

CABINET DECISIONS – 15 JANUARY 2021

1. Cabinet has taken note that the Central Water Authority (Dry Season) Regulations 2020 would be revoked as there has been an increase in the overall storage level of the reservoirs following the recent rain, with La Nicolière Reservoir at 100 percent. The situation would continue to be monitored and the Central Water Authority would pursue with its “save water” sensitisation campaigns, including through social media platforms.

2. Cabinet has agreed to the promulgation of the Education (Amendment) Regulations 2021. The Education Regulations are being amended –

- (a) to enable a citizen of Mauritius who has resided in the Republic of Mauritius for not less than four consecutive years (instead of seven years) immediately preceding 1 December of the academic year in which is held the State of Mauritius Scholarship examination for which he sits, and who has not been absent from Mauritius for more than three months (instead of 24 months) in the aggregate during such residence to compete for scholarship awards;
- (b) to provide for specific cut-off dates for the obtention of qualifications, submission of applications and documents;
- (c) to provide for the number of absences authorised for Higher School Certificate (HSC) candidates competing for the scholarships to be amended from 10 to 15 days (in either of the two school years) in line with the requirements of the current student attendance policy which provides for not more than 15 days of absences to qualify for full sponsorship of examination fees; and
- (d) to update the list of eligibility subjects under the Second Schedule to the Education Regulations which sets out the subjects to be offered to HSC candidates wishing to compete for the State of Mauritius Scholarships.

3. Cabinet has taken note that Regulations would be promulgated to enable Firearms Licensees stranded abroad or in quarantine facilities locally to renew their firearms licences if they have not been able to do so, as required by law, by 31 December 2020 due to COVID-19. The Regulations would be made –

- (a) under the Interpretation and General Clauses Act to extend the COVID-19 period to 01 January 2021 for the purpose of the Firearms Act only; and

- (b) under the Firearms Act to extend the validity of the firearm licence of –
 - (i) a licensee who was in a quarantine facility in Mauritius during the period 01 to 31 December 2020 to 31 January 2021; and
 - (ii) a licensee who was outside Mauritius on 31 December 2020 and who is confined in a quarantine facility following his arrival into Mauritius, to 30 days from the day of his release from the quarantine facility.

4. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development would promulgate the Double Taxation Agreement (Kingdom of Eswatini) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 under section 76 of the Income Tax Act. The Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) between Mauritius and Eswatini (formerly Swaziland) was signed on 29 June 1994. At the request of Eswatini, the DTAA was amended by way of a Protocol which was signed on 28 August 2020. The main changes brought to the DTAA are as follows –

- (a) the term “Competent Authority” has been updated so that for Mauritius, it now refers to the Director-General, Mauritius Revenue Authority or his authorised representative instead of the Commissioner of Income Tax or his authorised representative as was previously the case;
- (b) it has been clarified that an insurance company would be considered as a Permanent Establishment in a Contracting State, and therefore taxable in that Contracting State, if it collects premium in that State or insures risks situated therein through a person other than an agent of an independent status;
- (c) the applicable withholding tax rate on the interest income in the country where such income is sourced has been raised from 5 percent to 7.5 percent;
- (d) the Article on Exchange of Information has been updated and aligned with the international standard as prescribed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; and
- (e) a new Article has been introduced in the DTAA for mutual assistance in the collection of tax due to the other Contracting State, as a measure to reinforce the fight against tax evasion.

5. Cabinet has taken note of the findings of the National Drug Observatory Report 2019 prepared by the National Drug Secretariat. The main objective of the Report is to, inter alia, provide reliable data to enable concerned authorities to respond proactively, efficiently and in a timely manner to drug-related problems.

The Report also provides drug-related data on arrests effected by the Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit (ADSU), drug seizures by the different law enforcement agencies, drug-related convictions and imprisonment, and health response in terms of treatment, rehabilitation and prevention programmes.

The National Drug Observatory Report 2019 would be shared with all the stakeholders and uploaded on the website of the Prime Minister's Office.

6. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of an Implementation Framework between the Government of the Republic of Mauritius and the Government of the Republic of South Africa on cooperation in the fields of arts, culture and heritage. The proposed Framework would cover the following areas of co-operation –

- (a) exchange of information, experience and documentation related to artistic and cultural activities and administration; and
- (b) establishment of direct contact and co-operation between respective associations, institutions and individuals, in the fields of arts, culture and heritage, at both government and non-government levels.

The Implementation Framework would, inter alia, address the following –

- (i) cooperation between institutions of both countries in the fields of museums, archives, libraries and heritage;
- (ii) participation in major cultural celebrations and annual commemorations such as the Abolition of Slavery in Mauritius and the Heritage Month in South Africa;
- (iii) exchange of music, drama, dance or folk ensembles and individual performing artists during each other's major cultural festivals by mounting programmes in the field of performing arts;
- (iv) opportunities for developing the film industry in both countries as well as training and skills development; and
- (v) engage in the twinning of institutions, such as the Slave Lodge Museum in South Africa and the Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre of the Apravasi Ghat World Heritage Property in Mauritius to preserve the indentured labourers' heritage in both countries.

7. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security and the Agricultural Marketing Board (AMB) would make necessary arrangements for the supply of vegetables, coconuts and lemons through the outlets of the AMB, in addition to the usual market supply during the forthcoming celebration of Thaipooam Cavadee and Maha Shivaratree festivals.

8. Cabinet has taken note that –

- (a) the quarantine period in Mauritius would be extended from 15 February 2021 to 31 March 2021 and in this regard, the Minister of Health and Wellness would issue a Notice under the Quarantine Act 2020 and make appropriate Regulations under the Quarantine Act; and
- (b) the Prime Minister would accordingly amend the Order under section 3(1)(a) of the Quarantine Act 2020 to extend the prohibition of entry of aircrafts and ships in Mauritius until 31 March 2021, except for those aircrafts and ships as may be approved by the Prime Minister.

9. Cabinet has taken note of the alarming situation of the COVID-19 pandemic prevailing across the world and the spread of the new variants of the virus which have been detected in UK and South Africa. A new variant has also been detected in Brazil and Japan and the Ministry of Health and Wellness is closely monitoring the situation. With regard to Mauritius, no local case has been recorded since 26 November 2020. As at 15 January 2021, 547 cases of COVID-19 had been registered. Currently, there were 20 active imported cases of COVID-19 in Mauritius. The public should continue to observe strict sanitary precautions. Passengers coming from UK and South Africa or those who have transited through these countries during the last 15 days would not be allowed to enter Mauritius until 31 January 2021.

10. Cabinet has taken note of the measures and projects implemented by the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms to improve service delivery and spearhead the transformation of the Public Service.
