

MAURITIUS RESEARCH AND INNOVATION COUNCIL

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Charting an Innovation Culture in Mauritius



The Newsletter of the MRIC

**"SHAPING UP THE MAURITIUS OF TOMORROW
THROUGH RESEARCH, TECHNOLOGY
AND INNOVATION."**

FEBRUARY 2021



EDITORIAL

WHAT'S IN?

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- PGA Conference 2020
- SCP-Blue Resilience
- Social Innovation
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This is our first 2021 newsletter and we all hope to experience a better year ahead. At the level of the Council, the tempo is on to address the immediate pressing needs of the country and to continue the setting up of a firm basis for sustainable innovation. The Council has reacted promptly to bring concrete contributions to the COVID-19 and MV Wakachio oil spill episodes through special calls to churn innovative ideas from SMEs, academia, private and public organisations into concrete achievements. The challenges ahead are numerous and as the apex innovation institution of the country, the MRIC needs to continuously appraise and reinvent itself. As such, we look forward to provide novel avenues for emerging technologies, fintech initiatives, smart agriculture enhancement and alternatives to plastics funding opportunities. We are thriving to improve our global innovation index, promote further business innovation and incubation, and continue to reshape our blue economy in the coming months. The MRIC has the impetus, the competence and the will to move ahead in this



new normal era and we look forward to contribute effectively to the national innovation resilience.

Prof T. Bahorun, G.O.S.K
Executive Director, MRIC

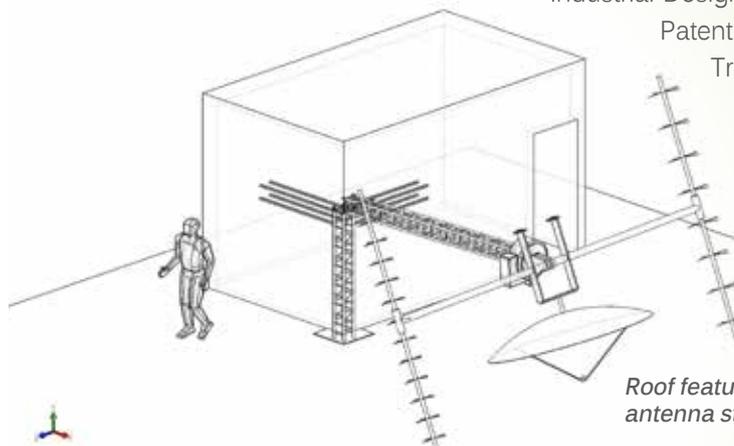
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY PROMOTION SCHEME (IPPS)

The IPPS is designed to boost creativity and innovation through support towards applications made for the grant of Patents and registration of Industrial Designs. The MRIC operates this scheme in collaboration with the Industrial Property Office. Through this scheme, an inventor can obtain a refund of 50% of the official fees for filing of applications for the grant of a Patent or registration of an Industrial Design. Since the initiation of this scheme, the Council has provided support for numerous individuals, start-ups, SMEs and large enterprises through its Technology Transfer Office, aimed at identifying and protecting their IP assets. The majority of support through the IPPS has focused on the protection of Industrial Designs. Design protection gives the owner

a monopoly in the visual features of the shape, configuration, pattern and ornamentation of the design. Design registration provides protection against one who is seeking to apply, or embody in a product, an identical design or a design that is substantially similar in its overall impression to the registered design.

Industrial Designs are covered under the Patents, Industrial Designs and Trademarks Act 2002. (Act No.25 of 2002)

by Dr N Gopaul



Roof features with antenna structure down

Examples of Industrial Designs that have been registered through the assistance of the Council's Technology Transfer Office and benefitted from the IPPS.



Building blocks (Class 25: Building units and construction elements)



Water tanks (Class 23: Fluid distribution equipment)

3RD EDITION OF THE MRIC POST-GRADUATE AWARD CONFERENCE (PGA) 2020

The MRIC Post-Graduate Award scheme has been providing sponsorship for graduates to undertake part-time research studies at a local tertiary education institution, leading to an MPhil or PhD or DBA since 2005. The MRIC Post-Graduate Award Scheme has been officially transferred to the Higher Education Commission (HEC) as from the budget exercise of 2017/2018. However, prior to this date, the MRIC had already committed to sponsor thirty (30) students having registered for MPhil/PhD with the University of Mauritius, University of Technology, Mauritius and the Open University of Mauritius. As at date, twenty-nine (29) awardees have already completed their PhD under this scheme. In this context, the Council organized the

3rd edition of a Two-Day PGA Conference on the 15th and 16th October 2020 whereby 21 Postgraduate awardees presented their respective MPhil/PhD projects in the form of a 20-minute presentation (including 5 minutes for questions and answers). Two of the presenters are pursuing their PhD under the National Research and Innovation Chair (NRIC) programme which has as main objective to stimulate strategic research in areas of national and international importance while retaining and attracting the best qualified research scientists in Mauritius. Over

the two days, about 350 participants attended the conference under 7 different thematic areas and the presentations were very well received by the audience as well as Members of the Jury. The Hon. Deepak Balgobin, Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation was the Chief Guest for the Award ceremony which was held on Friday, 16th October 2020 at the Conference Hall, Level 1, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Tower, Cybercity, Ebene whereby he announced the winners.

by Mr K Tatoree

The Winners were:

1st prize : Ms Prishnee Bissessur

2nd Prize : Ms Deepeeka Kaulysing

3rd Prize : Ms Piteesha Ramlagan



SPECIAL CALL FOR PROPOSALS → BUILDING BLUE RESILIENCE THROUGH INNOVATION

On 25th July 2020, MV Wakashio ran aground on a reef off Pointe d'Esny, southeast of Mauritius leading to a 'state of environmental emergency'. This also led to the release of oil into the pristine lagoons and coastal areas affecting the marine, terrestrial environments, and coastal communities along the impacted areas. The MRIC launched a Special Call for Proposals to encourage Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), enterprises, private organisations, public and private institutions, academia and research institutions to implement research and/or innovative projects that can potentially improve and accelerate the national response to the challenges posed by the oil spill and to contribute to remedial and recovery efforts. The deadline for the submission of proposals was Friday 25th September 2020. The proposals received cover a broad range of areas such as: development of ecosystem health and indicators, ecosystem and community structure; understanding ecological impacts; oil spill tracking; restoring coastal, marine, and



wetland resources; restoring coral reefs and sea-grass beds; and understanding ecological impacts. Based on the evaluation process and the pitching exercise undertaken by a Special Independent Panel, 18 proposals were approved for funding subject to certain conditions.

by Mrs H Mungun-Jhurry

SOCIAL INNOVATION AT THE MRIC

Alongside its due emphasis on fostering research and innovation in Science and Technology for industrial and commercial applications, the Council equally acknowledges the importance of Social Innovation which essentially refers to the adoption of new social practices in order to meet social needs in a more effective way. Over the last couple of years, it has been developing a portfolio of such projects being funded mainly under its Social Innovation and Research Grant Scheme (SIRGS). One Socially Innovative Project which has been recently completed is 'Fighting Diabetes at the Workplace' (FDW) at Omnicane. FDW is a socially innovative matching grant scheme accompanied by a pilot programme which has been designed by the Council to incentivize interested large companies to provide at workplace level, a range of medical, educational and psychosocial support facilities to their employees to ensure systematic

management of diabetes and pre-diabetes. This 2-year project was initiated in September 2018 at Omnicane. While a workshop for the public dissemination of the outcomes and lessons learnt from this project will be organized in a near future, it is worthwhile to highlight some salient features. 504 employees were targeted from La Baraque cluster. Over 2 months from Mid-October to Mid-December 2018, the total number of employees who voluntarily participated in a baseline screening was 491. 64 employees were diagnosed as diabetics including newly diagnosed ones. 33% of the employees were found to be prediabetics- 20% with a low risk and 13% with a high risk of developing diabetes. The B.M.I was also very high for the diabetics. From the results, it was noted that the highest number of diabetics were in the age group of 51-60 and the employees in the age group of 41-50 were mainly prediabetics. Many awareness sessions on nutrition



were also carried out on health topics such as stress management, impact of smoking and alcohol consumption and many more. For low-risk prediabetics: nearly 50 employees have demonstrated positive results i.e FBS Levels have either decreased or have been stabilized. For diabetics and high-risk prediabetics: 37 employees have shown consequent positive results. 7 employees have been able to demonstrate drastic decrease from nearly 9-10mg/DL to 5mg/DL. Omnicane went further with the FDW programme in transmitting the information and prescribed lifestyle changes to their employees' significant others as well as to the community through screening activities. 1120 individuals in Plaine Magnien, Tyack, Mahebourg and Rose-Belle were screened for diabetes by the NGO P.A.T.H.

by Dr A Peedoly

SOUTH AFRICA-MAURITIUS (SA-MRU) JOINT CALL FOR PROPOSALS IN APPLIED RESEARCH AND INNOVATION PROJECTS

In January 2020, South Africa's Technology Innovation Agency (TIA), together with the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council (MRIC) signed an important collaboration agreement that is intended to further enable the promotion of targeted social impact and market-oriented research cooperation and technology innovation partnerships between the two countries. Following from this, on 21st September 2020, TIA and MRIC hereby invited interested participants to submit applied research and innovation project proposals with a focus on real-world solutions for the Green and Blue Economies; Smart Agriculture and Life Sciences; Manufacturing; Social Impact Innovation; and Emerging Sectors. The themes for the Call were based on the national strategic focus areas and priorities of both countries. Specifically, the Joint Call invited South African and Mauritian start-ups, MSMEs and large enterprises, (in partnership with national research and/or higher education institutions in both countries, where relevant/appropriate), to submit applications for collaborative research, development and innovation (RDI) projects with commercial potential.

The main objectives of any project were to:

- Improve the competitiveness of the company through collaboration between research and industry.
- Develop a new/improved product, process and/or service.

Under the joint call, the combined total value of project funding, to be contributed in equal part by TIA and MRIC, up to R1 Million for South African applicants and up to MUR 2 Million (subject to exchange rates) for Mauritian Applicants would be provided per project, for a project duration not exceeding 24 months. The deadline for the submission of concept notes was Friday 30th October 2020. As a result of this Joint Call for Proposals, the MRIC/TIA received a total of 28 concept note applications, which are being processed by a Joint Technical Assessment Panel.

by Mrs P Veer-Ramjeawon



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"Innovation is seeing what everyone has seen and thinking what nobody has thought."

Dr Albert Szent-Györgyi, Biochemist