

HIGHLIGHTS OF CABINET MEETING – FRIDAY 20 MAY 2022

1. Cabinet has taken note that the Registration Duty (Home Ownership Scheme) Regulations 2022 would be promulgated. Under the Scheme, an eligible person buying a house, an apartment or bare land to construct his residence in the financial year 2021/2022 benefits from a refund of five percent of the cost of the property up to a maximum of Rs500,000. The Regulations would make provision for the following transactions to qualify under the Home Ownership Scheme, namely the acquisition of a residential property -

- (a) jointly by an ascendant and a descendant or the descendant's spouse; and
- (b) from a brother or sister, or from the spouse of the brother or sister.

2. Cabinet has taken note that the First Schedule of the Public Procurement Regulations 2008 would be amended to exempt the Ministry responsible for Rodrigues from the application of the Public Procurement Act for the procurement of service providers by the Rodrigues Subsidy Account for the transportation, storage and distribution of petroleum products only, namely MOGAS, Gas oil, Dual-Purpose Kerosene and Liquified Petroleum Gas of 5, 6 and 12 Kgs, for domestic use, from the Island of Mauritius to the Island of Rodrigues and back.

3. Cabinet has taken note that the Public Health (Restrictions on Tobacco Products) Regulations 2022 would be promulgated. Some salient features of the Regulations are as follows -

- (a) restriction on use, sale, importation, manufacture and distribution of tobacco products with regards to smoking restrictions in specific places and restrictions on sale within a radius of 200 metres of educational institutions or sports and leisure facilities for new tobacco vendors;
- (b) other forms of tobacco products have been included;
- (c) enforcing restrictions on advertising/promotion/sponsorship/scholarship related to tobacco products, including online advertising;
- (d) implementation of the concept of plain packaging of tobacco products in terms of labelling, package design and health warnings;

- (e) reporting requirements for importers and manufacturers in respect of emissions of tar, nicotine and carbon dioxide and imported tobacco on transit; and
- (f) registration of brands and variants of tobacco products in line with WHO Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products.

Regulations 11 and 12 of the Public Health (Restrictions on Tobacco Products) (Amendment) Regulations 2022 pertaining to plain packaging for tobacco products sold in Mauritius would be effective on or after 31 December 2022.

The implementation of the Fifth Schedule thereof regarding Reduced Ignition Propensity Cigarettes would be effective one year after the gazetting of the Regulations.

4. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement between the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change and the *Université des Mascareignes* in the context of the *Facilité 2050*. Mauritius would benefit from financial assistance from the French Government, through the *Agence Française de Développement*, under the *Facilité 2050* to support the formulation and implementation of long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies.

Under the *Facilité 2050*, long-term strategies up to the year 2050, would be developed for Mauritius in two mitigation sectors, namely energy and transport, and two adaptation sectors, namely agriculture and tourism. The Memorandum of Agreement between the Ministry and the *Université des Mascareignes* would provide for a framework to strengthen cooperation between academia and policy makers in the formulation of long term strategies for the above sectors and develop local expertise, especially in public sector institutions on climate change mitigation and adaptation.

5. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Health and Wellness has elaborated a five-year National Action Plan for Oral Health 2022-2027, with the objective of reducing the incidence and prevalence of oral diseases and, thereby, improving the overall oral health status of the population. The National Action Plan has been formulated in accordance with the recommendations contained in the Resolution on oral health approved by the World Health Organization wherein the shift from curative approach to promotion of oral health has been advocated. The main areas on which the National Action Plan focuses include, among others, -

- (a) oral health promotion for the general public;
- (b) integration of Oral Health into National Health Policy, taking into account patients affected by diseases, such as diabetes;

- (c) preventive oral health strategies; and
- (d) upgrading existing infrastructure, such as dental clinics.

The Ministry would hold a series of activities during the month of June 2022 to launch an Oral Health Month.

6. Cabinet has taken note of the ranking of Mauritius on the latest Financial Secrecy Index 2022 issued recently by the Tax Justice Network. The main objective of this Index is to pinpoint countries which have a legal and fiscal framework that enables individuals to hide their finances from the Rule of law. Financial Secrecy encourages tax abuse, money laundering activities and undermines human rights. Countries are ranked in descending order of secrecy whereby the most secretive is ranked first. Mauritius is ranked 55th out of 141 countries in 2022. In the 2020 Index, Mauritius was ranked 51st. Mauritius has improved by four places over the past two years.

7. Cabinet has taken note that the Electronic Queue Management System, “*Mo Rendez Vous*” set up by the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation in February 2021, has been selected as champion under the category “Enabling Environment” at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) of the International Telecommunication Union Prizes 2022. An award ceremony would be held on 31 May 2022 during the last week of the World Summit on the Information Society Forum 2022 at the International Telecommunication Union headquarters in Geneva.

8. Cabinet has taken note of the re-election of the Republic of Mauritius as Member to the United Nations’ 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Board.

Cabinet has agreed to a new National Programme on Sustainable Consumption and Production being developed and accordingly to the setting up of the National Coordination Committee to ensure responsible consumption and production in line with Sustainable Development Goal 12 (SDG-12). The main objective of the new programme would be to establish a comprehensive framework for an integrated approach in the mainstreaming of Sustainable Consumption and Production in key sectors for the Republic of Mauritius. It would thus support a transition to a low-carbon economy, thereby contributing in successfully attaining the Sustainable Development Goals.

9. Cabinet has taken note of the publication of a Report on Greening the SMEs: Improving Access to Green Finance in Mauritius, which has been prepared by the United Nations Environment Programme - Finance Initiative (UNEP-FI) under the umbrella organisation of the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE), in collaboration with the Ministry of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives. The Report would be launched on 25 May 2022.

The study seeks to assess the level of integration of environmental sustainability in the financing of SMEs in Mauritius. The Report examines the current state of green finance frameworks, practices and structures relevant to the financial sector and the potential to scale up green financing for the SME sector allowing increased access to green finance opportunities. The study has made several recommendations geared towards facilitating access to green finance for SMEs in Mauritius. These recommendations include -

- (a) scaling up public investments channeled towards green projects for SMEs;
- (b) provision of green finance policies and incentives;
- (c) improving SME sector awareness on commitments from the Government and commercial lenders to green projects and green financing;
- (d) enhancement of risk analysis of SMEs' green projects by financial institutions; and
- (e) expanding the range of green products/loans with favourable lending terms for SMEs.

10. Cabinet has taken note of the completion of the first phase of “*Les Assises de la Recherche et de L’Innovation*” (ARI 2022) organised by the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council. Six thematic areas were identified for discussions for ARI 2022 in Mauritius as follows –

- (a) Blue and Green Innovation;
- (b) Health and Wellness Innovation;
- (c) Financial Innovation;
- (d) Social and Grassroots Innovation;
- (e) Travel, Tourism and Entertainment Innovation; and
- (f) IT, Emerging and Enabling Industries Innovation.

The overall outcome of Phase 1 in terms of main strategic innovation orientations are, among others, –

- (a) establishment of a National Research and Innovation Steering Committee and a permanent multi-stakeholder committee for focus thematic development;
- (b) creation of a harmonised Research and Innovation legislation to pool resources across the public sector and govern research strategies;
- (c) development of a specialised scouting unit for identification, testing, acquisition, adaptation and showcasing of innovative and frontier technologies/innovations; and
- (d) establishment of a communication platform for dissemination of research and innovation happening in the country.

11. Cabinet has agreed to the irrigation dues to be charged respectively to small planters for the years 2019 to 2022 and to the corporate sector for the years 2019 to 2021 as recommended by the Irrigation Authority Board. The same rate as 2018 would be levied on small planters for the period 2019 to 2022. As regards corporate planters, the rate charged to them for irrigation dues is contingent upon the actual volume of water supplied, the actual rate of water and the irrigated area. Their irrigation dues for 2022 would be calculated at the end of the year.

12. Cabinet has agreed to the setting up of a Technical Committee to assess applications for development in and around the Buffer Zone of Le Morne Cultural Landscape. The Committee would be an Advisory Committee to the Permits and Business Monitoring Committee of the Black River District Council and would, inter alia, ensure that provisions made under the Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund Act, the Planning Policy Guidance and other legislation are complied with, when applications for development in the Buffer Zone are assessed.

13. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the 22nd Meeting of the Mauritius-Seychelles Joint Commission of the Extended Continental Shelf held recently in Seychelles. The main outcomes of the discussions held were, inter alia, as follows –

- (a) the Joint Commission decided to award the contract for Multi-Client 2D Seismic Survey in the Joint Management Area (JMA) to CGG, a company based in France;
- (b) the Joint Commission agreed that exploratory fishery of sea cucumber in the JMA would be carried out, in the first instance, in order to enable an assessment of the stock of sea cucumber; and

- (c) the Joint Commission approved the application by Monaco Expedition to conduct marine scientific research in the JMA. Scientists from both Mauritius and Seychelles would be selected to participate in the research surveys.
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14. Cabinet has taken note of the dates for the holding of the Primary School Achievement Certificate (PSAC) Assessments 2021-2022 as follows –

- (a) Grade 5 – Modular Assessment (Module 1)

| Date | Subject |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| Thursday 22 September 2022 | Science |
| | History & Geography |

- (b) Grade 6 – Modular Assessment (Module 2)

| Date | Subject |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| Monday 29 August 2022 | Science |
| Tuesday 30 August 2022 | History & Geography |

- (c) End of Year Grade 6 Assessment (Core Subject)

| Date | Subject |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Tuesday 18 October 2022 | French |
| Wednesday 19 October 2022 | English |
| Thursday 20 October 2022 | Asian Languages/Arabic/Kreol Morisien |
| Friday 21 October 2022 | Mathematics |

Private candidates would sit for the PSAC Assessment papers in Science and History & Geography as follows –

| Date | Subject |
|--------------------------|---|
| Tuesday 18 October 2022 | Science (Private Candidates) |
| Thursday 20 October 2022 | History & Geography (Private Candidates) |

PSAC Grade 6 Assessment results are expected to be announced around 09 December 2022.

15. Cabinet has taken note of the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic prevailing across the world. Some 525.1 million cases have been reported globally, of which 494.9 million persons have been successfully treated.

With regard to Mauritius, as at 18 May 2022, there were 192 active cases of COVID-19, out of which nine were admitted at the New ENT Hospital. Over the period 12 to 18 May 2022, no death was 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. The administration of vaccine to children aged between 5 to 11 years would start on Monday 23 May 2022.

16. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent mission of the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development to Washington D.C. to participate in the IMF/World Bank Group Spring Meetings. The Minister participated in various meetings and seminars organised by the IMF and the World Bank Group including the IMF African Consultative Group meeting of the African Caucus. The main theme of the African Caucus was “Unlocking Financing for the recovery and mitigating debt and climate vulnerabilities”.

He also attended, together with 22 other Ministers of Finance, the World Bank Africa Group II Constituency Meeting where discussions focused on development challenges and financing instruments to support member countries. Meetings were also held with the IMF and World Bank executives to discuss the Mauritian economy and progress made in respect of implementation of policy recommendations highlighted in the last Article IV report. The Minister commended the IMF for the setting up of the Resilience and Sustainability Trust, which was announced at the EU-AU Summit Round Table on Financing for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth in Africa and expressed interest to benefit from this Trust to build resilience to disasters and transition towards a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy.

The Minister also had meetings with, inter alia, –

- (a) Mr Aivo Andrianarivelo, IMF Executive Director;
- (b) Mr Hafez Ghanem, World Bank Vice President;
- (c) Mrs Anne Van Praagh, Managing Director of Moody's Sovereign Risk Group and Mrs Marie Diron, Head of Sovereign Risk Group of Moody's for Asia Pacific, Middle East and Africa; and
- (d) Ms Florizelle Liser, President and CEO of Corporate Council of Africa.

17. Cabinet has taken note of the reconstitution of the Board of the Open University of Mauritius with Dr Oomandra Nath Varma, OSK, as Chairperson.
