

Ministry of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives (SMEs Division)

NEWSLETTER

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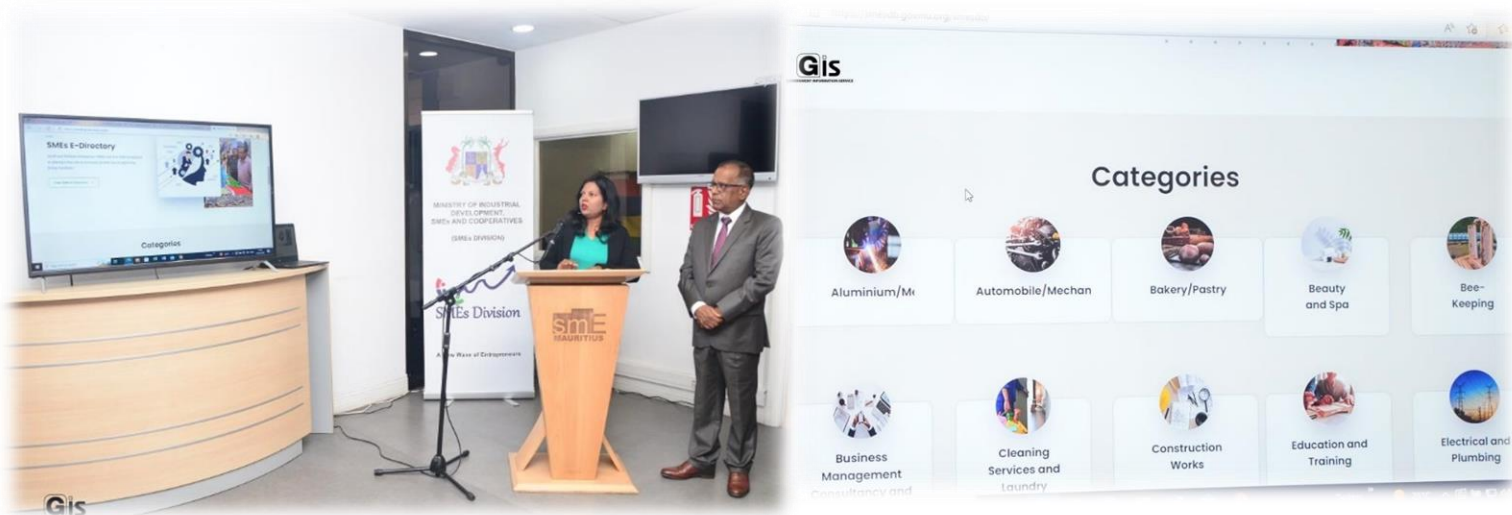
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“Keeping a business going is often a daunting task. Government is maximizing efforts to create an environment for SMEs to prosper because we believe in their capacity of being key drivers of economic growth”

Hon. Soomilduth Bholah



Launching of SME e-Directory



VITAL MARKETING TOOL

The SME e-Directory is an initiative of the SMEs Division to bring SMEs on an online platform as a way of promotion and is a practical tool for ventilation of information on SMEs.

The Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives, Hon. Soomilduth Bholah, officially launched the SMEs e-Directory, on Tuesday 27 September 2022, at the SME Registration Unit in Port Louis. In his address, he emphasised that the e-Directory is a vital marketing tool that increases the visibility of 5,351 SMEs and enables them to obtain orders from individuals as well as the private sector and Government bodies.

This e-Directory has been conceptualised in categories of activities and on a district wise basis. Contact details, business name, addresses, telephone numbers, location, contact information and type of service or products the business provides are available on the site.

The e-Directory is a laudable milestone in the process of business transformation of the Public Service. It provides an easy-to-access platform for business facilitation to SMEs free of charge. It is now accessible to the public and can be viewed on the link <https://smesdb.govmu.org> and on the Ministry's website.

Graduate students can also have access to this platform and can carry out surveys on the SME sector for their dissertation or any other research works.



3rd Joint Committee Meeting on MSMEs

M.O.U BETWEEN MAURITIUS AND INDIA

The Hon. S. Bholah, Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives and his delegation comprising Mr. J. D. P. Labonne, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Mr. R. Rampersad, CEO of SME Mauritius Ltd, and Mr. S. Coonjobeeharry, Director of the National Cooperative College, attended the 3rd Joint Committee on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises between Mauritius and India in India on 25 August 2022.



The Ministry signed two Memoranda of Understanding with a view to enhance training and capacity building of SME Mauritius Ltd and local SMEs as follows –

- i. Memorandum of Understanding between SME Mauritius Ltd and the Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII); and
- ii. Memorandum of Understanding between SME Mauritius Ltd and National Institute For Micro, Small And Medium Enterprises (NIMSME) of India.



Mission to Rodrigues

REFURBISHED BUILDING OF SME MAURITIUS LTD IN MALABAR

The Hon. Minister led a five-member delegation comprising representatives of the Ministry and SME Mauritius Ltd to Rodrigues Island from 24 to 26 April 2022. The Headquarters of SME Mauritius Ltd at Malabar was inaugurated on Monday 25 April 2022. An amount of Rs 4.7 million was invested in the renovation of the Headquarters. The refurbished building would enable Rodriguan entrepreneurs to benefit from the same services and logistics as their Mauritian counterparts as enumerated below:

- (i) incubator with new technologies and access to internet;
- (ii) meeting space for Rodriguan entrepreneurs and clients;
- (iii) four (4) new office space for administrative staff;
- (iv) a training room with maximum capacity of 60 persons;
- (v) a training room dedicated to handicrafts and textiles;
- (vi) a training room dedicated to culinary and agro processing courses;
- (vii) a training room dedicated to the manufacture of leather products; and
- (viii) an open space for entrepreneurs dedicated for networking purposes.



SME Registration certificates and certificates on aquaponics and vanilla and pitaya cultivation dispensed by SME Mauritius Ltd were also awarded to entrepreneurs.

A courtesy call on the Chief Commissioner was paid by the Hon. Minister and the delegation wherein the role and presence of SME Mauritius Ltd in Rodrigues as a service provider to SMEs was highlighted. Also, the need for SMEs to further enhance the quality of their products and services, promotion of manufacturing/consumption of local products especially in the agri-food sector and technological and technical exchanges between Mauritius and Rodrigues were discussed.



COMESA RECAMP Project

NATIONAL LEATHER VALUE CHAIN STRATEGY

As part of its objective to develop new sectors and opportunities for SMEs to tap into, a National Leather Value Chain Strategy was commissioned by the SMEs Division in 2018. The Strategy was developed by the African Leather and Leather Products Institute. The study had concluded that it is imperative that Mauritius addresses the leather value chain so as to avail of consistent good quality hides and skins, and focuses on the identification of potential markets/buyers for export of Mauritian leather and leather-related products at regional and international levels.



In this context and following a call for proposal, a project the SMEs Division had submitted to COMESA's Regional Enterprise Competitiveness Access to Markets Programme with a view to securing "Technical assistance to further enhance the development of the leather value chain in Mauritius" was favourably considered. Funding to the tune of EURO 116,199 has been made available for the project.

The SMEs Division is seeking to enlist the assistance of Consultant(s) tasked to identify international suppliers within the African continent from which Mauritius can source good quality raw hides and skins, and to identify potential markets worldwide, including in Africa, for the export of Mauritian leather and leather-related products.

An Invitation to Bid launched in April 2022 was, unfortunately, unsuccessful as bid(s) received were not responsive. The Invitation to Bid has been re-launched on 10 October 2022.

PAGE Report on Greening the SMEs

IMPROVING SME ACCESS TO GREEN FINANCE IN MAURITIUS

The Report was undertaken under the auspices of the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE) and the United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative.

The Report has concluded that specific barriers linked to insufficient green finance for SMEs include:

- Knowledge barriers that hinder the integration of green financing as SMEs' owners in Mauritius lack adequate awareness on green financing and executing green projects;
- Financial barriers that hinder SMEs from taking up green business projects due to larger initial capital costs, risk of investing in green SMEs and unfavourable financing terms;
- Regulation and policies on green finance are often inadequate and do not cater to the specific SME needs; and
- Available incentives and products often ignore the life stages of SMEs, especially start-ups and are thus not tailored to their specific investment needs.



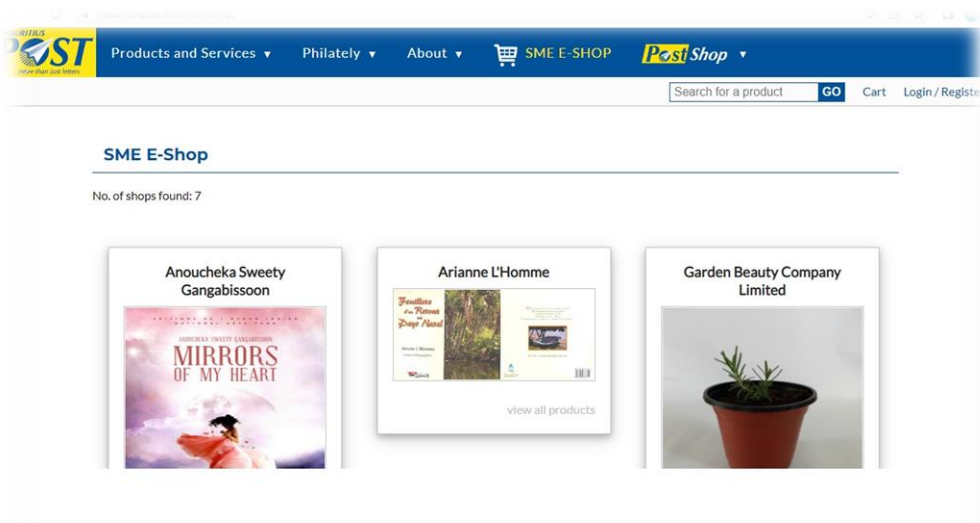
The Report also has proposed several actions to scale up green finance for SMEs and has further made various recommendations to improve the integration of green finance for SMEs in Mauritius.

The SMEs Division will be holding consultative meetings with concerned stakeholders over the implementation of the recommendations made in the Report.

MOU on e-Commerce with Mauritius Post Ltd

MARKETING PLATFORM FOR SMEs

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed on 29 July 2021 between the SMEs Division and the Mauritius Post Ltd with the aim to providing SMEs a secure E-commerce platform to market their products locally, regionally and internationally. Under the MoU, registered with the SMEs Division may benefit from preferential tariffs to four solutions of marketing offered by the MPL.



In this context, a guideline to facilitate SMEs to adopt the solutions offered by the MPL has been worked out by the Ministry. Following amendments brought to the SME Act 2017, the guideline is being reviewed to integrate Mid-Market Enterprises. Same would be uploaded on the website of the Ministry shortly.

Diagnostic Study of the Informal Sector

FACILITATE THE TRANSITION FROM INFORMAL TO FORMAL SECTOR

A diagnostic study on the informal sector in Mauritius was commissioned with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The study was conducted with the aim of facilitating transition from informal to formal sector.

The Consultant has submitted the final report. The SMEs Division is liaising with concerned stakeholders over the recommendations made in the report.



Study on Aromatherapy, Nutraceutical and Stevia

CREATING BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

The objective of the study is to assess the potential to develop Aromatherapy, Nutraceutical and Stevia sub-sectors for creating business opportunities for SMEs and Cooperatives in the Republic of Mauritius. The purpose of the study is to, among others:



- Contribute to the emergence of new business opportunities for SMEs and cooperatives; and
- Complement the import substitutions strategy and diversification of production.

Invitations to Bid were launched in December 2021 and July 2022 were, unfortunately, unsuccessful as bid(s) received were not responsive. The Invitation to Bid has been re-launched on 10 November 2022.

Setting Up of Mini Fruit Processing Plants

TRANSFORMATION OF FRUITS INTO VALUE ADDITION PRODUCTS

Surpluses of locally available fruits can be transformed by SMEs into value addition products such as juice, jam, syrup or other fruit-based products, through appropriate use of technologies and machineries.

The SMEs Division had invited Expressions of Interest from SMEs and Cooperative Societies for the setting up of mini fruit processing plants. Under the scheme, the SMEs Division will provide to a maximum of four (4) selected SMEs/Cooperative Societies, a financial grant of 50 percent (up to a maximum grant of Rs One Million), to cover the cost of equipment and machinery procured to set up the Plant.

Expressions of Interests have been re-launched on 04 October 2022 after two Expression of Interests launched in November 2021 and May 2022 were, unfortunately, not successful for technical reasons and due to unresponsive bids.



Mid-Term Review of 10-Year SME Master Plan

RESHAPE THE SME LANDSCAPE

The 10-Year SME Master Plan was launched in 2017. Five years down, a Mid-Term review of the 10-Year Master Plan is necessary to quantify the progress made, to identify bottlenecks hindering smooth implementation and to actualize the recommendations in-tune with new market realities as well as new Government priorities.

The Mid-Term review provides an insight of the progress made, the implementation challenges faced by key stakeholders and actualised recommendations to reach three main targets by 2026.

The Mid-Term review was conducted over a period of 8 months comprising 3 phases, namely:

1. Information gathering and compilation;
2. Consultative meetings; and
3. Analysis



Training at National Institute of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (NIMSME) of India

TRAINING PROGRAM ON SME FINANCING

To enhance the knowledge about the latest developments in SME financing, two Officers were nominated to attend an executive training program on “SME Financing – Approaches & Strategies” at the National Institute for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise of India from 18th July to 26th August 2022.

The program was designed to help comprehend the deeper insights on issues related to financing of SMEs besides sharing experiences with executives from 17 countries.

African Regional Labour Administration Centre (ARLAC) Tripartite Workshop

TRAINING PROGRAM ON SME FINANCING

Mr. Muhammad Ziyaad MADARBOKUS, Assistant Permanent Secretary, participated in the African Regional Labour Administration Centre (ARLAC) Tripartite Workshop on a Conducive Environment For Sustainable Enterprises, which was held from 25 to 29 July 2022 in Harare, Zimbabwe.

The purpose of this specific activity was aimed at further improving the competencies of participants for better analysis, design and implementation of programmes, which are aimed at promoting sustainable enterprises as generators of employment and catalysts for innovation and decent work and, the linking of such programmes to key regional and global priorities.

Particular emphasis was laid on micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as cooperatives and the social and solidarity economy, in order to generate decent work, productive employment and improved living standards for all.

FASHION SHOW BY SME MAURITIUS LTD

The annual fashion show, organised by SME Mauritius to showcase the talent and know-how of trainees imparted through different training programmes, was held on 26 May 2022 at Mont Ida. The theme retained was "Leather A 360° View".





Hon. Soomilduth Bholah recalled that a Design Centre for leather products has been set up at SME Mauritius in Coromandel to help boost the local leather industry through various trainings and latest technologies. He called on entrepreneurs to launch themselves in the leather industry, being a lucrative one, and added that it can bring considerable gains to the country.



International MSME Day 2022

A series of activities to mark the International Day of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) organised by the SME Mauritius Ltd, kicked off on 27 June 2022, at the Côte d'Or National Sports Complex, in Côte d'Or. A SME Entrepreneur Village, comprising an exhibition of products crafted by trainees and entrepreneurs registered with SME Mauritius Ltd, and stalls providing advice and guides about entrepreneurship, were also launched on that occasion.

Hon. Bholah recalled that the theme for International MSME Day 2022, "Resilience and Rebuilding: MSMEs for Sustainable Development", has as objective to salute entrepreneurs who faced several challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia/Ukraine war and climate change but still managed to remain important contributors to job creation and the economic development of the country.



Salon des PME at Flacq and Rose Belle

SME Mauritius Ltd organised SME fairs at Flacq in August 2022 and at Rose Belle in October 2022. The objective of the SME fairs was to enhance the visibility of locally manufactured products and help entrepreneurs maintain commercial relations with existing customers as well as to attract new customers.



SMEs and Cooperatives Market Fair at Quatre Bornes

Put on hold for the past two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, regional market fairs for SMEs and cooperatives have resumed after ease of restrictions. Presently SMEs and cooperative market fairs are being held at Quatre Bornes Market on a monthly basis (first and third Mondays of the month) and some 100 cooperative societies and SMEs participate in the Fair.



Certificate Award Ceremony – My Business Program

A third batch of three Prison Officers and 21 inmates, who have successfully completed the 'My Business Programme', received their certificate at the Prison Training School in Beau Bassin on 22 September 2022. This entrepreneurship training initiative offered by SME Mauritius, in the context of the Social Reinsertion and Inclusion Programme for detainees, aims at enabling inmates to set up their own businesses once they are released.

In his address, Minister Bholah highlighted that the training provided to inmates a positive and optimistic way to think about the future, and encouraged them to work hard to achieve their goal. This training programme, he emphasised, is part of various efforts to combat recidivism, as the skills learnt by the inmates will help them set up their business and not rely on post-release employment, which often is difficult to get after incarceration.



Outreach Program – Training in Creative Jewellery

Hon. Soomilduth Bholah attended the Certificate Award Ceremony and exhibition of creative jewellery in the context of Global Entrepreneurship Week organized by SME Mauritius Ltd on 16th November 2022 at Trou d'Eau Douce. This event is under the outreach programme organised regularly by SME Mauritius Ltd to bring the latest innovative craft and skill training to villages. It helps create new businesses and promotes an entrepreneurial culture among the participants.



Change in posting at the Ministry

In July 2022

Mrs. M. A. J. Jaunbocus, Permanent Secretary, posted to Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education and Science and Technology

Mr. R. K. Bunjun, Acting Permanent Secretary from the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping posted to this Ministry.

In September 2022

Mr. P. Ramkhelawon, Manager Human Resources, posted to the Ministry of Health and Wellness

Mr. A. S. Bheekhoo, Manager Human Resources, from the Ministry of Health and Wellness, posted to this Ministry.

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