, the College will be making every effort to make it effective. In this context, learners will not be left on their own. They will be supported by trainers through the discussions forums and scheduled video conferencing tutorials.

**E-Learning System (ELS) Platform**

After the lockdown, we are continuing with some face-to-face training sessions, *albeit* with limited numbers to accommodate for social distancing. We highly encourage Ministries/Departments, Parastatal Bodies, Local Government and State-Owned Enterprises to enrol their officers on the online ELS platform.

**“ We highly encourage Ministries/Departments, Parastatal Bodies, Local Government and State-Owned Enterprises to enrol their officers on the online ELS platform. ”**

**Work-From-Home Scheme**

As soon as it was announced that Government is introducing the Work-from-Home Scheme, the Civil Service College carried out a survey to find out the perception of public officers towards working from home. The core objective of the study entitled, '*Work-From-Home in the Mauritian Public Sector: A COVID-19 Response*' was to assess the perception of public officers as well as state-owned enterprises on the new mode of teleworking. Accordingly, the Government is encouraging Ministries and Departments to develop and implement the scheme for their staff on a pilot basis for a period of three months.

**Prof. (Dr) Ramesh Durbarry**  
**Director-General**  
**Civil Service College, Mauritius**

**CIVIL SERVICE COLLEGE PROJECT****Works planned to start in December 2020**

**The Government of Mauritius, with financial assistance from the Government of India, is in the process of constructing, by December 2020, a Civil Service College in the region of Le Réduit over a plot of land of an extent of 9A13.**

The Civil Service College will cater for the training needs of Public Officers across all Ministries and Departments, Parastatal bodies and Local Authorities. Gradually, the College will develop into a ***world class centre of excellence in Public Sector management and governance*** and will provide the institutional framework for human resource development in the Public Sector, through

institutional training, in-situ training and lifelong learning, in order to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for excellence in the Public Service.

The Ministry has already appointed National Buildings Construction Corporation Limited (India) Ltd as the Consultant for the preparation of the detailed designs and architectural works for the project; working out of the tender specifications for the appointment of the building contractor; and monitoring of the project during the construction phase. It is planned that the contract for the construction of the College would be awarded by November 2020 and construction works would start by December 2020.

**Human Resource Development Division  
Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and  
Institutional Reforms**

## PUBLIC SERVANTS AROUND THE WORLD AND THE NEW NORMAL

It is clear that the world of work has awoken to a new normal. The socio-economic challenge caused by the Covid-19 pandemic is likely to reshape perceptions of persons and organisations about work. The prevailing restrictions due to the pandemic has forced many to leap into the industrial revolution in a matter of weeks.

Eventually, focus of most Governments, in the initial stage, was to protect public officers while maintaining the business continuity to alleviate the impact on the vulnerable while also servicing the quickly emerging new government priorities.

## ACTIONS TAKEN BY GOVERNMENTS WORLDWIDE

The OECD has deemed it necessary to point out some of the actions being taken by different countries. These actions were regrouped according to some principles and it is deemed interesting to provide a brief overview so that eventually consideration could be given at some point. The information hereunder was sourced and reproduced from the OECD website ([www.oecd.org](http://www.oecd.org)). They are as follows:

## A. Put Health and Safety first:

Public employers are protecting their employees from contracting and spreading coronavirus (COVID-19) through a variety of measures such as generalised teleworking and enforced distancing measures if in the office.



**Korea** has issued compulsory guidelines on remote working for many staff, although some senior managers are in the office with precautions such as staggered lunch hours and physical distancing. Identifying vulnerable groups and using data such as commuting times to implement work rotation and remote working has also been a feature.



The **Slovak Republic** is providing facemasks to public servants, implementing a rigorous hygiene policy and eliminating/limiting social contact through postponing in-person recruitment and classroom training.

## B. Pay attention to mental health:

Governments are increasing mental health support services in recognition that many public servants are carrying an increased emotional burden linked to their duties and/or personal situation.



In **Latvia**, an employee survey aims to assess the wellbeing of public servants, including causes of anxiety and their expectations of the government and their management. This survey aims to offer targeted psychological help to public servants and has garnered more than 3,000 responses from more than 90 institutions.



The **Netherlands** has developed an online toolbox for public servants with information and short videos about working from home and maintaining work-life balance.

## C. Match workforce supply with demand:

This crisis has forced public service leaders to reprioritise quickly, determine essential positions and areas, and redeploy the workforce to meet changing demand.




**Ireland** developed tools (questionnaire and online portal) to map transferrable skills and facilitate temporary mobility assignments across the public service.




The **United Kingdom** is adjusting existing infrastructure and coordination mechanisms to reallocate employees according to need.

## D. Switch the 'default' on remote working:


Whereas employees used to need special permission to work from home, today the default is that all employees that can work from home must work from home. Authorisation is in many cases now required to be able to come into the office.


 In **Italy**, teleworking is now the default - formal authorisation to work from home is no longer required.

 The **United States** is operating at maximum teleworking capacity and issuing guidance to managers to support this.

**E. Leverage digital capabilities:**


Public administrations who had already invested in digital capabilities are better positioned to manage the crisis. Internal network capacity, cloud systems and familiarity with videoconferencing tools also enable more public servants to work productively from home, and to even continue interviewing and training candidates for critical roles.


 **Estonia** is benefitting from pre-crisis investment in distance learning technologies to up-skill employees.

 **Denmark** has also experienced less strain due to their digitalised working environment, and is using technology to coordinate people management issues through twice-weekly virtual meetings of all heads of HR.

**F. Maximise leave flexibility:**


Not all public servants can work from home. In some cases this has given rise to the creation or adjustment of leave arrangements to enable staff to recover from illness or care for a family member.


 **Germany** increased special leave provisions for certain groups from three to 20 days.

 **France** developed special leave provisions for staff who need to take care of children.

**G. Keep learning:**


Most public servants are using new technology and ways of working to carry out their jobs. Online learning tools and coaching can help to up-skill the workforce, including digital skills. Leadership and management skills are also key to maintaining productivity in transformed work environments and supporting workers to manage the transition.


 **Australia** is providing re-skilling opportunities for public servants to help them carry out crisis related work.

 **Belgium** expanded its online training offer, adapted in-person training for online access, and fast-tracked certain training programmes.

**H. Communicate and check-in:**


Public service leaders are using new channels such as videoconferencing and instant messaging services to share fast moving information with staff and unions. These and employee networks generate opportunities to stay in touch with team-mates and colleagues from across the public service.


 **Canada** developed dedicated webpages and resource for employees to provide them with information and resources on working remotely and on improving mental health during the public health crisis.

 **Norway** is exploring the use of targeted 'pulse' surveys to check in with employees and uses a portal for public employers with Human Resource information and guidance for managers updated daily.

**I. Plan ahead:**

The present state of most public administrations is changing so quickly that most public employers are focused on managing the here and now. But some are also looking forward, in recognition that the future workplace will be different. Some have already established working groups of senior managers to prepare for an eventual return to work, exploring how remote working can be used to facilitate a phased return to the office.

 **Finland** set up two working groups in the Prime Minister's office to monitor the current situation and prepare an exit strategy.

 **Slovenia** is looking at the leadership, management and digital competencies that will be necessary to strengthen the public administration after the crisis.

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