

**NATIONAL NEWS**

# Good start for STA's in-service courses

The Seychelles Tourism Academy has relaunched its in-service courses and short courses which lost steam due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The one-day courses kicked off this Saturday and include training in wellness and spa, restaurant and bar, food production and culinary arts as well as reception operations and services.

The academy also provides trainings for commission agents and a longer training course of 15 days for freelance tour guiding which comprises a first aid course.

Open to anyone aged from 16 years and above, the courses range from R600 to R900, with the more comprehensive tour guiding course costing R4,500.

The fees includes an assorted

snack box, water bottle, refreshments, and lunch.

Seychelles Tourism Academy's (STA) new director, Terence Max, said he had deemed it important to reinvigorate its in-service programmes when he assumed the responsibility of the school in May this year.

"Aside from various other exercises to revise our programmes and

operations at STA, we also evaluated our in-service programmes and our research showed that there were a lot of demands for these types of courses," stated Mr Max.

"We could see the potential and hence created a new section for in-service programmes headed by Cecile Payet who will lead and spearhead the programme on a full-time basis," he added.

Interest from the public was instantaneous, Mr Max noted, which is a promising start for the academy as it plans to conduct these courses throughout the year.

"We revisited the courses with all of the programme leaders and identified courses with the most demands after which Mrs Payet and her team put together the courses that we are launching today," Mr Max said.

STA is calling on more people to join the courses whether it be to gain further skills in their chosen careers or simply to learn something new such as how to bake.

"The courses are especially in-



Participants during a food production and culinary arts session on Saturday

mand during this pandemic because a number of people are looking to reskill, learn a new skill or open a cottage business such as manicure and pedicure, making pastries with which they can gain some income on the side or just for self-development," explained Mrs Payet.

With Covid-19 health guidelines strictly enforced at the school, STA has limited the courses to about 10 to 15 people.

Participants receive an attendance certificate at the end of the course.

Mrs Payet noted that although STA is carrying much of the financial responsibilities for these courses, the academy is looking into bringing on industry partners to facilitate the courses and provide financial assistance.

Elsie Pointe



STA director Terence Max (standing, second left) and Mrs Payet (first left) engaging with participants in a class being led by Mrs Daniella Rose

## ICS tackles invasive plants threatening Coco-de-mer population on Silhouette



The extent of the creepers suffocating a coco-de-mer tree

From La Passe on Silhouette, a steep trail leads to the enchanting Jardin Marron garden of Coco-de-mer palms.

Situated at an altitude of 400 metres, just before reaching the crest at the top, the indigenous Coco-de-mer palm (*Ladoicea Maldivica*) has recently been facing the threats of the sprawling invasive plants that could potentially affect its future existence.

Since June this year, the Island Conservation Society (ICS) together with partners - the Islands Development Company (IDC) and Seychelles Hilton Labriz Resort & Spa - started a habitat rehabilitation project to tackle the threat. Extensive work was carried out on an expanse of 50 square metres, about half of the area already invaded by invasive plants and creepers.

The alien species, *Merremia peltate* commonly known as *Lalyann gran fey* in Creole, are usually found on the main islands of Mahe and Silhouette. They are known to be aggressive and vigorous invasive creepers. This coarse climbing vine



The team at work

with underground tubers, tend to spread out of control. They grow first in small areas then extend rapidly, crawling onto indigenous species, strangling and smothering them. These fast-growing procumbent plants can grow up to 20 metres high and therefore can easily suffocate the garden's population of towering adult Coco-de-mer plants as well as the juvenile ones.

This monstrous threat, if not consistently and aggressively dealt with raises alarm bells.

Since *Lalyann gran fey* spreads mainly in two ways, either by sprawling onto nearby vegetation or by rooting from its nodes or seeds, cutting and uprooting it from the ground are methods that were determined for eradication. And because the plant species is tough and resilient the project will continue during the coming months.

The iconic Coco-de-mer palm only grows naturally on Praslin and Curieuse islands. Since its introduction to the hills of Silhou-



Jardin Marron invaded by invasive plants

ette in the 1940s, the endemic palm population on about 4,000 square metres, has been thriving well at the heart of *Jardin Marron*. ICS' objective is to keep maintaining a healthy habitat for the Coco-de-mer plants and promote germination.

The garden that accounts for part of Silhouette's history is also the largest area of Coco-de-mer habitat introduced across Seychelles' islands.

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