

SANKRANTI REJOICINGS



Can any botanically-minded person inform us of the name of that yellow flower featured on above Sankranti greetings? The name does not appear anywhere and even AI (and the lot of them are defeated). When the Mauritius Posts issued several sets of stamps to commemorate the Flowers of Mauritius, no mention was made of those yellow flowers. The Forest dept may help.

In Mauritius, the red Flamboyant flowers blossom in December to hail the New Year. This yellow flower is in full bloom in January every year and coincides with the celebration of Sankranti.

Many Mauritian Tamils of the older generation call it “Fleur banané Madras”. The Tamil community who originated from South India were known in Mauritius as Madras (after capital of Tamil Nadu).

In South India, Sankranti called Pongal, is celebrated on 14 January (not 15/1) and is a public holiday. It is also the occasion for the annual Harvest Celebrations that last for four days.

Many members of the Tamil community in Mauritius consider Pongal as their New Year. Hence, many Tamils in the country refer to the yellow flower that blossoms at Pongal time as *fleur banané madras*.

The National Sports
Award 2025



Minister Deven Nagalingum at conference

The National Sports Award 2025, dedicated to celebrating sporting excellence, is set to take place on 6 February 2026 at Côte D’Or National Sports Complex. With 14 categories up for grabs, the event will acknowledge the outstanding achievements of Mauritian athletes, coaches, and teams across a wide range of disciplines.

The announcement was made by the Minister of Youth and Sports, Mr Darmarajen Nagalingum, during a press conference

at the Mauritius Sports Council in Port Louis. Minister Nagalingum announced that the categories which will feature in this year’s edition, includes both well-established and newly created awards.

The 14 categories are: Sportsman of the Year; Sportswoman of the Year; Sportsman of the Year – Handisport; Sportswoman of the Year – Handisport; Most Outstanding Performance of the Year (a new category); Junior Sportsman of the Year; Junior Sportswoman of the Year; Most Promising Sportsman of the Year; Most Promising Sportswoman of the Year; Coach of the Year (Individual Sports); Coach of the Year (Team Sports); Team of the Year (Individual Sports); Team of the Year (Team Sports); and Sports Photographer of the Year (returning category)

In addition, a Lifetime Achievement Award will be presented on the gala night to further honour the legacy of those who have dedicated their lives to the sporting world in the Republic of Mauritius.

The event is expected to be graced by several eminent personalities, including the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam; the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Paul Raymond Bérenger; and the Commissioner for Youth from the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, Mr Joseph Varok Ravina.

Minister Nagalingum recalled that the National Sports Award serves not only as a celebration of excellence but also as an inspiration for the younger generation. “It is about rewarding the hard work of our athletes and encouraging our youth to dream big and work towards becoming award recipients themselves,” he stated.

Regarding the nomination process, the Minister explained that 20 out of the 45 sports federations had submitted names of those they believed were deserving of recognition in the various categories. Following an initial evaluation by technical officers from the Ministry of Youth and Sports, a final list of three nominees per category has been put forward for consideration by a voting panel, chaired by the former Minister of Sports and current Chairman of the Mauritius Multisports Infrastructure Limited, Mr Michael Glover.

The Minister pointed out that for the selection of the Most Outstanding Performance of the Year award, 20% of the votes will come from the Sports Press. Meanwhile, the winner of the Sports Photographer of the Year will be selected by a specialised panel of photography experts.

According to Mr Nagalingum, the staff of the Ministry is fully committed to ensuring that the event be grandiose, one that would honour the athletes and the sporting community with the respect and recognition they truly deserve. Sport is not just about competition, but about fostering Mauritian identity, empowering youth, and preparing the next generation for the future, he said.

On another front, the Minister emphasised that 2026 would be a pivotal year for the sports sector, with Federations and youth centres being closely scrutinised for the efficiency of their operations. He mentioned the forthcoming Sports Bill, and the decentralisation of responsibilities at the level of the Ministry in order to provide more streamlined and effective services.

GIS

China and Japan: The Spat Continues

Writes Mylene



Tensions between China and Japan are dominating the news, pushing other stories aside.
Back in MOG Issue 89, I touched on the growing strain between the two countries, a dispute serious enough to land them at the United Nations.
Since then, things don't appear to have improved.



The New Year is usually about fresh starts and leaving old baggage behind. But for China and Japan? Not so much. In 2026, relations between these uneasy neighbours remain decidedly frosty, angry might be the simplest way to put it.

A look back at history helps explain why.

This chill didn't suddenly appear in November 2025, when Prime Minister Takaichi said Japan wouldn't rule out getting involved if China were to move militarily against Taiwan. The roots run much deeper shaped by history and sharpened by recent political moves.

To understand, we have to go back to 1894, when a major power shift turned into war.

That moment set the tone for more than a century of mistrust and explains why, even today, despite trade and repeated attempts to move forward, there's still a noticeable chill in the air between Japan and China.

1894 -1895

The First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) ended with a decisive Japanese victory.

China was forced to cede Taiwan to Japan under the Treaty of Shimonoseki, and Japan ruled the island as a colony until 1945.

China also had to give up its influence over Korea, which was declared independent. In reality, this cleared the way for Japan to take control and formally colonize the country in 1910.

1930s - 1940s

During the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), which merged into World War II, Japan occupied large parts of China. This period saw atrocities such as the Nanjing Massacre, where millions of Chinese civilians died, leaving scars that have never fully healed.

Early 20th Century

Tensions deepened as Japan continued to expand its influence in China.

During World War I, Japan seized Qingdao and surrounding areas in Shandong Province from Germany. Instead of being returned to China after the war, the territory was handed to Japan under the Treaty of Versailles.

The decision caused anger that helped spark the May Fourth Movement in 1919, which became a symbol of foreign exploitation and Japanese opportunism.

1945

The war ended but the bitterness did not.

China felt Japan never fully took responsibility for its actions, while Japan focussed on rebuilding and later aligned closely with the United States.

1972

This marked the year when diplomatic relations between the two countries were normalised, but historical sensitivity never disappeared.

1978 - 2018

After Deng Xiaoping opened China up in 1978, shifting away from strict Mao era policies toward market reforms and foreign investment, the country urgently needed infrastructure.

Japan, wanting regional stability and better post-war relations, became China's biggest source of foreign aid through Official Development Assistance (ODA).

This funding helped to build roads, railways, airports and other major projects. Even today, many Chinese cities still rely on infrastructure partly paid for by Japan.

As China rose to become the world's second-largest economy, Japanese taxpayers questioned why aid was still flowing. The programme officially ended in 2018.

Quietly, the aid has also been seen as a way to make amends for Japan's wartime actions in China, even if this was never said out loud.

2026

The friction continues. China has banned exports of certain dual-use goods, items with both civilian and military use, such as advanced semiconductors, drones and drone parts.

Japan, meanwhile, has launched a major rare earth exploration project to reduce its dependence on China for critical materials.

For now, the lines of communication remain open, even as the chill between them refuses to fade.

Greenpeace Africa office sets up in Mauritius



The establishment of a Greenpeace Africa office in Mauritius marks a major step in advancing regional cooperation on environmental and climate action, while consolidating the country's position as a key hub for dialogue and leadership on ocean and climate issues across the Indian Ocean and Africa, said the Junior Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change, Mrs Joanna Bérenger.

She was speaking, this morning, at the official inauguration of the Mauritius office of

Greenpeace Africa at the Hennessy Park Hotel in Ebene, in the presence of the Executive Director of Greenpeace Africa, Dr Oulie Keita.

In her address, Mrs Bérenger congratulated Greenpeace Africa for its long-standing, structured and bold commitment to environmental protection across the African continent and beyond. She recalled the organisation's role in keeping major environmental challenges at the centre of public debate through scientific documentation, public

mobilisation and advocacy at regional and global levels, adding that such initiatives command respect and recognition.

The Junior Minister recalled that Mauritius, as a Small Island Developing State, is already facing tangible impacts of climate change, including coastal erosion, sea level rise, coral reef degradation and increasing pressure on natural resources.

According to her the choice of Mauritius to host the office is both strategic and symbolic, as the country remains actively engaged in regional and international discussions on the environment, oceans and climate. Such a dynamic will be further reinforced by the presence of Greenpeace Africa, she added.

Mrs Bérenger also pointed out the importance of science-based, long-term and cooperative responses to environmental challenges, noting that the Ministry has opened its decision-making spaces to civil society and non-governmental organisations. While acknowledging that differences in approach may arise, she underscored that dialogue, good faith and mutual trust are essential to achieving balanced and sustainable solutions. She reaffirmed the Ministry's readiness to engage constructively with

Greenpeace Africa in the interest of Mauritius, the region and future generations.

For her part, Dr Keita praised Mauritius' advanced legal frameworks on marine protection, plastic pollution, and sustainable blue economy initiatives, while highlighting the long-standing role of local communities, young activists, and environmental defenders in safeguarding its natural heritage. Greenpeace Africa seeks to complement these efforts by providing expertise, investigative tools, and legal platforms to amplify Mauritian voices while fostering collaboration across the African continent, she added.

Dr Keita also pointed to the opportunities created by the United Nations High Seas Treaty, now in effect, which allows Mauritius and other island nations to better protect international waters, prevent destructive exploration and harmful industrial fishing, and ensure the ocean remains sustainable for future generations. Greenpeace Africa's presence in Mauritius, she said, will be long-term and collaborative, supporting local initiatives rather than imposing external solutions

Source GIS