

ENVIRONMENT

President Danny Faure visits the Vallée de Mai



Educate Seychelles youths to preserve our Unesco world heritage sites

The youths of Seychelles should be educated to preserve our Unesco world heritage sites, President Danny Faure has pointed out.

"We have a world heritage site, the youths of the country should be educated to preserve it," is part of the president's message written in the visitors' book at the Vallée de Mai on Praslin.

He toured the Vallée de Mai on Saturday accompanied by Dr Frauke Fleischer-Dogley, chief executive of the Seychelles Islands Foundation (SIF) which manages the Vallée de Mai.

President Faure is also the patron of the SIF. Speaking about the president's tour of the Vallée de Mai, Dr Frauke Fleischer-Dogley said as the president is the patron of SIF, we decided to accompany him on his visit in the forest.

"We got extra time today to visit and talk about the coco de mer as it is our biggest treasure in Seychelles," said Dr Fleischer-Dogley.

She said as there has been changes in the management of the seed, the discussions touched on how best we can undertake the new management process of the coco de mer.

Dr Fleischer-Dogley added that as SIF is an organisation that has been in existence for quite some time and has therefore gathered much experience, they wanted the president to know that they not only have the capacity but are ready to help if there is a need.

The Vallée de Mai is a forest on Praslin but there are other organisations like the Seychelles National Parks Authority (SNPA) and Fond Ferdinand that manage the coco de mer which are ready to share experiences and knowledge on collaboration, science, research to move forward.

According to SIF, the Vallée de Mai was designated a world heritage site by Unesco in 1983 as an outstanding example of low and intermediate altitude palm forest characteristic of the Seychelles.

The site is classed under category IV (Habitat/Management Area) of the IUCN Management Category and designated as a natural world heritage site for fulfilling the criteria i, ii, iii and iv.

These criteria are as follows:

**Criterion i:** The property is an outstanding example of a major stage in the evolutionary history of Earth in that its ecology is dominated by endemic palms. It is a palm forest preserved in something like its primeval state, dominated by the famous and unique coco de mer (*Lodoicea maldivica*). The population is substantial and with continued protection, is self-sustaining.

**Criterion ii:** The habitats provide a refuge that harbours viable populations of endemic species of flora and fauna, providing outstanding examples of significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems and communities. An example is the unique association between endemic geckos and the male inflorescences of the coco de mer.

**Criterion iii:** An area of exceptional natural beauty where a concentration of diverse and unique plant and animal species thrive. The lush vegetation that largely features the coco de mer palm produces the largest seeds of the plant kingdom. The juvenile leaves of the coco de mer are also strikingly beautiful and among the largest leaves of any living plant.

**Criterion iv:** The area is rich in biodiversity and the habitat of rare and endangered species of flora and fauna. The region is the type locality and world's stronghold for the coco de mer (*Lodoicea maldivica*), Seychelles black parrot (*Coracopsis nigra barklyi*) and the endemic freshwater fish (*Pachypanchax playfairi*) in particular. With many other endemic plants and animal species, the area represents a remarkable concentration of outstanding natural wealth of the highest importance to science and conservation.

We bring you pictures of President Faure's visit to the Vallée de Mai.

