**2011 Budget**

Growth, Productivity and Social Justice remain priority action areas

The 2011 Budget, introduced in the National Assembly on 19 November 2010 by the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Mr Pravind Jugnauth, identifies the main thrusts of budgetary action in the coming year as rebalancing of growth, enhancing productivity and consolidating social justice.

**Budget outlook**

For the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, one of the long term objectives of economic growth is to propel the economy towards the achievement of ‘a GDP of one million rupees by the 2020s and an income per capita of USD 20 000 and higher’.

In Mr Jugnauth’s view, the adverse impact of the recent global recession and the euro-zone crisis on our economy has revealed the weaknesses of our own growth model and of being too euro-centric, thus prompting the need for development policies anchored
to new realities that advocate growth, productivity and eradication of poverty.

For our economic policy to succeed, Mauritius will have to seize all opportunities emerging from the global economy and maintain coherence between fiscal and monetary policies, the Vice Prime Minister points out. For him, however, successful development is not only about ‘creating value’ but also about ‘values of our society’, that is compassion, kindness and generosity, especially, towards families living in absolute poverty, and through the budget, the Government wants to ‘advance social and cultural integration, social justice, inclusion and equality and diversity’.

Greater use of economic diplomacy though a close linking of foreign policy with the domestic economy, the development of Mauritius as a duty-free paradise and the creation of a Sovereign Wealth Fund for greater stability of the foreign exchange market are among the new concepts that will be adopted to rebalance growth.

Economic and Financial performance

Economic growth for 2011 is expected to reach 4.2 per cent, compared to approximately 4.1 per cent this year.

Gross National Saving, as a ratio of GDP, would be 15 per cent this year, and investment 25 per cent. FDI would total around Rs 11 billion in 2010. A surplus of around Rs 2 billion is expected in the overall balance of payments and the net international reserves of Mauritius will be approximately Rs 99 billion, covering 8.8 months of imports. The unemployment rate will reach 7.5 per cent and the inflation rate 2.7 per cent at end 2010.

The budget deficit for 2010 is expected to reach 4.5 per cent of GDP. Total revenue will be lower by around Rs 3.8 billion and current expenses will reach Rs 68 billion compared to estimates of Rs 69.2 billion. Capital spending would be slightly over Rs 8 billion. Central Government debt would increase from 50.9 per cent of GDP in 2009 to 52.5 per cent at end 2010. Public Sector debt is estimated to increase to 60.7 per cent of GDP against 60.0 per cent of GDP in 2009.

For 2011, the budget deficit would amount to 4.3 per cent of GDP.

Budgetary measures

The abolition of the tax on interests and the National Residential Property Tax, both as from January 2010, are among the most prominent budgetary measures. Another important measure is the democratisation of the laureate scheme by increasing the number of additional scholarships from 12 to 50, with 24 of the new scholarships for pupils from poor families. New packages are proposed to laureates whether they opt to study locally or abroad.

A new formula for subsidies for SC and HSC examinations will also be introduced to help low income families.

For Rodrigues, the Regional Assembly will benefit from a budgetary allocation of Rs 1.55 billion. Furthermore, a sum of Rs 50 million will be provided for water projects in the island.
The aim is to encourage the manufacturing sector to rapidly rebalance to higher value-added production and facilitate its shift to new technologies and to create fast moving supply chain dynamics. To this end:

- The Private Equity Fund which was announced in the Economic Restructuring and Competitiveness Programme will open a second dedicated Sub Fund
- Rs 600 million will be mobilised through the Manufacturing and Services Development and Competitiveness programme to support enterprises in all sectors of the economy, in particular the SMEs
- All the instruments under the Leasing for Equipment Modernisation Scheme (LEMS) are being extended until December 2012
- Additional funding facilities of Rs 700 million for the LEMS are being provided to bring the total to Rs 1.4 billion
- Enterprise Mauritius (EM) will henceforth focus on export promotion and development of new markets, particularly in Africa and emerging economies
- The Development Bank of Mauritius will be transformed into a Development Finance Agency (DFA) to more effectively support SMEs.

*DFA will not provide direct lending facilities, except in specified cases. It will instead offer partial risk guarantees and other instruments to induce commercial banks and other financial institutions to lend to SMEs.*
- The Registrar of Companies will be the single point of entry for all business start-ups in non-regulated activities and payment of trade fees will be effected at the Registrar of Companies at the time of registration
- Building and Land Use Permit applications to the CEB and CWA will be done on line
- Government will implement an on-line submission and e-payment of notary deeds
- The e-payment system will be extended for all businesses as well as for the population
- Commercial disputes, where applicable, will be settled within a time frame of 100 days
- To open up the country to foreign talents, the threshold for the Board of Investment to issue Occupation Permits for professionals will be lowered to Rs 45 000 per month
Agriculture and Fisheries

- Tax exemption on the first 60 tonnes of sugar for small planters with less than 15 hectares of land and who rely solely on sugar income

- Abolition of 15 percent income tax on the surplus generated from sugar operations by Cooperative Credit Societies (CCS)

- Increase in the price of molasses sold for producing potable alcohol by Rs 10 per litre of absolute alcohol representing additional revenue of some Rs 300 per tonne of sugar for every planter

- Extension to small planters of VAT benefits currently provided to medium and large exporters of sugar

- Full duty-free facility on all types of double cab vehicles (4x4) for eligible small planters, farmers, fishermen’s cooperative societies and qualified SMEs

- Setting up of a National Agricultural Biotechnology Institute to fully tap the benefits of high tech development in the domains of agriculture, agro-industry and fisheries

- Rs 100 million earmarked to finance a research centre for the Mauritius Oceanography Institute at Albion

Tourism

The thrust as regards tourism is to diversify from our traditional markets and work on a marketing and promotion strategy to attract more visitors from non-euro-zone countries, particularly India, China and Russia. The national efforts on the rebalancing of the tourism industry will require around Rs 1 billion over the next five years, with Government contributing Rs 250 million. Besides, the duty free shopping paradise concept will be further developed.

Highlights

- The total budget for MTPA for 2011 amounts to Rs 390 million.

- Rs 100 million are earmarked over five years to double the annual number of visitors from India and the private sector is expected to contribute Rs 250 million towards the same objective.

- An investment of some Rs 500 million by both the public and private sector will be required to attract around 100 000 visitors from China by 2015. Government will contribute Rs 75 million over the next five years to that end.

- The plan for the Russian market for the next five years will cost Rs 350 million in all, to which Government will contribute Rs 75 million.

- The blueprint on the development of Mauritius as a duty-free shopping paradise is being updated. Simultaneously, the BOI will set up a dedicated desk for promoting duty-free shopping as a new sector of the economy.
**Financial measures and Taxation**

- Introduction of 15% tax on all profits and gains derived from transactions in land and other immovable property, including morcellements
- Threshold for full salary compensation raised from Rs 3 800 to Rs 5 000
- Increase of 3.2 percent in old age pension and other basic pensions and social aid
- Increase in income tax exemption on lump sum or severance allowance from Rs 1m to Rs 1.5m
- Tax at reduced rate of 10 percent for individuals who gain from sale of land and immovable property
- Refund of tax withheld at source on interest during 2010 in the form of a tax credit on 2012 and 2013 tax returns
- Introduction of a Solidarity Income Tax for the higher income earners with more than Rs 2 million exempt income, who will be charged 10 percent on their exempt income
- Tax exemption for taxpayers not subject to the Solidarity Income Tax and having children who are following a full-time undergraduate courses in Mauritius or abroad

**Infrastructure**

- Some Rs 30 billion for road decongestion will be required over the next five years, out of which Rs 4.1 billion are being provided for some 22 projects in the 2011 Budget
- Rs 3.5 billion pertaining to port development to be invested at the Mauritius Container Terminal
- For airport infrastructure, investment of some Rs 10.3 billion to accommodate wide-bodied aircraft and extend terminal capacity to 4 million passengers annually
- Around Rs 760 million for resurfacing the existing runway and developing the taxiway for use as a second emergency runway
- Rehabilitation of the Agalega airstrip at a cost of Rs 120 million
- Works on the Bagatelle Dam, with a project value of Rs 3 billion, to start by March 2011
- Rs 454 million budgeted over the next three years to improve water supply facilities
- Some Rs 3 billion earmarked for the upgrading and management of solid waste, waste water and drainage systems, out of which Rs 1.3 billion for waste water services
- Construction of a hazardous waste facility of La Chaumière
Health

Government will act on various fronts in the health sector, with special focus on infrastructure, research and development and training.

Some Rs 8 billion are being provided for health care. Projects include:

- The completion of the New Jeetoo Hospital
- A new full-fledged Spinal and Neuro-surgery Block at Victoria Hospital
- New blocks at Flacq Hospital, with more specialised facilities for the growing number of pre-natal and post-natal women
- A specialised hospital for the elderly
- More infrastructure capacity at the Bharati Eye Hospital
- A new medi-clinic at Triolet
- A maternity unit in the Area Health Centre of Agalega north

In a bid to fight alcoholism and its negative impact on health, no new “on and off” and retailer of beer licenses will be issued. Excise duty is being increased on alcoholic products and on tobacco products as well.

Women, Children and Youth

Women’s participation rate in the economy is 43 percent compared to 76 percent for men. Female unemployment rate is 12 percent compared to only frictional unemployment among males.

To help correct this imbalance, emphasis will be laid on training, re-skilling and encouraging more women to become entrepreneurs. Measures include:

- Intensification of the work started under the Economic Restructuring and Competitiveness Program to support the training programme for women so that they can take employment in a number of new activities
- Provision of Rs 98 million for women empowerment and gender mainstreaming

Children

Special measures for the care and protection of children include:

- Provision for a new Shelter at Cap Malheureux for children who are victims of abuse and violence.
- Provision of Rs 22 million for a Residential Drop-in-Centre at GRNW for the development and protection of children from any form of sexual abuse and exploitation.
- Domiciliary visits by doctors to children who are very severely disabled.

Youth and Sports

The 2011 Budget makes a provision of Rs 391 million for Youth and Sports. A multi-purpose sports complex at Triolet (Rs 60 million) and provision for a similar one at Saint Pierre are two major projects earmarked.
The budgetary commitment to education and training amounts to Rs 11.6 billion, of which Rs 9.8 billion are allocated to the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Rs 870 million to tertiary education, and Rs 670 million to other ministries for running various programmes, while Rs 230 million will come from the Human Resource Knowledge and Arts Development Fund.

Infrastructure

- New pre-primary units will be put up in Chamarel, Albion, Barkly and Belle Mare.

- Rs 678 million will be invested in secondary schools, including Rs 120 million for equipping them with multi-purpose complexes and playfields for the overall development of students.

- Some Rs 215 million will be invested next year to upgrade primary schools. The enhancement programme at Standard IV will be extended to children in Standard III as well.

Government scholarships

Fundamental changes are being brought to the State of Mauritius Scholarships and Additional Scholarships Schemes, with new improved schemes aimed at significantly increasing the number of laureates and extending scholarships to postgraduate studies.

As from academic year 2011/12, laureates will be able to either choose the current schemes (with a modification as to the annual grant for the Additional Scholarships) or opt for new ones with the following packages:

- A scholarship for an undergraduate course in any tertiary education institution in Mauritius with an annual grant

  The annual grant will be Rs 200 000 plus fees for the State of Mauritius Scholarships and Rs 60 000 plus fees for the Additional Scholarships.

- A second scholarship for postgraduate studies either in Mauritius or abroad

- Two years internship in a Ministry/Department

The number of laureates under the new Additional Scholarship Scheme is increased from 12 to 50. From the 38 new awards, 24 will be reserved for students from families with modest income.

SC and HSC examination fees scheme

Key improvements have been made to the SC and HSC examination fees scheme with a view to supporting a larger number of students.

- The monthly income threshold for Government paying 100 percent of the fees is raised from Rs 8 500 to Rs 14 500

- A second child taking examinations in the family will benefit from 100 percent payment of fees, against 50% previously, if the monthly family income is less than Rs 11 000

- Families with monthly income between Rs 14 500 and Rs 20 000 will receive a grant for 50 percent of the examination fees, regardless of the number of children taking examinations.
The 2011 Budget introduces a Housing With Good Living programme that includes five schemes extending over the next ten years. The total contribution of Government to support the 40,000 families who will benefit from these five schemes amounts to Rs 18.5 billion, of which Rs 2 billion are from CSR money.

- **Scheme 1** Families with income not exceeding Rs 5,000
  Some 7,000 units will be constructed. Government will bear the full cost of land and fifty percent of the on-site infrastructure cost. No initial deposit will be required on the purchase price.

- **Scheme 2** Families with income between Rs 5,000 and Rs 10,000
  Some 1,700 units will be constructed. Purchasers will have the same benefits as under Scheme 1, except that because their income is higher they will be required to pay an initial deposit of 10 percent of the price.

- **Scheme 3** Families with income between Rs 10,000 and Rs 15,000
  Some 9,000 serviced plots will be provided over the next ten years. Government will bear the cost of land and off-site infrastructure. A mortgage will be provided by MHC but a deposit of 10 percent of the value of the property will be required.

- **Scheme 4** Families with income between Rs 15,000 and Rs 25,000
  Some 15,000 serviced plots will be provided under the next ten years. Government will bear half the cost of land but the beneficiary will pay for the cost of servicing the plot. A mortgage will be provided by commercial banks with a guarantee operated by MHC and a deposit of 15 percent of the value of the property will be required.

- **Scheme 5** Families with income between Rs 25,000 and Rs 50,000
  Government will support some 6,500 first-time buyers to purchase or build a house that costs up to 50 percent more than they can afford with their current income.

Another important measure relates to registration duty. Thus, an adult first-time buyer of a house or bare residential land will not have to bear registration duty if his total annual income is below Rs 2 million. This benefit will apply on the first Rs 1.5 million of the price of a house, or the first Rs 750,000 of the price of bare land provided the beneficiary begins construction within one year and completes it within three years.

The grant for casting of slabs, available for low-income groups, has been increased from Rs 60,000 to Rs 65,000.
The Maurice Ile dureable (MID) vision has made significant strides to achieve continuous improvement in the living environment of all citizens. Advocating energy efficient buildings and the use of alternative sources of renewable energy remain at the core of government action towards environmentally sustainable development.

Among measures to be taken:

- The development by April 2011 of a national policy for sustainable buildings and construction as part of the National programme on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) and to be funded by the European Union

- The provision of Rs 30 million for the development of three eco-villages next year at Pointe aux Piments, Vuillemin and Rodrigues will be made

- Doubling the rate of excise duty on PET bottles, plastic bags and cans, from Rs 1 to Rs 2

- The grant for the solar Water Heater scheme reinstated at Rs 10 000 and reinforced with the participation and collaboration of commercial banks

The following measures have been spelt out to make a positive rebalancing of the sector:

- The law will be amended to expand the scope for corporations holding Category 1 Global Business License to extend their operations to the domestic economy. This framework is expected to encourage Regional Headquarters incorporation and activities in Mauritius.

- A Sovereign Wealth Fund will be created that will be invested in a range of asset classes abroad. The main objectives of the Fund will be forex market stability and higher returns on the country’s excess foreign currency reserves and holdings, whilst minimising the risks. The Fund will start with a portfolio of USD 500 million.

- Statutory amendments will be brought to strengthen the operational framework of the banking system while the legal framework for the banking sector will be brought in line with the insolvency legislation.

- The institutional set up and the regulatory framework will be strengthened to ensure greater coherence in supervision, regulation, policy formulation and implementation. In that perspective, Government will seek advice from international experts on the merging of the Bank of Mauritius (BoM) and the Financial Services Commission (FSC) into one single regulatory institution.
First hand measures are being taken to support the dynamic growth of the ICT/BPO sector. Among these:

- The cost of traditional international bandwidth services - International Private Leased Circuit and Internet Protocol Virtual Private Network - will be decreased by an average of 16 percent to 24 percent as from the beginning of 2011.

- The setting up of a Special Purpose Vehicle to ensure a second undersea cable link is under serious consideration, with an open access policy to the landing station. This would help reduce costs for all users.

- An industry-certification will be adopted at the national level for training so as to get the full and effective participation of licensed and approved centres in ICT/BPO. Government will work with the Outsourcing and Telecommunications Association of Mauritius to identify the skills required for sustaining the growth of the ICT sector and to formulate an appropriate training program for private sector investment. It is considered that the sector will need over 3 000 new recruits annually for the next five years.

- Rs 200 million have been earmarked in the 2011 budget for the implementation of the Mauritius National Identity Card Project. Under this Rs 1.5 billion project, some 800 000 smart cards with greater capacity to store information will be issued in 2012 to replace the existing laminated cards.

Necessary support will be provided to local authorities to modernise their infrastructure and expand their services.

Projects include:

- A Multi-Purpose Complex/Social Hall in Curepipe at a cost of Rs 60 million to provide sports and leisure facilities

- The construction of a complex in Vacoas at a cost of Rs 140 million

- New markets at Abercrombie and Rivière des Anguilles

- Upgrading of Central Flacq Market Fair

- Moving Quatre Bornes market to the site of the Guy Rozemont Stadium which will be moved to Palma

- An auction market at Riche Terre for fresh horticultural produce
Civil Service

The public sector accounts for around 20 percent of all capital formation and for around 25 percent of GDP.

The 2011 budget focuses on promoting excellence and accountability and rewarding performance. Measures regarding improvement of the public sector comprise:

- The establishment by the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms of a database on workforce qualifications and distribution, staff utilisation and gaps in skills so as to improve HR planning and upgrading of staff skills
- The provision of Rs 178 million to upgrade connectivity and for a programme to enhance work environment in the civil service with a view to shoring up productivity
- The appointment of a High-Level Committee to establish a national policy and strategy to guide Human Resource planning and allocation in Ministries, Departments and across the public sector
- The provision of Rs 426 million to fill 3,586 promotional posts and hire an additional 2,076 staff.
- The adoption of more modern procedures put in place by other Commonwealth countries. The PSC will further delegate recruitment and promotion authority to Ministries and Departments for technical and managerial staff, except at the most senior grades.

Arts and Culture

- The Citadel to be transformed into a permanent cultural and tourism attraction
- Holding of the Triennial of Contemporary Arts, an event which knits a strong interface between development of arts, cultural tourism and the creative industry
- Setting up of a Galerie d'Arts Nationale
- Rs 7.8 million to be provided for the rehabilitation and renovation of museums and restoration of paintings
- Funds to be provided for the conservation of the Trianon Indentured Labourers Barracks and the restoration of La Tour Koenig Tower
- Rs 5 million provided for subsidising 50 percent of the cost of rental of venues for cultural shows and concerts by local artistes
- Five new “Centre de Lecture Publique et d'Animation Culturelle” to promote reading through artistic, cultural and educational activities on a regional basis
- Rs 100 million provided for digitising the documents of the National Archives and making them accessible on the Internet
**Main Budgetary Measures**

**Social Integration and Empowerment**

- Government plans to move some 6,000 Social Aid recipients to the alternative empowerment programmes. To create the required employment slots, companies employing expatriate unskilled labour will also need to employ participants from the NEF Training and Placement Programme.

- For every 20 foreign workers, the employer will be required to recruit, according to the sector, between 1 and 3 NEF beneficiaries. The NEF will subsidise the training costs and the stipend, with a larger payment for middle-aged women.

- Provision for some 700 housing units to the tune of Rs 400 million for families earning less than Rs 5,000 per month.

- Rs 240 million earmarked to support efforts to Eradicate Absolute Poverty.

- Rs 500 million made available to enable the NEF to continue its efforts, aimed at some 8,000 citizens, for Training and Placement, Micro-enterprises for women, Projects in Rodrigues, Emergency Housing and the Decentralised Cooperation Programme to build the capacity of Civil Society Organisations to participate in the national empowerment effort.

**Other Measures**

- Introduction of a new Land Productivity Enhancement Scheme (LPES) to address issues of land conversion.

- Regarding law and order and national security, provision for a Coastal Surveillance Radar system, an offshore patrol vessel, the recruitment of 770 trainee Police Constables and upgrading existing infrastructure.

- The appointment of eight more judges and the setting up of an Institute for Judicial and Legal studies to enhance the capacity of the Judiciary.

- Construction of two Recreation Centres, at Pointe aux Piments and Riambel.

- Construction of a new fire station at Tamarin.

- Increase licence fees for casinos and gaming house ‘A’ from Rs 500,000 to Rs 3.5 million.

- Increase in licence fees for other types of gaming houses and for gaming slot machines and betting outlets.

- A cash grant of Rs 3,000 for families earning less than Rs 10,000 for the purchase of a water tank.
The way in which the British have treated the Chagossian people is a crime against humanity, said the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, in his speech on 3 November 2010, at a ceremony commemorating the deportation of the Chagossian community. Actually, the Government has, in recognition of the endurance of this community, declared 3 November a special day of commemoration.

The Prime Minister deplored the fact that another act of provocation was made vis-à-vis Mauritius when the then British Minister of Foreign Affairs decided to declare a marine protected area around the Chagos Archipelago.

Mauritius had never agreed to have this marine protected area and there was never any consultation, stressed the Prime Minister, adding that after meeting the new British Minister of Foreign Affairs, he got the impression that this matter would be properly delved into. However, the new British Government, has maintained the decision of the past Government and the Americans were also pressurising them, noted Dr Ramgoolam.

The Government of Mauritius does not recognise the marine protected area, unilaterally declared by Britain.

For the Prime Minister, the marine protected area is a sham and is a disguised way to put back the issue of sovereignty and to prevent the Chagossian people’s return to Chagos. There are nuclear submarines in Diego Garcia and war vessels that are polluting the sea but the British want to protect fish and corals there whilst the interests of the Chagossian people are being given no importance, he pointed out.

It is crucial to send a strong message through this special day, said the Prime Minister. He called for solidarity in all endeavours as regards the sovereignty over Chagos as well as on the right of return of the Chagossian people. The need to talk as one voice, be it the Government, the Opposition and the civil society, was stressed upon.

The Prime Minister also announced that the budget of the Ilois Welfare Fund will be increased from Rs 1.9 m to Rs 4 m and more will be done for the education, training and employment of the Chagossian people.

Sovereignty Issue

The Chagos Archipelago was illegally excised by the United Kingdom from the territory of Mauritius prior to independence. This dismemberment was done in violation of the United Nations General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960 and 2066 (XX) of 16 December 1965. The Chagos population was moved to Mauritius.

On 1 April 2010, the British Government decided to unilaterally declare a marine protected area around the Chagos Archipelago allegedly to protect the marine environment. The unilateral establishment of this marine protected area infringes the sovereignty of Mauritius over the Chagos Archipelago and constitutes a serious impediment to the eventual resettlement in the Archipelago of its former inhabitants and other Mauritians as any economic activity in the protected zone would be precluded.
Mauritius Celebrates 176th Anniversary of the Arrival of Indentured Labourers

The 176th anniversary of the arrival of Indentured Labourers in Mauritius was celebrated on 2 November 2010 at the Aapravasi Ghat in Port Louis in the presence of the President of the Republic, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, and the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam.

Speaking on the occasion, the President pointed out that the arrival of the indentured labourers had ushered a new era in the country’s history, forever altering its demography, economy and politics. In spite of all hardships sustained, our forefathers handed down to posterity their cultures, languages, norms and traditions, he observed. For him, these invaluable legacies have enabled us to lead a peaceful and progressive life and consequently, it is our moral obligation to pay tribute to their sacrifices.

For his part, the Prime Minister recalled that the Aapravasi Ghat is symbolic of indentured labour which, as a new system of recruitment, started in Mauritius. The Prime Minister Ramgoolam announced that Mauritius will propose the inscription of the National Archives on UNESCO’s Memory of the World Programme which aims at preserving and disseminating valuable archive holdings and library collections worldwide. The official celebration at Aapravasi Ghat comprised a wreath-laying ceremony by dignitaries and a multi-faith prayer followed by the launching of a CD of folk songs evoking the tribulations of indentured immigrants to mark the event. A book on Health, Disease and Indian Immigrants in the 19th Century Mauritius was also launched.

Other activities organised at regional level comprised a Gala Show entitled Manilall Doctor aur Bharitya Aapravasi at Rabindranath Tagore Institute, Ilot; an exhibition on Liberated Africans in collaboration with the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture; and a programme on Intangible Cultural Heritage at the Aapravasi Ghat.

Moreover, an International Conference on Migration and Settlement was also held from 10 to 11 November on the theme Migration and Settlement in the South-West Indian Ocean – Shifting Paradigms. The objective was to provide new perspectives on the history of migration and settlement in Mauritius and the region and to serve as a forum for the exchange of ideas and dissemination of research findings.

The Ghat

Formerly known as Coolie Ghat, the Aapravasi Ghat was inscribed on the World Heritage List in July 2006. It is considered by the World Heritage Committee as the “first site chosen by the British Government in 1834 for the ‘Great Experiment’ in the use of indentured, rather than slave labour”. The Aapravasi Ghat is closely associated with memories of almost half a million indentured labourers moving from India to Mauritius to work on sugar cane plantations. The site is recognised for its outstanding universal significance.
National Assembly Elects Monique Ohsan Bellepeau as Vice-President of the Republic

The National Assembly on November 11 unanimously elected Mrs. Monique Ohsan Bellepeau to the post of Vice-President of the Republic of Mauritius. She becomes the first woman to serve as Vice-President.

The swearing-in ceremony was held on 13 November at the State House, Le Réduit.

The motion in favour of the nomination of Mrs. Ohsan Bellepeau was proposed by the Prime Minister, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, and seconded by the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Paul Bérenger.

Mrs Ohsan Bellepeau was member of the National Assembly for Constituency No. 20 from 1995 to 2000. She served as Principal Parliamentary Secretary from 1997 to 2000. Before that she had had a long career as newsreader and reporter at the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation.

Mrs Ohsan Bellepeau was President of the Mauritius Labour Party from October 2007 to early November 2010.

Mauritius Ranks 20th in Overall Ease of Doing Business 2011

Mauritius ranks 20th in global rankings on Overall Ease of Doing Business 2011 and tops Africa’s Sub-Saharan economies for the third consecutive year, according to the World Bank group’s Doing Business 2011 Report: Making a difference for Entrepreneurs, launched in November.

Mauritius maintains its position among the top twenty economies on the overall ease of doing business followed by South Africa, ranked 34th, of the 183 economies rated by the International Finance Corporation and the World Bank. This is attributed mostly to the continuous reforms upon which the country has embarked, improving and transforming the business climate into a more globally competitive one. Reforms have also made the investment procedures significantly easier for people to do business, the report points out.

In the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Mauritius is the easiest place for starting a business, paying taxes and trading across borders while in the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) region Mauritius leads in protecting investors, paying taxes and trading across borders.