



THE STATE HOUSE NEWSLETTER

May 2017

“Seychelles is bigger than us all”

Coinciding with the month that celebrates World Press Freedom Day and the fundamental principles of press freedom, President Danny Faure held the second Presidential Press Conference on 15 May 2017.

President Faure continues to emphasise the critical role of the media and promote a transparent and open environment through quarterly Presidential Press Conferences. At the Press Conference, the President thanked all the journalists for attending and highlighted the essential role of the media in a democracy. He described the media as the “mouthpiece of the people” that holds the Executive accountable, and added that if investigative journalism reveals proof of malpractice in any form, the Government will take up the matter.

This was evidenced by a recent case reported in the paper of a foreigner working on an expired Gainful Occupation Permit. Following swift action on the part of the Government, the President confirmed that this individual left the country on Sunday 14 May 2017.

With attendance of over 11 media companies and 20 journalists, President Faure encouraged the local press to ask any questions he could answer in his capacity as President. Matters raised included cohabitation, the development of Police Bay, challenges in the Education sector, and his legacy. President Faure’s vision for Seychelles is one where the principles of transparency, accountability and good governance reign supreme, with strong institutions in place to protect human rights and dignity. He spoke about his efforts to implement these principles across the Ministries and ensure that individuals in positions of accountability accept their responsibilities.

President Faure was keen to stress that politics belongs in the National Assembly, and not in the Government, and that all his decisions are made



in the best interest of the country:

“I have been accused of talking too much with the Opposition, but they are in the majority in the National Assembly; so if I don’t speak to them how will Seychelles move forward? We need to break these bad habits. I receive everyone at State House – I don’t ask what party they support or what colour they are. As long as the matters we discuss make our flag fly high, that’s all that matters.”

The President admitted that it is too easy for Government officials to become complacent and forget the struggles many citizens face. As a result, he ensures he sees citizens every Tuesday afternoon and visits districts on a Friday whenever possible. Dialogue and discussion across all sectors of society has always been his motto. “We do not solve people’s problems by sitting at a desk all day,” insisted President Faure. “To serve the people, you have to walk in their shoes.”

The full video of President Faure’s second Press Conference is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VFLGdMtkm-Dw&t=26145>

CABINET DECISIONS

3rd May 2017

- The setting up of an Agency for the Coordination of Policy and Action on issues related to Drug Abuse was approved.
- Cabinet approved the adoption of a Public Finance Management Action Plan, based on a framework that will ensure financial accountability of public expenditure. This aims to strengthen financial discipline and accountability in the public sector.
- A moratorium on the importation of second-hand fishing vessels has been placed until a policy is finalised regarding the number and quality of fishing vessels in the local industry.
- Cabinet endorsed the national occupational safety and health policy, aimed at ensuring health and safety measures are met and enforced at workplaces.
- Cabinet members expressed sympathy for the families of those affected by tragic accidents at sea over the Labour Day weekend. Cabinet was advised about the existing regulations concerning the registration and licensing conditions for boats, especially those intended for carrying passengers, as well as the licensing of skippers. It was noted that basic regulations are frequently ignored, such as the need for life jackets. The marine police had prevented several vessels from proceeding on journeys with passengers over the Labour Day weekend, as the vessels did not meet safety requirements. Cabinet advised that the training and licensing of skippers be accelerated, and the registration and licensing conditions for vessels be properly enforced.

17th May 2017

- With effect from 18 June 2017, the Judiciary, the National Assembly, other constitutional bodies, and the Anticorruption Commission will have financial autonomy within an agreed framework, further strengthening their independence.
- Cabinet approved the National Strategic Planning Policy that will guide the development of sector plans in preparation for the wider National Development Plan.
- A cross-government approach to tendering for the cleaning of public places was approved. This new approach will ensure that small cleaning contractors have the possibility of getting contracts. Furthermore, small businesses/contractors will receive training to better manage their businesses. This decision is in line with the principle of a fairer distribution of wealth and the empowerment of the small business sector.
- Cabinet approved a proposal for Seychelles to have a successor programme with the IMF that would help the country consolidate its macro-economic policy objectives. The current Extended Fund Facility programme with the IMF comes to an end in June 2017.
- Cabinet has approved the review of the Dogs Control Act 1982 to allow for better management and control of dogs. The proposals have been published as a White Paper, with a deadline for public feedback by 30 June 2017.
- Cabinet approved the formalities for the introduction of a special pension for certain categories of public employees including: members of the nursing, medical and dental professions, the Defence Forces, the Police Force, teachers, prison officers, Fire and Rescue service officers, and enforcement officers of the NDEA.

31st May 2017

- Cabinet considered the findings of a research on the state of poverty in Seychelles and approved strategies for addressing emergent issues. Cabinet also approved for immediate action the recommendations of the task force on Corgate Estate.

- The Cabinet approved the feedback and recommendations from the white paper consultations on the Human Rights Commission Bill. The recommendations will be considered in the final drafting of the legislation by the Department of Legal Affairs.
- Further to President’s announcement in the State of the Nation Address, Cabinet has approved measures to ensure public access to beaches.
- Cabinet approved the implementation framework for the seed capital grant which was announced in the budget speech of 2017. Government will make available to eligible entrepreneurs a maximum of SCR50,000 to assist them in starting their business.
- Cabinet approved for the selling of Government shares in Nouvobanq and Development Bank of Seychelles. The procedure will be announced soon.
- Cabinet considered the Grand Police Citizens’ Initiative, and has decided that the parcel of land Number T575 should become a protected area. The Cabinet has agreed that the Government takes steps to engage with the relevant owners so that T575 is returned to the Government, and following this, declared a protected area.
- Cabinet approved for the formation of a National Information Sharing and Coordination Centre. This Centre will coordinate all maritime information for increased security and safety in the maritime space.

ACTIVITIES OF THE PRESIDENT

Labour Day Message

The President had a message on the occasion of Labour Day on 1 May, where the theme this year is “Annou travay pour en sel Sesel”.

This is in line with the National Theme, “Seselwa: En Sel Desten,” and allows all Seychellois to consider the many achievements so far, and focus on the future and the opportunities that lie ahead if we continue to work together.

In his message, the President called on all workers to renew their sense of dedication and professionalism in the service of others and to the Nation. Read the full message [here](#).



Six People Granted Citizenship



President Faure used his Presidential powers to grant Seychelles citizenship to six persons in accordance with Article 5(1) of the Amended Citizenship Act 1994, marking the first time a President has done so. A symbolic ceremony was held in their honour on 11 May 2017.

The six distinguished persons are Bishop James Richard Wong Yin Song, Sister Marie Alice Vivien, Father Landry Mukoko Maketa, Father Pierre Madiela, Father Louison Emerick Bissila and Father Guy Inkumene. The President described them as exemplary leaders and an inspiration to the people whose lives they touch in their communities each day.

Judge Renaud Sworn In as Justice of the Court of Appeal

Judge Bernardin Renaud was sworn in as the new Justice of the Court of Appeal at a ceremony held at State House on 18 May 2017, following recommendations made by the Constitutional Appointments Authority and consultation with the Leader of Opposition, Hon Wavel Ramkalawan.

Judge Renaud is one of the longest serving public officers, having joined the civil service in 1965. Prior to his appointment as Justice of Appeal, he was serving as a Judge of the Supreme Court since January 2004.



Meeting with the Board of CEPS

President Faure held his first meeting with the Chairperson and Members of the Board of the Citizens Engagement Platform Seychelles (CEPS) at State House on Thursday 18 May. His first meeting with the forum in 2017, a new Memorandum of Understanding between CEPS and the Government was presented to President Faure by the Chairman of CEPS. The MOU aims to strengthen collaboration between civil society organisations and the machinery of Government, and contribute towards decision making on important issues of national development.

The CEPS Board Members raised several issues of public concern to the President, such as the difficulties of low-income families, the issue of student discipline in schools, and urgent need for more active parenting. The promotion of volunteerism and importance of more responsible citizenship at all levels was also discussed. The CEPS Members also presented the President with a copy of its complementary proposals for Cap Ternav.



Meeting with Members of the Grand Police Citizens' Initiative

President Faure met with members of the Grand Police Citizens' Initiative on Thursday 18 May who presented him with a petition signed by almost 6000 citizens of Seychelles in advocacy for the conservation and protection of Police Bay in Takamaka.



In accepting the petition, the President commended the team for their act of citizenship, and the peaceful and positive manner in which they raised the issue with the Government. He stressed the importance of depoliticising the issue when so many citizens have objections. The President gave his commitment that the documents will be discussed in the next Cabinet meeting on 31 May 2017.

SITE VISITS

Port Glaud

President Faure reviewed the progress of numerous road and housing projects in the Port Glaud district on 12 May 2017, as part of his ongoing programme of community visits. Accompanied by community leaders and representatives of government agencies and services, President Faure had the chance to see the challenges faced by the district firsthand and speak to residents in the area.

The completed road project at the Beolière Milieu Road currently benefits over 15 families who have motor vehicle access to their homes. The decision was also taken to redevelop the current 12 units at the Forêt Noire low-cost housing project into a 25-unit housing estate.



Glacis



President Faure visited several residents in Glacis on Friday 26 May 2017, accompanied by community leaders and representatives of Government agencies. The Presidential Delegation called on families facing housing problems or in urgent need of relocation, and visited sites that require infrastructural development. This includes the provision of road access for citizens living in isolated areas.

Following the visit, a meeting at the Glacis Community Centre finalised an immediate course of action to be taken and flagged issues of priority. Timeframes for actions to be completed were also set.

Beau Vallon School

President Faure paid a surprise visit to the day-care centre, crèche, primary school and secondary school in the Beau Vallon district this morning. The President started his visit at Beau Vallon Day Care that looks after more than 50 toddlers before heading to Beau Vallon school. Stopping by classrooms, the President helped children in crèche with their learning exercises, and discussed aspirations and the importance of studying hard with students in secondary.

Following a tour of the school, he met with school management and the PTA to discuss the challenges being faced and ways forward.



DIPLOMACY

State Visit to Cuba

President Faure travelled to Cuba on a State Visit from 27 to 29 April 2017, at the invitation of the President of the Republic of Cuba, Mr Raúl Castro. Cuba and Seychelles enjoy long-standing bilateral cooperation, having established diplomatic relations almost 40 years ago on April 12, 1978. The two countries have maintained close collaboration in health, education, and environment, as well as in sports, cultural, economic, and social spheres.



President Faure's visit coincided with the opening of the first Embassy of Seychelles in Cuba on 26 April 2017, marking Seychelles' first resident diplomatic representation in the Latin American and Caribbean region. The Havana-based Embassy will serve as a bridge between Seychelles and the numerous island nations of the Caribbean region.

On Thursday 27 April 2017, President Faure laid a wreath to honour Cuban National Hero, Jose Martí, at the Memorial Monument in the Revolution Square. Following this, he met with Cuban National Assembly President, Esteban Lazo Hernández, where President Faure emphasised the great value both Seychelles and Cuba place on people centered development, despite their different historical contexts. In the evening, President Faure was received by President Castro at the Presidential Palace where the enhancement of the education and health sectors were the focus of discussions.

At the request of President Faure, President Castro agreed that the 15 Seychellois medical students in Cuba can pursue specialisation programmes immediately after graduation. This landmark agreement means that the medical students in Cuba will face no interruption in their studies, allowing Seychelles to be better endowed with much needed specialist doctors in a shorter time frame. President Faure also expressed his appreciation to President Castro for the support received from Cuba over the past three decades by sending doctors and specialists to Seychelles who provide high quality healthcare to Seychellois citizens.

Cuba has risen to global prominence with an innovative medical industry that offers cutting-edge treatment. In line with enhancing health cooperation, President Faure secured the support of Cuba in the implementation of a comprehensive programme for the treatment of diabetes, cancer, as well as increasing vaccination as part of the early childhood immunisation initiative in Seychelles. As two island nations affected by similar tropical communicable diseases and other health issues, President Faure also discussed the possibility of Cuba sharing effective researched health practices that can improve the Seychelles Public Health system.

You can read more about the results of the State Visit [here](#).



ACTIVITIES OF THE OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT

ICT Week

The Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), one of the portfolios of the Office of the Vice-President, recently hosted the 3rd edition of ICT Week. This has become an annual event, taking place around 17th May, which is dedicated as World Telecommunication & Information Society Day by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

Every year, ITU decides on a particular theme for the WTISD. This year the theme selected was 'Big Data for Big Impact', intended to bring focus and attention on the power of Big Data for development and to explore how to turn imperfect, complex, often unstructured data into actionable information in a development context.

In his message to commemorate the occasion, the Vice-President also sent a cautionary note to 'remind everyone of the dangers that exist in the realm of ICT. He stated that 'there is a need for developing security frameworks that protect the privacy of individuals without hampering life-saving uses of data'.

It is to be noted that the recent cyber-attacks that targeted a number of countries including their health services and businesses, drives home the message that there are individuals out there who will not hesitate to use the internet for unscrupulous purposes.

The following activities were featured in the ICT Week:

- Hour of Code launch
- Microsoft official launch of Office 365 in Seychelles
- Hackathon Start
- ICT Theme Debate
- Public WiFi Internet Access Service Launch
- Laptop Fair
- WebCup 2017 Competition

In his keynote address during the official launching ceremony, the Vice-President revealed that Seychelles is one of the African countries with the highest number of Internet and Facebook users per 100 inhabitants, which shows that we are also contributing our fair share of digital data despite our small population.



DICT's special guests for the ICT Week were members of a small delegation representing Microsoft, who were present throughout the week to provide support to the local DICT team and to launch Microsoft Office 365. The week also saw the launching of the Vehicle Testing Station's e-service for online reservation of vehicle tests as well as the public Wi-Fi service, Linksey.

High Level Committee on Prison Reform

The members of the High Level Committee on Prison Reform & Rehabilitation were on site at the Montagne Posée prison to conduct a familiarisation visit following their regular meeting on 20th April 2017. They toured the administrative offices as well as the living quarters of both inmates and staff.

Discussions focused on the de-commissioning of the Marie-Louise prison, the status of the secured incarcerated unit for hardened convicts and the prison reform plan being proposed by the Superintendent of Prisons.



During the course of the meeting, the committee met with Mr Bill Cullen, a representative of the UNODC who is on a three-week working visit to the Seychelles. Its mission is to assist with the revision of the Prison Act and the strategic plan amongst other things.

The High Level Committee which is chaired by the Vice-President, also visited the island of Coetivy where incarceration facilities are also present.

SPOTLIGHT

Every edition the State House Newsletter aims to give attention to a particular individual or cause whose work or experiences are exemplary. In this month's Spotlight we focus on Clifford J Mondon, known for his incredible charitable work with Make A Child Smile.

Clifford Mondon grew up in Anse Aux Pins with his parents and two siblings. Passionate about school and the church, Clifford looks back on his childhood fondly. His father supported the family with a modest income. "Despite not being rich materialistically we were rich in love as a family, and we were always happy with what we had. I thank my parents for instilling discipline in me and turning me into who I am today," he remarks.

Clifford's love to do charity work began 3 years ago when he joined a Religious group called *Zezi Vre Zonm* and rediscovered Jesus. Since then, he says that Jesus has been in charge of his life, appearing in a dream and calling on Clifford to follow Him. "Jesus, Mother Teresa, and my beautiful daughter Grace inspires me to do what I do," he says.

Make A Child Smile started in December 2016 when Clifford was watching 'Office Choir'. He noticed that out of the 10 finalists, only 1 child could be assisted. Noting the injustice, he chose to act.



The next day, he posted a request for the donation of toys and other gifts to 13 disabled children on Facebook. The post went viral. Within 4 days, Clifford had collected, wrapped, and labelled a large selection of toys for the children. "On Sunday 18 December, a group of 9 people went around Mahe to deliver the presents to the children. Although it was raining, this did not deter us and we brought a big smile to the faces of these children. We also prayed with them, and I noticed that it was as if we were bringing a ray of light into their life: hope that people still cared for their families and that they are not forgotten," remembers Clifford.



THE MOST BEAUTIFUL THING IN THE WORLD IS TO SEE A CHILD SMILE AND KNOW THAT YOU ARE THE REASON BEHIND THAT SMILE.

Realising the power of social media to connect people and raise public awareness, Clifford started to use Facebook to gather donations for children in need. Word spread quickly, through the newspaper, radio, and television. Since December 2016, Clifford has helped over 5 children with expensive but life-changing surgeries or equipment. Donations come from local businesses, corporate companies, the Children's Special Fund based in the Office of the President, and ordinary individuals. "Feedback and support has been tremendous," says Clifford.

"Make A Child Smile has touched so many hearts and will surely change many lives in the future. Someone told me that she had lost hope in humanity, but that the work of this foundation has given her hope that there are still many good people on this Earth."

One of the biggest and most well-known achievements of Make A Child Smile was the collection **SCR319,000 in just 5 days** to fund a surgery for Aurria Barbe, a 4 year old born blind, to regain her eyesight. "I went to mass at the Cathedral Of the Immaculate Conception on Sunday 12 March and launched an appeal to help Aurria Barbe. The mass was live on SBC Radio. 5 days later, we had all the money for her surgery. Nobody thought this was possible but God made it happen," says Clifford.

"The biggest joy I get from charity work is when I see the smile and happiness on other people's faces, and knowing that whatever I did for that person was not for myself but for God, my gift to Him for having blessed me with a beautiful disabled daughter, a wonderful family, and everything else I have in life," marks Clifford. "My hope for Make A Child Smile is for it to continue to grow, have more impact on more people and be able to save and change the lives of many, many children. The end objective is to make as many children as possible smile."

Clifford wakes up at 0430 every morning, thanks God for another blessed day, and does his daily prayers, Gospel reading, and Bible study on his phone on the bus on the way to work. He hopes to increase the impact of his charitable efforts:

"I have noticed that so many parents with disabled children or children with chronic illnesses find themselves alone and hopeless at times, with nobody to talk to or share their troubles with. In the next few weeks I will be launching a family support group where these parents can all come together and discuss any issues, find solutions, and give comfort and support. This is so that these parents will know they are not alone, that people care, and that hope is not lost. I've also been approached by parents with healthy living children asking if they can join as they wish to give their support. Certainly, yes, the group will be open to anyone who wishes to share their encouragement with these parents."

All donations made to *Make A Child Smile* are CSR-deductible. If you would like to change lives, one child and one smile at a time, contact Clifford J Mondon at 2814000.

