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Newsline

News Sports Business Life

Maz Millions: Lottery winners receive their cheques (page 2)



Mervin Dugasse crowned Mr Seychelles 2019 (page 4)



Victoria's first waterfront garden opens (page 7)



Destination Seychelles: Frégate (page 10)



Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture Seychelles' Food Week officially launched with food fair

For this year's food week, the Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture organised a food fair 'Manifestasyon Manze Lokal 2019' at the NSC Hall, on Sunday, 13 October 2019.

by E. Chang-Thiou

The food fair is one of the many activities to take place this week. In the presence of President Danny Faure, ministers and MNAs, Minister for Fisheries and Agriculture Charles Bastienne officially launched the food fair open.

"This year, is, in fact, the 39th celebration of the International Food Day, a day dedicated by Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and this year's theme is our action is our future – a good diet for a world without hunger. This is the 2nd edition of the food fair," he said.

He added that the first edition of the food fair surpassed the ministry's expectations and is hoping this year's edition will add more value to the two sectors.



Diverse local produce on sale

"To be able to guarantee the future of our two sectors, we need to involve our youth. We have high hopes that they, with our supports and proper encouragement, will work hard and bring substantial results in the agricultural and fisheries sector. We will soon announce initiatives that will push the interest of youth for the two sectors. In the meantime, we want to encourage the youth to take up a career or pursue their future in the two sectors, to assure a healthy lifestyle for the Seychellois people," said Minister Bastienne.

The food fair is an opportunity for not only the sale of local products but for the public to get to know their producers and to showcase the hard work local farmers, fishery companies and

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Big Interview with Dr Nirmal Shah Chief Executive Officer of Nature Seychelles

"Somebody coming and illegally taking our resources, that guy's a thief and he's sabotaging the progress towards the Blue Economy"

This week, TODAY talks to Seychellois Dr Nirmal Shah, well known civil society leader and change-maker who has 35 years' experience working nationally and internationally in various fields including sustainable development, biodiversity conservation, coastal zone management, fisheries, ecotourism, climate change, environmental education and insect, bird and marine research.

by S.Els

What should Seychelles do to harden its stance on illegal and unreported fishing in Seychelles?

We have to understand that we're a tiny country. Sometimes we forget we're the fourth or fifth smallest country in the world, and we have this huge marine territory that would be difficult for most countries to manage anyway. Some of it is quite re-

mote – that's the challenge. The Seychelles government has to forge bilateral or multilateral partnerships to be able to help us manage this huge Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). When we talk about Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing,



Dr Nirmal Shah, CEO of Nature Seychelles

some of these vessels are small and difficult to detect. But also, what a lot of people don't understand, is even the licenced boats are sometimes behaving illegally – under reporting their catches, under reporting the species, especially now when there's a quota

on Yellowfin Tuna. They may be switching off their radio transmitters the moment they leave the Seychelles EEZ. It's probably at a scale where it's quite difficult to manage. But also we have to

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Notes	TT/Draft	
	Buying	Selling
Buying	13.85	14.35
Selling	13.90	14.25

“Somebody coming and illegally taking our resources, that guy’s a thief and he’s sabotaging the progress towards the Blue Economy”

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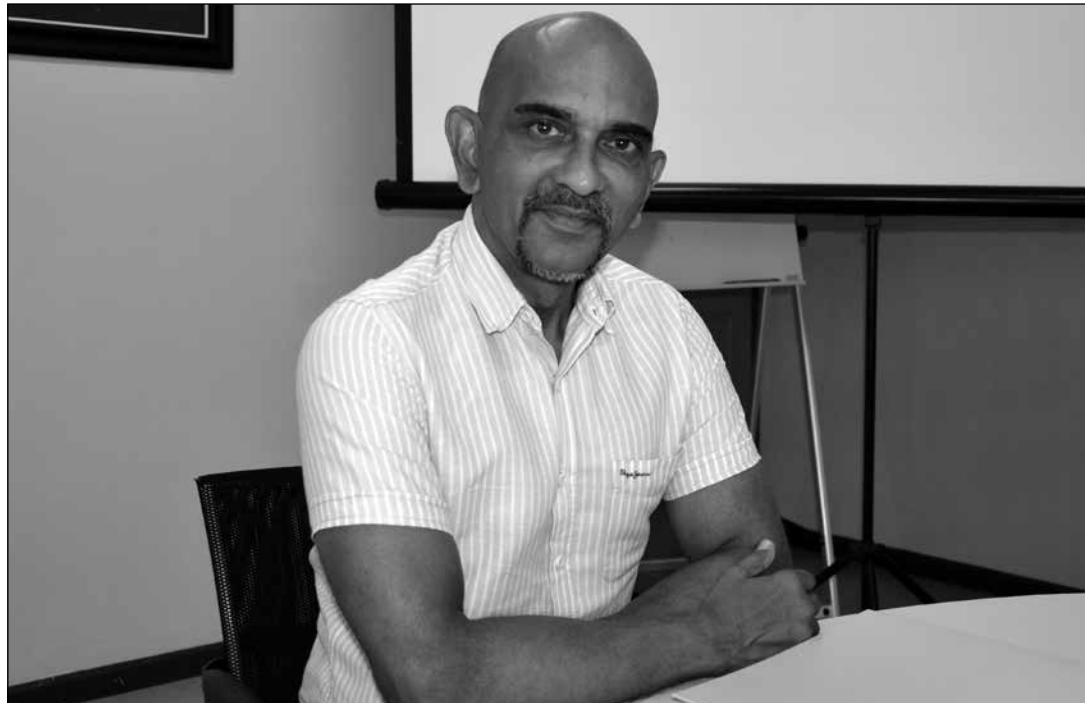
take advantage of new technology. We have Fish Watch and various others where all these vessels are being tracked in real-time. These kinds of applications are becoming more and more sophisticated. This is one way we should do it. Everywhere around the world practices are being automated. It’s a higher priority for us because we don’t have the human capacity. For example, one of the things that are being tried on a voluntary basis is cameras on tuna vessels – so that we have constant electronic surveillance.

What is the situation with Yellowfin Tuna stocks at the moment?

If we look at the catch reports, it seems that they’ve reduced the catches. But there are a lot of organisations, especially the international NGOs that are saying this is under-reporting. I can’t tell you what the reality of it is. But these organisations tracking this, even National Geographic has become interested, are saying that it is serious under-reporting and perhaps even over-reporting of other species, for example, Big Eye. Independent experts are saying that there’s a high probability that some of these vessels are reporting Big Eye which is not threatened at the moment rather than Yellowfin Tuna but it’s actually Yellowfin Tuna. We don’t want bad publicity or even a campaign against Tuna fishing as we saw last year where there were some calls not to eat Yellowfin from the Indian Ocean because of overfishing. The crux of the problem in Seychelles as regards everything is lack of capacity. For years, I, and the rest of civil society have been saying ‘government you can’t do this all by yourself’. You have a natural limitation in what you can grow as – government can’t grow exponentially. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has put limitations on government growth. You need to partner with the private sector and civil society to do a lot of this work. Unfortunately, in fisheries now, as we saw in conservation 20 years ago, there’s a huge conflict between civil society organisations/private sector and government authorities in charge of management of fisheries. Civil society and private sector are voicing concerns and also dissatisfaction at the engagement between the government authority and stakeholders and user groups. If we are not careful about building a common vision and rolling out benefits for all in our society the Seychelles is going to be in a lot of trouble.

Is Seychelles doing enough to protect its EEZ?

We are doing as much as we can, being a very small country. We need to form many partnerships – it’s a sort of balancing act between sovereignty and trying to manage a huge EEZ. We can’t do this ourselves. Let’s not get into the realm of fantasy. Most people don’t understand how big our EEZ is. We need to have technology, set up some sort of monitoring and surveillance. But also partnerships with other countries. We saw this with the EU with piracy which worked pretty well. We do have some partnerships. We have India providing dornier aircraft for surveillance, for example. As a



Dr Nirmal Shah

country, we need to come to the table with the stakeholders, not just civil servants and rich men. What kinds of things do we need to do to secure this huge territory? Without that conversation, I think the Blue Economy remains just a sort of pie in the sky. Because before you can gain economic and social benefits from something, you have to be able to control it and manage it.

We are seeing an increase of illegal fishing cases ending up in court and in some circumstances, perpetrators are given a light sentence and boats confiscated. Do you think more severe sentences should be considered?

When these sentences are passed sometimes the situation of the fishermen is taken into consideration, because many of these people are just employees. They don’t physically own the boat, they haven’t planned this and they don’t get the money behind it. The Seychelles being quite progressive in social thinking, the courts must be thinking this is not their fault. But seriously, I think there should be much more severe punishment. We should be looking at this issue as economic piracy. When we say IUU fishing, it hides a lot of evils – it hides things we’re not thinking of. Somebody coming and taking our resource? That guy’s a thief and he’s sabotaging our progress towards the Blue Economy. That’s the lens we should be looking through – these people are saboteurs. We should throw as many punitive measures at them as possible. But also keeping in mind that some of these people are indentured and real victims, as we saw with the Somali pirates, although the Somali pirates were sentenced and jailed. We have to approach the whole business of securing our EEZ as securing our economy and our future.

What should Seychelles be pushing for regarding the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement (SFPA) with the EU?

There is a lot of controversy over it. We’ve seen that in your newspaper and other parts of the media and internationally. As a country, we need to be more transparent about these kinds of things. There needs to be more economic research done on the benefits of the tuna fishery to

Seychelles. Some have been done but they’re quite rudimentary. More sophisticated analysis has to be done regarding many aspects – such as what is the government providing in terms of benefits, in terms of incentives, the domestic taxes they do not pay, transfer pricing arrangements, subsidies the EU vessels receive, and so forth. And what are we getting in terms of cash. Those are the kinds of things that people have sort of crept around on egg shells. I know that a recent unpublished study has started to approach this – and it shows that the benefits are not as much as what we have been told they are. Part of the solution would be to involve people apart from civil servants – everyone involved in this process at the moment is civil servants. What we see happening now, are more and more voices, ranging from the National Assembly to associations to do with fisheries, environmental and rights-based NGOs and others, asking to be involved in one way or another in these negotiations. Why? Because people know that these resources don’t belong to the government, they belong to all of us, today and tomorrow. So, it’s an equity issue. I want to emphasize this: Everything that we negotiate with the European Union and other foreign entities is an equity issue, of concern to every Seychellois. It has to do with one of the few natural resources that we have that could be sustainably used in the future. Everybody has to know what’s going on. It’s irrational and illogical to say that only a handful of civil servants can make this decision on behalf of present and future generations. We are talking about fisheries transparency. We’ve set up FiTi here. We have an Access to Information Act. But at the same time, a very important black box is not being opened to our people.

Is there enough opportunity for Seychellois to fish in our waters and what can be done to enhance the lives of local fishermen?

The next step would be for the semi-industrial fishery. Again, here we see the huge presence of the EU – some people call it a ‘stranglehold’. The whole EU partnership is weighed heavily to the EU’s benefit. Published research on this subject shows this is the case for all these EU partnership agreements in other

countries. So they are using the same strategy in Seychelles. We have to be careful that it’s not restricting the growth of our semi-industrial fishery or even hampering the growth of other parts of the fishery. The future would be reducing the capacity of the EU fleet and increasing the capacity of the Seychellois-owned fishery. This is where Seychellois can invest and do well.

Are Seychelles-flagged vessels receiving priority or equal opportunity compared to EU vessels fishing in Seychelles?

I think they are. We are talking about flagged-vessels in terms of industrial fishery. These are not Seychellois-owned vessels. We have the semi-industrials owned by Seychellois. Then we have industrial vessels which are these purse seiners that are foreign-owned but based in Seychelles that are Seychelles flagged. Tomorrow if the fishery gets difficult these vessels will go back to where they came from and get another flag. I think they are being monitored by the Seychelles authority quite well and I think they have adequate opportunities. But again, because of the quota system, and because of what the EU is pushing in terms of fisheries allocations at the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), we have to be careful that the EU fleet doesn’t get the lion’s share. We have to be very vigilant that the EU doesn’t bully these countries including Seychelles into allocation criteria that benefit itself mostly – I’ve spoken on this subject in this newspaper previously where I said we could become pirates in our waters if we are not watchful. I think that’s the issue. This is why we need a more diverse delegation to go to these negotiations whether it’s the IOTC or EU negotiations. We need the Chamber of Commerce, fisheries associations and others included in this. We should trust our people. There is expertise and energy outside government. Even if these people can’t be in the face-to-face negotiations, they must be involved in various ways to see what’s happening and report back to their constituencies and stakeholders. They can even raise concerns. We are talking about fisheries transparency. It has to start with that. Trust the people, get them onboard. There is so much suspicion, so much distrust in the fisheries sector. Everybody you talk to is unhappy.

Something has to be done. When we talk about the Blue Economy, it’s the economy we are talking about. The economy as we know is driven by the private sector. As regards civil society, in most countries they are watchdogs and important alternative voices. That sort of partnership has to be understood and agreed by government. It used to be understood and agreed upon. I don’t know what’s gone wrong. There is suspicion and distrust now. Actually, in this sector, I think we need to be extremely careful. It may be on the brink because people are so angry all the time.

Is the country earning what it should be earning and is Seychelles being sold short in any way?

I think Seychelles is being sold short in many ways. For example, let’s take bycatch from the tuna vessels. Bycatch now has to be landed here. The government started a bycatch policy. It involved the private sector which is very good. The private sector was very interested in the bycatch of tuna and other species. They started to export it, now suddenly the bycatch policy is shelved because there are issues. The people who are exporting bycatch are very unhappy and angry. A new trustworthy relationship has to be forged. Anybody you talk to now is just disenchanted about the Blue Economy.

What are your thoughts on having a military base on Assumption, do you think it will bring security for the EEZ?

There are two different issues: an Indian military base and the need to manage our EEZ. The latter is the key. With our EEZ, very few people understand what’s going on out there. This is the last frontier. It’s like the wild west. It’s like when the pioneers came into the United States and they were conquering new territory. Forts had to be built in the outposts of the territory to protect it. In some parts of our vast EEZ, we know what’s there and many places we don’t. We need to manage it before it’s pillaged completely. The only way to manage this huge territory is to be able to use technology and partnerships, as I said. We know that we don’t have enough people and resources to make and run these “forts” everywhere. Nevertheless, it is vital that the “forts” are owned solely by Seychelles although we may need others, our usual partners, to help us achieve the objective. In the case of Assumption, it is very close to Aldabra so we need to be extremely mindful about what we do there. As I said, there is a very delicate and difficult balancing act here, between sovereignty and partnership. These blocks and countries we are talking about, whether it’s India or the EU, they have their own vested interests in the Indian Ocean, so they may not always act in our best interest. So we need to be on top of the game always. What disappoints me about this whole thing to do with a so-called military base on Assumption is, that none of the entities that have been charged with conservation and management of these islands have even spoken properly about the issue of the military base.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS LINE

Civilians displaced in Turkey’s Syria offensive fear for future



As fighting raged in Ras al-Ain on Saturday, with Turkey’s military claiming to be in control of the key Syrian border town, civilians continued to flee the violence. Ahmed Naso, who fled his home in Ras al-Ain when Turkey launched its offensive on Wednesday, said airstrikes that day “came out of nowhere” and that people “immediately” began evacuating from nearby towns and villages. The United Nations has said that 100,000 civilians have been displaced since Wednesday.

Source: Al Jazeera

Typhoon Hagibis: Japan deploys military rescuers as deadly storm hits



Japan has deployed tens of thousands of troops and rescue workers after one of the strongest storms in years hit, killing at least 18 people. Typhoon Hagibis made landfall south of Tokyo on Saturday, moving north and bringing severe flooding. Thirteen people are missing from the storm, public broadcaster NHK said. In central Nagano prefecture, water surrounded Japan’s famous bullet trains while helicopters plucked stranded residents from rooftops. A total of 27,000 military troops and other rescue crews have been deployed in relief operations, authorities said.

Source: BBC

Army deployed in Ecuador as protests descend into violence



President Lenín Moreno ordered the army on to the streets of Ecuador’s capital Quito after a week and a half of protests over fuel prices devolved into violent incidents, with masked protesters attacking a television station, newspaper and the national auditor’s office. Moreno said the military enforced curfew would begin at 3pm local time in response to violence in areas previously untouched by the protests.

Source: Guardian

Hong Kong protesters defy ban on masks as they clash with police

Thousands of protesters are continuing to defy a ban on wearing masks in Hong Kong as clashes have again taken place between demonstrators and authorities. A petrol bomb was thrown at the gate of a metro station, and two government offices and a cafe were vandalised, although the mood on Saturday was less tense than at recent protests because police had not used teargas. Late on Saturday, however, the mood changed when police fired a shot outside the Mong Kok police station. The shot, possibly a rubber bullet or sponge round, was fired after a small group of protesters shouted obscenities and shone laser at police officers, who rushed out to subdue and beat a couple of young men.

Source: Guardian