Debates on 2015-2016 Budgets

‘A long-awaited societal project which will shape a more sustainable future’, says Prime Minister

The Prime Minister was intervening on the January 2015-June 2015 and July 2015-June 2016 budgets which were presented on 23 March 2015 by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development.

According to Sir Anerood Jugnauth, the seeds have been sown for the growth of a Mauritius that is based on the promise of inclusive development, quality investments resulting in job creation, equity, social justice, transparency and good governance. Government has mapped out its economic plan by taking into consideration the fact that higher growth will require increased investments and structural reforms to improve productivity, he pointed out.

One such force is the unlocking of 13 employment-rich mega-projects that will be spread across the country. The level of investments would be around Rs 120 billion, with prospects for the creation of a very high number of jobs. Eight of these projects will be designed on the ‘Smart City’ concept. The five other projects relate to the creation of technopoles on a regional basis.

Government aims at putting the Mauritian economy back on track and achieve growth rates much superior to the five percent mark and due consideration has been given on catalytic forces that will boost development and progress across our economic sectors, said the Prime Minister.

The 2015-2016 Budget lays the foundation for boosting quality investment in traditional, emerging as well as new economic sectors, Sir Anerood Jugnauth emphasised, adding that this Budget sets the foundation for a second economic miracle and looks at transforming Mauritius by creating jobs so as to solve the problem of high unemployment.
On that note, the Prime Minister said that Government’s incentives for the development of smart cities are designed precisely for the creation of self-sustained cities dedicated mainly to knowledge-based industries in which employees can flourish, businesses can succeed and local communities can prosper.

‘Together with the techno-parks, we are looking at the development of thirteen employment-rich mega projects which would create the ambit for new higher investment threshold for Mauritius and bring about a new wave of development with the utilisation of 7 000 arpents of land. We are here talking about the creation of thousands of new jobs, the development of a whole new value chain with respect to smart cities and techno-parks and unprecedented levels of investments’, he highlighted.

Another measure is enhancing the SME sector so that it becomes a backbone of the economy. On that score, the Prime Minister said that no model of sustainable economic development can exist without a dynamic and strong SME sector, and that is why Government has put in all necessary efforts in devising a strategy for enhancing an entrepreneurial culture in Mauritius. ‘This will not only lead to further wealth and job creation, but will contribute largely in creating a more balanced and equitable society, where all have a fair chance. We are in fact unleashing a new chapter in the democratisation process of our economy’, he stated.

Hydrographic data sets were presented by India to Mauritius on 13 April 2015 during a ceremony held on the Indian surveying vessel, INS Sarvekshak, at the Port Louis Harbour, thus highlighting Indian-Mauritian longstanding relationship and strong cooperation ties.

The INS Sarvekshak was engaged for 36 days in Mauritian waters to carry out bathymetric surveys off Rodrigues Island and also to record and analyse hydrographic data sets which will help Mauritius’ claim of continental shelf at the United Nations.

Hydrographic surveys are usually undertaken during the months of September and October when there are no cyclones so as to obtain accurate and useful data. However, at the request of the Mauritian Government and following discussions between the two parties, India has, within 48 hours, readied and deployed the INS Sarvekshak, to undertake the required hydrographic surveys to be presented on time at the United Nations for Mauritius’s claim of continental shelf.

Work accomplished by the ship will provide an outline of the features of the sea bottom, its geographical relationship with the land that will eventually aid the country to claim the rightful sea areas.

Extension of MOU

During the handing-over ceremony on 13 April 2015, the Indian side announced an extension of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Hydrography between India and Mauritius for an additional five years.

It is recalled that since the signature of the MoU in the field of hydrography in 2005, the hydrographic department of Indian Navy has provided Mauritius with seven navigational charts comprising of mainland Mauritius, Agalega Islands, Cargados to St Brandon and Rodrigues Island. The Hydrographic Unit operating under the aegis of the Ministry of Housing and Lands has been contributing since November 2013 in the development of hydrographic surveying and nautical charting in Mauritian waters.
Major amendments aiming at consolidating democracy at the local level and promoting better participation of local Councillors in the management of the affairs of the community have been brought to the Local Government Act.

The Local Government (Amendment) Bill was passed on 9 April 2015 by the National Assembly. One of the main provisions relates to the holding of Municipal City Council and Municipal Town Council elections in the year 2015, and thereafter every six years. The last elections were held in December 2012.

While commending the Bill to the House, the Minister of Local Government, Dr Anwar Husnoo, pointed out that amendments will contribute to consolidating grassroots democracy since a vigorous local democracy is the basis for a healthy national-level democracy.

For the Minister, citizens look up to the Local Government as the first public authority, due to its proximity, to solve their immediate social, welfare and environmental problems. It also represents the level of democracy in which the citizen has the most effective opportunity to actively and directly participate in decision-making for the society, he added.

It is recalled that Government set up a Ministerial Committee chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications, Mr Xavier-Luc Duval, to look into the pressing issues that needed to be addressed in the Local Government Act with a view to consolidating democracy at the local level. The amendments have been brought following the works of the Ministerial Committee.

### The Amendments – Highlights

- An increase in the number of Municipal City Councillors and Municipal Town Councillors to be returned per ward from 3 to 4, thus increasing the total number of Councillors from 90 to 120.

- Every group or alliance presenting more than 2 candidates at an election of a Municipal City Council or Municipal Town Council shall ensure that not more than two-thirds of its candidates for election to that Council are of the same sex.

- Any person who is and has, for not less than 6 months before a Municipal City Council or Municipal Town Council election, been the owner or tenant of business premises in a ward of a city or town may stand as a candidate at the election.

- The chairperson or a member of the governing body of a statutory corporation or an organisation wholly funded by the State may stand as a candidate at a local government election;

- In the case of an alliance, every group forming part of the alliance may submit a reserve list and that the seat of a member of one group within the alliance becoming vacant shall be filled by the first available person on that group’s reserve list;

- A Councillor shall not lose his seat where he ceases to belong to a group otherwise than by resignation;

- In addition to a Lord Mayor, a Mayor and the Chairperson of a local authority, a Deputy Lord Mayor, Deputy Mayor or Vice-Chairperson of a local authority may be revoked following a vote of no confidence;

- A local authority shall be required to meet at least once a month and no business shall be transacted at a meeting of a local authority unless there are present more than one third of the number of members.

### The breakdown is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipal City Council of Port Louis</th>
<th>8 Wards</th>
<th>32 Councillors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Municipal Town Council</td>
<td>No of Wards</td>
<td>Number of Councillors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beau Bassin/Rose Hill</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quatre Bornes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vacoas/Phoenix</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
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<td>Curepipe</td>
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<td>20</td>
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The Municipal City Council of Port Louis
Exploring new cooperation prospects between Mauritius and Madagascar, particularly the creation of special economic zones in Madagascar with Mauritian expertise, constituted one of the main highlights of the official visit of the Malagasy Prime Minister, Mr Jean Ravelonarivo, from 29 April to 3 May 2015 to Mauritius.

Set against the backdrop of the reinforcement of Mauritian-Malagasy bilateral, trade, social and political ties, the five-day visit was also marked by Mauritius acceding to the request of Madagascar to return a ‘bois de rose’ cargo that was seized in 2011. Trade in ‘bois de rose’ - a precious and highly prized wood - saw a ban from the Malagasy government due to over-exploitation.

Mauritius to help Madagascar set up special economic zones

Madagascar has sought Mauritian collaboration for the setting up of special economic zones – which are business areas that have a specific economic regulation to attract local and foreign companies. In fact, Madagascar wishes to use Mauritius as a model owing to our country’s successful industrial development.

This issue was discussed during a meeting on 30 April 2015 between Prime Minister Ravelonarivo and Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth.

In a statement following the meeting, Prime Minister Ravelonarivo pointed out that Madagascar has already established the appropriate infrastructure for the setting up of the special economic zones and his country is looking forward to Mauritian cooperation as well as investors towards taking the project at the next level of development.

Other Features of the Visit

During his visit, the Malagasy Prime Minister and his delegation also paid a courtesy call on the President of the Republic, Mr Rajkeswar Purryag.

Moreover, working sessions were held between the Malagasy delegation and several members of the Mauritian Government which served as a platform for both parties to emphasise the strong fraternal ties that exist between the two countries and enabled fruitful exchanges as regards the reinforcement of bilateral ties.

The two countries have thus expressed their will to foster a sustainable and strategic partnership in several sectors which comprise regional integration; fight against corruption; maritime security; good governance; tourism; food security; fight against natural resources, mineral and ‘bois de rose’ trafficking; and new technologies and telecommunications as well as the innovation sector and the domain of connectivity as important components towards favouring sustainable development. The 2016 Francophone Summit to be hosted in November in Madagascar was also discussed.

About Special Economic Zones

It is recalled that Budget 2015-2016 indicates the establishment of special economic zones in African countries whereby Madagascar, Ghana and Senegal have already expressed interest to collaborate with Mauritius with a view to developing these economic zones.

The setting up of the special economic zones constitutes an opportunity for both Madagascar and Mauritius to attract foreign investments in sectors ranging from agriculture, manufacturing, financial services, renewable energy, and infrastructure.

A special economic zone is subject to various tax concessions and other favourable conditions. The concept of special economic zones is broader than that of industrial free zone and may include, among others, an industrial park, service areas, offices and a logistics platform, commercial areas, tourist complexes and residential areas.
PM Attends Passing-out Parade of Trainee Prison Officers

A Passing-out Parade for 67 Prison Officers, including nine female officers enlisted in August 2014 was held on 22 April 2015 at the Prison Training School in Beau Bassin. The Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, was the chief guest at the ceremony.

The parade was marked by a presentation of medals to the best recruits. Medals were presented to the All Best Round Recruit, Second Best Recruit, Best Shot, Best Athlete and Best Female Recruit who had distinguished themselves in various disciplines.

**PM gratified to see young people fearless to take up career in the Prison Service**

Addressing the new recruits in his keynote address, the Prime Minister, expressed his sense of pride and satisfaction to see that more and more youngsters, including women, are undaunted by the challenging prospects and are ready to take up a career in the Mauritius Prison Service (MPS).

The Prime Minister congratulated the Trainee Prison Officers for having demonstrated physical prowess and talent in passing through the intensely competitive recruitment process and gruelling training programme. Furthermore, he expressed confidence that the new recruits will exercise their skills and talent successfully in keeping detainees in safe and humane custody while assisting them to lead a lawful life upon release.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth also lauded the Mauritius Prison Service’s (MPS) significant contribution towards fostering public safety in the country as well as its crucial role in the smooth running of the Criminal Justice System. ‘It ensures that those who have transgressed the laws of the land are kept in secure custody and provided with rehabilitation opportunities so that they are eventually able to reintegrate society as useful and law-abiding citizens’, he said.

As regards Mauritius prisons’ infrastructure, the Prime Minister stressed that there have been improvements in the penal environment, and recalled that, with the coming into operation of the Eastern High Security Prison at Melrose, the issue of over-population in the prisons has been largely addressed. In line with Government Programme 2015-2019, an open facility for selected women detainees will soon become operational, he added.

New Recruits Training

During the course of their intensive training at the Prison Training School, the Trainee Prison Officers are exposed to basic prison duties, drill, and physical exercise. Their training also covers new topics such as human rights, first aid, response to emergencies, prevention of suicide and self-harm, self-defense, customer care, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, communication skills, listening and counselling techniques.

After successful completion of their training, the new recruits are assigned responsibilities to serve the community in the different prisons of the Republic of Mauritius including Rodrigues.
World Health Day
Workshop focuses on aligning Food Regulations with international standards

World Health Day’s 2015 edition, under the theme Food Safety – From Farm to Plate, Make Food Safe, was marked by a workshop on 7 April 2015 in Ebène on the alignment of Food Regulations with Codex Alimentarius.

Codex Alimentarius is a collection of internationally recognised standards, codes of practice, guidelines and other recommendations relating to foods, food production and food safety.

The one-day workshop focused on amendments to be brought by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life to the existing Food Regulations. The amendments aim at aligning Mauritius’ Food Regulations with international standards specified in the Codex Alimentarius, improve their consistency, reduce their complexity and enhance consumer protection.

Speaking at the launching ceremony, the Minister of Health and Quality of Life, Mr. A.K Gayan, said that Governments around the world are rethinking their approach to food safety and consumer protection, including revisiting legislative frameworks, applying systems approaches to inspection and better leveraging oversight resources.

According to him, consumers are now taking unprecedented interest in the way food is produced, processed and marketed, and are increasingly calling for strong initiatives from Government and the food industry for food safety and consumer protection.

In addition to food safety, it is equally important to reflect upon the nutritional value of the food we eat as non-communicable diseases are responsible for a large share of the morbidity, mortality and disability in Mauritius, Minister Gayan pointed out.

Chagos Archipelago: 1st Committee Meeting chaired by PM

A Committee, to consider the best way forward with regard to the Chagos Archipelago issue and chaired by the Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, held its first meeting on 13 April 2015.

The Committee has been set up following the Ruling delivered on 18 March 2015 by the Arbitral Tribunal under the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea in the case brought by Mauritius against the UK in respect of our ongoing struggle for sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago and to challenge the legality of the so-called ‘Chagos Marine Protected Area’.

Members of the Committee are the Leader of the Opposition as well as a representative of each political party represented in the National Assembly. Representatives of Mauritian citizens of Chagossian origin have also been invited by the Prime Minister to convey their views and proposals.

Observations were exchanged during the meeting with Professor Philippe Sands, QC, who led the external legal team which assisted Mauritius in the case against the UK. These views will be discussed in greater detail so as to develop a strategy for concrete action at the earliest.
Mauritius has been elected as president of the African-Asian Rural Development Organisation (AARDO) for the next triennium 2015-2017. This is the main outcome of the 18th General Session of AARDO’s Conference held from 6 to 9 April 2015 at Le Méridien Hotel, in Pointe aux Piments.

The conference, inaugurated by Prime Minister Sir Anerood Jugnauth, brought together around 125 foreign delegates, including 17 ministers. Discussions focused on administrative issues, and explored opportunities for coordination of efforts for promoting welfare, and eradicating hunger, illiteracy, diseases and poverty among rural people.

In his opening address, the Prime Minister said that sustainable development and inclusive social and economic growth are prerequisites to make the world a better place to live in. ‘Progress cannot be achieved without the integration and full participation of the entire population. Empowering individuals, building fairer societies should be top most priorities for all governments,

policy makers and practitioners’, he pointed out.

According to Sir Anerood, there still exists unacceptable level of exclusion although a lot of progress has been achieved in various domains. In that regard, the Prime Minister called for action and cooperation. ‘We cannot be a passive witness of pervasive poverty, systemic unemployment, inhuman inequalities, heartbreaking malnutrition and deprivation for many millions of our brothers and sisters, especially in some part of Africa and Asia’, he stated.

Moreover, the Prime Minister urged all delegates to reflect on how AARDO should keep abreast of changing circumstances. AARDO, with the necessary support, can be further consolidated to enable it to better serve its member countries in their individual efforts to answer to the legitimate expectations of inclusive growth which is the cry of the day, he said.

Speaking about Mauritius’ endeavour to protect vulnerable ones, the Prime Minister recalled that to this end, the country is presently focusing on a Marshall Plan with a view to combatting poverty and social exclusion. Mauritius, he said, has adopted a humane development and equal opportunity for all philosophy. This philosophy should eminently prevail in all AARDO’s member States endeavours and initiatives, added Sir Anerood Jugnauth.

About AARDO

AARDO, established in 1962, promotes rural development, and develops understanding amongst its 29 Member States to explore collectively opportunities for coordination of efforts for promoting welfare and eradication of thirst, hunger, illiteracy, diseases and poverty amongst rural people. Other areas of concern are: poverty alleviation; sustainable agricultural development; integrated rural development; women’s empowerment; decentralisation and community empowerment; and environment and climatic changes in the context of rural development.

Mauritius joined AARDO in March 1975 and since then it is also an Executive Member of the Organisation. Keeping in view the socio-economic scenario of the developing countries of Afro-Asian region, AARDO is mandated to address both agriculture and rural development. It aims to catalyse efforts of the Afro-Asian countries, to help them restructure their rural societies and to reconstruct the economy of their rural people.
A hydrotherapy pool, to the tune of around Rs 2.1 million, was inaugurated on 9 April 2015 in the physiotherapy department of Dr A. G Jeetoo Hospital, in Port Louis. An important tool in the management of many health-related pathologies, the pool will be used for treating patients with physical deficiencies.

Until now, the hydrotherapy unit at Victoria Hospital was the only one available for Mauritius.

The range of treatment includes: re-education of walking post fracture of the lower limb; strengthening exercises; assisted exercises; healing of muscles and joints; treatment of arthritic and backache; rehabilitation exercises for children; improving range of movement of stiff joints; and enhancing psychological effect.

Hydrotherapy

Hydrotherapy is the use of water in the treatment of different conditions, including arthritis and related rheumatic complaints. Hydrotherapy has much therapeutic value due to the physiological effects induced with a change in temperature.

Physiotherapy services in hospitals

Physiotherapy services are provided daily in all five Regional Hospitals and on a twice weekly basis at Mahebourg and Souillac Hospitals and once weekly at Yves Cantin in Rivière Noire. Daily outpatient attendances in physiotherapy departments are as follows: Victoria hospital (150-200 patients); Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Hospital (100-150), Dr A.G Jeetoo Hospital and Flacq Hospital (75-125).

The different pathologies treated are mainly backache, neck pain, stiffness of shoulder, deformities of spine, degenerative disease of the knees, fractures and sprains. The various methods used are: heat therapy, ice therapy, wax therapy, lumbar and cervical traction, massage, crutch walking and hydrotherapy.

A three-day Planning Meeting of the Inter Country Quality Node on Early Childhood Development (ICQN-ECD), aiming at elaborating a Strategic Plan for 2015-2017, opened on 8 April 2015 at Voilà Hotel in Bagatelle.

The event brought together several local and foreign experts from regional and international organisations engaged in advancing the cause of children and other stakeholders concerned with early childhood education to work on the policy document.

The Strategic Plan, once validated and adopted by ICQN member countries, will serve as a reference for African Governments to implement ECD policies in their respective countries.

ICQN-ECD

The ICQN-ECD is expected to foster and develop ownership about the importance and benefits of Early Childhood Development for all the 54 countries of the African Continent. It is based on collaborative action among African Ministers of Education and strategic partners for advancing ECD agenda in Africa and relies on a networking of African countries, institutions and experts for exchange of knowledge on concepts, research findings and capacity building.

An intergovernmental organisation, the ICQN-ECD was launched in February this year, during the sub-Saharan Africa Regional Ministerial Conference on Education Post-2015.

Mauritius was requested by the Association for the Development of Education in Africa to lead and drive the ICQN-ECD.

The country is thus called upon to act as a regional platform for capacity building, knowledge sharing, peer-learning and establishing a community of practice and disseminate findings of policy research for countries to translate into effective ECD policies.
The Charter is an instrument developed by the COMESA Secretariat with the objectives of creating an enabling social and economic environment based on gender equality, equity, equal treatment and equal opportunity and maintaining sustainable development within the Member States and in the region.

Signatories were the Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, Mrs Marie-Aurore Perraud, on behalf of the Government of Mauritius, and the Director of Gender and Social Affairs of COMESA, Mrs Beatrice Hamusonde.

The implementation of the Charter is expected to accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region as well as to strengthen policies which improve, broaden and ensure the participation of women, as equal partners to men, in all spheres of political, economic, social and cultural life. The Charter calls upon Member States to put in place measures to ensure the promotion of close cooperation amongst them in the social and cultural fields.

The Charter includes several strategic pillars. These are:

- Employment and Working Conditions
- Social Protection
- Human Resource Development and Youth Mobilisation
- Well-being of the Child
- Community Development
- Education, Training and Skills Development
- Health Care
- Sustainable Development and Protection of the Environment
- Cultural and Sporting issues
- Elimination of Harmful Social and Cultural Practices.

The Charter will only enter into force thirty days after eleven COMESA Member States deposit their instrument of ratification at the Secretariat.

It is recalled that the COMESA Social Charter was adopted at the 17th Summit of the COMESA Authority of Heads of State and Government held in February 2014 in Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Mauritius first Member State to sign COMESA Social Charter

Mauritius is the first Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Member State to have signed on 21 April 2015 the COMESA Social Charter.

Mauritius hosted the 4th Monitoring for Environment and Security in Africa (MESA) Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting from 27 to 29 April 2015 at Le Labourdonnais Hotel in Port Louis. The Meeting was organised at the initiative of the African Union Commission (AUC) in collaboration with the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) and the Mauritius Oceanography Institute (MOI).

The MESA programme is an EU-funded project to the tune of 37 million Euros under the 10th European Development Fund and managed by the AUC. The objective is to reinforce the framework and expand the long term cooperation and exchange between European and African stakeholders for the development of operational services based on satellite and Earth observation data that support environmental management and security in Africa at continental, regional and national levels. This project is a continuation of the African Monitoring of Environment for Sustainable Development (AMESD) programme which was implemented between 2007 and 2013.

The PSC, which meets at least once a year, oversees and validates the overall direction and policy of the project.

Stakeholders from Austria, Belgium, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Germany, Ghana, Italy, Kenya, Mauritius, Niger, and Nigeria attended the Mauritius meeting.
Eleven fishermen received an amount of Rs 200 000 each on 23 April 2015 for the purchase of small boats, called ‘canottes’ during a ceremony held at the Fisheries Training and Extension Centre in Pointe-aux-Sables.

The aim is to improve the livelihood of the fishermen and encourage them to relocate from lagoon to off-lagoon fishing. The financial support will allow the beneficiaries to purchase fibre glass canottes measuring between eight to 12 metres with an engine of more than 25 horsepower capacity.

It is expected that this initiative will help to increase the incomes of small-scale fishers. An additional 26 fishermen will receive the same support around June/July 2015.

It is important to highlight the contribution of people at grassroots level, especially fishermen and labourers, who did not have the means but who have toiled hard to help make Mauritius the flourishing country it is presently, stated the Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands, Mr Premdut Koonjoo, while addressing the fishermen community on that occasion.

Speaking about the ocean economy sector, the Minister said it is one such sector encompassing prospects such as scientific, gas, petrol ventures, and corals for medicinal production, which can be explored and exploited for the progress of the country. Mauritius has a great future in the blue and green economy which, once fully tapped while preserving the ecosystem, can enhance the quality of life of people, he added.

Ocean Economy - An Important Industry

Government is committed to making Ocean economy an important industry to sustain economic diversification, job creation and wealth generation. A new Ministry - the Ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands - has been created.

The 2015-2016 Budget makes provision for several measures to boost the ocean economy, such as:

- Introduction of a new Petroleum Bill to provide the legal and fiscal framework for exploration and exploitation of hydro-carbon resources in our Exclusive Economic Zone.

- Setting up of a regional shipping line to expand regional trade and the role of our port in the region so as to open Mauritius to the world.

- Setting up of a National Ocean Council to ensure better coordination among all stakeholders, both public and private, to implement the Ocean Economy project.