

**COCKTAIL EVENT FOR THE PREMIER  
OF TOYOTA PRIUS  
LE SUFFREN HOTEL & MARINA  
PORT LOUIS**

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Hon Speaker of the National Assembly,  
Colleague Ministers,  
The Lord Mayor,  
Former Vice President of the Republic,  
Directors of Toyota (Mauritius),  
Distinguished Guests,

I am always delighted to launch a new car – you all know my passion for cars and I am particularly delighted to be here to-night for the launching of the Toyota Prius, which I believe is the first mass-produced hybrid vehicle in the world. It is also reckoned to be one of the least carbon dioxide-emitting vehicles and this is in line with my vision of Maurice Ile Durable.

The Maurice Ile Durable project is the adoption of a new way of life in our drive to protect our environment and to encourage more efficient use of energy, a special measure regarding lower taxes on hybrid vehicles was announced in the 2008/2009 Budget. The rates of excise duties, Registration fees and road taxes were reduced by half for these hybrid vehicles as from 1st July 2008. In addition, customs duty has been abolished on all tyres with energy saving and emissions reducing certification. They are therefore more cost-effective than traditional petroleum-fuelled vehicles.

The Maurice Ile Durable project reaches almost all of our endeavours, at both micro and macro levels. It encompasses our daily activities ranging from garbage disposal to more responsible behaviour towards nature. It is about relinquishing carefree attitude towards the use of resources and acting as custodians of the environment for transmission to future generations. It is about building viable industries using clean technology.

At a time of climatic change, depletion of resources and economic recession, many countries are indeed realizing that going green is part of smart growth strategies. It is our energy policies and our choice of technologies that will indeed drive economic revitalization.

Over reliance on fossil fuels places a heavy burden on our economy and strains our resilient capacity. The use of reliable, clean and affordable energy will reduce our economic vulnerability. Investment in technologies which are less carbon intensive than fossil fuel, is not merely an economic option, it is an urgent necessity for the sustainable development of our island.

While we will not compromise on our GDP growth, my Government aims to provide opportunities to those who develop and deliver green and low carbon products and services.

services.

One of the main sources of air pollution in our country remains vehicle emissions. Black smoke emission, from diesel-driven vehicles, remains a visual nuisance. This problem has been aggravated with the rapid increase in the number of vehicles over the last few decades.

By the end of last year, there were 351,406 vehicles registered at the National Transport Authority. Nearly fifty percent of our total energy consumption goes to the transport sector, which contributes 25% of total emissions of carbon dioxide, the major greenhouse gas, in the atmosphere.

We are fully conscious that current patterns of transportation are not sustainable and may compound both environmental and health problems.

With a view to reducing traffic flow, my Government is investing massively in new roads and bridges, maintenance, upgrading and rehabilitation of existing networks. The Terre Rouge-Verdun-Trianon link roads, the new access road to Réduit triangle, the Macondé Bridge and the Phoenix-Beaux Songes link road are some of the major projects.

Government has taken a series of measures to improve the quality of our ambient air, environment and human health mainly through the introduction of unleaded petrol. More recently my Government has also approved the reduction of sulphur content in diesel from 2,500 parts per million to only 500 parts per million. This will reduce black smoke emissions from diesel vehicles.

A special loan is available at the Development Bank of Mauritius to those who wish to install Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) kits in their vehicles.

Customs duty on all tyres with energy saving and emission reducing certification have been abolished.

A bus modernization programme will be launched to enable bus operators to renew their fleet with new generation buses which are safer, more comfortable and more environmentally-friendly.

I am pleased to note that the private sector is attuned to the fact that environmental good practice is also about business efficiency. More and more companies are identifying and carrying out projects to help Mauritius move towards a low carbon economy. I believe that the more an organization goes green, the more it reflects on its brand image and the better it is for its business success.

We welcome the contribution of each and every citizen to the national endeavour of making Mauritius a sustainable island. Our competitive edge and our resilience will be consolidated through the promotion of sustainable development projects.

The decision of Toyota Limited to commercialise hybrid vehicles fits in our endeavour to shift to a low carbon culture.

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I hope that all of us are committed to achieving greater energy efficiency and that we attempt to assemble our aims into the Maurice Ile Durable project. There is indeed a synergy gradually taking shape around this project.

The introduction in Mauritius of this hybrid car is in line with our determination to revisit our habits and conventions.

I wish to express my appreciation for the pioneering spirit and entrepreneurial flair of the Issur family. "Prius", I understand, means "prior". "Prius" is the predecessor of other cars to come. I am confident that your company will continue to venture in other innovative projects and that we will have, inevitably, more such occasions to celebrate your business acumen.

At the same time, I wish to point out that such an initiative would not have been possible today if the local climate was not conducive to business. As a responsible Government, we have undertaken a complete reform of our economy over the past three and a half years and as a result our country is faring rather well despite the unparalleled global economic recession.

This unprecedented recession calls for innovative solutions and bold entrepreneurial skills from those who are able to view the present challenges as opportunities. The pertinent remark of AmartyaSen, which I quoted, at the last session of the National Assembly, is well worth considering.

I quote:

'A crisis not only represents an immediate challenge that has to be faced. It also provides an opportunity to address long-term problems when people are willing to reconsider conventions.'

Unquote.

I reiterate my congratulations to Toyota Mauritius for its technology consciousness and wish it every success. I hope our citizens will make good use of this environment-friendly vehicle.

I thank you for your attention.

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