

## A platform for business in Africa

### Island nation poised to act as Asia's gateway to Africa

Small and exclusive vacation islands sometimes struggle to be known in the world for anything more than their beauty, but with Mauritius, things are different.

Thanks to a highly successful diversification program, steadily implemented since it became independent in 1968, the country holds its own as middle-income economy that has performed well in the face of the global crisis.

Boasting a top financial services industry, a growing manufacturing base, and excellent communications, Mauritius is an envied trade and investment hub, as well as an ICT hotbed for the region.

Its political stability, rule of law and sophisticated regulatory and investment structure have allowed it to grow in stature as a platform for companies wishing to break into Africa.

Opportunities abound in the agro-industries, creative industries, financial services, healthcare and medical travel, hospitality and property development, information technology and business process outsourcing, knowledge, logistics and distribution services, manufacturing and light engineering, renewable energies and environment, and seafood and aquaculture sectors.

Internationally acclaimed for its ease of doing business, governance and quality of life—according to the World Bank report “Investing Access Borders”, Mauritius has one of the world's most open economies to foreign ownership and receives some of the highest FDI per capita—the country is looking to attract further investment from China, a nation it has enjoyed diplomatic

centers and a bilingual Chinese-English boarding school, is the latest example of Chinese confidence.

As Mauritius Prime Minister Navinchandra Ramgoolam said, “Mauritius and China have supported each other on many regional and international issues, such as UN reform, we appreciate China's support for the country's desire to maintain its territorial sovereignty and boost its economy.”

#### A beacon for air travel

For an island situated 2,000 kilometers from the nearest continent, Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam International Airport, or SSR, is a critical component of the Mauritian transport system, ensuring links between the country and the rest of the world.

The airport stands among the five best in Africa and is recognized by the International Airport Council as a leader in the 2 to 5 million passenger category.

As well as supporting output, it is also a significant revenue generator. Last year, it made up 15 percent of GDP, a sum equivalent to \$3 billion.

As the island grows in importance as a hub for business and finance, the airport will be more important than ever.

Tourism arrivals remain steady, the recent drop in crisis-affected European visitors being offset by an increased influx from the island of Reunion, India and China.

Thanks to substantial funding from China, a new terminal that can handle around 4.5 million passengers a year is close to completion, and the Prime Minister is pleased at what this will mean for his country.

It is part of an ambitious master-plan that will also see the development of a cargo and freeport zone. Airports of Mauritius Co Ltd, or AML, which owns SSR Airport, has already launched an expression of interest for phase one, that will cater for the development of the first segment of 20 hectares.

Serge Petit, CEO of AML and Duty Free Paradise, said: “The airport business is dynamic and often at the forefront of economic development.

To make this possible we integrate the latest technologies and gear our businesses towards exceeding standards.

“We also anticipate and plan for future developments in the sector.

“For instance, aircraft size is expected to increase by about 30 percent over the next 20 years and the world aircraft fleet is expected to double by 2030, with the creation and opening of new markets, such as in the BRIC countries.”

At the current time, 13 scheduled airlines serve more than 35 destinations throughout SSR.

“We welcome viable and innovative business proposals that would add value to our services and be beneficial to our passengers.

“For instance, three private groups owning land close to the airport are moving forward with commercial developments, such as the construction of hotels, office blocks, leisure and convenience facilities, and accommodations amongst other things.”

“Duty-free shopping is one of the promising avenues. Space dedicated to this activity in the new terminal has doubled from about 1,000 to 2,200 square meters.”

“The new shops have been designed by our partner DUFY, one of the world's largest suppliers of duty free products.

“Food, drink and retail are critical revenue generators for modern airports because they are among the most important passenger needs.

“We are therefore planning for a modern food court offering a vast choice to passengers and all airport users.”

#### World-class connections

Since the country became independent 45 years ago, Air Mauritius has served as the national carrier, opening new routes and gateways for travel and trade.

Because it is still primarily a leisure destination, around 80 percent of the passenger traffic is made up of tourists.

Two thirds of visitors coming to the island are traditionally Europeans.

However with the economic crisis, that has impacted on demand for air travel, both the country and the airline embarked on a diversification strategy to rebalance growth to emerging markets.

Its operations to China is a pillar of this strategy.



PHOTO PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Former Chinese President Hu Jintao (right), accompanied by Mauritian Prime Minister Navinchandra Ramgoolam, walks through the honor guard upon his arrival in Port Louis for a state visit in February 2009.

Air Mauritius CEO Andre Viljoen said: “Traffic between Mauritius and China is growing fast for a number of reasons.

It is generated from the growing commercial activities between the two countries, as well as ethnic travel given the strong cultural ties.

Also, China is becoming the leading tourism market for the world. Since we started operations to Shanghai via Kuala Lumpur in July 2011, Air Mauritius has registered double-digit growth rates.

In January we introduced two direct flights to Shanghai and have just launched a direct flight to Beijing.

This adds up to a total of nine weekly flights to destinations in

China, including three flights to Hong Kong and three connecting via our hub in Kuala Lumpur. The growth of tourist arrivals for the first five months of this year was around 70 percent.”

Since February 2011, the company has been implementing a set of measures aimed at restoring profitability and long-term economic sustainability.

“Arrivals and departures are now scheduled in such a way as to provide optimum connecting possibilities.

“Our hub in Europe remains Charles De Gaulle and the network has been concentrated around destinations like Kuala Lumpur, Johannesburg, Nairobi and Perth.

“We are serving them through reinforced collaborations with partners.

“Other key measures aimed at boosting sales and revenue management have yielded robust results.

Unit revenue improved by more than 14 percent for the financial year ended on March 31.

During that period the company also registered efficiency gains of around €35 million (\$46 million), and plans to phase in more efficient new generation aircraft.

Despite industry challenges, Air Mauritius remains a resilient and profitable company.

*InFocus provided the story*

“The new passenger terminal is expected to be one of the largest and most modern of its kind in the Indian Ocean.”

NAVINCHANDRA RAMGOOLAM  
PRIME MINISTER OF MAURITIUS

relations since 1972.

In 1995, the Republic of Mauritius set up its embassy and sent its resident ambassador to China. Since 1982, the mutually beneficial partnership has gone from strength to strength, with a number of Chinese firms now present on the Indian Ocean island in a range of sectors.

The erection of the Jinfei Economic Trade and Cooperation special economic zone is expected to feature a logistical center, international conference centers, information towers, medical centers, wholesale and retail shopping

“The new passenger terminal is expected to be one of the largest and most modern of its kind in the Indian Ocean,” he said.

“It is absolutely important that the quality of service and the security standards comply with international requirements.

It will change many things for the country's image and for the Mauritians, and increase the connectivity of the country.”

Terminal 2 will cover an area of 57,000 square meters, and feature 52 check-in desks, six baggage claim carousels and nine telescopic air bridges.



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# Channeling foreign investment

Leading conglomerate BAI is helping Chinese producers negotiate their way round Africa

With investment in more than 50 companies covering financial services, commerce and industry and services, investment holding company British American Investment Co Ltd, or BAI, is a rapidly expanding group with a turnover of \$500 million.

Established in Mauritius for more than 40 years, BAI is proud to manage \$1 billion worth of assets, serving around 200,000 families through local operations. With a diverse range of products provided under local and international brands, BAI presents an excellent opportunity for Chinese investors, as chairman emeritus of BAI, Dawood A. Rawat, explained.

“China is a country with which Mauritius has had longstanding ties of friendship,” he said. “Bilateral trade has improved in recent years, and today a large number of our

China is a country with which Mauritius has had longstanding ties of friendship. Today a large number of our imports are from there.”

DAWOOD A. RAWAT,  
CHAIRMAN EMERITUS OF BAI

imports are from there. Our group, for example, has one of the largest retail businesses in Mauritius: Courts, a huge consumer electronics and furniture retailer, with 35 stores, and most of the imports are from Asia, including China. Courts has just opened its first store in mainland Africa, in Kenya, which means that the goods we import from China are now also distributed in Madagascar and Kenya.

“We are also representatives of two Chinese automotive brands – MG and Maxus. Recently, the Chinese government donated 57 MG cars to Kenya and BAI acted in liaison with the Kenyan govern-

ment to facilitate the handover.”

In line with Mauritius’ diversified economy, BAI took the opportunity to maximize its operations early. With 50 years’ experience in Africa as a whole, it has gained an excellent insight into the African market, which attracted an array of global brands.

This insight has been key to the group’s success, noted Rawat, who joined BAI in its infancy in 1970.

“Because it was such a small economy based mainly on the sugar mono crop, Mauritius’ leaders invested intelligently in export driven industries, and diversified export markets. The economy underwent a major restructuring program looking for new sectors to offset preferential trade regimes, which have supported our manufacturing and agricultural exports over decades.

Africa,” Rawat said. “The group has historically achieved premium returns where it has consolidated its market position and developed strong local brands. Our long term strategy is to have a portfolio of businesses that combine attractive growth characteristics in periods of economic growth and which also exhibit strong defensive capabilities when times become tougher.

“Going forward, BAI will continue to operate as an investment company, a ‘House of Brands.’

Expanding on the idea of BAI as a stepping-stone for China and other Asian nations do business in Africa, Rawat said, “The group entered mainland Africa in 1965, through its investments in the financial services sector. Today, it holds important stakes both in the insurance services, through BAI Kenya, now known as Britam and in the banking sector in Kenya, through Equity Bank.

“Today, Equity Bank (A+ credit-rating) is one of the fastest growing banks in Africa and is listed on the Nairobi Stock Exchange. Both companies are now moving into East Africa. BAI is further consolidating its presence in Africa, namely in Uganda, Tanzania, Luanda, Ethiopia, and even South Sudan.”

Rawat believes investors need help negotiating the way into Africa.

“Despite significant improvements in trade and investment liberalizations within the regional economic blocks, there are still many obstacles that prevent entrepreneurs embarking on an Africa strategy,” he said. “They need to be guided by more experienced companies.

“Africa is different and I think the Mauritian financial services industry must understand the cultural difference before participating into any new venture. Mauritius is hoping to turn itself into a regional financial and business services hub on the

strength of its regional accessibility.

“We can play a strategic role in channeling foreign investment into Africa through widening double-taxation treaties, bilateral investment protection agreements which makes the country a safe place to conduct business from it is political stability. These include protection of assets, an independent judiciary, the rule of law, a well-regulated and modern financial services sector, high-class business services and a democratic system of government.

“New partnerships are in the making with investors from Asia and Europe, and even Africa for a number of projects that will help expand business relationships between BAI and mainland Africa.”

**Taking China to Africa**

Moving with the times, among the many projects on BAI’s table is the development of 6,000 hectares of land in Mozambique to produce certain food crops and biodiesel. The group’s Nairobi-based wholesale business, Bramcom International, can now provide multi-channel distribution of goods imported from Asia, and especially China, to African wholesalers and retailers.

“The store is situated close to Nairobi airport which allows for smooth redistribution,” Rawat said.

Established in 2012, Bramcom International procures and distributes several thousands of products, including retail consumer goods, automotive and energy activities, and delivers everything from printing paper to luxury vehicles.

It creates sales and profit opportunities for vendors and resellers through a unique network, as well as outsourced logistics and management solutions, technical support and financial services.

At its Mauritius branch, the firm successfully completed deals amounting to around \$200 million, a large proportion of which was through its main client on the island, Iframac Ltd, which has more than 30 retail stores in Mauritius and supplies Harely Davidsons, Mercedes

Benz, Jeep, Peugeot and Mitsubishi.

Jonid Dowlut, president and CEO for Bramcom International, said, “We understand the complexity of procurement of products globally and distribution to emerging markets. This is why we are continuously in search of responsible partnerships to give our clients a competitive edge. The partnerships not only need to meet our mutual requirements, but also complement our ongoing commitment to facilitate the sourcing, shipping and delivering of reliable goods that our clients need within specific deadlines.”

The program (Young Entrepreneur Award) provides thousands of dollars worth of capital to these young entrepreneurs to start up their business.”

DAWOOD A. RAWAT,  
CHAIRMAN EMERITUS OF BAI

**Investing in People**

Enterprise and social responsibility are clearly important to the BAI’s philosophy, so it is fitting that the company is a significant supporter of the Youth Engaged in Service Program, which has evolved from five colleges in 2007 to nine in 2009, with 325 students participating.

As well as supporting women entrepreneurs, the management and prevention of diabetes, and numerous other health and educational initiatives, the group also launched its Success.mu, Young Entrepreneur Award. The innovative project helps young Mauritians with a good business idea but limited resources to set up or expand their own ventures.

“The program provides thousands of dollars worth of capital to these young entrepreneurs to start up their business and even more in equipment, technical support, training and assistance with local and international distribution channels among others. A group of professionals will also work with these young people for a period of up to three years,” Rawat said. “This brings me to another area where China

can collaborate with Mauritius. The Mauritian Chinese speak Cantonese, which significantly hampers communication with the people in Beijing, Shanghai and other commercial centers.

“The Chinese government could help Mauritius by creating a platform to teach Mandarin, and why not open universities here for the rest of Africa? Several European and Asian universities are taking advantage of the incentives under the policy to make Mauritius a knowledge hub. The number of African students enrolled in these interna-

tional universities here is increasing significantly every year.

“I once told a Chinese ambassador that anyone going to China to buy goods would be told to order a minimum of 20ft container. However, the Mauritian market is tiny, and Africa, although it is a huge continent, is not wealthy. China could therefore use Mauritius as a base – the goods would come here, be unbundled and redistributed to Africa. Opening our wholesales business in Nairobi and Mauritius is the first step to create that major redistribution center.”

The Chairman Emeritus believes the most interesting areas for Chinese investors would be in financial services, medical services — BAI recently set up the world class Apollo Bramwell Hospital with Indian backing — and retail. Also, he explained, and perhaps not surprisingly for an island in the middle of the Indian Ocean, boat building.

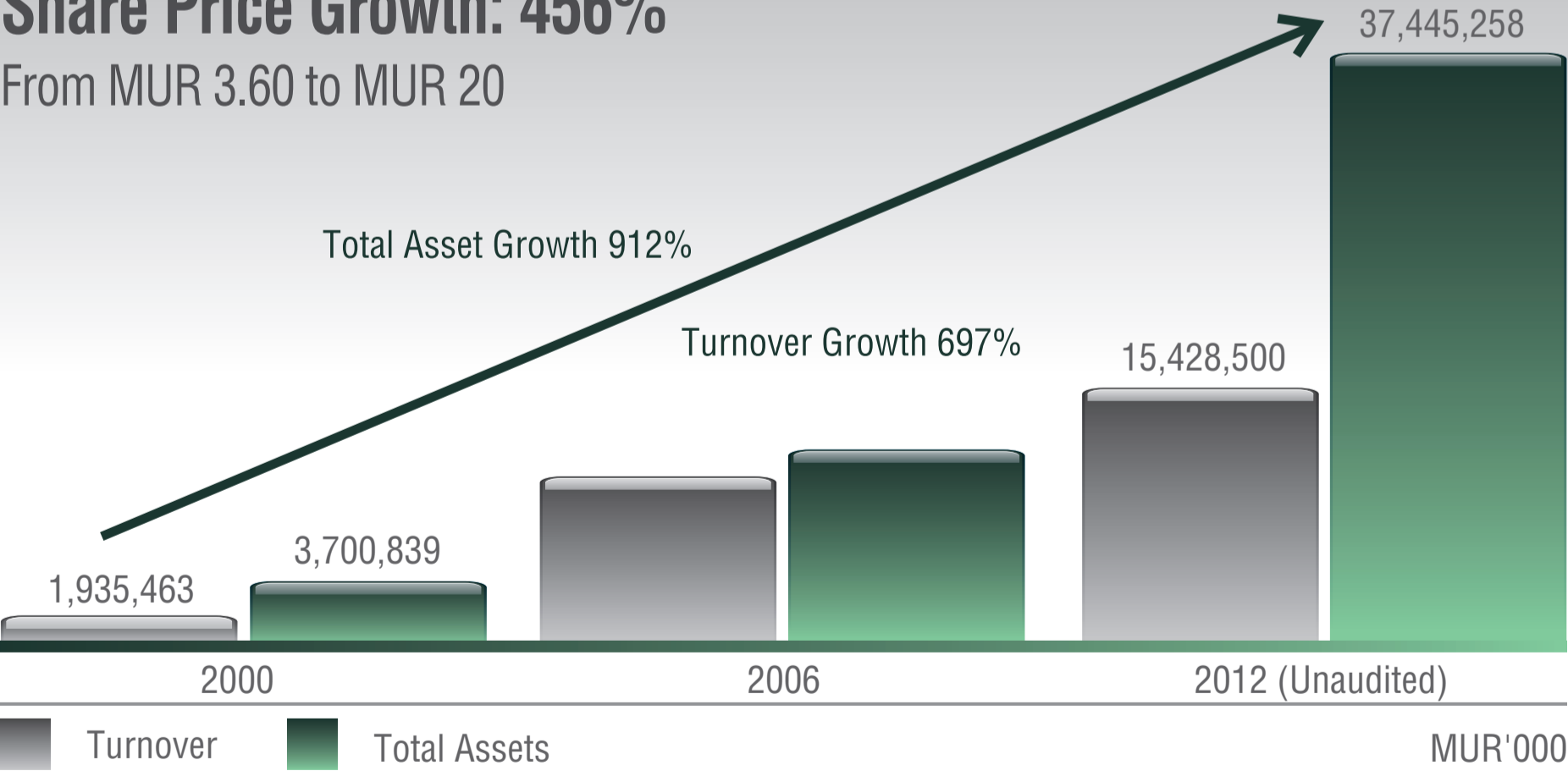
“One of our subsidiaries is involved in the production of mainly fishing and leisure boats,” he said.

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# Island looks east to build up new markets

## Chinese arrivals are growing steadily

Sun, peace, beautiful resorts and excellent hospitality — all the ingredients of a relaxing holiday are a standard part of the Mauritius experience. The island, a 12-hour direct flight from Beijing and 11 hours 20 minutes from Shanghai, outperforms competitors with its natural beauty and exquisite waters.

Although the number of visitors from the island's traditional market, Europe, have fallen in the aftermath of the global crisis, the number of Chinese tourists to this high-end destination has almost doubled every year in recent years, reaching 20,885 visitors in 2012.

In July this year, a total of 4,311 Chinese inbound tourists visited Mauritius, an increase of 138.4 percent compared to the same month last year, propelling the visitors' total figures for January-July 2013 by 87.1 percent.

Total tourism arrivals are expected to reach 97,000 this year, based on first-quarter trends, and Minister of Tourism and Leisure Michaël Yeung Sik Yuen believes growth will be around 4 percent, a healthy increase from last year's 0.1 percent figure.

"We live in challenging times," he says, "but when you look at the figures, more than 63 percent of our tourism came from Europe before. We therefore have begun to diversify. As well as consolidating the European market, we have started to reach out to the regional markets, such as Reunion Island, South Africa and Australia.

"We are also working hard on emerging markets, like China, India and Russia. We have some people come here from Brazil but the distance remains a problem. We are also in touch with the Commonwealth of Independent States members and Gulf Cooperation Council countries: last year we were in Dubai for the Arabian Travel Market show. Every year, we search for new markets."

As A. Karl Mootoosamy, director of Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority, explained, players and professionals of the Mauritius Tourism Industry have spared no effort to expand this promising and emerging market. The national airline, Air Mauritius, currently serves two weekly and one weekly direct flight to the mega cities of Shanghai and Beijing respectively.

In addition, passengers can connect via various hubs such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, and Dubai.

"The attractiveness of Mauritius for Chinese tourists mainly lies in the amazing natural beauty of sun-kissed sandy beaches, exceptional purity of the air, and the wide array of products offered by no other single island destination," Mootoosamy said. "These include luxury hotels, resorts and services, a multiethnic population blended as a microcosm of the world's greatest cultures (including Chinese descendants), a most hospitable and friendly population, romantic and unforgettable wedding and honeymoon packages, exciting water sports, state-of-the-



**We live in challenging times, so we are working hard on emerging markets, like China, India and Russia, and reaching out to regional markets."**

MICHAËL YEUNG SIK YUEN  
MINISTER OF TOURISM AND LEISURE



**Part of the attractiveness of Mauritius for Chinese tourists lies in the wide array of products offered by no other single island destination."**

A. KARL MOOTOOSAMY  
DIRECTOR, MTPA

art designer golf courses, and spa and wellness amongst many other things.

### A regional success story

While some hotels are struggling with earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortization margins, Sun Resorts Limited — or SRL, part of the leading industrial and investment CIEL Group, has been investing a lot in the new markets as well.

SRL is a major Mauritian hotel group that currently owns and manages stunning resorts in Mauritius and the Maldives.

According to its Annual Report for 2012, the group continued with its strategy of enhancing and expanding its product portfolio with the launch of the four star 297-key resort, Ambre on the east coast of the island.

"This additional investment

economic conditions in our main European markets, as evidenced by the drop in tourist arrivals out of Europe to Mauritius and the Maldives by 8 percent and 3.7 percent respectively, SRL managed to increase its market share by 19 percent, with a 23 percent growth in room nights sold for the year. The group therefore managed to increase its room occupancy over 2011 to 61 percent, when the national average industry occupancy retreated by 3 percentage points."

The company's flagship property, Le Touessrok, is a five star luxury resort and a member of the Leading Hotels of the World. It was successfully relaunched in 2002 as the ultimate "tropical chic" contemporary resort", said Tommy Wong, chief finance officer of Sun Resorts.

Le Touessrok is the perfect holiday



**We believe very much in the Chinese market. In Maldives, the number of Chinese visitors grew from zero to 250,000 in just six years."**

TOMMY WONG  
CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER, SUN RESORTS LTD

showed our faith in the local tourism sector despite the troubling times we are all experiencing but we are confident that this new resort will add value to our group in the medium to long term span," the report said.

"Additionally, with the first full year of Long Beach, the group increased its room nights available in Mauritius by 23 percent in 2012, thus consolidating its position as the second largest hotel operator on the island with a total of 1,261 rooms — and 1,361 rooms with the Republic of Maldives.

"Despite the deterioration of the

setting for couples and families, with a fabulous range of facilities, including an extensive choice of water sports and land-based activities, five restaurants, a renowned Givenchy Spa and personal butler service.

The beautiful resort also features three luxury waterfront villas, which have redefined the benchmark for luxury villas in Mauritius. Open since May 2005, Le Touessrok Villas offer ultra-exclusive and spacious accommodation, using the latest technology to meet the high expectations of the most discerning guests to Mauritius. Unsurprisingly, it has



Grand Baie, in the north of Mauritius, is the Mauritian center for sailing activities.

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just received the Daily Telegraph's Ultratravel Magazine's "Best Hotel in Africa and the Indian Ocean" award.

SRL was incorporated in February 1983 and has been listed on the Stock Exchange of Mauritius since January 1993. It is 100 percent Mauritian-owned and has around 13,000 shareholders.

"The hotel industry has been at crossroads in the past few years, because we have been highly dependent on Europe. Because of our history, our main market as always had been Europe and the UK. We have been capitalizing on that," Wong said. "We have been looking timidly at other markets, especially those in Asia and the Middle East, but since the crisis in Europe, which started three years ago, we had to come up with a clear strategy of how to capitalize on and obtain a bigger share of the Chinese and Asian markets.

"For us as a hotel group, and for the Mauritian government as well, it was clear that we wanted to grow the Chinese market and exploit its huge potential.

"We have been in the Maldives for the past seven years, and have seen the Chinese market grow from zero to become the leading market. With 250,000 arrivals a year, it is now our premier market and growing exponentially.

"If you look at the Maldives as a destination, they have been very lucky. They had a good strategy of basically capitalizing on new emerging markets, especially China, and very successful in mitigating the loss of the European market, which Mauritius hasn't been able to do until now."

Wong, a chartered accountant who has been in the tourism industry for

20 years, is very clear what sets SRL apart, said:

"We were one of the pioneers on the island, and our model has always been the quality of our customer service. We make our clients very happy.

"Because we were one of the first resorts on the island, we were able to pick prime locations. Newer hotels don't have that privilege anymore as the island is limited in terms of beachfront areas. We have invested a lot in our image and in the quality of all our properties. Mauritius is a long-stay island, an exclusive place. We have shopping, sightseeing and casinos, so there is more to do than just go to the beach.

"Our feedback tells us that people like high-end quality destinations and resorts. So the challenge for the next two years will be to ensure people hear about us. We want to remain in the Indian Ocean; we have a presence in Maldives and we are also looking at Seychelles. When the time is right, we will look at Africa: Tanzania or Mozambique for example."

Wong is keen to get Chinese investors on board for its expansion plans. "I think the message is clear; since 1972, we have been a very good partner to China. They invested in Mauritius, and we have been working with the biggest business partners. We are basically looking to expand our relationship in getting more Chinese to Mauritius as a first step. And then, also to get strong partners in terms of cooperation.

"As a partner in terms of support, finance, in terms of going to Africa, and because of our agreements and expertise, China is ideal. We still have developments to look at, in real estate and hotels. A partner-



Tommy Wong  
Chief Finance Officer  
Sun Resorts Ltd

ship would basically accelerate the growth of Chinese investment into our company."

Sun Resorts also has the cushion of its parent company: the Mauritius-based CIEL. Headed by Chairman Arnaud Dalais and with a portfolio of investments of 126 million euros (\$167 million), CIEL Investment is one of the leading Mauritian investment companies, with focused interests in various operating sectors of the Mauritian economy such as tourism, leisure, financial services, investment, property, healthcare and life sciences.

Managed as a long-term investment fund, it has achieved rapid growth primarily through Mauritius equity and equity-related investments and reached an internal rate of return of over 40 percent in US dollar terms over the past 20 years, through an active investment management approach.

*InFocus provided the story*





**SUN RESORTS**

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# Globally competitive, clean and advanced

## The most technologically savvy of all African countries, Mauritius leads as a knowledge hub

For a unique island like Mauritius, connectivity is everything and the country has made phenomenal strides in this field in order to support its world-class financial sector and grow as an information and communications technology hub. Already Africa's leading ICT economy, the globally competitive country was selected by the World Economic Forum as a case study for its "Making of a Digital Nation" report.

The ICT sector, the study notes, is well on the way to being an important engine of economic development, along with tourism and finance.

The sector contributed 6.5 percent to the GDP in 2011 and employs around 15,000 people, nearly 5 percent of the total workforce, although this is expected to double by next year. The sector grew by 9.5 percent in 2012, showing its dynamism and potential. Minister for ICT Tassara-jen Pillay Chedumbrum, who took up post in May 2010 when ICT's contribution to GDP was a mere 4.8 percent, explained where the attraction lies.

"The consistency has been growing for a long time now," he said. "Business process outsourcing and information technology firms are attracted to us because Mauritius is safe and secure. We have democratic elections every five years. Our electricity supply is stable; there is no power cut every two or three hours. And, in terms of connection costs, we have introduced a new tariff so users are paying half of what they paid before.

"We have introduced more competition into the sector, so we have more broadband providers and this has addressed the cost of connectivity substantially. We have also set up an industry-driven ICT academy in order to build up a pool of skilled labor. We have a young and intelligent population that is bilingual, and you have direct flights from Mauritius to Europe and Asia."

Work on a new IT park will start in November, in order to accommodate the overspill from the popular Ebene Cyber City, which has around 600 ICT companies domiciled on its premises.

"We hope the new building will be



**The strategic partnership with Industrial and Commercial Bank of China certainly boosts our ability to connect Chinese investors to African opportunities."**

LAKSHMAN BHEENICK  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
STANDARD BANK

completed before the end of 2014, because we have a lot of demand," Chedumbrum said.

**Helping Mauritius grow**

The Hassam Moussa Rawat Group of Companies, also known as HM Rawat, has been a pivotal player in the island's digital revolution.

A family-owned business that deals with everything from luxury furniture and cars to apparel and industrial equipment, HM Rawat is also a leading name in mobile communications, IT hardware, software solutions and mobile applications for the Southwest Indian Ocean, Africa and the Indian Ocean Islands regions.

In business for around 120 years, the company has been highly praised for its good governance and boasts a turnover of \$110 million.

From his office in a shiny new, 30,000 square feet multi-level landmark building in Beau Bassin-Rose



**Our aim is to align the interests of individuals, corporations and society and transform society through the design and deployment of ICT."**

MOHAMAD AMEEN H. RAWAT  
GROUP CHAIRMAN AND CEO  
HM RAWAT

Hill, the second largest settlement on the island after the capital Port Louis, Mohamad Ameen H. Rawat offered an overview of his company's success.

"We believe that the results showing our good governance are based on our business acumen. We invested our own resources and made our way to the top. As described by Sydney Selvon in his book *In Search of Excellence*, HM Rawat is a trendsetter and stays one step ahead of technology.

"Our aim is to align as closely as possible the interests of individuals, corporations and society. Furthermore, good governance entails financial responsibility, accountability and transparency," Rawat said.

The company's social conscience is also very strong. HM Rawat is one of the key partners of the government in the development of Public Key Infrastructure, and it is responsible for the implementation of the digital signature cer-



Port Louis.

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tificate. We would like to transform society through the design and deployment of ICT," Rawat said.

**Advancing technologies**

With these strategic business investments, HM Rawat is widening access to more advanced ICT services such as broadband for high-speed internet.

"Mauritius offers excellent business opportunities in many sectors," Rawat explained. "We recommend IT and BPO, as it can realize the potential of e-commerce by developing policy and practical tools that encourage competition, growth, predictability, compliance and the secured, free flow of information in cross-border trade, via the Internet and ICT.

"The IT/BPO global sourcing market size is currently estimated between \$89 billion and \$93 billion with IT and BPO market shares averaging 40 and 60 percent respectively. The contribution of the IT/BPO sector to the Mauritian economy is expected to grow to 8 percent by 2015 with direct employment in the sector amounting to 25,000"

**Innovating to benefit all**

Founded in 1992, Mauritius Telecom is a private company also dedicated to the island's development. For Chairman Mohammed Asraf Dulull, investment and innovation are the keys to the company's success, as well as the country's ongoing competitiveness.

"Because the government is our major shareholder, we need to focus on the social aspect of the technical development, as well as creating wealth for shareholders.

"We help by giving our latest technology to economic operators for them to be more competitive in order to be able to optimize the resources and compete with international players, but we also bring ICT closer to the people that need it.

"For a country to succeed, we have to democratize access to ICT and that's what we are doing at Mauritius Telecom. Here, you can get an Internet connection for around \$8 a month."

With the number of individual subscriptions of Mauritius Telecom at more than 1.2 million, it is doing a great job capturing the market.

However, as Dulull noted: "Although we want higher market penetration, we are also keen to improve the quality and the number of services for our subscribers. Our aim is to bring more satisfaction through continued improvements to our network and services."

**Asia and Africa are presently the two regions with sizeable economic growth opportunities. Standard Bank Mauritius is well positioned as a channel for the rapidly growing flux of trade between China and Africa."**

LAKSHMAN BHEENICK,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, STANDARD BANK MAURITIUS LTD

Orange customers, for example, can use one of Mauritius Telecom's 19 Orange shops to withdraw cash from an ATM.

The teleco is also working on offering a service where they can make financial transactions through their phones. Mauritius Telecom will contribute a lot to making sure Mauritius becomes a cyber island, Chairman Mohammed Asraf Dulull asserted.

**Excellent performance**

In the meantime, the financial sector remains one of the island's best-performing sectors. The island's two leading banks posted record profits last year, while growth for this year is expected to be a steady 5 percent. Huge opportunities lie within the increased penetration of the African mainland.

Standard Bank (Mauritius) Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Standard Bank Group, is the largest bank in Africa in terms of earnings and assets. It has been in Mauritius since 2001 and has expanded rapidly since then. At the end of last year, it boasted assets of \$2.2 billion and employed more than 130 employees.

Today, it is a major player in its targeted segments and provides corporate and investment banking to governments, parastatals, large corporations, financial institutions and international counterparties.

Lakshman Bheenick, chief executive of SBML, explained why his bank should be the investor's choice for their financial needs.

"Rooted in Africa for more than 150 years with an on-the-ground presence in 18 African countries, Standard Bank has an intrinsic understanding of the dynamics that drive the African continent.

"Having developed in line with the sophistication of the markets, our corporate and investment banking unit provides tailored solutions to connect our customers in, for and across Africa with a deep specialization in natural resources.

"Asia and Africa are presently the two regions with sizeable economic growth opportunities. Standard Bank Mauritius is well positioned

as a channel for the rapidly growing flux of trade between China and Africa.

"We also leverage on the advantages Mauritius offers through its strategic location and political stability and skilled bilingual workforce, as well as a distinct competitive advantage to investors wishing to make use of Mauritius as a gateway to Africa through its network of Double Taxation Avoidance Treaties with 15 African countries.

"Finally, the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China Ltd, the world's largest bank by market value, is the single shareholder of the Standard Bank Group. This strategic partnership most certainly boosts our ability to connect Chinese investors to African opportunities."

The appetite of Chinese investors into resource-rich Africa has increased substantially over the past decade. Standard Bank has set up an office in Beijing – Standard Advisory (China) Limited – which provides a full spectrum of banking solutions including Investment Banking, Corporate Banking, Global Markets (foreign exchange and hedging) and Transactional Products and Services to Chinese businesses operating in Africa.

The pro-Mauritian sentiments are echoed by Arnaud Lagesse, CEO of GML, one of the country's flagship conglomerates, which posted a turnover of MUR 27.6 billion for the first half of this year. With more than 22,000 shareholders and around 300 subsidiaries, the group is dedicated to sustainability practices, as well as profits.

"The people working here are proactive," he said. "Because of the small economy, we have had to diversify our activities. Mauritius could be the knowledge hub for Africa."

InFocus provided the story

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> Corporate and Investment Banking

CAPTURING AFRICAN OPPORTUNITIES

Standard Bank (Mauritius) Limited is the gateway to unlock Africa's unique growth opportunities. We leverage on our African footprint, local market knowledge and strong focus on natural resources to provide tailor-made corporate and investment banking solutions for clients going into Africa.

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