In this issue

National Assembly Elections: Mauritius goes to poll

180th anniversary of arrival of indentured labourers in Mauritius

Indenture Labour Route International Conference

4th WTO Trade Policy Review for Mauritius

Mauritius Hosts 36th International Conference of Data Protection and Privacy Commissioners

Finalisation Of National Employment Policy for Mauritius

Development of mTobacco Cessation Programme

White Paper on Arts and Culture Launched

**National Assembly Elections**
Mauritius goes to poll on 10 December 2014

General elections will be held in the Republic of Mauritius on 10 December 2014. The National Assembly was dissolved on 6 October 2014, paving the way for the coming elections. The last ones were held on 5 May 2010.

Nomination Day was held on 24 November 2014. Overall, 726 candidates are standing for the general elections this year. Moreover, a total of 73 political parties have been registered.

The island of Mauritius is divided into 20 Constituencies and Rodrigues is the 21st constituency. The 20 Constituencies return three members each whilst Rodrigues returns two members. It is the Electoral Boundaries Commission that delimits the boundaries of electoral constituencies. The island of Agalega forms part of Constituency No. 3.

For the coming elections, Constituency No. 5 (Pamplemousses and Triolet) has the greatest number of candidates (69), whereas Rodrigues has only 8.

The total number of electors is 936 975 and Constituency No. 14 (Savanne and Black River) has registered the highest number of electors with 62 524. Next comes Constituency No. 5 (Pamplemousses and Triolet), with 62 092 electors. Constituency No. 3 (Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) has the least number of electors (23 112). **(See Table at page 2)**

It is recalled that the right to vote is a fundamental principle enshrined in the Constitution. The voting age was reduced from 21 to 18 years in December 1975.
### Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constituency</th>
<th>Number of candidates</th>
<th>Number of electors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Grand River North West and Port Louis West</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>42 456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Port Louis South and Port Louis Central</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>25 470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>23 112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Port Louis North and Montagne Longue</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>49 865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Pamplemousses and Triolet</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>62 092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Grand Baie and Poudre d’Or</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>52 351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Piton and Rivière du Rempart</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>43 079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Quartier Militaire and Moka</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>44 314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Flacq and Bon Accueil</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>54 724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Montagne Blanche and Grand River South East</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>50 936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>42 590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>38 363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>35 151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Savanne and Black River</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>62 524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 La Caverne and Phoenix</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>57 104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Vacoas and Floreal</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>46 479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Curepipe and Midlands</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>47 899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Belle Rose and Quatre Borne</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>44 357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Stanley and Rose Hill</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>40 507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>44 817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Rodrigues</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28 785</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**The National Assembly**

The National Assembly comprises 70 members, 62 elected on the first-past-the-post basis, and eight under the Best Loser System.

The eight additional seats are allocated to non-elected party candidates in order to ensure a fair and adequate representation of each community and party in the Assembly, along the following lines:

- The first four Best Loser seats go to appropriate under-represented communities irrespective of party, provided the candidates belong to a party.
- The second set of four seats are then distributed on the basis of both appropriate party and under-represented communities with a view to redressing any imbalance to the verdict of the electorate caused by the allocation of the first four seats.

Following an amendment to the Constitution in June 2014, it is not mandatory for a candidate at the 2014 general elections to declare his/her community. If the candidate chooses not to do so, he/she will not be eligible for a seat under the Best Loser System.
“We have travelled a long way and achieved much, but this road has no end. We must continue to strive for a better life and rise up to the challenges of this changed, globalised world. We must unite our efforts so that we can unleash the full potential of all our people.”

The above statement was made by the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, for the 180th anniversary of the arrival of indentured labourers in Mauritius which was commemorated on 2 November 2014 at Aapravasi Ghat, Port Louis.

The Prime Minister underlined that the commemoration is an opportunity to acknowledge our existential root, and traced the journey of the indentured labour from India to Mauritius after the abolition of slavery in 1834. He also paid tribute to those unsung heroes who through perseverance, resilience and fortitude contributed significantly to make this country what it is today.

According to Dr Ramgoolam, indentured labourers were treated like slaves but they persevered because they had an indomitable spirit to overcome all obstacles. He recalled that the country was built by immigrants from different continents but they have all worked together for the prosperity of Mauritius.

The commemorative ceremony organised by the Ministry of Arts and Culture in collaboration with the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund (AGTF) consisted in the laying of wreaths on the steps indentured labourers first climbed after they landed; a re-enactment scene depicting the arrival of the first batch of indentured labourers to Mauritius; dance performances by local and foreign artists; launching of a Souvenir Magazine of AGTF; inauguration and guided visit of the Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre; and unveiling of the bust of late Mr Beekrumsing Ramlallah.

The ceremony was also graced by the presence of the President of the Republic, Mr. Rajkeswur Purryag, and the External Affairs and Overseas Indian Affairs of the Republic of India, Mrs Sushma Swaraj, who was the Chief Guest.

Addressing the audience on the occasion, Mrs Swaraj remarked that by their hard work and sacrifice, the early pioneers from the indentured labour system paved the road for the freedom and prosperity that are enjoyed in Mauritius today. The footsteps of those 36 first indentured labourers on Aapravasi Ghat would change the course of history for Mauritius and for India with the rest of the world, she added.

Indian Minister of External Affairs on official visit

The Minister of External Affairs and Overseas Indian Affairs of the Republic of India, Shrimati Sushma Swaraj, was on an official visit to Mauritius from 1st to 3rd November 2014.

Other than the historical and cultural elements of the visit of Minister Swaraj, bilateral and economic aspects, namely strengthening of friendly and cooperation ties between Mauritius and India, were also of prime importance, with meetings scheduled with the Prime Minister and Minister Boolell.

The programme of her visit also comprised an interactive business meeting, the launching of the International Conference on Indentured Labourers, and a Civic Reception.

Following a tête-à-tête with Minister Swaraj on 2 November 2014 at Treasury Building in Port Louis, Prime Minister Ramgoolam announced that India has agreed to grant a Line of Credit of USD 200 million to Mauritius as regards the Light Rail Transit project. An additional amount to the tune of USD 450 million from EXIM Bank of India at a very low interest rate will also be granted.

During the meeting, discussions focused on: the Double Taxation Avoidance Convention, the visa-on-arrival facility, the situation in the region, and Mauritius’ unwavering support for India to have a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council.
The three-day Indenture Labour Route International Conference, focusing on the Establishment of the International Indenture Labour Route, kicked off on 3 November 2014 at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute Auditorium, Moka.

The conference aimed to discuss on the way forward for the implementation of the Indenture Labour Route project and its financing with the assistance of UNESCO and Member States. The project which will complement the Slave Route Project since both relate to the movement of a mass of people across continents, has been approved by UNESCO. It will also help promote reflection on culture pluralism, intercultural dialogue, sustainable development and peace.

The Indenture Labour Route International conference was graced by the presence of the Minister of Arts and Culture, Mr. Mookhesswur Choonee; the Minister of External Affairs and Overseas Indian Affairs of the Republic of India, Mrs Sushma Swaraj; and other eminent personalities.

In his address, Minister Choonee highlighted that the International Indentured Labour Route Project symbolises the story of more than 2.2 million indentured labourers mostly from India, sent to some 26 countries around the world.

What is needed is a roadmap for the future and this goes in hand with the establishment of an international scientific committee to elaborate a plan of action that would be implemented with the help of the Secretariat, he added.

For her part, Minister Swaraj stated the story of the Indentured Labour Route deserves to be studied, told and heard, in a more complete, systematic and scientific manner.

This Project, she added, would provide a platform and act as a catalyst to bring together researchers and scholars from around the world for conducting research and documentation on hitherto unknown aspects of the indenture experience.

Mauritius as initiator of the project and as the only country hosting a World Heritage Site linked to Indentured Labour, that is, the Aapravasi Ghat, is hosting the Secretariat of the project at the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund under the aegis of UNESCO to conduct research and document the indenture experience in Mauritius and in other countries where the system existed; and set up national and international links with other countries.
The Trade Policy Review is a transparency exercise which takes place every six years for Mauritius. The objective is to examine the compliance of the trade policies and practices of the country with the WTO Agreements.

The Fourth Review

The Fourth Review of Mauritius took place on the 22nd and 24th of October 2014. For each review, two reports are prepared: a policy statement by the Government under review, and a detailed report written independently by the WTO Secretariat. Both these reports detail the economic trajectory of Mauritius since the last Trade Policy Review held in April 2008 and the policies which Government has adopted with regards to trade development in compliance with its commitments under the WTO. The Ambassador of Colombia to the WTO was appointed Discussant and his job was to examine both these reports.

WTO Member States were given two weeks prior to the review to submit written questions on the documents for which responses were provided before the start of the review process. Mauritius received 65 questions from the following countries: EU, US, Canada, Brazil, China, Thailand, and Peru. Questions and clarifications were also sought during the Trade Policy Review itself.

Around 20 delegations took the floor including all those who submitted written questions and congratulated Mauritius for the active role it has been playing at the WTO and for the economic result it has achieved since the last Trade Policy Review in spite of the global financial and economic crisis.

According to official reports, the Economic Reform Programme of Mauritius was unanimously applauded by all those who took the floor during the meeting, in particular on measures taken to facilitate and promote investment, diversify the economic base of the country and trade liberalisation programme which the country has pursued.

Mauritius was presented by most of the African countries who took the floor as a showcase and as an inspiration for them. The steps taken by Government to develop the Ocean as a new pillar of the economy were appreciated by all, with Canada even willing to share its experience in the sector and support Mauritius in the development of same.

All speakers also appreciated the measures taken by Mauritius to facilitate trade and commended the country for its active participation in the WTO negotiations on trade facilitation and on the timely submission by Mauritius of its Category ‘A’ Notification on Trade Facilitation. Mauritius was the first African country to have submitted such Notification.
Public officials from international and sub-national authorities, as well as other experts in the field gathered at the 36th International Conference of Data Protection and Privacy Commissioners which was held from 13 to 16 October 2014 at the Intercontinental Hotel in Balaclava.

The theme of the four-day event, organised by the Data Protection Office under the aegis of the Prime Minister’s Office, was A world order for data protection—our dream coming true?

This annual conference provided a platform to discuss a large number of issues and challenges regarding different areas of data protection. The conference aimed at exploring the path towards building the relationships and tools necessary to protect the data of individuals regardless of culture, national borders, or the challenges that come from innovative data usage.

It was also an opportunity for data protection stakeholders to meet colleagues from Africa, America, Europe and other jurisdictions in the Asia-Pacific region. Matters of common interest and concern, challenges for the future, and how to work together and find a way forward were on the agenda.

During the conference, participants adopted resolutions on data protection and privacy, examined all contemporary issues in respect of data protection and privacy, and built the appropriate networks for enhancing the protection of personal information.

Several themes were discussed, namely, privacy and data protection in the developing world; One Stop Shop: Centralisation versus Proximity: Surveillance versus Dataveillance; Privacy in the Digital Age - the UN General Assembly Resolution; E-Health and Data Protection; Ethics, Fundamental Rights and Big Data; and Net Neutrality and Data Protection.

Key speakers included Ms Drudeisha Madhub, Data Protection Commissioner from Mauritius; Mr Jacob Kohnstamm, Chairman of the Dutch Data Protection Authority; Ms Edith Ramirez, Chairperson, US Federal Trade Commission; Mr Peter Hustinx, European Data Protection Supervisor; and Mr Mukesh Haikerwal, Chair of the Council, World Medical Association (Australia).

In his opening address, the Minister of Information and Communication Technology, Mr Tassarajen Pillay Chedumbrum, pointed out that the hosting of the conference shows Government’s unflinching will to make ICT the first pillar of the economy, balanced with a meaningful protection of our personal information.

“We want to show the world that we are leaving no stone unturned in making Mauritius a safe destination for trustworthy investment coupled with a strong data protection and privacy framework to attract the right businesses especially in the ITES-BPO sector”, he said.

The Minister recalled that Mauritius has endeavoured to commit itself to acceding to the international Conventions on data protection and privacy in order to achieve accreditation with the European Union. The objective is to make Mauritius the leading country in the African region with the right framework, in line with international principles in data protection and privacy, he said.
The draft National Employment Policy (NEP) for Mauritius was finalised after a two-day tripartite workshop which opened on 29 October 2014 at La Cannelle, Domaine Les Pailles.

Organised by the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment in collaboration with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the workshop served as platform for the tripartite constituents namely representatives of Employers, Workers Government and the Private sector to take cognizance, analyse and make recommendations on the draft NEP. The deliberations eventually served towards the finalisation of the document.

During the workshop, discussions focused on the contents of the draft NEP comprising of the inputs of the various stakeholders under the main themes namely: Micro-Economic Policies; Sustainable Development/Promotion of Green jobs; Social inclusion and Specific employment measures for vulnerable groups; Human resource development; Sectoral and SMEs development and transition to formality; Youth and female employment; and Labour migration.

The NEP is one of the main components of the ILO Decent Work Country Programme for Mauritius signed in 2012. It will serve as a coherent framework and as an important tool to enable all Mauritian citizens who are willing to work, to attain secured and sustainable livelihood to enhance their standard of living through productive and freely chosen employment.

The policy aims at highlighting multidimensional interventions adopted on the basis of common agreement reached by all parties concerned and pursued by Government in order to address clearly identified challenges and opportunities to achieve specific and qualitative employment objectives.

In his opening address, the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment, Mr Shaakeel Mohamed, called for a proper synergy and a concerted effort among all the Ministries/Departments involved in helping people to find an employment. All those concerned should work together and in the same direction to better achieve the common goal which is that of addressing employment issues in Mauritius, he added.

Minister Mohamed also spoke on giving proper career guidance to the youth so as to make them employable. This, he said, will help them decide their professional path in a wise way hence helping them to find the appropriate jobs with their acquired skills in the relevant fields.

Decent Work Country Programme

A three-day tripartite workshop to present the preliminary report on Decent Work Country Programme Mid Term Review for Mauritius opened on 27 October 2014 at Maritim Hotel, Balaclava.

An initiative of the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment in collaboration with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the workshop served as platform for the tripartite constituents, namely representatives of Employers, Workers and Government to make an evaluation of the various programmes implemented so far under the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) 2012-2014.

The participants also analysed the progress achieved under the DWCP, hence enabling the ILO and its constituents to assess their joint performance in delivering planned output and in further supporting other projects under the DWCP. The mid term review exercise highlighted good practices and make recommendations on how to improve on the delivery of decent work results.

About the DWCP

The DWCP, enunciated in the Government Programme 2012-2015 as one of the priority areas of Government to promote decent employment while improving the working and living conditions of workers in Mauritius, was signed on 30 November 2012.

The programme addresses three main features, namely: Creation of Decent and Productive Employment with the provision of adequate Social Protection; Strengthening Social Dialogue; and Elimination of all forms of Discrimination.

The aim is to promote decent employment through specific programmes and activities determined in consultation with the social partners thus contributing towards the improvement of the working and living conditions of workers in Mauritius.

ILO DWCPs are tools of framework for cooperation between the ILO and member states, formulated with the aim to deliver technical support to Governments in areas of employment and labour.
In this context, a three-day technical workshop was organised from 28 to 30 October 2014 at Le Meridien Hotel at Pointe aux Piments in view of developing a strong and comprehensive mTobacco Cessation programme for Mauritius in line with the E-health project that the Ministry is implementing. The workshop was organised jointly by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life.

The mTobacco Cessation programme forms part of the wider mHealth project which is an innovative concept spearheaded by the WHO using mobile telecommunications technology to create awareness on non-communicable diseases. In the first instance, the mHealth programme will focus on tobacco cessation and subsequently will be extended to address other Non-Communicable diseases, in particular diabetes.

The objectives of the workshop were namely to introduce the “Be Healthy Be Mobile” initiative and the mTobacco programme; involve various players in the implementation of the programme; review the strategy to fund the programme; refine the monitoring and evaluation framework; and finalise programme timeline.

Participants comprised stakeholders from different ministries, the Mauritius Institute of Health, NGOs dealing with tobacco, and other related regulatory authorities.

In his address, the Minister of Health and Quality of Life, Mr Lormus Bundhoo, stated that Mauritius has known a rapid development of Information Communication Technology, while adding that the health sector can definitely benefit from it for health promotion. “There is great need to shift from our traditional way of communication to innovative use of modern technology in order to successfully reach different segments of the population”, he pointed out.

Tobacco Control Measures

Since 2009, several tobacco control measures have been put in place, namely the coming into force of a new Framework Convention on Tobacco Control compliant tobacco regulations which comprise the ban of smoking in public places, ban of sales to and by minors, ban of advertising, promotion and sponsorship, yearly tax increase on tobacco products, implementation of pictorial health warnings on cigarette packages.

A smoking cessation clinic was set up in 2008 on a pilot basis at the Odette Leal Community Health Centre in Beau Bassin. Subsequently, in 2011 the smoking cessation service was extended to six other health points in the five health regions. Moreover, since May 2011, a toll free telephone information line has become operational to give information on tobacco to the public. A tobacco cessation clinic has also been set up in Rodrigues.
The document, prepared by the Ministry of Arts and Culture (MAC), is the first comprehensive cultural policy framework that takes into account the potential of the creative economy and the necessity for a new equilibrium for the Republic of Mauritius, ranging from the rich and diverse cultural heritage (the live past), contemporary creativity (the pressing present) to the anticipated aspirations of future generations (the fast-forward future).

It aims at transforming arts and culture into a flourishing industry in the short-term and with the vision of making it the next pillar of the economy, in the medium term. Creative Mauritius – Vision 2025 further proposes to set the basis for a new pragmatic working collaboration between the MAC and its stakeholders especially artists, creative entrepreneurs and the public. It lays the foundation of the culture of a new century, comprising several specific recommendations as well as an overview of issues such as capacity-building, funding and legislation for the successful implementation of the document.

It is recalled that the White Paper will be followed by a strategic plan that will create a clear rationale for action, an outline programme, a set of desired outcomes and an action plan. In his address at the launching ceremony, Minister Choonee recalled that culture, which encompasses creativity, is a dynamic and constantly evolving sector. The White Paper elaborates on the vision of how culture has to evolve during the next ten to fifteen years, he said.

“We want the realisation that culture can make a valuable contribution to the economy as a way to encourage decision-makers at all levels to re-evaluate the place of culture in the developmental agenda. There is no future without culture”, he added.
Some 21 MPhil/PhD students participated in the second edition of the Mauritius Research Council (MRC) Post Graduate Conference held on 30 and 31 October at the seat of the research institution in Ebène. The Conference aimed at enabling students from the natural sciences and engineering as well as social sciences fields to present their respective progress regarding their research studies.

The students are beneficiaries of the MRC Post Graduate Award Scheme whose purpose is to provide sponsorship to graduates undertaking part-time research studies leading to an MPhil or PhD at a local tertiary education institution.

In his address, the Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology, Dr Rajeshwar Jeetah, stated that research and innovation are critical for the development of knowledge and, contribute substantially to economic growth and social development.

Recalling the amendments brought to the Mauritius Research Council Act to provide for the setting up of a National Research and Innovation Advisory Committee with the participation of Nobel laureates, Dr Jeetah highlighted the importance of having a pool of researchers in different fields as well as a multidisciplinary approach to research in Mauritius.

The Minister also listed measures initiated by Government to promote research and innovation. They comprise: the Best Mauritian Scientist Award initiative to recognise and reward the work of Mauritian scientists; participation of Mauritian scientists in the Lindau Nobel Laureates Meeting; appointment of National Research Chairs; and creation of a research fund to finance research projects together with the private sector, among others.

**MRC Post Graduate Conference Programme**

During the presentations, topics such as biomedical and biopharmaceutical, energy efficiency and renewable energy, ocean technology and marine resources/ocean economy, water resources/water security, waste management and waste recycling, food security, land use, land transport and logistics, economics, social and financial services, were covered.

Presenters were also required to submit a paper not exceeding 2,500 words, to be compiled into a conference proceeding. Cash Prizes of Rs 20,000, Rs 15,000 and Rs 10,000 will be awarded to the best performers at a ceremony to be held in January 2015.

It is to be recalled that some 19 students participated in the first edition of the Post Graduate Conference, held in 2012.