Speech of Hon. Deepak Balgobin, Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation

Training Workshop on "Building of Simplified Antenna for Satellite Communication and Ground Station Operation"
The First Mauritian Satellite
Venue: Forest Side Girl SSS, Forest Side
Date: Thursday, 03rd December 2020
Time: 13:00

Mrs Beedassy, Rector, Forest Side, SSS

Dr Kaviraj Sharma Sukon, Chairperson, MRIC

Dr Prof. Theesan Bahorun, Executive Director, MRIC

Mr Jean Marc Momplé, Mauritius Radio Amateur Society

Heads of Institutions,

Students and teachers,

Members of the Press,

Distinguished Guests,

I am extremely proud today to contemplate so much enthusiasm on our students' faces today for this closing ceremony of the training workshop on Building of Simplified Antenna for Satellite Communication and Ground Station Operation.

This training is an important component of the First Mauritian Satellite Project which is currently being implemented by the MRIC under the aegis of My Ministry.

What is noteworthy it is a joint collaboration between the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council, Mr Jean Marc Momplé from the Mauritius Radio Amateur Society and the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research.

I seize this opportunity to thank both Mr Momplé and Honorable Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun, the Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Education, for their presence and unflinching support today.

For the first time in the history of Mauritius, thanks to the UNOOSA (*United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs*) / JAXA (*Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency*), KiboCube Programme, the MRIC has embarked into a new initiative geared towards exploring the potential of space/satellite technology for the socio-economic benefits of our Country.

The first Mauritian nanosatellite, MIR-SAT1 (Mauritius Imagery and Radio – Satellite 1) was designed by a team of Mauritian Engineers and an experienced Radio Amateur from the Mauritius Amateur Radio Society in collaboration with experts from AAC-Clyde Space UK. The MIR-SAT1 will be sent by JAXA to the International Space

Station (ISS) and deployed from the Japanese Experiment Module "KiboCUBE".

The Primary objective of MIR-SAT1 is to acquire satellite technology through the design process, design review, assembly, integration and testing. In parallel, the MRIC will set up a Ground Station located at its premises in Ebène, which will be used to control and operate MIR-SAT1.

Data that will be collected are:

- satellite health data
- payload data, that is, pictures of Mauritius and surrounding regions
- experimental island to island communication

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear students,

Space applications, although largely and seamlessly present in our daily lives are often overlooked. Space offer a formidable boon to the society as a whole. Capacity building, disaster risk management, weather and climate monitoring, connectivity to

remote areas are some of the space applications which are key to human and economic development.

The first Mauritian Satellite opportunity has opened a new avenue for the MRIC to explore and exploit this initiative, churning it into profitable outcomes for Mauritius in the long run.

Currently, 13 African countries already have space-related agencies, organisations or research institutions. Mauritius has to keep up the pace with countries in the region, especially in the space sector and this highlights the justification for a much-needed space agency in the country.

My Ministry fully supports MRIC's initiative to embark into Space Technology which I am sure will open a new chapter of our History and potentially contribute towards the betterment of the lives of our people.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Innovation requires effective implementation, and this cannot be achieved in a sustainable manner at country level unless a structured framework is put in place that allows the '*doers of innovation*' to operate and grow. Ensuring sustainability of this project is of considerable importance with the view to initiating

Mauritius into Space Technology and in the long run creating a new economic pillar for the country.

In this connection, my Ministry is closely following up the implementation of this program by chairing a high-level Steering Committee comprising representatives of the PMO, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance, ICTA, NCB, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Public Infrastructures and Ministry of Social security. The MIR-SAT1 is a National project and has obtained the full support of Government.

The socio-economic benefits of a space sector to the country are significant. Space is one of many tools which can address the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. In fact, 12 of these challenges could be reached using satellites. For instance, Mauritius is currently facing three major problems of national priority set by the government:

(1) Ocean surveillance and optimal management of ocean resources (e.g. tackling fish depletion) in the Mauritian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) which is about 2.3-million-kilometre square; (2) Road traffic congestion and (3) Natural disaster mitigation (i.e. frequent flooding). Our hope to find solutions to these issues rest in Satellite Technology.

The MIR-Sat 1 initiative envisages to inspire the younger generation to look into the numerous advantages of engaging into space technology. Not only for job creation, but also for research, development and Innovation and thus for the betterment of the society. I address myself to all the students present here today and encourage you all to conduct more research on your own in this area.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today's event is the first of a series of workshops to initiate students at secondary and tertiary levels to building satellite receiving stations and provide schools with their own mini ground stations which will serve as secondary receiving stations for the first Mauritian Satellite.

I would like to end by congratulating the students and staff present here today for their accomplishment. This was the result of a dedicated group effort by the students and staff, sacrificing their time during school holidays to participate in a training programme put together by the MRIC in collaboration with Mr Jean Marc Momple, AMSAT Ambassador.

This is the first operational satellite receiving station at a school in the country and therefore I would again like to congratulate all those involved for this historical initiative and look forward to celebrating the success of this programme.

I thank you for your attention and wish you good luck and great success ahead.