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April 2011 - No 281

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

Monthly - 70p 28th year

The Legends Hotel murder

Two suspects still in detention

The murder case of Irish honeymoon tourist Michaela Harte in Mauritius has noted a major landmark in March with the release of two of the suspects, Raj Theekoye and Dassen Naraynen.

In her ruling at the Mapou district court, magistrate Sheila Bonomally has reduced the charges from 'conspiracy to commit murder' to 'conspiracy to commit larceny'. The charges on Theekoye were struck off and he is now a free man.

Theekoye was employed as a room attendant at the Legends hotel while Naraynen worked as security officer at the same hotel. Naraynen had to pay bail worth Rs 200,000 and an acknowledgement of debt worth Rs 500,000.

Moreover, he will have to present himself at the local police station three times weekly on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays.

Police prosecution has lodged a motion for a preliminary inquiry on the involvement of Sandeep Moneea. The magistrate announced that she would give her ruling on Friday.

The lawyer of Avinash Treebhoowon, Sanjiv Teeluckdharry, presented a bail motion but Bonomally postponed the debate to March 31. Moneea remains on remand and is expected to appear in the Supreme Court, Port Louis.

Five suspects were initially arrested following the murder of Michaela Harte at Legends Hotel in January. With the



**Murdered bride
Michaela Harte**

release of three suspects so far, there now remain Sandip Moneea and Avinash Treebhoowon.

Legends again in the limelight

After the tragedy that struck Irish tourist Michaela McAreavey Harte, the beleaguered Legends hotel in Grand Gaube is back in the limelight for theft of tourists' property.

An employee of the hotel was arrested by the Grand Gaube police recently in connection with two cases of theft on the premises. The valet, Reaz Garib Nayad, is expected to be produced in the District Court of Mapou.

The 38-year-old will be in police custody until then. Nayad is accused of stealing goods worth

Rs 20,000 from the rooms of two Indian tourists, Rahim Firozalli Patel, 26, and Amal Dattaray Naik, 28.

Following a complaint, the Goodlands police set up an operation and arrested Nayad at his house at Mosque Road, Vale. He was transferred to the Grand Gaube police station and following a strict interrogation he confessed to committing the crime and explained his modus operandi.

He had stolen a master key which he used to access the victim's room.

MN note: It is not an uncommon fact that items of personal belongings of visitors are frequently stolen at hotels in Mauritius. It has been reported to us that the keys of a guest staying at a local hotel were stolen from his bag and his house in the UK visited while he was still in the island. He realised the loss when he was back looking for the keys to open his premises.

Mauritius on the warpath?



Michael Marain

A visitor to Mauritius on March 12 may be forgiven to believe that Mauritius was mobilising its forces for some enemy confrontation.

As a matter of fact the military display was part of the annual parade at the Champs de Mars in Port Louis to commemorate the Independence anniversary of the island. It became independent of Britain on March 12, 1968.

Mauritius contesting the Chagos Marine Park creation

Australian Ivan Shearer will chair court hearing

The case brought by the Mauritian government against Great Britain regarding the creation of a marine park in the Chagos took a new turn.

The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) has completed an important step by appointing Albert Hoffman of South Africa, James Kateka from Tanzania and Ivan Shearer of Australia as arbitrators of the Tribunal of Hamburg in the case between the two countries.

The Australian representative will act as the chairperson.

Raj Law Solicitors move to new location in Tooting

The offices of Raj Law Solicitors are now located at 169 Tooting High Street, Tooting Broadway, London SW17 0SY. Telephone 020 3133 0000. Facsimile: 020 8682 0755. (Nearest Tube Station: Tooting Broadway on the Northern Line)



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Traffic Wardens are now delivering post

The above headline from a recent issue of the South London Press, is followed by the subheadline 'TOO MANY PARKING PERMITS WENT MISSING'.

This indictment on the Royal Mail's inefficiency is loud and clear. The Royal Mail delivery service is defective.

We have been saying so for a long time. As we have recourse to bulk posting to subscribers throughout the UK and overseas, we frequently receive complaints from subscribers that their copies of Mauritius News are not delivered to them.

In December last, we experienced the worst postal delivery ever when it snowed for several days. Some readers never ever received their December issue of the paper. To this day we do not know what the post office has done to these copies. The situation was made worse for us as we were relying on this December post to deliver the application forms for the Miss Mauritius (GB) Competition.

By January, 2011, we had to print separately over a thousand application forms to target certain areas at extra cost, and to have them despatched by Royal Mail at still extra cost. All that made a big hole in our budget.

Many contestants phoned us to say that MN had not acknowledged their applications. We had to bring it home to them that the Royal Mail never delivered their applications to us in the first instance.

Royal Mail's delivery service is not only getting poorer and poorer, postage is put up on every April 1 without proper justification. It will now cost us 75p to send inland one copy of Mauritius News (16 pages) as first class mail. The price is much higher, almost £2, for despatch to Mauritius and other overseas destinations. To meet such cost, how much should we charge for annual subscription? — taking into consideration the wrapping, printing (which has also gone up, the administrative costs and the other overheads. Recently, a self-employed person withdrew her services, without prior notice, because the paper could not afford to pay her an **additional** monthly fee of £400.

When the Royal Mail introduced the new tariff in April we were sent a questionnaire for comments. I did not hesitate to write down that it may be time for the mail delivery service to be 'liberalised' in the same way as the telephone service. When BT had the monopoly of the telephone service, a phone call to Mauritius used to cost as much as £1.25 per minute. Today, you can make call to the country for as little 9p per minute (and cheaper with special Simcards)

The fact that Traffic Wardens are now delivering post, as reported in the press, may be considered as a step in the direction of liberalising the service. There are already other courier services available for mail delivery but this operation is still in its infancy. The appropriate network will be put in place in due course. Perhaps then we shall have a brake on the escalating postage rate. We have seen it all, going up and up for the past 28 years that we publish and despatch.

By the way, I have returned my Census form on time and the provided envelope. I have today (Tues 19/4) received a reminder that I would be fined if I do not return the form by post or complete it on line. That's how wonderful is the Royal Mail service.

The Royal Wedding

One may rightly wonder whether the 1,800 invitations to the Royal Wedding are being sent through the Royal Mail. The whole lot cannot be hand-delivered or be delivered by whatever means the Royals have to do so. If you do not receive your invite it will not surprise anybody as the Royal Mail is not always up to it. If Parking Permits go missing, a royal invitation may as well.

All in all, it may be said that this is a jovial time to be in the UK—to be part of the history that will take place. We shall witness, be it on TV or elsewhere the wedding of a future King of England. His Queen and himself will accordingly be chronicled in the History of England. We should be forgiven if in years to come we should brag we were there when that bit of history was made. If there is any reason to rejoice, this very idea of one's presence during such a shifting era could be sufficient. One can sense a general feeling of goodwill towards the happy young couple that everyone would wish them well. It's an age of very young people (and more and more of them) at the helm, even among politicians. We can visualise the destiny of United Kingdom mapped by a generation of young people, a destiny devoid of bigotry in the religious field and corruption in the political arena. It has pleased many people to hear Labour leader Ed Miliband saying that he does not believe in God.

AV or No AV? If one has read Andrew Tarrant's article in the last issue of MN one may have an inkling of what AV is about.

Some believe it is a form of PR (Proportional Representation) if not PR itself. It is believed that as far as political parties are concerned, the Lib-Dems are going to do much better in obtaining a larger number of seats in Parliament. But as far as government stability is concerned the country may be doomed to perpetual coalitions as it has been happening elsewhere. Some say why bother?

March 2011

Peter Chellen

Political development

Are British politicians normal?

B A drew Tarrant



British politicians are more distrusted than almost any other profession according to opinion polls. An opinion shared by many newspaper columnists who rail against the self-seeking nature of "modern" politicians. But is it true that British politicians are more divorced from society than they ever have been?

If they are divorced from society, how could we remedy this? The solution could lie in reforming the House of Lords so that normal citizens can review acts of government.

The critics' view is that the amateur politicians of the past were more normal. Supposedly this was because their outside interests meant they were better connected with the world outside the "Westminster bubble" and less interested in pursuing their own selfish-interests. The expenses scandal is often said to have confirmed this view.

One of the leading advocates of the decline of politics and the rise of the political class is the Daily Mail journalist Peter Osborne. He argues that the professionalization of politics has given rise to a new political class who know only politics.

They become involved in politics at university, graduate to becoming MPs' assistants and move on to becoming politicians. In his opinion, they lack the wisdom accumulated by the MPs of the past in their non-political professional lives.

As one might expect with any argument associated with a Daily Mail polemicist, the mountain of rhetoric rests on a molehill of evidence. The truth is that the majority of MPs still have extensive non-political experience.

Evidence compiled by House of Commons researchers for the period 1951-2001 shows that the percentage of politicians from a professional political background rose to 11% in both of the main parties (from 4% in the Labour Party and 2% in the Conservative Party in 1951). It was still heavily outweighed in the Conservative Party by the 37% with a business background and the 41% with a professional background such as law - percentages which had barely changed since 1951.

The biggest change in the Labour Party intake was the decline in MPs from a manual labour background (27% to 13%) and a rise in MPs from white collar but non-professional backgrounds (4% to 18%). A change which reflects wider changes in society.

It is also inaccurate to say that accumulated experience has significantly waned. The average age of MPs has remained constant between 1951 and 2001 at 52 years of age. The number serving as MPs for more than one or two parliaments has only risen by about a fifth.

It is not at all clear that experience in other walks of life is an advantage for a politician seeking high office. The majority of MPs with the vaunted non-political experience tend to vote for leaders who have the longest political and least professional experience.

If this majority of MPs are supposed to be the wisest, their decision to appoint the politically-experienced MPs as their leaders contradicts the Osborne argument.

This preference on the majority's part has always been the case. If we look at the careers of the men who were British Prime Ministers between 1919 and 1945, we find that they first entered parliament at an average age which would put them among the youngest MPs even in today's parliament.

The growing preference for the professional over the amateur is a consistent theme in the development of all British professions. At one time, as Norman Dixon's book "On the Psychology of Military Incompetence" reveals, the British army was thought to benefit from the purchase of officer-rank by aristocrats and the exclusion of professional soldiers. For Britain's very survival, it was a doctrine that had to be abandoned during wars.

The argument in favour of the amateur implies either that MPs have to be very wealthy or that they have to be supported financially by an interest group. Historically, this was the case in

Britain. From the First World War to the Second World War, Conservative MPs were independently wealthy and Labour MPs were either in the same position or financed by trade unions.

It is hard to see how these positions would not impact on impartiality. It is impossible to see how anyone could argue today that this would be a reflection of the normal organisation of life.

The lifestyle of today's MPs may be closer to the normal voter than if they were required to be financially independent. They do have mortgages and they use public services.

But they still do not look like the average voter and may struggle to appreciate how policy decisions impact on the average citizen. An MP earns £65000 a year, which puts them in the top ten per cent of earners in Britain. The average person earns £23000 a year.

They are also not like other people because they are able to set their own pay and expenses. Fearing voter's wrath they have tended to shy away from voting themselves the higher salaries they believed they merited. Instead, comparing themselves with higher earning professionals in other walks of life, many sought to pad out their salaries through a lax expenses regime.

Revelation of the details in 2009 provoked a political crisis and the eventual imposition of a much stricter regime. According to opinion polls, it did not bring MPs into greater disrepute with voters. But this is only because there has always been great scepticism about their integrity.

British people have always mistrusted politicians. In 1944, a time in history when the British people were more unified than they have been before or since, a Gallup Poll found that 35% of Britons thought politicians looked out for themselves and 22% that they were only concerned with party advantage.

This record was echoed in popular culture. British films from the 1940s to 1960s cast doubts on the motives of politicians. In one 1948 film, "Vote for Huggett", Grandma suggested of her son "He'll be standing for Parliament next." Her daughter-in-law's shocked response was "Grandma, what a horrid thing to say about anyone."

Those who argue that with financially independent MPs we would have avoided expenses scandals have to overlook two major facts. Moat cleaning and duck houses were not being claimed by less wealthy MPs. And the House of Lords, where far more members are financially independent, has its own severe expenses embarrassments.

The distrust of politicians also arises from two other sources. The first is that we feel that we do not have a say over the specific decisions which they make. Many of the momentous decisions made during a parliament are not those which were put before us at general elections.

The other source of our distrust may be the media. The way that much of the media, particularly the most-read tabloid newspapers, covers politics means that we are uninformed on policy content and over-informed of the human failings of individual politicians. Famously, just before leaving office, Tony Blair gave a speech on this to journalists in 2007.

Describing the media as a "feral beast" which tore "people and reputations to bits", he expressed the opinion that the relationship between public life and the media had been degraded. In his view, scandal and controversy were the focus of much media reporting of politics and the errors made by politicians were unfairly attributed to venality and conspiracy rather than mistakes in judgment.

A solution could be devised which could go some way to make us feel that ordinary citizens' views are taken into account while still allowing policy-making to be pursued by professionals. It would reduce the need to rely on an entertainment-focussed media.

Continued on page 12

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Tel & Fax
0207 498 3066
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www.mauritiusnews.co.uk

CHAIRMAN & MANAGING DIRECTOR:
Peter Chellen
editor@mauritiusnews.co.uk
Editor: Vacant
Associate Editor:
Robin Sooklall

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Titbits from Mauritius

By **A mad Macky**

Two Sri Lankans Still In The Wild

They were to fly to Sri Lanka on Wednesday the 6th April to be repatriated, but two of them who were employed at Tropic Knits have not left Mauritius and they have not been found yet.

As at Thursday night, the police were still looking for them since they are staying illegally on the island.

In fact on Wednesday, some fifty foreign workers of Tropic Knits, including Indians, Bangladeshis and Sri Lankans were repatriated to their respective countries. However, four Sri Lankans who did not board the plane.

Two of them were eventually found and were sent home. At midday on Thursday the management of Tropic Knits received a demand from some 100 expatriates, all Sri Lankans who wanted to be repatriated.

Procedures were initiated in this direction.

Medpoint Clinic Scandal: Two Civil Servants Arrested

Yodhun Bissessur, the No 3 of the Government Valuation Office, and Aneerood Jeebodhun, were arrested on Tuesday 5th April by officers of ICAC in connection with the investigation into the controversy surrounding the acquisition by the State of MedPoint clinic for the sum of Rs 144 million.

These are the first arrests in this case. Both are provisionally charged with "public official using office for gratification." Clearly, they are provisionally charged with having ordered a second evaluation exercise of the MedPoint clinic.

Yodhun Bissessur said the decision to conduct a second evaluation exercise came from the Ministry of Health. As for choosing Hoolooman & Associates, he contends that there were "suggestions" during a meeting at the Ministry of Public Infrastructure for the firm to get the contract.

Yodhun Bissessur and Aneerood Jeebodhun were released on bail on the same day.

The ICAC began an investigation into this case to establish the circumstances justifying a new assessment exercise after the first evaluation report setting the price of the old clinic at Rs 75 million.

Scaffolding Regulations

Scaffolding can be dangerous, even fatal, if the structures used for mounting it are not up to standard.

To minimize and eliminate risks of accidents related to scaffolding in the construction industry, the Occupational Safety and Health (Scaffold) Regulations have been amended. The new measures have been in force since April 1.

The Cabinet took note of this and coincidentally a bricklayer of 52 years fell from scaffolding at his workplace at Pointes aux Sables on the same day. He unfortunately passed away two days later. The Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations has worked on these new regulations for the past six months.

"Since my arrival at the Ministry of

Labour, I noted with dismay that there were no regulations, no security code for scaffolding, though many buildings are under construction across the country," Shakeel Mohamed said.

According to the majority of people in Mauritius, Minister Shakeel Mohamed so far has done nothing positive for either the labour sector or the industrial sector. Many people are not satisfied with his work.

Two employees were sacked at the MBC and Mohamed did nothing but offer empty promises.

"Never in the history of the ministry of Labour, has a government had such a poor performing minister," said many people who have dealings with this Minister.

Edition of SECA 2011

A Mauritian delegation has participated in the 2011 edition of SECA, the leading European trade fair for Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) and call centres which started on Thursday 5th April in Porte de Versailles.

For three days, the task of the delegation was to convince investors to head to Mauritius to invest in this sector.

The delegation used the instability in the Arab world as a strong argument for investors to come to Mauritius. Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco are the main outsourcing markets for francophone countries.

"The problems these countries are going through may worry investors. When a country is facing political and/or social instability, investors lose confidence quickly. We want to redirect their investments to Mauritius, a country which is known precisely for its great political and social stability.

"It is a strong point that we certainly put forward," said one participant at the show.

Sai Baba Hospitalized

A panel of specialists were at the bedside of the guru Sai Baba, 85, to try to save him, on Tuesday the 5th April.

He suffered a kidney malfunction. The guru has been admitted to a hospital specializing in the field, at the Prashantigram Hospital, since March 28, following abdominal pain and lung problems.

According to Dr A.N Safaya, Director of the Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences, his other organs were stable.

In Mauritius many of his disciples are praying day and night for his recovery.

Escape From Custody

BiBi Z reen Tafazul, 30, a female detainee from Sivananda Avenue, Floreal, was being escorted by a trainee police woman, posted at Floreal Police Station, to the toilet of Curepipe Court when she escaped.


She did appear in court on Tuesday the 5th April, in virtue of a warrant of arrest for a case of shoplifting.

In less than 48 hours she was caught in Rose-Hill and brought back to a police cell.

Serious Burns

While cooking at her home at Morcellement Beau Climat, Amaury, Sarada Samuel, 53 years old,


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accidentally sustained burns when her clothes caught fire.

She was admitted to Princess Margaret Orthopaedic Burns Unit at Candos hospital.

Her condition is serious. The accident took place on Wednesday the 6th April at around 2.00pm.

Possession of Cannabis

Two police officers posted at Coromandel Police were performing a stop and search exercise along Royal Rd, on the 6th April when they signaled a private van to stop.

The driver failed to do so. In a close chase, the van was intercepted along Richelieu Rd and the driver, aged 54, residing at Beau Bassin threw away a small packet.

The packet was picked up and it was found to contain a certain quantity of cannabis. He was positively alcotested and was detained.

The van is in police custody.

Fatal Road Accident

Balakrishna Goondun, aged 47 years, residing at Long Mountain was riding his motorbike along Royal Rd, Grande Rosalie towards Flacq on Wednesday the 6th April when he was knocked down by an oncoming bus.

He died instantly. Dr Sain, PMO, certified that the death was due to shock following multiple injuries. The driver, aged 56, residing at Belvedere was negatively alcotested.

He appeared in court on Wednesday the 6th April 2011.

Infanticide

Marie Noelle Fortuno, aged 26 and residing at Tombeau Bay, confessed to police that she willfully left her three month old baby alone in a pail of water for about two hours.

Her boyfriend, a fisherman aged 34, residing at St Joseph Rd, Terre Rouge reported that on the 6th April at about midday, when he returned home from work, he found that his baby son, Ashish Hosany was lying inert on a bed.

The latter was pronounced dead at SSRN Hospital and Dr Gungadin, CPMO, certified that death was due to acute pulmonary oedema.

In her statement to the police, the accused said that she heard the story of the woman who killed her baby in the South of the country and wanted to imitate her.

Marie Noelle was sent to Brown Sequard Psychiatric Hospital after appearing in court.

Assaults

A 34 year-old woman living on Route du Jardin, Curepipe, reported to the police of the locality that on Tuesday the 5th April at midday, she was walking alone along Pope Hennessy Street, Curepipe, when a private car with four unknown men on board stopped near her.

Thereupon, two of the occupants alighted from the car, assaulted her and stole her handbag containing a sum of Rs 2000 and they then drove away.

The victim was slightly injured and needed treatment.

Another case of assault, this time a maid, aged 45 years, residing at Quatre Bornes reported that she was walking along Chooroomoony Avenue, Quatre Bornes, with her mother-in-law, when the pillion seater of a motorcycle snatched their gold chains and sped away.

The victims were not injured.

SEM News

The Mauritius Commercial Bank tops the official market list of companies classified in terms of annual total return as at 31 March 2011.

The other nine companies in the list are, in order: Shell, ENL Land, Mauritius Union Assurance, United Basalt Products, Mauritius Oil Refineries, Gamma Civic, State Bank of Mauritius, Mauritius Development Investment Trust and Rogers.

Texprocess 2011

Enterprise Mauritius will be leading, for the first time, the participation of local manufacturers from the textile and apparel industry in Texprocess.

This upcoming international trade fair, for processing textile and flexible materials, will be held at the Fairground Frankfurt, in Germany from 24 to 27 May.

International manufacturers are expected to present, during this trade fair, their latest machines, plant, processing, IT systems and services for making up textiles and other flexible materials.

BOM Purchases USD

The Bank of Mauritius (BOM) intervened on the domestic foreign exchange market recently.

It purchased an amount of USD 6.35

million and EUR 0.9 million at the weighted rate of Rs/USD28.4200 and Rs EUR 40.1000.

New Index Number Plates For All Motor Vehicles

As from the 1st July this year, all motor vehicles will have to change their index number plates and put new ones, according to a new law.

All motor vehicles should exhibit yellow index number plates with black figures on the rear and white index number plates with black figures on the front.

This new law takes effect from the 1st July 2011. There is a lot of controversy over this new system.

NEO TOWN (Les Salines) Project: Another Mega Scandal After Medpoint Clinic

The government has made a deal to lease 60 acres of land situated at "Les Salines", also known as NEO TOWN, for 99 years to a private Indian company namely, "Patel Engineering Company Ltd" for stupid money, peanuts.

At its press conference on Saturday the 9th April, the leader of the opposition, Paul Bérenger, promised to disclose the "mega-scandal" in the near future.

The land is estimated at Rs 15 billion but the Indian company will pay at Rs 1.5 million.

This controversial issue is making front page headlines in Mauritius and "choux gras" for journalists.

Historical facts

Did you know that the actual shipwreck of Le St Gèran off the coasts of Mauritius in 1744 inspired French author Bernardin de St Pierre to write his novel 'Paul et Virginie'?

More of this shipwreck will be mentioned on other pages. You may wish to refer to such notes to answer questions.

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Fatal accident in St. Julien: 12 dead and four seriously wounded

A fatal accident happened recently at St Julien, in the Eastern part of Mauritius. A mini-bus, carrying about 15 Bangladeshi workers on their way to work, and a HGV lorry transporting macadam collided. As a result of this collision, 12 people died on the spot with another dying in hospital two days later. The dead bodies (11 Bangladeshis and the Mauritian mini-bus driver) are mostly employees from a nearby Textile Industry. All the Bangladeshi bodies were repatriated to Bangladesh. Four victims are still fighting for their lives in the Intensive Care Unit of the SSR Hospital. Police are still making inquiries about the cause of this accident.

Former Lord Mayor found guilty of corruption

Tirat Moosun, the former Lord Mayor of the City of Port Louis, was found guilty of corruption (conflict of interest) by Intermediary Court of Mauritius. Moosun was accused of breaching article 13 (2) (93) of the Prevention of Corruption Act 2002. Moosun supposedly gave favour to his sister, a Mrs Vimla Callychurn, by not adopting the proper legal procedure, as stipulated by law. His sister obtained a market stall without even applying for it. At the time when his sister obtained this market stall, Moosun was the Lord Mayor of Port-Louis. Moosun bypassed all applications made by other people and offered the market stall to his sister. This matter only came to light when two market traders complained about it to ICAC (Ind Commission against Corruption) and police.

Reservoirs levels cause concern

The situation of Mauritius’ reservoirs is still alarming. The government has decided to review the Water Rights Policy in Mauritius and all possible options to maintain a minimum water distribution have been considered. Measures will be implemented to supply water to the different sectors of the economy throughout the year. The Minister of Energy and Public Utilities announced his decision at a recent press conference. He expressed the

determination of the government to review the water rights policy in Mauritius. He has the backing of other Cabinet Ministers.

Comoros President visits Mauritius

The President of Comoros Islands, Ahmed Mohamed Sambi’s first visit to Mauritius visit was focused primarily on the public health sector and the judiciary. He was welcomed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr Arvin Boolell. The President was accompanied by his Minister of Health, Dr Sounhadj Attoumaned. On the Wednesday, he made a courtesy call to Prime Minister Ramgoolam before meeting the leader of the opposition, Paul Berenger. The delegation held a workshop at the Ministry of Health. Discussions centred on the updating of a partnership agreement signed in 2001. A courtesy call on the President of the Republic of Mauritius, Sir Aneerood Jugnauth, followed.

Government purchases clinic

The government has bought The Med Point Clinic for the sum of RS 145 million. The Minister of Health and Quality of Life, Maya Hanoomanjee, admitted that the institution will be converted into a specialized centre for the elderly. Located in Solferino, the Med Point Clinic closed down last September owing to financial problems. The clinic was formerly run by Dr Malhotra, the son-in-law of President of the Republic, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, and the brother-in-law of the Finance Minister, Pravin Jugnauth. The Med Point Clinic sale led to questions from various quarters.

Officer attacked

Two armed men attacked a police officer when he was heading home from the harbour station on his motorbike. The aggressors were also on a motorbike. They overtook the police officer and then forced him to stop. They allegedly hit the officer on the head with their helmets. Then, one of them stole his motorbike. The police are searching for the two men.

Two hotel employees steal diamond ring

Two employees from the Sugar Beach Hotel stole a diamond ring, valued at

1,800 Euros (Rs 74,790), from a hotel room. The victim is a French tourist who was on holiday in Mauritius. The accused were named as Vijay Ramesh, a 28 year-old room servant, and Archanand Bindyah, a 47 year-old bar attendant. Both men confessed to police that they did steal the diamond ring when arrested. The French tourist kept her diamond ring in the room of the Sugar Beach Hotel where she booked to stay whilst on holiday in Mauritius. The tourist realised that her ring was missing from the place she kept it. She went to the police and complained.

Dead woman in boyfriend’s house

A woman in her thirties was found dead in her new boyfriend’s house at Pointe-aux-Biches in the new year. Police suspect that she died of an alcohol overdose. The woman left her ex-boyfriend in Triolet six months ago to go and live with her new one. The police are investigating.

Hit and run accident

A 38 year-old woman in Baie-du-Tombeau was seriously injured when a car hit her recently and ran. According to the investigators, the driver who hit her escaped immediately from the area. People walking by found the woman next to the road. She had leg and head injuries. She was taken to the SSR National Hospital for attention. Her condition is apparently critical. Police are still searching for the driver.

Car wash banned in Mauritius

Washing your car at a petrol station is now illegal. Anyone found wasting water either by having their car washed or using water for irrigation or cleaning purposes could be liable for a fine of up to Rs 200,000 and a maximum prison sentence of six months. This drastic measure by the Central Water Authority (CWA) was taken because of the critically low level of water in the reservoirs and to mitigate water shortages.

Driving test fees up

Driving tests fees, as well as registration fees for taking the oral examinations component, have gone up. They are now Rs 300 and Rs 500 respectively. According to a spokesman from the Driving Learner Institution, “practical tests to obtain a driving licence are done in three stages: firstly road driving, followed by reversing, and then parking”. Learner drivers must pay Rs 500 to do these three different tests each time. And if the learner driver

fails, they must again pay Rs 500 to re-sit the exams.

The Lam Po Tang case

The atrocious murder case of Helene Lam Po Tang took a new dimension recently. A third suspect, 33 year-old Kishan Dhooky from Quatre Bornes, was arrested on in January. Dooky was suspected of aiding and abetting. The new suspect is a close friend of Sanjeev Nunkoo, the alleged murderer who is in detention. Gary Lam Po Tang, the victim’s husband is accused of having ordered the murder of his wife. Helene Lam Po Tang was stabbed 39 times and died in her house at Tombeau Bay last October.

Three year-old boy found dead in closed car

A three year-old boy was found dead in his uncle’s car recently. He died of suffocation, as none of the car windows was open. The car was parked on the family compound in Flacq. The boy had earlier been to the seaside with his dad and brother. The father had borrowed the uncle’s car for the family outing. It is believed that the boy got back into the car when they got back home, and that he fell asleep with the doors and windows closed. His father looked for him everywhere and finally found him on the floor of the car. He was lying unconscious between the front and the back seats. The child was immediately taken to the Flacq hospital, where the doctors pronounced him dead.

Indian doctor assaulted in Mauritius

An Indian doctor was hit on the head with an iron bar by a truck driver during a traffic incident. The two men were driving their vehicles in a heavy traffic jam in La Louise, Quatre-Bornes. According to the truck driver, the doctor forcibly got in front of his vehicle. He horned to express his anger at which point the doctor allegedly insulted him. When the two drivers came to the roundabout of La Louise, the truck driver decided to take action. “I got out of my vehicle to explain myself, but he continued to provoke me. That is when I grabbed the iron bar which was lying in my truck...”. He appeared in Court charged with “dangerous driving” and “assault with premeditation”.

Attempted rape of South

African tourist

A South African tourist was relaxing in a restaurant in Flic-rn-Flac when two men walked over to her table. They offered her a drink and the trio spoke for a while. One of the men asked the lady if she wanted to go for a walk on the beach. She declined the offer. According to the woman, the man turned violent. He allegedly forced her to leave the restaurant with him. He took her to an abandoned house, threw himself on her and tried to rape her. She fought back and managed to run away. Shocked and with blood dripping from her face, she returned to Tamarin, where she was staying at a friend’s house. The South African lady told her friend what had happened and they went to the police to report that matter. The victim was taken to Victoria Hospital, in Candos, for a medical check-up. Police is still searching for the two men.

Death threat by former police officer

A former police officer from Rose-Belle allegedly spat on the face of a lawyer and threatened to kill him. The lawyer says that he caught him trying to break a water pipe in his apartment. The lawyer challenged him for an explanation but all he got was the spitting and the death threat, he said to the RoseBelle Police. The former police officer was detained. He has appeared in court.

APEC protests against rise in water tariff

Members of the Association for the Protection of the Environment and Consumers (APEC) are protesting the increase in water tariff, especially following the price increase of a number of commodities.

In a press release, APEC president Suttuhdeo Tengur deplored the “incompetence” of the Central Water Authority (CWA), which he referred to as the “Central Waste Authority”. Tengur has blamed the CWA for not taking urgent measures to solve the problem of water leakages that have been occurring for years. He also strongly criticised the management of the CWA.

Tuberculosis at UoM under control

Following the recent detection of four cases of pulmonary tuberculosis at the University of Mauritius (UoM), a press conference was held on Friday to reassure parents, students and staff members that the situation is under control.

The meet was held at the Council and Senate Room of the UoM, Réduit. “There is no reason for panic and necessary actions are being taken by the university to address the problem,” declared Professor Konrad Morgan, vice-chancellor of UoM.

UoM is working in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Tertiary Education to ensure that the university remains a safe environment for work and study.

Police investigates habitual passport swindler

Officers of the Flacq Criminal Investigation Division have started the reconstruction exercise of passports seized from an alleged swindler Dharmadev Goohee, 39, a resident at Riche Mare.

Among the 200 passports seized, some of the owners are yet to take possession as the passports are undergoing an inquiry. The suspect was presented at the District Court of Flacq under a temporary charge of swindling and was remanded to the police cell as he was on bail for a similar case two years ago at the Fanfaron police station.

Investigators plan to carry out an in depth inquiry to determine the means used by Goohee to swindle the people.

Activities to mark International Physical Activity Day

Various activities will be organized to mark World Day for Physical Activity, observed on April 6.

The National Action Plan on Physical Activity 2011-2014 will be released. The plan aims at raising awareness on the benefits of physical activities. A workshop for trainers will also be organized.

Various sports and recreational activities are also being planned, including Tai Chi, boxing, street football, basketball, volleyball and traditional games such as ‘lamarelle’ and ‘rope skipping’.

This year’s theme to mark the event is ‘Together for an Active and Happy Life’.

ICT exhibition to be held in April

The National Computer Board, along with the Mauritius IT Industry Association, will hold the first edition of the Professional Information Technology exhibition and conference from April 20 to 22 at the Freeport of Mauritius Exhibition Centre, Mer Rouge.

The main objectives are to create awareness on business solutions for corporate bodies, enterprises and the business community and provide information on products, services and technologies that empower business.

STC invests in storage facility

To ensure that the country has a strategic stock of fuel, the State Trading Corporation (STC) has indicated its intention to have its own infrastructure for the storage of petroleum products in the future.

If everything goes as planned, the project will be completed in 18 months. The objective is to double the current capacity of the products whose storage is currently ensured by the private sector.

In this respect, the STC has already identified a plot of land at Mer Rouge so that the project can be realised. The idea is to increase the storage capacity of gasoline from 10,000 to 20,000 metric tonnes.

On the other hand, the storage capacity of diesel will be increased by 5,000 metric tonnes. The STC wants to realise this project because the storage capacity of petroleum products has not been increased during the past years.

Moreover, there is a net growth in consumption due to the expansion of fleet. Another reason prompting the STC to increase storage capacity is to avoid the supply getting delayed as ships take a longer time to arrive to Mauritius as they currently use a secure route to avoid pirates at sea.

Former lawyer creates new political party

Former lawyer Dev Hurnam organised a meeting at Curepipe on Sunday to announce the setting up of his August of his political party called Le Parti Lepep (The People’s Party).

At the meeting, he made allegations against chief justice Bernard Sik Yuen and requested his revocation. He also spoke about how he was “unfairly” struck off from the list of lawyers, adding that he was the victim in this case for believing his client.

He was found guilty on August 11, 2003, of providing a false alibi to his client Soobashing Bholah on May 5, 2000, to hinder a police inquiry.

Following the ruling, Hurnam was sentenced to six months imprisonment.

IPA officially registered in Mauritius

The International Police Association (IPA) is now officially registered in Mauritius.

It organised its first annual general meeting under the aegis of its honorary president, commissioner of police Dhun Ishwar Rampersad at the Line Barracks on March 25. The association has existed since the late 1970s.

It grouped together 59 countries with a total of around 700,000 member. It aimed to create a network of police officers to share their policing knowledge to support their foreign counterparts both socially and economically.

Some 150 members are present in Mauritius and these include senior officials such as deputy commissioner of police Mario Nobin and commissioner of prison Jean Bruneau.

The social organisation aims to organise one activity per month and had already planned its first official activity on April 10 at Blue Bay.

The IPA represents executive members of each country to keep track of the achievements of the police.

Kreol optional in all primary schools

The minister of Education, Dr Vasant Bunwaree, declared at a press conference that Kreol will be introduced in all primary schools as an optional language as from 2012.

The language is already used as a medium of communication. Its inclusion in the curriculum will allow the child to better understand the technical subjects which require in-depth explanation. Bunwaree stated that an academy is already working on the language with swift and remarkable progress.

The academy has almost completed the syntax and spelling. “We are left with the written form,” the minister said.

Kreol is already spoken in the schools. When introduced, children will easily understand the subjects taught and the language will have the same status as the oriental languages.

Parents have the option to choose the language of learning for the child.

Eco-tourism to receive boost from France 2

Movie director René Heuzey, who is known for the acclaimed movie “Ocean”, believes the marine eco-system around Mauritius has improved over the past 10 years despite concerns over the situation of its waters.

However, he said that if no action is taken to protect the sea, the marine fauna could be lost. He was in Mauritius from February 27 together with France 2 producer Marianne Cramer who visited the island to produce three episodes for weekly French television programme ADN, and to produce a 40-minute long promotional video featuring the island to promote eco-tourism.

They were supported by French assistant Jean Christophe Guerri and Mauritian diver and marine photographer Hugues Vitry.

Oil prices go down temporarily

Despite the fact that international oil prices have continued to soar over the past few months, the government has decided to temporarily reduce charge in the petroleum price structure.

This announcement was made by the minister of Finance and Economic Development, Pravind Jugnauth at the parliamentary session held on Tuesday 29 March. The minister also held a press conference to give more details on this decision in the presence of minister of Industry Showkutally Soodhun and minister of Consumer Protection Michael Sik Yuen.

After taking into account the Value Added Tax (VAT) impact, the price of diesel will be decreased from Rs 43.50 per litre to Rs 41.20 per litre, representing a reduction of Rs 2.30 or 5.3 per cent. Gas oil, price will be reduced from Rs 51.30 to Rs 49.30 per litre, implying a drop of Rs 2 or 3.9 per cent.

4.8 magnitude quake registered at Chagos

The US government site of seismic monitoring, USGS, confirmed that there was an earthquake of 4.8 magnitude that hit the Chagos Archipelago on Tuesday 29 March at night.

The site ‘Malango’ of Mayotte said that the epicentre of the quake was 10 kilometres, a distance of 583 km from Diego Garcia and 643 km from Maldives. Chagos is currently occupied by the British and Americans who have set up a military base there. The site said this was not a very strong earthquake adding that people could feel objects moving. No damage has been reported. The Vacoas Meteorological Station said that their devices have registered the quake and said that it occurred due to the movement of plates.

Vanilla Islands project on the move

Minister of Tourism and Leisure Nando Bodha said that the Vanilla Islands project could be the country’s main source of foreign currency. He was speaking at a press meet attended by Seychelles tourism board deputy CEO Elsia Grandcourt and Madagascar tourism office director Joel Randriamandrato in Port Louis on Wednesday. The project involves Mauritius, Madagascar, Reunion Island and Seychelles and will act as a tourism hub offering a Nando package holiday allowing tourists to travel across these islands without any visa, hotel booking and concerns with destination management companies. However, Bodha said the islands must ensure there is a return on investment for key stakeholders such as hotels.

Diabetic youngsters on Increase

The number of youngsters suffering from diabetes is on the rise in Mauritius. Some 121 youngsters aged less than 18 years are undergoing treatment and about 60 of them have been admitted to the hospital. According to the World Health Organisation, the island has the highest number of diabetic patients in the world. In a bid to fight diabetes, the Ministry of

Continued on page 8

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The Irish market which has been patiently built over the years by the Mauritian tourist industry, must have been severely shaken after the murder of beauty queen Michaela McAreavey, daughter of emblematic manager of Tyrone Gaelic Football Team, Mickey Harte. The victim’s young husband, John McAreavey, is himself a popular soccer player and nephew of the Irish bishop, Mgr McAreavey, who married the young couple.

It is a fact that Mauritius has figured prominently in Ireland in the fields of business and tourism in the decade just gone by. *Post.ie*, or *Sunday Post Online* of 6 February 2005 carried ‘**The Irish take their wishes to Mauritius**’, by Linda Maher who hailed the island as “*a high-end tourist destination [...] and a favourite with honeymoon couples looking for something a little different.*” The journalist referred to the Integrated Resorts Scheme (IRS) and focused on the ‘Anahita project’, “*one of the first luxurious resorts to become available under the IRS*” to Irish investors. Indeed, according to this article, “*the target market for Anahita is high net worth individuals from the main tourist markets: Ireland, Britain, France, Spain, Italy, Dubai, India and South Africa.*”

Maurice Lam, Chairman of the Mauritius Board of Investment at the time, is reported by the journalist to be “*particularly excited about Irish interest in Anahita. He believes that Ireland is a perfect example for Mauritius to follow in terms of attracting foreign investment.*” Finally, the article quotes “*one Irish investor with a business in Mauritius [who] said [that] the economy was more comparable to Europe than Africa despite the location. Many people view Mauritius as simply a sunshine destination, but many don’t realise that it’s an industrious country, with textiles and sugar as its main exports.*” Significantly, while knowledge of Mauritius is spreading in Ireland, it is, perhaps naively, represented as something of a refuge or a last Eldorado, in a fast-changing modern world.

The “safe and sure” mantra shaken

However, the mantra singing Mauritius as a “*safe and sure*” destination (to quote Patrice Legris, director of the AHRIM which groups hotel and restaurant owners of the island) was severely hit after the tragic death of Michaela. “*We’re not even safe in paradise*” is the new clarion call emanating from the international press. The worse is that Irish tour-operators have stopped selling Mauritius as a tourist destination. MTPA itself was compelled to postpone a campaign targetting honeymooners in Ireland, to encourage them to come to Mauritius for St Valentine this month. To minimize the fall, Patrice Legris is reported saying that the tragic death of Michaela, which is much regretted, is an isolated case and that, in general, Mauritius remains a safe and sure destination for tourists.

Albeit, it is downright sure that Michaela’s death, which was related to theft, has impacted negatively on the Irish. Relating what he heard on a very popular Irish radio show called Liveline, hosted by the well-known Joe Duffy, Saffiyey Edoo, a Mauritian who lives in Limerick, communicated the following to the page “Forum” of Le Mauricien of Monday 17

January:
“*While many acknowledged that one community cannot be held responsible for the acts of three individuals, many called for completely different reasons. About 75% of the callers recounted how they have been victims of theft while staying in hotels. This, I think, is very detrimental to the reputation of our country. The radio show is listened to by millions here, these types of stories could have a lot of people seriously reconsidering holiday plans to Mauritius. I am no expert in the matter, but I think tourism authorities should take active steps in investigating the matter. Hotel managers should seriously take whatever complaints of theft laid by their guests. Quite a few people on the show complained that hotel authorities did not take the matter seriously; one lady actually said a hotel staff was ‘apathetic’ to her complaints...*”

Dramatic increase of thefts in ‘Tourist Belt’

Indeed, the dramatic increase in the number of thefts in the “Tourist Belt” of the island, must cause serious concern to the Mauritian authorities. No less than five cases of thefts with violence were reported during the week-end following Michaela’s death. More worrying is the fact that half of thefts in the ‘Tourist Belt’ in 2010 were committed inside the very hotels where the tourists are deemed to be afforded comfort, safety and security. S. Edoo’s advices published in ‘Forum’ should be considered with due diligence:

“*For a country that praises itself for its warmth and hospitality, we should actually practise it. Let’s hope that the authorities concerned will take appropriate steps. Nothing is going to bring Michaela McAreavey back, but let’s hope that the tragedy will have hotel managers think twice before recruiting people and will have hotel employees do their jobs honestly because, as we have seen, the best laid plans can change in 2 minutes.*”

It is high time the authorities react strongly to stop aggressions and robberies on the persons of tourists from insiders. The more so as MCIT investigators in Mauritius are on the point of putting forward damning evidences proving that the floor supervisor Sandeep Moneea was the mastermind behind the series of thefts at Legends hotel.

Colloque des spécialistes de divers horizons scientifiques sur Malcolm de Chazal

Le présent colloque international pluridisciplinaire se situe dans le cadre de 2011 Année Malcolm de Chazal marquant les 30 ans du décès de cet « artiste intégral » comme il aimait se qualifier et en constitue l'aboutissement scientifique. Dans ce contexte, la Fondation Malcolm de Chazal – initiateur de cette année d'hommage – a mis en place une palette d'activités faite, entre autres, de conférences, d'animations en milieu scolaire et populaire, d'expositions, d'un festival du théâtre chazalien, de publications diverses afin que son apport à l'art en général et à la littérature et la peinture en particulier soit mieux connu.

Tour à tour essayiste, aphoriste, dramaturge, poète, chroniqueur, conteur, peintre, métaphysicien, Malcolm de Chazal n'a eu de cesse de multiplier le recours à des moyens d'expression différents comme si chaque étape de sa réflexion exigeait une forme particulière. Le fond, cependant, semble être le même : « retrouver ce Pont entre l'homme et la vie, rétablir la communication entre l'homme et l'univers ». Quête essentielle, quête de l'essentiel, éclairant le même absolu : aller au-delà de soi, écrire au-delà de soi, penser au-delà de soi, peindre au-delà de soi... En bref, vivre au-delà de soi ! Son oeuvre écrite, qui comptait 54 ouvrages à son décès et 58 aujourd'hui avec 4 publications d'inédits, n'a guère perdu de sa vigueur et de son intemporalité. Certains aspects – notamment ceux relevant de la métaphysique qui domine ses écrits de la décennie 1950 – restent encore à découvrir et analyser car il s'agit d'oeuvres publiées localement en petits tirages de 100 exemplaires et qui n'ont guère voyagé.

Lorsqu'en 1954 disparaissait Robert Edward-Hart, Malcolm de Chazal écrivait en hommage à cet ami poète qui lui avait fait découvrir le mythe de la Lémurie : « Jamais le poète n'est plus vivant que quand il est mort. (...) Son immortalité, c'est le souffle de l'Esprit qui l'inspira. (...) Quand on m'a annoncé la mort de Hart, ma première pensée a été : que voit-il ? Car le poète voit. »

C'est donc celui qui a vu et qui voit toujours que la Fondation honore par cette Année Malcolm de Chazal : la substance de ses visions créatrices et prophétiques sera au centre des présentations et des débats de CE Colloque ouvert à des spécialistes venant de divers horizons scientifiques. Et Malcolm le Mauricien, détenteur d'une vérité universelle faite de féerie et d'humanisation des plantes, des montagnes et des êtres, reprendrait ce qu'il avait écrit en 1970 : « Que ce message vienne de l'île Maurice, ce point dans l'océan – c'est cela qui est extraordinaire. »

NOTE : La liste de thèmes esquissés ci-dessus est indicative et non exclusive. Nous invitons des propositions – en français ou en anglais – pour des communications individuelles ou des panels entiers sur des sujets pertinents au thème général du colloque. Chaque panel consistera normalement en trois communications. Les communications seront sélectionnées selon leur valeur intellectuelle et leur originalité. Le titre et le résumé de la communication (une dizaine de lignes sous format Word, Times 12) devront être envoyés au plus tard le 1er juillet 2011 à : chazfund@intnet.mu. Des informations sur l'organisation logistique, les ressources hôtelières à proximité et les prix vous seront envoyés en retour.

Obituary

Dr Cader Raman OBE

passed away in February at the age of 90.

Dr Raman was an internationally well-known figure in the field of psychiatry having written several papers on the subject for the benefit of members of the profession from nurses to doctors.

In his younger days, following his medical studies in the UK (after the war) he worked for several years at the Maudsley and Bethlem Hospital. He returned to Mauritius in the 1950s where took up employment at the Beau Bassin mental hospital, later the Brown Sequard Hospital, where, after a distinguished career, he retired as Superintendent.

He returned to England in the 1980s and took up employment once more at the Maudsley Hospital in South London.

Mauritius News was very happy to have him as one of our contributors for several years, and we were pleased to attend his 70th birthday which he celebrated among relatives and friends in Canterbury.

Mauritius News sympathises with all those who mourn Dr Cader Raman's death.

(We regret that the tribute from Karim Essack has been mislaid)



George Milate died on January 12 in London, aged 83.

George was a fine musician and composer. His favourite instrument was the violin and he used to perform at various Mauritian

open-air fête in London, and to entertain locals in his area when he first came to the country.

George Milate will long be remembered for his part tyrolean sega song *Marcienne mo gatée* which was a great hit in the 1960s in Mauritius.

George was one of the few compatriots (if not the only one) who could imitate the tyrolean singing voice. This is perhaps part of his heritage as his grandfather emigrated to Mauritius from Yugoslavia. The name Milate itself is of that origin. His musical genius also runs in the family as his grandfather was himself a distinguished violinist.



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Australia News

Mauritian fails to win seat in State elections

By Eddy Abraham

Jérôme Laxale, who was the Labour candidate for electorate of Ryde in the New South Wales State Elections, failed to win that seat.

The 27 year old scored 9,498 votes out of the electorate roll of 48,148, a swing of 24.3 % against him. The sitting member, Victor

Dominello of the Liberal Party, won the seat with 29,578 votes, a swing of 75.7 %.

The electorate of Ryde is in Sydney Lower North Shore. At the 26 of March State Elections, the Liberal Party swept to power for a four year term, in New South Wales, defeating the Labour Party, who was in power for the past 16 years.



Pilgrims to gather in Rome for John Paul II's beatification

Australian Mauritians will attend ceremony

THE Vatican expects 300,000 pilgrims to descend on Rome for John Paul II's beatification on May 1. The ceremony in St Peter's Basilica will put the late Polish Pope on the path to sainthood.

The main event will also be shown on giant screens in churches around Rome and along the River Tiber running through the city centre. In total, organisers say they are expecting more than a million people will attend. Australian Mauritians will make the trip, it is reported..

John Paul's beatification coincides with the traditional Labour Day holiday in Rome.

City authorities said the event would include a concert on May 2 on the Capitol, featuring people associated with John Paul's life. These include Polish cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz, his personal secretary, and Rome's former chief rabbi Elio Toaff, who welcomed the Pope in his synagogue in 1986.

The celebrations will also feature a photo exhibition in Piazza della Repubblica and an exhibit of personal objects belonging to the Pope in the Capitoline Museums. A four-metre statue of the Pope, donated by a private foundation, is scheduled to go up in front of Rome's Termini railway station later in May.

Several churches will remain open all night on the eve of the beatification mass on May 1 and there will be information booths around the city centre.

Organisers said 3,000 police, 2,500 volunteers and 1,200 sanitary workers would work to keep the city safe and clean during the beatification ceremonies. More than 5,000 buses have been booked to transport people.

"Rome is being asked to show its best side for three days. The whole city without exception is linked to this man, who is seen as a father," mayor Gianni Alemanno said at a news conference outlining plans for the beatification.

Australia Landscape at the British Museum

21 April – 16 October 2011 Museum Forecourt – Admission Free

The Landscape forms part of Australian Season – a series of exhibitions and events at the British Museum focusing on Australia from April – October 2011. Australian Season is supported by Rio Tinto.

Australia Landscape on the West Lawn of the British Museum Forecourt takes the visitor on a journey across the whole Australian continent by featuring unique and rare plants from its differing climates, and showcasing its rich biodiversity.

This is the fourth landscape in a five-year partnership programme

involving the British Museum and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, which celebrates the shared vision of both institutions to strengthen cultural understanding and support biodiversity conservation across the world.

Following on from South Africa Landscape last year, Australia Landscape transits from the vegetation of Eastern Australia's coastal habitat, through the red centre (the arid desert covering the southern third of the Northern Territory and the North East corner of South Australia) and culminates at a Western Australian granite

outcrop.

The landscape will showcase unique and highly threatened flora and will highlight how these fragile habitats and systems are under threat from land usage and climate change.

This is of particular concern as Australia has one of the world's greatest concentrations of geographically restricted species, otherwise known as endemics. Some 90% of Australian plants are only found in Australia.

Many of the plants on view in the landscape are especially evolved to survive extreme dry spells such as the Anigozanthos flavidus (Evergreen Kangaroo

paw) and the Brachychiton populneus (Kurrajong tree) both of which have developed unusual ways of storing water over long periods of time.

Some have even evolved to survive and utilise bush fires, such as the Acacia dealbata (Wattle) which requires exposure to fire and smoke to prepare its seeds for germination.

There are plants from western Australia which have developed unusual features in order to take advantage of the way granite rocks weather and age. Some have adapted to survive in the cracks of rocks for example, while others are able to live in seasonal rock pools.

Independence decorations



Renganaden Mootooveeroo, popularly known as Aya Naden, a Tamil priest serving at the St Antoine Draupadee Ammen Kovil, received the Badge of Honour on Independence Day for Voluntary Social Work. Aya Naden served has served for 30 years at the Goodlands temple.

The priest is seen in the picture above at Le Réduit to be decorated by President Sir Anerood Jugnauth. May also be seen in the front row seat Lady Sarojini Jugnauth (left) and Prime Minister Navin and Mrs Veena Ramgoolam (right)

Picture sent to us by Vega R. ngasamy (Ontario, Canada)

A CSK for distinguished community service



For distinguished services to the community Mr Narain Ramana was awarded the CSK medal (Commander of the Star & Key of the Indian Ocean.)

Mr Ramana is above receiving the medal from the Republic President Sir Anerood Jugnauth. Mr Ramana was before his retirement a Chief Finance Officer in the Mauritius Government Service.

Picture forwarded by C.S.

Academic Success



Congratulations to Selina Seeromben of Essex who obtained a BSc (Econs) Class 1 from the University of Birmingham

A page from history The St Gérân Tragedy

The St Gérân shipwreck is no fiction. It actually took place in 1744

The St Gérân which sailed from Lorient in France on March 24, 1744 for the Isle de France and Isle de France and Ile de Bourbon, was carrying machinery for the sugar refinery at Villebague, Pamplémousses and 25,000 Spanish silver piastres. There were 130 passengers aboard. The sailing vessel was in sight of Isle de France on August 17 but Captain Delamarre, who did not know the area well, decided to wait until the following day before approaching, sailing off the coast during the night.

Towards midnight the vessel was dangerously near to the island of Ambre's rocky coastline, where there were strong currents.

Some sailors warned the officer on watch who took no notice. Shortly afterwards, before the St Gérân had time to attempt any manoeuvre, the vessel grounded on the rocks, taking both the crew and the passengers by surprise.

Panic spread quickly aboard. The lifeboats, hit by the ship's masts, were unfit for use. The ship broke in half. People jumped into the sea grasping on anything they could find. Only ten of them managed to reach Ambre. And these were the survivors who made depositions to the Clerk of the High Court on August 22. The first remains of the wrecks were recovered in 1966., and can be seen, in the Naval Museum at Mahébourg. This shipwreck inspired Bernardin de St Pierre when he wrote his novel *Paul and Virginia*.

Extract from the Tourist Guide 'Mauritius in your pocket'

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April – October 2011 – The British Museum and Rio Tinto present Australian Season, a season dedicated to Australian culture featuring a broad programme of exhibitions, installations, performances, lectures and film screenings. The season is supported by Rio Tinto and includes Australia Landscape along with Out of Australia: prints and drawings from Sidney Nolan to Rover Thomas, a prints and drawings exhibition featuring works by Australian artists from the 1940s to the present along with Australia Landscape, a specially commissioned space presenting Australian biodiversity in the Museum’s forecourt (in collaboration with the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew), Baskets and belonging: Indigenous Australian histories, a display of beautifully handcrafted baskets, woven from the Australian landscape and a rich and varied public programme.

For further information please contact:

Esme Wilson:
ewilson@britishmuseum.org /
020 7323 8394

Notes to Editors:

· Rio Tinto is a leading international mining group headquartered in the UK, combining Rio Tinto plc, a London and NYSE listed company, and Rio Tinto Limited, which is listed on the Australian Securities Exchange. Rio Tinto’s business is finding, mining, and processing mineral resources. Major products are aluminium, copper, diamonds, energy (coal and uranium), gold, industrial minerals (borax, titanium dioxide, salt, talc) and iron ore. Activities span the world but are strongly represented in Australia and North America with significant businesses in South America, Asia, Europe and southern Africa. Rio Tinto acknowledges that the conservation and responsible management of the environment and natural resources – such as land, water, biodiversity and air – are important business and societal issues. The Group’s biodiversity strategy commits Rio Tinto to achieving the goal of a “net positive impact” on biodiversity – ensuring that biodiversity ultimately benefits as a result of company’s activities in a region. Rio Tinto is the largest private sector employer of Indigenous Australians, currently representing [8] per cent of the Group’s Australian workforce.

· Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew is a world famous scientific organisation, internationally respected for its outstanding living collection of plants and world-class Herbarium as well as its scientific expertise in plant diversity, conservation and sustainable development in the UK and around the world. Kew Gardens is a major international visitor attraction. Its landscaped 132 hectares and RBG Kew’s country estate, Wakehurst Place, attract nearly 2 million visitors every year. Kew was made a UNESCO World Heritage Site in July 2003 and celebrated its 250th anniversary in 2009. Wakehurst Place is home to Kew’s Millennium Seed Bank, the largest wild plant seed bank in the world. RBG Kew and its partners have collected and conserved seed from 10 per cent of the world’s wild flowering plant species (c.30, 000 species). The aim is to conserve 25% by 2020 and funds are being actively sought in order to continue this vital work. Support the work of Kew’s Millennium Seed Bank partnership by getting involved with the ‘Adopt a Seed, Save a Species’ campaign www.kew.org/adoptaseed.

· There will be a British

Museum/Kew debate:
Landscape: longing and
biodiversity, Tuesday 6
September, 18.30, £5, Members
and concessions £3. A high-
profile panel discussion will
investigate the tensions between
exploitation and preservation of
Australian landscapes and the
economic, spiritual and cultural
value of both the landscape and
its biodiversity.

Are Enriched Eggs Better?

Many people are worried about eating eggs due to publicity that eggs can be bad for your health and tend to increase your cholesterol level thus leading to coronary disease

*B Devinia Sookia (USA) **



At one time we were advised by nutritionists and food scientists not to eat the yolks but only the whites. Instead of going through the trouble of separating yolk from white, some people decided to keep away from eggs completely. Now we are told that egg yolk is good for us and we should eat it. This is a bit confusing but food scientists have come up with an explanation which clarifies this issue.

Nutritionally speaking, eggs are naturally rich in protein and contain almost every vitamin and mineral known to be essential for human health. However we still find eggs that are enriched with extra vitamin E and omega-3 fatty acids in almost every

supermarket. The first question that arises is whether it is necessary to mess with eggs which are provided by nature.

The second question is whether enriched eggs have more nutritional values than ordinary eggs. According to food scientists the answer seems to be in the positive. Vitamin E which is an antioxidant that protects against cell damage and omega-3-fatty acids which are healthful fats that are linked to the prevention and treatment of heart disease, inflammation and other chronic medical conditions are essential nutrients.

Unfortunately these nutrients are not in the foods most people eat in great quantity or on a regular basis. That is why supplements containing vitamin E and omega-3's are often promoted and why some food manufacturers choose to enrich

their products with these nutrients.

All eggs contain some naturally occurring omega-3 fatty acids. However enriched eggs simply contain more. An ordinary egg contains about 50 mg total omega-3 fats according to food scientist and registered dietitian, Mary Van Elswyk. She points that those omega-3s are found only in the yolk and that is the part of the egg you have to eat in order to get the benefits.

Hens that are fed grains enriched with flaxseed, fish oils or algae get an omega-3 fatty acid boost in their diet that transfers to their eggs. The amount and type of omega-3 fat in enriched eggs varies with the type of feed and the size of the egg and yolk but a large enriched egg can contain 100 to 200 mg of omega-3 fatty acids.

Egg yolks also contain vitamin E but only in very small

amounts. When the vitamin E content of a laying hen's diet is improved, the hen produces eggs that are richer in this vitamin than ordinary eggs.

When canola oil or another vegetable oil is added to the hen's feed, the result is an egg that is lower in artery-clogging saturated fats and higher in healthier unsaturated fats.

Therefore it seems that if we do eat egg yolk, we must eat enriched eggs which are high in nutrients and can prevent us from getting many diseases. Besides egg is a very versatile food and various dishes can be made from it.

We can enjoy eggs anytime of the day whether it is poached egg or hard boiled egg for breakfast or an omelet for lunch and scrambled eggs and mushroom on toast for dinner.

These are all very healthy and quick dishes.

Devinia Sookia is a barrister-at-law, journalist, writer and attorney

Health Matters

Vaccines: aluminium does not pose a risk

Are the aluminium salts used in vaccines dangerous? According to the specialist bulletin InfoVac, this is just another unfounded but persistent rumour.

The bulletin goes on once again to state the harmlessness "of aluminium- salt- based adjuvants, which have been used for over 80 years. Their safety profile is so good that for many years they were the only permitted adjuvants."

The French National Academy of Medicine is of the same opinion. "The use of aluminium in vaccines is repeatedly called into question", the assembled learned body explained. And it must be said that these criticisms often come from doctors themselves.

The Academy points out that "in 1988, a team of French researchers blamed some cases of macrophagic myophasiitis on the aluminium present in the vaccine". However, this accusation proved groundless.

As the InfoVac bulletin explains, "no health authority in the world has recognised this link. The greatest majority of vaccines recommended in the vaccinal calendar contain aluminium-based adjuvants".

"The unjustified fear of vaccines, often improperly instigated by the media, quickly impacts on public vaccine cover and on practitioners' vaccination management", the French Academy of Medicine continues.

Yet the consequences of this can be seriously detrimental to public health. "It is very damaging to the prevention of infectious diseases, which is something that widespread vaccination has been successful in controlling."

The presence of aluminium salts at the site of injection aids the immune cells to mature. And it is these that handle the vaccine antigens.

In other words, aluminium is an essential adjuvant in the preparation of vaccines and without it we would need to use much greater quantities of antigens.

Multiple sclerosis: exercise can only be good for you...

Taking regular exercise does not accelerate the progression of disability in people suffering from multiple sclerosis.

Quite the opposite in fact.

Sports such as running, swimming and cycling improve muscle, cardiovascular and respiratory functions and also intellectual and cognitive capacity.

"Physical activity is obviously beneficial and all studies have shown this in both physical and psychological terms" states physiatrist Dr Cécile Donzé.

For example, people suffering from multiple sclerosis who followed an aqua gym programme showed improvement in arm and leg function and also in balance and movement coordination.

Of course, physical activity causes fatigue. This is both normal and reversible. In fact, exercise actually decreases fatigability and stress. Not to mention the fact that keeping moving helps to combat muscular atrophy and joint problems. The patient acquires new and sharper reflexes.

Indeed, there are no formal reasons why someone suffering from multiple sclerosis should not take part in sport or physical activity although there may sometimes be temporary contraindications associated with the evolution of the disease.

The neurologist and multi-disciplinary team caring for the patient will advise them on an individual basis about what forms of exercise or sport are most suitable.

HIV shown to increase the risk of fracture

According to an American study, infection with HIV appears to lead to an increase of between 200% and 360% in fracture risk compared with the population in general of comparable age.

From 2000 to 2006, researchers compared the incidence of fractures in seropositive HIV patients and seronegative individuals. The results are quite clear. The number of fractures was between 2% and 3.69% greater in the first of these groups.

A number of risk factors such as age, psychoactive substance abuse, co-infection with the hepatitis C virus and diabetes have been associated with the increased risk of

fracture in seropositive patients. And for the first time, a link has been established between this risk and the CD 4 lymphocyte count. These cells are essential to the correct functioning of the immune system and HIV attacks them specifically.

"Our results should lead the medical community to issue monitoring recommendations that focus specifically on the risk factors associated with fractures", the principal author of the report concludes.

Could microbes lead to a treatment for asthma?

When it comes to asthma, not all children are equal. Certain bacteria play a protective role in children, which means that their living conditions are especially important. Young children who live on farms, for example, are at lesser risk of developing asthma than children who live in cities, and even than children who just live in rural areas not on farms.

A number of studies in the past have already pointed to this interesting fact and an international team of researchers has now brought further confirmation. Their study confirms the low incidence of asthma among farmers' children and explains this by the fact that they are exposed to a greater variety of micro-organisms than other children.

The authors focused on the "microbial pollution" level found in the habitat of these children. They collected dust from their bedrooms and analysed the DNA of the bacteria and microscopic fungi found in this. Their results show that farmers' children face a much broader range of micro-organisms and, paradoxically, these bacteria and fungi appear to act as guardians of their health. The more diversified the microbial population, the lower the risk of developing asthma.

The next challenge for researchers is to work out the nature of the link between each micro-organism found in household dust and the protective effect it has. But the long term objective is to find candidate vaccines that might lead the way to creating a vaccine against asthma.

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National Lottery Results Mar/Apr 2011

Lotto Draws: Twice weekly

19 Mar	10-26-28-34-35-39	17
23 Mar	06-18-23-26-32-44	34
26 Mar	02-09-16-21-31-44	38
30 Mar	10-16-17-21-39-41	47
02 Apr	12-14-32-44-48-49	25
06 Apr	07-11-13-14-38-41	45
09 Apr	06-08-17-21-39-47	22
13 Apr	01-14-25-33-34-43	15

These results were obtained from the National Lottery. Mauritius News accepts no liability for any misprints or discrepancies in the results published in this column.



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Thought for the month

The destiny of every human is decided by what goes in his mind when he is confronted by what goes on outside his mind.

*Eric Berne M.D.
(Author of Games People Play)*

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H M S Mauritius, Vacoas 1962-1975

2011 Reunion - Portsmouth

At the moment, approximately 100 former members of HMS Mauritius, Vacoas, will be holding their 4th annual reunion in Portsmouth, United Kingdom, on 8th October 2011. There is a website called 'Mautitian Veterans'(which is hidden behind another website) and any former service personnel and civilians who worked in HMS MAURITIUS are eligible to join. For further information on membership [which is free] send details of the years you were there rank and where you worked to roberthchase@btinternet.com and copy to micheal@pearce6575.freemove.co.uk and put membership in the subject line. Also please mention you saw the advert in Mauritius News.

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Rodrigues News

Tackling poverty in Mauritius – but what about Rodrigues?

Since the Corporate Social Responsibility Campaign was started in Mauritius, all companies of a certain size must donate 2 % of their profits to the CSR Office (National Empowerment Foundation) to be used by NGO's and government organizations.

The emphasis has been on eradication of absolute poverty and the new Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment under Hon. Xavier Duval has been active in putting the scheme into action.

However it was noted from the start that many companies in Mauritius were not supporting the

NGO's based in Rodrigues, because these companies did not have any commercial activities in Rodrigues and thus were not interested in the Rodrigues based NGO's.

Thus the few NGO's in Rodrigues who were directly involved in social developments and poverty alleviation there were not benefitting at all from the CSR funds despite making applications to Companies in Mauritius.

Some NGO's in Rodrigues however were successful in convincing some Mauritian companies to direct their attention to the situation in Rodrigues with regard to the disabled and thus Mr

Adamas, British American Investments, Mr Kalachand and notable the Mauritius Telecom Foundation did respond positively.

A big step forward came when the National Empowerment Foundation Branch Office in Rodrigues formed their own Rodrigues CSR Committee and as a result Care-Co, the Trevor Huddleston Association and Association Enfants Dabord, and the Maison Familial among others were granted funds to support their various projects.

It is to be hoped that even more funds will be directed to help NGO's in Rodrigues, who should not be left out in the efforts to alleviate poverty in the Republic of Mauritius.

Ireland helps Rodrigues' disabled youngsters

Relations between Ireland and the Republic of Mauritius took a terribly sharp knock earlier this year, when a well known Irish tourist was apparently murdered whilst on honeymoon in a 5-Star Mauritian Hotel.

However this tragic situation, which received media publicity the world over, did not deter The Rehab Group, an Irish Charitable organization, based in Dublin, from sponsoring a skills development training scheme for disabled youngsters at the Care-Co Centre for the Disabled in Rodrigues.

A sum of 6,985 Euros was granted to Care-Co to train six young graduates from the Gonzague Pierre Louis Special Learning Centre, Rodrigues to undergo a six months training in

the production of Handicrafts, and for the launch of a marketing campaign for the Crafts in Mauritius and the UK.

Three of the trainees have severe or profound hearing impairments and three have visual impairments.

At the end of the training session, each trainee received a certificate.

As a result of the Marketing campaign orders have been received at the Care-Co Centre from Beau-Coco UK and several large Hotel groups in Mauritius, and thus the chance for these trainees to be employed full-time in the Care-Co workshop.

Meanwhile, a second training scheme was started for the graduates to enable them to start beekeeping at home.

The Care-Co beekeeping and Honey Producing department won a First Prize in Class 6 (overseas Honeys) at the 2009 National Honey Show in the UK and the Care-Co Honey Department has over 15 beekeepers with disabilities in the scheme.

The Beekeeping training scheme was part sponsored by the Kingdom Beekeepers Association of Tralee, County Kerry, Ireland, another Irish Group interested in helping the disabled in Rodrigues. The Australian High Commission Direct Aid Programme also contributed to this scheme with beekeeping equipment.

Paul Draper set up Craft-Aid Rodrigues Branch in 1989 after helping to start Craft-Aid in Mauritius in 1982.(It was named CARE-CO (Rodrigues in 2004).

The organization also includes the Trevor Huddleston Association for the Disabled which runs the Special Learning Centre in Rodrigues.

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Bollywood Spice

Toronto pays tribute to Raj Kapoor

Raj Kapoor's hugely successful career and achievements will be honoured in Toronto, Ontario, on 26 June. A gala, hosted by acclaimed director, Karan Johar, will precede a retrospective film series called 'Raj Kapoor and the Golden Age of Indian Cinema'.

Sharing the same passion for cinematic excellence, the International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) and Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) announced their collaboration to host this tribute to the legend of Indian cinema, post the 12th IIFA celebrations in Canada. The film series will run for six weeks at the TIFF Bell Lightbox, TIFF's permanent home.

Several members of Indian cinema's first family, the Kapoors, attended the media interaction this month to lend their support. The legacy of Prithviraj Kapoor has been succeeded by three generations starting with Shammi, Shashi and Raj Kapoor.

Raj's sons, Randhir, Rishi and Rajiv Kapoor enjoyed success in the industry and his grandchildren Ranbir, Kareena and Karishma Kapoor have subsequently carried on the Kapoor tradition of brilliant artistry and super stardom. The family shared sentiments regarding the retrospective and pledged to be a part of the tribute event in Canada.

Speaking on behalf of the family, Randhir Kapoor said, "I am very touched by this gesture and would like to thank IIFA and TIFF for honouring the legacy of our father who lived for his work and who lives on through his work. He is a true legend and I believe that this retrospective is a great way to honour his memory."

Rishi Kapoor added, "Our father was a great man both in his personal and professional life. His passion and love for cinema shines through in all his movies and he has made a place for himself in the hearts of



cinema lovers all over India. I'm thrilled about this retrospective of his work and cannot wait to see it. He has always been a true inspiration for me."

With a career spanning over five decades, Raj Kapoor achieved phenomenal success and became the youngest director of his time at age 24 when he opened his own studio, RK Films. Aptly called 'The Showman of the Millenium', Raj Kapoor won several awards and was nominated for the Palme D'or at the Cannes Film Festival which is the highest honour awarded to competing films at the festival.

He was also awarded the Padma Bhushan and the Dadasaheb Phalke Award for his contributions to Indian cinema. It is the magnitude of his accomplishments and the impact that he's had on the world of cinema that this tribute aims to portray.

Sabbas Joseph, Director - Wizcraft, said, "Through IIFA we have strived over the years to bring Indian cinema to its fans across the world while simultaneously giving Indian films an international platform. It is an honour to have the opportunity to pay tribute to one of the greatest luminaries of Indian cinema."

The retrospective promises to be a brilliant showcase of Raj Kapoor and the magic he brought to the cinema screen."

TIFF's Artistic Director, Noah Cowan, addressed the press to share how honoured TIFF was to play a part in

showcasing this Festival. "We're thrilled to be hosting a Raj Kapoor Tribute event this June."

TIFF offers a wide variety of year-round programming that allows audiences to engage with film, its history and its connection to contemporary culture. Kapoor fans are in for a treat with our retrospective film series which spans the career of this pioneer of Indian cinema."

Cinema lovers will have the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to relive the magic of the legend's films during this tribute and retrospective in Toronto. Raj Kapoor and the Golden Age of Indian Cinema will feature 15 iconic Raj Kapoor classics including Aag, Barsaat, Awara, Aah, Boot Polish, Shree 420, Jagte Raho, Jis Des Mein Ganga Behti Hai, Sangam, Mera Naam Joker, Kal Aaj Aur Kal, Bobby, Satyam Shivam Sundaram and others.

Several pieces of memorabilia from Raj Kapoor films like costumes, cut-outs and props used during the films will be displayed in the TIFF Bell Lightbox atrium.

A series of paintings inspired by Raj Kapoor films by acclaimed Goa-based artist Seema Sardesai will also be showcased.

The International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) which has become the most awaited award ceremony in the industry over the last 12 years is dedicated to taking Indian cinema to greater and more glorious heights by promoting it on a global scale.



2,000 contestants turn out for auditions of Superstar Hrithik Roshan's Debut TV show, 'Just Dance'

It's all systems go for Bollywood heartthrob, Hrithik Roshan, as his debut TV show, 'Just Dance', opened its doors to the highly anticipated first auditions in Kolkata.

Apart from the contestants who had pre-registered themselves through STAR TV's website, a staggering 2,000 hopefuls arrived in the hope of catapulting their talents into the international spotlight.

The registered entrants, followed by the walk-in entrants, will be auditioned with only the best candidates awarded the honour of showcasing their skills in front

of the iconic jury member, Hrithik Roshan, who sits alongside some of the most highly acclaimed choreographers of the Indian film industry.

'Just Dance' is already the talk of the town and will feature aspiring and established dance talent from across the globe including those participants that turned out for the February UK and USA auditions.

The overseas finalists will travel to India to represent the UK and USA respectively in what is being touted as one of the biggest dance shows on Hindi television.

The International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) celebrates the 12th Videocon IIFA Weekend and the Micromax IIFA Awards during its three-day weekend in Toronto.

The Videocon IIFA Weekend will be a selection of mega events that spotlights global attention on Indian cinema. The Weekend includes the high-profile IIFA World Premiere, the first look of a number of Indian films, the IIFA Film Workshop and the spectacular Micromax IIFA Awards.

The Videocon IIFA Weekend is the largest South Asian celebration event and the Micromax IIFA Awards is among the most-watched global events, annually.

Supporting the Weekend and Awards at the conference today were Friends of IIFA, Hrithik Roshan, Anil Kapoor, Boman Irani and Dia Mirza. Longtime IIFA supporter, Indian Cinema super star, Hrithik Roshan addressed the media saying, "As always it is a great honour for me to come to IIFA and join in the revelry with the rest of the fraternity."

"I see IIFA Toronto as a landmark for the Wizcraft team and our fraternity, confirming the reach of Indian Cinema, and I could not be more thrilled to represent this great industry and meet the fans in Canada. Let the celebrations begin."

Known for its cultural, entertainment and metropolitan scene, Toronto is an ideal choice for IIFA 2011. As Canada's

economic capital, Toronto is the most populous city in the country and is known for its large Indian diaspora.

Riteish Deshmukh and Boman Irani will once again play hosts at the Awards. This will be Boman's fifth time at the Awards, while good friend and fellow-actor Riteish will co-host for the fourth time.

Talking of the 12th Awards and his hosting stint, Boman Irani said, "I am honoured to host the Awards for the fifth time this year. It is always wonderful to be part of this larger than life event and hosting is an assignment that I look forward to each year."

The IIFA 2011 nominations were announced today with film favourites, Dabangg, Rajneeti, My Name Is Khan, Band Baaja Baaraat and Once Upon A Time In Mumbaai being nominated in the Best Film category.

The Leading Role Male category include Salman Khan (Dabangg), Hrithik Roshan (Guzaarish), Ranbir Kapoor (Rajneeti), Ajay Devgn (Once Upon A Time In Mumbaai) and Shah Rukh Khan (My Name Is Khan).

Leading ladies, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan (Guzaarish), Katrina Kaif (Rajneeti),

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Abhishek Bachchan showcases his rap skills in 'Dum Maaro Dum'



Six years on from his debut lyrical performance, Bollywood superstar Abhishek Bachchan will take to the microphone once again for the highly anticipated release, 'Dum Maaro Dum', directed by Rohan Sippy.

Having broken records with his 'Right Here Right Now' rap number for 'Bluffmaster', also directed by Rohan Sippy, lead actor Abhishek has performed a special rap song titled 'Thayn Thayn' for the high voltage music soundtrack, created by maverick composer, Pritam.

Speaking candidly about his musical abilities, Abhishek tweeted "Back in the studio after six yrs with chuck masta Sippy. Have no idea why he's convinced that I can sing!! But Pritam's killing it!!!!"

Abhishek Bachchan plays a merciless cop in the film alongside leading talent from the Indian film

industry such as Bipasha Basu and Prateik, as well as Telugu cinema's Rana Daggubati in his Bollywood debut. 'Dum Maaro Dum' is set in the exotic Indian beach resort of Goa, and tells the story of six characters whose lives change forever when they become embroiled in the shady and perilous underworld.

A fast-paced, stylised thriller which races through the by-lanes, beach shacks and party scene of Goa, 'Dum Maaro Dum' is a compelling tale set against the stunning backdrop of one of the world's most famous tourist hotspots.

Get ready for a cinematic high when 'Dum Maaro Dum' releases through Twentieth Century Fox on 22nd April 2011, a film which will take audiences on a trip that will have them on the edge of their seats from the title sequence to the end credits.

Ontario welcomes IIFA and Indian Cinema to Toronto for their annual celebrations



From left to right: Arbaz Khan, Sonu Sood, Hrithik Roshan, Dia Mirza, Boman Irani and Karan Johar

Anushka Sharma (Band Baaja Baaraat), Vidya Balan (Ishqiya) and Kareena Kapoor (Golmaal 3) are up for the Lead Female Role honour.

The nominations were released as a result of the industry voting for the Micromax IIFA Awards at the IIFA Voting Weekend 2011 held in March.

The online voting for the Awards will go live on 15th April and will be open to audiences of Indian Cinema, across the world on: www.iifa.com/toronto2011.

As a platform that reaches out to millions of global television viewers, IIFA offers a phenomenal opportunity to deliver relevant messages to audiences.

The event will be broadcast globally on STAR PLUS, India's No. 1 entertainment channel.

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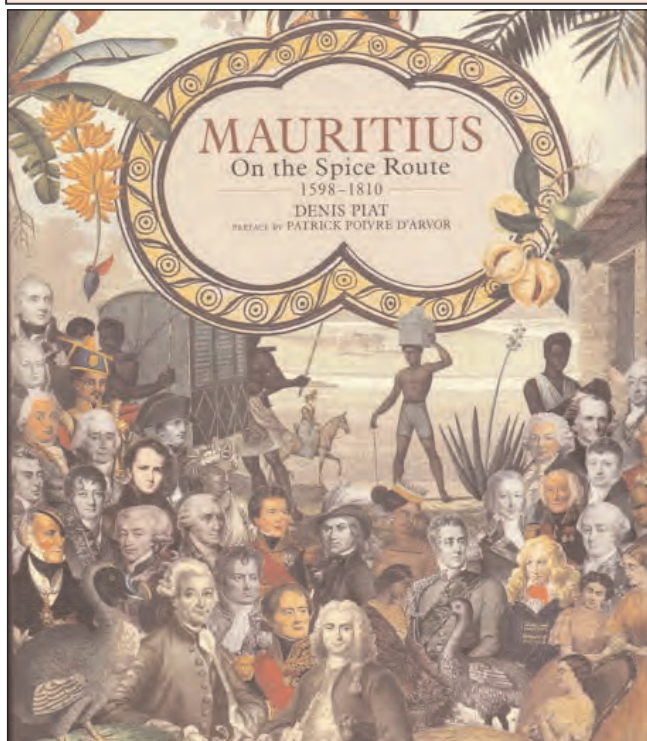
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To mark the bicentenary of the end of French occupation of Mauritius, "Editions du Pacifique" have published a reference book on the former "Isle de France". As a strategic location on the spice route, Mauritius was for a long time a source of conflict between the powerful European countries. Being a vital stop-off point on the commercial routes to the Orient, "the star and key of the Indian Ocean" has known many occupiers, was then discovered, abandoned, conquered, strongly defended ... it was a point of battles or a port for sailors. Featuring a large number of pictures, maps and documents from the author's private collection, this book takes you on a journey of discovery, detailing the ever-evolving history of an island of passion, jealousies and bloody battles, of fights for scientific discovery and the commerce in spices.

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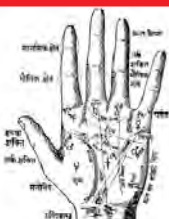
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2011 Reunion - Portsmouth
At the moment, approximately 100 former members of HMS
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holding their 4th annual reunion in Portsmouth, United
Kingdom, on 8th October 2011.
There is a website called 'Mautitian Veterans' (which is hidden
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Animal Rights

Leading personalities sign petition to stop use of primates in research

A host of people, including scientists and celebrities, signed an open letter to UK's Prime Minister, David Cameron, calling on his government to stop the cruel trade in wild-caught primates. This letter was published in the Times and Guardian newspapers on 30 March and will impact on Mauritius.

This is part of a campaign by BUAV, who campaign to end all animal experiments. Many primates used in UK laboratories are imported from Mauritius, and despite a ban on the use of wild-caught primates in research since 1997, there is no such ban on their offspring or those from farms which trap wild primates for breeding purposes.

The capture of primates from the wild inflicts great suffering, which has been recognised by a number of organisations and official bodies.

World famous primatologist, Dr Jane Goodall, supports the campaign along with a number of famous and influential people.

These include actress and wildlife campaigner Virginia McKenna, environmentalist Jonathon Porritt, conservationist Ian Redmond, as well as TV wildlife presenters Simon King, Bill Oddie,

Michaela Strachan and Mark Carwardine. Actors Ricky Gervais and Jenny Seagrove and model Twiggy also signed the letter.

Also supporting BUAV are leading academics and scientists such as Professor Roger Crisp, Professor William McGrew, Revd Professor Andrew Linzey, Professor Stephen Harris, Professor Michael Balls, Professor Vernon Reynolds and Professor Jonathan Wolff.

Politicians include David Blunkett MP, Vernon Coaker MP, Caroline Lucas MP, Zac Goldsmith MP, Chris Davies MEP, Jillian Evans MEP, Nigel Dodds MP and Charles Kennedy MP.

Over 100 British MPs have also signed an Early Day Motion (EDM 957) in Parliament calling on the government to end the UK's involvement in the wild-caught primate trade.

Dr Brian May CBE, musician and Founder of Save Me said, "The imprisonment and abuse of wild animals must stop. BUAV has uncovered evidence of monkeys ripped from their jungle homes and families, and forced to produce babies who will be shipped to laboratories around the world."

"The UK plays a major part in allowing this cruel trade to continue by importing



Actress Jenny Seagrove in the petition to Downing Street

monkeys from countries such as Mauritius for British laboratories. On behalf of the Save Me foundation, I call on the government to cut all ties with this cruel trade immediately."

"We are calling on the UK government to ban the import of these primates and stop perpetuating this appalling cruelty."

between Sri Lankan forces and the LTTE - known as the Tamil Tigers - in 2009.

The document cites "credible allegations" that government forces deliberately shelled civilians and repeatedly targeted hospitals. If proven, the allegations amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Why was the UN to move so slow as regards Sri Lanka when they have been just a little faster in Lybia?

(Gathered from Channel 4 News)

Human Rights

Alleged Sri Lankan War Crimes

A leaked United Nations report estimates that tens of thousands of civilians were killed during the fighting

Are British politicians normal?

(continued from page 3)

It would also increase the representation of those who did share the exact age and earning characteristics of the normal Briton. It would lie in reform of the House of Lords.

Instead of being formed of hereditary peers and unelected political appointees, the House of Lords should become a large jury. Like any jury, its membership would be for the duration of the event only.

In this case, the life of a single parliament. Selection would be by lottery, removing any bias towards any part of the population. As a five year commitment to participation is onerous, it would be drawn only from those who put their names forward for inclusion in the lottery.

Experiments with such citizen-juries elsewhere in the world at local level have shown that they give rise to improved legislation. The advantages of a citizen-jury over the use of referenda are two-fold. First, it can examine every piece of legislation whereas referenda can only be used for a limited number of major pieces of legislation.

Second, because its deliberations involve an iterative discussion with policy-makers, it makes it very hard for

distortive media campaigns to drive outcomes. In addition, because the jurors do not seek re-election, they are also less prone to be driven by the wishes of media barons.

The new design of the Lords would fit with its historical role as a revising chamber and would not cut across the role of the Common's as the main and elected legislative body. Membership of the Lords would be paid and should be set at a rate that would attract normal people and compensate them for standing aside from their current occupation.

If governments could not obtain approval of legislation in a Lords with jury membership then the normal person could be pretty sure that it did not have a policy that would meet his or her approval.

And we would no longer have to rely so heavily on newspaper comment to make that assessment. This would come as a relief to many.

The same polls that record mistrust of politicians, records only one group for whom British people have higher mistrust: journalists.

By Andrew Tarrant

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The genesis of the Mauritius Labour Party



Founder members of the Labour Party

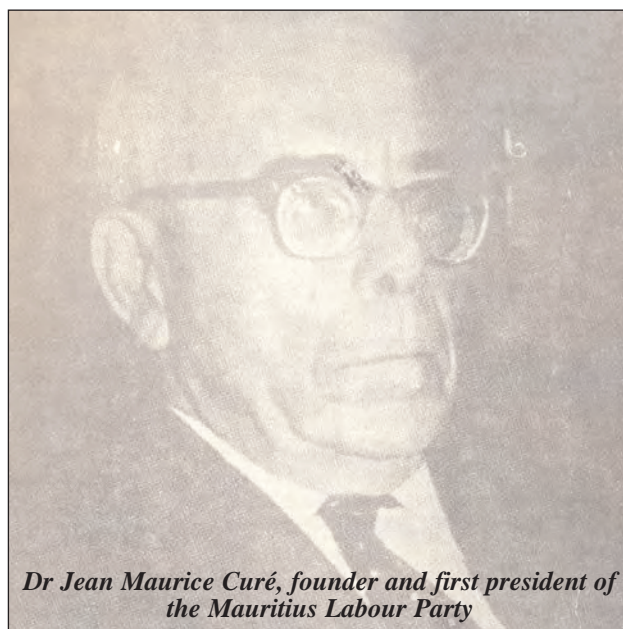
The Mauritius Labour Party (MLP) celebrated the 75th anniversary of its foundation February last. Debates have been ongoing in the press about the effective start date and origin of the Labour Party in Mauritius.

The first question that requires some food for thought is the following one – was the Mauritius Labour Party founded in February or in March 1936?

Traditionally it is held that “it was on 23 February 1936 that Dr Maurice Curé founded the MLP at Champ de Mars.”(1) This assertion is still taken for granted as indicated in a recent press article: “On 23rd February, 1936, the Mauritian working class answered Dr. Curé's call as more than eight thousand workers and some members of the island's petite bourgeoisie gathered at the Champ de Mars. At this first political gathering of the Mauritian working class in the annals of the island's modern history, the Mauritian Labour Party was born.”(2)

As a matter of fact, the 23rd of February 1936 is the date when Dr Maurice Curé and his collaborators held the first mass workers' political gathering at the Champ de Mars, reuniting some 8,000 persons (4,000 to 5,000 according to the police). Some three days earlier, Dr Maurice Curé had issued the manifesto of the Labour Party under the title “*Manifeste pour un Parti travailliste*”.

However, the MLP as such was created and organized some three weeks later as revealed lately and for the first time, the author of this revelation emphasizing the fact that up to now “no historian has produced any document in connection with the place and date associated with the foundation of the Labour Party in Mauritius.”(3)



Dr Jean Maurice Curé, founder and first president of the Mauritius Labour Party

Created in March at Port Louis municipality

The chronicler Pahlad Ramsurrun did a pioneering job, digging up press articles which appeared in the 1920's and 1930's in Mauritius.

Quite obviously, the francophone press of the time which defended the interests of the oligarchy and the plantocracy, was mute about the development going on at the grassroot levels and which concerned the fate of the working masses.

No mention was made of the labour movement initiated by Dr Maurice Curé. Fortunately, a dynamic hindiphone press led by Pandit Cashinath Kistoe filled in the vacuum. Pahlad Ramsurrun's mastery of the Hindi language helped him delve into various issues

of “*Mauritius Arya Patrika*” and “*Arya Vir*”, edited by Pandit Cashinath Kistoe, which contained invaluable information about the genesis of the Labour Party in Mauritius.

Were it not for an entry made by Pandit Cashinath Kistoe on March 20, 1936 in the Hindi section of his paper “*Arya Vir*” under the caption “*Majdoor Andolan*” (The Labour Movement), we would never have known about the exact date and place where the Labour Party was officially founded.

The entry read thus: “*Last Friday, on March 13, 1936 at three o'clock, under the chairmanship of Dr Maurice Curé at the Municipality of Port Louis a meeting was held to establish 'The Labour Party'.*”

In that meeting Indians, Muslims and Creole members who had been sympathizing with the plight of the workers were present... Then a committee of the ‘Labour Party’ was elected: Dr Maurice Curé president; Mr. Barbe Secretary and Mr. Seesurrun, the notary was elected treasurer. A few Indians and Muslims were elected members.” (Ibid)

Among the other collaborators of Dr Curé were “Dr Abdool Gaffoor Jeetoo, Omar Mamode Assenjee, Gabriel Félix, Marc Abel, Sookdeo Balgobin, B. Ohsan, F. Courtois, C. Carpen, Arthur Rohan, Cashinath Kistoe, Pokraj Manrakhan, Marcel Geneviève and Pandit Dazzi Sahadeo Rama...”(1)

It is notable that “*Dr A.G. Jeetoo's surgery at Foch Square, Port-Louis, served as the MLP seat.*” (Ibid)

Pandit Cashinath Kistoe, the precursor of Dr Maurice Curé

Pahlad Ramsurrun's investigation has brought to light a fresh historical fact related to the genesis of the Mauritius Labour Party – that the creation of such a party was already in the air in the 1920's, Pandit Cashinath Kistoe being the real mentor of the Labour Party.

These are the terms used by the investigating historian in what is definitely a major breakthrough in the history of the beginning of the Labour Party in Mauritius:



Pandit Cashinath Kistoe played a pioneering role in the emergence of the Mauritius Labour Party.

“He (Pandit Cashinath Kistoe) was ... the redoubtable editor of *Mauritius Arya Patrika* and *Arya Vir* successively. He had been advocating for the foundation of a Labour party on the British model ever since the creation of *Arya Vir* in 1929. His editorial published as far back as on February 13, 1931, under the caption “*The Labour Party*” is a concrete testimony to this assertion.

Not only this, in 1935, the historic year for the Indo-Mauritians and the public in general, when the former were to celebrate their arrival centenary, Pt. Cashinath Kistoe had consecrated nine editorials to highlight the grave problems affecting the Indian workers of which two deserved special mention.

The first was “*The Indian Labour Party*” published in the *Arya Vir* on August 2, and the second was entitled “*Forty hour week for the workers*”, published on August 30, 1935 in the same paper.

It is significant that both the editorials on labour problems were written at a time when Dr Maurice Curé was a sitting member in the Legislative Council as an elected member. Besides, the preparation for the Centenary Celebrations of Indian Immigration was going on at full swing. Pt. Cashinath went on writing similar editorials on Indian worker's problem on August 23, October 4 and December 27, 1935 prior to the foundation of the Labour Party in February-March 1936.”(3)

Another Pandit advocating for the creation of

a Labour Party

However, Pandit Cashinath Kistoe was not the only Hindu religious figure who was voicing concern for the creation of a Labour Party.

Another such personality was Pandit Luxminarain Chaturvedi ‘Raspunji’, author of a poetical epic entitled “*Centenary Lily*” that was published in the wake of the centenary celebration of Indian Indentured Immigration in 1935.

He made a passionate plea for the creation of “*A Labour Party*” that would look into the welfare of the Indian workers in stanza 57 of his book, that read thus:

*Impart auspicious messages,
Stop quarrelling among yourselves
Indulge in trade and politics;
Appropriate agriculture totally,
You all found a Labour Party,
Which may give enjoyment to all.*

A timely boost given by the Indian Immigration centenary celebration

There is no doubt that the fighting mood instilled among the Indo-Mauritians in the wake of the celebration of the centenary of Indian Indentured Immigration was highly propitious to the emergence of the Labour Party.

The celebration, wholly funded by Indo-Mauritians via a Centenary Celebration Fund, attracted some 7000 to 8000 people and was attended by eminent guests, Indians and non-Indians, among whom Dr Maurice Curé.

No doubt this ongoing mobilization among the Indians was propitious to the cause of the Labour Party as a sizeable proportion of the mass gathering organized at the Champ de Mars on February 23, 1936 by Dr Curé, consisted of Indo-Mauritians, so much so that Pandit Sahadeo had to address the people in Hindi.

Pahlad Ramsurrun's comments of this episode are quite pertinent: “*Now, Pt. Sahadeo addressing the gathering in Hindi after Dr Curé has great importance for it shows the impact of Hindi on the audience mostly composed of Hindi speaking people; and that gathering was destined to be the pivot for the genesis of the Labour Party.*”(3)

But the centenary celebration brought to the emerging Labour Party not only the membership of Indo-Mauritians, but their financial support as well. Pahlad Ramsurrun relates this other eye-opening episode:

“*Five years after the Indian Centennial Celebrations, it was announced by the president of the Centenary Celebration Organizing Committee, Mr. R.K. Boodhun that the remaining balance of the Centenary Celebration Fund was to be remitted publicly to Dr Maurice Curé, the President of the Labour Party. As such a correspondence ensued between him and Dr Curé in regard to that donation which was published in The Arya Vir on June 14, 1940.*” (Ibid)

Part of this correspondence has been reproduced by Pahlad Ramsurrun:

“*On dissolution of the Indian Colonization Centenary Celebration Committee which was formed some years ago, a sum of Rs 571 which was left over from the funds was entrusted to me by the committee for free disposal. Exercising the discretionary power thus conferred to me, I think that the best use it could make of the money would be to devote it to the cause of the Labour Party which is an authoritative body representing proletarian interests, if you kindly accept it...*” (Ibid)

Consequently, a cheque was drawn and gladly received by Dr Maurice Curé with the following appreciation:

“*Votre généreuse pensée à l'égard du Parti travailliste a été pour moi la cause d'une vive satisfaction.*”

D O D O

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In a sense, Ireland gave us everything (from the British victory which led to the conquest of Isle de France in 1810 and which had weighed so much in the destiny of Mauritians since then to the poetical legacy of Robert-Edward Hart of Irish connection), yet we snatched the life out of her. How ungrateful and how inhuman!

Indeed, Mauritius has been served, in one way or another, by Irish ever since French rule. “*Descendants of the ‘Wild Geese’, who had found refuge in France, arrived at Isle de France as early settlers under Governors Denis Denyon (1721-1725), Denis Brousse (1725-1727), Pierre Benoit Dumas (1727-1729, and in much larger numbers under Mahé de La Bourdonnais (1735-1746).*” **(1)**

The term ‘Wild Geese’ has been coined to designate the Irish emigrants who left Ireland for political reasons in the 17th century and “*took refuge in Brittany, Normandy, the Paris region or other regions of France, as well as Spain, Scandinavia, the Low Ɖuntries and the Austrian Empire.*”**(Idem)**

What did these Irish-born emigrants come to do in Isle de France under the early French governors? “*They came as hired hands such as carpenters, soldiers, sailors, and chaplains.*”**(Idem)**

French Mauritius continued to welcome Irish-born people in the second half of the eighteenth century, the more remarkable among them being fighting troops in the service of France. “*Later from the 1750s onwards, Irish Regiments that formed part of the ‘Irish Brigade in the Service of France’ sojourned at Isle de France on their way to India; the Regiments of Lally (17 December 1757-27 January 1758), Clare (April 1771-September 1772) and Walsh (1788-1790) left their mark in the annals of Isle de France.*”**(Idem)**

Indeed, a few of the soldiers serving in the Irish regiments settled on the island for good. Such was the case of officers William de Keating and Thomas O’Gorman in the 1780’s and 1790’s. The musician of the Walsh Regiment, Henry Louis Denys Chelin, together with his wife and son settled on the island in the late 1790’s.

“*Henry Louis et son épouse s’installèrent à la rue de l’Hôpital où selon toute probabilité elle ouvrit un café offrant le couvert et une salle de jeux équipée de billard.*”**(2)**

Irish troops instrumental in British 1810 takeover

At the beginning of the 19th century, the Irish played a decisive part in helping the British secure the Mascarenes. “*The chief events leading up to the takeover of Rodrigues (1809), the capture of Bourbon (July 1810), the French naval victory at Grand Port (August 1810) and the invasion and fall of Isle de France in December 1810*” have all seen “*the active participation of Irish soldiers and seamen, generals and officers.*” **(1)**

Indeed, at that time, many Irishmen were recruited to form part of British troops. “*A large proportion of the crew of the British frigates was Irishmen. Ireland had only been formally politically united with Britain less than a decade before the battle of Grand Port. Crew members listed came from Dublin, Limerick and Ɖrk but sometimes their origin is simply given as ‘Ireland’.*” **(3)**

Admittedly, the most

prominent part was played by Colonel Henry Sheehy Keating, the first to land with the British troops in the north of Mauritius on 29 November 1810, and Commodore Sir Josias Rowley, one of the signatories from the victorious camp of the Act of Capitulation on 3 December 1810.

Both Irishmen were previously implied in the takeover of the other two islands of the Mascarenes, Rodrigues (August 1809) and Bourbon or Réunion (July 1810). One Mauritian historian has argued that the British takeover of the island has been a blessing indeed, insofar as the liberation of the masses and the evolution of the democratic process was concerned.

“*If the British had not dislodged the French...and taken over Mauritius in December 1810 – the 66 thousand slaves would not have been liberated in 1835 – and Indian Immigration en masse (450 000 from 1834 to 1923) would not have taken place. As such, Mauritius would not have experienced the evolution of a democratic system of Government.*”**(4)**

An immense contribution to quality education

Whatever would have been the case, the British administrative era in Mauritius did open the way for numerous “*Irish-born professionals, politicians, soldiers, settlers, and members of various religious orders*”**(1)** to serve on the island. There has been “*the immense contribution made to education in Mauritius by the I.B.V.M. Congregation (Loretos) from 1845 to the present day.*”**(Idem)**

I.B.V.M. stands for The Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary created in the 17th century by Mary Ward in the Yorkshire. However, the credit for the real pioneering effort in the field of quality education for girls goes to an Irish lady Teresa Ball who started the first Loreto House in Dublin.

As a matter of fact, the success obtained in the field of education by the Loreto Sisters is a telling evidence of the success obtained in general by the Irish missionaries in Mauritius. “*La preuve la plus éclatante de la réussite des missionnaires irlandais demeure sans conteste la gestion des collèges Lorette ainsi que les écoles primaires dont ils avaient érigé en modèles.*”**(5)**

On the other hand, the case of boys’ education in Mauritius has been served with mush success by the Brothers of the Christian Schools and the Fathers of the Holy Ghost (C.S.Sp.).

Of governors and bishops from Ireland and others

It is indeed a honour that the second British governor appointed to rule Mauritius, from 1823 to 1828, was none other than the Irish Sir Lowry Cole, and that, following in his footsteps, “*several Irish governors were appointed, among them, in the 1880s, Sir John Pope Hennessy who had a vital role to play in taking Mauritius further along the road towards constitutional and social reforms.*”**(1)**

To him we owe the famous slogan, “*Mauritius to the Mauritians!*”, and, as such, he can be considered as the real father of the century-long process of the evolution of Mauritius towards autonomy and full independence.

On the other hand, let alone Irish members of the clergy and educators, no less than four Irish bishops, “*Mgr Peter O’Neill o.s.b. (Benedictine Order), and three Spiritan Bishops of Port-Louis: Mgr*

John Baptist T. Murphy (1916-1926); Mgr James Leen (1926-1949) and Mgr Daniel Liston (1949-1968)” have been at the head of the Catholic Church in Mauritius.

Their administrations have been a blessing for the island:

“*These four Irishmen, out of a total of eleven Bishops to date, had a major impact on the spiritual life and moral values of twentieth-century Mauritius. Significantly, since 1991, a Mauritian-born Bishop, trained in Dublin and a member of the same Congregation of the Holy Ghost, Mgr Maurice Piat C.S.Sp., is at the helm of the Catholic Church, having succeeded the much-revered and greatly-loved Mgr Jean Margéot.*”**(1)**

Just as Mgr Maurice Piat, a large number of “*Mauritian-born students...have completed their education in Irish tertiary institutions, notably at the Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland (R.C.S.I.), University College, Dublin, or other Colleges of the National University of Ireland at Cork or Galway.*”**(1)**

Prominent among them are the Prime Minister, Dr Navin Ramgoolam, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Arvin Boolell, Dr Charles Yip Tong and Dr I. Gaya who all studied in Dublin.

On the cultural, artistic and economic fronts

On the cultural and artistic fronts, apart from gratifying Mauritius with the exquisite works of Irish artists like Frederick Robert Nixon and writers like Charles John Doyle, Ireland has inspired a host of Mauritian writers and novelists as Karl de Souza, Arthur Martial and Lilian Berthelot.

Quite obviously, it is imperative, “*in the context of Irish-Mauritian connections*”, not to “*forget that Robert-Edward Hart (1891-1954) belongs to a family with ancestors from both countries*” **(Idem)** and whom Jean Urruty has described in the Dictionary of Mauritian Biography as “*not only the bard of Mauritius, but the poet of the entire Indian Ocean*” and “*up till now the greatest poet Mauritius has ever produced.*”

On the economic front, Mauritius has learnt from Ireland’s economic progress as a nation in the 1980s. Furthermore, “*sporting links between Mauritius and Ireland have existed since the foundation of the Mauritius Turf Club in 1812...*” when “*British and Irish officers and Government officials first participated in races at Mangalkhan and the Champ de Mars for many years.*”**(Idem)**

The law of reciprocity tampered with

Mauritius has, on one or two occasions, shown how much she values her connection with Ireland. Thus, “*the contribution of Ireland to the education of Mauritian-born young people was recognized in the 1960s by Mauritius which made a generous donation to the R.C.S.I.*”**(Idem)**

The donation amounted to £ 10,000. Again, in response to a call as far back as 1849, in the wake of the Great Famine, Mauritius made a “*donation £ 3 000 to the Irish nation*” which “*was the largest of all and even surpassed the contributions of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert combined.*”**(Idem)**

Sadly enough, on a fateful 10 January 2011, Mauritius played it foul to Ireland by strangling to death, in hotel room 1025 of the Legends, her 27 year old beauty queen Michaela McAreavey-Harte. A national shame!

D O D O

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Photos: “No Man is and Island” of Professor Marc Serge Rivière, to whom we are indebted.

Commonwealth News

'Women as Agents of Change' commemorated at Commonwealth Day Observance

"There's so much to be done, but with willpower, vision, and commitment, I believe that positive changes can, and absolutely must be achieved" - Annie Lennox

More than 2,000 people from all over the world gathered yesterday in Westminster Abbey, London for the multi-faith Commonwealth Day Observance attended by HM Queen Elizabeth II, Head of the Commonwealth.

In a pre-recorded message, the Queen marked the 2011 theme, 'Women as Agents of Change', by highlighting the important role played by women in unleashing the potential of those around them.

Her Majesty encouraged the citizens of the Commonwealth to give thought to ways in which they can provide support to girls and women.

The flags of Commonwealth countries were paraded through the Abbey at the start of the service which also included cultural performances from Australia, India, Trinidad and Tobago and a London-based gospel school choir.

The Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Kamla Persad-Bissessar, who is the first woman to hold the post of Commonwealth Chair-in-Office, gave a bible reading and faith leaders representing the Christian, Jain, Jewish, Sikh and Zoroastrian communities offered prayers focusing on the theme.

Carol Ann Duffy CBE
(b 1955)

The Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy paid tribute to the women and girls of the Commonwealth in a specially-commissioned poem 'A Commonwealth Blessing for Girls'. Appointed in 2009, Ms Duffy is the UK's first woman Poet Laureate.



Her Majesty and Annie Lennox shake hands

The hour-long Observance also included testimonies from the musician and activist Annie Lennox and economist Dambisa Moyo.

Ms Lennox, who visited Malawi earlier this year as envoy for the Scottish branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, said: "Women account for more than half of all adults newly infected by HIV and it is only through equipping, supporting and empowering women that we can begin to turn the tide."

"My visit to Malawi helped me to begin to appreciate the unique reach and potential of the Commonwealth. There's so much to be done, but with willpower, vision, and commitment, I believe that positive changes can, and absolutely must be achieved."

Dr Moyo said: "The challenges facing women around the world are a clarion

call for the Commonwealth member states to lead the international community towards improvements in economic growth, meaningfully reducing poverty, ensuring the promotion of human rights, and ultimately establishing good governance.

"Who better to lead these efforts than the Commonwealth's 54 member states?"

The Observance was also attended by more than 1,000 schoolchildren.

"Women as Agents of Change" emphasises the Commonwealth message that by investing in women and girls we can accelerate social, economic and political progress in our member states.

The theme has particular global resonance, coming less than a week after the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day.

Commonwealth Secretary-General addresses UN Human Rights Council

"In the Commonwealth, we share the vision of a world in which human rights are 'universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated'" - Kamlesh Sharma.



Commonwealth Secretary-General Kamlesh Sharma, addressing the UN Human Rights Council on Wednesday, 2 March, in Geneva, Switzerland, said the international community shares the task of realising the ideals of human rights around the world.

In his speech to the High-Level Segment of the Human Rights Council's 16th Session, Mr Sharma noted that all countries advance and occasionally falter on the journey to implementing human rights, but, he continued, the Commonwealth can be a "well-spring of wisdom" drawing from its own experience of working to realise human rights in its member states.

"In the Commonwealth, we share the vision of a world in

which human rights are 'universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated'," he said.

"We will always be true to the belief that human rights should be fundamentally woven into our values, and everything we do."

During his speech to the intergovernmental body, Mr Sharma highlighted the Commonwealth Secretariat's work to support member countries to ratify UN human rights conventions; prepare for and respond to the Universal Periodic Review process, which reviews countries' human rights records; and convening a network of some 31 national human rights bodies and 21 independent National Human Rights Institutions.

"This is the Commonwealth at work on human rights," he said. "Quietly but solidly offering the helping hand of the trusted partner."

The Secretary-General also noted developments within the Commonwealth to strengthen the scope of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group, first in empowering it to deal with the 'full range' of serious or persistent violations of the Commonwealth's fundamental political values, and second in bringing it into more active and

constructive engagement with member countries, with further offers of practical assistance on promoting human rights and democratic values.

The Human Rights Council is an intergovernmental body within the United Nations system made up of 47 states responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe. Eleven of the Commonwealth's member countries are currently sitting on the UN Human Rights Council.

He reiterated that the Commonwealth's first constituency is its most vulnerable people, dealing with issues of inequality, criminalisation, persecution and discrimination. He cited the example of the range of individual countries' legal positions on the criminalisation of homosexual activity.

"We will continue to match aspiration with delivery, and to achieve a balance between public pronouncement and constructive engagement," he said.

Mr Sharma added that the Commonwealth's newly opened Small States Office in Geneva will soon employ human rights experts who can supplement the work of the Secretariat in London in advising member countries.

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