

CABINET DECISIONS – 28 AUGUST 2020

1. Cabinet has taken note of developments in respect of the MV Wakashio oil spill, namely –

- (a) the planned sinking of the forward section of the wreck has been completed on 24 August 2020 at a depth of 3100 metres. The rear section of the vessel was aground on the reef at Pointe D'Esny and some 30 cubic metres of oil in the engine room had been pumped out by the SMIT Salvage team. Arrangements are being made for the removal of the rear section of the vessel;
- (b) the deployed booms, including those at Ile aux Aigrettes and Blue Bay Marine Park were being removed taking precautionary measures. However, the booms deployed in front of the wreck of MV Wakashio would be maintained;
- (c) the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change was working with all stakeholders and experts to come up with an integrated environmental monitoring strategy for the immediate, short, medium and long terms, taking into consideration international best practices;
- (d) as at 28 August 2020, around 12 experts from Japan, UK, UN and the International Organisation for Migration were in Mauritius and were providing assistance in different areas of expertise. Some 10 experts were assisting remotely. Local experts from the University of Mauritius have also been participating in the Strategic and Coordination, Social and Environmental Impact Assessment as well as in the joint monitoring programme;
- (e) the air quality monitoring by the National Environment Laboratory was ongoing to assess the possible presence of Volatile Organic Compounds at various locations;
- (f) coastal water quality monitoring was being carried out on a daily basis at 27 sites;
- (g) as regards the removal and disposal of wastes, some 1236 metric tons of liquid wastes Heavy Fuel Oil had been collected and had been sent to Ecofuel and Virgin Oil. Some 815 metric tons of solid waste and contaminated debris had been collected and transferred to the Hazardous Waste Interim Storage Facility at La Chaumière for interim storage and subsequent exportation; and
- (h) a Special Desk has been set up in four CAB Offices (Bel Air Rivière Sèche, Mahebourg, Plaine Magnien and Bois des Amourettes) to receive complaints/suggestions from the inhabitants and other stakeholders.

2. Cabinet has taken note that the Deputy Director of Shipping at the Shipping Division of the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping has submitted his Report on the Preliminary Inquiry on the grounding of MV Wakashio. The Preliminary Inquiry Report had also made a series of recommendations which the Ministry would examine in consultation with relevant stakeholders for implementation.

Cabinet has also taken note that a Court of Investigation would be appointed under the Merchant Shipping Act which would consist of a Chairperson who holds or has held judicial office and two other persons with skills and knowledge in maritime matters.

3. Cabinet has taken note that a Solidarity Grant would be paid to fishers, fishmongers and Pleasure Craft Licensees/Operators/Workers starting as from the month of August 2020. This grant would compensate for the stoppage of sea activities in the affected regions as a result of the oil spill. The monthly payment for the solidarity grant is Rs10,200 and this amount is over and above the following –

- (a) payment of daily rate of Rs800 for cleaning of beaches and lagoons;
- (b) payment of allowance under the Wage Assistance Scheme;
- (c) payment of allowance under the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme; and
- (d) payment of bad weather allowance to fishers.

Both the Wage Assistance Scheme and Self-Employed Assistance Scheme would be payable to tourism operators until the borders are opened.

The total allowances payable to different categories of affected persons are –

- (a) for fishers: Rs10,200 (Solidarity Grant) plus Bad Weather Allowance of Rs425 daily where applicable;
- (b) for fishmongers: Rs10,200; (Solidarity Grant);
- (c) for Pleasure Craft (Self Employed): Rs15,300 (Solidarity Grant and Self-Employed Assistance Scheme of Rs5,100); and
- (d) for Pleasure Craft (Workers) Rs20,400 (Solidarity Grant and Wage Assistance Scheme of Rs10,200).

4. Cabinet has taken note that the National Social Inclusion Foundation was working with various NGOs to support vulnerable groups and offer appropriate support to victims of the MV Wakashio Assistance wreckage. A MV Wakashio and Support Cell would be set up under the National Social Inclusion Foundation with Mr Charles Cartier as Chairperson. The objective of the cell is to fast track support to hardship cases in the affected regions and provide assistance as appropriate through NGOs.

5. Cabinet has taken note that an E-Platform had been set up and was being hosted on the website of the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping to enable any person or entity that has sustained a loss or damage as a consequence of the grounding of MV Wakashio to submit his claim on-line. This would facilitate the coordination and channelling of claims to the ship owners and/or insurer. A Help Desk has also been set up at that Ministry to assist in the submission of claims.

6. Cabinet has taken note that the *Agence Française de Développement*, World Bank, United Nations Development Programme and African Development Bank would form a consortium to provide technical assistance for an assessment and evaluation of all impacts at the sites affected by the oil spill resulting from the grounding of MV Wakashio.

7. Cabinet has taken note that the Prime Minister delivered a keynote address on “Sustaining/maintaining continued function on the health system to deliver holistic health services” at the 70th World Health Organisation (WHO) Virtual Regional Committee for Africa held recently. The main points of the keynote address were the setting up of a High-Level Committee under the chair of the Prime Minister to coordinate the national response to COVID-19 and the measures taken for Mauritius to be COVID-19 safe. The measures include the immediate closure of borders upon detection of the first cases of COVID-19 in Mauritius, mass screening, extensive contact tracing, public awareness on COVID-19 preventive measures, construction of COVID-19 Testing Centres in the Regional Hospitals, enhanced testing capacities and procurement of vital life-saving equipment.

The Prime Minister also informed about the health sector indicators which were comparable to those of high-income countries, namely life expectancy at birth, infant mortality rate per thousand live births and maternal mortality per 100,000 live births. The Prime Minister further informed that the Five-Year Health Sector Strategic Plan 2020-2024 was approved by Government with projected investments of Rs67.7 billion over five years to build and maintain a resilient health system.

8. Cabinet has taken note of the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic prevailing worldwide and in the region. As at 27 August 2020, 355 cases of COVID-19 had been registered in Mauritius. The last local case was registered on 26 April 2020.

As at 27 August 2020, there were ten imported active cases of COVID-19 in Mauritius. Sanitary precautions should be maintained in order to avoid any importation or resurgence of COVID-19 in the country.

9. Cabinet has taken note that, as announced in the Budget Speech 2020/2021, all sugarcane planters would, for crop 2020 also be paid a guaranteed price of Rs25,000 per ton for the first 60 tons of sugar accrued to them. The payment for the guaranteed price would be effected in two instalments similar to crop 2019, i.e. 80% of the payment to be made to planters as from September 2020, after they have harvested and sent their canes to the mill. The remaining 20% would be paid to them at the end of the crop season based on the final ex-syndicate price of sugar for crop 2020.

10. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail would promulgate the Road Traffic (Conduct of Passengers) (Amendment) Regulations 2020. The Regulations are being amended in order to prevent disorderly behaviour of commuters while also reassuring the bus crews on duty. The new types of offences being proposed in the Road Traffic (Conduct of Passengers) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 relate to admittance, behaviour and restrictions imposed on passengers on-board buses with a view to better regulating their conduct.

11. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development would promulgate the Companies (Payment of Fees to Registrar) (Amendment) Regulations 2020. The Regulations are being amended to review the fees for reinstating companies from Rs15,000 to Rs5,000 to reduce cost of doing business in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, as announced in Budget Speech 2020-2021.

12. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development would promulgate the Economic Development Board (Smart City Scheme) (Amendment) Regulations 2020. The purpose of the Regulations is to, inter alia, give effect to the measures contained in the Budget Speech 2020/21 relating to the Smart City Scheme, namely –

- (i) allowing a non-citizen holder of a Residence Permit, an Occupation Permit or a Permanent Residence Permit to acquire one plot of serviced land not exceeding 2,100 m² for residential purposes within a smart city; and
- (ii) reducing the minimum investment amount for a holder of an immovable property under the scheme to obtain the status of Resident from USD500,000 to USD375,000.

13. Cabinet has agreed to the accession of Mauritius to the African Regional Intellectual Property Organization (ARIPO). ARIPO is an intergovernmental organisation that grants and administers intellectual property titles on behalf of its Member States and also provides intellectual property information in the form of search services, publications and awareness creation. The accession of Mauritius to ARIPO would enable a better and more rapid service delivery by the Industrial Property Office with respect to receipt and processing of applications for the grant of patents. It would also gain in terms of technological information which is available to ARIPO Member States for the purpose of facilitating the adaptation, transfer and acquisition of appropriate technology, the development of local research and the creation of indigenous technology (i.e. traditional knowledge).

14. Cabinet has agreed to the accession of Mauritius to the Marrakesh Treaty to make published works accessible to persons with visual impairments and other print disabilities. The Marrakesh Treaty forms part of the body of international copyright treaties administered by the World Intellectual Property Organisation and it has a clear humanitarian and social development dimension. Its main goal is to create a set of mandatory limitations and expectations for the benefit of the blind, visually impaired and otherwise print disabled. The Copyright Act which was amended in 2017 already makes provision for the two main obligations under the Treaty.

15. Cabinet has taken note that, as at 27 August 2020, some 26 dead melon-headed whales and one bottle nose dolphin were found dead in the region of Grand Sables, Petit Sables and Pointe aux Feuilles. The post-mortem examination was conducted by the Veterinary Officers of the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security to determine the possible cause of stranding and death. The autopsy was assisted by representatives of the Mauritius Marine Conservation Society, the Mauritius Megafauna Conservation Organisation and the Mauritius Museums Council. The preliminary report of the post-mortem has revealed the following –

- (i) no fluid was found in the thoracic and abdominal cavities;
- (ii) the intestines were found empty;
- (iii) trachea and oesophagus were found to be clear;
- (iv) one of the lungs was found to be congested; and
- (v) several worms were found in the heart and lungs of some of the carcasses.

All samples would be subject to bacteriological and toxicological analysis.

16. Cabinet has taken note that the Memorandum of Understanding on Co-operative Activities between the Government of Mauritius and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development which was signed in September 2018 would be extended for a further period of five years. The areas of collaboration would focus on markets and regulatory conduct, which would include, among others, –

- (a) regulation and supervision of financial sector, and the development of sound, transparent and efficient financial markets, private pensions and insurance;
- (b) financial literacy and education, financial consumer protection and financial inclusion;
- (c) functioning of capital markets and corporate governance of both listed and state-owned enterprises;
- (d) promoting efficiency and sound markets through competition policy;

- (e) anti-bribery and anti-corruption; and
- (f) blockchain policy issues in the financial sector and other sectors.

17. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent participation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade in the 40th Summit of the SADC Heads of State and Government held via video conference. The theme of the Summit was “40 Years Building Peace and Security, and Promoting Development and Resilience in the Face of Global Challenges”. The Summit elected HE Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, President of the Republic of Mozambique, as the new Chairperson of the SADC and HE Dr Mikgwaetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, President of the Republic of Botswana as the new Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation. The Summit expressed solidarity with the Government and People of Mauritius for the environmental disaster in its waters caused by a grounded ship and called upon SADC Member States, and the International Community to support Mauritius in containing the disaster.

The Summit approved the Report on the Socio-economic Impact of COVID-19 on the SADC region and urged Member States to review and realign their Roadmaps and Action Plans. The SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP 2020-2030) and Vision 2050 documents, which would guide the implementation of SADC projects and programmes, were approved.

18. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the meeting of the National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up (NMRF). The NMRF is a national platform which aims at ensuring that Human Rights obligations at the United Nations or African Union levels, are kept under review for proper follow up and Periodic Reports and mid-term Review/Progress Reports are submitted in a timely manner after thorough consultations with all parties concerned.

19. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation would organise the third edition of the activity ‘*Pédaler en Sécurité*’ on Saturday 12 September 2020 from 0900 hours to 1200 hours in Flacq. The objective of ‘*Pédaler en Sécurité*’ is to promote cycling as an affordable and an environmentally sound sport and to encourage members of the public to practise cycling on a regular basis.

20. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Health and Wellness would conduct the 7th National Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) Survey, in collaboration with the World Health Organisation, the Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute, Australia, the Imperial College, UK, the University of Helsinki, Finland, the Monash University, Australia and the Umea University Hospital, Sweden. The overall goal of the NCD Survey 2020/2021 is to determine the incidence and prevalence of diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, obesity and their associated risk factors in the Mauritian population and to study the trends of each of them.

21. Cabinet has taken note of the reconstitution of the Board of the Rajiv Gandhi Science Trust Fund with Dr (Mrs) Jayantee Naugah as Chairperson.

22. Cabinet has taken note of the appointment of Mr Gérard Daniel Louis, OSK, as Chairperson of the Mauritius Society of Authors.

23. Cabinet has taken note of the reconstitution of the Board of the Mauritius Qualifications Authority with Mr Rajnarain Gutty as Chairperson.

24. Cabinet has taken note of the reconstitution of the Council of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute (MGI) and the Rabindranath Tagore Institute (RTI) with Mr Vishwadeo Gobin as Chairperson.

25. Cabinet has taken note of the reconstitution of the Stamp Advisory Committee with Mr Devendranath Choolhun as Chairperson.
