

**MAURITIUS PHILATELIC SOCIETY**

**SUPPLEMENT**

**TO QUARTERLY UPDATES No. 3 – 2019**

Further to the short note about the 2019 STAMP PROGRAMME in our Quarterly Update No.1 regarding the cabinet decision of 15<sup>th</sup> February 2019 new additions to the programme were announced on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2019 by the Government of Mauritius as follows:

Item No.11 : Cabinet has taken note that two special issues of stamps would be added to the “Stamp Issue Programme 2019”, namely on the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, the islands of Chagos Archipelago and the visit of His Holiness Pope Francis in Mauritius. The cabinet’s comma after Justice, suggests three special issues not two.

This cabinet decision overrides the advisory role of the Stamp Advisory Committee which gets no mention. Government decides and Mauritius Post executes. Note that Mauritius Post had at 30<sup>th</sup> September not yet issued any stamp programme for 2019. That being the case the solution is to sack all the SAC members, close it down; save money!

The society will list the stamps of 2019 after they have all been issued in its December 2019 No.4 Quarterly Updates. Our members and visitors to our website will then be able to compare what should have been with what has been.

The cabinet decision of 15 February 2019 lists 11 items in order (a) to (k) for the “Stamp Issue Programme” of the year. The Japanese item is listed (j) 10<sup>th</sup> or second last. On 30<sup>th</sup> April a single title (and **not** a triple one) namely the “50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Mauritius” leap-frogged eight other commemoratives to become the second stamp issued this year.

The cabinet’s initial listing and subsequent additions and the non publication of any stamp issue programme from Mauritius Post impacts negatively on the way some institutions function. The absence of Mauritius Post stamp issue programme with details of themes and dates of the stamps of 2019 as well as the opacity in the way in which stamps have been (and have not been) issued so far in 2019 is unacceptable.

During the last few years the stamp issue programmes have been approved, published and circulated very late. Up to September 2019 no programme from Mauritius Post has been seen. Inquiries to the philatelic bureau get a “don’t know” response. The decay of Mauritius’ philatelic reputation continue to worsen. Poor if not rubbish stamps, loss of interest by collectors and declining philatelic sales stares the “Issuing Postal Authority” in the face however Mauritius Post does nothing to stop the rot.

**MAURITIUS PHILATELIC SOCIETY**

**FOR THE FACTS ON MAURITIAN PHILATELY AS THEY ARE  
FORTHRIGHT OBJECTIVE RELIABLE**

## MINIATURE SHEET AND SOUVENIR SHEET

A miniature sheet is a small sheet containing a single stamp, a pair, block or set of stamps issued as a commemorative souvenir for collectors. Sometimes the stamps in the miniature sheet may differ from those of the conventional sheet. Generally the stamp(s) of the M/S and the conventional sheet(s) are similar in theme, value or colour and more importantly miniature sheets have postal validity.

A souvenir sheet may (a) be a small sheet which does not incorporate a stamp or stamps of conventional form and (b) a small sheet of philatelic interest but of no postal validity. Souvenir sheets are in the main philatelic giveaways, exhibition free passes and stamp dealers' promotional handouts.

All the miniature sheets ever issued by Mauritius since 1969 beginning with the Gandhi commemoratives, right up to the International Court of Justice special enforced one of August 2019 are not souvenir sheets but miniature sheets. All the miniature sheets of Mauritius are listed by Stanley Gibbons as M/S and not S/S. All the miniature sheets of Mauritius have postal validity to this day (1).

Beginning in 2018 with the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Independence M/S a trio of miniature sheets of Mauritius have been inscribed Souvenir Sheet; the collective doings of some moronic clowns and the "Issuing Postal Authority Mauritius Post Ltd". Not satisfied with the philatelic chaos they have this far created Mauritius Post acting in cahoots with their cohorts now come up with their own definition and interpretation of philatelic terms.



*Genuine Souvenir Sheet*

*Rare*

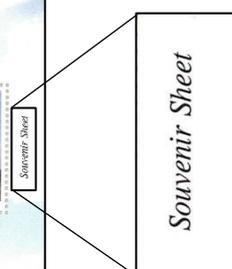
*Actual size 90mm x 95mm*



*Genuine Miniature Sheet*

*Common*

*Actual size 133mm x 100mm*



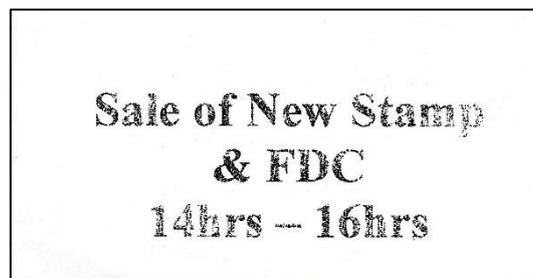
This kind of nonsense has never happened before. How far is Mauritius Post prepared to go in messing up what is left of the once good philatelic reputation of Mauritius? Beginning in 2006 the philatelic antics of Mauritius Post have destroyed the good philatelic name of modern Mauritius. Mauritius may well never recover from the damage inflicted.

## PHILATELIC POSTSCRIPTS OF A PAPAL VISIT

I The public holiday of Monday 9<sup>th</sup> September 2019 was no holiday for many public servants of Mauritius especially the police and others such as the catholic clergy, the catholic volunteers, some essential services and particularly at least 15 very unhappy Mauritian postal officers.

Circular Instructions No.26/2019 of 28<sup>th</sup> August 2019 re: Sale of stamps and FDC of Pope Francis on Monday 09 September 2019 changed the hours of business from 9:00 to 11:00 to 14:00 to 16:00.

The reason – “In order to allow our citizens to attend the event at “Marie Reine de la Paix” in other words the open air mass which incidentally **did not** clash in any way with the original 9:00 to 11:00 hours slot. In fact the change meant that perhaps except for the only Port Louis outlet, Philatelic Bureau, none of the 14 other outlets could have benefitted from the change. As a matter of fact one particular outlet (provided with four times its normal quota of OFDCs) sold a grand total of 2 out of the allotted 40. If the marketing gurus at Mauritius Post thought that a predominantly catholic crowd at the mass in Port Louis would rush out to buy FDCs in the afternoon between 14:00 and 16:00 hours they got it all wrong.



*Actual size 70mm x 35mm*

Interestingly on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> September fresh instructions were issued viz. “a poster with the new hours of transactions is annexed” for the information of the public – notwithstanding that the poster to be displayed on a notice board within the post office building and that the 7<sup>th</sup> Saturday was a half day, the 8<sup>th</sup> Sunday (the eve of the sale) was not a working day. A dumb Mauritius Post pre-sale promotional stunt! The poster measures 29.1cm x 41.5cm, the time change adhesive stuck to it measures 70mm x 35mm. A glaring example of a lack of any professionalism and promotional visibility; the work of amateurs.

II In the evening of 9<sup>th</sup> September at the State House function during an exchange of official gifts between the Vatican and the government of Mauritius two of the gifts presented to the pope were an Official First Day Cover in what appeared to be some kind of protective frame and a sheet of 50 stamps of the “Visit of Pope Francis in Mauritius” ... unprotected! At the handover ceremony in full glare of local and international media no less than four persons handled the flipping sheet with both bare hands, the aide to the pm, the pm, the pope and the aide to the pope. The bent and warped sheet exchanged between eight sweaty hands were imprinted with enough finger and palm prints to end up completely ruined with crackled, disturbed and damaged gum. Watching this unbelievable event on TV I cringed, as did my colleague, Stephen Spark from London, visiting Mauritius. It is an absolute disgrace that

Mauritius Post did not place the sheet, even if the face value is only Rs 650.00, in a proper philatelic protector and if they did not know what a protector is at the very least protect the sheet with suitable presentation packing.

### WHITEWASHED AND BLACKENED OUT

The problem with the new stamp production policy of Mauritius Post, introduced during the first decade of the new millennium, namely the local retouching of photographs taken specifically for reproduction as postage stamps has resulted in the total loss of all creativity and originality. In the past stamps of Mauritius were entrusted to professional stamp designers. In 2019 alone two local graphically worked stamps issued depict a faceless white family and a black faced team namely the International Day of Family stamp of 15<sup>th</sup> May and a J.I.O.I. stamp and M/S of 19<sup>th</sup> July. Some other examples are the 2011 “International Year of Chemistry” stamp, the “paddock” M/S of the 2012 Mauritius Turf Club commemoratives and two of the four “Customs Department in Mauritius” stamps of 2012.



*Stamps drawn by professional designers from photographs*



*Graphically worked stamps by Mauritius Post from photographs*

In the past Mauritius hardly ever issued faceless persons on its stamps, subjects could be identified because stamps were drawn by professional artists. Today standards have simply hit rock bottom with the garbage in garbage out graphically retouched photograph stamp production process at Mauritius Post.

### GOLD LAURELS AND MOBILE POST OFFICE 3

Here is the Quarterly Update No.2 of 2019 promise to deal with a\* and b\* “**Foreign Relations**” and “**Mobile Post Office 3**”

a\* In three successive years gold laurels have graced three different Official First Day Covers because of a lack of imagination or worse from the issuing postal authority, Mauritius Post, and its stamp advisory experts of the SAC. Gold is supposed to symbolize 50 years.

On 12<sup>th</sup> March 2017 an inappropriate gold laurel illustrated the OFDC of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Republic of Mauritius, a **25** year silver occasion. The reworked 1992 coat of arms of Mauritius is shown on the 2017 anniversary stamp with the national colours but without laurels. The same coa however illustrates the 2017 OFDC together with the gold standard laurel of the “President’s flag” introduced on 12<sup>th</sup> March 1992, simply because of a lack of inspiration and creativity or maybe stupidity and definitely very poor imagination.

On 12<sup>th</sup> March 2018 a gold laurel is used to mark the **50<sup>th</sup>** Anniversary of Independence which by pure coincidence happened to be the **26<sup>th</sup>** Anniversary of the Republic, without any mention of the silver plus one year of the event previously commemorated in 2017 with a gold laurel. A mix of 15 stamps issued in previous years with **both** independence and republic themes are embraced within the gold laurel. No inventiveness whatsoever.

On 30<sup>th</sup> April 2019 a gold laurel illustrates the OFDC of a trio of blurred events. What the date has to do with any of three different events is baffling. Firstly the stamp shows only one building, a **Radar at Trou aux Cerfs** in Curepipe, inaugurated 27 days earlier on 03 April a date that has nothing to do with the occasion unless Mauritius Post got their **0** misplaced. Nothing gold about this occasion unless the radar project is a 50 year old project. The explicit object on the stamp is the radar station building, nothing else. Financed by the Japanese government and implemented by the Japanese Cooperation Agency, it is a Foreign Aid project and not a **Foreign Relations** issue. As for the **50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Mauritius** the main title of the OFDC, relations was established “soon after the proclamation of Independence of Mauritius” in 1968 according to the data card. What date and how soon after the independence we are not told. Both the Mauritius Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Japanese Embassy in Mauritius were unable to provide us with the exact date. The Japanese however provided us with this; Japan recognized the independence of Mauritius on 12<sup>th</sup> March 1968, diplomatic relations were established some time in 1969. And yet another gold laurel OFDC – three times in three years – embedded, unbridled monotony.

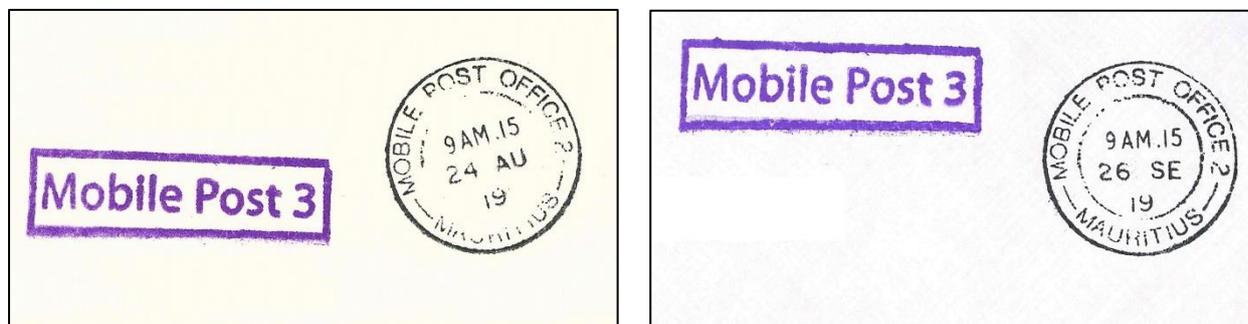


*Whether right side up or upside down this is a very good example of a very bad stamp*

Whilst writing this supplement I looked at the stamps and OFDC of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Independence 2018 set again. The Rs13 denomination shows two hands and the creole *Lame dan Lame* title of a “hand in hand” song. The locked hands of the stamp however convey a strong arm-wrestling contest grip rather than an amicable affectionate national unity handshake. Think about it, the grip may actually represent the 50 years struggle to come to terms with the problems of the discriminatory communal divisions and other darker aspects of Mauritius. Mauritius Post does have a sense of humour after all even if it is a warped one.

**b\*** The report of the introduction of the **Mobile Post Office 3** services on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2019 was not accompanied by any postmarks simply because at the 30<sup>th</sup> June cut-off date of Quarterly Updates No.2 the society had not seen any postal markings having learnt of the new facility for Camp Levieux residents only in mid-August. On 24<sup>th</sup> August we saw for the first time a strike of the (new) postmark of the double circle Type D circular datestamp struck reading **Mobile Post Office 2** top and Mauritius bottom on a cover serviced at Camp Levieux. This datestamp is the spare datestamp of the second **Mobile Post Office 2** service of Mauritius based at Forest Side. It is **not** the designated numeral 3, for the new Mobile Post Office 3 service. Furthermore the same item of mail is struck with a rubber handstamp reading **Mobile Post 3**. We repeated the exercise again on 26 September 2019 and we got the same result, a **Mobile Post Office 2** postmark and a **Mobile Post Office 3** rubber stamp mark on the cover.

The Mauritius Post is contravening all conventions governing the designation and utilization of datestamps with very serious legal implications. The postmark **Mobile Post Office 2** is **not** the postmark for the localities from which **Mobile Post Office 3** is supposed to provide services. How far is Mauritius Post prepared to go in its madness. Incredibly at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2019 more than three months after the introduction of the service the localities of Palma, Barkly and Roches Brunes have not yet seen the yellow van which still operates only between Camp Levieux, in the yard of a funeral parlour, and its base at Stanley post office. Mauritius Post is still in intensive “contemplation” mode before extending the service to the three other localities. Mauritius Post is out of control. If the organization is not out of control then top management is. It is time to fire someone at the top for this insanity.



WRITTEN BY MICO W. ANTOINE

(1) Ref: *Philatelic Terms Illustrated* – Stanley Gibbons.

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Note: The material contained in this update has been compiled and collated in good faith for general information and no liability can be accepted for errors and omissions.