

HIGHLIGHTS OF CABINET MEETING – FRIDAY 04 MARCH 2022

1. Cabinet has taken note of the programme for the Flag Raising Ceremony to be held on Saturday 12 March 2022, at 1200 hours at the State House, Le Réduit, to mark the 54th Independence Anniversary and 30th Anniversary of the Republic of Mauritius. The Ceremony would be held in accordance with the prevailing sanitary protocol.

2. Cabinet has taken note that following the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Elections, the Swearing-In Ceremony would be held on Saturday 05 March 2022. In that context, HE Mr P. Roopun, GCSK, President of the Republic of Mauritius, would proceed to Rodrigues. The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism would also attend the ceremony.

3. Cabinet has agreed to an increase in the quantum of the Annual Rental Value payable to grant-aided Private Secondary Schools for the use of school premises under the Comprehensive Grant Formula (CGF) 2020-2023. The revised ceiling of Rs300,000 would be made effective as from the date of completion of the valuation exercise, that is, 01 July 2021, in line with the CGF Report 2020-2023.

4. Cabinet has taken note of the setting up of a loan scheme at the Development Bank of Mauritius (DBM) Ltd for grant-aided Private Secondary Schools for the construction of new educational units and infrastructure facilities, upgrading/improvement/embellishment pertaining to the physical condition of the school building/premises and school infrastructural facilities including repairs and maintenance. The following terms and conditions would apply

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- (a) the maximum loan amount would be Rs15M at an interest rate of 2.75 percent per annum for a maximum repayment period of seven years;
- (b) the repayment of the loan would be made directly to the DBM by the Private Secondary Education Authority through a deduction at source;
- (c) all application for loan would be made directly to the DBM. After processing the applications, the DBM would seek the endorsement of the Private Secondary Education Authority prior to sanctioning the loan; and
- (d) the loan would be disbursed by the DBM in a phased manner upon verification of the relevant documentary evidence by that institution.

5. Cabinet has agreed to drafting instructions being conveyed to the Attorney General's Office to bring amendments to the Insurance Act and Insurance Regulations 2007, with a view to establishing a regulatory framework for the introduction of a new line of business known as Structure Investment-Linked Insurance Business commonly referred to as "Insurance Wrapper".

The Financial Services Commission consulted the industry stakeholders and the public on the establishment of a regulatory framework for the introduction of the Structure Investment-Linked Insurance Business. The feedbacks received were assessed by a technical team of the Financial Services Commission and a Consultant appointed to develop a comprehensive regulatory and supervisory framework for the Structure Investment-Linked Insurance Business.

6. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of a Bilateral Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Mauritius and the Government of the Principality of Monaco, for the implementation of an exchange programme between the Ecole Hôtelière Sir Gaëtan Duval and the "Lycée Technique et Hôtelier de Monaco" of the Principality of Monaco for the period 2022 to 2024. The Bilateral Agreement was first signed in 2005 for a three-year period and has subsequently been renewed on a regular basis.

The aim of the Agreement is to define the modalities to enable cooperation between the Government of Mauritius and the Government of Monaco and subsequently, the implementation of the exchange programme. The objective of the exchange programme is to improve students' skills in the hotel and restaurant industry while benefiting from an international experience as well as to enhance trainers' knowledge in the cooking, pastry and wine waiting fields.

7. Cabinet has taken note of the setting up a Fast Track Committee to look into all issues impeding the implementation of the National Flood Management Programme. The Fast Track Committee, which would be chaired by the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development, would address bottlenecks related to land acquisition, securing of right of entry or wayleaves, as well as other challenging issues which might hamper the implementation of the National Flood Management Programme.

8. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Health and Wellness would be providing two new services at SSR National Hospital, namely a Fertility Clinic and Epidural Services for women in labour. The Ministry has set up a unit to enable the registration of patients in a sub-fertility database so that each patient can benefit from a set of diagnosis and a proposed plan of action according to his/her needs.

The Fertility Clinic would provide a holistic approach to those couples who are facing difficulties to conceive based on the assessment, diagnosis and treatment modalities. Existing advanced reproduction techniques such as artificial insemination and in-vitro fertilisation would be offered to eligible couples.

In addition, the Ministry would start an Epidural Service for women undergoing normal delivery at SSR National Hospital. At a later stage, this service would be extended to the other regional hospitals as soon as the necessary facilities were available and the personnel would have been trained. These services would be operational as from 08 March 2022 at SSRN Hospital which would coincide with the commemoration of International Women's Day.

9. Cabinet has taken note of developments following the grounding of three fishing vessels in the Port waters on 23 February 2022. Vessel FV Wen Hung Dar 168 has been successfully pulled out from the incident site and towed to the dry dock after all marine gas oil was pumped out. Salvage operations in respect of the other two vessels, namely FV Maan Yu Feng 1 and FV Maan Yu Feng 168 were underway with pumping out of the marine gas oil and removal of rotten fish in their cargo holds. The salvage team expects to put afloat these vessels by the following week and tow them to the dry dock. No oil spill was observed following the incident.

10. Cabinet has taken note of the status of projects that were being undertaken by the National Housing Development Company Ltd (NHDC). The NHDC Ltd has, since November 2019 to-date, completed the construction of some 2,188 housing units. Out of these 2,188 housing units, 656 and 300 housing units have been constructed at Dagotière and at Mare Tabac respectively. The allocation process of these units was underway and expected to be completed shortly.

Moreover, construction of 282 and 203 housing units has started in Wooton and Mare D'Albert and was expected to be completed in June and October 2022, respectively. The NHDC would also proceed with the construction of 223 housing units at La Valette in May 2022 and the project was expected to be completed in August 2023. Furthermore, the construction of around 290 housing units in Mont Goût was expected to start in June 2022.

11. Cabinet has agreed to extend the existing operation and maintenance period of the Ebène Recreational Park by the Metro Express Ltd for a further period of five years, with effect from 19 November 2022.

12. Cabinet has agreed to the setting up of a Coral Reef Network. The aim of the Coral Reef Network is to work with relevant local stakeholders towards the improvement and harmonisation of policies, as well as the legal and institutional framework with regard to coral reefs. This would be achieved through a collaborative and consultative approach while enhancing networking and improving collaboration for a better exchange of data.

The Coral Reef Network would align its activities with the Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14 - Life Under Water) to contribute to the conservation goal set by the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping. It would be led and coordinated by the Albion Fisheries Research Centre and the membership would comprise representatives of main stakeholders including Ministries, locally recognised NGOs, fishers' organisations, diving centres, universities and other relevant organisations. It would provide a common platform to discuss on issues/challenges related to coral reef and its associated ecosystems. It would coordinate, organise and manage activities, propose appropriate strategies and management measures to protect and conserve coral reefs, as well as sensitise the public at large.

13. Cabinet has taken note of the findings of the Research Project 'Investigation of the Performance of Different Road Lighting Technologies and their Effect on Road Safety' undertaken by the Road Safety Observatory of the Ministry of Land Transport and Light Rail in collaboration with the University of Mauritius. The objectives of the Study were as follows –

- (a) investigating the safety benefits associated with road lighting and reviewing the existing road illumination according to international standards to reduce the number of road crashes;
- (b) determining road users' behaviour and understanding with respect to road lighting in Mauritius and its effect on their safety; and
- (c) investigating the performance of different road lighting technologies on Mauritian roads and their potential impact on road safety.

A survey was carried out in the nine districts of Mauritius to gauge the general perspective of road users concerning road lighting and a sample of 730 respondents was chosen for this exercise. The findings and recommendations of the Research Project were being analysed at the level of the Ministry of Land Transport and Light Rail for formulation of policies and implementation of corrective measures and actions for enhanced road safety. Meetings would be organised with Ministries and organisations concerned to disseminate the findings and recommendations of the Study. The recommendations would be communicated to the Road Development Authority to be included in the specifications for street lighting in all new road infrastructural projects.

14. Cabinet has taken note of the proposed relocation of the ex-Governor's Railway Station within the premises of the State House and the remedial works to be undertaken at the Food Technology Laboratory, both found in Réduit, in the wake of the implementation of Phase 3 of the Metro Express Project: Rose Hill Central to Mahatma Gandhi Station (Réduit) through Ebène.

15. Cabinet has taken note of the prevailing situation in Ukraine and the United Nations General Assembly resolution entitled "Aggression Against Ukraine" which was adopted on 02 March 2022 by a recorded vote of 141 in favour.

Mauritius voted in favour of the resolution and the Representative of the Mauritius Mission in New York delivered a statement in line with the position of Mauritius on the respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of all States.

16. Cabinet has taken note of the comparative retail prices of Mogas and Gas Oil as at 01 March 2022 in Reunion Island, Singapore, India, France and Seychelles. Cabinet has also taken note of the price hikes of these commodities on the international market.

17. Cabinet has taken note of the performance of the Mauritian weightlifters in the Qualification Weightlifting Event for the Commonwealth Games held in Mauritius recently. The performance of the Mauritian weightlifters was as follows –

- (a) Gold Medallists: Dinesh Pandoo, Jonathan Coret, Maeva Matlot, Ketty Lent, Alison Sunee, Doushka Gopaloodoo;
- (b) Silver Medallists: Dorian Madanamothoo, Khelwin Juboo, Cedric Coret; and
- (c) Bronze Medallist: Anastajia Babet.

Their performance at the event would be taken into consideration for qualifying for the Commonwealth Games.

18. Cabinet has taken note of the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic prevailing across the world. Some 440.6 million cases have been reported globally, of which 373.1 million persons have been successfully treated.

With regard to Mauritius, as at 02 March 2022, there were 2,337 active cases of COVID-19, out of which 14 were admitted at the New ENT Hospital. Over the period 24 February to 02 March 2022, 18 deaths were attributed to COVID-19.

Cabinet has also taken note of progress in the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme, including the administration of the booster dose in the Republic of Mauritius. As at 03 March 2022, 1,000,075 persons had received a first dose of vaccine (representing 79 percent of the population). 962,399 persons were fully vaccinated (representing 76 percent of the population). 524,337 persons had received a booster dose (representing 41.4 percent of the population). 75.5 percent of adolescents aged 12 to 17 years had received a first dose of vaccine and 66.1 percent had received a second dose.

Cabinet has further taken note that the Ministry of Health and Wellness has received a donation of 25,000 Rapid Antigen Tests from *L'Agence Régionale de Santé* of Reunion Island.

19. Cabinet has taken note of the COVID-19 situation prevailing in Rodrigues. As at 02 March 2022, there were 492 active cases. Six persons were admitted at Mont Lubin Treatment Centre. Three ventilators have been sent to Rodrigues for the management of COVID-19 patients.

Cabinet has also taken note that a new NOTAM has been issued on 04 March 2022 for Rodrigues. The following conditions would apply to passengers travelling to Rodrigues and vice-versa –

- (a) no PCR test would be required prior to departure;
- (b) only fully vaccinated local passengers would be allowed to travel if they have received a booster dose. Fully vaccinated non-Mauritian travellers with two doses of vaccine would also be allowed to travel; and
- (c) there would be no quarantine in Rodrigues.

Exception would be made with respect to minors and medical or other emergencies would be considered on a case to case basis.

20. Cabinet has taken note of the status regarding the implementation of the Victoria Urban Terminal project. As at end of February 2022, the construction works of the Victoria Urban Terminal had progressed significantly, with an overall completion of around 86 percent. The Victoria Urban Terminal was expected to be fully operational by October 2022, with phased openings.

21. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the first meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on monitoring and implementation of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) signed by Mauritius held recently. The Committee took note of a draft concept paper prepared by a Technical Coordination Committee, comprising representatives from both the public and private sectors. The draft concept paper outlines specific measures and actions to be implemented by various institutions to unlock the opportunities under the various FTAs.

The draft concept paper would be amended to take into consideration issues raised during the meeting including –

- (a) improved connectivity with key exports markets;
- (b) focussed marketing strategy to boost exports and attract investment;
- (c) re-structuring of the manufacturing sector; and
- (d) promoting Mauritius as a manufacturing destination of high end products.

22. Cabinet has taken note that the Human Rights Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Mauritius and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva, would be holding a training programme on “the right to participate in Public Affairs and the United Nations (UN) Participation Guidelines” on 06 and 07 April 2022 for some 40 participants. The prospective participants would comprise members of the National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-Up Committee including representatives from the Rodrigues Regional Administration and the Chagossian Welfare Fund. The resource persons designated by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva are Mr Hernan Vales, Human Rights and Democracy Adviser and Ms Alice Lixi, Associate Human Rights Officer.

23. Cabinet has taken note that the INTERPOL Training on Physical Security of Port Infrastructure would be held in Mauritius from 07 to 11 March 2022. The training forms part of the Port Security Project 2021-2024 which is entirely funded by the European Union and jointly implemented by INTERPOL, the International Maritime Organisation, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Indian Ocean Commission.

The training would be conducted in favour of officers from local law enforcement agencies, namely the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Police Department and the Mauritius Revenue Authority.

24. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent visit of the delegation from the National Informatics Centre, a department operating under the aegis of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology of India, to Mauritius to assist the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation to come up with a Digital Government Blueprint. Some of the potential key areas of collaboration would include the following –

- (a) consultancy services for the setting up of a Tier IV Data Centre at the Government Online Centre;
- (b) development of an e-Recruitment platform at the Public Service Commission;

- (c) deployment of a Fleet Management System and development of a Cashless Ticketing System at the Ministry of Land Transport and Light Rails;
- (d) collaboration for the setting up of an e-Hospital System at the Ministry of Health and Wellness;
- (e) development of an e-Social Security platform at the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity; and
- (f) development of an online e-Commerce and Collaborative Platform for local Small and Medium Enterprises at the Ministry of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives (SME Division).

25. Cabinet has taken note of the reconstitution of the Board of the Mauritius Telugu Cultural Centre Trust with Mr Atmanand Mahunthy Aatma Ramanah, MSK, as Chairperson and Mr Atmaramoodoo Pentayah as Vice-Chairperson, for a period of three years.
