Government has made massive investments in public infrastructure over the last few years despite the difficult worldwide economic backdrop, said the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, on 20 February 2013 at the inauguration of Phase 1 of the Port Louis Ring Road, extending from Sorèze to Les Guibies.

According to the Prime Minister, the landscape of Mauritius is about to change comprehensively, thanks to several governmental projects under way to build, enhance and connect more roads, and to proactive policies espoused by Government. He stated that he is eager to see the completion of most infrastructural projects as soon as possible.

Dr Ramgoolam stated his belief that road security is essential and that according to recent studies, road traffic congestion can cost the country up to Rs 3 billion each year. Works have already started to improve main roads, as well as secondary roads to allow for better
traffic flow, and a massive Rs 29 billion is projected to be invested in such projects by year 2015.

In this regard, a Driving Education Centre will soon be set up in Highlands in order to make drivers and pedestrians more responsible. New Fitness centres will also be opened and three sites – in Port Louis, Curepipe and in the East – have already been identified for their construction.

**Port Louis Ring Road**

Phase 1 of the Ring Road has cost Rs 1.3 billion. The completed Ring Road, which includes Phase 1 and Phase 2, will be a circular track consisting of a 1.3 kilometre-tunnel under the mountain. It will start from Sorèze, near Montebello and will go through Les Guibies, Domaine les Pailles. It will pass through the mountain and come out on Justice Street in the outskirts of Port Louis, near the Chinese pagoda.

It will then take the direction of Colline Monneron, and will reach Pamplemousses Road through Vallée Pitot. Finally, it will take the Military Road to connect to the harbour roundabout on the M2. The aim is to make traffic to and from the capital fluid. This will also reduce accidents and will provide alternate access to Port Louis from the south.

**Saint Pierre Bypass and New Higgingson Road**

As part of Government programme to improve road infrastructure, two other roads – the Saint Pierre Bypass and the newly improved Higginson Road, linking St Julien D’Hotman to Providence - were inaugurated on 6 February 2013 by the Prime Minister.

The St Pierre Bypass will improve traffic flow along the Saint Pierre - Réduit axis and help alleviate the pressure on this segment of the road network. The cost for the St Pierre Bypass amounts to Rs 231 million.

The Higginson Road in St Julien D’Hotman, which was very narrow with a width of 6 m with dangerous curves, now has a width of 10.4 metres. Pavement slabs have been added as well as streetlights. The cost of the Higginson Road renovation and improvement is to the tune of Rs 182 million.
In that context, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping, through its Mass Transit Unit (MTU) has recently called for an Expression of Interest (EOI) for the design, construction, financing, operation and maintenance of the Mauritius Light Rail Transit (MLRT) project, through a Public Private Partnership (PPP) model.

The closing date for the submission of EOI is 12 April 2013. Interested parties should submit a non-binding response to the EOI, for consideration by the Ministry with a view to short-listing bidders for further participation in the Request for Proposals (RFP) stage of the MLRT procurement.

The MLRT project will be procured as a public private partnership in accordance with the Public Private Partnership Act No 37 of 2004, as amended. Preliminary details of the public private partnership are set out in the EOI document.

Registration details for the EOI may be obtained via the MLRT project website: www.mauritiuslightrapidtransit.com

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**Circular Migration**

**A Batch of 30 Mauritians to Take Employment in Canada**

A batch of 30 Mauritian workers have been selected to take employment in various regions in Canada, under the circular migration programme initiated by the International Organisation for Migration in Mauritius and the Federal Government of Canada.

Eligibility certificates and other relevant documents were handed over to them on 7 February 2013 in Port Louis by the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment, Mr Shakeel Mohamed, and the Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment, Mr Surendra Dayal.

Mr Mohamed announced that the recruiting agency from Canada namely Prudhomme International Inc., based in the region of Saskatchewan, will be coming to Mauritius in March to recruit more workers.

For his part, Mr Dayal appealed to job seekers to register themselves and take advantage of the training facilities namely the Recognition of Prior Learning programme offered by his Ministry through the National Empowerment Foundation (NEF).

Besides Canada, Mauritius is also working on other circular migration projects with France, while circular migration agreements with other countries such as Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Italy are being finalised so as to facilitate the mobility of Mauritian labour towards these places. Under the programme, another batch of Mauritian workers will be leaving soon to work in Switzerland.
178th Anniversary of Abolition of Slavery Slavery, a Crime against Humanity, Says PM

‘Victims of the horrors of slavery must not be forgotten and slavery itself was a crime against humanity’, said the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, on 1st February 2013 at a ceremony at Le Morne to commemorate the 178th anniversary of the abolition of slavery.

Dr Ramgoolam stated that physically, we are all different, yet we have something in common and that is, human dignity. People must gaze towards the future, overlook the animosity and humiliation endured during slavery, and work hard to succeed in life even if one is poor, he added.

Activities

Several activities were organised by the Ministry of Arts and Culture, in collaboration with Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund, the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture, the Kreol Speaking Union, and other stakeholdersto mark the 178th Anniversary of the Abolition of Slavery to pay homage to the memory of the slaves.

Activities kicked off on 31st January 2013 by a wreath laying ceremony at the Monument des Esclaves, at Pointe Canon, Mahebourg.

On 1st February 2013, the official ceremony started with a wreath laying ceremony by the President of the Republic, Mr. Rajkeswur Purryag, the Prime Minister, Dr Ramgoolam, and other eminent personalities. It was followed by a donation of laptops to students of Le Morne who have excelled in the Certificate of Primary Education examinations 2012.

Futhermore, Proverbe Ilistre, a book about proverbs in kreol along with their translations in English and French, and written by Dr Arnaud Carpooran, was launched. An educational kit was also distributed to all students at Le Morne Public Beach.

Moreover, the Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund built a replica of the village of Trou Chenille on the public beach of Le Morne on the theme Le Morne: Memwar nou Listwar depicting origins, history, genealogy, migratory movements, culture and economic activities of the village.

It is recalled that Le Morne Cultural Landscape was inscribed on the World Heritage List in July 2008 at the 32nd session of the World Heritage Committee in Quebec City, Canada.

Higher School Certificate 2012 Results: 79,14 % Pass Rate

The pass rate for this year’s Higher School Certificate results, proclaimed on 4 February 2013, was 79.14 % compared to 79.31 % in 2011. The names of 45 laureates were also announced. The number of candidates who sat for the 2012 HSC examinations were 13 098 compared to 12 369 in 2011.

Out of the 129 secondary schools where students took part in the examinations, 29 have scored a pass rate of more than 90%. This year, the pass rate for girls stands at 82.24%, whereas for boys, the pass rate is 74.78%.

Government Scholarship Schemes

It is recalled that in line with Government Programme 2010-2015 and for greater equity and inclusiveness, the Government Scholarship Schemes, also known as the Laureates Scheme has been reviewed with a view to awarding scholarships to a larger number of students, particularly meritorious candidates from modest income families.

The number of Scholarships has subsequently been increased from 30 to 68 and laureates now have the option to study abroad or locally. Laureates are encouraged to undertake their first degree studies in a local tertiary education institution, duly registered with the Tertiary Education Commission, and thereafter benefit from a postgraduate scholarship.

Under the Additional Scholarship, 24 Scholarships will be awarded on the basis of both academic merit and approved social criteria.
Mauritius Revenue Authority

E-Filing Services for Individual Income Tax Return 2013

E-filing services aimed at improving operational efficiencies at the Mauritius revenue authority and provide a better and a service to taxpayers while easing the whole return filing process were launched on 25 February 2013 in Port Louis. The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Mr Xavier-Luc Duval, and the Director General of the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA), Mr Sudhamo Lal, were present.

The e-filing system comprises several security aspects and added taxpayer facilitation features. Taxpayers have been allocated a User ID and a password to register for MRA e-Services. Once registered, taxpayers may have access to several facilities, namely: Prefilled tax form; Save a copy of draft return; Retrieve a copy of the final return from MRA system; Change their personal data; and Get their refund credit directly to their bank account.

The e-filing services are in line with the Maurice Ile Durable project (reducing the use of paper), and from the socio-economic perspective, with the vision of the Government to make optimum use of ICT to modernise the economy and facilitate the life of the citizens.

The MRA is also offering several incentives to taxpayers having recourse to e-filing. These include an extended delay of up to 15 April 2013 to these taxpayers and also to those effecting payment of tax using internet banking, ATM or mobile payment. E-filers will also participate in a draw offering 20 prizes, the first prize is Rs 50 000 and no documents need to be submitted if an individual is filing income tax electronically.

Other e-filing projects are in the pipeline such as the MNS e-filing facilities that would be made available on MRA e-services so that they are more accessible to SMEs, hence allowing a greater number of SMEs to have recourse to e-filing.

In 2012, 82% of total individual return was filed electronically. For the year 2013, 90% of employers have so far filed annual Return of Employees out of which 100% of them are electronic.

Revenue Collections Increased by 5% in 2012

The Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) has for the fiscal year 2012 collected approximately Rs 58 billion in the form of revenue as compared to Rs 53 billion in 2011, which represents an increase of 5%. The budgeted estimates for 2013 are approximately Rs 64.7 billion.

For the year 2012, the MRA has registered an increase in revenue collection in the following categories:

- Corporate Tax amounted to Rs 8.3 billion as compared to Rs 7.7 billion in 2011;
- Income Tax around Rs 6.2 billion compared to Rs 5.7 billion in 2011;
- Value Added Tax approximately Rs 24.9 billion as compared to Rs 22.7 billion in 2011;
- Customs and Excise duties totalled Rs 14.5 billion over Rs 13 billion in 2011.
- An amount of Rs 1.2 billion has been collected regarding Gambling Tax and Passenger Fee has increased from 793 million in 2011 to Rs 1.2 billion in 2012.
The creation of a sufficiently broad energy portfolio to safeguard the country against security concerns and price instability while being sensitive to environmental imperatives is the primary objective of the new Integrated Electricity Plan (IEP) of the Central Electricity Board (CEB) for the period 2013-2022. The IEP was launched on 18 February 2013 at the new headquarters of the CEB in Ebène.

The Plan constitutes an invaluable set of information to the Government, investors, business partners, NGOs, academia, customers and the community. IEP 2013-2022 reflects CEB’s assessment of the domestic electricity market evolution over the coming decade, the resource requirements in electricity generation, transmission and distribution, and environmental challenges.

The objective is to match harmoniously the power system supply-side with the expected growing demand. CEB will need around Rs 18 billion in terms of investments over the next 10 years. It will collaborate with the Energy Efficiency Management Office to educate the population about energy efficiency and demand-side management.

Findings and Forecasts of the New IEP

According to the IEP 2013-2022, the electricity demand in Mauritius will be around 3 196 GWh in 2022. On average, the increase in energy demand will be around 78 GWh compared to 80 GWh recorded for the period 2002-2012.

The Plan reveals that two new firm generation capacity 50 MW each will be required in 2017 and 2021 respectively. CEB, in-keeping with the policy of Government, will also accommodate renewable energy facilities, such as the 29.4 MW Curepipe Point (Plaine Sophie) Wind Farm, 10 MW distributed Solar PV Farms and small (micro/mini) hydro plants, among others. In this regard, CEB has already embarked on the project to increase the water storage capacity of the Sans Souci Dam by some 30%.

CEB will also facilitate the penetration of renewable energy projects so as to be in accordance with the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities’ upcoming ‘Renewable Energy Master Plan’ and the Energy Strategy Action Plan (ESAP) 2011-2025. This will include CEB’s active participation in the development of a Wind Atlas, study to increase energy production from ‘bagasse’, study to use cane residues for electricity production, setting up of a pilot plant for handling and feeding cane residues and the setting up of a 20 MW Wind Energy System every 3 years as from 2017 and a 10 MW Solar Energy System every 3 years after 2013. Furthermore, the CEB will conduct a comprehensive pre-feasibility study for the use of Liquefied Natural Gas which is an ideal substitute for fossil energy sources.

Transmission network reliability

A number of measures are spelt out to enhance transmission network reliability in the short term:

- The commissioning of a new 66 kV transmission line and a substation in the South-West at Case Noyale.
- The commissioning of a new 66 kV line from Belle Vue substation to Sottise substation.
- The laying of two new high-capacity underground cables to maximise power evacuation from Fort Victoria Power Station to Saint-Louis substation.
- The commissioning of La Tour Koenig and Riche Terre substations.
- The upgrading of other existing substations.
Mauritius and Turkey signed, on 07 February 2013 in Istanbul, a Framework Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation and an Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (IPPA).

The agreements were signed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Dr Arvin Boolell, for Mauritius, and the Minister of Economy, Mr Zafer Caglayan, for Turkey.

These agreements represent an additional step in fostering relations between both countries following the signing of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in September 2011.

The Framework Agreement and the IPPA

The Framework Agreement is multi-dimensional and will help to identify concrete areas where both countries can work together especially in terms of increasing investment flows. It will cover the following areas: Agriculture, Fisheries, Education, Health, Industry and SME development, Science and Technology.

The agreement will also help create synergies between the business communities of both countries and identify where joint venture projects could be promoted and what needs to be done to increase trade flows and remove any non trade barriers.

Trade Statistics

Latest economic statistics highlight the existing strengths of Mauritius-Turkey bilateral economic relationship. Turkey is the 18th largest trading supplier to Mauritius, with exports and imports totalling 44 million USD and 4 million USD in 2011 respectively. Figures also show a growth in imports from Turkey by 10%.

For Mauritian companies, Turkey is a large market nearing 90 million people with companies having a strong global orientation and a business culture that values quality. Mauritius with its links to the SADC and COMESA region represents an important market of more than 500 million inhabitants.
Health Infrastructure

New Operation Theatre and Wards Block to be constructed at Victoria Hospital

The laying of foundation stone for the new facilities was held on 4 February 2013 by the Minister of Health and Quality of Life, Mr Lormus Bundhoo, in the presence of the Ambassador of the People’s Republic of China in Mauritius, Mrs Bian Yanhua.

The construction which started in February 2013 is expected to last for 23 months. It is being carried out by a Chinese contractor, Nanjing Dadi Construction Group Co. Ltd. The Chinese aid project consists of a grant (1/3) and an interest-free loan (2/3), including design, construction and provision furniture and medical equipment. The medical equipment and furniture comprise laryngoscope sets, electrical and orthopaedic operating tables, ICU beds and Fowlers beds, among others.

The project consists of ground floor and four floors and a partial basement. The total floor area of the building is around 88,156 sq. feet and the building will accommodate six operation theatres; two recovery rooms, each with seven beds; one Intensive Care Unit with eight beds; and two female wards on the second floor and two male wards on the third floor, with a total bed capacity of 120 beds.

Other Health Infrastructural Projects

In a bid to modernise health care services the Ministry has embarked on a number of infrastructural projects. Provision has been made for Rs 1.1 billion for capital development in the budget.

At Flacq Hospital, a new Block, at a cost of Rs 129 million, was opened in November 2011 to provide services to Neonatal Unit, Cardiology Ward and a Cardiac ICU providing 24 hour cardiac monitoring for male and female patients.

The total cost for the new Dr. A.G Jeetoo hospital is estimated at Rs 2.2 billion. Phase I was completed in May 2009 and phase II was handed over in July 2012. The third phase of the project, comprising restoration works estimated at Rs 173 million, will start around March 2013. Provision is being made for a new block of four wards at Jawaharlal Nehru hospital so as to increase bed capacity.

At Victoria hospital, a number of new projects have been carried out in recent years. The labour ward, NICU and Nursery have been renovated at a cost of Rs 5 million.

Paediatric Orthopaedics Surgery Telecast Live in Mauritius and Africa

Surgeons from Regional Hospitals, postgraduate students and African countries watched a live telecast paediatric orthopaedics surgery on a four-year old girl with severe malformation in the upper limbs which was held on 27 February 2013 at the Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam National Hospital in Pamplemousses.

Consultant Paediatric Orthopaedic surgeon Dr Atul Bhaskar from India, assisted by a team of orthopaedic surgeons from the SSRNH carried out the operation.
Re-designed Government Portal Operational

The web portal of the government of Mauritius (www.gov.mu) has been redesigned with enhanced features allowing better interaction between citizens and government. The Minister of Information and Communication Technology, Mr Tassarajen Pillay Chedumbrum, launched the new Portal at Ebène Cyber-city on 22 February 2013.

The main portal includes information related to the Government of Mauritius and is considered as the entry point to the websites of Ministries/Departments. The new portal has been designed with value-added features, such as registration of citizen and personalised content through the ‘my Gov’ concept, facilities to view PDF files in a more user-friendly way. Other features, such as News and Events Calendar, Newsletters, Weather, Currency Converters, Alerts and Notifications, Media Gallery, Poll, Chat Rooms, Blogs and Discussion Forums are also available.

The new portal is based on state-of-the-art technologies that have addressed the technical issues encountered with the previous portal and that have taken into account emerging trends, needs and aspirations of users.

E-government figures high on Government’s agenda and the new portal is reflective of the commitment of Government to offer meaningful, up-to-date and reliable information as well as allow and maintain a close relationship with citizens, the business community and foreigners alike through interactive and innovative technological features and services.

Main Projects in the Pipeline for 2013

Main ICT-related projects in the pipeline for year 2013 were the focus of a press conference on 19 February 2013 by the Minister of Information and Communication Technology, Mr Tassarajen Pillay Chedumbrum, in Port Louis.

The ICT Minister elaborated on the projects which include Mobile Banking, Migration from Seven to Eight Digits of Non-Geographic E.164 Telephone Numbers and ICT Expo 2013.

Mobile Banking is in line with making optimum use of ICT to modernise the Mauritian economy and facilitate the life of citizens. In a bid to bring more innovation in our systems, the Mobile Banking project is being introduced on a pilot basis. A first batch of 10 e-payment services, including the payment of parking fines, business registration fees and income tax is being made available.

A guideline regulating mobile banking and mobile payment systems has been issued by the Bank of Mauritius on 5 February 2013. The objective of this guideline, effective as from 18 February 2013, is to promote a sound financial system in Mauritius and regulate the mobile banking and mobile payment systems. It is intended for providers of mobile banking and mobile payment services.

Another major project is the migration from seven to eight Digits of Non-Geographic E.164 Telephone Numbers assigned for Mobile Networks, which will be effective as from 1st September 2013. The migration is necessary in view of development in technology, particularly, those linked to convergence of fixed and mobile networks and services.

ICT Expo 2013

The National Computer Board will organise ICT Expo 2013 in Rose Belle at the “Centre Commercial du Vieux Moulin” on 13 and 14 April and at Goodlands Farmers Service Corporation on 27 and 28 July 2013. The main objectives of the Expo are to sensitise the public on the potential applications of ICT and choice of technology for effective business and individual solutions; and, bring Government services closer to the people by providing accessible services.
Drug prevention strategies
Mauritius to host regional training programme

A regional training programme, aimed at enhancing national capacity to adopt and promote evidence-based drug and other substances prevention strategies and programmes, will be held from 8 to 12 July 2013. Organised by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for Mauritius, in collaboration with the Indian Ocean Commission, the training will focus on the Prevention of Drug Use, HIV and Crime among Young People.

The topics that will be discussed include safety and healthy parent/child attachment, parental supervision, monitoring and effective discipline, communication of pro-social family values, parental involvement in a child’s life, supportive parenting, and cohesive and organised family environment.

Private-aided secondary schools
Implementation of a new grant formula

A New Grant Formula will be implemented to finance private-aided secondary schools for the period 2013-2015. The Grant Formula has been worked out on a performance-based approach to compensate private-aided secondary schools for their efforts to improve the quality of education.

Existing elements, such as Operations Grant, Management Grant, Incentive Grant, Performance Grant, Pre-vocational Education Grant, and New Performance Indicators, have been increased. New elements, such as quality of School Certificate graduates and students’ attendance, have been added.

As regards Rodrigues, a Rodrigues Element has been considered to provide adequate funds to the private secondary schools to meet certain specific costs due to their location. The annual cost of the implementation of the Formula is estimated at Rs 510 million.

MoU for Establishment of Supranational Reference Laboratories

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) will be signed between the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life and SADC for the establishment of Supranational Reference Laboratories, and Regional Centres of Excellence. The MoU provides a framework of cooperation for the designation and operationalisation of the Supranational Reference Laboratories for HIV and AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis, and the Regional Centres of Excellence for Human Resources Development and Quality Assurance relating to communicable diseases in the SADC region.

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