Commemoration of the 176th Anniversary of the Abolition of Slavery

The official ceremony marking the 176th Anniversary of the Abolition of Slavery in Mauritius was held on 1 February 2011 at the International Slave Route Monument at Le Morne in the presence of the President of the Republic, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, and the Prime Minister, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam.

In his speech, the President reminded that Le Morne Cultural Landscape, inscribed on the World Heritage List in July 2008 by UNESCO, now belongs to the whole humanity. Slavery being a crime against humanity, Sir Anerood wished that history does not repeat itself.

For the Prime Minister, the commemoration of such an important event gives us an opportunity to reflect on the history of the country, as history is actually one of the prerequisites for better social harmony and national unity. Dr. Ramgoolam paid homage to the toils and sacrifices of slaves, who have brought an invaluable contribution to the development of the country.

Among the activities organised by the Ministry of Arts and Culture in collaboration with Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund and...
the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture to commemorate the event were a wreath-laying ceremony at Pointe Canon, Mahebourg and at Le Morne, a cultural programme, the unveiling of two sculptures made by artists from India and China and the presentation of laptops to the best CPE 2010 students of Le Morne Government School.

Le Morne Cultural Landscape was inscribed on the World Heritage List in July 2008. According to historical records, Le Morne was used as a shelter by runaway slaves and maroons through the 18th and early 19th centuries.

It will be recalled that in 2009 the Slave Route Monument was inaugurated at Le Morne Cultural Landscape in the context of the commemoration of the 174th Anniversary of the Abolition of Slavery. One of the objectives of the Slave Route Monument Project is to promote peace through cultural dialogue.

**Road Infrastructure**

**New bypass eases traffic around Triolet**

The Triolet Bypass, a route designed to improve traffic fluidity and access in the region of Triolet, was inaugurated by the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, on 22 February 2011.

Constructed to the tune of some Rs 225 million, the Triolet Bypass provides an alternative access route for those heading to the northern part of the island. The Triolet Bypass project consisted in the construction of a single carriageway road of length 6.5 km to bypass the village of Triolet on the east side from Solitude to the northern limit of Triolet on Fond du Sac Branch Road. Some 5.4 km of new roads with hard shoulder on both sides, traffic islands and footpaths have also been built.

In addition, the Fond du Sac Branch Road as from its junction with Grand Baie to the bypass was upgraded over one kilometre. Other amenities include five roundabouts, drainage structure, traffic signs, handrails and street lighting.

Construction works, which started in August 2009, were completed by November 2010. A road safety audit was then carried out by engineers from the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping to check the safety aspects of the new bypass.
The PTA, which came into force on 30 November 2007, allows some hundreds of tariff lines to be traded between Mauritius and Pakistan on preferential terms. The ultimate objective is to pave the way for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) that will encompass substantially all products and will also cover trade in services.

Discussions at the 9th Round evolved on the need to put in place concrete programmes to create synergies between the business communities of the two countries. The Mauritian side showed interest in establishing cooperation with the light engineering industry as well as the handicraft sector of Pakistan. Both sides discussed the draft framework agreement for trade in services and agreed to engage in project-based cooperation in areas such as ICT, health, education, tourism and logistic services.

Mauritius and Pakistan have decided to further deepen collaboration in the field of higher education. Pakistan will facilitate the admission of Mauritian students for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes as well as for professional degrees. Both countries share many cultural affinities and in the margin of the 9th JWG, Mauritius and Pakistan signed a Cultural Exchange Programme which aims at facilitating the exchange of folk art, music, crafts and cultural troupes between the countries.

The Joint Working Group (JWG)

Since its inception in 2005, the JWG has held nine Rounds of discussions. Through the JWG, Mauritius and Pakistan have established a channel of structured dialogue with a view to boosting bilateral trade and economic relations. The JWG meets at the level of high officials of the two countries and the meeting is held alternately in Port Louis and in Islamabad to work on the bilateral trade agenda every year. The private sector of the two countries is also involved in the consultation process.

The JWG has adopted a gradualist and pragmatic approach to generate business-oriented results. Its first objective was to fast-track the conclusion of a PTA. The JWG also aims at triangular cooperation whereby Mauritian and Pakistani economic operators could engage in joint-ventures in the markets of Africa.
In his address on that occasion, the Prime Minister pointed out that with increasing trade, and global threats such as terrorism, organised crime and new risks like trade in dangerous goods, the Customs department, which has a law enforcement role, has to improve continuously to be ahead of all those trying ways and means to achieve illegal practices.

For the Prime Minister, the setting up of the new Custom House is a clear demonstration of the significant modernisation that the country’s infrastructure is undergoing. Such institutions, he added, should work in a spirit of collaboration with other law enforcing agencies so as to create a strategic network to combat illicit practices.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Mr. Pravind Jugnauth, for his part, reminded that the new Custom House is a continuation of the effort by the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) to assist traders and businesses with a one-stop facility that will significantly contribute to reduce their cost of business and accelerate the pace for the implementation of a number of on-going customs reforms.

The eight-storey building, equipped with closed circuit television, serves as a one stop shop for all customs, excise and port operations. The building also houses a small museum tracing the history of Customs in Mauritius from the colonial era to post-independence period.

Since 2008, the Customs has undergone major reforms and various projects have been implemented. Amongst them, the implementation of the Nuctech X-Ray Scanners at the Mauritius Container Terminal and PATS Airport, the setting up of the Risk Management Unit and the Anti-Money laundering Cell. It is to be noted that Mauritius Customs is also the first among the 168 members of the World Customs Organisation to host, on a pilot basis, the National Customs Enforcement project, a database aimed at collecting, analysing and disseminating information on customs offences and share intelligence on a global basis in a timely, reliable and secure manner.

Moreover, with globalisation and the rapid change in the dynamics of trade, in addition to being a traditional collector of revenue, Mauritius Customs is called upon to face various challenges on different fronts, namely, trade facilitation and security across borders. Hence, to overcome challenges like drug trafficking and money laundering, the department has adopted new procedures and technology such as scanners, drug detector dogs and risk management techniques so that its resources are devoted to the areas of highest risks.

On the revenue front, the Customs Department which contributes up to 50% of all taxes collected by the MRA, brought in some Rs 24 billion for the year 2010.
The objective was to reflect on and identify the procedural and legal challenges to piracy prosecution with a view to drawing a protocol for prosecution in Mauritius for pirates caught in the Indian Ocean.

A document entitled *Guidance for the Transfer of Suspected Pirates, Armed Robbers and Seized Property to Mauritius* was distributed to all stakeholders during the working session. The guidelines spelt out in the document are based on discussions with law enforcement authorities, prosecutors and relevant stakeholders. The aim is to assist in the efficient and timely transfer of piracy suspects and ensure that the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions is provided with sufficient evidence under Mauritian Law to ensure that transferred suspected pirates are successfully prosecuted for crimes of robbery at sea or for piracy.

Discussions centred on the following issues, amongst others: *What should be the set rules for evidence collection and preservation? How to secure the attendance of witnesses at trial? Who is the point of contact for Mauritius and what are the requirements before the warship with suspected pirates on board arrive at Port Louis?*

In his speech, the Director of Public Prosecutions, Mr. Satyajit Boolell, pointed out that there was an urgent need for a protocol on procedures for piracy transfer in case Mauritius had soon to deal with its first batch of pirates transferred for prosecution purposes. According to him, piracy has become an organised, lucrative and attractive criminal activity with growing regional implications. The entire region, he added, has not only suffered from the negative economic effects of piracy but has also witnessed an increase in the associated crimes of money laundering and trafficking of weapons and migrants.

All stakeholders convened at the meeting were asked to draft a model handover guidance document in conformity with Mauritian laws, procedure and practice, to ensure smooth handing over of suspected pirates and seized property to Mauritius and guarantee evidence that would be admissible in Court.

According to a report submitted on 24 January 2011 by Mr. Jack Lang, Special Adviser to the UN on legal issues related to piracy, pirates took hostage 1,900 people and captured 105 vessels off the coasts of Somalia in the last two years.
Mauritius-EU
One-day workshop focuses on the European Development Fund

An initiative of the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Trade of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, the workshop enabled participants to brainstorm on how Mauritius can derive further benefits from the EDF, and other financial instruments and institutions such as the European Investment Bank (EIB).

Mauritius-EU relations excellent and fruitful

In his opening statement, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Dr. Arvin Boolell, expressed satisfaction as to the excellent relations and fruitful collaboration that exist between Mauritius and the EU. He said that Mauritius should tread cautiously when going about diversification and talking of moving away from the EU, referring to the latter as not only a reliable and predictable partner but also as the country’s main tourist market and an important provider of funds.

The Minister also mentioned some issues that need to be pondered upon in the context of the discussions that have started on the next EU financial Perspectives post 2013 and the disbursement of resources. The backdrop is the mounting pressure from EU Member States to curtail expenditure. According to the Minister, already some quarters are arguing for the budgetisation of the EDF. The ACP Group, through its Working Group on the Future Perspectives of the ACP, is reflecting on the issue as this may have a serious impact on resources to be provided to the ACP. Also, since there is no legal and political basis to negotiate the 11th EDF or its successor, there is growing concern amongst the ACP member states, Minister Boolell pointed out.

For his part, the Ambassador and Head of Delegation of the European Commission, Mr Alessandro Mariani, said that other than funds from the EDF, Mauritius is benefiting from other EU budget lines, like the ones in the form of the sugar accompanying measures.

Mr Mariani noted that through dialogue, other budget lines have been mobilised, for instance the global climate change alliance budget line for which Mauritius has been considered a final country. He also gave as example the Non State Actors budget line and announced that Mauritius would benefit from another € 500 000 for this specific budget line.

European Development Fund

The EDF is the main instrument for providing community development aid to ACP countries and the overseas countries and territories. It is concluded for a period of around five years and is implemented within the framework of an international agreement between the European Community and partner countries.

The EU-Mauritius portfolio has an overall budget of around € 308 million for the period 2008-2013. Under the 10th EDF, Mauritius obtained € 63.4 million, of which € 43.5 million were in terms of general budget support. Mauritius also obtained € 5.5 million for the Decentralised Cooperation Programme as well as € 2 million under the Technical Cooperation Facility. Moreover, Mauritius has benefitted from EU support in the sugar sector to the tune of € 267.14 million (€ 127.541 million for 2007-2010 and € 139.6 million for 2011-2013).
**Labour and Employment**

**Towards the elaboration of a National Employment Policy**

A National Employment Policy (NEP), a framework for achieving productive employment and decent work for all as well as meeting the employment challenges through well targeted policies and programmes, is being elaborated by the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment.

In this context, the Ministry organised a tripartite workshop on 8 and 9 February 2011 in Trianon, in collaboration with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), with a view to seeking consensus from the various local stakeholders in the preparation of the NEP.

Participants at the workshop comprised mainly representatives of employers’ organisations, workers’ organisations, and the public sector as well as consultants from the ILO. Various aspects of the NEP are being examined and a national consultant is to be appointed to steer the project and help to set it on a firm footing within a few months.

The main objectives of the NEP are to achieve sustainable employment growth, improve the competitiveness of Mauritius by enhancing human capital and workers’ adaptability to the changing requirements of the dynamic labour market and improve the quality of jobs in line with the principles enshrined in ratified international conventions.

The elaboration of the NEP forms part of the measures announced in the Government Programme 2010-2015 to protect workers and promote social dialogue as well as unlock opportunities for employment creation.

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**Enhancing power generation**

**New turbines operational at Fort Victoria station**

The contract for the installation of four additional units of diesel turbines of 15 MW each at the Fort Victoria Power Station at Bain des Dames, Cassis, was awarded by the Central Electricity Board (CEB) to Burmeister and Wain Scandinavian Contractor of Denmark on 23 February 2011.

This project, to the tune of Rs 2.7 billion, forms part of the second phase of the redevelopment plan of Fort Victoria. The four turbines will produce 240 GWh of electricity per year. The tender for the acquisition of the turbines was launched in April 2010. The commissioning of the turbines will be carried out end 2012.

The redevelopment project, which comprises phases 1 and 2, will allow the power station to produce a total of 90 MW. As regards Phase 1, the CEB installed two new turbines of 15 MW each to the tune of Rs 1.8 billion in June 2010. These energy efficient turbines will enable the CEB to ensure availability of generation capacity to meet short and medium term demands. They have replaced four MIRLEES turbines which were more than 25 years old and had become inefficient and obsolete.

The modernisation of the station, in operation since 1964, comprises the replacement of old turbines. This process is in line with the policy of the CEB to provide a secure, reliable, quality and affordable electricity supply in a timely manner to meet rising demand. Indeed, the energy demand has been increasing at about 5% annually during the past five years and the challenge remains the diversification of the energy mix and the reduction of reliance on fossil fuel.

Furthermore, environmental considerations were taken into account at the design and construction stage of the new power station. It is equipped with modern features optimised for low emissions, waste incineration and a 65-metre high stack. The carbon dioxide emission is about three times lower than that of a coal plant. Moreover, it has been provided with a state-of-the-art sludge treatment technology to ensure that the level of oil in the water outlet from the power plant is below 10 PPM. The plant will operate on both base and semi-base mode so as to provide flexibility to meet load variation on the grid.

The CEB produces around 40% of the total energy requirement for the country through its four power stations and eight hydropower plants. The four power stations, namely Fort George, St Louis, Fort Victoria and Nicolay, produce 35% of electricity and the eight hydropower stations 5%. 50% come from independent power producers. The energy produced annually is around 2400 GWh.
Mauritius will soon submit a proposal for Pointe d’Esny to be registered as a third site on the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance along with the two existing sites, namely Rivulet Terre Rouge Estuary Bird Sanctuary and Blue Bay Marine Park. The Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security, Mr. S. Faugoo, made the announcement at the opening of a workshop held at Rivulet Terre Rouge Estuary Bird Sanctuary on 2 February 2011 on the occasion of World Wetlands Day.

The Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security, through the National Parks and Conservation Service, has initiated action to sensitise the public on the importance of wetlands and the need to protect them for the welfare of the present and future generations.

Despite their importance, wetlands are among the most impacted and degraded of all ecological systems. In the past few centuries they have been commonly regarded as unproductive and unhealthy lands. Many have been filled with domestic and industrial wastes while others have been drained to create additional land for development. In the past 50 years, the rate of wetland loss has increased dramatically and is still continuing. According to experts, it would seem that more than half of the used wetlands may have been destroyed over the last 100 years.

Recently, the National Parks and Conservation Service organised a two day intensive training course on wetlands with the collaboration of the SADC wetland sector. The latter funded the programme and delegated four eminent scientists on wetlands to act as resource persons for the training.

Stakeholders coming from different sectors, district councils, ministries, NGOs, universities, are involved in one way or the other in the management of the 30 wetlands found in Mauritius. They have been trained and provided with a series of valuable documents as reference materials for further use. The main objective of the training was to give a better understanding of wetlands to all stakeholders of different institutions so that in future a general consensus could be arrived at when taking decisions about development of wetlands.

The World Wetlands Day is celebrated on 2 February of each year as it marks the date of the signing of the Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971, in the Iranian City of Ramsar, hence the Ramsar Convention. The theme for this year was Wetlands and Forests: Forests for Wetlands and Water.

World Wetlands Day was celebrated for the first time in 1997 and since then government agencies, non-governmental organisations and groups of citizens at all levels of the community have taken advantage of the opportunity to undertake actions aimed at raising public awareness of wetland values and benefits in general and the Ramsar Convention in particular.
MS ISO 9001: 2008 Awarded to Flight Clearance Office

The Flight Clearance Office of the Civil Aviation Department was awarded the MS ISO 9001: 2008 Certification on 7 February 2011 by the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms.

The adoption of MS ISO 9001: 2008 standards implies that processing systems are clearly spelt out, responsibilities for a particular task established and a timeframe set for each task.

The Civil Aviation Department, particularly the Flight Clearance Office, plays a major role in regulating air traffic in Mauritius. A safe and secure civil aviation airspace is a prerequisite for the sustainable development of the pillars of the economy, especially the tourism industry, ICT and financial services sectors and trade.

Present for the occasion, the Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms, Mr. Ashit Kumar Gungah, said that the Civil Aviation Department has contributed significantly towards the development of the country and the ISO Certification of the Flight Clearance Office can be considered as a label of recognition, that of operating according to international ISO quality management standards. These standards, in fact, define the fundamental elements of a quality system for organisations to ensure that their services not only meet customers’ expectations but excel in service delivery.

It is the Flight Clearance Office which, on receipt of a request from an aircraft operator to operate a flight to Mauritius, either to land at the airport or to overfly Mauritius’ airspace, processes the request for a clearance. The final decision of whether to accede to the request or not is taken by the State at the level of the Prime Minister’s Office which relies on the information and recommendations submitted to it by the Flight Clearance Office.

The Department of Civil Aviation has three main functions. Firstly, it regulates all activities in the civil aviation sector to ensure safety of operation. Secondly, it enforces appropriate measures for aviation security in order to safeguard civil aviation operation against acts of unlawful interference. Lastly, the Civil Aviation Department provides air navigation services within the vast oceanic air space under the jurisdiction of Mauritius, as assigned to it by the International Civil Aviation Organisation.

It is to be noted that in November 2010, the Department of Civil Aviation won the bronze award for innovative management following a competition by the African Association for Public Administration and Management within the African continent.
Youth initiated to entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship: Scope and Challenges was the theme of two workshops organised by the Ministry of Youth and Sports on 19 and 26 February at the Pamplemousses Youth Centre and the Pointe Jérôme Youth Training Centre respectively. These workshops, the first two of a series of five scheduled for this year, fall in line with Government’s policy to further promote entrepreneurship among the youth.

The main objectives are to motivate and encourage young people to make entrepreneurship a privileged career option, to impart useful and timely information on facilities offered by different stakeholders in the field and to provide a platform where young people can discuss issues related to entrepreneurship. Some 200 youth leaders aged between 18 to 30 years attended the workshops that were conducted by resource persons from the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Authority, the Development Bank of Mauritius and the Arts and Craft Association of Mauritius.

It is to be noted that in 1989, an innovative programme known as Entreprenariat Jeunesse was launched by the Ministry of Youth and Sports in collaboration with the Conférence des Ministres de la Jeunesse et des Sports des États et Gouvernements Ayant le Français en Partage (CONFEJES). The programme aims at fostering an entrepreneurship culture among young people and securing the active participation of young people in the role of an entrepreneur in the socio-economic development of the country.

To date, some 2 000 young people have been exposed to Entreprenariat Jeunesse through training programmes, talks and workshops which are organised to sensitize young people on youth entrepreneurship.
Health
Workshop on National Cancer Control Programme and Action Plan 2010-2014

A one-day dissemination workshop on the National Cancer Control Programme and Action Plan (NCCPAP) 2010-2014 held on 17 February 2011 at La Cannelle, Domaine Les Pailles, ended with the preparation of an Implementation Schedule in the main areas of cancer control. Around 70 medical and paramedical staff from the public and private sectors participated in the workshop organised by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life.

In a bid to decrease the incidence and impact of cancer, a mass media campaign is planned for sensitising the population especially against breast cancer, and cervical, colon and prostate cancers. Over the next four years, the Ministry will also invest on high technology equipment for early cancer detection and treatment and on capacity building.

The NCCPAP has made provision for early detection through a Digital Mammography Unit, a Cervical and Colposcopy Therapy Unit and Colonoscopy; diagnosis through echography machines, radiology and CT scans; surgery; treatment through chemotherapy drugs, radiotherapy treatment, and accessories and rehabilitation.

Rationale of the Four-Year Cancer Programme

Cancer has become the third major health threat after diabetes and cardiovascular diseases and the total number of new cases has risen by 41% and 40% in men and women respectively. Figures from the National Cancer Registry Report 2005-2008 reveal that there were a total of 2 286 and 3 280 new cases of cancer in men and women respectively and that 58% of all female cancers occurred in the age group of 15 to 60 years while 1.7% of all cases occurred in children below the age of 14 years.

There has been a doubling of the incidence rate of female breast cancer between the periods 1989-1992 and 2005-2008. Among men, the highest incidence of cancer is that of colon/rectum cancer (14%) followed by prostate (10.5%) and trachea/bronchus/lung (9.6%).

In women, breast cancer accounts for 37.8%, cervix uteri (10.2%), colon/rectum (7.6%), ovary (5.6%) and uterus (5.1%).

In view of the increasing prevalence of cancers among the population, it is deemed necessary to intensify actions in the fight against cancer by reinforcing cancer control programmes. The NCCPAP, which is a four-year public health programme, has therefore been designed to reduce the incidence of cancer and cancer mortality and improve the quality of life of cancer patients through the systematic implementation of evidence-based strategies for primary prevention, early detection, treatment and palliation and by making the best use of available resources.

The NCCPAP will also attempt to prevent cancer through public education and provide adequate therapy for patients especially since one-third of all cancers are preventable and one-third treatable.

Measures taken by the Ministry in terms of prevention and treatment of cancer relate to, amongst others, the setting up of a 16-bedded Children Cancer Unit at Victoria Hospital, new colposcopy and diagnostic endoscopy facilities at Victoria Hospital and SSRN Hospital respectively, recruitment of specialists in the radiotherapy department, screening mobile caravans and cancer awareness campaigns.
The Sankoré Project, whose main objective is to facilitate the provision of education to African children through innovative technological means, will be launched in April this year in Standard Four classrooms. To enable all schools to benefit from the Sankoré Project, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources is ensuring that these are equipped with laptops, digital interactive projectors/White Boards (IWBs) as well as digital educational lessons.

The Sankoré Project provides African teachers with the best ICT educational resources through the free Sankoré generic website and helps teachers in creating their own digital resources as well as sharing them within educational communities. It is believed that this project will enhance both the teaching and learning process since an infinite variety of pedagogical works will be available to both teachers and pupils. The wide array of educational lessons accessible by a simple touch to the IWB screen is hosted in a dedicated and secured data centre located in France.

At a later stage, the project which is an important tool in meeting the challenges of education will be implemented in Standards Five and Six, and in Rodrigues and Agalega as well. Secondary schools will also benefit from this project, particularly the Forms Three, Four and Five.

The Sankoré Project offers the possibility to carry out mass training of the education personnel, both teaching and non-teaching from a single transmission point. The Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE) has been assigned the responsibility to train local educators for this project. Moreover, the MIE has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Paraschool, a French private organisation for the production of e-learning materials, for the setting up of the Mauritius Learning Factory.

The project, an outcome of a Franco-British partnership to educate some 16 million African children, is available to both Anglophone and Francophone African countries. Besides Mauritius, five other countries namely Burkina Faso, Mali, Madagascar, Mauritania and Senegal have joined the project.

The name Sankoré refers to one of the most ancient universities in the world, established in Timbuktu in Mali, and is a sign of the desire of Africans to integrate knowledge transfer into their culture.