Abolition of Slavery
A Marshall Plan elaborated to combat poverty and social exclusion, reveals PM

A medium to long term Marshall Plan will be elaborated by Government in a bid to combat poverty and social exclusion, Prime Minister Sir Anerood Jugnauth said in his address on 1st February 2015 at Le Morne in the context of the celebrations of the 180th Anniversary of the Abolition of Slavery.

Much emphasis is being laid on the eradication of poverty and combating social injustice while ensuring that meritocracy prevails so as to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor, pointed out the Prime Minister. Sir Anerood Jugnauth also expressed his firm belief in the principle that national wealth should be equitably distributed among all segments of the society with each and every one contributing to the socio-economic development of the country.

According to the Prime Minister, Government wants an economy where not only the standard of living increases, but also where every citizen’s quality of life continues to rise steadily and sustainably in harmony.
On that note, he enumerated a series of measures that will be enunciated in the forthcoming budget to fight social exclusion. These include the restructuration of the National Empowerment Foundation to render it more proactive and improve service delivery towards those at the lower rung of the social ladder.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth called upon the population to participate in the economic reconstruction and in nation-building endeavours and help to make the second socio-economic miracle vision a reality. This will contribute to the making of a better future for the nation inspired by the first economic miracle that took our country out of the doldrums in the eighties, he said.

This socio-economic vision, observed the Prime Minister, reflects Government’s belief in the Mauritian genius and entrepreneurship spirit, our sense of social justice and reward sharing. It is a vision of a modern and vibrant Mauritius, he added.

Activities to mark the 180th Anniversary

The Abolition of Slavery which is commemorated on 1st February annually, had as theme this year ‘Yer Rezistsans Zordi Rezilians’.

A series of activities were organised to mark the 180th Anniversary and comprised the following: an official programme at Le Morne Public Beach; a wreath laying ceremony; the unveiling of a sculpture at the International Slave Route Monument; and a cultural programme.

Other activities included an exhibition on the theme ‘Lest We Forget’; the unveiling of a Plaque at Bassin des Esclaves, Pamplemousses; an International Conference on the theme ‘Yer Rezistsans Zordi Rezilians’; and a wreath-laying ceremony at the Monument des Esclaves, Pointe Canon, Mahebourg.
China-Mauritius
Mauritius benefits from a grant and an interest-free loan totaling Rs 500 million

A sum of Rs 500 million (Rs 250 million as grant and an interest-free loan of Rs 250 million) to help support development projects in priority areas in Mauritius has been allocated by the People’s Republic of China to the Mauritian Government.

The agreement was signed on 6 February 2015 in Port Louis by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Mr Seetanah Lutchmeenaraidoo and the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the People’s Republic of China in Mauritius, Mr Li Li.

In his address, Minister Lutchmeenaraidoo said that both countries will build on this foundation to achieve higher development goals through established and innovative modes of cooperation including a mutually beneficial transfer of capital, technology and business opportunities. China remains a strategic partner for Mauritius for having always extended both technical and financial support for the economic development of the country, pointed out the Minister. Mauritius, he said, is being positioned as an important economic platform between China and Africa in terms of facilitating investment flow into China and vice-versa.

Furthermore, the holding of the Sino-Mauritian Joint Commission in the second quarter of 2015 was announced by the Finance Minister. Discussions during that event will focus on key infrastructure and water projects, among other priority areas.

For his part, Ambassador Li Li highlighted the promising/evolving trend to further strengthen cooperation in the tourism sector, textile sector and other promising sectors in addition to improving the infrastructure needs in Mauritius. He reiterated the support of China in the economic development of Mauritius, adding that the presence of Chinese enterprises in Mauritius already demonstrates the strong partnership that exists between the two countries.

Diplomatic and Cooperation relations

The Republic of Mauritius and the People’s Republic of China established diplomatic relations on 15 April, 1972 and since then, the relationship between the two countries has seen a favourable and steady development. The past years have been marked by the consolidation of Mauritius-China relations characterised by cooperation and mutual understanding.

Mauritius has obtained around Rs 36 billion from China in the form of grants, interest-free and commercial loans to implement key infrastructure projects, such as the airport, roads, housing, closed-circuit television (CCTV) camera, the sewerage system and the water sector.
Agriculture
PM calls upon planting community to adapt to unfolding challenges in the sector

The Mauritius planting community was urged by the Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, to adapt to new challenges in the agricultural sector which include an increase in the demand of production on lesser scope of lands in a context where concern for environmental protection is growing on a daily basis worldwide.

The Prime Minister was speaking at the inauguration, on 23 February 2015, of a Bio-Fertiliser Plant at the Mauritius Chemical Fertiliser Industry (MCFI) Ltd, Fort George, in Port Louis. The Plant is set up by the Mauritius Cooperative Agricultural Federation and the MCFI Ltd in collaboration with the Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Ltd.

Helping the planting community overcome future challenges is one among the priorities of Government, pointed out Sir Anerood Jugnauth in his address. To this end, agricultural policies will be elaborated accordingly, he stated, while calling upon the planting community to adopt new and modern production techniques using environmentally friendly components including fertilisers.

Speaking about the Bio-Fertiliser plant project, the Prime Minister observed that its use will serve the interest of the local planters as bio-fertilisers will help planters in their endeavours to cut down costs, improve yields and at the same time contribute in the national efforts to protect environmental assets.

Government, said Sir Anerood Jugnauth, cares for the sustainability of Mauritius’ agriculture sector, the environment and the future of local planters. A series of measures will be introduced to cater for the well-being of the planting community and ensure that small planters increase their revenues from cane production, bagasse and other crops, he added.

Measures for the agricultural community

Several measures and initiatives to uphold the various sectors of agriculture will be implemented by Government.

These include: provision of financial assistance to compensate cane planters producing up to 60 tonnes of sugar; setting up of a mechanism to ensure that the planting community holds up to 35 percent shares in concerned companies as well as refineries and distilleries; and, encouraging cooperatives societies to be accredited to a Fair Trade to benefit an additional amount of up to 60 dollars on each tonne of sugar produced and to participate in the production of solar energy.

As regards small planters of the non-sugar sector, hydroponic villages will be set up to modernise the production system, plan their cultivation and gear them towards the agro-processing industry and also help them find markets for exportation in the region.

Youths will be encouraged to undertake agricultural activities and embark on the agro-business sector. To this end, financial assistance, technical guidance and logistical support will be provided to them to boost the agro-industry sector.
Mauritius eRegistry Project
2nd phase under implementation

The second phase of the Mauritius eRegistry Project (MeRP) aiming to transform the Registrar-General Department (RGD) into an e-Service organisation, is underway of implementation. The first phase was completed in May last year.

The new system, with the various online service features, was presented on 5 February 2015 during a half-day workshop to different stakeholders.

2nd phase of MeRP

The second phase of the MeRP is focusing on transforming the RGD’s services to electronic mode. The objective is to provide the RGD and stakeholders an electronic dashboard through which they can perform the following tasks: eSubmission of documents; ePayment of fees; eRegistration; eSearch; and eDelivery of registered documents.

The eRegistry Project which is being jointly funded by the Government of Mauritius and the Investment Climate Facility for Africa to the tune of around Rs 170 million is being developed by the Norway Registers Development.

The project is being implemented in two phases over a period of two years. Hence, enabling the RGD to have an integrated system for its customers by harnessing the latest technologies and solutions that can provide integrated workflows and options for businesses, professionals and members of the public to conduct transactions with the RGD online.

MeRP first phase

The first phase which is already operational pertained to the modernisation of the RGD through the implementation of the eRegistry software system whereby most of the automated tasks are being implemented and services provided through sophisticated software tools.

The integrated eRegistry System comprise the following facilities: Integrated cashier and registration module; Integrated search engine for registered document (movable); Taxation module; Reporting engine; User and security administration module; and Digitisation of Land Archive (immovable).
**Health**

**Major Project to Revolutionise Treatment of Cancer Patients**

A major project entitled ‘Establishing Hybrid Imaging in Nuclear Medicine for Better Management of Non Communicable Diseases’ and which is expected to revolutionise the diagnosis, management and treatment of cancer patients will be implemented by Mauritius jointly with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

This announcement was made on 23 February 2015 by the Minister of Health and Quality of Life, Mr Anil Gayan, at the opening of a Regional Training Course for Technologists on Paediatric Imaging at Preskil Beach Resort, in Mahebourg.

The project involves the setting up of a new department at the Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital to accommodate a PET-CT Scanner.

Implementation of this project will set another milestone in providing oncologists with latest technology for the accurate determination of the status of diseases, said the Minister. Thereby providing for more effective planning of the management of those diseases, he added.

**The Regional Training Course**

The aim of the five-day Regional Training Course was to educate Nuclear Medicine Technologists in Mauritius and in the African region on new protocols and new trends in the field of radiopharmaceuticals.

The objective was also to empower Technologists in performing paediatric scintigraphy or diagnostic technique using radio-active tracer for the early diagnosis of paediatric diseases, and thus further strengthen services provided to patients in the region.

**UN Convention on Transparency in Treaty-based Investor-State Arbitration**


The UN Convention on Transparency is an instrument by which Parties to investment treaties express their consent to applying the UNCITRAL Rules on Transparency in Treaty-based Investor-State Arbitration to their existing investment promotion and protection agreements. A one-day Conference would be organised on that occasion, to address, investor-State arbitration and human rights, and arbitration and access to justice.

**WHO: Mauritius to host SIDS Ministers Meeting**

The Fifth Meeting of Ministers of Health of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) of the World Health Organisation (WHO) African Region, aiming to monitor achievements made towards the Health Millennium Development Goals, will be held in Mauritius in April/May 2015.

The Meeting also has as objective to allow Member States to exchange views and experiences. Priority issues would be discussed, such as the management of communicable and non-communicable diseases; approaches to substance abuse; and research on community-based intervention strategies.

Ministers of Health from Cape Verde, Comoros, Sao Tome and Principe, and the Seychelles, as well as foreign delegates, including the WHO Regional Director for Africa, are expected to participate.
A Participatory Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) Planning Workshop for the Demonstration Project on Integrated Management of Northern Aquifer of Mauritius was launched on 23 February 2015 at Voilà Hotel in Bagatelle. The aim was to enable stakeholders understand how aquifer management can be fully integrated.

The two-day event also acted as a platform for discussions and consultations on the practical approaches for sustainable groundwater management.

Organised jointly by the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities and the Water Resources Unit, with the support of the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Office for Project Services, the workshop was held in the context of the Regional Project on Implementing Integrated Water Resource and Wastewater Management in six Small Island Development States (SIDS) in the Atlantic Ocean and Indian Ocean. The SIDS countries are namely Mauritius, Comoros, Maldives, Seychelles, Cape Verde and Sao Tome & Principe.

The Regional Project

The Regional Project on Implementing Integrated Water Resource and Wastewater Management is led by United Nations Environment Programme and is financially supported by the Global Environment Facility and all participating countries.

The objective is to strengthen the commitment and capacity of the six countries to implement an integrated approach to the management of freshwater resources. The long-term goal is to enhance the capacity of the countries to plan and manage their aquatic resources and ecosystems on a sustainable basis.

Each country has to develop an IWRM and Water Use Efficiency demonstration project that provides real, on-the-ground solutions to common problems.

The Mauritius Project

The Mauritius demonstration project is entitled ‘Integrated Management of the Northern Aquifer of Mauritius’.

It focuses on improving the management of a heavily exploited and increasingly polluted aquifer through the following: a combination of water resources assessment (hydrogeological investigations) and saline intrusion prevention (recharging of treated wastewater); water demand management (supply leakage and theft reduction, wastewater re-use for irrigation); wastewater improvements (replacement of septic tanks with sewerage systems), linked to awareness raising campaigns on water conservation and good septic tank management; and contributing to national governance (policy and institutional) reforms.
**A National Programme to ensure growth of an energy efficiency market**

The National Programme for Energy Efficiency (PNR – Programme National d’Efficacité Énergétique), aiming in the long term towards ensuring the progressive growth of an energy efficiency market in Mauritius, was launched on 26 February 2015 at Voilà Hotel in Bagatelle.

The objectives are also to enable the private sector reduce their energy bills, improve competitiveness while also work towards environmental protection.

The National Programme is based on a partnership between the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities, the Joint Economic Council, the Agence Française de Développement and the European Union.

The launching of the PNEE bodes well for the future and a lot can be achieved in the renewable energy sector when, instead of implementing separate initiatives, private sector institutions work together, observed the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities, Mr Ivan Collendavelloo, in his address at the event. Mauritius lags behind Reunion Island and Seychelles as well as countries in Latin America in the field of energy efficiency, he pointed out. Moreover, in a bid to make the country a regional partner in energy efficiency, the Vice-Prime Minister made an appeal to the Indian Ocean Commission to provide Mauritius with regional expertise.

Speaking about seeking greater energy independence, the Vice-Prime Minister highlighted the necessity to change the Central Electricity Board’s power grid to accommodate energy from renewable sources such as solar, wind, wave or from waste. Government intends to collaborate with the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), an intergovernmental organisation that supports countries in their transition to a sustainable energy future, to review the situation, he said. Legislations will also be reviewed and provisions made for the operation of a regulatory body in the field of energy production, he added.

Mr Collendavelloo also announced that Mauritius will support fully COP21, also known as the 2015 Paris Climate Conference when France will host and preside the 21st Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in December 2015.
Measures to boost the island’s economic development

The support to be provided to further stimulate the socio-economic development of Rodrigues was the focus, on 20 February 2015, of a press conference in Port Louis by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Mr Seetanah Lutchmeenaraidoo, following his recent visit to Rodrigues in the context of pre-budget consultations.

According to the Minister, Government is fully committed to put the Rodriguan economy on the right track and prepare the island for future challenges. He also announced the visit of the Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, to Rodrigues after the presentation of the 2015 budget which he said, bears testimony to the importance Mauritius attaches to the socio-economic development of Rodrigues.

Various measures to boost the Rodriguan economy were enumerated during the press conference. These are:

• Standardisation of the air fare between Rodrigues and Mauritius to Rs 5430 instead of the current fare of Rs 7,186 with effect as from 15 February. This measure has been taken in order to align ticket prices from Rodrigues to the discounted fares currently offered to residents of Mauritius travelling to Rodrigues. The fare will be applicable to holders of Mauritian passport or national ID card.

• Establishment of a direct air link between Rodrigues and Reunion Island with effect from May this year. This will give a new impetus to the tourism industry in Rodrigues with a better connection among the neighbouring islands.

• Setting up of an SME Bank in Rodrigues with a provision of some Rs 10 million over five years targeting young entrepreneurs. The aim is to ignite the spirit of entrepreneurship among youth and make of the Small and Medium Enterprises the main engine of growth.

The bank will allocate loans without guarantees or mortgages. In addition, the micro-enterprises launched by a young entrepreneur in Rodrigues will benefit from a tax exemption for eight years.

• 150 young Rodriguans will benefit from training in companies in Mauritius or Rodrigues under the Youth Employment Programme which will be 100% funded by Government.

Other measures for the promotion of an enhanced business climate include:

• An investment of Rs 2 billion for the extension of the airport at Plaine Corail to accommodate more aircrafts.

• Elaboration of a Master Plan to transform the harbour of Port Mathurin into a modern one.

• Economic diversification with the creation of new markets.

• Development of a dynamic private sector.

• Encouraging young people to engage in agricultural production with focus on organic production. Five products namely: onions, garlic, ginger, saffron and beans will benefit from guaranteed purchase price.

• Creation of a fishing school.

• Setting up of a branch of the Board of Investment to boost investment.

• Installation of an optical cable between Mauritius and Rodrigues in two years. Meanwhile, upgraded satellite facilities will be offered.
The aim was also to assess the extent to which the existing setup has contributed to reduce or increase income inequality. The Report makes recommendations on new wage policies to address income inequality, including the viability and acceptability of a national wage determination mechanism and the introduction of a National Minimum Wage.

According to the Report, given the central role of the NTC in wage determination, consideration should be given to transforming it in a permanent body with adequate research capabilities. It could be the nucleus of a future independent National Pay Commission.

As regards the case for a National Pay Commission, the Report recommends that as a first step, there should be a high level of cooperation and coordination among the three institutions (Pay Research Bureau, National Remuneration Board and NTC) to minimise the ineffectiveness due to this fragmented nature.

In the long run, states the Report, considerations may be given to bringing together the skills and strengths of all the three institutions together for a genuine National Pay Commission. However, given the position of social partners on this issue, there is a need for extensive consultations with a view to achieving consensus.

Restoring to the Pay Research Bureau its role of a pay research entity, is another salient feature of the Report. ‘With the NTC, granting a uniform compensation for cost of living to all workers, including all workers of the public sector, the PRB will no longer have to spend most of its time to correct the “anomalies” created by the tapering/ceiling approach,’ states the document. It will be able to concentrate on reviewing conditions of service, internal salary relativities, benchmarking with salaries and conditions in the private sector and international benchmarking and best practice.

The Report further recommends greater independence to the National Remuneration Board to review minimum wages and conditions of work.
in sectors falling under its mandate. It should be given the means to effectively review minimum wages and conditions of work for all sectors of the economy, says the Report.

**Focus on wage policy**

The NESC’s study of Income Inequality was undertaken with particular focus on wage policy. In fact, employment income contributes to about three quarter of the total income inequality in Mauritius.

According to the Report income inequality, measured through the Gini coefficient, has been rising steadily for the past decade, reaching a figure of 0.41 in 2012.

Furthermore, looking at income distribution in the country, the Report has established that the highest 20% income earners are earning nearly half of the total income in the country and that the ratio of the highest 20% to the lowest 20% of income share is increasing.

**Income Inequality in Mauritius**

From data available through Statistics Mauritius, NESC has undertaken an analysis of how the top income group and bottom income group fare in terms of sharing of the total income.

This analysis shows that, over the years (from 2001 to 2012), the top income group has been increasing its share of the total income. It refers to the distribution of income in Mauritius by comparing the share of total income accruing to the lowest and highest 20% of households. Indications are as follows:

- In 2012, the highest 20% income earners were earning almost half (47%) of the total income in the country, compared to 44% in 2001.
- For the same period, the share of total income earned by the lowest 20%, had fallen, reaching 5.4% from 6.4% in 2001.

- As a result, the ratio of the highest 20% to lowest 20% of income share has increased over the past decade, from 6.9 to 8.8.

Moreover, the NESC has undertaken a finer analysis to look at the distribution of income in the country. Data from Statistics Mauritius has been converted into *vigintile* analysis of income sharing for each of the years 2000/01, 2006/07 and 2012. The data come from the household budget survey undertaken periodically.

The analysis indicates the following:

- Confirmation of a concentration of income at the very top, the share of income of the 5% highest income earners growing faster than the top 20% of income earners.
- In 2012, the top 5% of income earners were drawing about a fifth of the total income in the country.
- The top 5% of income earners made 29 times more than the bottom 5%, up from a ratio of 22:1 in 2001.
- The bottom group of income earners is having a dwindling share of total income.

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