Mr Pravind Kumar Jugnauth was sworn in as Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius on 23 January 2017 at Sir Harilal Vaghjee Memorial Hall, Government House in Port Louis.

The Swearing-In Ceremony of the Prime Minister and Ministers was held in the presence of the President of the Republic of Mauritius, Dr Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, and other eminent personalities.

Mr Pravind Jugnauth, the leader of the majority party (the Mouvement Socialiste Militant) at the National Assembly, has been appointed Prime Minister after Sir Anerood Jugnauth resigned as Prime Minister. He received his letter of appointment as Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit and Minister of Finance and Economic Development from the President of the Republic of Mauritius at the State House, Réduit.

The new Cabinet comprises 24 Members, of whom three have been appointed as minister for the first time, namely Mr Eddy Boissézon, Mr Purmanund Jhugroo, and Mr Stephan Toussaint. The Deputy Prime Minister is Mr Ivan Leslie Collendavelloo (leader of the Mouvement
New Prime Minister outlines key priorities for the country

Transforming the country into a high income economy is achievable owing to the good performance of the economy in various sectors and with a forecast growth rate between 3.8% and 4% for 2017 and a Foreign Direct Investment of Rs 17 billion along with a booming construction sector.

The statement was made by the new Prime Minister, Mr Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, in a message to the nation broadcast, on 23 January 2017, where he defined his priorities for the country.

Focus, he stated, will be on an accelerated pace for the economy in line with the Vision 2030 in view of creating the proper climate for business and investment, and boosting job creation so as to push Mauritius to the next level of development.

The Prime Minister also elaborated on his future endeavours regarding other sectors of the economy namely, public infrastructure, recalling the Metro Express project for which construction work will start in March this year. He also listed out major road infrastructure projects that will necessitate an investment of some Rs 30 billion for the next three years together with Rs 25 billion for renewable energy projects; Rs 13 billion for port development; Rs 20 billion for the water sector; and Rs 20 billion for the education, health and housing sector, among others.

Moreover, Mr Jugnauth called for unity and solidarity among the citizens and reassured the population that he will fulfill the responsibility conferred upon him. He reiterated his commitment to serve the population at his best so as to make Mauritius a place where security prevails. Dynamism, prosperity, and modernity are high on his agenda, he said, adding that these will help consolidate and build a modern country for the future generation.

He gave an overview of the broad perspectives for the coming years under his term as Prime Minister outlining that law and order remain his focus. On this score, he pointed out that he will mobilise all resources as well as use modern technology to make sure that law and order prevails in the country.

He expressed his intolerance against drug scourge which is a nuisance to the society and restated his ambition of making Mauritius the safest place in the world with the establishment of the Safe City project this year. Other priorities evoked pertained to the tourism sector, digital economy, youth and sports, and education.

The Prime Minister reaffirmed his commitment to fight absolute poverty and social exclusion which he said are unacceptable at a time when Mauritius is aspiring to become a high income country.
Australia and Mauritius collaborate on Maritime Safety and Security

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) collaborated with the Ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands organised a Search and Rescue Exercise (SAREX) from 16 to 19 January 2017. The exercise is part of an ongoing collaboration with AMSA known as the Search and Rescue Capability Partnership Programme.

The AMSA’s current programme of collaboration with the Ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands dates back to January 2015 when the Search and Rescue Capability Partnership Programme (SCPP) was first launched.

The $2.6 million programme funding which is being provided by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade through its Government Partnerships for Development Programme will help strengthen SAR capabilities in Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Mauritius. The programme will run until June 2018.

The Programme is assisting partner countries to strengthen their national SAR services to enable more effective response to maritime and aviation distress situations in their SAR areas.

Search and rescue requires a cooperative and coordinated response across multiple government agencies including those involved in maritime and aviation operations and policy, policing, defence, weather prediction and the private sector.

In Mauritius, SAR authorities have worked collaboratively with the AMSA and supported all activities for enhancing SAR capability. Successful activities delivered to date have included SAR training in Port Louis and Singapore, training and implementation of the e-Broadcasts and Search and Rescue Calculator systems, Search and Rescue Exercises, and a meeting of the National SAR Standing Committee with over fifteen SAR organisations and agencies of Mauritius represented.

Search and Rescue Exercises are designed to practise and determine the readiness of organisations involved in a SAR response operation. They confirm that trained staff follow established procedures and use available systems to develop an effective SAR response plan. Outcomes and areas for improvement are determined through a debrief discussion and recommendations are made for consideration by the participating agencies.
Academic Year 2017
191 600 children resume classes at primary and secondary levels

The student population of 191 600, a total of 81 600 to primary schools and 110 000 secondary schools, resumed classes on 10 January 2017.

Admission procedures for pupils joining Grade 1, formerly Standard I (Primary level) and for students enrolling in Grade 7 previously Form I (Secondary level), was held on 9 January 2017.

Enrolment figures indicate that 12 000 have joined Grade 1, while 15 000 students have enrolled in secondary schools.

The school calendar for the Primary and Secondary Education Sectors for Academic Year 2017 is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Term</td>
<td>9 January to 7 April</td>
<td>9 January to 7 April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Term</td>
<td>24 April to 14 July</td>
<td>24 April to 14 July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Term</td>
<td>14 August to 3 November</td>
<td>7 August to 27 October</td>
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Transition Phase

It is recalled that Academic Year 2017 is considered the transition year during which Government’s reform project for Mauritius’ learning sector - the Nine-Year Continuous Basic Education (NYCBE) - is being implemented.

The objectives are to provide equitable Learning for All opportunities for students to attain high levels of achievement, and inculcate in young people a sense of moral responsibility, patriotism and set of values.

Under the NYCBE, the Proposed Education Structure will comprise 13 grades. The core of the reform is the replacement of the Certificate of Primary Education by the Primary School Achievement Certificate at the end of Grade 6 from 2017 onwards. Moreover, the National Curriculum Framework for Grades 7, 8 and 9, that is the final three years of the nine years of continuous basic education, has been approved.

The Framework covers the curriculum for the final three years of the nine years of continuous basic education. The Framework also advocates new approaches to assessment, both summative in the form of end-of-year assessment by the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, and continuous school-based assessment.

Other amendments, under the NYCBE include: the introduction of a National Certificate of Education as from 2020 onwards; and the setting up of Academies which will run classes from Grades 10 to 13 and specialise in certain streams/subjects, and of Polytechnics.
The Ministry of Health and Quality of Life adopted a Guideline on antibiotics at the end of 2016, which has become effective on 1st January 2017.

These Guidelines are intended for health professionals to provide them direction on the proper and judicious use of antibiotic therapy.

The purpose of the guidelines is also to ensure that antibiotics are used effectively to treat infections and minimise the spread of resistant organisms.

The Guidelines are expected to prevent or reduce abuse in prescribing antibiotics by medical professionals.

The document lists three antibiotic prescribing strategies as well as advice to be given to patients for the proper use of antibiotics. These Guidelines have been disseminated to public hospitals, private health institutions, and private medical practitioners.

A Monitoring Mechanism comprising the Pharmacy section at the level of the Headquarters of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life has also been set up to ensure compliance with the Guidelines.

It will work very closely with Infection Control Committees at the level of the five Regional Hospitals and with Consultants in different disciplines, in order to ensure effective implementation of the Guidelines and close monitoring of antibiotic prescription.

Antibiotic resistance

Antibiotic resistance is a growing public health concern worldwide which threatens the effectiveness of successful treatment of infection. It occurs when bacteria become resistant to antibiotics used to treat the infections they cause. While antibiotic resistance happens naturally, the overuse and misuse of antibiotics has accelerated the process, leading to record high levels of antibiotic resistance which poses a major challenge to health, food security, and development.

Also, antibiotics are meant to be used against bacterial infections, but are ineffective against viruses such as colds, most coughs, many types of sore throat and influenza.

It is noted that in 2015, Mauritius used a total of 41 000 532 units of antibiotics. Out of this number, almost 40 million units were used in public hospitals.
Mauritius and the European Union (EU) signed on 17 January 2017 in Port Louis a Financing Agreement to the tune of 7 million euros, approximately Rs 270 million, under the 11th European Development Fund Regional Indicative Programme to improve the Business and Investment Climate in Mauritius.

The project to the tune of 9 million euros will be funded jointly by the EU that is 7 million euros in form of grants and the remaining 2 million euros by the Government of Mauritius.

The grant will support the implementation of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between EU and Mauritius with focus on creating a conducive environment for doing business in Mauritius which will eventually boost economic growth, job creation and sustainable development.

It will also help address the shortcomings regarding the ease of doing business and investment facilitation environment following the weaknesses revealed in the 2016 Ease of Doing Business Index by the World Bank. These measures are in line with a series of reforms for business facilitation enunciated in the 2016/2017 Budget Speech as one of the ten strategies to usher a New Era of Development for Mauritius.

The business facilitation project will include: the setting up of a centralised e-Registry of licenses and an e-licensing platform which will act as single point of entry for application for any business permits and licenses; an assessment of existing impediments and outdated licenses in the regulatory framework that can be merged into ‘omnibus’ licenses resulting in the elimination of duplication of licences; and a training and sensitisation component to ensure that the new system is optimally used by relevant public agencies and the business community.

It will be recalled that several actions are being initiated in a bid to improve the business climate, namely: the introduction of a Business Facilitation Bill in Parliament in April to fundamentally improve the legal and regulatory framework; setting up of an Inter-Ministerial Committee to ensure timely and effective implementation of the business facilitation project.

Moreover, the Board of Investment and Business Mauritius are also working together on a plan to reengineer and streamline the various administrative processes relating to the Ease of Doing Business.

Mauritius has so far benefitted from both technical and financial assistance from the EU which remains one of the major development partner for Mauritius. The EU has also demonstrated strong commitment to support Mauritius in achieving the goals set under Vision 2030. Furthermore, upon successful implementation of the business facilitation project, Mauritius will also be entitled to an additional envelope of 3 million euros for the implementation of the interim EPA.
Decentralisation of operations at the National Transport Authority for enhanced service delivery

The services provided at the Head Office of the National Transport Authority (NTA) in Cassis are also as from this month available at two private examination centres, namely Eastern Vehicle Examination Station at Laventure, and SGS Vehicle Examination Station at Forest Side.

This decentralisation is in line with the restructuring of the NTA in a bid to offer streamlined and user-friendly services to the public and implement practical measures to respond to customers’ exigencies. The third private examination centre, Autocheck in Plaine Lauzun, will also shortly provide the same services.

The services being provided at the Vehicle Examination Stations during week days comprise: Issue of “Certificat de Gage”; Transfer of ownership; Custom clearance; Removal permits; Payment of Motor Vehicle Licence; Re-issue/loss of registration book (horse power); Amendments to particulars of vehicle; Re-registration, Inscription/removal of lien; Change of name and address; Duplicate horse power, and Copy of entry.

As part of the decentralisation process, NTA sub-offices will also be opened in Bambous and St Pierre. In Curepipe, road transport inspectors will be posted in an office near the market for better control and monitoring of the transport situation there.

Besides, the NTA has set up a special desk at the Head Office for the registration of new and second hand vehicles with a view to enhance services provided to its customers. Customers will have to deposit their documents before 11h30 and collect same between 13h00 and 15h00 on the same day.

Combating illegal transport steps taken by the Authority to crack down on illegal transport operators include the enforcement of the Road Traffic (Control of Contract Car and Contract Bus Operations) Regulations 2016 as from February 2017. The Regulations request holders of a Contract Bus Licence to display on their contract vehicles the required stickers for easy identification.

Owners or users of vehicles too will have to ensure that their registration plates comply with prescribed specifications for the purpose of identification or to give information to the relevant authorities on the road. Moreover, it is at present mandatory for the certificate of fitness to be attached to the windshield of vehicles following examination of the vehicles in private examination centres.

Other activities of the NTA

The National Transport Authority is a department operating under the aegis of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport. It was established under the Road Traffic Act in 1980 and has, as main responsibility, the registration and control of road transport in Mauritius.

It is noted that in 2016, 507 676 vehicles were registered in Mauritius compared to 486 144 in 2015, representing an increase of 4.4%. Last year, some 3 012 contraventions were established by the inspectorate of the NTA following control and monitoring exercises at rural and urban bus terminals as well as taxi stands across the country.

The NTA also issues some 156 000 bus passes yearly so that students benefit from free transport facilities. Regarding the 2017 school year, the NTA has already signed contracts with 59 bus operators for the conveyance of students.
The Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) launched, on 26 January 2017 at the Customs House, Mer Rouge, its e-Auction Sales System. The Auction Sales System is a user-friendly interface for bidders to bid online for sales by public tender of goods which have been abandoned, unclaimed or seized.

The platform enables bidders to bid for goods without being physically present at the Customs warehouse as it was the case previously. Operational on a 24-hour basis, it contains details of the goods being put on sale. The e-Auction Sales System ensures that sales are done in a transparent and efficient manner as bidders will have timely information about the award procedures. The launching of the e-Auction Sales System coincided with the International Customs Day 2017.

Facilitating trade and business

In line with the MRA’s continuous reform agenda, a series of projects and initiatives aimed at facilitating trade and businesses have been implemented. These include: the Single Window System which provides online web-based facility to submit applications for import/export licenses and permits; the web-based Customs declaration portal which enables a person to submit customs declarations and trade documents electronically; the e-Auction Sales System; the Time Release Study which aims to assess the dwell time of cargo imported and exported by sea and air and identify bottlenecks in the clearance procedures; and the Harmonised System 2017 which aims at addressing trading codes and caters for new inventions.

International Customs Day 2017

The World Customs Organisation is dedicating 2017 to promoting data analysis under the slogan “Data Analysis for Effective Border Management.” Emphasis is on data analysis which can propel Customs to new levels of success in both compliance and facilitation by enabling it to, amongst others, improve risk management, engage with other Government agencies to leverage their experience and expertise, and enhance performance measurement to improve officer practices and integrity.

Rodrigues Regional Assembly Elections 2017

The election of twelve members of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly for the six local regions of Rodrigues, namely Port Mathurin, La Ferme, Marechal, Saint Gabriel, Baie aux Huîtres and Grande Montagne will be held on 12 February 2017. Each local region elects two members.

Following the dissolution of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, the President of the Republic, Dr Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, issued, on 5 January 2017, writs for the election. The Nomination Day and the Submission of Party Lists of Candidates was on 21 January and 26 January 2017, respectively.

Thirty candidates are standing for the elections under three political parties: Organisation du Peuple de Rodrigues, Mouvement Rodriguais, and Muvman Independantis Rodriguais.

After the polls, five Island region members will, on 13 February 2017, be designated by the Electoral Commission on the basis of proportional representation, from the Party Lists already submitted. This will complete the election of members of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.
An Early Warning and Emergency Alert System Project for the Republic of Mauritius

A Government-financed project to the tune of Rs 35 million - the National Multi-Hazard Early Warning and Emergency Alert System (EWEAS) - is on the fast-track. The EWEAS project holds significant importance for the Republic of Mauritius since the country has been affected by several natural calamities (flash floods, torrential rains, cyclones) these past years.

The project is designed to improve regional infrastructure, policies and protocols to strengthen the Republic of Mauritius capacity to predict and prepare for emergencies and natural hazards, thereby improving resilience and disaster reducing risks and losses.

Project beneficiaries are the islands of Mauritius, Rodrigues, Agalega and St. Brandon. There is a large public sensitisation and education component to this project since all Mauritian citizens and tourists need to know what the alerts are and how to respond to them.

The services of Le Groupe-Conseil Baastel Ltée (Canada) has been enlisted for consultancy services for this project and the consultancy team had several consultation meetings with key stakeholders for the identification of the most appropriate system to be implemented.

Implementation calendar is as follows:

- Phase one, which started in November 2016, will extend till March 2017 and comprises assessments, recommendations, and procurement.
- Phase two, covering the period March 2017 to December 2017, will include procurement, implementation, and system acceptance.
- Phase three, spanning November-December 2018, will be dedicated to the component of going live and audit.

The EWEAS project will be financed as follows: Rs 15 million for 2016-2017 financial year; Rs 15 million for 2017-2018; and, Rs 5 million for financial year 2018-2019.

CEB to implement Green Energy Scheme for Cooperatives

The Central Electricity Board (CEB) will implement a Green Energy Scheme for Cooperatives under its Small Scale Distributed Generation Scheme.

The objective of the Scheme is to allow cooperative societies to produce electricity from solar photovoltaic systems.

Under the Scheme, cooperative federations and societies will be entitled to install solar PV not exceeding 5 kilowatt peak, and benefit from a one-off grant of Rs 10 000 per kilowatt up to a maximum of Rs 50 000.

Any excess of electricity produced by a cooperative federation or a society would be credited to its energy account at the CEB under a net metering system.
The ICT/BPO Industry Review 2016 report, launched on 16 January 2017 at the Board of Investment (BOI) in Port Louis, highlights the competitiveness, vertical and market diversification initiatives by operators coupled with Government’s solid support for the past year.

2016 is considered a rejuvenation year for the ICT/BPO industry, characterised by growth and diversification of most major existing BPO companies. A shift from ‘Do it cheaper’ to ‘Do it differently’ was also noted with most of the local companies constantly re-inventing themselves in order to keep pace with fast-changing market needs.

The key drivers highlighted in the 2016 Survey include:

- Increase of 7% in terms of number of operational companies to reach 750 companies;
- 35% of the industry consist of start-ups (employing 1 to 9 people) and are at the vanguard of digital marketing, social media and web development services;
- IT outsourcing is showing an expansion trend with an increase of 3% in terms of companies engaged in the development of software solutions. Nearly 353 companies operate within this segment with multiple companies offering new innovative activities such as software as a service.
- Within the BPO segment, an increase of 16% was noted with regard to the number of companies providing both voice and non-voice activities.

It is expected that this trend shall continue given the global shift from voice to digital interactions.

The industry has also maintained its strength towards high-end activities. Total employment in the ICT-BPO industry has crossed the 20 000 threshold and presently stands at 23 000. The BPO segment remains the main generator for jobs with 53% of total employment in the segment of call centres, BPO non-voice and shared services.

It is recalled that the 2016 Survey has taken nearly two months from conception to completion of the Report. A hybrid data collection methodology was used to assess the industry’s performance by using online surveys, emails, phone conversations, and one to one meetings as well as on-site visits.