

CABINET DECISIONS – 15 APRIL 2016

1. Cabinet has taken note that the Employees Welfare Fund would put up a scheme to provide a loan to Mauricians who have secured employment on a cruise vessel to enable them to pay their air tickets to join the vessel to assume duty.

2. Cabinet has agreed to the Prime Minister's Office inviting an Expression of Interest from potential companies which are willing to be considered for sponsorship by the Government of the Republic of Mauritius, for the exploration of minerals in international seabed areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction. Such activities can only be carried out under a contract issued by the International Seabed Authority (ISA). These mineral resources are classified in three main categories, namely polymetallic nodules, polymetallic sulphides and ferromanganese crusts. A State Party, which sponsors a natural or juridical person to make an application to the ISA for the exploration of minerals in areas beyond national jurisdiction, benefits, *inter alia*, from an equitable share of royalties on commencement of mining activities, employment creation and access to specialised training.

3. Cabinet has agreed to Government acceding to a request of a foreign national, who is undergoing sentence in our prisons for drug related offences, for his/her transfer to his/her native country only after he/she has served two-thirds of his/her sentence in Mauritius.

4. Cabinet has agreed to the introduction of a Bio-Farming Promotion Scheme to encourage local farmers to produce local food according to bio-norms in line with Government policy to gradually shift from conventional agricultural practices based on heavy utilization of chemical inputs in food crop production systems. Applicants, satisfying the established criteria under the Scheme, would be issued with Bio-Farming Development Certificates and benefit from –

- (a) Income Tax Holiday for the first eight years of operation of the approved bio-farming project;
- (b) Value-Added Tax Exemption on production equipment and other inputs acquired for the implementation of the project;
- (c) loan facilities at an annual interest rate of Key Repo less 1% over a period of 10 years for maximum of 90% project financing under the MauBank SME Financing Scheme; and
- (d) fast track business support solutions from the Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (FAREI) and MyBiz.

5. Cabinet has taken note of measures taken to revamp the Cooperative Sector, namely –

- (a) the Cooperatives Act 2005 is being reviewed to respond to the new challenges and the evolving needs of cooperators;
- (b) the Office of the Public Sector Governance is carrying out an exercise for the restructuring of the Cooperatives Division of the Ministry of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives for improved service delivery;
- (c) the development of cooperatives in emerging sectors, such as bio-farming, aquaculture and green economy, is being promoted;
- (d) cooperators in the sugar sector are being sensitized on the fairtrade concept and the importance of grouping together to benefit from assistance from Fairtrade Certification;
- (e) the cooperative dairy sector is being reviewed with the assistance of the Afro-Asian Rural Development Organization; and
- (f) the Mauritius Excellence Awards for Cooperatives is being organised annually to enhance visibility of cooperative societies, and provide national recognition for best practices in the sector.

6. Cabinet has taken note that Mauritius would sign and ratify the Paris Agreement adopted at the 21st Meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP 21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The Paris Agreement aims at strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty based on the principle of equity, common but differentiated responsibilities, and respective capabilities. It has also set a long term temperature goal to hold the global average temperature increase well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, and pursue efforts to limit the temperature rise to 1.5°C. The main provisions of the Agreement relate, *inter alia*, to mitigation, adaptation, finance and transparency of actions.

7. Cabinet has taken note that, according to the last monthly report published by the Statistics Unit of the Ministry of Tourism and External Communications, 108,704 tourists visited Mauritius in March 2016 as compared to 96,595 in March 2015, i.e., an increase of 12.5%. For the first quarter of 2016, tourist arrivals reached 327,836 as compared to 291,329 during the same period, in 2015. Growth has been registered in arrivals from Germany (+14.6%), UK (+15.7%), India (+4.8%), South Africa (+35.8%), Sweden (+124%), Switzerland (+51.5%) and Czech Republic (+15.6%). Tourist arrivals from the Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland) and Eastern Europe (Ukraine, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Roumania and Hungary) for the month of March 2016 registered a sharp increase of 72.2%.

8. Cabinet has taken note that the situation of some 322 squatters, who were occupying State lands in the region of Port Louis, would be regularised either *in situ* or through relocation at Batterie Cassée, Roche Bois, Monseigneur Leen, and Pointe aux Sables, in line with Government policy of '*un toit pour tout un chacun*'.

9. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Health and Quality of Life would make the Dental Council (Board of Examination) Regulations to set up a Board of Examination under section 24 of the Dental Council Act. The Board of Examination would be responsible to conduct examinations for Dental Surgeons. The Board would be chaired by Mr Ambikadutt Rajkoomar.

10. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation would upgrade the Public Internet Access Points (PIAPs) in post offices under the Community Empowerment Programme. The Programme is a citizen outreach initiative which seeks to empower communities to use ICTs for development, and democratize access to and stimulate the development of local content and creativity on the Internet. The Public Internet Access Points service is free for senior citizens, unemployed, people with disabilities, widows and orphans. The service contributes to bridging the digital divide within the country and democratising access to ICTs.

11. Cabinet has taken note that the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities would make the Radiation Protection (Safe Transport of Radioactive Material) Regulations with a view to complying with the Regulations for the Safe Transport of Radioactive Material 2012 of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The Regulations of the IAEA establish the requirements for the transport of radioactive material that must be satisfied to ensure safety of persons, property and the environment, and covers all modes of transport, including transport that is incidental to the use of the radioactive material. The Regulations would become effective as from 1 May 2016.

12. Cabinet has agreed to Mauritius submitting its candidature for election as Member of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The Committee, *inter alia*, promotes and monitors the objectives of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, provides guidance on best practices, and makes recommendations on measures for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage.

13. Cabinet has taken note of the activities that would be organised in the context of the World Immunisation Week. The World Health Organisation has declared the last week in April, i.e., from 25 to 29 April, as the World Immunisation Week in order to promote the importance of vaccination and provide an opportunity to countries to strengthen immunisation services and systems. The theme of the Immunisation Week is “**Close the Immunisation Gap – Immunisation for all throughout life**”. The WHO Africa Regional Office is, simultaneously, observing the Africa Vaccination week under the theme “**Close the Immunisation Gap. Stay polio free!**”. The activities that would be organised include, –

- (a) launching of the polio switch as recommended by WHO;
- (b) distribution of a pamphlet “*Guide sur la Vaccination*”; and
- (c) sensitisation campaigns on the importance and benefits of vaccination.

14. Cabinet has taken note that, on the occasion of the World Day for Safety and Health at Work, observed on 28 April, the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms would organize the following activities for the benefit of public officers –

- (a) a Workshop on the theme selected by the ILO for 2016 “**Workplace Stress - A Collective Challenge**”. The workshop would bring together the key stakeholders of the Civil Service to share ideas and experiences in better managing work-related stress in different work situations.
- (b) An Award of Certificate ceremony, in collaboration with the Mauritius Police Force, for 219 officers of the Special Mobile Force who have completed the course “*Systematic Implementation of the Occupational Safety and Health Management System*”.
- (c) A sensitization campaign on the theme “**Workplace Stress - A Collective Challenge**”.

15. Cabinet has taken note of the activities that would be organised by the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training to mark the International Labour Day 2016, observed on 1 May, namely –

- (a) a wreath laying ceremony at the stela of Anjalay Coopen in Cottage;
- (b) distribution of posters based on the theme “**Workplace Stress - A Collective Challenge**”;
- (c) Ministries and Departments, as well as the private sector enterprises, would be encouraged to give due recognition to their retired staff for long and dedicated service; and
- (d) a recreational programme by the Manufacturing Sector Workers Welfare Fund for its members.

Arrangements have been made for workers and their families to benefit from concessionary rates at leisure parks, cinemas, hotels and restaurants, and shopping malls.

16. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent mission of the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security to Côte d’Ivoire where he participated in the 29th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Africa. The theme of the Conference was “*Transforming African Agri-Food systems for inclusive growth and shared prosperity*”. The Conference addressed, *inter alia*, the following issues –

- (a) Public Private Partnership for Inclusive Agricultural Growth;
- (b) Trends and Issues in Food and Agriculture for Regional and National Action in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals;
- (c) Outcome of the Committee on World Food Security and follow-up actions at regional and country levels;
- (d) Results and Priorities for FAO in the Africa Region; and
- (e) Prioritisation of Needs of Countries.

17. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent mission of the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection to Reunion Island at the head of a delegation in the context of a ‘*Rencontre Business Maurice-Réunion*’ organized by Enterprise Mauritius. The event was attended by some 90 business operators from both countries. The main objective of the meeting was to offer opportunities to Mauritian business operators to further boost export to Reunion Island. Following the event, two companies in the Textile and Clothing Sector have secured confirmed orders. The Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection also had working sessions with Mrs Faouzia Aboubacar Ben-Vitry, *Elue du Conseil Régional* and Mr Loic Armand, Deputy Prefect and General Secretary for Regional Development Reunion Island, on areas of collaboration in the field of trade.
