

**CABINET DECISIONS – 22 JANUARY 2016**

1. Cabinet has taken note that the Freedom of Information Bill, as announced in the Government Programme 2015-2019, is being prepared. The main objective of the Bill will be to promote transparency and accountability in public administration.

\*\*\*

2. Cabinet has agreed to the introduction of the SME Development Scheme for the benefit of small and medium enterprises, including small planters and breeders, in line with Government objective to make SMEs the backbone of the economy. Under the Scheme, eligible SMEs would be granted a SME Development Certificate. Holders of such Certificate would be eligible to incentives and facilities, namely –

- (a) Income Tax holiday for the first 8 years and other tax concessions;
- (b) a Special Grant for training, consultancy, financial management, feasibility study and technical assistance. The grant will be 10% of the project value up to a maximum of Rs150,000; and
- (c) business support solutions from MyBiz and fast-track mechanism for obtaining permits and licences.

Cabinet has also taken note that MauBank Ltd proposes to introduce a special financing scheme for enterprises - the MauBank SME Financing Scheme, and would provide a grant of up to Rs10,000 for the conduct of a feasibility study of a project proposal by an SME in the ICT, manufacturing, aqua-culture, renewable energy and handicraft sectors.

\*\*\*

3. Cabinet has agreed to a new scheme that will allow companies operating in the ICT/BPO Sector to create additional job opportunities on the basis of a 1:1 formula, i.e., one foreign employee against one Mauritian employee, for all new applications. Foreign expertise would be allowed on the condition that for each foreign worker employed, an equivalent job is created for a Mauritian on a pairing concept to allow for the transfer of knowledge and technology. The Employment (Non-Citizens) (Restriction) Exemptions Regulations 1970 would be amended to allow expatriates coming to work in companies in the ICT/BPO Sector to be granted a Business Visa, pending the ICT/BPO companies applying for work permit, so that they could start work immediately on arrival.

\*\*\*

4. Cabinet has taken note of developments in the implementation of the Heritage City Project at Minissy, in the region of Ebène, with the assistance of Saudi Arabia. The total project cost is estimated at USD 820 million. The project would comprise an administrative city, residential units, mixed-use commercial complex, a four star business hotel, and a Heritage Square. A delegation comprising the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands; the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms, the Financial Secretary, and Financial Consultants had discussions with HE Ahmed Al Khateeb, Special Envoy of the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, and made a presentation on the feasibility and financial modelling of the Project. It is expected that the Project would generate an Internal Rate of Return between 14% and 16% and a Return on Equity of 32%.

\*\*\*

5. Cabinet has taken note of developments in the setting up of a new Mauritius International Stock Exchange, in collaboration with Nasdaq Dubai. Following the meeting that the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms had with the CEO of Nasdaq Dubai, it has been agreed that –

- (a) Nasdaq Dubai would participate in equity of the Stock Exchange of Mauritius;
- (b) the Stock Exchange of Mauritius would be rebranded as Mauritius International Stock Exchange;
- (c) Nasdaq Dubai would introduce Sukuk (Islamic Bonds) products trading to the new Mauritius International Stock Exchange; and
- (d) the first derivative product offering will be currency derivatives for African currencies being hedged and settled in USD.

\*\*\*

6. Cabinet has taken note of developments in the setting up of a Mauritius Commodities Exchange, with the assistance of the Dubai Multi Commodities Centre (DMCC). Following meetings that the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms had with the Executive Chairperson and CEO of DMCC, the latter has agreed to assist in the setting up of the Spot Trading Market for Gold, Diamond and other precious metals in Mauritius, and provide necessary guidance in developing rules/regulations and other soft infrastructure to support the Trading Market. The objective in setting up the Market is to create a new segment in precious metals and stones trading, processing and storage by leveraging the current ecosystem as an internationally recognized financial centre of substance. The Spot Trading platform would be based in the new business park in Rose Belle.

\*\*\*

7. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation would extend the validity period of the old National Identity Card from 31 January to 31 March 2016 to enable citizens with the old Identity cards and who have not yet registered for their new Identity Card to complete the necessary procedures.

\*\*\*

8. Cabinet has agreed to the MBC TV licence fees in respect of households consuming not more than 33 kilowatt hours of electricity monthly being waived.

Cabinet has also agreed to the implementation of measures to redress the precarious financial situation of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation as recommended by the Public Sector Efficiency Bureau.

\*\*\*

9. Cabinet has taken note that the Seafarers' Welfare Fund has launched new welfare schemes for seafarers that would be effective as from 1 February 2016. Under the schemes, the quantum of grants payable to seafarers, such as educational and death grants, and medical, eye and dental treatment, has been raised; the Rodriguan seafarers have been brought within the ambit of the Fund, and recreational and leisure policy for foreign seafarers has been worked out.

10. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Environment, Sustainable Development, and Disaster and Beach Management would issue a Prohibition Notice against Original Confection Ltd located at Baie du Tombeau to prohibit the company from using heavy fuel oil in the boiler, and operating noise-generating equipment outside a sound-proof enclosure.

\*\*\*

11. Cabinet has taken note of activities that would be organised on the occasion of the celebration of Spring Festival at national level, namely -

- (a) a Gala Show by the Shanxi Huajin Dance Troupe from China on 08 February 2016; and
- (b) a cultural programme, with the participation of the Shanxi Huajin Dance Troupe and local artists at the Port Louis Waterfront. The programme would be preceded by a défilé comprising Chinese Dragon and Lion Dance groups, martial arts demonstration and other artistic groups.

Cabinet has also taken note that a cultural show would be organised on 20 February 2016 to mark the Lantern Festival.

\*\*\*

12. Cabinet has decided not to proceed with the Electronic Bracelet Monitoring System in view of the high cost involved.

\*\*\*

13. Cabinet has agreed to the Fisheries and Marine Resources (Import of Fish and Fish Products) Regulations 2012 being amended to, *inter alia*, –

- (a) align the regulations to the international standards and codes of practice recommended by the Codex Alimentarius;
- (b) provide a legal framework to enable the competent authority to certify imported fish and fish products intended for re-export to EU countries; and
- (c) incorporate the Single Window TradeNet System which is used, among others, for online application for registration, issue of registration certificate, application for authorization to import, and electronic payment of the annual import fee.

\*\*\*

14. Cabinet has agreed to the contribution payable by employers and employees of tourism enterprises to the Tourism Employees Welfare Fund (TEWF) being increased. The last increase in the rate of contribution dates back to 2008. The TEWF operates various schemes and projects to assist employees of tourism enterprises and their families in improving their quality of life. The increase would, *inter alia*, enable the Fund to extend the scope of its welfare activities.

\*\*\*

15. Cabinet has taken note that the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association would hold a Post-Election Seminar in Mauritius in February 2016. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association offers Post-Election Seminars to its Member Branches with a view to building an informed parliamentary community by connecting, developing and supporting parliamentarians and their staff across the Commonwealth to identify benchmarks of good governance. The Seminar would also provide participants with a better understanding of the parliamentary system and democratic process.

\*\*\*

16. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent mission of the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications to France and the UK. The objectives of the mission were to –

- (a) engage consultations with key trade partners to gauge the impact of the terrorist attacks in Paris on long haul travel trends;
- (b) reassure the travel trade of the high level of safety and security prevalent in Mauritius and secure their commitment to increase sales to the destination; and
- (c) enlist the collaboration of all big players in the elaboration of a programme for the upcoming low season.

\*\*\*

17. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of an Agreement on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons with the Government of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. The main objective of the Agreement is to facilitate the social rehabilitation of sentenced persons within their own society.

\*\*\*

18. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of the Declaration on Youth Development and Empowerment in SADC. The aim of the Declaration is to draw the attention and secure the commitment of SADC Heads of State and Government on the urgency of ensuring a holistic approach to Youth Development and Empowerment in the context of regional cooperation, integration, development and peace and security in the region.

\*\*\*

19. Cabinet has taken note of the appointment of Dr Yousouf Ismaël as General Manager of the Central Water Authority. Dr Ismaël holds a Master in Development Economics and Planning, and a PhD in Economics. He has been a Member of the Board of the Central Water Authority since 2012.

\*\*\*\*\*