

**CABINET DECISIONS – 19 MARCH 2021**

1. Cabinet has agreed to the introduction of the Taxi Operators Welfare Fund Bill into the National Assembly. The main object of the Bill is to provide for the establishment of the Taxi Operators Welfare Fund for the advancement and promotion of the welfare of taxi operators and their families. The Taxi Operators Welfare Fund shall, in the discharge of its functions –

- (a) manage and optimise its financial and other resources to further the social and economic welfare of taxi operators and their families;
- (b) set up and develop schemes, including loan schemes and other forms of financial assistance, for taxi operators and their families;
- (c) develop and implement projects for the welfare of taxi operators and their families; and
- (d) to do all such things as appear necessary and conducive to the advancement and promotion of the welfare of taxi operators and their families.

\*\*\*

2. Cabinet has agreed to the introduction of the Optical Council Bill into the National Assembly. The object of the Bill is to provide for the establishment of the Optical Council of Mauritius with a view to better regulating the profession of opticians. The Bill accordingly provides that the Council would, inter alia –

- (a) regulate and control the profession of opticians;
- (b) register opticians;
- (c) regulate the professional conduct of opticians;
- (d) promote the advancement of opticians; and
- (e) approve, conduct or cause to be conducted training courses, programmes, lectures, seminars or conferences, including continuing professional development courses or programmes, for opticians.

\*\*\*

3. Cabinet has taken that the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development would promulgate the Income Tax (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2021 to pay the Wage Assistance Scheme and the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme to operators in other sectors, in addition to the tourism sector for the month of March 2021.

\*\*\*

4. Cabinet has agreed to five schemes being implemented in order to provide financial assistance to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The Schemes aim at supporting SMEs in

restructuring their capital requirements and to survive the crisis. SMEs that are negatively impacted by the COVID 19 pandemic and the current confinement period are eligible for support under the Schemes in accordance with established criteria. The five schemes are as follows –

- (a) the SME Interest-Free Loan Scheme would be made available to SMEs with turnover not exceeding Rs50 Million. An interest-free loan of Rs100,000 with a moratorium of 5 years on repayment would be granted to some 18,000 employers;
- (b) the Self-Employed One-Off Grant Scheme would be available to all those registered with the Mauritius Revenue Authority under the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme registered as at 15 March 2021;
- (c) the COVID-19 Special Support Scheme would be implemented by the Development Bank of Mauritius whereby SMEs would be able to apply for unsecured loans of up to Rs1 Million at an interest rate of 0.5 percent per annum with a moratorium of 1 year on payment of capital and interest;
- (d) the DBM One-Year Moratorium Scheme would provide a one-year moratorium on payment of capital and interest on all its existing loans under its various schemes; and
- (e) the postponement of VAT Payment from end March 2021 to 15 July 2021.

\*\*\*

5. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development would promulgate the –

- (a) Customs Tariff (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 2) Regulations 2021;
- (b) Customs (Export to the Republic of India under the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement) Regulations 2021;
- (c) Excise (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 2) Regulations 2021; and
- (d) Excise (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2021.

The Regulations provide mainly for -

- (i) the implementation of our tariff concession commitments as well as Rules of Origin requirements under the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement between the Republic of Mauritius and the Republic of India (CECPA);
- (ii) the extension of the customs/excise duty rebate granted on motor vehicles under the Economic Recovery Programme up to 30 June 2021;
- (iii) a clarification that a motor car propelled by an electric motor but charged by a petrol engine should be classified as a hybrid car; and
- (iv) the removal of the excise duty of Rs2 per unit on non-biodegradable and non-compostable plastic bags and consequential amendments following the banning of plastic bags and containers.

\*\*\*

6. Cabinet has taken note that the National Land Transport Authority (NLTA) would in the context of the COVID-19 situation, proceed with the extension of delays for the renewal of licences. The NLTA has put in place the following measures –

- (a) renewal of all Public Service Vehicle Licences and Road Service Licences would be extended up to 31 August 2021;
- (b) implementation of Contract Car and Contract Bus Licences was being extended up to 31 August 2021;
- (c) renewal of licences for petrol service stations would be extended up to 31 August 2021 subject to the petrol service station holding a valid Fire Certificate issued by the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Services; and
- (d) Motor Vehicle Licences expiring on the last day of February 2021 would be extended up to 31 August 2021 subject to the vehicle having a valid insurance cover. Upon renewal of the licence, arrears would have to be paid as from the expiry date, without any surcharge. After 31 August 2021, an expired Motor Vehicle Licence shall be subject to the applicable surcharge.

Where the Certificate of Fitness of a vehicle has lapsed or would lapse during the confinement period, the vehicle would be allowed on the road only in exceptional circumstances, that is, for persons holding a valid Work Access Permit issued by the Commissioner of Police or in case of a medical emergency, or where a person has to purchase essential food items or necessities.

\*\*\*

7. Cabinet has taken note of the setting up of a Committee on Sustainability of Public Finances, in the context of the preparation of the 2021-2022 Budget. The Committee has been set up to analyse the state of public finances and come up with proposals to consolidate public finances in the immediate, medium and long term. The Committee would be chaired by the Financial Secretary and would comprise representatives from the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, the Mauritius Revenue Authority and the Economic Development Board. The Committee would look into the following -

- (a) revenue and expenditure patterns and measures to reduce the budget deficit;
- (b) measures to reduce public sector debt, including disposal of assets and early repayment of debt;
- (c) review of the Public Sector Investment Programme and exploring alternative means for financing and refinancing of infrastructure projects; and
- (d) formulation of new policies and strategies to boost economic growth.

\*\*\*

8. Cabinet has agreed to the adoption of the Work from Home Protocol developed by the UNDP consultant, PriceWaterhouseCoopers Ltd in the context of the development of a

Business Continuity Model for the Public Service. The salient features of the Protocol are as follows –

- (a) introduction of flexible and agile working policies that balances the needs of Government and Public Officers;
- (b) all Public Officers should discuss the working arrangements with their Heads of Department/Division/Section and the latter should take every possible step to facilitate the process;
- (c) the Protocol is applicable to all Public Officers and does not change or replace the existing terms and conditions of employment of Public Officers; and
- (d) the policies of the Government including the terms and conditions of employment and policies to Safety and health, data protection and security will apply during a Work-From-Home arrangement.

A Steering Committee would be set up under the chair of the Secretary for Public Service to oversee the implementation of the Work From Home across the Public Sector.

\*\*\*

9. Cabinet has agreed to the submission of the draft schedule of tariff concessions of Mauritius on the remaining 10 percent tariff lines in the context of the negotiations on the African Continental Free Trade Area. The schedule of concession for the remaining 10% tariff lines would consist of a list of sensitive products (7%) and an exclusion list (3%). The sensitive list includes some 399 tariff lines with duty ranging between 0% and 30%, while the exclusion list consists of 192 tariff lines. The exclusion list includes all products that are considered sensitive from the perspective of the domestic industries of Mauritius such as black tea, wheat flour, sugar, oil, fruit wine, soap and detergent, among others.

\*\*\*

10. Cabinet has agreed to the development of a Mobile App for the Citizen Support Unit. The proposed App would enable citizens to directly transmit their requests, share concerns and ideas with Ministries/Departments, parastatal bodies and local authorities. Moreover, it would enable users to keep track of their requests through a ticketing system.

\*\*\*

11. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent official visit of the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development to Rodrigues in the context of the forthcoming Financial Year 2021/22 budget consultations with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

The Minister had a working session with the Executive Council on priority projects and policies and discussed on key issues, including major projects in sectors, such as airport and port development, water management and desalination, education and other sectors. He visited the Ex-Citron Donis College which would be upgraded and be used as a Polytechnic, track roads under construction at Grand La Fouche Mangués, Montagne du Sable and Le Chou and the desalination plant Anse Goeland. He also proceeded to the laying of the foundation stone in

connection with the construction of the first Technopark Building at Baladirou which is expected to be completed by August 2022.

\*\*\*

12. Cabinet has taken note of the actions taken following the grounding of the Fishing Vessel Lu Rong Yuan Yu 588 on the reef at Pointe aux Sables. On 11 March 2021, FV Lu Rong Yuan Yu 588 was successfully refloated and was towed safely to Quay D in the Port.

A preliminary inquiry would be conducted under the Merchant Shipping Act to investigate the circumstances that led to the grounding of the Fishing Vessel Lu Rong Yuan Yu 588. Captain Hubert Noel, Principal Nautical Surveyor, has been designated to conduct the inquiry.

\*\*\*

13. Cabinet has taken note that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has given assurance to continue its support to the Government of Mauritius in relation to the ongoing "Mainstreaming Biodiversity into the Management of Coastal Zone in the Republic of Mauritius" project pursuant to the final Investigation Report of the Social and Environmental Compliance Unit (SECU). The UNDP would contribute on the following fronts -

- (a) providing technical assistance, where requested, to Government towards the adoption of proposed legislation to protect Environmentally Sensitive Areas;
- (b) revisiting the risk framework to ensure that the project remains in compliance with UNDP's Social and Environmental Standards and identify pre-emptive measures to mitigate and reduce any potential for project failure;
- (c) further strengthening stakeholder engagement, communication, and outreach; and
- (d) ensuring ongoing effective implementation and oversight of the project towards completion.

\*\*\*

14. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Health and Wellness would make the Clinical Trials (Registration of Contract Research Organisations) Regulations 2021. The Regulations would set out the following –

- (a) the registration process of Contract Research Organisations (CROs) wishing to conduct, or assist in, clinical trial in Mauritius;
- (b) the fees to be paid and guidelines to be followed by CROs;
- (c) the validity of the registration certificate;
- (d) the rejection of an application; and
- (e) the extension of a registration certification.

\*\*\*

15. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Health and Wellness would launch a new health promotion programme on Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) in collaboration with the

Prime Minister's Office. The MBC would produce a series of programmes to sensitise the population. These programmes would be recorded in households in different localities around the island to give the opportunity to the inhabitants to share their personal experience and good practices of preventing or living with Non-Communicable Diseases.

Other health related programmes would be made on -

- (a) public health: vector borne diseases (Chikungunya and Dengue), potential threats such as Zika, COVID-19, Ebola and Measles;
- (b) Drug Prevention Campaign and Harm Reduction;
- (c) Sexual and Reproductive Health; and
- (d) HIV/AIDS.

\*\*\*

16. Cabinet has taken note that the Government of Saudi Arabia, through the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre would donate surgical sterile gowns, non-sterile surgical gowns, KN90 Masks, surgical masks and nitrile gloves to the Government of Mauritius, in the context of the fight against COVID-19.

\*\*\*

17. Cabinet has taken note that a consignment of 200,000 doses of COVAXIN purchased by the Ministry of Health and Wellness from India has reached Mauritius on 19 March 2021.

\*\*\*

18. Cabinet has taken note of the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic prevailing across the world. With regard to Mauritius, as at 19 March 2021, 812 cases of COVID-19 had been registered. There were currently 194 active cases of COVID-19 in Mauritius, out of which 172 are local cases and 22 imported cases. Contact tracing exercises are being carried out in accordance with the established protocol. The public should observe strict sanitary precautions.

Cabinet has also taken note of the status of the Vaccination Programme.

\*\*\*\*\*