

HIGHLIGHTS OF CABINET MEETING – FRIDAY 16 MAY 2025

1. Cabinet has agreed to the introduction of the Revenue Tribunal Bill into the National Assembly. The object of the Bill would be to provide for the establishment of the Revenue Tribunal which would take over the functions and powers of the Assessment Review Committee under the Mauritius Revenue Authority Act.

Accordingly, any person aggrieved by a revenue determination of the Director-General of the Mauritius Revenue Authority or of the Registrar-General would now appeal to the Revenue Tribunal instead of the Assessment Review Committee. The Revenue Tribunal would also conduct its proceedings in a more simplified manner and would, inter alia, have the power to -

- (a) make such order requiring the attendance of a person or the production of any record, document or exhibit as it thinks necessary or expedient for the disposal of an appeal; and
- (b) take evidence on oath and, for that purpose, administer an oath.

The Bill would impose a deadline of 120 days on the Revenue Tribunal to fix an appeal for preliminary hearing after the date the appeal was lodged and, thereafter, the Revenue Tribunal would have to give its determination not later than 90 days after the close of the hearing of the appeal.

In addition, a person aggrieved by the final decision of the Revenue Tribunal would now be eligible to appeal to the Supreme Court against that decision, including any evidence assessed by the Revenue Tribunal, unlike an appeal from the decision of the Assessment Review Committee to the Supreme Court which was only limited to such decision as being erroneous in law.

2. Cabinet has agreed to the introduction of the Legal Aid and Legal Assistance Bill into the National Assembly. The object of the Bill would be to repeal the existing Legal Aid and Legal Assistance Act and re-enact a modern legislation with a view to making it more accessible for persons with low income and who could not afford legal representation to have access to justice in civil and criminal proceedings before any Court. The Bill would, inter alia –

- (a) provide for an increase in the ceiling of the monthly earnings and the assets, of a person seeking to obtain legal aid or legal assistance;
- (b) widen the offences for which legal aid and legal assistance might be obtained; and
- (c) impose an obligation on –
 - (i) the Court to inform a person, in a language that he was conversant with, of the possibility to obtain legal aid; and

- (ii) a police officer who would intend to record the statement of a person under warning to inform the person, in case the person was not represented by a barrister, that he might make an application for legal assistance for legal advice and counselling during the recording of the statement.

3. Cabinet has agreed to drafting instructions being conveyed to the Attorney-General's Office for the finalisation of the Organic Agriculture Bill. The draft Bill would aim at promoting the production of quality organic products, set the minimum requirements for and regulate the production, handling, processing and labelling of organic products. The key provisions of the Bill would include –

- (a) the establishment of a National Organic Office within the Ministry of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries to, inter alia, register accredited certification bodies, assist in the development of a domestic and export market for organic products, and diminish the reliance of organic producers on chemical fertilisers, pesticides and other inputs;
- (b) the constitution of a National Organic Advisory Committee to advise on policy formulation regarding organic farming, the protection and promotion of organic products, and trade, and the minimum requirements for the production, handling, processing and labelling of organic products amongst others;
- (c) the principles of organic production, farming, processing, and storage to be complied with by operators engaged in organic crop and livestock production, organic beekeeping as well as in organic food and feed processing;
- (d) the modalities for the registration and accreditation of 'certification service providers', that is, those bodies which would be responsible for verifying that organic products were produced, processed, prepared and handled in accordance with provisions of the Bill;
- (e) prohibitions on the use of Genetically Modified Products, ionising radiation and sewage sludge in organic production, and the parameters for the storage, transportation, import and export of organic products;
- (f) precautionary measures for maintaining product integrity during storage, transportation, import and export. The conditions for the importation, labelling and marketing of organic products would also be established;
- (g) enforcement mechanisms in terms of periodical inspections to be carried out by the National Organic Office; powers of entry and search; service of enforcement notices and issue of warrants; removal and storage of seized products and their disposal after proceedings; and fines for various offences; and
- (h) time-limited exemptions and temporary variations.

4. Cabinet has agreed to the promulgation of the Forests and Reserves (Protection of Protected Plants) (Amendment) Regulations 2025 which would provide for the introduction of a ban on the export of sandalwood for a period of 10 years.

With a view to addressing the issue of theft and overexploitation of sandalwood, the cutting, felling and exploitation of sandalwood would not be authorised in order to allow the species to regenerate and its export would also be banned for a period of 10 years.

5. Cabinet has taken note that the Consumer Protection (Use of Liquefied Petroleum Gas in Small Cylinders) (Amendment) Regulations 2025 would be promulgated to provide for the introduction of stricter penalties to discourage the use of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) for carrying out commercial activities or for decanting purposes in vehicles as these cylinders were meant for domestic purpose only.

The Regulations would provide for a differentiated and progressive penalty structure, distinguishing between the unauthorised use of domestic LPG for non-domestic purposes and the more serious offence of illegal decanting. The following penalties would apply for offences related to illegal decanting -

- (a) first conviction - a minimum fine of Rs25,000;
- (b) second conviction - a fine of not less than Rs50,000;and
- (c) subsequent convictions - a fine of not less than Rs75,000 and imprisonment for up to three years.

Furthermore, the Court might order the forfeiture of equipment, gas cylinders, or any other item used in the commission of the offence. In addition, officers of the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection would step up their routine inspections at retail outlets, restaurants, hotels, and petrol stations to detect and deter infractions and also to raise awareness among operators on the legal consequences and safety aspects of illegal decanting.

6. Cabinet has agreed to Mauritius joining the Sub-Commission of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission for the Central Indian Ocean (IOCINDIO) as a Member State. The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), a body of UNESCO, promotes international cooperation in marine sciences to enhance the management of oceans, coasts and marine resources. The objectives of IOCINDIO are to –

- (a) promote international cooperation and coordinate activities agreed by the governing bodies of IOC-UNESCO;
- (b) make recommendations to IOC-UNESCO on issues and areas of its competency;
- (c) prepare a plan for implementation of the agreed activities;
- (d) offer a platform for identifying regional issues and solutions based on international cooperation;
- (e) cooperate with relevant organisations, agencies, and institutions; and
- (f) cooperate with other subsidiary bodies and programmes of IOC-UNESCO on matters of common interest.

7. Cabinet has taken note of activities that would be undertaken by the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change at the level of Stage 1 of the Kigali Implementation Plan for the period 2025 to 2029.

Mauritius became Party to the Montreal Protocol in 1992 and since then had been executing various measures, including the implementation of the Chlorofluorocarbons Phase out Management Plan and Hydrochlorofluorocarbons Phase out Management Plan, with the ultimate objective of gradually phasing out substances that harm the ozone layer known as Ozone Depleting Substances.

The Kigali Amendment under the Montreal Protocol was adopted by the international community to phase down Hydrochlorofluorocarbons consumption by 80% by 01 January 2045 in different stages. Mauritius ratified the Kigali Amendment in October 2019. The Kigali Implementation Plan was prepared with the technical assistance from the implementing agency *Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* following which Stage 1 of the Kigali Implementation Plan for the period 2025 to 2029 was approved by the Multilateral Fund with the objective of reducing the Hydrochlorofluorocarbons consumption of Mauritius by 10% of the country's baseline by 2029.

8. Cabinet has taken note of the measures that would be implemented by the Ministry of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries to safeguard existing coral reefs with a view to restoring and rehabilitating the coral reefs around the island due to severe degradation and mass bleaching events. A public communiqué would be issued to inform all stakeholders of the measures.

9. Cabinet has taken note of the activities being organised in the context of International Day for Biological Diversity 2025 on the theme "Harmony with Nature and Sustainable Development."

The National Parks and Conservation Service would raise public awareness on the protection of our endemic bird, the Pink Pigeon and promote terrestrial biodiversity conservation through an awareness event at the Black River Georges National Park at Petrin on 22 May 2025. The event would comprise, inter alia, the inauguration of a board walk at Plaine Raoul, Petrin, a live exhibition of some endemic animals; distribution of magnetic bus stickers and awareness materials. In addition, an exhibition on biodiversity would be held with the participation of various stakeholders.

A road show would also be organised on two consecutive Sundays at Petrin and Grand Bassin parking areas to raise awareness on the need to protect the Pink Pigeons through the display of awareness materials on their rising mortality rates in those areas due to primarily the birds being attracted by food wastes and hit by passing vehicles.

10. Cabinet has agreed to the organisation of *Salon des PMEs* by SME Mauritius Ltd, which would offer unique business development opportunities to entrepreneurs. It would aim at improving the visibility of SMEs by providing them with a platform and the opportunity to display a range of local products, create awareness and showcase their *savoir-faire*. The first

Salon des PMEs for 2025 would be held from 23 to 25 May 2025 at Place des Taxis, Central Flacq.

11. Cabinet has taken note of the programme of activities for the celebration of the Dragon Boat Festival 2025, which is celebrated on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month in the Chinese calendar. On that occasion, boats decorated with dragon heads participate in a race. The Ministry of Arts and Culture would organise the following activities on Sunday 25 May 2025 at Le Caudan Waterfront in collaboration with the Dragon and Lion Dance Federation, Le Caudan Waterfront Ltd and the China Cultural Centre –

- (a) a dragon boat race competition involving nine teams;
- (b) a traditional *defilé* of lions and dragons from the Port Louis Waterfront to the Caudan Waterfront;
- (c) a cultural programme by local artists; and
- (d) artistic performances by the Nair Band, a cultural troupe from Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.

12. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of a Project Cooperation Agreement between the Ministry of Industry, SME and Cooperatives and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Office in Kenya for the implementation of the Accelerating the Transition to a Net-Zero Nature-Positive Economy in Mauritius Project, from May 2025 to April 2029.

The project would aim at accelerating the implementation of Net-Zero Nature-Positive pathways at the national level and through investments in nature-positive and low-emission solutions in the Mauritian manufacturing sector. The UNEP Office in Kenya through the Global Environment Facility Implementing Agency would provide technical support for the implementation process in Mauritius. The Project would comprise three main components, namely –

- (a) Component 1 relating to country-wide actions which involve the creation of enabling conditions to support the integration of Net-Zero Nature-Positive concepts in policy planning at national level;
- (b) Component 2 relating to the decarbonisation of the manufacturing sector through the setting up of a Green Manufacturing Scheme which would provide for a de-risking mechanism to incentivise enterprises to conduct energy and material audits as well as invest in Net-Zero Nature-Positive initiatives; and
- (c) Component 3 relating to the Monitoring and Evaluation, and Knowledge Management.

13. Cabinet has taken note of the status of the e-Health project which was implemented by the Ministry of Health and Wellness in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme with a view to having a paperless, modern and integrated health care information management system which would improve the quality of health services in all the public health care facilities. The aim of the project was to put in place a "One Patient One Record" system across all Hospitals, Mediclinics, Area Health Centres and Community Health Centres. The first phase of the project would be launched at the Flacq Regional Hospital by July 2025. The project would be progressively rolled out to the other Regional Hospitals.

Cabinet further noted the setting up of a Digital Health Agency with the overall responsibility, management and dedicated oversight for the successful implementation and sustainability of the e-Health Project and other digital initiatives within the Ministry of Health and Wellness. The Board of the Digital Health Agency would be constituted under the chair of Mr S. Purmessur, Acting Senior Chief Executive of the Ministry of Health and Wellness.

14. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries and the Food and Agriculture Organisation for a joint exploratory expedition on fisheries resources and oceanographic studies within Mauritius waters.

The objectives of the research expedition would be to enable the exploration of ecologically rich marine biodiversity and potential exploitable fisheries resources in the territorial waters as well as the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of Mauritius. The expedition would, therefore, allow an in-depth study of the marine biodiversity as well as the collection of biological data and assessment of the population density, abundance and distribution of potential deep-sea fisheries resources. Fishery mapping and oceanographic study of the understudied and unexplored regions of the EEZ of the Republic of Mauritius would, furthermore, assist scientists and policy makers to make science-driven decisions with respect to marine conservation and environmental protection on unexplored areas of the ocean.

The research expedition would include participants from the Albion Fisheries Research Centre, the Mauritius Oceanography Institute, the Ministry of Housing and Lands, the Department for Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones Administration and Exploration and the University of Mauritius.

15. Cabinet has agreed to the Ministry of Health and Wellness signing a Clinical Training Framework Agreement with the JSS Academy of Higher Education and Research (Mauritius) Ltd. The aim of the Clinical Training Framework Agreement would be to, inter alia –

- (a) establish a structured collaboration to facilitate the clinical training of medical students from the JSS Academy at SSRN Hospital, specialised hospitals, and Primary Health Care Centres;
- (b) ensure the conduct of clinical training under appropriate supervision, in line with the guidelines of the Ministry of Health and Wellness and the Higher Education Commission; and

- (c) set out the responsibilities of the Ministry of Health and Wellness, the JSS Academy and the students as well as terms and conditions for the conduct of the training.

16. Cabinet has agreed to the University of Mauritius signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Coventry University, United Kingdom. The purpose of the Memorandum of Understanding would be to –

- (a) discuss the possibility of running joint undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes;
- (b) discuss and develop mechanisms for identifying potential areas of joint research, innovation and enterprise projects;
- (c) discuss and develop mechanisms for identifying potential joint funding opportunities;
- (d) discuss and identify potential opportunities for staff and student mobility between both parties including but not limited to exchange programmes; and
- (e) discuss and identify potential opportunities for the Coventry University students at the University of Mauritius including but not limited to internships, placements, work experience, field trips, guest lectures and mentorships.

17. Cabinet has agreed to the Higher Education Commission signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education of the United Kingdom. The Memorandum of Understanding would aim at enabling the two regulatory bodies to enhance the quality assurance systems in their respective jurisdictions, while supporting the recognition of review processes and eliminating the need for double accreditation for UK-affiliated institutions in Mauritius, hence promoting efficiency.

The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding would enable both entities to pursue the following main activities of mutual interest –

- (a) exchange of information, news, updates and relevant manuals, with the purpose of enabling staff of the two institutions to share knowledge and support each other in the fields of quality assurance in higher education, quality improvement, and quality culture;
- (b) offer of professional advice with the objective of enabling the two entities to maintain high-quality standards in the higher education sector;
- (c) staff development, through the organisation of training activities and learning initiatives, and participation of technical staff in review processes;
- (d) use of the partnering institution's list of reviewers and specialists, which would strengthen the international dimension of institutional reviews, accreditations and reviews of cross border education;

- (e) mutual recognition of the partnering institution's standards, regulations and procedures, which would facilitate cooperation and promote smoother interactions; and
- (f) collaborate on mutually-agreed projects and activities, including the quality enhancement of transnational education, the identification of fraudulent institutions, awarding bodies or accrediting agencies in UK and in Mauritius, while also supporting student mobility and undertaking research.

18. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent participation of the Junior Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change in the High-Level Segment of the Meetings of the Conferences of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions (BRS COP) held in Geneva, Switzerland.

The objective of the high-level segment was to provide an interactive, dynamic and inclusive platform for Ministers and Deputy Ministers to exchange experiences, as well as to provide political leadership for renewed commitment to the implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, with a view to raising awareness on how they address the triple planetary crises of pollution, biodiversity loss and climate change.

The Junior Minister submitted a written statement on the status of implementation of the three Conventions in Mauritius and the challenges being faced. The Junior Minister took part in discussions on the topic of pollution in the context of the BRS Convention. Key themes included global solidarity, fair trade, capacity building, technology transfer, and climate-aligned financial support for developing countries.

The Junior Minister called for climate equity and adherence to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, as per the Rio Declaration and Kyoto Protocol. She also stressed the need for global cooperation in implementing the BRS Conventions and highlighted the importance of supporting Small Island Developing States. The Loss and Damage Fund was cited as a vital mechanism for climate-vulnerable nations.

The Junior Minister also attended an informal Ministerial breakfast meeting on the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on plastic pollution hosted by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, as well as side meetings with BRS Conventions Executive Secretary.

19. Cabinet has agreed to the appointment of Directors on the Board of the National Empowerment Foundation following an Expression of Interest exercise launched in January 2025. Mr Hootesh Ramburn would be nominated as part-time Chairperson of the Board and Mr Axcel Chenney would be appointed as Chief Executive Officer of the National Empowerment Foundation.

20. Cabinet has taken note of the reconstitution of the –

- (a) Price Observatory Committee, with Mr Tejanand Dewoo as part-time Chairperson;
- (b) National Youth Environment Council, with Mr Hishaam Ali Ibrahim as part-time Chairperson; and
- (c) National Children's Council Board, with Mr Gianto Antonio Antonio, as part-time Chairperson.
