

Speech of Honourable Deepak Balgobin,
Minister of Information Technology,
Communication, and Innovation

Award Signing Ceremony for
The Public Sector Transformation Scheme
Between the MRIC and the Ministry of
Commerce and Consumer Protection

02 September 2021

My colleague, Honourable Soodesh Callichurn, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection and Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training,

Ms Sandrine Valere, Permanent Secretary of my Ministry,

Mr Rangan, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection,

Dr Sukon, Chairman of the MRIC,

Prof Bahorun, Executive Director of the MRIC,

Mr Noonaram, CEO of Verde Frontier Solution LTD,

Representatives of both Ministries,

Members of the Press,

Good afternoon to you all and welcome.

As the saying goes, "***The future is not a gift. It is an achievement***" and the first step in winning the future, is encouraging innovation.

As we rise to the challenge of the pandemic since the last one a half year now, many rules have changed. We have seen revolutions in technology which have transformed the way we live, work and do business and as the digital landscape continues to change at a rapid pace, we need to ensure that we create impactful innovation.

With the signing of the present agreement between the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council, the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection and Verde Frontier Solution LTD, for the setting up

of the '**Price Monitoring and Control Application**', we are moving towards yet another step forward into innovation.

It is the first project being approved under the **Public Sector Transformation Scheme** (PSTS), as mentioned by Professor Bahorun earlier. This scheme is aimed at supporting innovative collaborative projects that test new approaches and technologies by start-ups and SMEs for improving processes and enhancing service delivery in the public sector.

The objective is to support innovative projects that will enable, through a collaborative approach, the development, pilot testing and evaluation of new solutions to deliver better outcomes in the public sector. Following the budget 2020-2021 announcement, this scheme has been developed during the last quarter of 2020, through a series of consultations with various stakeholders of the public sector and an innovation needs assessment to sketch out its *modus operandi*.

Following this, a Call for Proposals was launched on the 1st of March 2021 with a deadline set on the 14th May 2021. The MRIC received a total of 25 innovation collaborative proposals.

The **Price Monitoring and Control Application** project is the first approved project under this scheme. It will display information on products sold in most supermarkets in Mauritius. While the platform was originally launched to increase competition, it will definitely be useful in this pandemic era.

The application will also be useful for consumers to go directly to the store that has the product they need at the best price and value for money, minimizing the need to get out of the house with the current conditions.

Dear friends,

With the re-opening of our borders and the relaunch of the economy, there is a significant opportunity for our Public Sector to re-dynamize and re-invent itself while embracing novel and emerging technology.

This event, today, marks a new turn for our public service, with this project which puts innovation at contribution for a response to a pressing national issue.

In this regard, I wish to thank the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council for the quick and effective implementation of this budget measure, along with all the other collaborating stakeholders and also, Verde Frontier Solution LTD for coming up with this application.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am endeavouring, through my Ministry and the MRIC to establish the right ecosystem for Mauritius to embrace innovation.

As you may be aware, the mandate of the MRIC has been recently enlarged to include the capability to conduct research in identified national priority thrust areas and to enlist support from local and international innovators for furthering the innovation agenda.

We need a new mindset towards creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship. It is good to remind ourselves that it is people who innovate - not machines or laboratories.

Excellency in science and research for innovation are necessary but not sufficient. Innovation is not only made by one institution but calls for multi-disciplinary initiatives, teamwork, knowledge, and reward sharing. Innovation is also about wide collaboration between institutions, both local and overseas.

Our country, as rainbow nation, is indeed a fertile ground for innovation, specially with cross fertilisation of ideas and coordination between different stakeholders. All we need to do to unleash our potential is to provide the intrinsic motivation. This is what my Ministry is determined to do with the collaboration and support of institutions like the MRIC as well as other institutions and organizations. It goes in the same line as our Government Programme with the vision of the Prime Minister, Pravin Jugnauth, to build an economy in the league of high-income countries, driven by technology and innovation and bringing higher levels of growth.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before I conclude, I would like to thank the MRIC, the Evaluation Panel members, and everyone who has contributed to the Public Sector Transformation Scheme.

We have no doubts that this application will be a valuable asset to the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection, for the benefit of each and every citizen of our country.

Thank you for your attention.

