
The draft National Strategy Paper and Action Plan on Ageing 2016-2020, aiming at translating Government’s strategic vision to provide more protection and security to the elderly through the adoption of a multidisciplinary approach, was discussed during a validation workshop on 28 January 2016 at the Dr James Burty David Recreation Centre, Pointe aux Sables.

The document permeates the human dimensions in its strategies while emphasising the gender and disability perspective with a view to effectively meeting the specific needs of these two important segments of the elderly population. It also addresses the issue of elderly persons living alone.

The other key area relates to the economic dimension with a valorisation of the role of the elderly from a passive recipient of services to that of an active contributor to the economic value creation.

The draft Paper also elaborates on public-private collaboration to build synergy and foster service innovation in the sector with the support of civil society.

Eight strategic objectives have been identified, amongst which: creating an enabling environment to enhance the quality of life of the elderly; fostering partnership with the corporate sector; enhancing the social fabric by bridging the intergeneration gap; and strengthening international cooperation to provide service and process innovation in the elderly sector.

The National Strategy Paper and Action Plan on Ageing sets out a programme of action and reform to address existing problems in the elderly sector and deliver higher quality services for senior citizens.
This is the ambition envisioned for the country by the Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, as stated in his New Year Address to the Nation on 1 January 2016.

The Prime Minister outlined that patience and solidarity are the key to success and reiterated his faith in the Mauritian genius, which in turn will contribute to achieve the second economic miracle. The democratisation of the access to Internet and IT will be an important tool for the youth to achieve success, he said. He recalled that 250 free Wi-Fi spots have been set up across the country and that an additional 135 will be set up this year.

Sir Anerood listed out the various achievements of the Government over the last year adding that the creation of jobs is high on his agenda for this year. Several major development projects will start this year, amongst which the Airport City, Heritage City, Technopark, Port development, the bunkering project and projects related to Ocean economy, he said.

The fight against corruption, the progress expected in the tourism, agriculture and the Small and Medium Enterprise sectors were also highlighted by the Prime Minister.

**Projects worth Rs 1.3 billion for Public Sector Investment Programme**

Eighteen projects to the tune of Rs1.3 billion have been cleared by the Project Plan Committee to be included in the Public Sector Investment Programme.

The projects include:

- the relocation of the Forensic Science Laboratory at La Vigie,
- extension of the Police Hangar at SSR International Airport, and
- coastal zone adaptation works at Mont Choisy and Rivière des Galets.

**Rodrigues**

The projects that have been recommended for Rodrigues include the construction and upgrading of roads, the construction of a fire station, schools and a fishing port, the computerisation of the health sector, and design study for the improvement of the health services at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.
MRA Launches National Single Window and Taxpayers’ Portal

**A National Single Window (Mauritius Trade Link) and a Taxpayers’ Portal was launched by the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) on 26 January 2016 at the Custom House, Mer Rouge in the context of International Customs Day 2016 which was marked under the theme: Digital Customs: Progressive Engagement.**

These initiatives are in line with the MRA’s customs reforms strategy and modernisation programme to make the Customs department more dynamic and efficient while at the same meeting the expectations of its various stakeholders both local and worldwide.

The Mauritius Trade link will act as a single web-based online portal for the submission and processing of import/export permits and respective clearance from Government agencies.

Various benefits will be derived from the National Single Window project by the business communities in general such as reduction in dwell time for import/export permits processing and clearance; reduced cost of doing business; 24/7 access to the portal via internet; and facilities for traders to track the progress of their applications/declarations in real time among others.

The Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection is the first Government agency to join the Mauritius Trade link platform and eventually other ministries will follow in a phase-wise approach.

As for the Taxpayers’ Portal it will act as a web-enabled intuitive application accessible from any smart device. It will be the gateway for interaction between MRA and the taxpayer and provides self-service facilities for taxpayers to query their own accounts.

The MRA taxpayer portal is accessible from the MRA website. Among the benefits: taxpayer can easily track their forthcoming returns filing obligations as well as their status of the returns recently submitted.

Industrial Waste Assessment Project

An Industrial Waste Assessment Project will be implemented by the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection, with the assistance of the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO).

The main objectives of the project are to:

(a) develop a pool of expertise among both public officials and enterprises on industrial waste characterisation for improved identification, characterisation and quantification;

(b) generate data and other information, through the industrial waste characterisation, that can determine opportunity for a national and regional industrial symbiosis programme, as well as for the setting up of a recycling industry; and

(c) determine amendments that may be required in the legislative framework on industrial waste management.

The project would involve industrial waste characterisation exercise in some 25 enterprises in the textile, agro-industry, seafood, chemical and printing sectors.
The main issues discussed were:

(a) Socio-Economic Reforms, Perspectives for becoming a High Income Country and the 11th European Development Fund, the National Indicative Programme and the Regional Indicative Programme;

(b) Cooperation with the European Union regarding the Economic Partnership Agreement;

(c) Fisheries Partnership Agreement and Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing;

(d) Post-Cotonou 2020 Agreement;

(e) the current European Investment Bank Projects;

(f) Climate Change, SWITCH Africa Green and Sustainable Development; and

(g) Economic Integration and Free Trade Agreements.

The Fourth Political Dialogue between the European Union (EU) and Mauritius, aiming to exchange information, foster mutual understanding, facilitate the establishment of agreed priorities and shared agendas, and strengthen cooperation on various issues of mutual interest, was held on 18 January 2016 at the Maritim Hotel in Balaclava.

The Political Dialogue is provided for under Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement signed between the EU and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) States in 2000.

The EU is the most important development partner for Mauritius and the only development partner providing direct budget support. It is also the most important market for Mauritius, accounting for approximately 70% of the country’s export.
Tender procedures are on to build a Refuge Centre at the cost of some Rs 45 million to protect the communities living in the coastal areas of Mauritius from the adverse effects of climate change, especially storm surges. The Refuge Centre will be located at Quatre Soeurs where Government has acquired a plot of land to the tune of Rs 9.5 million.

An Early Warning System (EWS) for incoming storm surge has been implemented through the United Nations Development Programme’s Adaptation Fund Project. Through the Adaptation Fund Project on Climate Change Adaptation Programme in the Coastal Zone of Mauritius, a grant of USD 9,119,240 was secured and this fund targeted to assist Mauritius in meeting the costs of concrete adaptation projects as it is particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.

The Project which spans over five years, kicked off in 2012 and is expected to be completed in June 2017.

It comprises the following main components:

- Implementation of soft and hard beach protection measures.
- Setting up of an early warning system for storm surges.
- Construction of a refuge centre.
- Improvement of institutional framework for coastal management.
- Trainings.

The application of adaptation measures for coastal protection at three coastal sites, namely, Mon Choisy, Rivière des Galets and Quatre Soeurs was carried out to address climate change risks at the three sites through design and application of coastal protection measures, using proven technologies, addressing beach erosion and flood risk from storm surges.

As regards the EWS for incoming storm surge, it can predict where and when a storm surge is to be expected. The prediction is produced every six hours and covers a period of three days. This gives authorities enough time to evacuate the area. The storm surge prediction model covers the islands of Mauritius, Rodrigues and Agalega.

The system has been installed at the Mauritius Meteorological Service.

Another component of the project is training and it is being carried out to promote compliance with climate-proofed planning, design and location guidelines. It is also targeted to build capacity for ongoing replication of effective coastal adaptive measures by both the Government and private sector.

Concerning policy mainstreaming, this component ensures that all policies, strategies, plans and regulations are consistent in recognising climate change impacts in the coastal zone over the next 50 years.

Knowledge dissemination, another key component of the project, aims at facilitating more frequent and accessible public information on climate change effects in the coastal zone.
Stabilisation of prevalence of diabetes according to Mauritius NCD Survey 2015

The findings of the Mauritius Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) Survey carried out by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, in collaboration with the World Health Organisation and various international organisations were released on 12 January 2016 in Ebène.

According to the survey, for the first time in 30 years, the prevalence of diabetes in Mauritius has stabilised with figures standing at 22.8% in 2015, compared to 23.6% in 2009, while the prevalence of pre-diabetes, for the same period, has declined from 24.4% to 19.4%. However, the prevalence of obesity has increased from 16% in 2009 to 19.1% in 2015, with approximately 398,417 Mauritians being overweight or obese.

It is noted that though the prevalence of diabetes has stabilised, the magnitude of diabetes epidemic remains high as diabetes is coupled with significant premature ill health and death due to the enormous burden associated with diabetic complications including heart disease, limb amputation (about 500 cases yearly), blindness, as well as kidney disease and failure necessitating dialysis.

Evidence-based data from the Team Based Hospital Efficiency Costing Project and the International Diabetes Federation show that the cost of treatment in Mauritius for one person suffering from diabetes was around Rs 16 800 per year, and that the State spends some Rs 2.2 billion annually on the treatment of diabetes and its complications.

The Survey also points out some positive trends as compared to the 2009 Survey such as the decrease in the prevalence of hypertension from 38% in 2009 to 28% in 2015; the reduction in the prevalence of smoking from 21.7% to 19.3%; and an improvement in the population undertaking sufficient physical activity from 16.5% to 23.7%.

Moreover, the new Survey has taken in consideration asthma, and cognitive decline in a bid to identify the link between ageing population and dementia. While the measurement of asthma-like symptoms shows a prevalence of around 10%, data is still being analysed regarding cognitive impairment.

The Survey - Backdrop

The Mauritius NCD Survey 2015 was conducted by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life in collaboration with the Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute of Australia, the Department of Endocrinology and Metabolism of St Mary’s Hospital, Imperial College of the United Kingdom, the Umea University Hospital of Sweden and the University of Helsinki of Finland.

A sample of 4 400 participants, representative of the population and aged 18 years and above from across Mauritius, was targeted for the Survey, with a response rate of 87%. Previous surveys were conducted in 1987, 1992, 1998, 2004 and 2009.
A SERIES OF MEASURES TO BE IMPLEMENTED TO IMPROVE SAFETY OF MOTORCYCLISTS

A graduated licensing system will be introduced for future riders of two-wheelers, based on power and engine size as well as on the age of the riders, who will have to take compulsory training and pass the required test before being allowed on Mauritian roads. Government expects this measure will help to make the roads safer for all.

These new measures were announced by the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, Mr Nandcoomar Bodha, at a press conference on 14 January 2016. Riders of two-wheelers are at far more risk than car drivers in term of fatalities, thus the necessity to give priority to motorcycle safety initiatives and actions.

Hence, those in 15 to 18 age group will be authorised to ride only two-wheelers of an engine capacity not exceeding 50cc; those between 18 to 21 years old can only ride vehicles with engine capacity of 50 to 125cc while those above 21 years of age will be allowed to ride motorcycles of up to 300cc.

Training will be designed to ensure riders have acquired the right theoretical and practical skills such as vehicle control and to promote safe behaviours. As part of this road safety initiative, some Rs 5 million have been earmarked for the setting up of at least six regional motorcycle riding schools. These riding schools will be required to, among others, have a 100 metres long and 6 metres wide paved track and a 1,500 square feet building, to provide the appropriate two-wheeled vehicles during the riding courses and to employ Government accredited trainers.

Consequently, some 40 motorcycle instructors, with riding competence requirements, will be recruited to undertake an 840-hour diploma course in order to work in these riding schools. As regards the examiners, ten police officers will be enrolled in a 1,000-hour diploma course to conduct the practical tests. It is noted that at the issuance of the learners’ licence, the holders will have a period of six months to enrol for riding courses.

The new system is expected to be in place by 1 July 2016.

THE OVERSEAS TREATMENT SCHEME

The Overseas Treatment Scheme being reviewed with a view to enabling a greater number of patients to benefit from treatment and get value for money. Under the Scheme, financial assistance is granted to patients requiring treatment not available locally.

The Memoranda of Understanding, signed with medical institutions in India, will also be reviewed to provide, among others, for specialists, surgeons or other health professionals being despatched at short notice to Mauritius to carry out complex operations.

This arrangement will enable the recovery of patients in an environment where they are surrounded by relatives, as well as enhance capacity building of the local personnel.
The Port Louis Smart City Concept plan project to the tune of some Rs 52 billion which is part of the Urban Regeneration Scheme envisaged by Government in line with its vision to transform Mauritius into a smart island was presented to the media on 15 January 2016 in Port Louis.

The Port Louis Smart City consists of a series of projects to be driven by both the private sector and the Government in meeting the objectives set to elevate Mauritius and place it on the world map, and solve the many issues in the cultural, urban, economical and societal fabric. The key driver of the project are namely: Re-affirm Port-Louis’ Capital dimension; Re-connect with the sea; Connect the Heritage; Infuse Life; Tame mobility; Smart the City; and Celebrate the City.

Infrastructural work for the project will kick-start in 2016 spanning over a period of five years until 2021. Several places will be revamped with the Port Louis Smart City project under the above mentioned sub-categories.

The project, which is expected to generate some 12 000 jobs by 2020, will also trigger several benefits such as: boosting the economy- integrate the Port Expansion and new maritime activities; develop the tourism potential of the Capital; connect the City to the sea and enhance the seafront economic development potential; and unlock the development potential of Aappravasi Ghat Buffer zone and Chinatown.

In addition to creating a dynamic intelligent green city it will improve the quality of life of the inhabitants with the creation of some 8 000 residential units in the city while at the same alleviating the flow of traffic in Port Louis with the transfer of all administrative blocks to the Highlands City. The Hawkers issue will also be resolved with some 2 000 units to be allocated to them.

Another component of the project is the conversion of Port Louis into an internationally acclaimed cultural city for the promotion of a new leisure and cultural offer to both the Mauritian and tourist visitors. The aim is to showcase Port Louis as a model to be replicated to other towns and villages and to the African Continent.

By 2020, it is expected that the Port Louis Smart City Project will offer a new cache with the provision of an excellent framework for high quality of life, with proud citizens rooted in intelligent, human and safe environment, access to nature and favourable conditions to business.

It will be recalled that the concept of Smart Mauritius is to boost existing territories and create new cities.
Signature of agreements for Rs 66 million between EU and Rodrigues

A grant totaling Rs 66.4 million to develop the water sector (Rs 62 million rupees) and to support actions towards poverty alleviation (Rs 4.4 million) has been awarded to Rodrigues by the European Union.

The grant agreements were signed on 21 January 2016 by the Chief Commissioner of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, Mr Louis Serge Clair, and the Ambassador of the European Union to the Republic of Mauritius, Mrs Marjaana Sall, in Rodrigues.

Grant agreements

The grant agreements consist of two components: support to water sector development and poverty alleviation.

The new support from the EU to the tune of Rs 62 million under the second phase of the programme known as “Support to water sector development in Rodrigues” will be used to finance four projects of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

These projects will contribute, among others, to improve availability of potable water to the residents in the northern and southern regions of Rodrigues; to improve water supply to small enterprises in a bid to increasing their productivity; and to ensure regular water supplies to schools and social centres.

The EU support will also equip at least 250 low-income families with rainwater harvesting systems. Priority will be given to those households including disabled persons and women (single mothers as head of family) and those living in regions where water distribution is irregular.

Under Phase 1, four contracts to the amount of Rs 58 million were signed in March 2015 to improve water production, storage and distribution, especially for 500 low-income families.

Under component 2 (Poverty alleviation), the EU is providing support under the 10th EDF Decentralised Cooperation Programme amounting to Rs 4.4 million to five NGOs.

The community projects under this component to be implemented over a period of 12 months relate to women health issues, empowerment of women, and capacity building for vulnerable groups and for the fisher community.

SME Development Scheme

The SME Development Scheme for the benefit of small and medium enterprises, including small planters and breeders, in line with Government objective to make SMEs the backbone of the economy is being introduced.

Under the Scheme, eligible SMEs will be granted a SME Development Certificate. Holders of such Certificate will be eligible to incentives and facilities, namely:

(a) Income Tax holiday for the first 8 years and other tax concessions;
(b) a Special Grant for training, consultancy, financial management, feasibility study and technical assistance. The grant will be 10% of the project value up to a maximum of Rs150,000; and
(c) business support solutions from MyBiz and fast-track mechanism for obtaining permits and licences.

Moreover, MauBank Ltd proposes to introduce a special financing scheme for enterprises - the MauBank SME Financing Scheme, and will provide a grant of up to Rs10,000 for the conduct of a feasibility study of a project proposal by an SME in the ICT, manufacturing, aquaculture, renewable energy and handicraft sectors.
Project to set up a Mauritius Commodities Exchange

A Mauritius Commodities Exchange is to be set up with the assistance of the Dubai Multi Commodities Centre (DMCC). The DMCC has agreed to assist in the setting up of the Spot Trading Market for Gold, Diamond and other precious metals in Mauritius, and provide necessary guidance in developing rules/regulations and other soft infrastructure to support the Trading Market.

The objective in setting up the Market is to create a new segment in precious metals and stones trading, processing and storage by leveraging the current ecosystem as an internationally recognized financial centre of substance.

The Spot Trading platform would be based in the new business park in Rose Belle.

Negotiations are on with the relevant stakeholders for the setting up of a new Mauritius International Stock Exchange in collaboration with Nasdaq Dubai.

The major points of convergence following a meeting between Mauritian and Dubai stakeholders are:

(a) Nasdaq Dubai would participate in equity of the Stock Exchange of Mauritius;

(b) the Stock Exchange of Mauritius would be rebranded as Mauritius International Stock Exchange;

(c) Nasdaq Dubai would introduce Sukuk (Islamic Bonds) products trading to the new Mauritius International Stock Exchange; and

(d) the first derivative product offering will be currency derivatives for African currencies being hedged and settled in USD.