

CABINET DECISIONS – 24 JANUARY 2020

1. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the mission of the Prime Minister to UK where he attended the UK-Africa Investment Summit. The objective of the Summit was to showcase opportunities for investment across Africa and expertise which the UK could offer to African countries in different sectors. The UK Prime Minister pointed out that apart from assisting countries in raising funds for their projects and offering technology of all kinds, the UK had more of the world's top universities apart from the USA.

The Prime Minister of Mauritius formed part of the Heads of State Panel on "African Growth Opportunities: Generating Investment for Inclusive Growth in Africa". In his intervention, the Prime Minister, inter alia, highlighted that diversification had been key to the economic success of Mauritius and that industrialisation was imperative to start that process. He pointed out that the gains from the textile and sugar industries were reinvested in the development of the tourism sector, thus marking our first steps in the services industry. He also underscored that Mauritius had since then, developed the tertiary sector to include financial services, ICT-BPO and professional services.

The Prime Minister had a meeting with the UK Prime Minister and discussed with him the Chagos Archipelago issue, the Economic Partnership Agreement which Mauritius had concluded with the UK together with three other countries of Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) and assistance to Small Island Developing States to cope with the adverse effects of climate change. The Prime Minister also met the Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP, Secretary of State for International Trade and President of the Board of Trade and sought assistance from the UK for the further development of our financial sector and of Mauritius as a knowledge hub as well as training from the UK for combating cybercrimes and drug trafficking.

In the margins of the Summit, the Prime Minister also met the President of Egypt, Ghana, Mozambique and Senegal respectively with whom he discussed bilateral areas of cooperation. Prior to the UK-Africa Investment Summit, the Prime Minister also participated in a roundtable session organised by the Economic Development Board (EDB) and hosted by Invest Africa. The session was attended by 45 business leaders, mainly from the financial services sector as well as UK-based companies operating in Africa. The focus of the session was to position Mauritius as an ideal international financial centre and business hub for Africa. He also participated in a meeting organised by the EDB with Mr Bill Winters, CBE, Group Chief Executive of Standard Chartered Bank. Mr Neil Mulcock, Vice-President, Government Affairs and Policy EMEA of Gilead Sciences, had a meeting with the Prime Minister to discuss the status of the medicine donation programme of his firm which aims at treating and curing patients who suffer from hepatitis C in Mauritius.

2. Cabinet has agreed to the adoption of a fare structure for feeder buses. A uniform flat fare of Rs15 would be applicable on all feeder routes irrespective of where the passenger alights or boards. A rebate of Rs5 would be provided to those passengers using the feeders to connect to the light rail.

3. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of the Reimbursable Advisory Services Agreement between the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security and the World Bank in the context of the study on the viability of the sugar cane sector in Mauritius. The key deliverables of the Agreement are –

- (a) a competitiveness assessment of the advantages of the agro-industrial enterprises and farmers which will focus on productivity, cost of production, opportunity costs, and revenues from different potential market sources;
- (b) an analysis of the institutional structure, performance and incentives of the various stakeholders of the sugar cane sector, including, the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security, the Mauritius Sugar Syndicate, the Sugar Insurance Fund Board, the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, the Central Electricity Board, smallholder growers, producers, millers, employees of the various institutions, and traders; and
- (c) a policy note summarising the sector review and providing main recommendations for public policy and programmes for the future development of the sugar cane sector as well as the development of implementation plans for each recommended action.

4. Cabinet has agreed to the adjustment of the rates for non-contributory benefits payable under the Social Aid Act, the Unemployment Hardship Relief Act and the Social Integration and Empowerment Act, in line with the salary compensation approved by Government for part-time employees with effect from 1 January 2020. Some 40,000 beneficiaries of social assistance would benefit from these adjustments as well as some 12,000 children attending schools under the Social Integration and Empowerment Act. The relevant Regulations would be amended accordingly.

5. Cabinet has agreed to Mauritius making a yearly voluntary contribution to the United Nations Road Safety Trust Fund. The Fund which supports the implementation of the Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety, benefits the world's citizens by leveraging the expertise of the United Nations system to achieve the road safety related Sustainable Development Goals. The objectives include –

- (a) strengthening road safety management capacity at the national and local levels;
- (b) supporting road safety programmes at the national and local levels across the five pillars of the Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety by providing financial support to participating institutions and organisations; and

- (c) coordinating and harmonising initiatives for the Sustainable Development Goals, and maximising the effectiveness and efficiency of the goals.

6. Cabinet has taken note of the three-year Strategic Business Plan of the Utility Regulatory Authority (URA). The Strategic Business plan has identified seven strategic key objectives, namely –

- (a) recruiting, skilling and strengthening the URA team, including the Board members;
- (b) enhancing the electricity sector legal framework by introducing regulations for licensing and harmonisation of existing legislation;
- (c) phased implementation of licensing, developing a tariff methodology, enforcing quality of service regulations and commercial regulation;
- (d) enhancing financial independence of URA and ensuring accountability;
- (e) maintaining regular public engagement through consultations, dialogue and public relations with stakeholders and publishing regular reports;
- (f) developing conducive working conditions and adopting performance tools; and
- (g) keeping in view the role of URA in regulating the water and waste water sectors in the future.

7. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) would organise a national workshop on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in May 2020. The AfCFTA is expected to be operational by 01 July 2020. The objective of the AfCFTA Agreement is to boost intra-Africa trade, promote industrialisation and achieve greater sustainable development. The workshop would be an opportunity to sensitise stakeholders on the AfCFTA and the opportunities that it would provide to Mauritius. Some 50 participants from both the public and private sectors would attend the workshop.

8. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation would enlist the services of a Consultant for the drafting of a Policy Paper on Recreation. The main tasks of the Consultant would be to –

- (a) carry out an assessment of the current situation on recreational services, activities and facilities provided by other Ministries/Departments and non-state actors;

- (b) formulate a Policy on Recreation for the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation, including strategic objectives and devise appropriate Action Plans with reference to practices in other countries;
- (c) develop a comprehensive and integrated strategic plan of sustainable events and activities for different age groups with measurable goals and targets;
- (d) recommend on any linkages that need to be put in place internally within the Ministry and with other Ministries/Departments and with the private sector; and
- (e) provide an estimated costing on the required institutional set-up and operational arrangements for the implementation of the recommendations in the policy document as well as a cost estimate of the proposed yearly events and activities over a period of five years.

9. Cabinet has taken note of the status of the key projects and programmes being implemented by the Ministry of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives jointly with SME Mauritius, for the promotion and development of the SME sector. Various schemes have been completed and/or are under implementation, namely –

- (a) the Mentoring and Hand-holding Programme;
- (b) the Communication and Visibility - Online Presence Scheme;
- (c) the Technology and Skills Transfer Scheme;
- (d) the Barcode Registration System;
- (e) the SME Certification Scheme; and
- (f) the SME Productivity Improvement Scheme.

During the period July 2018 to November 2019, over 1,100 SMEs have already benefitted from those schemes while some 1,300 have acquired applied knowledge and know-how in different specific fields including crafts, skills and aquaponics. Under the SME Employment Scheme, implemented by SME Mauritius, a total of 940 graduates has been placed, while 550 degree holders and 82 diploma holders are in post as at date. Loan to the tune of Rs443 Million from MauBank has been approved for some 196 SMEs under the SME Development Scheme Certificate. An SME Observatory to enhance SME market intelligence, has also been set up at SME Mauritius since September 2019.

10. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent mission of the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities to Abu Dhabi where he participated in the 10th Assembly of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA). In his message to the IRENA Assembly, the Secretary-General of the United Nations urged all leaders to push their governments to make new investments in innovation, and to boldly phase out subsidies and replace them with tax incentives for renewable scale-up. He also urged the Assembly to continue to push for renewable energy scale-up in all sectors.

The Deputy Prime Minister made a keynote address at the High Level Meeting on Accelerating the Energy Transformation in Small Island Developing States through Renewable Energy. A Ministerial Roundtable on Green Hydrogen and a Ministerial Session on Hydropower were also held. The Deputy Prime Minister also had meetings with HE Dr Thani Ahmed Al Zeyoudi, Minister of Climate Change and Environment of UAE and the Director General of IRENA.

11. Cabinet has taken note of the activities that would be organised in the context of World Cancer Day, observed on 4 February. The theme of the World Cancer Day campaign for the period 2019 to 2021 is '**I am and I will**'. The Ministry of Health and Wellness would launch the activities on 05 February 2020 at L'Escalier Mediclinic. An exhibition on health lifestyle and healthy diet would also be held. Sensitisation programmes on the causes and risk factors of cancer and preventive measures would also be carried out as well as screening programmes for breast and cervical cancer.

12. Cabinet has taken note that in the context of the National Day Celebrations, the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation would organise a Youth Carnival on 11 March 2020. The starting point of the Carnival would be Saint François Xavier Stadium in Port Louis and it would end at Port Louis Waterfront where a flag-raising ceremony would be organised. The best participants in the carnival would be rewarded with cash prizes.

13. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity would proceed with the anti-influenza vaccination exercise during period April to May this year. Vaccines would be provided to elderly persons aged 60 and above, children with disabilities attending specialised schools and inmates of charitable institutions and private licensed Homes. The vaccination exercise would also be extended to Rodrigues and Agalega.
