Address

by

Hon. Jayeshwur Raj Dayal, CSK, PDSM, QPM

Minister of Environment, Sustainable Development,
Disaster and Beach Management

Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport,
Plaisance

Thursday 12 February 2015 at 1500 hours
Mr Maga Ramasamy, CSR and Sustainability Manager of Air Mauritius

Staff

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to be in your midst today for this tree planting activity organized by Air Mauritius in collaboration with my Ministry.

I wish to first thank you for your warm welcome and hospitality. I also congratulate you for your prompt response in partnering with my Ministry in its endeavour to nurture a better environment and quality of life for the citizens of Mauritius.

As we say, ‘the first impression is the last
impression’. Landing at the airport offers the first sky view glance of Mauritius. The green and lush vegetation from the sky is an unparalleled view of our beautiful and unique heavenly island.

Allow me to quote the American aviation pioneer, Amelia Earhart who said I quote “You haven't seen a tree until you've seen its shadow from the sky.”—unquote

No doubt, the airport is also the key gateway to reach for the warmth of our island. The broad smiles, the diverse greetings, dresses, styles and contrast of colours at the airport and in the plane already display the beauty and rich diversity of our culture and traditions.

Ladies and gentlemen,
We are at a turning point in the making of the history of our island. The country has many
challenges ahead. Together with the challenge of the second economic miracle of the country, we also face the challenge of conserving and restoring the beauty and biodiversity of our island.

It’s been more than a century since Mark Twain said: “Mauritius was made first, and then heaven, and that heaven was copied after Mauritius”. It is however now, more than ever, our sacred duty to preserve this unique legated natural flora and its historical rich biodiversity.

As announced in the Government Programme 2015-2019, sustainable and eco-friendly development ranks high on our agenda. One of my top priorities is to pave the way for a cleaner, greener and safer Mauritius.

In this quest, all partners of the society would have to take a significant role in environmental
protection and management. You will all concur with me that we can no longer think of an environment development model that excludes the active participation and engagement of the private sector.

Together, we are all responsible to care for our Mother Earth and we should honour her with gratitude.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As I took office, I made a special plea to the private sector and NGOs to establish meaningful partnerships with the Government in mobilising combined efforts to put the green into growth. To leapfrog in our environmental efforts, we need to continuously innovate and foster partnerships that can enable us achieve optimum environmental sustainability.
Today, I am indeed very pleased to take note of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities carried out by Air Mauritius, especially with regard to its initiative called One take-off, one tree. I particularly commend your relentless and laudable efforts in reducing the carbon footprint of Air Mauritius, which joins our efforts for a better heartprint for One & All.

**Ladies and gentlemen**

My Ministry in collaboration with other stakeholders is pursuing its campaign on “Tree Planting for Clean Air”. As to date, some 86,000 trees have already been planted. Our target is to sensitise the population at large on the importance of trees and increase our green canopy for a greener, cleaner and safer Mauritius.

We all know that trees are the lungs of the planet.
They provide oxygen and support life. They purify and renew the air supply; they remove gaseous pollutants from the air and indirectly reduce air pollution. They are vital mitigating agents for climate change. They retain water and prevent erosion and flooding. The list of benefits is very long.

Trees are the embodiment of life in all its realms: the point of union between heaven, earth and water. In most ancient religious imagery, the tree was believed to have an abundance of divine creative energy. In short, trees represent abundance in all its form.

The symbolic tree planting today symbolizes optimism and faith in the future.

Let me end here by another quote from Abrahalm
Lincoln.

I quote “He who plants a tree, plants a hope”. Unquote

Indeed small acts, when multiplied by millions, can transform the world.

I thank you all for your kind attention.

J.R.D