

**THE FORENSIC SCIENCE LABORATORY**  
**IN COLLABORATION WITH**  
**THE EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

**OPENING CEREMONY OF THE**  
**FORENSIC DISCIPLINES EXCHANGE PROGRAMME**

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**SPEECH BY HON PRAVIND KUMAR JUGNAUTH**  
**PRIME MINISTER**

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**MONDAY 16 MAY 2022 AT 09.30 Hrs**  
***(HON PRIME MINISTER TO ARRIVE AT 0925 HRS)***

**VENUE: INTEGRATED CUSTOMS CLEARANCE CENTRE**  
**LE CHALAND, PLAINE MAGNIEN**

**Mrs Judes DeBaere, *Chargé D’Affaires*,  
US Embassy,**

**Mr Stuart Wilson, Political Advisor to the US Army  
Southern European Task Force, Africa,**

**The Commissioner of Police,**

**The Director General, Mauritius Revenue Authority,**

**The Director, Forensic Science Laboratory,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

A very good morning to you all.

I feel privileged to open this important event whose objective is to promote exchanges between law enforcement agencies in Mauritius, and the US Army Southern European Task Force, Africa.

Exchanges will bear notably on forensic laboratory techniques, crime scene techniques, documentation, and proper transportation of exhibits while maintaining the chain of custody as well as customs and borders security.

Developments in Science and New Technologies have considerably impacted forensic science, disrupting established patterns of work and skills in forensic

laboratories. Forensic science will increasingly enable quick and reliable reconstructions of events as well as identification of suspects through validated means.

We are very keen in Mauritius to enhance our capabilities and techniques as threats evolve in this field. Since 2014, government has invested heavily so as to improve and expand laboratory capabilities. The size of laboratory operations and the sensitivity as well as precision of scientific tests have all increased.

The ability of our Forensic Scientists to characterise biological evidence using DNA testing methods has been the most notable of breakthroughs they have achieved. The speed and sensitivity of laboratory

techniques to examine traces of DNA have improved significantly.

As recommended by the Commission of Inquiry on Drug Trafficking, a dedicated Drugs Unit has been set up at the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL). This Unit is equipped with the latest analytical technology equipment, scientifically validated and in compliance with the guidelines of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for synthetic drug analysis.

These high tech instruments allow for the detection of all types of synthetic drugs including the latest generation as well as emerging synthetic drugs. It is worth mentioning that our FSL is the only Laboratory in

the region with such testing capabilities. It routinely performs synthetic drug testing for neighbouring islands.

In addition, the Forensic Science Laboratory is certified compliant with ISO requirements for competent, impartial, and consistent operation of laboratories. This certification covers all its core services, namely drugs, emerging new psychoactive substances, and DNA analysis.

As such, the FSL can be hailed as a leading laboratory in the region. It provides services to neighbouring countries such as Madagascar, Seychelles, Djibouti, and the East African countries.

Yet, if you're not moving forward, you're falling back!  
So the FSL will undergo new organisational and operational changes with the building of a new Forensic Science Laboratory. The need for a modern purpose-built Forensic Science Laboratory is long overdue.

We are fully committed to the delivery of the new Forensic Science Laboratory project, estimated to cost around USD 13.5 Millions. Arrangements have been made for financing through the Indian line of credit.

Once procurement procedures are completed, construction works will be carried out over the next two years. The new laboratory should be ready by May 2024.

The custom-built facilities will allow the FSL to make full use of the huge potential offered by high technology, and will future-proof the needs of its services for decades to come.

The project is a very significant capital investment in the future of forensic science and demonstrates our determination to fight crime, in particular drug trafficking.

This capacity building programme, therefore, comes at an opportune time for a holistic approach to the development of the Forensic Science Laboratory.



## **Ladies and Gentlemen**

I am pleased to note that over the past decade, the Mauritius Police Force has been continuously aiming to bolster its effectiveness through extensive recourse to evidence-led investigation. This ambition is incorporated into the Police Strategic Plan 2022-2025 launched earlier this year. The upscaling of the scientific approach to police investigations has been facilitated by the robust forensic support provided by the Forensic Science Laboratory as well as the strong and long-standing collaboration between the Mauritius Police Force and the Forensic Science Laboratory. This is evidenced by the host of successful convictions secured through scientific evidence, such as the DNA.

The evidence-led investigation, enabled through the enhanced forensic capabilities of the FSL, has been of benefit to the Mauritius Police Force in many ways. It has contributed to the modernisation of the organisation and ensuring the prevalence of international policing norms and standards. It also protects police officers from unfounded allegations.

In fact, the increasing reliance on scientific evidence has required the tooling up of the Mauritius Police Force with both state-of-the-art equipment and the relevant competencies. Additionally, this approach has enabled the entrenchment of an organisational culture conducive to international human rights standards,

which has, in turn, reduced the exposure of police officers to unfounded allegations of abuse and malpractices.

Mauritius has also made strides when it comes to enhancing its security measures at the port and the airport. Here the Mauritius Revenue Authority and its Customs Department have put in place all the protocols needed to ensure that our borders are the least porous possible. To that end, over the past few years, the Mauritius Revenue Authority has acquired hi-tech equipment for the scanning of parcels, containers, and even of people who are carrying suspicious luggage.

I wish to thank the US authorities, on behalf of all our local stakeholders, for proposing this Event. Allow me also to seize this opportunity to thank the US Embassy for funding exchange programmes that have addressed the specific capacity needs of 264 Mauritians in the last five years.

I wish the experts a nice stay in Mauritius, and I make a personal appeal to all participants to make the most out of these five days of intensely practical and technical activities.

Thank you all for your attention.

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