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March 2010 - No 270

Mouthpiece of the Mauritian Diaspora. Every Overseas Mauritian is an ambassador for Mauritius

Monthly - 70p 27th year

Independence 2010



Photo: Michael Marain

UK Mauritians attending the annual Thanksgiving Service at Westminster Abbey in the company of H.E. The High Commissioner for Mauritius, Mr Mahen and Mrs Mahalutchmi Kundasamy, to commemorate the 42nd anniversary of the independence of Mauritius on March 12.

It was a moving ceremony, especially when the Dean of Westminster, The Very Reverend Dr John Hall, prayed for Mauritius and for the welfare of its people. For the record, we can say weatherwise it was a dreadful afternoon, rainy, windy, and very cold.

The annual service has been held at the Abbey since March 12, 1968 when a member of the Royal family (a last minute replacement of Princess Alexandra) attended the grandiose ceremony, and

when the flag of a sovereign Mauritius was raised for the first time in the UK (and for the first time outside the island, as a matter of fact) in the presence of the then High Commissioner for Mauritius, late Sir Leckraz Teeluck, and his staff. Weather report: it was a bright sunny day (since then the sun has been shining on Mauritius).

P.C.

I was privileged to attend both ceremonies.

Owing to various contre-temps, indisposition of key staff, credit crunch repersussion, late of receipt of revenue, Bank squeeze on overdraft facilities MN finds itself experiencing delays in pulcation of the paper. The printers, Royal Mail and all have to pay upfront, Rent and business Rates

Richard Marcel, Dancer par excellence



Richard at MN office on Wandsworth Road

Photo: P.C. (MN)

"I love Richard," says Lulu, famous singer & former Eurovision song contest winner.
 "I thank Richard for teaching me how to dance," said Rufus winner of TV programme 2010 "Let's Dance for Sport Relief".

See more on Page 10

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For sale

A two-storey house at Péreybère

5 minutes walk to the public beach



Centre unit on 3 floors

The house for sale is the centre unit and on three floors.

It is part of a complex of three houses (all on three floors). See picture on right and left in this advert.

The three floors of the house (in the centre of the complex) are made up as follows:-

- Ground floor: Front sitting room and back kitchen
- First floor: Front bedroom, back WC & Shower
- Second floor: Front bedroom and back bedroom
- Roof terrace: Walled up for safety

The house has two street entrances: in front and at the back.

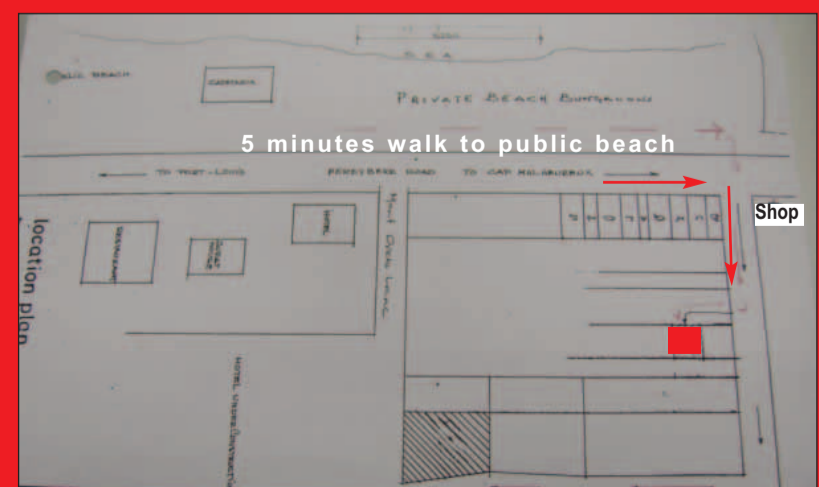
At the back is a spacious garden, with its own gate, that can accommodate two or three cars.

Péreybère is located between the holiday resorts of Grand Baie and Cap Malheureux. It has one of the best and most popular beaches in the island, with numerous hotels and restaurants in the area.

Asking Price: Rs 3 million
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Warning: Don't rely too much on the judgement of others at home. They always can get us better and cheaper. Give them your money to buy for you and bid goodbye to it. These things happen all the time.

We should use our own judgement, which has so far served us well in the UK.



The accommodation may be used as a guest house or B & B with each room being let separately. Indoors is rather cool even during the summer.

With a back garden, an open roof terrace, a balcony overlooking the street on each floor no claustrophobic feeling can ever be experienced.

three

The beasts of wars

When in my teens I read the Diary of Anne Frank I could not contain the anger and hatred I felt against the Neanderthal Hitler and his beasts in their persecution and extermination of the Jewish people of Europe.

And when I saw on the TV news in January 2009 the heart-rending picture of a very little Palestinian girl clutching her babybrother in her frail arms, racing away from the Jewish bombs in Gaza, my heart exploded. The terror on the girl's face and her screams should put to shame any pervert as Netanyahu whose grandparents came from East Europe, Lithuania. The Palestinians have been living on these lands for thousands of years.



Children fleeing Israel bombs in Gaza

Yet, nasty Netanyahu, during the recent election campaign in Israel, made it known that he would not give back the lands seized from the Palestinian people, which are being occupied by the Jews.

On the contrary



Palestinian homes to be blown down by Netanyahu administration

Only just now, while writing this note - 5pm, 28/02/09, - French TV5 announces that the new Netanyahu administration will bulldoze the homes of Palestinians, including the ones above, the Jews argue the land belongs to East Jerusalem. Yet the News Agency stresses that these buildings were constructed over sixty years ago, before the arrival of the Jews. Have these people got any humanity in them? The Palestinians are appealing to US President Barak Obama to save their homes

Objecteurs de conscience thrown in jail in the Jewish State Police

When innocent Jewish boys and girls were persecuted by the Nazis, the world remained silent.

Now that little Palestinian boys and girls are persecuted by the Jews, the world is powerless.

There are, however, protests among young Jewish girls and boys in Israel itself, tired of the killings. Whenever they make any conscience objection demonstration, they are thrown in jail in Israel Police State.

More to follow.

February, 2009 Peter

Ethnicities



Cambridge marks 20 years of its programme to encourage ethnic minority applications with a special reunion as record numbers of ethnic minority students are admitted

2009 sees the University of Cambridge mark its 800th year. A slightly less venerable, but no less important anniversary is also being marked by the University's GEEMA (Group to Encourage Ethnic Minority Applications) programme, which was set up in 1989 as a joint venture by students and the Colleges of Cambridge to encourage ethnic minority applications and ensure bright students from whatever background know that Cambridge could, and should, be a place for them.

GEEMA was one of the first programmes of its kind in UK Universities, and its model of a range of outreach initiatives from Open Days and Summer Schools exclusively for students from minority ethnic backgrounds, to school visits and partnerships with external organisations has been the forerunner of many widening participation and widening access initiatives. The real impact of GEEMA over the last 20 years is visible in figures released by the University of Cambridge this week. They show that in 2008, a record number of ethnic minority students were admitted to Cambridge.

In 1990, a year after GEEMA was founded, 158 (or 5.5 per cent) of the 2,865 home students admitted to Cambridge whose ethnicity was known were from ethnic minorities. In 2007 the equivalent numbers were 428 (14.7 per cent) out of 2,911. For 2008 the figures are 448 (15.5 per cent) out of 2,890. Therefore the number of home students of ethnic minority origin admitted to Cambridge has increased by 5% this year.

Jon Beard, Director of Undergraduate Recruitment for the University, said: "The University of Cambridge remains committed to attracting the brightest and best students regardless of background, and as GEEMA enters its 20th year these figures emphasise the vital role it plays in ensuring that happens. The University is rightly proud of the work GEEMA does and this anniversary year is the perfect opportunity to showcase its successes and push even harder to ensure that all students of high academic ability know that Cambridge could be for them."

Matthew Ryder who studied law at Cambridge from 1986 to 1989 was one of a group of students who helped to found GEEMA. He is now a barrister at Matrix chambers, specialising in crime and human rights. He has been involved in a number of high-profile cases, including representing the parents of murdered teenager Stephen Lawrence, and he is highly regarded in the fields of police law and terrorism. Last year he was selected by the government as one of the 20 REACH National Role Models, tasked with providing alternative role models and life paths for African-Caribbean boys and young men.

"GEEMA arose out of Cambridge Black Students' Caucus in the mid-1980s. It was a unique project because it was the first time black British students were a visible entity at Cambridge. Our goal was to make the University more accessible and less intimidating to those coming behind us. The improvement in numbers shows why GEEMA is effective, but there's still work to do. Cambridge and other universities are always trying to attract the very best young minds, no matter what background they come from and GEEMA has an important part to play in doing that."

The most powerful testament to the effectiveness of the GEEMA programme are those who've experienced it for themselves and know the transformative value it can and does have. An anniversary dinner planned for the summer of 2009 will bring together many of those people - some now prominent figures in their chosen fields. Anyone wishing to obtain further details on this event is invited to contact geema@cao.cam.ac.uk

For further information please contact Lisa Costello, Communications Officer, Education & Policy. Tel: 01223 339671/e-mail: lisa.costello@admin.cam.ac.uk

Notes for editors:

i) The University of Cambridge has released latest details of applications/acceptances/admittances by ethnic origin for the 2007/08 admissions cycle. Full details will appear in the forthcoming Undergraduate Admissions Statistics Special Edition of the Reporter and can be obtained on request from the Office of Communications and External Affairs on 01223 332300.

ii) The University of Cambridge employs a GEEMA-focused Co-ordinator, who works with current undergraduates to encourage applications from ethnic minority students in the UK.

iii) GEEMA is also proactive in the support network for ethnic minority undergraduates at Cambridge, liaising with CUSU (Cambridge University Students' Union), societies and organisations across the University.

A summary of GEEMA events in 2009:

29 January: Challenge Day for 120 ethnic origin students from all over the UK giving them a taste of Cambridge complete with mini-lectures, college tours and talks on higher education.

3 March: Visit of around 50 students in conjunctions with the Black Boys Can Association, an organisation set up to raise the aspirations and educational development of black boys

9 April: Visit of around 50 students in conjunctions with the Windsor Fellowship - an organisation which aims to aid personal development for black and Asian students in the UK.

11 June: GEEMA Open Day - for Year-12 students from ethnic minority backgrounds attending a state school. General introduction to the University, subject sessions led by Admissions Tutors, talks on interviews and life at Cambridge.

3-7 August: GEEMA Summer School - residential event for Year-11 UK students from ethnic minorities attending a non-selective state school. Lectures, seminars, and practical work offering a taste of study at Cambridge.

Further information on GEEMA can be found at <http://www.cam.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/publications/geemaguide.pdf>

Travel News

Eurostar reports record numbers for last year

Passenger numbers broke the nine million barrier for the first time with 9.1 million travellers carried - an increase of 10.3% from 8.26 million in the previous year

Eurostar, the high-speed passenger train service that links the UK and mainland Europe, has reported record traveller numbers and ticket sales for 2008 following the first full year of operations on High Speed 1.

Ticket sales also reached a record level of £664 million, rising by 10.9% from £599 million in 2007. Shorter journey times to Paris and Brussels and the excellent connections offered by St Pancras International are attracting increasing numbers of passengers to switch to high-speed rail.

The results would have been significantly stronger but for the closure of part of the Channel Tunnel following a fire on board a Eurotunnel freight shuttle on 11 September 2008, which continues to cause reductions in services and longer journey times.

The nature of the Eurostar service, in which travellers book up to four months in advance, means sales were significantly affected by the Channel Tunnel incident from September onwards, whereas the subsequent economic downturn had little impact on the year as a whole.

Eurostar continues to achieve high levels of punctuality with 92.4% of trains arriving on time or early during 2008.

Richard Brown, Chief Executive, Eurostar, said, "An increase of nearly a million extra passengers using High Speed 1 during its first year of operations, even with the impact of the tunnel fire, demonstrates beyond doubt that people prefer high-speed rail to short-haul air. They are switching because rail journeys are faster, more punctual, more convenient, and have less environmental impact.

"Whilst reduced tunnel access will affect the first quarter of 2009, we expect to return to a full timetable in the early spring with journey times restored to 1h 51 to Brussels and 2h 15 to Paris once Eurotunnel completes repairs to the Channel Tunnel.

"The uncertainties of the current economic climate reinforce the importance of good value fares and Eurostar's UK lead-in fare remains at £59 return for the sixth year in a row.

"The short-term outlook for 2009 is challenging, but the long-term prospects for Eurostar and high-speed rail are very good. High Speed 1 is fully connected into Europe's fast expanding high-speed network and we expect to see continuing growth in the number of travellers making longer connecting journeys from towns and cities across the UK to Belgium and France, as well as to destinations in the Netherlands and Germany."

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Titbits from Mauritius

by Ahmad Macky

MEAT UNFIT FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION

Four meat traders were recently charged for selling meat unfit for consumption.

In fact, 52 kilos of meat was seized within three days. The Ministry of Health intensified its control over butcher's shops and markets around the island. Those meats were kept without adequate degree of refrigeration. As a result, this caused a serious risk to public health.

Police confiscated 18.5 kilo of stag meat at the Rose Belle market. The meat was put on sale at room temperature, without a system of refrigeration.

A second meat trader was charged for selling 3.5 kilos of goat meat during its course of thawing.

A meat trader from Rose-Hill, this time, was caught red-handed by Health Inspectors for offering to sell 6 kilos of goat meat in the open air. Health Inspectors with the assistance of police officers seized 20.5 kilos of mutton meat that kept thawing on the stall at Quatre Bornes market. The same meat trader was charged a day before by Municipal Inspectors. He did not abide by certain conditions according to the law about the sale of frozen meat.

It is stipulated that frozen products should maintain a temperature between 18 and 21 degrees. To put on sale frozen meat at room temperature is contrary to provisions of the Food Act and is liable to a fine of Rs 2000 and 2 yrs imprisonment.

FOUR POLICE OFFICERS ARRESTED

Four police officers stationed at La Tour Koenig Police Station, in Pointe Aux Sables have been arrested on the allegation of neglect of duty.

They were all charged for allowing a detainee to escape from the police cell at La Tour Station.

45 yrs old prisoner, Gilbert Ladinaff, who was arrested on an allegation of murder, broke a window in the police cell and made good his escape without being discovered by the four police officers on guard on that day at the police station.

The four officers appeared in Court on the 7 January 2009 and were kept in custody. The fugitive is still on the run.

GHOON PROCESSION

To commemorate the martyr of Hassen Hussein, the grand son of Prophet Muhammed, the celebration of ghoon was held as usual during the Moharram period of the new moon.

The ghoon procession was held in the streets of Port Louis as a tradition by the Muslim community where the latter do penance to the sound of the drums.

It is a traditional that has gradually phased out.

The festival of ghoon has always been celebrated by the Muslims in Mauritius since 1790 during the period of French Colonization. The whole commemoration is normally held during ten days every year at the appearance of the new moon of the Moharram.

CONTROVERSY ON DHOLL PURI'S PRICE

Sylvio Tang, the Minister for Consumers Protection stated all dholl puris should come down by Rs 1.00 due to the recent reduction on the price of flour.

Normally a pair of dholl puri costs Rs 10.00. Many dholl puri sellers disagreed with the Minister and maintained their prices because they said that the "curries" that come with the dholl puri are costly. They said that the "chutneys" ingredients are very rare to find and so they could not come to an agreement about reducing its prices to Rs 1.00.

Tang, the Minister for Consumers Protection has threatened to take court action to dholl puri vendors who do not conform to the regulations as implemented by his Ministry. The Minister has also instructed all dholl puri vendors to exhibit a small poster by stipulating on it their dholl puri's price so that customers are aware.

PRESS TO ADOPT A NATIONAL ETHICAL CODE

Earlier this year, at a general assembly, the Newspapers Editors and Publishers Association (NEPA) consisting of editors-in-chief and other directors of publication, as well as the directors of several press groups adopted a national ethical code for the whole profession to abide together.

Such a system is a model practice and still exists from foreign countries particularly in England. This is to assure the freedom of expression, the right to inform and keep the public interest alert of information.

PETROL FROM SEYCHELLES ISLAND

President James Michel of the Seychelles Island has announced recently that the EAX Company based at Dubai has discovered a spot in the depth of the Seychelles Sea where billions of barrels of petrol could be extracted.

The President has added that he would wait for the economy of his country to get better in the years to come before embarking on this project.

POLICEMEN REFUSE TO TAKE EXAMS

Certain police officers who have graduated with the BSc (Hons) in Police Studies protested against the setting of promotion exams for constable to sergeants. "It is in admissible for us to take part in these exams to get promotion. We have studied during several years in order to get our BSc degrees, now we have been told that we should take part in these promotion exams. Where is the logic in this?" said one of the officers concerned.

The Commissioner of Police, Mr Dhun Iswar Rampersad has proposed to the Ministry of Public Affairs that constables and sergeants who have more than 10 years service should be automatically promoted to the rank of inspector. He said that the same apply to inspectors and chief inspectors and assistant

superintendent of police who have got more than 10 years service should be automatically promoted to higher rank.

MOTHER ARRESTED FOR AIDING & ABETTING DAUGHTER

Feroza Gulvadeen 47 yrs old factory worker residing at Bel Air, Rivière Sèche was arrested by police on an allegation for aiding and abetting her 18 yrs old daughter to have an abortion.

According to Gulvadeen, her daughter was too young to become a mother and for that reason she helped her to have an abortion. Gulvadeen brought her 18yr old daughter to a back street surgery in Centre de Flacq where the adolescent had the abortion by a doctor. She was two and a half month pregnant.

Due to medical complications the daughter had few days after the abortion, the young woman had to be transported to Flacq Hospital where it was discovered that she had an illegal abortion. Police are still investigating this matter and the doctor who operated on the young woman is wanted by police.

In the mean time Feroza Gulvadeen is on conditional bail.

ALLEGED PLOTTERS AT LAST EXAMINED

A fact finding committee, presided by Victor Glover set up by the Prime Minister is in session to investigate allegations of conspiracy by Sanjay Bhuckhory ex-president of Air Mauritius who has resigned, Dan Maraye ex-governor of the Bank of Mauritius and former President of the Board of Airport of Mauritius Ltd and Indira Manrakan Commissioner No 2 of ICAC.

It is alleged that Bhuckhory and Maraye were invited to Indira Manrakan's residence for a cup of tea and to discuss plans to get rid of former Director of Air Mauritius, Nirvan Veerasamy, when the latter was in office in 2006.

The conversation that took place at Manrakan's house was secretly recorded and handed over to the Media. This later led to several resignations at Board level in Air Mauritius, including that of Mr Bhuckhory.

PETROL PRICE IS UP

The Automatic Price Mechanism (APM) met to decide on the price of petrol, diesel and heavy oil. It was decided that petrol price is to go up from Rs 34.10 to Rs 36.50 per litre. Diesel has come down by Rs 2.00 making it Rs 33.15 per litre. Heavy oil remains unchanged since it was reduced by 7.5%.

The Ministry of Business, Enterprises & Cooperatives has fixed the price of dual purpose kerosene at Rs 32.10 per litre from the old price of Rs 40. per litre.

LESJONGARD RESIGNED FROM MSM

Joe Lesjongard an MP for constituency No 4 (Long Mountain) resigned from the MSM party. He left because he said that as a member of that party he did not have a role.

At a press conference given Lesjongard said that he would not join any other political party but would stay as an independent MP.

Rumours had it that Lesjongard will found his own party as part of a sub branch of

Federation Creole Mauricien of Father Gregoire and then ally with the MMM of Bérenger for the next general election. Another political party namely L'Union National (UN) of Ashok Jugnauth has already contacted Lesjongard.

TRADE DEFICIT CROSSED THE BARRIER Rs 60b

The external trade deficit from January till November 2008 has gone up to more than Rs 60.3b. This rise is shown to be higher than the one registered for the corresponding period of the year 2007, which was Rs 48.1 billion.

The recent figures published this week by the Central Statistic Office (CSO) sh January to November 2008 has reached Rs 120.9 billion against Rs 110 billion in 2007.

The statement of account of the CSO shows that the cost of importing alimentary products (from Rs 17.9b to Rs 22.1b) and petrol products (from Rs 20.3b to Rs Rs 26.1b) has increased in this period. However, one has been considerably reduced to a figure of Rs 1.1 billion against Rs 2.6 billion for the precedent month.

Concerning the exports, they have gone up to Rs 60.6 b from January to November 2008, less Rs 1.2 b for the corresponding period of the year 2007. The alimentary products (such as sugar and sea products) have produced Rs 16.3 b that is minus Rs 3.7 b. For November 2008, both imports and exports of goods are approximately Rs 11.5 b and Rs 6.2b respectively, leaving a deficit of Rs Rs 5.3b.

MP ON WIFE BASHING ALLEGATION

Former Telecommunications Minister Etienne Sinatambou, 44 yrs old, now deputy Speaker to the National Assembly was accused of an allegation of domestic violence by his wife Manisha, 25 yrs old. The couple was married on the 6th September 2008. It is to be recalled that Sinatambou was transferred by the PM Ramgoolam from his Ministry portfolio during the recent Cabinet reshuffle.

Police enquiries are under way.

NEW DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMS

Stephen Mendes, the new director of Customs started his new job on Monday 2 February 2009. Aged 45 yrs, this Briton has been a key figure in the fight against drug trafficking. He has also worked in many other countries of which Ukraine was his last one. He replaces Bert Cunningham who left Mauritius Revenue Authority last August. His departure caused lots of controversies in the country.

SECOND LEISURE CENTRE AT BELLE MARE

From October 2009, old aged pensioners will get a new leisure centre at Belle Mare.

This second leisure centre would be similar to the first one at Pointe-aux-Sables. This new one will be built at Belle Mare in the east coast of Mauritius. The Ministry of Social Security reckons that the new centre would cater for the larger population of our old aged people that keeps increasing.

CANNABIS PLANTS SEIZED

Police with the assistance of Helicopter team reached the slope of Black River Mountain

and eradicated about 200 cannabis plants.

The grower is so far unknown. Police seized about 10 cannabis plants at Nouvelle Decouverte also. They also uprooted about 90 other cannabis plants from the same area.

BRIDGING LOAN OF RS 1.5 BILLION TO AIR MAURITIUS

Air-Mauritius has asked the government Rs 2.2b in order to pay back its debt but the government has decided to lend the company only Rs 1.5b (35 million Euros) under certain conditions.

This sum is not a government gift; it is only a bridging loan to the airline which the company will have to pay back in a very short term. This new intervention by the government to financially assist the company is the third time in two months.

The first time the government intervened financially was in the beginning of December 2008 to offer a guarantee of Rs 1.65b (US\$ 50million). In mid-December 2008, a fresh sum of Rs 2b (US\$ 60m) was given to the company.

It is estimated that the hedging contract for the purchase of oil will cost about Rs 5.7 b to Air Mauritius till August 2010, if the price of the barrel of oil remains unchanged.

KISHOREDEERPAL SINGH TO TAKE PRIVATE PROSECUTION

It is reported that Mr Kishore Deerpalsingh, a former Minister of Health, is taking a private court action against the conspiracy against Nirvan Veerasamy the ex director of Air Mauritius.

Mr Deerpalsingh has lodged his plaint in the Port Louis court. He maintained that in 2006 Bhuckhory, Manrakan and Maraye did conspire to get rid of Veerasamy from his post of director by fabricating evidence to say that there was a case of conflict of interest on the part of Veerasamy whilst the latter was in office as director of Air Mauritius.

CONTRACT NOT RENEWED FOR NEGLECT OF DUTY

National Transport Authority (NTA) has decided to get rid of his chairman namely Mr Zareedin Jaunbaccus for neglect of duty.

The Minister of Transport, Anil Bacchoo has decided not to renew the contract of Jaunbaccus upon the recommendation of the NTA. Minister Bacchoo criticized Mr Jaunbaccus for repeated absences. His salary and other remuneration have been frozen. Jaunbaccus has, however, claimed damages of about Rs 100,000 to the authorities for not renewing his contract.

NEW DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROSECUTION

Parliamentary Counsel Satyajit Boolell has been nominated as the new Director of Public Prosecution (DPP) on the 3rd February 2009 replacing the former DPP Gerard Angoh who in turn has been nominated as a Judge of the High Court.

This was a decision of the Judicial and Legal Service Commission (JLSC) consisting of the Chief Justice, Bernard Sik Yuen, Senior Puisne Judge, Keshoe Parsad Matadeen, and

Supreme Court Judge, Paul Lam shang Leen and as well as the Public Service Commission (PSC) Mr Regis Yat Sing.

Mr Boolell took his new office on the 4th February 2009. It is David Chan Kam Cheong, Assistant Solicitor General who will occupy the post of Parliamentary Counsel.

STATE VISIT OF PRESIDENT OF REPUBLIC OF CHINA

President Hu Jintao made a state visit in Mauritius for two days in February 2009.

A spokesman from the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed that the visit had to do with mutual business between China and Mauritius.

It is to be recalled that vast areas of small planters' lands from Riche Terre were given to Tianli group, a chinese company from China who will implant their business enterprises together with their own employees in Mauritius.

The China's president also paid a visit to Sir Anerood Jugnaut, his homologue, during his state visit in Mauritius.

Truth and Justice Commission is operational

The Truth and Justice Commission Act has become operational on 1 February 2009.

The Act provides for the establishment of the Truth and Justice Commission, in line with the commitment taken by Government to establish truth regarding slavery and indentured labour.

The main objective of the Commission is to conduct inquiries into slavery and indentured labour in Mauritius during the colonial period and may, for that purpose, gather information and receive evidence from any person.

The Commission also has the responsibility to: determine appropriate measures to be extended to descendants of slaves and indentured labourers; enquire into a complaint, other than a frivolous and vexatious complaint, made by any person aggrieved by a dispossession or prescription any land in which he claims he had an interest.

The Commission will prepare a comprehensive report of activities and findings, based on factual and objective information and evidence received by it and submit the report to the President of the Republic.

The Truth and Justice Commission is chaired by Professor Robert Shell. Dr (Mrs) Vijaya Teelock, head of the Department of History and Political Science, University of Mauritius, is the Vice-Chairperson.

The other members are Dr Parmaseven Pillay Veerapen, associate Professor in Statistics of the Faculty of Social Studies and Humanities, University of Mauritius; Mr Lindsay Morvan, General Manager, TLC (Mauritius) Ltd; and Mr Benjamin Moutou, historian and writer.

Mauritius obtains 18 million-dollar loan from World Bank

Mauritius has obtained an 18 million-dollar loan from the World Bank under a five-year technical assistance program to finance the Mauritius Economic Transition Technical Assistance Project (METTAP). This project aims at enhancing the performance of selected public enterprises and services contributing to an improved investment climate.

METTAP is a specific program designed to improve overall public sector efficiency by removing existing administrative hurdles to business and investment and reengineering key public enterprises to improve service delivery and achieve gains.

It also helps in undertaking regulatory, legal and institutional reforms to streamline investment-related procedures and contribute to making Mauritius an attractive and preferred investment destination.

The loan agreement was signed on 16th February by the Mauritius Government and the Country Director of the World Bank.

225,867 Mauritians travelled abroad in 2008

The number of Mauritians who travelled abroad in 2008 stood at 225,867, an increase of 6% compared to 213,169 for 2007.

The following changes were observed in the number of Mauritians visiting the major destinations: France (+6.9%), United Kingdom (-1.1%), Reunion Island (+0.6%), United Arab Emirates (+29.2%), India (-9.3%), Republic of South Africa (+16.6%), Australia (+33.4%), Hong Kong (-0.9%), Singapore (+4.4%), Malagasy Republic (-4.5%) and Seychelles (+12.1%).

SuperSport Utd beats Curepipe Starlight (5-2)

South African team SuperSport Utd defeated Curepipe Starlight by five goals to two (5-2) at the George V stadium on 15th February in the return leg of the preliminary tour of the African Champions League. The score was 2-2 at half-time.

SuperSport Utd won the first leg played a fortnight earlier in South Africa by three goals to nil (3-0). Hence, Curepipe Starlight is out of this competition.

HSC Laureates: QEC again

This year again, the Queen Elizabeth College has produced the largest number of laureates, 12 out of 15, on the girls' side. On the boys' side, Royal College of Curepipe got 5 laureates, Royal College of Port Louis, 4 and St Esprit College, 4 laureates.

Other laureates came from Dr Regis Chaperon State Secondary School (1), Droopnath Ramphul State College (1), Dr Maurice Curé SSS (2), and Rodrigues College (2).

The Mauritius Examinations Syndicate said a total of 8 907 students took part in the HSC examinations last year. The pass rate for girls is 82.21% and that for boys is 74.42%.

23-year-old Kiran Sangurah and 24-year-old Kiteswar Ramjuttun drowned at sea at Le Goulet, near Baie-du-Tombeau, on February 10.

They both had a swim after consuming, according to some other friends who were together with them, some alcohol drinks. Witnesses say the two ignored the advice of their friends not to go to the sea.

Lawyer Goomany dies

75-year-old lawyer Ali Asgar Goomany died on February 9 after a brief illness.

Ali Asgar Goomany had worked for the past forty years at the bar in Mauritius.

Satyajit Boolell is the new DPP

Satyajit Boolell has been appointed Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) since early February. He replaces Gérard Angoh who has been appointed to the post of judge.

45,000 US\$ from Microsoft (O.I.) to SOS Poverty

A cheque of 45 000 US\$ has been remitted by Microsoft (O.I.) to NGO SOS Poverty which is committed to training in information technology. Such a training addressed to youth and women from deprived areas, is meant to improve their access to employment.

The cheque was offered to Yousouf Dauhou by the representative of Microsoft (O.I.) Alexandre Brouchoud in the presence of Lady Jugnauth during an award ceremony for 250 trainees. Up till now the training programme which has been ongoing for two years, has benefited 800 persons from deprived quarters.

National Campaign 'Anou sap nou lezar' launched

The Mauritius Wildlife Foundation launched a nationwide campaign to save four endemic species of Mauritian lizards to be found nowhere else in the world. Those reptiles live on the islets in

Grand Port Bay.

Several activities will be organized as part of the sensitization campaign among which an open day with drawing competitions, games, talks, photo exhibition. The campaign has been conceived and realized by Rare Pride with the help of the British High Commission, PriceWaterhouseCoopers, Darwin Initiative and the National Parks and Conservation Service.

To ensure the success of the campaign the cooperation of the skippers of Blue bay has been enlisted. They have been specially trained by the Foundation to serve

New Edge Solutions rewarded

New Edge Solutions, representative of the software Sage Accpac, exclusive to the Food and Allied Group of Companies in Mauritius, has been awarded the 'Sage Accpac Silver Solution' and the 'Accpac Runner Up Best Performer Award 2008'.

The award was handed to New Edge Solutions during the Annual Congress of Accpac held in South Africa lately.

Birth bicentenary of Charles Darwin

The birth bicentenary of Robert Charles Darwin, world famous British naturalist whose works and theories relative to the evolution of living species have revolutionized biology, was celebrated at the Mauritius Sugar Industry Research Institute (MSIRI) at Réduit on 12 February 2009. During a tree-planting ceremony to commemorate the event, the British High Commissioner, Dr John R. Murlod, was invited to plant a tambalacoque.

On that occasion the Royal Society of Arts and Science is organizing an essay competition for young Mauritians (18-25 years) at home and abroad on the following themes: (1) *Ensuring the competitiveness and economic success of our future agro-industry through the adoption of modern genetic and biotechnologies for the improvement and value-adding for co-products, to meet the challenges of the new economic paradigm and the need for preserving our food security;* (2) *Promoting and branding Mauritius as a green country and Ile Durable, though enhanced conservation efforts and creation of parks and reserves, to ensure the long term sustainability of our biodiversity.*

The essay must be about 5 000 words long. The copies must be typed on A4 sheets and must include not more than 8 visuals, 5 graphics, 3 photos and 2 pages of references. Participants must not have reached their 26th birthday on 31 January 2009. The essays must be forwarded in three copies, not later than 30 June 2009, to the following address: The Secretary, Royal Society of Arts and Sciences c/o MSIRI, Réduit, Mauritius.

It is of note that Charles Darwin paid a two-week long visit to Mauritius, from 29 April to 9 May 1836, in the wake of his world famous tour on board the *HMS Beagle*.

Ex-MP takes to task costly project of Ring Road

Former Member of the Legislative Assembly Raymond Rivet held a press conference in Port Louis to criticize the imminent launching of the first phase of the Ring Road meant to solve the problem of traffic congestion in Port Louis.

The costs of the full project are estimated at Rs 4 billion. The Ring Road will start at Montebello (Upper Pailles) and go through Soreze via the valley of the Guibies through Tranquebar and Valley Pitot to reach the highway M1 somewhere near the roundabout of Quay D.

Contender Raymond Rivet proposes an alternative which will reduce costs considerably, the road proposed being shorter by five kilometers as it will pass through the Goat Rock tunnel instead of the more complicated Quoin Bluff tunnel of the Ring Road.

41 candidates stand for by-election in No. 8

Three candidates have withdrawn themselves out of the 41 who have registered to stand for the by-election scheduled for the 1st March in constituency No 8 Moka-Quartier Militaire. This by-election follows the unseating of former MNA (Member of the National Assembly) Ashok Jugnauth on the ground that he bribed the electorate to get elected during the 2005 general elections.

Among those standing as candidates for the only seat at stake in the by-election are former MLAs Ashok Jugnauth himself, Pravind Jugnauth, Anil Gayan and Vinod Goodoory.

Demise of Senior Chief Executive sends shock wave

Raj Mudhoo, Senior Chief Executive at the Ministry of Defence and Internal Affairs, suddenly passed away on the night of Monday 16 and Tuesday 17 February sending a wave-shock at Clarisse House where he was awaited the following day to sign the conventions between the Republic of China and the Republic of Mauritius in the wake of the State visit of President Hu Jintao.

Raj Mudhoo had been involved at all stages of the preparation of that State visit including the banquet given at the Swami Vivekananda International Conferences Centre at Domaine Les Pailles where he made his last public appearance.

The deceased was given a State funeral to signify the high esteem in which he was held at Government House. The funeral procession was followed by members of the Special Mobile Force and the Police Band which played funeral marches for the occasion. The body was then laid in a jeep of the SMF and carried to the cemetery of Phoenix for the cremation ceremony.

New law publication

Doing Business in Mauritius,
A Practical Guide by Marie Lourdes Lam Hung
Barrister at Law

The book is highly recommended to members of the legal profession advising clients in Mauritius. It is recommended as a manual to Law students, and as a reference book to those wishing to familiarise themselves with the relevant information on Mauritius.

£40 per copy (excluding postage). Obtainable in the UK from Esthel, Tel: 786 753 5939.

'Doing Business in Mauritius - A Practical Guide' may be summed up in the author's own words: "This in-depth guide can be a springboard for the launching of new enterprises."

Travel News

Eurostar reports record numbers for last year

Passenger numbers broke the nine million barrier for the first time with 9.1 million travellers carried – an increase of 10.3% from 8.26 million in the previous year

Eurostar, the high-speed passenger train service that links the UK and mainland Europe, has reported record traveller numbers and ticket sales for 2008 following the first full year of operations on High Speed 1.

Ticket sales also reached a record level of £664 million, rising by 10.9% from £599 million in 2007. Shorter journey times to Paris and Brussels and the excellent connections offered by St Pancras International are attracting increasing numbers of passengers to switch to high-speed rail.

The results would have been significantly stronger but for the closure of part of the Channel Tunnel following a fire on board a Eurotunnel freight shuttle on 11 September 2008, which continues to cause reductions in services and longer journey times.

The nature of the Eurostar service, in which travellers book up to four months in advance, means sales were significantly affected by the Channel Tunnel incident from September onwards, whereas the subsequent economic downturn had little impact on the year as a whole.

Eurostar continues to achieve high levels of punctuality with 92.4% of trains arriving on time or early during 2008.

Richard Brown, Chief Executive, Eurostar, said, "An increase of nearly a million extra passengers using High Speed 1 during its first year of operations, even with the impact of the tunnel fire, demonstrates beyond doubt that people prefer high-speed rail to short-haul air. They are switching because rail journeys are faster, more punctual, more convenient, and have less environmental impact."

"Whilst reduced tunnel access will affect the first quarter of 2009, we expect to return to a full timetable in the early spring with journey times restored to 1h 51 to Brussels and 2h 15 to Paris once Eurotunnel completes repairs to the Channel Tunnel"

"The uncertainties of the current economic climate reinforce the importance of good value fares and Eurostar's UK lead-in fare remains at £59 return for the sixth year in a row."

"The short-term outlook for 2009 is challenging, but the long-term prospects for Eurostar and high-speed rail are very good. High Speed 1 is fully connected into Europe's fast expanding high-speed network and we expect to see continuing growth in the number of travellers making longer connecting journeys from towns and cities across the UK to Belgium and France, as well as to destinations in the Netherlands and Germany."



Cambridge marks 20 years of its programme to encourage ethnic minority applications with a special reunion as record numbers of ethnic minority students are admitted

2009 sees the University of Cambridge mark its 800th year. A slightly less venerable, but no less important anniversary is also being marked by the University's GEEMA (Group to Encourage Ethnic Minority Applications) programme, which was set up in 1989 as a joint venture by students and the Colleges of Cambridge to encourage ethnic minority applications and ensure bright students from whatever background know that Cambridge could, and should, be a place for them.

GEEMA was one of the first programmes of its kind in UK Universities and its model of a range of outreach initiatives from Open Days and Summer Schools exclusively for students from minority ethnic backgrounds, to school visits and partnerships with external organisations has been the forerunner of many widening participation and widening access initiatives. The real impact of GEEMA over the last 20 years is visible in figures released by the University of Cambridge this week. They show that in 2008, a record number of ethnic minority students were admitted to Cambridge.

In 1990, a year after GEEMA was founded, 158 (or 5.5 per cent) of the 2,865 home students admitted to Cambridge whose ethnicity was known were from ethnic minorities. In 2007 the equivalent numbers were 428 (14.7 per cent) out of 2,911. For 2008 the figures are 448 (15.5 per cent) out of 2,890. Therefore the number of home students of ethnic minority origin admitted to Cambridge has increased by 5% this year.

Jon Beard, Director of Undergraduate Recruitment for the University, said: "The University of Cambridge remains committed to attracting the brightest and best students regardless of background, and as GEEMA enters its 20th year these figures emphasise the vital role it plays in ensuring that happens. The University is rightly proud of the work GEEMA does and this anniversary year is the perfect opportunity to showcase its successes and push even harder to ensure that all students of high academic ability know that Cambridge could be for them."

Matthew Ryder, who studied law at Cambridge from 1986 to 1989 was one of a group of students who helped to found GEEMA. He is now a barrister at Matrix chambers, specialising in crime and human rights. He has been involved in a number of high-profile cases, including representing the parents of murdered teenager Stephen Lawrence, and he is highly regarded in the fields of police law and terrorism. Last year he was selected by the government as one of the 20 REACH National Role Models, tasked with providing alternative role models and life paths for African-Caribbean boys and young men.

"GEEMA arose out of Cambridge Black Students' Caucus in the mid-1980s. It was a unique project because it was the first time black British students were a visible entity at Cambridge. Our goal was to make the University more accessible and less intimidating to those coming behind us. The improvement in numbers shows why GEEMA is effective, but there's still work to do. Cambridge and other universities are always trying to attract the very best young minds, no matter what background they come from and GEEMA has an important part to play in doing that."

The most powerful testament to the effectiveness of the GEEMA programme are those who've experienced it for themselves and know the transformative value it can and does have. An anniversary dinner planned for the summer of 2009 will bring together many of those people – some now prominent figures in their chosen fields. Anyone wishing to obtain further details on this event is invited to contact geema@cao.cam.ac.uk.

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