

**Launching of book “Reconnecting and Engaging the Mauritian Diaspora”
at Mahatma Gandhi Institute on Thursday 14 March 2024 at 13:00 hrs**

Your Excellency Prithvirajsing Roopun, President of the Republic of Mauritius

Mr Rajcoomar Rampertab, Director of the MGI& RTI

Members of the Diaspora group

All protocol observed

Ladies and gentlemen

Good afternoon

In the wake of, as well as soon after, independence, the fear of economic recession led to the emigration of large numbers of Mauritians.

It is estimated that around 65,000 people emigrated between 1961 and 1982. The main destination countries included South Africa, Australia, Britain and other European countries as well as Canada.

Apart from Mauritians who left from the mid-1960s to the 1980s because of the difficult economic conditions in the country, there has been a steady flow of emigration of highly skilled Mauritian youth mainly to the western developed countries in Europe, North America and Australia.

Most of these Mauritian youth left the country to pursue higher studies overseas and did not return to work in Mauritius, opting to pursue a career and settle abroad, thereby causing a brain drain.

The Mauritian diaspora has therefore been growing and its significance in terms of numbers, skills and resources, and its potential to contribute to the

development of Mauritius especially through Diaspora Direct Investment (DDI) is indeed substantial.

The Government of Mauritius recognises the fact that the Mauritian diaspora overseas includes a substantial number of individuals who have gained international experience, distinguished themselves in several professions and fields, acquired entrepreneurial insight and accumulated savings that could be invested in Mauritius with the right incentives.

We need to harness the diaspora's intellectual, cultural and social potential, capital and skills.

Government, together with parastatal bodies, have initiated and implemented incentives geared towards attracting members of the diaspora back to Mauritius.

In order to encourage the return of skilled and high net-worth Mauritians through tax-based incentives, the Economic Development Board launched the Mauritius Diaspora Scheme in 2015 under the Investment Promotion Act of 2015.

This Scheme aims at encouraging professionals and other Mauritian entrepreneurs living abroad to come and work in Mauritius as employees or by setting up on their own in sectors where their expertise is in high demand.

Unfortunately, it has been observed that 75% of diaspora members are unaware of this scheme.

Through the 2018 National Migration and Development Policy, Mauritius acknowledged the need for more in-depth data on diaspora communities and to create strong platforms tailored to the Mauritian diaspora.

This project aimed at responding to the diaspora needs identified through International Organisation for Migration (IOM) pilot mapping and profiling and build on the momentum to engage its diaspora and strengthen existing initiatives, while working towards building new initiatives.

In June last year, a working group, under the leadership of the President of the Republic of Mauritius, was set up to explore ways and means for Mauritius to create a stronger bond with members of its diaspora, reconnect with them and develop a long-lasting trusted relationship.

Members of the group include

- Mr Rajcoomar Rampertab, Director of the MGI& RTI,
- Dr Dindyal Jaguthsing Former Lecturer,
- Prof Marc Serge Riviere, Author and Professor emeritus University of Limerick Ireland,
- Dr Ibrahim Alladin, Professor, researcher, writer and author,
- Dr Oomandra Nath Varma, Former Executive Director of the MIE,
- and myself.

The working group believes that members of the diaspora carry with them a rich cultural heritage and a wealth of expertise gained from their experiences abroad.

They represent a vast resource of untapped potential that can significantly contribute to the development and progress of their motherland.

We need to reach out to the Mauritian diaspora, to allow them to reconnect with their roots and to harness their expertise in various fields so as to enrich and to empower the nation. Thus the “Connect with the Diaspora” initiative.

The group meets almost once monthly, discussing about how to create the enabling and facilitating environment to make this initiative a reality.

As a first exercise, it was decided to conduct a case study on a selected group of individuals who have excelled in their fields. Participants will reflect a cross section of experiences, age and professions with a gender balance.

Their success stories would be written and presented as role models. The launch of this compilation could serve as a platform for the diaspora initiative. It was targeted to release this compilation in the form of a book during the 56th anniversary celebration of our independence. The compilation and editing were entrusted to Dr. Ibrahim Alladin.

Dr Ibrahim Alladin was educated in England, Canada, and Australia. He received a BA (Hons) in Sociology and Public Administration in London, a Master's degree in Sociology and Education from the University of Alberta, Canada, and a PhD from Australia.

He started his academic and teaching career at the University of Alberta, then became the Associate Director of the Centre for International Development. He was also appointed Professor at Altai State University in Russia and served as a Visiting Professor at several universities in Europe, Asia, and Africa. His academic career extends over thirty years.

Professor Alladin has extensive experience in educational planning and management. He was the Team Leader of a major project on tertiary education in Papua New Guinea and has been the Project Coordinator in Malawi, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, India, Peru, China, Turkey and Saudi Arabia. He has also served as a

consultant and is external examiner for doctoral students. He has travelled to over fifty countries.

Dr Alladin is a writer and author. He has published several scholarly articles on education, society, economics, international development, and multiculturalism, and is the author of more than twenty books.

He is a Paul Harris Fellow and a former Rotarian. He received the Citizenship Citation Award from the Govt. of Canada for his work on cultural diversity. He is currently Adjunct Professor at the University of Cape Breton in Canada, and Education Advisor at MCET in India. Dr Alladin is also the Founder and President of the Alladin Foundation, a charitable organisation, and a Board Member at the Open University of Mauritius.

I shall conclude by reminding you of this English phrase and Carl Perkins song “You can take the boy out of the country but you cannot take the country out of the boy”.

Those who leave do so for a variety of reasons, but there is always an opportunity to return. The Mauritian government is waiting to welcome them back.