

**COMMEMORATION OF 50 YEARS
OF
AIR MAURITIUS IN RODRIGUES**

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

**TUESDAY 11 OCTOBER 2022 AT 1645 HRS
(HON PRIME MINISTER TO ARRIVE AT 1645 HRS)**

VENUE: PLAINE CORAIL AIRPORT

Chief Commissioner of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly,

Deputy Chief Commissioner,

Chairperson of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly,

Parliamentary Private Secretary,

Member of the National Assembly,

Commissioners,

Minority Leader,

Members of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly,

Chairperson of Air Mauritius Ltd,

CEO, Airport Holdings Ltd,

Conservation Director, Mauritian Wildlife Foundation,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Afternoon.

It is a pleasure for me to be here today to celebrate the 50th anniversary of operations of Air Mauritius in Rodrigues.

When the national carrier first landed in the island, little did anyone know that this new service would open so many doors and opportunities for the island.

Today, we can say that this inaugural flight was the first step on a journey to success.

That first flight was operated by a Piper Navajo, a twin-engine 6-seater aircraft leased from Air Madagascar. It took off for Rodrigues on Wednesday 13 September 1972.

Air traffic on this route gathered momentum subsequently as Air Mauritius started using an 18-seater De Havilland Twin Otter aircraft and then a fleet of ATR 72-500.

Air transport provided a crucial lifeline for Rodrigues. It represented a major breakthrough for a number of essential services such as medical evacuations for accident victims, transportation of people needing urgent treatment in Mauritius, and expedition of urgent mail or packages.

The air link also made it easier for students from Rodrigues to study in Mauritius.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Air Mauritius carried critical cargo to Rodrigues which included medical supplies and vaccines. In addition, it operated a number of repatriation flights to the island.

Freight capacity is around 100 kg per flight to Rodrigues. During the pre-Covid-19 period, Air Mauritius was carrying 94 tons of freight yearly to Rodrigues. Today, we are rapidly reaching the same level of freight.

The regular air service between our islands also paved the way for tourism to become an important pillar of the Rodrigues economy. At present, Air Mauritius connects

Rodrigues to a network of destinations through Mauritius.

Rodriguans are able to connect on the Air Mauritius network which provides daily flights to Paris and Johannesburg, three weekly flights to London with a fourth one to be introduced as from 15 November, and six weekly flights to Mumbai. Regionally, Air Mauritius flies four times weekly to Antananarivo, and operates three flights daily to Reunion island.

Air Mauritius will resume two flights weekly to Kuala Lumpur as from 31 October. On 1st November, Air Mauritius will restart operations twice weekly to

Perth and, later, will start seasonal flights to Cape Town.

The extension of the runway at Plaine Corail to welcome Jets which will carry more visitors and tourists to Rodrigues will give a further boost to the tourism industry and the economy of the island.

Larger aircrafts operating to Rodrigues will provide additional capacity in terms of cargo. The local businesses will benefit fully from new opportunities to export perishables like fresh fish, fresh food and also non-perishables such as local handicrafts products.

Air connectivity of Rodrigues has unlocked the economic potential of this outer island Mauritian

territory and made available new services to the local population. But, above all, it has brought us closer to our brothers and sisters in Rodrigues.

I am confident that Rodrigues will continue to reap the benefits of an enhanced connectivity in many more decades to come.

Allow me, before concluding, to express my gratitude to Air Mauritius for helping us to meet the growing aspirations of the Rodriguan people.

Thank you for your attention.
