

HIGHLIGHTS OF CABINET MEETING – FRIDAY 27 AUGUST 2021

1. Cabinet has taken note that the 27th Universal Postal Congress which is currently being held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, adopted on 24 August 2021, a resolution on the implementation of United Nations General Assembly Resolution 73/295 on the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965. The resolution provides that –

- (a) the Universal Postal Union formally acknowledges henceforth that, for the purposes of its activities, the Chagos Archipelago forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius;
- (b) the International Bureau of the Universal Postal Union should request Mauritius to keep the Universal Postal Union regularly informed of any decisions regarding international postal operations in the Chagos Archipelago, including any authorisations to maintain the operation of international mail processing centres by foreign entities in the Chagos Archipelago. The international mail processing centres currently established in the Chagos Archipelago are operated by Australia Post of Australia and Royal Mail of the UK;
- (c) the International Bureau of the Universal Postal Union should cease the registration, distribution and forwarding of any and all postage stamps issued by the so-called “British Indian Ocean Territory”;
- (d) the International Bureau of the Universal Postal Union should ensure that Universal Postal Union documentation does not include any references to the so-called “British Indian Ocean Territory” or to the Chagos Archipelago as part of the member country of the Universal Postal Union known as the “Overseas Territories of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland”; and
- (e) the International Bureau should take any other measures deemed necessary to ensure due implementation of UN General Assembly Resolution 73/295.

2. Cabinet has agreed to the National Land Transport Authority (NLTA) implementing the following measures in view of the difficulties being faced by the contract bus operators due to the COVID-19 pandemic -

- (a) vary the licence of contract bus operators involved in the conveyance of tourists to also allow them to carry employees up to 31 December 2021;

- (b) review the replacement age of Standard and Executive vehicles used for the conveyance of tourists from 8 to 10 years and from 12 to 14 years respectively;
- (c) extend the validity of Public Service Vehicle Licence for contract bus operators involved in the conveyance of tourists and which could not be renewed due to COVID-19, up to 30 June 2022;
- (d) extend the delay to implement a Public Service Vehicle Licence for contract bus operators (tourists and school children), up to 30 June 2022;
- (e) extend the delay to implement a Public Service Vehicle Licence in respect of taxi licences and contract bus operators (employees) from 31 August 2021 to 31 December 2021;
- (f) vary the licence of contract bus operators conveying school children to also allow them to carry employees up to 31 December 2021; and
- (g) extend the delay to renew a Petrol Service Station Licence from 31 August 2021 to 31 December 2021.

3. Cabinet has agreed to Mauritius nominating Le Morne, Old Grand Port and Pamplemousses villages to participate in the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) “Best Tourism Villages Initiative”. The overarching objective of the “Initiative” is, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, to make tourism a positive force for transformation, rural development and community wellbeing. It seeks to advance the role of tourism in valuing and safeguarding rural villages along with their associated landscapes, knowledge systems, biological and cultural diversity, local values and activities, as well as gastronomy.

The selected villages under the UNWTO “Best Tourism Villages Initiative” could benefit from one of the following three awards –

- (a) the “Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO” Label;
- (b) the “Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO” Upgrade Programme; and
- (c) the “Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO” Network.

The announcement of the Best Tourism Villages which would receive an award would be made on the occasion of the 24th session of the UNWTO General Assembly to be held in October 2021 in Morocco.

4. Cabinet has agreed to drafting instructions being conveyed by the Ministry of Health and Wellness to the Attorney General's Office to amend the Dangerous Drugs Act so as to empower the Forensic Science Laboratory to carry out examination of suspected illicit drugs by a sampling strategy based on the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) guidelines.

5. Cabinet has taken note that a National Survey among People Who Use Drugs in Mauritius would be conducted by the National Drug Secretariat of the Prime Minister's Office in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Wellness, the UN Resident Coordinator's Office and the World Health Organization. The Survey would provide comprehensive information including the socio-demographic characteristics of drug users, their living conditions, their employment status, age of onset of drug use, frequency and patterns of drug use and extent of drug use which would guide the national drug response.

6. Cabinet has agreed to the promulgation of the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service (Fire Safety Plan and Fire Certificate) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 to provide for the issue of digital Fire Certificates and a revised fee structure. An e-Licensing System for fire certification has been developed and it would enable online applications, e-payment of fees and automated issuance of Fire Certificates in digital format with effect from mid-September 2021. The new system would substantially decrease processing time and would result in improved efficiency and governance. With the new digitalised Fire Certification System under the National Electronic Licensing System, the fee structure would be rationalised.

7. Cabinet has taken note that the SMEs Division of the Ministry of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives would extend the existing SME Employment Scheme to holders of National Certificates from the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Institutes as announced in Budget Speech 2021-2022. Prospective placees of TVET Institutes are expected to hold at least an MQA approved Level 3 National Certificate in accordance with the National Qualifications Framework. Registered SMEs would be able to benefit from any mix of placees up to a maximum of two, irrespective of the category (Graduate or Diploma Holder or TVET Certificate Holder). Eligibility of SMEs would be verified and certified by SME Mauritius Ltd.

8. Cabinet has taken note that the Tourism Authority would sign an "Implementation Agreement" with the National Productivity and Competitiveness Council for the execution of the COVID-19 Occupational Safety & Health and Resource Efficiency Project for the tourism industry. The objective of the project is to engage into capacity building of employees of tourist accommodations (Hotels, Tourist Residences, Guesthouses, Domaines), restaurants, pleasure craft operators, Destination Management Companies, Travel Agencies, taxis based at hotels and airport, amongst others, with a view to contributing to the promotion of Mauritius as a safe destination.

9. Cabinet has taken note of the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic prevailing across the world. Some 214.7 million cases have been reported globally, of which 192 million persons have been successfully treated.

With regard to Mauritius, as at 27 August 2021, there were 4,643 active cases of COVID-19, out of which five were serious cases. Over the past week, six deaths were attributed to COVID-19.

Cabinet has also taken note of progress in the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme. As at 26 August 2021, 803,035 persons had received a first dose of vaccine (representing 64 percent of the population). 735,513 persons had been fully vaccinated (representing 59 percent of the population).

Cabinet has further taken note that the quarantine period in Mauritius has been extended up to 31 December 2021.

10. Cabinet has taken note that the Mauritius Housing Company (MHC) Ltd would set up, under the Companies Act, a wholly owned subsidiary, namely MHC Properties Ltd. The MHC Ltd holds a non-bank deposit taking licence from the Bank of Mauritius and such companies are not allowed to engage in renting and leasing activities. All immoveable properties such as land and buildings of MHC Ltd would be transferred to the subsidiary. The main objects of the MHC Properties Ltd would be as follows –

- (a) management, maintenance and renting of existing properties of MHC Ltd;
- (b) promote property development in Mauritius and Africa;
- (c) act as syndic for MHC projects; and
- (d) any activities directly or indirectly related to real estate development.

11. Cabinet has taken note of the findings of three Research Projects undertaken by the Road Safety Observatory of the Ministry of Land Transport and Light Rail in collaboration with the University of Mauritius. The Research Projects are -

- (a) "The Road Traffic Death and Injuries: The Shadow to GDP and Welfare in Mauritius"- the objectives of the Study were to assess the consequence of road accidents and injuries on the Gross Domestic Product together with the associated socioeconomic costs and investigate into the impact of road accidents and injuries on the welfare of affected families and individuals;

- (b) "Understanding Road Users' Behaviour and Attitudes in Mauritius" - the objective of the Study was to capture trends and statistics for an enhanced road safety policy by decision-makers; and
- (c) "Understanding Pedestrian Use of Crossing Facilities in Mauritius" – the aims of the Research Project were to identify pedestrian blackspots in Mauritius, investigate pedestrian perception of crossing facilities, explore the general behaviour of pedestrians along roads and at crossings, investigate pedestrian perception on the attitudes of other road users at crossings and assess the effectiveness of sensitisation campaigns.

12. Cabinet has taken note of a programme of collaboration and activities proposed by Facebook to the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation, geared towards building awareness on responsible online behaviour, critical thinking and understanding social issues shared via digital technology, with the ultimate objective of enabling safe, responsible and productive use of the social media platform. Facebook has submitted a programme of activities aiming, inter alia, at -

- (a) reducing the spread of false news, harmful contents and misinformation;
- (b) reducing hate speech/incitement to violence which may trigger civil unrest, social disorder and economic hardships; and
- (c) showing to the Government of Mauritius and its people the steps taken by Facebook to tackle misuse of the platform and how it is seeking to support economic recovery in Mauritius.

A series of activities and workshops would be held in Mauritius during the last quarter of this year and at regular intervals next year. These activities would target small businesses, the Mauritian population in general and high level Government stakeholders.

13. Cabinet has taken note of the fire outbreak reported on 24 August 2021 at around 18 25 hours on board the Taiwanese fishing vessel RUEY CHIEN TSAI 112, which was berthed at the entrance of the Port. The 18 crew members onboard had been safely evacuated.

Cabinet has also taken note that the fire had been extinguished on 26 August 2021 at around 14 00 hours but it re-ignited on that same day, late in the night. However, in the morning of 27 August 2021, the firefighters of the Mauritius Ports Authority were able to control and subdue the fire. No leakage has been observed except for a minor sheen of oil around the vessel.

Cabinet has further taken note of actions/measures taken by the Ministry of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management, the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change, the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping, the National Coast Guard, the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service and the Mauritius Ports Authority to deal with the incident.

The National Emergency Operations Command had been activated to monitor the situation and to chart the way forward. The National Oil Spill Committee and a dedicated Crisis Committee were also closely following up the matter in collaboration with all stakeholders.

14. Cabinet has taken note that the 42nd Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group (ESAAMLG) Task Force of Senior Officials and the 21st Council of Ministers Meetings were being held from 26 August to 07 September 2021 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

15. Cabinet has taken note of the reconstitution of the Board of Governors of the University of Technology, Mauritius, with Mr Deonanan Raj Makoond, GCSK, as Chairperson.

16. Cabinet has taken note of the appointment of Mrs Sangheeta Saulick as Chairperson of the Board of the National Women's Council.

17. Cabinet has taken note of the appointment of Mr Dayanand Kurrumchand, OSK, as Deputy Chairperson of the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund Committee.
