

**CABINET DECISIONS – 23 APRIL 2021**

1. Cabinet has agreed to the setting up of a Fact Finding Committee, chaired by Mrs Deviyanee Beesoondoyal, former Judge, to enquire into the recent death of renal dialysis patients at the New Souillac Hospital. The Fact Finding Committee would comprise two other Assessors.

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2. Cabinet has agreed to the Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance promulgating the Captive Insurance (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2021 and the Insurance (Amendment) Regulations 2021. The Schedule to the Captive Insurance Act and the Insurance Regulations 2007 would be amended in order to exempt all International Organisations falling under the International Organisations and Conferences (Privileges and Immunities) Act from the need to seek a licence from the Financial Services Commission to operate any activity covered by these two pieces of legislation.

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3. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Road Development Authority and the Commission for Public Infrastructure, Transport and Water Resources of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, on a framework for collaboration and mutual cooperation. The main objectives of the Memorandum of Understanding are to -

- (a) share project information and data to streamline design, construction standards, construction methodologies and ways of conducting supervision, in order to transfer knowledge and experience between technical staff of both organisations;
- (b) set up an Exchange Programme for Engineers and Technicians from Rodrigues to come over to Mauritius and vice versa, such that the technical officers benefit from appropriate on-site training, especially on major projects being implemented by the Road Development Authority;
- (c) provide assistance to the Commission in the design, procurement and supervision of projects in Rodrigues, for a term of two years as from the signature of the Memorandum of Understanding;
- (d) set up a road classification system in Rodrigues; and
- (e) formulate a Strategic Master Plan for the road network in Rodrigues, taking into consideration future sustainable developments on the island.

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4. Cabinet has agreed to the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation implementing a project for the development of a Government chatbot, an intelligent

virtual assistant, which would be a state-of-the-art solution to respond to citizens' queries. Chatbots are meant to streamline interactions between people and services through the use of artificial intelligence and machine learning technologies. They interpret queries using Natural Language Processing, an advanced form of artificial intelligence, to come up with reliable answers or solutions. The implementation of the chatbot would prove to be a major milestone as –

- (a) citizens would have access to instant responses to their queries;
- (b) the service would be available 24/7 from anywhere;
- (c) with customer feedback, the services would be continuously improved;
- (d) citizens would be relieved of administrative hassles such as emails or phone calls;
- (e) it might become one of the main point of contact for agencies or citizens to interact with Government; and
- (f) a Whole-of-Government knowledge base would be created through inputs from Ministries and Departments, leading to enhanced public service delivery.

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5. Cabinet has taken note that a Joint Public-Private Sectors Working Group has been set up, under the chair of the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism, to formulate recommendations for the re-opening of borders of the Republic of Mauritius and relaunching of the tourism sector. The terms of reference of the Joint Public-Private Sectors Working Group are to -

- (a) determine the optimal conditions for the early reopening of borders in a safe environment; and
- (b) recommend specific measures therefor.

Three Sub-Committees have also been set up to work on the following topics –

- (i) entry requirements and health protocols;
- (ii) air connectivity; and
- (iii) destination marketing

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6. Cabinet has agreed to the implementation of the COVID-19 Artists Support Plan 2021 for the Cultural and Creative sectors by the Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage to mitigate the effects of the confinement following the recent resurgence of the COVID-19 pandemic and also

to revitalise these sectors. The main objective of the Support Plan is to offer a financial support to the actors of the cultural and creative sectors, who due to gathering restrictions are experiencing loss of revenue, whilst at the same time giving them an incentive to further develop their artistic talent and create new art productions. The Plan would be implemented as from the current financial year and would be valid up to 30 September 2021. The Plan comprises schemes in various artistic disciplines, namely music, books, production of short stories, painting, sculpture, film making, photography and other forms of art.

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7. Cabinet has agreed to the implementation of the Design-Build/Turnkey for Purging of Rock and Provision of Rock Net at Macondé Cliff project. The Black River/Savanne Coast Road at Macondé is prone to rock fall due to the weathering erosion and other environmental conditions of the cliff. The Road Development Authority would implement the following works under Phase II of the project –

- (a) design of rock nets, including liability for the whole assembly;
- (b) removal of loose rocks located in the area, that is purging of the unstable rocks where rock net would be installed;
- (c) traffic diversion and management scheme; and
- (d) procurement and complete installation of rock nets of approximately 3,600 m<sup>2</sup>, with all necessary fittings, cables and anchors, amongst others.

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8. Cabinet has taken note that the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has submitted its report entitled 'Reigniting the Engine of Growth: A Forward-looking Business Model for the Mauritian Tea Industry' which was commissioned to identify the required dynamic transformative actions for a sustainable Mauritian tea industry. The Report focuses on a forward-looking business model and proposes strategies for a thriving and sustainable tea sector in a highly competitive global tea market. The main recommendations are, inter alia, -

- (a) the setting up of a 'Mauritius Tea Industry Development Agency';
- (b) the improvement of tea field productivity;
- (c) the reduction of factory and processing cost;
- (d) the improvement of quality of green leaf and made-tea; and
- (e) the promotion and branding of the Mauritian tea.

A Committee, comprising officials of the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security, other relevant stakeholders and the FAO National Correspondent has been set up to implement the recommendations.

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9. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security would avail of the funding under additional support for green and inclusive economy under the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE) which is an initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) providing support targeted to a green economic recovery. The initiative of the UNDP aims at assisting countries in the formulation and implementation of policies, capacity building and financing for inclusive green economy transitions, and is tailored to each country's needs. The project activities include –

- (a) modelling exercise to forecast green jobs in the agriculture and food sectors, and assess the impacts of the economic stimulus on the recovery of the sector;
- (b) development of a rapid assessment diagnostic toolkit for scaling up public and private finance for nature based and climate-smart agriculture;
- (c) creation of an enabling environment and incentives to boost the agro-processing industry;
- (d) development of the Farm to Fork strategy based on Collaborative Framework for Food Systems Transformation approach in the context of COVID-19 recovery;
- (e) strengthening collective national ownership of green recovery plans; and
- (f) capacity building on green and inclusive recovery in all sectors involved in food production, and distribution, including hotels, restaurants and bars to reduce food waste.

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10. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the first Steering Committee meeting in the context of the revamping of the Mauritius National Identity Card System chaired by the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation. The terms of reference of the Steering Committee are to –

- (a) advise Government on any aspect of the Mauritius National Identity Card project;
- (b) monitor and review the Mauritius National Identity Card project;
- (c) undertake such project management duties as may be required;
- (d) ensure the timely completion of tasks in connection with the Mauritius National Identity Card project;
- (e) ensure the involvement of appropriate resources for the timely completion of the project; and
- (f) coordinate the Mauritius National Identity Card project.

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11. Cabinet has taken note that Mauritius has been elected to the International Seabed Authority (ISA) Council on 03 March 2021. The four-year term took effect as from 01 January 2021. The ISA is mandated under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to organise, regulate and control all mineral-related activities in the international seabed area.

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12. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Health and Wellness would promulgate the Dental Council (Examination Fee) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 and the Medical Council (Registration of Registered Medical Practitioners) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 to revise the quantum of fees payable for Dental Registration Examination and Medical Registration Examination to Rs13,500.

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13. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the 4th round of technical negotiations between the European Union (EU) and Eastern and Southern Africa States (ESA-5: Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles and Zimbabwe) on the deepening of the Interim Economic Partnership Agreement, held virtually. Out of the 13 areas agreed for negotiations between the EU and the ESA-5, the Parties have so far covered eight issues including Rules of Origin; Customs and Trade Facilitation; Sanitary and Phyto-sanitary measures; Technical Barriers to Trade; Agriculture; Trade and Sustainable Development; Trade in Services, Investment Liberalisation and Digital Trade; and Economic Development Cooperation. A Protocol on Mutual Administrative Assistance which sets the parameters for cooperation between the customs authorities of the Parties was concluded.

The EU took note of the request of the ESA-5 to continue to fund the coordination hub. The next round of technical negotiations has been scheduled for July 2021 and would cover, inter alia, Agriculture, Technical Barriers to Trade, Intellectual Property Rights and Government Procurement.

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14. Cabinet has taken note of the various activities being organised by the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms to mark the World Day for Safety and Health at Work celebrated on 28 April. The following activities would be organised -

- (a) the e-Newsletter for April 2021 would be dedicated to Occupational Safety and Health Management;
- (b) a virtual exhibition would be launched on 28 April 2021 to sensitise employers, employees and the general public on the preparedness and response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The different measures taken by Government to control the spread of Coronavirus would also be depicted; and
- (c) a webinar would be organised by the Civil Service College Mauritius on safety and health issues at the workplace with the participation of panellists from both the public and private sectors.

The theme chosen for this year's celebration is 'Anticipate, Prepare and Respond to crises - Invest Now in Resilient Occupational Safety and Health Systems'.

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15. Cabinet has taken note of the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic prevailing across the world. With regard to Mauritius, as at 23 April 2021, 1,225 cases (including imported cases) of COVID-19 had been registered since the outbreak of the pandemic in March 2020. There were currently 137 active cases of COVID-19 in Mauritius, out of which 128 were local cases and nine imported cases. Contact tracing exercises and random testing are being carried out in accordance with the established protocol. The public should observe strict sanitary precautions.

Cabinet has also taken note of progress in the implementation of the National COVID-19 Vaccination Programme and arrangements being made to administer the second dose of vaccine.

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16. Cabinet has taken note that the Anti-Influenza Vaccination Campaign 2021 started on 22 April 2021 in the regions of Rose Hill, Beau Bassin and Grand Bois and 1,977 elderly persons have been vaccinated in those regions. As from Monday 26 April 2021, the campaign would be carried out in five localities per day and as from Thursday 29 April 2021, it would be extended to six localities per day.

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17. Cabinet has taken note of the main causes and impacts of flooding in the South and South East regions which occurred on Friday 16 April 2021 and also of the short and long term measures identified to mitigate flooding in those regions. Some 404mm of rainfall was recorded within 24 hours at Plaisance. This phenomenon caused flash floods and impacted on a number of localities in those regions.

The Land Drainage Authority carried out an assessment of the flooding in those regions. With a view to mitigating the impact of flooding, the following measures have been identified for implementation in the short term -

- (a) cleaning and desilting of rivers and watercourses;
- (b) cleaning of existing drainage infrastructure and culverts; and
- (c) cleaning of road side drains, repairs to handrails and patching works by the Road Development Authority.

The National Development Unit was also constructing drains along Doolar Lane, near the Naval Museum in Mahebourg and Mon Désert Road in Plaine Magnien. The Land Drainage Authority has commissioned a national study, with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme, on flooding risks arising from overland flows from agricultural land and mountain slopes.

Cabinet has also taken note –

- (i) of the actions taken by the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre with regard to the flash floods;

- (ii) that following the Torrential Rain warning in the South East of Mauritius on 16 April 2021, three Evacuee Centres, namely Carreau Esnouf Community Centre, St. Hilaire Community Centre and Cité La Chaux Social Welfare Centre were opened to accommodate evacuees. The Evacuee Centres at Carreau Esnouf Community Centre and St. Hilaire Community Centre accommodated 10 families comprising 26 persons. There were no evacuees at Cité La Chaux Social Welfare Centre. The Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity made arrangements for the evacuees who spent the night in the centres to be provided with the basic necessities; and
- (iii) that a Loss Assessment Exercise was currently being conducted by Officers of the Agricultural Services, Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute and the Small Farmers Welfare Fund to determine the degree of loss incurred in fields so as to compensate small planters who have adhered to the Crop Loss Compensation Scheme (CLCS) and the Agricultural Calamities and Solidarity Scheme (ACASS) with a view to cater for the loss incurred in terms of seeds, fungicides, fertilizers and other inputs. In respect of sugar cane planters, a rapid assessment has been carried out by the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority and no major damage has been noted. However, compensation for damage, if any, would be dealt with by the Sugar Insurance Fund Board at the end of the harvest period.

Cabinet has further taken note of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre operations in connection with the rainy event on 23 April 2021. The National Emergency Operations Command (NEOC) Level II since 21 April 2021 was on-going with deployment of the Police, the Special Mobile Force, the National Coast Guard, the Special Supporting Unit and the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service. Special prepositioning of composite teams at several regions were effected as from 04 00 hours on 23 April 2021, including special patrols during the night by the Special Mobile Force along the south-east coastal road and the National Coast Guard along the southern coastal roads. All road networks were practicable. No evacuees were reported.

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