

## MAURITIUS

### A competitive, well-diversified and broad-based economy

One of the least developed countries in Africa at its independence in 1968, Mauritius has risen to be one of the continent's wealthiest and is now home to thriving industries

ecognized around the world as a leading tourism destination, Mauritius is much more than a tropical paradise in the Indian Ocean. Over the years, the island nation has demonstrated an openness to innovation and economic diversification, transforming from a centuries-old trading post into one of the wealthiest countries in Africa.

In 1968 when it gained its independence from the UK, the archipelago was reliant on its sugar industry. Now, it boasts a broad-based competitive economy. Financial services are the largest contributor to that economy, generating around 14% of the country's gross domestic product. Tourism is close behind, with Mauritius having welcomed nearly 1.4 million visitors in 2024. Other strong industries include textiles, fishing, information and communication technologies, education, real estate, business process outsourcing and, increasingly, pharmaceuticals and renewable energy.

This diversity has made the economy resilient. Although the country's real GDP contracted during the COVID-19 pandemic, the rebound was quick - it expanded by 5.6% in 2023 and Statistics Mauritius is forecasting a further 5.1% for 2024, based on the economy's performance in the first nine months of the year. The International Monetary Fund predicts that it will continue growing by about 3.5% a year over the medium term, which is in line with the average annual rise it recorded between 2001 and the pandemic. The international body also calculates that the country's 1.3-million-strong population enjoyed a GDP per capita of \$12,600 in 2024, the second-highest level in Africa after the Seychelles.

Mauritius has capitalized on its advantages to cultivate this successful economy. Firstly, it has strategic location at the crossroads of Africa, Europe, the Middle East and Asia, and has amassed free trade agreements that cover nearly 70% of the global population. That market access has made the country an excellent base for export-centric manufacturing and service businesses

Secondly, Mauritius is one of most developed and stable countries in Africa, which has allowed it to position itself as a secure gateway for investment into the rest of the fast-growing continent. The foundation of the nation's stability is its strong multi-party democracy. Governmental elections are held every five years, with the most recent taking place in November 2024. As a result of that poll, Navin Ramgoolam has been given a clear mandate to lead the country as Prime Minister for the fourth, non-consecutive, time.

Not only is Mauritius politically and socially stable, so is its business environment. Public institutions are robust, as is the nation's legal system. Furthermore, successive governments have modernized regulations and private sector investment policies to adjust to shifts in the global economy. Investing in infrastructure, healthcare and education has also been a priority for all governments. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's 2024 Invest-



Mauritius' stunning ocean and inland natural environments have made it a renowned tourism destination

ment Policy Review, "Changes to Mauritius' domestic framework and other investment climate improvements over the years have made it one of the world's most business-friendly jurisdictions."

#### Dynamic financial hub

Mauritius' flourishing financial services sector is a prime example of the country's forward-thinking approach to economic development. Around 35 years ago, the government launched a strategy aimed at turning this industry into a new pillar of the economy. Thanks to reforms introduced over the following decades, Mauritius is now a premier international financial center for investors seeking security, transparency and fiscal efficiency.

Commenting on the sector's transformation, Thierry Hebraud, CEO of Mauritius Commercial Bank, a leading local banking institution, says: "The decision to position Mauritius as a financial center was visionary. Today, Mauritius is a key international financial center in Africa, alongside Dubai. Mauritius has built a complete ecosystem around financial services — not just banking, but legal, tax advisory and management services. Initially focused on trade with India, it has evolved into a major gateway for Africa. Mauritius remains a trusted financial hub, with a solid investment-grade rating and a comprehensive financial sector that supports growth in Africa."

Legislations and regulations for the sector are constantly reviewed and augmented to include

innovative products and services, enabling it to adapt quickly to market demands. This agility has put the country at the forefront of digital innovation in financial services. With the assistance of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the authorities are now implementing a plan to make the nation a regional platform for fintech. Mauritius was an early mover in this area and its business and regulatory frameworks

**Changes to Mauritius'** domestic framework and other investment climate improvements over the years have made it one of the world's most business-friendly jurisdictions.

covering fintech have been revamped in recent vears. Among other initiatives, the central bank has launched an innovation hub that is fostering the development of cutting-edge solutions for the financial, banking and regulatory sectors.

Mauritius is a leader in sustainable financing too. In 2021, its Financial Services Commission implemented a green bond framework for private issuers, while the central bank issued a sustainable framework for sovereign bonds and opened

a Climate Change Center. The center is focused on integrating climate-related and environmental financial risks into the bank's regulatory, supervisory and monetary policies, and supporting the wider development of sustainable finance.

Mauritius financial services sector and the rest of its diverse economy are attracting an increasing number of investors. In the first nine months of 2024, total foreign direct investment inflows amounted to \$534 million, 7% more than over the same period in 2023. Investment from the US rose 37% year-on-year to reach \$15 million.

In 2024, US Ambassador to Mauritius Henry Jardine gave a speech at a high-level US business summit in the African nation in which he revealed why he was optimistic that the two countries' economic ties will continue to grow. "Mauritius has all the conditions for cultivating successful business endeavors. Today, more than 100 American companies and brands currently are invested or have a local presence in Mauritius. These companies are leaders across sectors, including financial services, telecommunications, information technology, logistics, food processing, fishing, clothing, education and consumer goods."

Jardine concluded his speech by asserting that "more U.S. companies will see Mauritius as the golden opportunity it is — both in terms of business expansion, and high quality of living, economic prosperity, and its strong social and democratic foundations."

### The beginning of a new era for the island nation

Ramgoolam's election as Prime Minister and his vision for the future reinforce Mauritius' status as a beacon of stability and economic diversifiatio

'n November 2024, Mauritians headed to the polls to elect a government for the 12th time since the democratic nation gained its independence. The result was a convincing victory for a coalition of opposition parties, Alliance of Change (ADC), which is headed by Navin Ramgoolam. "The court of the people has delivered its verdict and a new Mauritius awakes," proclaimed Ramgoolam once it had been confirmed that he would become the country's next Prime Minister.

The new government plans to introduce initiatives that aim to turn the country into a center of excellence for research and development in strategic areas like the digital and ocean economies.

An estimated 80% of the population voted, with ADC securing 62.6% of their ballots and 60 of the 62 electable seats in the National Assembly. In line with the country's constitution, the impartial Electoral Supervisory Commission can allocate a further eight seats to losing parties, thereby ensuring all citizens are represented.

Despite the nation's strong post-COVID economic growth levels, rising cost of living was a major element in the previous government's defeat. The year-on-year headline inflation rate had fallen to 2.9% by December 2024, but it averaged 7% during 2023, driven by increasing global commodity prices and depreciation of the Mauritian currency.

Another factor was concern that governance standards had started to slip. Mauritius ranks second in Africa in the Ibrahim index of good governance, however a scandal in the lead up to the election demonstrated that transparency and accountability could be improved. This saw some politicians' telephone calls being leaked online, which the then-government reacted to by temporarily blocking all access to social media, a decision that was punished by the elec-

In common with Mauritius' previous elections, the 2024 ballot was free, fair, peaceful and well organized, according to International Electoral Observation Mission observers. The transfer of power from the old to the new administration was also smooth.

Although Mauritius has a new government, it is being led by experience. Ramgoolam served as Prime Minister between 1995 and 2000, as well as from 2005 to 2014, and he is widely credited with having introduced many



**Navin Ramgoolam** 

of the reforms to the country's business environment that have made Mauritius a gateway to Africa for investors. Those credentials will reassure international investors that the nation will remain a business-friendly beacon of stability on the continent.

Furthermore, the Mauritian economy will continue to diversify under Ramgoolam's oversight. His goal is to create a new economic model for the nation by launching reforms, investment incentives and other measures that can help make Mauritius a hub for high-tech and sustainable sectors. These include the green economy and renewable energies, the blue economy, advanced technologies, ecotourism and fintech.

Ramgoolam's strategy for development is also focused on consolidating and modernizing established industries, such as agriculture, fishing, textiles and financial services. In addition. the new government plans to introduce initiatives that can turn the country into a center of excellence for research and development in strategic areas like the digital and ocean economies, pharmaceuticals and agribusiness.

However, the Prime Minister believes his first job in office is to get the current economy "back on track," he said in an address to the nation in January. "2025 will be a year of hope and reconstruction."

Challenges his administration is now addressing include reducing the cost of living by lowering the price consumers pay on some core goods, bolstering governance mechanisms and their transparency, and improving financial management systems. Ramgoolam considers the latter to be so important that he has appointed himself as Minister of Finance and Dr. Rama Krishna Sithanen as Governor of the central bank.

Sithanen previously served as the country's Minister of Finance from 1991 to 1995 and 2005 to 2010, and his financial reforms during those terms were instrumental in establishing Mauritius as an international financial services center and making it a leading platform for investors in the continent. Some of the veteran economist's initial priorities are to stabilize the national currency, reduce public debt and implement a new Fiscal Responsibility Act.

US Ambassador to Mauritius Henry Jardine was among the first foreign dignitaries to reach out to Ramgoolam after his win. "I extend warm congratulations to the newly elected government of Mauritius and to all Mauritians for their dedication to the democratic process," he said in a statement. "Together, we can continue building on the strong foundation of cooperation and friendship between our two nations."

#### TOP TEN REASONS TO INVEST IN MAURITIUS



A strategic location between Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Europe



Investment opportunities in over 15 sectors



Mauritius is currently part of 10 free trade agreements



1st in Africa and 13th in the world — World Bank's Ease of Doing Business



2nd in Africa and 23rd in the world — Ibrahim Index of African Governance



A well-educated population, trilingual in English, French and the native Creole



A wide network of **54 Double Taxation Avoidance** Agreements



Fully compliant with the Financial Action Task Force

(FATF) recommendations



15% corporate income tax and free repatriation of profits, dividends and capita



A vast network of 46 Investment Promotion and **Protection Agreements** 

## A key gateway for capital into Africa

TDB Group is facilitating cross-border banking and investment in Africa due to an attractive investment climate in Mauritius

specialized wholesale bank and a leading African regional development finance institution, the Trade ■and Development Bank (TDB) Group has had strong ties to Mauritius since opening one of its principal offices in the country. Since then, it has supported the financial sector and various projects that have significantly contributed to the island's economic development and

Forming a strong partnership with the financial community in Mauritius and collaborating closely with Mauritian banks, the country plays a key role in the operations of TDB Group. "Mauritius is a success story in Africa, offering an attractive investment climate and a strong brand that enhances our global institutional offerings," explains Admassu Tadesse, Group President and Managing Director of the TDB Group. "As an investment-grade jurisdiction, it aligns perfectly with our investment-grade status, reinforcing our credit strength. Mauritius serves as a key gateway for capital into Africa, with its IFC providing a robust platform that complements our role as an African multilateral financial institution

"Co-financing and co-investing are central to our strategy, and Mauritius' capacity as a financial hub is instrumental. The success of Mauritius has not only benefited us from a platform perspective but also through significant Mauritian investment in our special purpose funds. The country's commitment to high standards of governance and transparency further strengthens our operations here."

By leveraging Mauritius' strategic position as a financial hub to facilitate cross-border banking and investment in Africa, TDB Group has been able to grow substantially. While trade financing solutions remain at the core of the business, TDB Group is now exploring sectors such as infrastructure, agriculture and tourism,

all of which are vital to the Mauritius' economy. "Our model is not just direct financing; but also co-financing, collaborating closely with Mauritian banks. Mauritius also hosts our insurance company, asset management business and several special-purpose vehicles, some regulated by the Financial Services Commission. This strong partnership with Mauritius' financial community is important," states Tadesse.

"Our growth story has also been about ex-



Admassu Tadesse Group President and Managing Director

panding our capital base, attracting new investors and strengthening partnerships, talent management and human capital. We have also broadened our geographic reach, expanding from Eastern and Southern Africa to select economies in West and North Africa, with operations now in countries like Ghana, Senegal,

Mozambique, Botswana and soon Angola. "We are now deeply involved in infrastructure finance, supporting projects in railways, cross-border ICT, agriculture and energy — especially renewables. These sectors are crucial to Africa's growth and have contributed to the 'Africa Rising' mega-trend while strengthening our balance sheet and asset base."

While there has been a growing interest in investing in Africa, which is increasingly seen as integral to the future of the global economy, Mauritius continues to stand out as an attractive platform for investors. Inflows of foreign direct investment reached \$760 million in 2023. compared to \$253 million in 2021, aligned with the government's pro-trade and investment

"Mauritius is an attractive platform, espe cially with US investors, due to its financial sector maturity, investment grade ratings and established track record. While other African countries like Morocco, Botswana and Rwanda also have investment platforms, Mauritius is among the most advanced. For conservative investors, Mauritius offers a familiar and reliable entry point into Africa," describes Tadesse.

Mauritius has emerged as a key financial hub

"The US is interested in sectors like infrastructure, agriculture and mining, especially with the growing focus on the climate agenda and energy storage technologies. However, finding the right investments remains challenging. The US is making strides, but Africa must also work to reduce risks and make investment opportunities clearer. The path to increased US investment in Africa will be evolving.

"While Mauritius is not a large economy by US standards, it offers appealing opportunities for Africa-wide investment in a well-rated African jurisdiction. The country is also making

> ADMASSU TADESSE GROUP PRESIDENT AND MANAGING DIRECTOR, TDB GROUP

"Mauritius is an attractive platform due to its financial sector maturity, investment grade ratings and established track record."

significant strides in renewable energy with attractive incentives for investors. Besides financial services, Mauritius presents investment prospects in real estate, service sectors and the blue economy, which includes fishing and other ocean-related opportunities."

#### A focus on sustainability

While Mauritius is accelerating the transition to green energy by using blue resources, the TDB Group has also been assessing ways in which it can explore green growth. A decade ago, the group enjoyed great success with its Class B shares that encouraged institutional investors such as pension funds, insurance companies, sovereign wealth funds, development finance institutions and others to its equity capital.

Inspired by this initiative and in line with the sustainability actions outlined by the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the Paris Agreement. the TDB Group launched Class C Green+ shares — an incentive for investors to support low-carbon, clean technology projects.

This received further support when the African Development Bank Group announced a follow-up equity investment of \$15 million in the pioneering scheme. The new capital, to be sourced from the Clean Technology Fund, will support the establishment of a project preparation facility to boost investment in clean technologies. "We have always prioritized sustainability in our financing, but with the escalating climate crisis, we have intensified our focus on green growth, particularly in renewable energy. We are committed to clean technologies like solar, wind and geothermal energy," says Tadesse.

"We have invested in projects such as Uganda's mini hydros, the Lake Turkana Wind Power (LTWP) Project in Kenya and solar projects in East Africa. Additionally, we are exploring hydropower opportunities in Southern Africa.

"To support these initiatives, we have secured specialized capital dedicated to green growth, combining risk capital with debt funding. We have received climate finance from various institutions like the World Bank, the Agence Française de Développement, the European Investment Bank and KfW of Germany. Recognizing the need for equity alongside debt, we have introduced a new class of green plus shares to attract green equity capital.

### Leading the way by embracing the digital revolution

Absa Bank (Mauritius) Limited has experienced significant g owth after making a significant investment in technolog

Standing out in a crowded market is far from easy but that is exactly what Absa Bank Limited (Absa Mauritius) has been able to achieve thanks to its broad range of products and services across personal and business banking, corporate and investment banking, and wealth and investment management.

Part of the larger Absa Group Limited, one of Africa's largest diversified financial services groups, the bank is one of the major players in Mauritius' finance sector and in 2023 registered profit after tax of MUR3,582 million an increase of 79.3% compared to 2022.

This impressive performance is on the back of a significant transformation that has seen Absa Mauritius leveraging advancements in technology and customer insights to enhance its already sizeable suite of products and services. This has included investing in cutting-edge technology to streamline processes and introduce innovative solutions such as the Absa Digi Account, Absa Digi Loan and Absa Pay.

"In the last three to four years, we have seen excellent growth, with consistent revenue increases and significant investments in diversifying our business," explains Ravin Dajee, Managing Director, Absa Mauritius. "Digital innovation is a key part of our growth strategy and we have made significant investments in technology, people and our business model. On the domestic corporate front, we have enhanced our capabilities and increased capital to support further growth. Our efforts in digital transformation have earned us several industry awards and recognition for several innovative market-firsts in Mauritius' digital landscape.

"The digital agenda has been crucial for several reasons: reinforcing our control frameworks, tapping into new revenue pools and making the lives of our colleagues easier. Many clients prefer digital solutions over visiting branches, so we have successfully implemented channels to meet that demand. Furthermore, our focus on innovation in technology, products and channels keeps us relevant and competitive, adding real value for our stakeholders.

"We are now focusing on a fully digital customer segment, building this model further. Additionally, we have made substantial investments in training and development over the past few years to stay ahead of industry opportunities and risks

"We also promote the international mobility of our employees and encourage them to gain exposure across the Group."

Understanding that the financial needs and preferences of their customers are constantly evolving, Absa Mauritius has had to remain ag-



Managing Director, Absa Mauritius

ile and adaptive. It has continuously refined its services to stay ahead of the curve and meet the ever-changing demands of the market.

Absa Mauritius also recently reached a significant milestone when it completed the acquisition and integration of HSBC domestic Wealth and Personal Banking, and Business Banking businesses. "This strategic move was a pivotal step aligned with our growth goals. The acquisition not only expanded our presence and

MANAGING DIRECTOR, ABSA MAURITIUS "With our strong presence in Africa, we are positioning ourselves as a partner of reference for companies looking to enter

the continent."

**RAVIN DAJEE** 

market share but also enhanced our capabilities to cater to the diverse financial needs of individuals and businesses in Mauritius," reveals Dajee. "By integrating the acquired businesses into our operations, we can leverage synergies, optimize resources and deliver enhanced value to our customers. Building on this foundation, we are now focusing on one of our new growth pillars: the wealth segment.

"We have recently launched a Wealth Centre in Grand Baie which represents the first of its kind in Mauritius and a pioneering step for our group outside of South Africa. It marks a milestone in Mauritius' financial sector, offering a unique value proposition that combines excep-



Absa Mauritius is aligned with the Group's aspiration to be a leading Pan-African bank

tional customer service with world-class wealth offerings. Dedicated to high-net-worth individuals and families, it provides a tailored environment designed for sophisticated financial needs. The Centre features private meeting rooms, luxurious lounges, and a high-tech boardroom to facilitate meaningful discussions.

"Additionally, its digital innovations simplify processes like offshore account opening, reflecting Absa's commitment to combining human expertise with cutting-edge technology."

#### A forward-thinking approach

While it remains important for Absa Mauritius to invest in the latest technology, another core focus is helping Mauritius to meet its carbon emission targets. The bank wants to become a leader in sustainability and its key strategies for the future revolve around responsible corporate behavior and sustainable finance. Absa Mauritius has already pledged to dis-

burse more than MUR 30 billion (\$650 million) in sustainable finance by 2030, with a key focus on renewable energy, green buildings, clean transportation and financial inclusion. It is also actively managing its direct carbon footprint and has committed to reducing its own emissions by 50% by 2030. "Sustainability is a key part of the Group's

strategy as well as our local strategy.. We believe it's our corporate responsibility to not only perform well financially but also be good corporate citizens. We have an obligation to contribute to the sustainability journey," states Dajee.

"Additionally, regulatory pressures will increasingly require banks to adopt sustainable practices, and we aim to stay ahead of that. Clients, investors, shareholders and employees also expect us to embrace sustainability. Today people want to work for companies with a clear sustainability agenda, and clients may leave if we don't. It's essential to meet both regulatory and stakeholder expectations.

"Our corporate strategy includes a strong focus on sustainability, from managing internal carbon emissions to working with suppliers who are prioritising sustainability and are aware of ESG considerations. We're also developing sustainable finance solutions to help companies grow in this area. This is a critical agenda for both our Group and us locally.

Dajee adds: "We have built a credible in ternational financial center with a strong track record. With our strong presence in Africa, we are also positioning ourselves as a partner of reference for companies looking to enter the continent. We also have an office in New York which helps clients invest in Africa, and Mauritius is a key part of that flow.

"Beyond Africa, Mauritius attracts investments due to its stability, rule of law and growth potential, especially in emerging sectors like technology, sustainability and the ocean economy. These are areas that we are developing in-



www.absabank.mu

## Providing vital support to the MSME sector

The Development Bank of Mauritius has introduced a host of new initiatives to help small business owners and entrepreneurs

stablished in 1936 to help facilitate economic development within Mauritius, the Development Bank of Mauritius ■ (DBM) has evolved over the decades to address the changing economic needs of the country. Having initially focused on agriculture, in the early 1970s it extended its assistance to the tourism sector and today plays a pivotal role in supporting micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), as well as infrastructure developments.

The ability to introduce new strategies to fit local and macroeconomic contexts has been vital to the success of DBM. For instance, the bank shifted its priorities in the aftermath of COVID-19 because the pandemic highlighted a need for the bank to focus more on building up the nation's food security and renewable energy capacities. Therefore, it introduced new loan schemes aimed at providing credit facilities at low interest rates to operators in the agro-industry. DBM also launched loan schemes to enable individuals and MSMEs to produce their own electricity by purchasing photovoltaic

(PV) panels for the rooftops of their buildings. Supporting the MSME sector is of particular importance in Mauritius as it contributes around 35.7% to the country's gross domestic product. It also employs almost 49% of the labor force and accounts for 11.7% of domestic exports. DBM is tasked with assisting small business owners and entrepreneurs, and a key tool in that regard is its Mentoring and Hand Holding Program. Through this initiative, DBM supplies financial assistance to MSMEs in general, as well as loan products specifically formulated to support the empowerment of women, which aim to address a gender imbalance in entrepreneurship. For example, the bank now offers businesswomen collateral-free loans of up to \$108,000 at 0.5% interest, repayable over five to seven years.

DBM has a team of experts that guides Mauritian startups from the inception of their ideas

through to implementation. It also strives to encourage more young people to become entrepreneurs. As an illustration, it recently organized a competition among university students who were asked to submit innovative entrepreneurial projects. The top-three students were awarded prizes, while the ten best ideas were given financial assistance to implement their projects with the support of the Mentoring and Hand Holding Program team. Another area where DBM is providing sub-

stantial assistance is with the nation's move towards cutting carbon emissions by 40% by 2030. Mauritius is actively seeking green investment to reach this target, which has led the bank to establish its DBM Energy subsidiary that is focused on bolstering the growth of the country's sustainable energy sector.

This subsidiary was incorporated to invest in renewable projects and products that benefit a variety of businesses, as well as citizens of the country who want to create a more sustainable ecosystem and are interested in ways to lower their carbon emissions.

The pandemic highlighted a need for the bank to focus more on building up the nation's food security and renewable energy capacities.

For example, DBM Energy owns several industrial estates and MSME parks where PV systems are being installed to produce 6 megawatts of energy that will be exported directly to the national electricity grid. The subsidiary is now replicating this model across government buildings and educational institutions.

Although the life span of PV installations is more than 20 years, payback usually takes between 10 to 12 years. As a result, it was diffi-



cult for DBM to mobilize funding to undertake such projects in the past, and it had to rely on the government or international agencies to provide the necessary financing. However, it is now working with the United Nations Environment Programme, which will provide financial assistance to enterprises willing to invest in the renewable sector.

On a more micro level, DBM has introduced loan schemes for households wanting to install PV systems and for taxi operators to purchase hybrid or electric vehicles. Those schemes provide \$7,600 at 2% interest rates over seven years to individuals, with up to \$21,700 being available for SMEs.

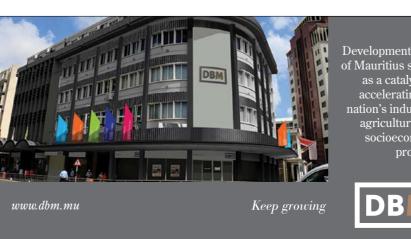
#### A long-term vision

One of the reasons that DBM has been so successful has been its ability to move with the times. Having previously recognized the importance of developing different industries, it is now focused on positioning itself as a leader in digital innovation within the financial services

Technological advances such as Internet of Things, artificial intelligence and blockchain are transforming the way in which Mauritian customers and businesses interact with each other. The nation's payment landscape is also changing, with digital payments playing a greater role, while the Bank of Mauritius is exploring the introduction of a central bank digital currency, which will open up opportunities for commercial banks to provide more innovative services and a wider range of payment options.

DBM realized that it was important to prepare itself for a digitalized financial ecosystem, finding ways to support the digitization of businesses and implementing new disruptive technologies in its own operations. Notable steps it has taken include the implementation of a new accounting system and the automation of all its operations. It has also introduced new internet banking facilities so that customers can get online access to their loan accounts.

DBM's digital transformation is part of a wider evolution that began in 2020. At the height of the COVID-19 crisis, the bank was at a crossroads, with a deteriorating financial position and a high level of non-performing assets. Over the past four years, however, the bank's financial state has been turned around. In addition, it has started to renovate its industrial estates, and opened one SME park and three new branches. Looking to the future, DBM wants to contribute to ensuring food security, implement new initiatives towards the decarbonization of Mauritius, enable the use of technology in all spheres of the economy to reduce the cost of doing business and, last but not least, ensure the sustainability of the bank in a competitive ever-changing financial landscape.



## **Looking to the future**

SBI Mauritius plans to diversify its product offering and implement green initiatives

ince being established in 1989, SBI Mauritius has grown in tandem with the country's emergence as a major international financial center and last year posted record profits after tax of \$27 million, marking a 12% year-on-year growth margin. Now operating 14 fully integrated retail branches, the bank offers a diverse range of products and services in both the offshore and domestic sectors.

Catering to global, corporate, retail and personal segments, SBI Mauritius has taken significant steps to embrace digital and disruptive technologies, including the introduction of Unified Payments Interface (UPI) services which was launched in collaboration with the government of India.

"This allows Indian visitors to use their RuPay cards or UPI QR codes in Mauritius, while Mauritians can use the same in India, simplifying transactions without needing cash," explains Somnath Adhya, Managing Director and CEO of SBI Mauritius. "This initiative is particularly beneficial as 62% of the Mauritian population is of Indo-Mauritian origin.

"Furthermore, our digital infrastructure, including the YONO app, is robust and widely accepted. We offer premium services and we also prioritize cybersecurity, ensuring a strong and secure digital system with minimal incidents of fraud. Mauritius' financial system is rapidly evolving and we expect it to be on par with global standards in the very near future."

In addition to catering to the growing demand for digital banking solutions, SBI Mauritius is pursuing an innovative green agenda and has developed a climate and environmental success toolkit, transitioned to paperless operations and introduced products such as a green car loan scheme. These are set to play an important role in helping the country reach its 2030 target of cutting carbon emissions by 40%.

"One of SBI's key objectives is to enhance our focus on environmental, social and governance (ESG) initiatives. We have developed a toolkit to assess companies seeking financing based on their ESG contributions and environmental impact," outlines Adhya. "We offer a green financing scheme, pro-

viding interest subsidies and favorable loan terms to green industries, particularly those involved in solar power, waste management and other sustainable initiatives. In addition to these green financing schemes, we actively support corporate social responsibility activities, including wildlife conservation and coral reef restoration to name just a few.

"While Mauritius is still developing its



MD & CEO, SBI Mauritius

green initiatives, we are committed to advancing alongside the banking sector and the Mauritian economy. We recognize there's more to be done and we aim to make significant progress in this area in the coming

Looking to the future, SBI Mauritius will also explore expanding its footprint beyond Mauritius into other African markets by leveraging its strong regional connections and growing economic opportunities across the

"Our primary focus remains on retail, but we are also looking to expand into select African markets, including but not limited to Kenya, Tanzania, Ivory Coast, Nigeria and South Africa. We aim to align with Mauritius' investment flow into Africa, particularly in geopolitically stable countries.

"With India's strong presence in Africa, we seek to synergize our bank with the continent's growth story, where the future holds significant potential," reveals Adhya. "We are also focused on digital transfor-

mation, emphasizing cybersecurity and creating a customer-centric system for easier access. A key target is growth in the ESG segment, particularly in sustainability and the green sector. While we have grown 30-35% this year, my goal is to ensure sustainable growth of 15-20% annually and to double our

"SBI Mauritius also plans to explore product diversification and expand its offering to include more customized solutions for different customer segments, such as MSMEs, high-net-worth individuals and corporate clients. We also aim to build long-term relationships with our customers by addressing their evolving financial needs."



¬he second-largest bank in Mauritius, with more than 40 branches and counters in operation, SBM Bank (Mauritius) is a pioneer in the country's financial landscape that played a significant role in providing Mauritius citizens with pertinent banking services. Determined to increase financial inclusion,

customer experience, the bank has always taken an innovative approach in providing tailored financial solutions to a broad range of clients. "We have always been able to redefine our goals to align with the evolving business landscape which has ensured that we stay true to

offer competitive products and enhance the

our purpose while adapting to new challenges. By focusing on these core principles, we can build a formidable institution that is resilient, innovative, and capable of responding to market dynamics effectively," explains Premchand Mungar, Chief Executive of SBM Bank (Mauritius) Ltd. "Furthermore, we aim to leverage technology to enhance the customer experience and our operational efficiency. By investing in digital infrastructure, we can provide personalized banking experiences and better meet the needs of our diverse customer base."

Providing cutting-edge digital banking services has always been a top priority for SBM Bank (Mauritius) Ltd. as it has strived to utilize the latest technological innovations. This has facilitated the bank to meet the growing needs of its customers and its plans to become a financial powerhouse.

"Our primary goal is to enhance the overall customer experience by integrating technology in a way that augments our service delivery. We understand that customer expectations are continuously evolving, so we are updating our IT architecture and infrastructure to support a seamless and personalized experience," adds Mungar. "This includes enhancing our mobile banking application to offer a truly digital banking experience that is convenient and accessible for our customers. By investing in tech-



Premchand Mungar CEO, SBM Bank (Mauritius) Ltd.

nology and digital services, we aim to position ourselves as a leading financial institution that is well-equipped to navigate the complexities of the modern financial landscape."



## RELIABLE LEADERS IN INNOVATIVE **FINANCING SOLUTIONS FOR AFRICA'S** SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT





Black River Gorges National Park is home to century-old trees and unique species of wildlife

### **Green energy becoming** a pillar of the economy

A major focus on renewable energy has led to a rise in green activity and investment as Mauritius begins its bold energy transition

ive years ago, the government of Mauritius launched a roadmap to increase the share of renewable energy in the country's energy mix to 60% by 2030. In order to transition to a low-carbon economy, the plan was to boost the use of renewable energy and phase out coal in the electricity generation

Since then, the government has been continuously creating new initiatives to ensure this target is met. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic when the economy was hit hard, the focus was on transitioning to renewables, encompassing everything from solar and wind to biomass and hybrid renewable systems.

This resulted in 120 megawatts of installed capacity of wind and solar farms being commissioned in recent years, while a pipeline of solar-plus-battery projects with an aggregated capacity of 376.8 megawatts is underway.

As well as financial support from the government for investment and growth in the renewable energy sector, processes have been streamlined to reduce delays in securing permits and licenses for the implementation of renewable energy projects. In addition, several sector-based renewable energy schemes have incentivized economic operators to join the green energy transition. These initiatives have established a more favorable and enabling climate and give a further impetus to the renewable energy sector.

Having 60% of the country's energy coming from sustainable sources is feasible and within reach, although raising that to 80% by 2030 would be a more ambitious task, according to the Mauritius Renewable Energy Agency

and this is currently at the bidding stage. Concurrently, a feasibility study is ongoing for expanding the capacity of floating solar PV. This technology offers substantial potential, according to a high-level feasibility study carried out by MARENA in 2019.

In this respect, a pilot-phase project of 2 megawatts will be installed by September this year

Another initiative that has recently been introduced is an adaptation of the government's Carbon Neutral Industrial Scheme (CNIS), which was launched in 2023 to target the decarbonization of industrial energy users. The scheme allows industrial companies to offset some of the costs of their energy consumption when they invest in the installation of on-site or off-site solar PV farms. CNIS has been a great success and so the authorities have now finalized a similar initiative for the information and communication technologies sector.

With defined goals in place, significant investment and numerous projects already underway, Mauritius can become a leader in the field of renewable energy, especially when it comes to reliability.

In order for that to happen, MARENA's ambition is to demystify and de-risk renewable technologies, making them bankable for investors and capable of integration into CEB's electricity grid. The agency recognizes that renewable energy can be unstable, requiring utilities to invest in stabilizing the network with batteries and other resources. Therefore, it aims to create a supportive environment where new technologies can be tested and proven, so that Mauritius can maintain the excellent 99% reliability of its power supply.

Mauritius is capitalizing on international partnerships to meet its renewable energy targets. As an illustration, the country recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to discuss new opportunities for cooperation in areas such as green energy, hydrogen and liquefied natural

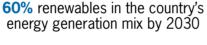
Mauritius has been utilizing ground-mounted and rooftop solar energy for a decade but MARENA is now also exploring avenues for the installation of a floating solar power plant.

MARENA has also seen technology firms from the US participate in some of its initiatives and it hopes to attract more international collaborations in projects involving novel technologies. Given the relatively small size of Mauritius, the agency is confident that the country serves as a perfect testing ground for innovations that can then be replicated in other

#### **PATH TO NET ZERO**



17.6% renewables in Mauritius' energy generation mix as of 2023



120MW in wind and solar farms currently installed, and a pipeline capacity of **376.8MW** is underway



greenhouse gas emissions and a



of solar-plus-battery projects with a complete phase-out of coal by 2030

### A diverse and modern energy sector

(MARENA), which is the public body respon-

environment conducive to its development.

Major potential in solar power

sible for promoting the sector and creating an

By 2030, the country aims to have 500 to 600

megawatts of renewable energy capacity in-

stalled and MARENA is exploring various ma-

rine renewable energy technologies, including

offshore wind, tidal, wave and both undersea

and surface water currents to help achieve this

goal. These technologies might not be fully

mature at the moment, but the agency believes

the country's renewable energy mix, Mauritius

is mainly relying on solar for its energy tran-

sition. EnVolt, a pioneer in large-scale rooftop

solar power generation, recently launched a \$45

million green bond program in Mauritius to

construct 13 photovoltaic (PV) plants on the is-

land. Additionally, initiatives such as the Home

Solar Project have caused significant drops

in energy prices for residents. Through this

scheme, the Central Electricity Board (CEB) is

from the sun because the island nation bene-

fits from good solar irradiance throughout the

year. There are some 1,500-1,600 hours of an-

nual solar production capability available just

in the northern part of Mauritius, which has

Mauritius has been utilizing ground-mount-

the country's highest potential for solar power.

ed and rooftop solar energy for a decade but

MARENA is now also exploring avenues for

the installation of a floating solar power plant.

The focus has been on generating energy

installing rooftop solar systems on houses.

While numerous technologies will make up

they offer significant potential for Mauritius.

The Central Electricity Board is embracing largescale renewable energy solutions and investing in emerging technologies

esponsible for the transmission, disribution and supply of electricity to Mauritius, the Central Electricity Board (CEB) currently produces more than 45% of the country's electricity from its four thermal power stations and 10 hydroelectric plants. It is also one of the major employers on the island, with around 2,200 people working for the company

Playing a crucial role in the nation's economy and social well-being since it was first established in 1952, the CEB has always strived to deliver a reliable service for its customers. The board's current 10-year electricity plan focuses on ensuring that its infrastructure can support future economic growth and the integration of new energy technologies. This has led the company to embrace the digital revolution and modernize the national electricity grid.

That modernization is currently progressing in line with the CEB's smart grid roadmap. The board is implementing an advanced distribution management system, and it has already installed smart meters for around 30% of its network. It plans to replace all remaining older meters with smart ones within the next two

The CEB's evolving smart grid enables twoway communication, allowing users to monitor and manage their consumption, and ensuring quick fault detection and self-healing capabilities. Furthermore, the smart grid includes an energy management interface for data integra-

The switch to smart meters is underway, but the CEB also wants to explore new emerging



technologies and is looking for support and investment from countries that have already implemented the latest tech. In addition, it is seeking funding from agencies such as the European Investment Bank, the World Bank and Masdar from the United Arab Emirates, with which it is already in discussions.

The CEB is open to technologies and partnerships that will enhance its modernization efforts. For example, the United Nations Development Program helped design its smart grid roadmap, with assistance from a US-based company. Although this is being implemented. the board is aware that it needs a detailed action plan to guide further development.

The CEB also wants to expand the decentralization and digitalization of the country's electricity systems, ensuring a stable grid while improving energy efficiency and management. For this, it is seeking support from countries such as the US and UK that have advanced

Acelerex, a US-based company, is currently assisting the board with energy integration in collaboration with the World Bank. Mauritius has a limited grid capacity, so CEB must meticulously manage the integration of energy sources like solar and wind.

With the World Bank's support, the CEB is conducting studies to determine how much variable energy its grid can accommodate reliably. The country has access to plenty of sun and some wind, but these intermittent sources require robust integration processes to ensure grid stability.

It is also working with EY Global to review and revise its power purchase agreements to ensure that future generation projects receive the necessary financing for their implementation.

#### The importance of renewable energy

As part of a national strategy to reduce the country's reliance on fossil fuels, improve energy security and mitigate climate change, the CEB is adapting to enable both public and private investment in power generation, facilitated by government regulations. It has also launched several initiatives to promote renewable energy, including the integration of small and medium-scale solar photovoltaic (PV) projects into

For example, it has set up hybrid renewable energy facilities in partnership with private moters. This has seen the installation of 5,000 solar PV kits on rooftops of private residences, non-governmental organizations, and



Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Botanical Garden was established over 300 years ago

charitable and religious institutions, as well as the installation of a 20-megawatt battery energy storage system in the city of Amaury.

In addition to offering free PV kits to lower-income households to help reduce their electricity bills, the CEB is encouraging other neowners and industries to install their own PV systems, with the CEB purchasing excess energy at fixed tariffs. Public sector bodies are being urged to install PVs on their roofs as well, with large entities like Rose Hill Sugar Estate and Mauritius Telecom being supported to produce up to 15 megawatts of electricity to boost renewable energy in the grid.

All the utility's projects are carefully assessed before implementation in order to guarantee that they address the social, economic and technical needs of the country.

The board is also overseeing a new scheme called Agrivoltaics, which will boost both food and energy security on the same plot of land. Through this scheme, the government is offering attractive incentives for the installation PV panels at a level high enough to allow for vegetable and other crop farming to take place

Another important factor for the CEB to consider is how it will phase out the use of oil and coal in its production of electricity. Currently, most of its electricity is generated from diesel power plants that are powered by import-

ed oil. However, the company is exploring the possibility of adapting these facilities to run on

It is looking into converting the country's coal power plants to use woody biomass, including bagasse and waste from sugarcane as well. This includes studying how much wood it could produce locally and sustainably to support the fuel transition.

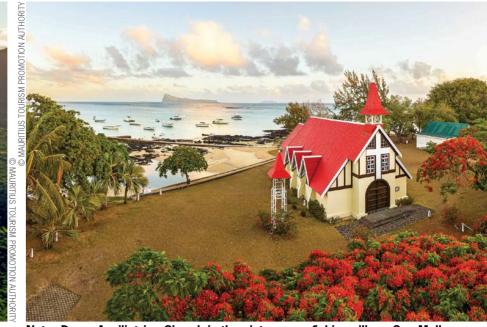
The company is also investigating a range of emerging technologies for renewable energy generation and utilization. These include floating solar, tidal energy, offshore wind power, green hydrogen and battery storage solutions, which are seen as crucial for ensuring that Mauritius' transition to green energy does not negatively impact the reliability of its electricity

supply.

The CEB's current focus for new generation is floating solar, as solar is Mauritius' most cost-effective and competitive renewable energy resource, and there is limited land available for ground-based projects. In addition, this technology offers improved efficiency due to water cooling, which reduces reservoir evaporation. The board is implementing a 2-megawatt floating solar pilot project on a one-hectare reservoir and is planning a future 30-megawatt

While it is important that the CEB explores technological innovations, the priority of the company is ensuring that every citizen of Mauritius has access to electricity at an affordable rate. This means that all the utility's projects must be carefully assessed before implementation in order to guarantee that they address the social, economic and technical needs of the country, as well as being financially viable for





Notre Dame Auxiliatrice Church in the picturesque fishing village Cap Malheureux

### Attractive investment environment

The Economic Development Board plays a crucial role in attracting international investments to high-growth industries in Mauritius' increasingly diverse, innovative and export-centric economy

auritius' remarkable transformation into an upper-middle-income nation with a well-diversified economy is founded in its political and socioeconomic stability, open trade policies, strong institutional frameworks and favorable regulatory environment. By ensuring stable and transparent frameworks for doing business, Mauritius has also become a competitive and resilient destination for international investors.

In 2023, gross foreign direct investment flows into the country reached an all-time-high \$797 million. That figure is likely to have been surpassed last year, with the latest official data revealing that Mauritius received \$534 million in FDI during the first three quarters of 2024, 7.4% more than over the same period in 2023.

The nation's Economic Development Board (EDB) has played an instrumental role in this success. The board's overarching goal is to create a dynamic and robust economic environment that attracts high-quality investments, fosters sustainable development and benefits all Mauritians. With nine offices around the globe, EDB's main tasks are identifying and nurturing potential opportunities across economic sectors, facilitating strategic partnerships and providing comprehensive support to domestic and international investors. That support includes a range of services, such as expediting regulatory processes, providing strategic advice and helping exporters access global markets.

As the country continues to advance, diverse high-growth industries have significant potential for further expansion and investment, according to EDB. One of them is financial services. Mauritius serves as a trusted regional financial hub that offers a wide array of products and services,

including fund administration, capital markets, global business sector, early-stage starters, venture capital funds, investment banking, securities, wealth management and fintech. Over the years, 21% of total investment flows through the Mauritius International Financial Centre have come from US investors, who are attracted by the center's robust business environment, which helps mitigate risks and enables entry into volatile markets in Africa and Asia.

There are also exciting opportunities for investors in an export-centric manufacturing sector that benefits from Mauritius' free trade agreements and strategic location between Africa, Europe and Asia. As the sector moves up the value chain and modernizes, there are prospects for advancing manufacturing processes, expanding product lines and exploring new export markets. This evolution incorporates innovation and technology and is focused on specialized areas where Mauritius has comparative advantages, such as jewelry, medical devices, sustainable

textiles and pharmaceuticals. Information and communication technologies and business process outsourcing are experiencing substantial growth too. Over 32,000 young professionals are employed in these fields, and the country is making advances in fintech, Industry 4.0, smart transportation and e-services. As a result, Mauritius is drawing in investments in digital innovations like blockchain, Internet of Things and artificial intelligence. It is also creating opportunities in data analytics, edtech, cybersecurity and robotic automation.

Real estate and tourism, on the other hand, have been prominent targets for investors for decades. Future real estate projects are set to conform with global sustainability trends and offer

excellent potential for investors in residential and resort developments. The country aims to position itself as not just a business, investment and financial hub, but also as a destination for visitors, retirees and talent. In order to attract international professionals and digital nomads, permit schemes are in place that make it easy for them to live and work on the island.

Furthermore, Mauritius' ongoing drive for economic diversification and resilience has led to the emergence of new investment opportunities in recent years. One area that is primed for growth is the ocean economy, which is a key pole of the new government's program for 2025-2029. It is determined to develop an inclusive and sustainable blue economy by leveraging the vast untapped assets in the country's oceanbased exclusive economic zone, which covers 888,000 square miles.

#### Mauritius' ongoing drive for economic diversification and resilience has led to the emergence of new investment opportunities.

Another burgeoning industry is healthcare, including nutraceuticals, medical tourism, wellness and clinical trials, as well as pharmaceuticals and medical devices. The biotechnology sector is receiving increased attention from investors too, as are education, agribusiness and renewable energy. Substantial investments have been made in green electricity-generating plants recently and there are many other opportunities available in areas such as solar, wind, biomass and energy efficiency solutions.

#### Easy to invest and do business

EDB is committed to encouraging and facilitating investments in cutting-edge technologies and sustainable practices that align with global shifts. To ensure that Mauritius continues to attract these investments, it works closely with the government to introduce incentives and enhance ease of doing business. Streamlining investment processes is a critical component of EDBs strategy and it has been working hard to simplify regulatory frameworks, reduce bureaucratic hurdles and improve its services.

A key outcome of the country's recent efforts to bolster the investment environment has been the automation of public sector processes through several online platforms, including the National Electronic Licensing System, which centralizes the application, payment and issuance of business licenses.

Another is Mauritius Investment Corporation (MIC), a subsidiary of the central bank that was established in 2020 in response to the economic and social impacts of COVID-19. MIC was created to support systemically important enterprises and traditional sectors such as hospitality, agriculture, manufacturing and aviation through the pandemic.

Having safeguarded those industries, the corporation is now looking to expand its investment portfolio into new sectors and future-oriented projects that are focused on innovation, self-sufficiency and sustainability. It is developing a venture capital fund and is actively seeking partnerships for projects both within Mauritius

#### Forging international partnerships EDB undertakes numerous activities to raise

Mauritius' investment and export profile. One of its primary strategies involves forging international partnerships with counterparts and trade bodies. In addition, it promotes the country's high-growth sectors through targeted marketing campaigns, by organizing sector-specific events and conferences, and by participating in major international trade and investment events.

EDB is currently focusing its efforts on several markets, which include Europe, India, China, Africa, particularly South Africa, and the US. The board views the US as a crucial partner for collaboration, investment, business expansion and trade, as the country's exports benefit from preferential access to the US under the African Growth and Opportunity Act.

Recent activities underscore EDB's commitment to strengthening ties with America. These include participation in the Enlit Africa energy summit in 2023 and 2024, an exploratory mission to the US in September 2023, and partnering with the US Embassy in Mauritius to organize the US-Mauritius Business Summit in August 2024. With substantial US investment already routed through Mauritius, the partnership between the two countries offers considerable potential for growth and mutual advancement.

#### THE MAURITIAN ECONOMY IN NUMBERS



Total GDP at market prices was \$15 billion in 2024, Statistics Mauritius estimates





Total FDI inflows were \$534 million in the 1st 9 months of 2024, a **7%** year-on-year increase



FDI inflows from the US were \$15 million in the 1st 9 months of 2024, a 37% year-on-year increase



Total exports valued at \$1.8 billion in the 1st 9 months of 2024, a 6.9% year-on-year increase





There are dozens of islets in the Mauritian archipelago to discover

## Redefining digital connectivity

Mauritius Telecom is shaping the country's digital future by investing in state-of-the-art infrastructure and innovative technologies

he leading telecom operator in the country and a key driver of the nation's transformation into a digital economy, Mauritius Telecom has been a pioneering force in shaping the information technology enabled services (ITES) and business process outsourcing industry (BPO), now a major pillar of the Mauritian economy.

With its diversified portfolio spanning fixed and mobile services, high-speed broadband, internet protocol television (IPTV), fintech, cloud services and data centers, Mauritius Telecom is committed to empowering individuals and businesses to thrive in the digital age.

#### **World-class infrastructure**Mauritius Telecom has built a world-class, re-

silient and future-ready telecommunications infrastructure, making Mauritius one of the most connected nations in Africa and globally. It continuously invests in cutting-edge technology and connectivity solutions.

Global submarine cable connectivity
For example, Mauritius Telecom has estab-

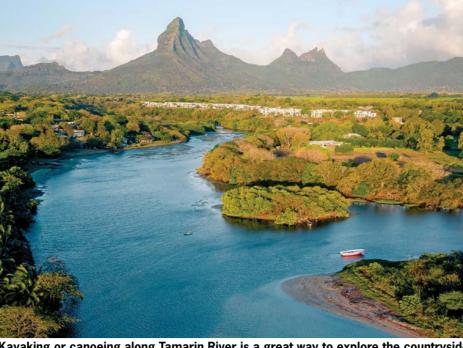
lished seamless and redundant global connectivity through continued investment in diverse and independent routes, such as the submarine cables SAFE, LION and T3. Its third and most recent submarine cable T3, which links Mauritius to South Africa, has a total capacity of 72 terabits per second.

Its submarine network, the north route of which goes through the LION/LION2-EAS-Sy-EIG cables, provides a direct link to Europe. Furthermore, its strategic points of presence in Europe, Asia and Africa facilitate seamless connectivity across these regions, using new cable systems such as Equiano, PEACE and SMW5.

Mauritius Telecom is now actively participating in the development of a T4 subsea cable that will run from the African island to Southeast Asia and South Africa. This new cable will significantly enhance global connectivity, provide high-capacity data transmission and support the growing demand for international telecommunications services.

#### 100% island-wide fiber access Mauritius Telecom has invested in

Mauritius Telecom has invested in providing fixed-line and broadband access to every



Kayaking or canoeing along Tamarin River is a great way to explore the countryside



Mauritius is one of the most digitally connected nations in Africa and globally

home on the island, a task which started in 2012 and was completed in 2017. The company's island-wide fiber deployment enables Mauritian citizens and businesses to benefit from ultra-high-speed broadband internet that ranges from speeds of 50 megabits to 1 gigabit, and up to 10 gigabits for businesses.

Based on the FTTH/B Global Ranking of September 2023, Mauritius is among the top 10 most-fibered countries in the world as a result of the company's efforts. And as per nPerf's report for 2024, Mauritius Telecom's fixed internet services have been deemed the fastest in the country and as providing the best customer experience.

#### 5G leadership

Further underscoring the company's commitment to world-class connectivity, Mauritius Telecom's 4G LTE network extends across the entire island and it was the first to launch 5G in Mauritius in 2021, providing island-wide coverage by 2025, hence powering next-gen-

Mauritius Telecom is transforming from a traditional telecom provider into a tech-driven company, expanding beyond connectivity to deliver innovative digital solutions.

eration applications. As per Ookla's report for S2 2024/S1 2025, Mauritius Telecom has been deemed to be the Best Mobile Network and the fastest 5G network in the country.

The company leads in the mobile market with a mobile client base that stands at more than 1 million for a population of 1.3 million.

#### A focus on innovation

Mauritius Telecom is at the forefront of digital transformation and innovation with the launch of several game-changing services and products in Mauritius.

The company's strength in technology is demonstrated by the innovative enterprise solutions it has produced for the business-to-business market, which have been recognized with various awards from Fortinet, Cisco, 3CX and Avaya. These include software-defined wide area network, security operations center, cloud, hosting and video conference services.

The company also overhauled the entertainment landscape in Mauritius by leveraging its fiber optic network and partnerships with key international entertainment leaders — like MultiChoice, Sony and Zee — to offer pioneering IPTV services that have transformed its customers' viewing experience.

#### Fintech pioneer

As an illustration of how it spearheads the development of new technologies to meet evolving customer demands, in 2019 Mauritius Telecom became the first company to launch a mobile wallet in the country.

My.t money is a fintech service that has revolutionized the Mauritian payments industry. It is now an all-in-one superapp, with a complete ecosystem of services that allow users to make payments, pay bills, transfer money to any bank or payment app, and recharge airtime, for example.

Tier IV data center and cloud services Mauritius Telecom's flagship service is its state-of-the-art Tier IV data center, which puts Mauritius among the few countries in sub-Saharan Africa and the Indian Ocean to

The company's Rose Belle Data Centre has been awarded Tier IV Certification of Constructed Facility by the Uptime Institute and is ISO 27001:2013 compliant. The \$25-million center includes features such as redundant

have this advanced infrastructure.

together we succeed

power and cooling systems, fire suppression and 24/7 monitoring. It supports numerous online services and business needs and provides end-to-end facilities for the cloud eco-

Enterprises of all sizes, including Google, Akamai and Facebook, are now using the center, which offers them a safe and resilient environment that meets the highest international standards for data security and reliability.

Mauritius Telecom has also invested in a new enhanced cloud platform with scalable and on-demand computing resources, designed to empower businesses to grow, innovate and lead in the digital age.

#### In-house Digital Factory

The company's in-house Digital Factory, with its team of more than 60 developers, specializes in artificial intelligence, machine learning and application development, reinforcing Mauritius Telecom's role as a leader in digital transformation across Africa and the Indian Ocean region.

#### Prudent financial management

When it comes to good governance, Mauritius Telecom is aligned to all international corporate standards. At present, 59% of the company's shares are owned by the government, directly or indirectly, 40% by Rimcom Ltd (Orange) and 1% by its employees. Although it is not currently listed on the stock market, it is audited by Deloitte, which ensures governance standards are maintained.

The company achieved an impressive \$270 million in revenue in 2023, 11.2% more than it generated in 2022, while its net profit rose 11.7% to \$25 million. As a result of its judicious management practices, its balance sheet is robust. The company ended that year with \$62.5 million cash in hand and cash equivalent, a total asset base of \$550 million and a net-debt-to-equity ratio of 0.03.

In addition, its earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization and after lease expenses margin was 38.3% in 2023, placing it among the top-tier telecommunications companies globally on that metric.

#### **Ambitious vision for the future**Mauritius Telecom remains committed to le-

veraging information and communication

Mauritius Telecom's flagship service is its state-of-the-art Tier IV data center, which puts Mauritius among the few countries in sub-Saharan Africa and the Indian Ocean to have this advanced infrastructure.

technologies to boost productivity, create jobs and attract investment to the country. Additionally, it is exploring potential expansions into international markets through strategic mergers and partnerships, particularly in the Indian Ocean and African regions.

The company is also open to investors seeking strategic shares in its well-established telecommunications business that has a strong market presence. This presents a valuable opportunity for stakeholders interested in joining a profitable and growing sector.

Mauritius Telecom is transforming from a traditional telecom provider into a tech-driven company, expanding beyond connectivity to deliver innovative digital solutions.

Backed by robust infrastructure, market

leadership, strong financial performance and continuous innovation, Mauritius Telecom is well-positioned for sustained growth and enhancing digital experiences for businesses and individuals. The company's shift to a technology-first approach ensures it remains at the forefront of the digital revolution.



lle aux Cerfs, a stunning 215-acre island off the east coast of Mauritius



The country is famous for its white sands and turquoise waters

## Industry giants driving economic growth

Investment opportunities abound in Mauritius where growth across a variety of sectors is contributing towards a flourishing econom

n its pursuit to become a high-income country, the government of Mauritius introduced a number of incentives to facilitate investments in various sectors and position the country as a competitive business and investment hub.

This resulted in the country becoming particularly attractive for companies with diverse investment portfolios. CIEL Group, a Mauritian-based international investment company has strategically invested in six sectors that have played a vital part in Mauritius' economic growth

Having initially focused on agriculture, the company has since ventured into textiles, tourism, healthcare, financial services and most recently, real estate.

"With a track record of 112 years, CIEL Group employs around 37,500 people globally with operations based in Mauritius but extending across East Africa and into India and Bangladesh. Over time, we have strategically invested in six sectors, which reflect the economic growth seen in Mauritius," reveals Guillaume Dalais, Group Chief Executive at CIEL Group.

"Over the past nine months of the financial year ended June 2024, we have achieved strong growth, with a 33% increase in profit after tax, reaching \$84 million.

"Textiles is a key industrial sector for us,

making up about 27% of our portfolio. Starting in Mauritius in the 1970s, we expanded to Madagascar in the '90s and India and Bangladesh in the 2000s, employing 23,000 people, including 7,000 in Madagascar and 10,000 in India. CIEL Textile has a significant impact on employment in these regions.

## GUILLAUME DALAIS CEO, CIEL GROUP "CIEL's strength is our diversified portfolio, clear growth opportunities and strong values."

"With 19 production sites, we produce and export 43 million garments annually to Europe, India, South Africa and the US We are vertically integrated, handling everything from yarn to finished garments. Our strategy has been to position ourselves in the mid to upper-market segments, which has proven very successful.

"Our expansion into India has positioned us as a leading exporter in woven textiles, a significant achievement in our strategy. We sell 25% of our production locally, mostly to international brands like Levi's, while 75% is exported. Madagascar and Mauritius are also key parts of our African strategy, offering duty-free access to the US and a unique positioning when compared to Asia

"While India is our main growth catalyst, with plans to increase production by 40% in the next four years, Mauritius and Madagascar also present promising opportunities. This dual approach, which focuses both on export and growing local markets, is key to our growth. We emphasize operational excellence and sustainability in our strategy, rather than pursuing only growth and volume.

"This approach has given us a solid position, allowing us to navigate challenges with agility and secure premium clientele from Asia to the United States."

#### Spotlight on tourism

Having been greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism industry in Mauritius has successfully rebounded, with the latest report from the Ministry of Tourism revealing that the island registered a 100% recovery in the first quarter of 2024 compared to the corresponding period pre-pandemic.

In this regard, CIEL Group has made significant investments in the tourism industry in recent years.

"Tourism comprises 17% of our portfolio, with seven high-end resorts across Mauritius, ranging from four to five stars. We operate two models: Sunlife, our own successful brand managing four hotels, and branded hotels managed by Four Seasons and Shangri-La. This dual approach gives us deep industry insights and visibility," explains Dalais.

"After the challenges of COVID-19, we rebranded Sun Resorts as Sunlife, reimagining our customer offering with a focus on Mauritian sayoir fairs.

"This repositioning has been highly successful and we are pleased with the positive momentum across our assets and the industry in Mauritius.



Guillaume Dalais CEO, CIEL Group

"We also used our time during the pandemic to reimagine tourism with a strong focus on sustainability. We have integrated sustainability into our brand and hotel repositioning, aligning with CIEL's values and enhancing the tourism experience while preserving our island. Though visitors must fly to Mauritius, we are innovating ways to make a positive impact once they are here."

Medine Group — a Mauritian company with expertise in property, agriculture, leisure and education — is another important player in the tourism sector. It currently operates Casela Nature Parks, a pioneering eco-tourism destination in Mauritius, as well as a beachfront hotel with 50 rooms, a championship 18-hole golf course and a sprawling 17-acre sports and leisure center. Now the group has plans to open a new tourist destination.

"We are finalizing a new master plan for an integrated resort on the west coast of the island, with hopes to begin implementation in the next few years," states Dhiren Ponnusamy, CEO of the Medine Group. "We aim to help Mauritius move beyond traditional sun-and-sea tourism as today's travelers seek diverse experiences.

"That is why we offer alternatives like Casela Nature Parks, which spans 350 hectares, and our neighboring 4,000-hectare Yemen nature reserve with safaris and nature trails.

"We envision Mauritius constantly evolving to provide a range of attractions that would include eco-lodges, mountain activities and more, alongside its stunning beaches. Casela serves as a testing ground for these new offerings and helps us adapt to changing customer preferences."

#### Lucrative opportunities

One of the keys to Mauritius' economic success has been willingness to develop profitable industries. One such sector is healthcare which offers numerous opportunities ranging from specialized treatment centers and clinics to pharmaceutical product manufacturing and clinical research.

"Since investing in healthcare in Mauritius in 2008, we have taken a leadership role in the sector. Today, C-Care represents 17% of our portfolio. Our focus is now on substantial growth with strong management and local expertise, making healthcare one of our most exciting prospects for the future," explains Dalais.

Meanwhile, when it comes to renewable energy, objectives include the implementation of utility-scale projects and innovative green projects.

#### ARNAUD LAGESSE CEO, IBL GROUP

## "We made sustainability a core priority for the group, focusing on more impactful projects."

"Medine has pioneered several sustainability initiatives. In 2019, we launched Mauritius' largest solar farm, partnering with French renewable tech leader Akuo. Our commitment to sustainability began in the early 2000s when we adopted sustainable farming practices to ensure chemical-free food production," says Ponnusamy.

"We have implemented natural drainage systems and designed schools to use natural airflow, eliminating the need for air conditioning. The extension of Cascavelle Shopping Mall and our new hospital will also both be LEED-certified. We also prioritize recycling in our agriculture."

IBL Group — which has more than 190 years of expertise in anticipating market trends



Mauritius' blue lagoons are calm, clear and unpolluted



rnaud Lagesse EO. IBL Group

and strategic investment — has also recognized the importance of a greener future and is introducing new sustainable initiatives.

"Sustainability isn't a trend; it's essential if we want to leave something for the next generation. Early on, we made sustainability a core priority for the group, focusing on more impactful projects. We avoid greenwashing and aim for meaningful action," outlines Arnaud Lagesse, CEO of the IBL Group

"With our strong in-house team and leadership, we have developed great initiatives. For example, in our seafood cluster, we transport and process fish, primarily tuna.

"Instead of wasting by-products like bones, skins and heads, we fully utilize them, producing fish meal for animal feed, omega oil for beauty and baby food, and even generating energy from wastewater to power our factories. This approach allows us to use more than 99% of the fish, ensuring a sustainable, full-value

process."

With Mauritius having a long tradition of political and economic stability, the country has emerged as the ideal platform for facilitating investment into Africa and the wider region. This has been highly important to CIEL Group which has built up a diversified portfolio valued at more than \$500 million.

"We see significant potential, particularly in consolidating our real estate operations and adapting to post-COVID travel trends. Whilst we are focusing on the tourism sector's evo-

lution before pursuing growth initiatives, our primary growth drivers include healthcare and financial services in East Africa and expanding beyond textiles into non-textile industries in India." states Dalais.

"Mauritius is an excellent base for investors targeting Africa and India. Its favorable environment and strong framework make it ideal for structuring operations and we have had positive partnerships with US brands and find it a great place to attract talent and investment.

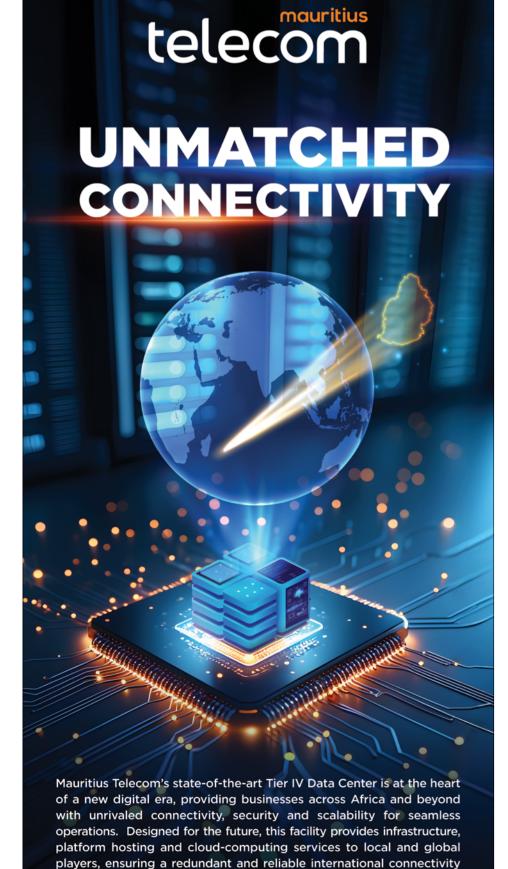
#### DHIREN PONNUSAMY CEO, MEDINE GROUP

## "We aim to help Mauritius move beyond traditional sunand-sea tourism as today's travelers seek diverse experiences."

"Mauritius offers political stability and effective policies that support both local and foreign investments, making it a strong platform for business growth. CIEL's strength is our diversified portfolio, clear growth opportunities and strong values.

"Our talented leadership team from Mauritius, Africa, Europe and India drives our success. We are pioneers from a small island, who value resilience and collaboration, making us a strong partner of choice."





through 3 optical submarine cables - SAFE, LION and T3.

telecom.mu | rbdc.mu

# A world-class tourism offering for every type of traveler

By improving connectivity, promoting its wealth of sustainable attractions and strengthening its infrastructure, the country intends to welcome a growing number of tourists in the years ahead

auritius may be famous for its sapphire waters and powder-white sand, however, there is so much more to the island than just its beaches. The premier vacation destination offers a unique blend of breathtaking landscapes, rich authentic culture, luxury and warm hospitality, making it a haven for any traveler.

It is no surprise that tourism has been a key pillar of Mauritius' economy for more than 50 years and, over those decades, careful planning has ensured that the sector has grown sustainably to prevent overtourism and maintain the island's pristine environments.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism contributed 8% to the country's gross domestic product directly, and 19% when travel's broader economic impacts are factored in. In 2019, the island received nearly 1.4 million visitors, but the number plummeted when the pandemic hit. Mauritius kept its borders closed longer than many other countries as the crisis eased, because the authorities prioritized the implementation of effective health protocols to protect the population and tourists, a strategy that was praised by institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

The premier vacation destination offers a unique blend of breathtaking landscapes, rich authentic culture, luxury and warm hospitality, making it a haven for any traveler.

The sector surged back in 2023 with 1.3 million arrivals and the country welcomed almost 1.4 million visitors last year. Furthermore, 2023's tourism revenues surpassed the previous record set in 2019 to reach \$1.9 billion, and the latest official estimates suggest the sector's earnings exceeded that figure by about 8% in 2024.

One reason for Mauritius' ongoing popularity is that it is an ideal destination at any time of the year, thanks to a constantly balmy climate that rarely drops below 68°F. In addition, the country covers just 1,261 square miles, which means that all its diverse attractions are within easy reach.

Many of those attractions are found on the coast. Mauritius is lined by nearly 100 miles of fabulous beaches, clear blue lagoons and the world's third-largest coral reef that encircles the island. Beyond this is the wide-open Indian Ocean and dozens of islets, some of which are protected nature reserves.

That idyllic ocean environment makes the country an exceptional destination for either relaxing or enjoying water sports, such as kayaking, paddleboarding, kite surfing, dolphin and whale watching, and deep-sea fishing. Divers and snorkelers who want to explore a plethora of fish, turtles, sharks and other marine life are also well catered for in Mauritius. Numerous dive sites open up adventures around reefs and shipwrecks, while the country's diving schools are dedicated to ensuring the safety of both guests and the natural environment.

The island's lush inland landscapes are just as enticing and provide endless opportunities for outdoor activities and relaxation. For example, ecotourists can hike or follow trails on electric bikes through stunningly preserved tropical forests, zipline through a national park, climb mountains, or visit the oldest botanical garden in the southern hemisphere that is teeming with indigenous flora. One highlight for those wanting to reconnect with nature is Black River Gorges National Park, home to century-old trees, dramatic waterfalls, rivers, canyons and mountains, as well as protected species of birds and other wildlife that are unique to the island. Two others are the Seven Colored Earths Geopark, where natural minerals in the soil have given rise to rainbow-hued sand dunes, and La Vanille Nature Park, which boasts one of the world's largest colonies of giant tortoises.

Mauritius also contains plenty of physical reminders of its fascinating history. The Dutch were the first to settle in the country, where they established its sugar industry in the mid-1600s. From 1715 to 1810, France controlled the island and further developed its sugar sector, as well as turning the capital Port Louis into a prominent colonial city and naval base. The European nation then ceded Mauritius to the UK, which governed the country until it gained its independence in 1968.

One of its most evocative historical locations commemorates the African slaves who were brought to Mauritius to work on sugar plantations before the British abolished slavery in 1835. Over the years, many escaped and built communities on Le Morne mountain, which is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. After slavery was banned, planters employed almost 500,000 indentured Indian laborers, whose experiences are brought to life at the country's second World Heritage Site, Port Louis' original immigration depot Aapravasi Ghat.

The 1800s also saw a large quantity of Chinese traders arriving on the island and, today, the Mauritian population is a well-integrated mix of the European, African, Indian and Chinese descendants of the different communities who have settled on the island over the centuries. That diverse heritage has made Mauritius a melting pot of cultural richness. The country's religious traditions are a good illustration of this, with churches sitting alongside temples, mosques and pagodas in peaceful harmony.

Excellent places to explore the country's wealth of culture include authentic fishing and

countryside villages, and the colorful capital. Mauritius also offers a year-round program of events and festivals that celebrate different aspects of its culture.

A standout example is the Kreol International Festival, which is held in December and shines a light on the Creole language, crafts, cuisine, arts, music and dances that originated with African slaves. One of this community's art forms is listed as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO: Sega Tipik, which involves songs rooted in the issues of slavery that are played on traditional instruments and accompanied by vibrant dance performances. Also on the same UNESCO list is Geet Gawai, an opening ritual for Indian weddings that includes prayers, songs and dances.

In addition, the island's multicultural heritage has resulted in an incredible cuisine that fuses elements of Indian, Chinese, African and European gastronomy. This can be enjoyed at street stalls, simple restaurants and fine-dining establishments, all of which make the most of locally harvested seafood, meats, vegetables, tropical fruits and spices. Sampling sugar, tea and rum at Mauritian plantations and distilleries are further experiences that should not be missed.

Mauritius also offers travelers world-class hospitality options, including luxurious villas, ecolodges, hotels and resorts. Those facilities, coupled with the country's renowned spas and healthcare services, have helped put Mauritius on the global map for wellness, medical and recuperation tourism.

#### Increasing flight connectivity

Beyond the diversity of Mauritius' tourism offering, the continued expansion of its tourism sector has been supported by its increasing flight accessibility. In 2024, over 97% of visitors flew into Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport, with the remainder arriving on cruises and other marine vessels.

The country's authorities have established 60 bilateral air service agreements to date and there are long-standing partnerships with operators



Hiking to the top of Le Morne mountain is an exhilarating experience



Mauritius is an idyllc destination for water-sport enthusiasts

such as Air Austral, Air France, British Airways, Condor, Corsair, Kenya Airways, Lufthansa Group, Saudia, Emirates, Turkish Airlines and South African Airways. Mauritius has recently attracted more direct flights, with two examples being a new Mumbai service from the Tata-Singapore Airlines venture Vistara and a Bangalore service from Indigo, India's largest airline. Mauritius has also seen more flights arriving from strategic connection hubs, which include Paris, London, Dubai and Johannesburg.

About 45% of all flights to the island are operated by Air Mauritius, the national airline, which has implemented a series of reforms to revitalize its operations and redeploy its network. The airline's ambition is to grow its flight market share to 55% by expanding its services to key destinations in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Indian Ocean. To achieve that, it plans to significantly increase its fleet size within the next 10 years and modernize its existing fleet, which will

allow it to implement more sustainable practices that adhere to international environmental standards. Air Mauritius also aims to position Mauritius as a connecting hub between Africa, Southeast Asia and Australia in order to attract more transit passengers and enhance connectivity for travelers.

At present, around 64% of the island's tourists come from Europe, but its rising connectivity is encouraging more US travelers to visit. Most of them are incorporating Mauritius into a two-country vacation or opting for longer immersive stays on the island. However, some are setting up new homes, leveraging Mauritius' appeal as a stable democracy with a high quality of life, where it is easy to obtain permanent residency and do business.

In recent years, significant investments have been made in tourism infrastructure, such as hotels, restaurants, attractions and transport systems to accommodate the growing number of tourists and enhance the visitor experience. A key figure in these investments is Airport Holdings Ltd. (AHL), a public company with subsidiaries in sectors that include aviation, airport operations, hospitality and property development.

Ranked third among the top 100 companies in Mauritius with a turnover of \$728 million in 2023, AHL is striving to fill some of the service gaps in the country's tourism supply chain. For example, it has acquired Airbus helicopters for airport-to-hotel transfers and scenic tours, while duty-free shops are being revamped to offer exclusive luxury collections. The company is working on the creation of an "airport city" near the airport as well. This will include an international conference center and cement Mauritius' status as a leading business tourism destination.

AHL is also expanding the tourism offering on Rodrigues, an autonomous outer island of Mauritius, which has a population of fewer than 45,000 people and is home to a dramatic combination of mountains, valleys, lagoons and cave systems. Aiming to attract high-net-worth individuals to this unique, stress-free paradise, the company has renovated and expanded its luxury Cotton Bay Resort and Spa and plans to build ecofriendly villas.



Traditional sega songs and dances are rooted in Mauritius' Creole heritage



Mauritius is lined by nearly 100 miles of fabulous beaches



The Seven Colored Earths Geopark is a natural phenomenon

## The island's multicultural heritage has resulted in an incredible cuisine that fuses elements of Indian, Chinese, African and European gastronomy.

Another of its major projects involves the creation of a new green airport in Rodrigues that will be able to handle larger aircraft. The country has secured a \$184 million loan from the World Bank to fund this initiative, which will increase the island's cargo capacity, boost exports and foster sustainable tourism.

#### The sustainable island

In general, Mauritius works hard to ensure that tourism is integrated with the needs of the local population and that the island's precious natural resources are conserved. These efforts are overseen by the Mauritius Tourism Authority (MTA), the industry's regulatory body that is mandated to promote the sector's sustainable development. In 2018, MTA launched a sustainable tourism program with the support of the European Union. Since then, the authority has introduced numerous initiatives that have bolstered environmental protection, including strict regulations for whale-watching activities and measures that are encouraging operators to invest in inland tourism facilities and services, which are preventing overcrowding on the island's beaches.

MTA is also helping all operators in the sector to gain green certification from accredited bodies such as the World Travel and Tourism Council and the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC). As part of this, it has developed an innovative digital platform — horizon.eco — that operators can use to measure their consumption of water, electricity and other resources, as well as to monitor their carbon emissions. This tool has been such a success that other countries are keen to utilize it.

The authority's goal is for the whole country to be certified as a GSTC Green Destination by 2030, which is in line with new Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam's pledge to put eco-sustainably at the heart of the Mauritian tourism sector's future development.