The Department of Economics of the University of Madras has completed 100 years. During its century (1916-2016) old journey, its contributions to the society through its teaching, research and policy-making are immense and worth celebrating.

Gilbert Slater, the first Professor (and the Head) of Economics, kept the society and the economy as the most important subjects for learning, teaching and research in the Department. The successors have also kept this tradition alive by focusing their teaching and research towards the most pressing contemporary problems of the society and the economy.

In 1916, Gilbert Slater initiated his village studies by first visiting Iruveliappattu, a village in the present Villupuram district of Tamil Nadu. Prof. Slater conducted similar surveys for eleven villages. These studies have laid the foundations of modern research in the Madras University.

Gilbert Slater was the one who first introduced Economics as a separate subject of study in the south. In 1918, he introduced the Diploma Programme as the first academic programme of the newly established Department of Economics. He also introduced the B.A Honours (Economics) programme in a few affiliated colleges of the University of Madras. Slater was all alone in shouldering the twin responsibility of defining his own work as well as initiating a maiden approach for the teaching and learning of the Economics; he did so particularly when the economics education was either non-existent at the least or at its infancy at the most not only in the Madras presidency but in the entire country. But when he launched his maiden approach of teaching and learning Indian Economics, a rich tradition was set in motion at the very beginning of the century old journey of this Department.

The faculties of the Department, during the last 100 years, have mostly focused their research on issues which are contemporary in nature with immediate social significance and policy relevance. And many of them have also occupied various prominent policy making positions at the national as well as international levels. For instance, Dr. John Mathai was the first Railway Minister and subsequently the Finance Minister. When Shannagam Chetty, resigned as the First Finance Minister of India, Dr. Mathai succeeded him and he presented two budgets including the first one of the Independent India.

P.J. Thomas was nominated as a member of the Legislative Council of the Madras Presidency for nine years. In 1937, he also became the Chief Economic Adviser to the then Chief Minister C. Rajagopalachari. In the Madras Presidency he introduced Prohibition as well as sales tax for the first time to meet the revenue loss to the government in lieu of Prohibition. In 1942 he was appointed as the Economic Adviser to the Department of Finance in Delhi. He also became the Chairman of the Indian Post war Planning Committee. He attended the inaugural session of the UN as a member of the Indian delegation which signed the UN Charter in 1945. In 1957, he became the member of the Rajya Sabha. Above all, he was the first Chief Economic Adviser to the Government of the Independent India.

Dr. P.S. Lukanathan served as the first Executive Secretary of the U.N. Economic Commission for Asia and Far East (ECAFE) from 1946 to 1956. His contributions, during this period, helped Japan to gain admission into ECAFE. It was by his initiative that the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) was started and as the first Director-General of NCAER he conducted the techno-economic survey for most Indian States and these surveys have contributed a great deal during the inception of the Indian planning process during the fifties.

Prof. Balakrishna was appointed as member of the Consultative Committee of the economists to examine the post-war problems of India. He was also a member of the Cotton Textile Industry Inquiry Committee, the Central Advisory Council of Industries, the Research Programme Committee of the Planning Commission and the Panel of Economists constituted for advising the Government in the drawing of the Second Five Year Plan. Prof. Nallagounder was a member of the Tamil Nadu Planning Commission during 1979-80. He was Director of the Institute of Techno- Economic Studies in 1991. Prof. V.K. Shannagundaram was the Member of the Central Board of RBI, IDBI, State Planning Commission and MMDA.

Prof. M. Naganathan served as the Vice-Chairman, State Planning Commission for five years from 2006 to 2011. At the national level he has served in the Environmental and Infrastructure Committee and Monitoring Committee of Sethu Samudram Canal Project and Ennore Port Advisory Committee of the Union Government.
Department of Economics
University of Madras
100 Years of Economics Education

27.1.2016

Inaugural Session

10.30 a.m. Welcome Address
Dr. K. Jothi Sivagnanam
Professor and Head, Department of Economics
University of Madras

10.40 a.m. Felicitation to the Retired Faculties of the Department of Economics

10.45 a.m. Launching of New Working Paper Series of the Department of Economics

10.50 a.m. Presidential Address
Prof. A. Amudavalli
Syndicate Member
Professor and Head, Dept of Library & Information Science & Director, International Centre for University of Madras

11.00 a.m. Inaugural Address
Professor G. Thimmaiah
Former Member, Union Planning Commission, New Delhi.
on Social Reforms and Economic Development in Southern India

12.00 p.m. Keynote Address
Professor Barbara Harris-White
Senior Research Fellow, Area Studies, Oxford University Emeritus Professor of Development Studies, Oxford University Emeritus Fellow, Wolfson College, Oxford University
on The Mofussil Town: Economic Dynamism Over Four Decades

02.00 p.m. Lecture I
Com. R. Nallakannu
Member
Central Executive Committee
Communist Party of India
on Agricultural Legislations and Practices

03.00 p.m. Lecture II
Dr. M. Vijayabaskar
Professor, Madras Institute of Development Studies (MIDS), Chennai
on Agrarian Transition and Collective Action in Tamil Nadu

Forenoon Session
Chairperson

Professor V Loganathan
Former Tagore Professor, University of Madras

10.30 a.m. Lecture III
Professor J. Jeyaranjan
Director, Institute for Development Alternative, Chennai.
on Rural Non-Farm Employment in Tamil Nadu

11.30 a.m. Lecture IV
Professor R.S. Deshpande
ICSR National Fellow
ISEC, Bangalore.
on Agrarian Distress and Farmer Suicides

Valedictory Session
Chairperson

02.00 p.m. Welcome Address
Dr. K. Jothi Sivagnanam
Professor and Head, Department of Economics
University of Madras

02.10 p.m. Presidential Address
Dr. P. David Jawahar
Registrar, University of Madras

02.20 p.m. Valedictory Address
Professor J. Krishnamurthy
Former Professor, Delhi School of Economics Visiting Professor, Institute for Human Development, New Delhi.
on The Expatriate Economist in India 1900-1939: A Few Case Studies of their Role

Vote of Thanks