

HIGHLIGHTS OF CABINET MEETING – FRIDAY 06 AUGUST 2021

1. Cabinet has agreed to the Government of Mauritius signing an Exchange of Notes with the Government of Japan for a Grant Aid of an additional JPY600 million. In February 2021, a Grant Agreement was signed between the Government of Mauritius and the Government of Japan, for an amount of JPY600 million to finance the Coastal Surveillance Radar System Project. An additional grant of JPY600 million would be needed to meet the total cost of the Coastal Surveillance Radar System Project.

2. Cabinet has taken note that an application for a Confiscation Order was made to the Mauritian authorities by the Central Authority of Canada in 2019 under the Mutual Assistance in Criminal and Related Matters Act. The matter related to investigations conducted by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police into criminal offences involving a bike group called 'Hell Angels'. Cabinet has also taken note that the confiscated proceeds of crime have been transferred to the *Directeur des poursuites criminelles et pénales, Québec, Canada*.

Cabinet has further taken note of the successful conclusion of this case of vesting of confiscated proceeds of crime between Mauritius and a foreign State.

3. Cabinet has agreed to the proposed research and trials on Industrial (non-cannabinoid) Hemp which would be undertaken by the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security in collaboration with the Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute. Industrial Hemp is classified as a variety of Cannabis Sativa and contrary to Marijuana, it contains less than 0.3 percent of THC (delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol), which has a minimal concentration of psychotropic effects. Hemp is cultivated for various purposes and has multiple benefits on the environment, economy and medicinal sector.

The major producers of Hemp are Canada, China, France, USA, Lithuania and Germany. Hemp can be used in the manufacture and production of eco-friendly disposable food containers and cutleries, high protein foods and beverages for consumption, paper products for office use, insulating materials for vehicles and electric cables, bio-fuel, anti-corrosion coating paints and solar panels. At the initial stage, 5 kg of three varieties of Industrial Hemp would be imported and grown on a pilot basis.

4. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of an Agreement on mutual administrative assistance in customs matters between Mauritius and Pakistan. The main objective of the Agreement is to enhance cooperation between the two Customs administrations with a view to better enforce Customs laws, ensure security of the trade supply chain and exchange expertise. The Agreement provides mainly for the following –

- (a) establishing the scope and modalities of the mutual assistance;

- (b) exchange of information and mutual assistance to investigate and combat customs offences, trafficking of illicit goods and substances, money laundering and financing of terrorism;
- (c) promoting the transfer of expertise, new techniques and best practices;
- (d) exchange of information relating to risk management for control purposes; and
- (e) provision of other technical assistance in customs matters.

5. Cabinet has agreed to the implementation of a Standard Road Safety Audit at the stage of completion of both preliminary and detailed designs, in addition to the pre-opening safety audit of the road infrastructures and post-operation monitoring, for all new road infrastructural projects and road traffic schemes. The objective of the process during the design and implementation of new road infrastructures is to minimise future road accident occurrence and severity, once the scheme has been built and the road comes into use, i.e., the operational road safety experience is applied during the design and construction process.

The Road Safety Audit would be carried out by a team of specialists in the areas of accident prevention and road safety engineering. The team would be led by the Ministry of Land Transport and Light Rail through the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit and would comprise representatives from the Police Department and an independent engineer from the Road Development Authority.

6. Cabinet has agreed to the establishment of a National Steering Committee for the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE) Mauritius to direct and supervise PAGE country work, related to the Green Recovery Programme so as to meet the objectives of PAGE Mauritius whilst advancing national policies, strategies and programmes. PAGE is an inter-agency UN initiative established in 2013 which provides governments with a comprehensive and coordinated package of technical assistance, policy support and capacity building services to develop, adopt and implement green economy policies and strategies. The PAGE Green Recovery Programme for the period from January 2021 to April 2022 would involve seven activities. The main responsibility of the National Steering Committee would be, amongst others, the oversight management of performance of PAGE Green Recovery Fund Programme in Mauritius.

7. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security would promulgate the Sugar Insurance Fund (Reduced General Insurance Premium) Regulations 2021 with a view to exempting sugarcane planters and *métayers* producing up to 60 tons of sugar from the general insurance premium payable to the Sugar Insurance Fund Board for crop 2020 as announced in Budget Speech 2020-2021.

8. Cabinet has agreed to the renewal of the Convention on the '*Diplôme d'Etudes en Langue Française*' between the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and

Technology and the French Embassy for a period of three years on the same terms and conditions.

The '*Diplôme D'Études en Langue Française*' (DELF) is an internationally recognised French Language Proficiency Certificate awarded to candidates studying French as a foreign language. It is a requirement for those wishing to pursue higher studies in France or other francophone countries or to take up employment in sectors where competency in French Language is a prerequisite or at least desirable.

9. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation would sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the Beach Authority for the construction of a Beach Arena at the Blue Bay public beach, as mentioned in Budget Speech 2021/2022, in the context of the '*Jeux de la Commission de la Jeunesse et des Sports de l'Océan Indien 2022*'.

The Blue Bay Beach Arena would consist of five playgrounds, one for beach soccer, two for beach handball, and two for beach volley practice and competitions and would also include a health track. The new facility would initially be used for the beach games of the '*Jeux de la Commission de la Jeunesse et des Sports de l'Océan Indien*', scheduled in Mauritius in December 2022 and would, afterwards, be opened to the public.

10. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the meeting the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation had with high officials of Facebook. The discussions focused on greater collaboration in dealing with issues related to that social media platform. After discussions, it has, inter alia, been agreed that –

- (a) Facebook would enhance the review process of local contents, including timely response to requests from local authorities. For that purpose, they are envisaging to employ more Mauritian citizens, including diaspora;
- (b) CERT-MU would be the only reporting agency to Facebook to ensure consistency and efficient coordination, as is the case in other countries;
- (c) Facebook would submit a programme of technical assistance to Mauritius on emerging technologies; and
- (d) a visit by Facebook high officials in Mauritius would also be worked out to have technical working sessions with concerned authorities.

11. Cabinet has taken note of the setting up of a licensed Certification Authority at the National Computer Board for the issuance, against payment, of digital certificates which are

credentials that facilitate the verification of identities between users in a transaction and which can be used to sign information digitally and of the promulgation of the National Computer Board (Certificate Authority) Regulations 2021.

The new Certification Authority which has been named, MauSign CA, provides four categories of digital certificates, namely individual, organisation, server and application service providers with a validity of one or two years with provision for renewal. The implementation of this new service is expected to transform the landscape of electronic transactions. The National Computer Board (Certificate Authority) Regulations 2021 would be effective as from 10 August 2021, date on which MauSign CA is expected to go live.

12. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training would formulate a National Employment Policy for Mauritius. The National Employment Policy would, among others, have the following objectives –

- (a) provide a situational analysis of the Mauritian economy identifying the expressed needs, expectations and priorities for employment promotion across the whole country;
- (b) highlight the key challenges and opportunities in line with the current socio-economic context;
- (c) come up with a statement of the policy's vision, objectives, goals/ quantifiable targets and principles;
- (d) define a comprehensive and coherent set of policy priorities, outcomes, strategies for the next five years (2022-2027); and
- (e) propose a policy implementation framework and action plan with a view to promoting full, productive and freely chosen employment to align with the specific goal of SDG 8-“Decent work and Economic Growth”.

The Ministry would work in close collaboration with other Ministries and trade unions' and employers' organisations and the International Labour Organisation to formulate the policy.

13. Cabinet has taken note of the progress made in the implementation of the Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) by the Ministry of Health and Wellness. The LIMS has been implemented at the Central Health Laboratory and is currently being extended to the Flu Clinics at the five Regional Hospitals. Subsequently, the different Laboratories of the Regional Hospitals and Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Rodrigues would be equipped with the LIMS by July 2022. The LIMS would thereafter, be extended to the major health institutions, namely Souillac Hospital, the Moka Eye Hospital, the Cancer Hospital, the New ENT Hospital and the Brown Sequard Mental Health Care Centre. The overall deployment of the LIMS was expected to be completed by December 2022.

Focus was also being placed on the development of a Passenger Laboratory Information Management System in order to ease health data capture and diseases

surveillance in the context of COVID-19. An Embarkation/Disembarkation platform would also capture vaccine related information, namely vaccination status and eligibility, name of vaccine and date of administration of first and second doses. The implementation of the Digital Embarkation/Disembarkation Platform was expected to be operational shortly.

14. Cabinet has taken note of the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic prevailing across the world. Some 201.6 million cases have been reported globally, of which 181.4 million persons have been successfully treated. With regard to Mauritius, as from March 2020 to 6 August 2021, 4,849 cases (including imported cases) of COVID-19 had been registered. There were 1,501 active cases of COVID-19 in Mauritius, out of which 1,486 were local cases and 15 imported cases. Contact tracing exercises and random testing are being carried out in accordance with the established protocol.

Cabinet has also taken note that Petit Verger Prison has been converted into a COVID Treatment Centre to accommodate COVID-19 positive detainees.

Cabinet has further taken note of progress in the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme. As at 5 August 2021, 709,876 persons had received a first dose of vaccine (representing 56.1 percent of the population). 572,186 persons had received a second dose of vaccine (representing 45.2 percent of the population). Some 38,400 doses of AstraZeneca vaccines were received on 5 August 2021. A plan for future procurement of vaccines was also being worked out.

15. Cabinet has taken note of the virtual participation of the Prime Minister as a panelist in the opening plenary of the 13th US-Africa Business Summit, organised by the Corporate Council on Africa from 27 to 29 July 2021 in Washington, D.C. on the theme “New Pathways to a Stronger US-Africa Economic Partnership”. The plenary ceremony focused on the opportunities for US and African public and private sector leaders to strengthen the US-Africa economic partnership. Discussions focused on –

- (a) perspectives regarding the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which is scheduled to end in 2025, with particular attention to collaborative efforts of the US and its African partners for supporting the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and African regional integration while exploring ways to enhance and beyond AGOA;
- (b) “Prosper Africa”, a US initiative to increase investment between African nations and the US;
- (c) investments in key sectors in Africa and exploration of possible new bilateral trade agreements; and
- (d) growth of the digital economy in Africa supported by companies like Visa Inc.

During his interventions, the Prime Minister highlighted –

- (i) the excellent Mauritius-US relations and the aspirations of Mauritius for a strengthened and transformative Mauritius-US engagement, based on shared values and convergence of interests on many issues; and
- (ii) the high expectations in the African Continent for a strategic Africa-US partnership following the announcement of President Joe Biden that “America is back” and the fact that the African Continent, with its flagship AfCFTA, is primed for trade, investment and mutually beneficial partnerships.

The US Secretary of Commerce stated that it was the time for the new US Administration to strengthen the partnership with Africa, underscoring the strong “appetite” for the US private sector to do business in Africa.

16. Cabinet has taken note that the Food and Agriculture Organization would allocate USD400,000 to the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security under the Technical Cooperation Programme (Emergency Assistance) to further support the Foot and Mouth Disease vaccination campaign by procuring the required vaccines together with any other additional support.

17. Cabinet has taken note that following the detection of the Tomato Mottle Mosaic Virus (ToMMV), in February 2021, various biosecurity measures were immediately taken by the National Plant Protection Office in collaboration with the Entomology Division of the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security to contain and eradicate the source of infection. The measures adopted have successfully prevented the spread of the ToMMV disease in other tomato and solanaceous cultivations around the island. As at date, no new cases of ToMMV have been detected. Pest Surveillance was underway across the country.

18. Cabinet has taken note that on 28 July 2021, a stretch of road along Leckraz Lane, Congomah collapsed due to major cracks. The Geotechnical Unit of the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development and relevant authorities effected site visits thereat. The National Development Unit has already taken remedial measures for the works to be carried out for –

- (a) the construction of approximately 250 metres of reinforced concrete retaining wall at the affected locations; and
- (b) the construction of 300 metres of drains and associated road works.

The project is expected to be completed by early December 2021.

19. Cabinet has taken note of progress achieved in the past Financial Year, by Ministries/Departments in the implementation of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) introduced to support the Public Sector Business Transformation Strategy, namely relating to E-procurement, Training Budget and Corruption Risk Assessment. The following KPIs would be used in Financial Year 2021-2022 –

- (a) Utilisation of Training Budget by Ministries and Departments;
- (b) Implementation of Phase II of the e-HR System;
- (c) Compliance of Buildings Housing Public Officers with Fire Safety Requirements;
- (d) Prescription of Scheme of Service; and
- (e) Good Governance.

20. Cabinet has taken note of the activities that the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation would organise in the context of the International Youth Day 2021, observed on 12 August. The theme chosen by the United Nations for this year is “Transforming Food Systems: Youth Innovation for Human and Planetary Health”. The following activities would be organised –

- (a) the Ministry would stream on its Facebook page, as well as on the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, pre-recorded videos of young people engaged in the transformation of food production systems;
- (b) an online symposium would be held on food production systems;
- (c) in order to raise awareness on the importance of youth engagement and youth empowerment, eight groups of six young persons would participate in a roadshow, in the morning on 12 August 2021 during traffic peak hours at eight locations; and
- (d) young people aged between 14 to 35 years old would be invited to participate in a video competition and submit short videos that feature youth-to-youth messages on the chosen theme.
