

HIGHLIGHTS OF CABINET MEETING – FRIDAY 15 OCTOBER 2021

1. Cabinet has agreed to the introduction of the Offshore Petroleum Bill into the National Assembly. The object of the Bill is to repeal the Petroleum Act, a legislation which dates back to the year 1970, and replace it with a new and more appropriate regulatory regime for the conduct of petroleum activities in the seabed and subsoil areas of the maritime zones of Mauritius, such as the prospecting, exploration, retention and production of petroleum. The Department for Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones Administration and Exploration of the Prime Minister's Office shall, amongst its other functions, be the regulatory body for petroleum activities in the maritime zones of Mauritius and shall, inter alia, -

- (a) regulate, monitor and oversee petroleum activities;
- (b) be responsible for the issue of prospecting permits, exploration licences, retention licences and production licences;
- (c) negotiate, on behalf of the Government, prospecting agreements and petroleum agreements;
- (d) facilitate the conduct of petroleum activities;
- (e) develop strategies and policies to minimise and manage the impacts of petroleum activities in the marine environment;
- (f) advise the Minister in the formulation, planning and management of policies in relation to petroleum activities; and
- (g) do such other things as may be necessary for the conduct of petroleum activities.

In addition, all sovereign rights to petroleum contained in the seabed and subsoil areas of the maritime zones shall vest, and shall always be deemed to have been vested, in the State of Mauritius.

2. Cabinet has agreed to Mauritius signing a Protocol with the Federal Republic of Germany to amend the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) between the two countries. The objective of the current Protocol is to amend the DTAA so that it complies with the Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) project recommendations. The Protocol, would incorporate in the Agreement, the following new provisions –

- (a) a statement in the Preamble to emphasise that the intention of both countries is to eliminate double taxation, without creating opportunities for non-taxation or reduced taxation through tax evasion or avoidance;

- (b) the possibility for a taxpayer to have recourse to arbitration where a tax dispute cannot be resolved by the competent authorities within a period of three years after the case has been referred for consideration; and
- (c) to clarify the cases which are not eligible for arbitration.

3. Cabinet has agreed to the adoption of an injury protocol for reporting, handling and administration of injury and illness at the workplace in Ministries and Departments. The protocol would greatly help public organisations to put in place an effective reporting and recording mechanism. The benefits accruing from the adoption of the protocol include, amongst others, the following -

- (a) improvement of compliance with the Occupational Safety and Health Act;
- (b) paving the way for the implementation of the Occupational Safety and Health Management System in accordance with the norms of ISO 45001;
- (c) avoiding complex litigations; and
- (d) enhancement of the image of Government as a caring employer.

4. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of a Joint Declaration for extension of the existing Memorandum of Understanding on the Establishment of a Chair in Ayurveda, between the University of Mauritius and the Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences under the Ministry of AYUSH, Government of the Republic of India, for a period of three years. The Memorandum of Understanding provides, inter alia, for a Chair in Ayurveda to be set up at the University of Mauritius to –

- (a) undertake academic and research activities in Ayurveda, in accordance with the requirements of the University of Mauritius;
- (b) act as credible source of AYUSH related information for the Republic of Mauritius; and
- (c) advocate the safe use of Ayurveda in the Republic of Mauritius.

5. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on a framework for collaboration and mutual cooperation between the Construction Industry Development Board and the University of Mauritius. The following areas would be covered –

- (a) collaboration in research, teaching and learning in fields of common interest;

- (b) collaboration in the exchange of educational resource materials and publications that are of mutual interest;
- (c) identification of special short-term academic programmes and projects of mutual benefit to both institutions;
- (d) development and running of short courses aimed at capacity building of SME contractors operating in the construction industry;
- (e) development and running of short courses for consultants operating in the construction sector;
- (f) organisation of Continuing Professional Development programmes, including training sessions and workshops, to cater for the needs of local contractors; and
- (g) research work on topics that are relevant to the needs of the construction industry.

6. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping would sign an amended “Small Scale Funding Agreement” with the United Nations Environment Programme in relation to the implementation of the project “Assessment of Blue Carbon Ecosystem (Seagrass) around the island of Mauritius: Relevance for Marine Spatial Planning”. The main objectives of the project would be –

- (a) the production of a map depicting the distribution and diversity of seagrass species in the lagoons of Mauritius;
- (b) the establishment of long-term monitoring stations; and
- (c) the collection of data on seagrass and the carbon storage capacity of the different species of seagrass around Mauritius.

7. Cabinet has taken note of the inauguration of the Ground Station of the first Mauritian Satellite on 07 October 2021 and of action being taken by the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation to pursue Government’s agenda in the field of Space Research and Technology. With a view to controlling and commanding the Mauritian Nano Satellite, a Ground Station together with related antennas, has been set up at the Ebène Heights Building, on the premises of the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council. The satellite is able to take pictures of Mauritius and its surroundings when it passes over the region. The Ground Station is also able to capture data from other low orbiting satellites and is helping to build capacity in satellite/space technology.

The official inauguration of the Ground Station was performed by the Prime Minister, in the presence of the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan, the High Commissioner of the Republic of India and other officials on 07 October 2021.

8. Cabinet has agreed to the proposal of the Mauritius Ports Authority to name the new cruise terminal facility in the port area at Les Salines as the “Port Louis Cruise Terminal”. The Mauritius Ports Authority is undertaking the construction of a cruise terminal building at Les Salines which comprises the terminal building and the associated area for passenger cars, taxis and shuttle buses. The project is scheduled to be completed by the first quarter of 2022. The cruise terminal would be fully operational by mid-next year in time to cater for the 2022/2023 cruise season.

9. Cabinet has taken note that the 32nd National Crisis Committee on Wakashio was held recently. The purpose of the Committee was to look into the restarting of the removal of the aft part of the Wakashio wreck, which could not be carried out since March 2021 due to bad sea state and weather conditions. The National Crisis Committee was apprised that Lianyungang Dali Underwater Engineering Co Ltd and Hong Kong Lidada Ocean Engineering Co Ltd, which had been appointed by Japan P&I Club and the owner, had mobilised the logistics and were ready to restart the operations. The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre would be on site at Blue Bay Command Centre for coordination purposes as from the start of the wreck removal operations.

10. Cabinet has taken note of the activities being organised by the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security in the context of the World Food Day, celebrated on 16 October every year to mark the foundation of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). The theme for this year is ‘*Our Actions are Our Future. Better Production, Better Nutrition, a Better Environment and a Better Life*’. At national level, the theme chosen is ‘*Manz Seki Nou Prodwir, Prodwir Seki Nou Manze*’.

The Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security would organise an Agricultural Exhibition and a Culinary Competition on 16 October 2021 at the Plaine des Papayes Multipurpose Complex. The agricultural exhibition/fair would involve the participation of the Agricultural and the Forestry Services, the Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute, the Agricultural Marketing Board and other parastatal bodies. They would have the opportunity to showcase their activities and the numerous services they offer. Fruit trees, decorative and endemic plants, vegetables, day old chicks and agro-processed foods would be sold at promotional prices to the public. Fruit Fly baits would also be distributed freely to visitors. The objective of the Culinary Competition is to promote local products and dishes.

11. Cabinet has taken note that 1,111 applications for Premium Visa have been received as at 30 September 2021 and 750 applications which fulfilled the required criteria, have been approved.

12. Cabinet has taken note of the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic prevailing across the world. Some 240 million cases have been reported globally, of which 217.3 million persons have been successfully treated.

With regard to Mauritius, as at 14 October 2021, there were 451 active cases of COVID-19, out of which 31 were admitted at New ENT Hospital including five on ventilators. Over the period 07 October to 13 October 2021, 20 deaths were attributed to COVID-19.

Cabinet has also taken note that there were two active cases in Rodrigues. Both were returning Rodriguans who were in quarantine.

Cabinet has further taken note of progress in the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme. As at 13 October 2021, 884,765 persons had received a first dose of vaccine (representing 69.9 percent of the population). 831,918 persons had been fully vaccinated (representing 65.7 percent of the population). 10,968 persons had received a booster dose. 20,124 adolescents aged between 15 to 17 years had received a first dose of vaccine.

Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Health and Wellness has made the following Regulations/Notices –

- (a) Consolidated COVID-19 (Amendment) Regulations 2021;
- (b) Notice under Regulation 4(2)(d) of the Consolidated COVID-19 Regulations 2021; and
- (c) Notice under Regulation 14(a) of the Consolidated COVID-19 Regulations 2021.

13. Cabinet has taken note of the activities being organised by the Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage in collaboration with the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture on 27 October 2021 at La Tour Koenig, Pointe Aux Sables to mark the 35th Anniversary of the Centre. The 35th Anniversary coincides with the celebration of “*La Journée Internationale Créole*”, and the following activities would be organised –

- (a) projection of a video clip on the history of the Centre from its official inauguration on 27 October 1986 to date;
- (b) projection of a video clip on La Tour Koenig and its conversion by the Centre into an Art Space;
- (c) unveiling of an inaugural plaque by the Prime Minister and launching of the “*Lespas Lar*” at La Tour Koenig;

- (d) opening of an exhibition on the creation of the Centre with emphasis on the inauguration of the Centre by Late Sir Anerood Jugnauth; and
- (e) a Sound and Light Show with mapping on La Tour Koenig.

14. Cabinet has taken note of the activities being organised by the Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage, in collaboration with ISM (Mauritius) Ltd on 20 October 2021 at the Ex-Military Hospital, Port Louis following the completion of Phase 1 of the Intercontinental Slavery Museum Project. The following activities would be organised at the ex- Military Hospital, Port Louis –

- (a) a slam on slavery entitled “*Rakont mwa gran mama*”;
- (b) a presentation of a documentary on the Ex-Military Hospital, “*Lopital Militer, Enn Fitir Sit de Konsians*”;
- (c) the launching of the publication on the outcome of the public consultation exercise; and
- (d) a guided visit of the rehabilitated Wing A of the Ex- Military Hospital and exhibition on the outcome of the Public Consultation exercise entitled “*Ki mize lesklavaz pou enn lil Moris modern*”.

15. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change would hold a two-day Consultative Workshop on “*Plastic-Free Mauritius: Defining the Roadmap*” with assistance from the United Nations Development Programme Country Office, on 18 and 19 October 2021. The aim of the Workshop is to provide a forum for national dialogue among key stakeholders to forge the way towards the elaboration of the roadmap. The platform would serve to raise awareness on the measures, policies, and institutional and legal framework to tackle plastic pollution; identify existing gaps and opportunities; and take on board the suggestions of key stakeholders towards the development of the roadmap.

As a side-event to the Workshop, an expo-vente was also being planned to sensitise members of the public on plastic products that have been banned under the Environment Protection (Control of Single Use Plastic Products) Regulations 2020 and the Environment Protection (Banning of Plastic Bags) Regulations 2020.

16. Cabinet has taken note of the status of road capital projects being implemented across the island by the Road Development Authority as at 30 September 2021, for which an amount of Rs3.9 billion is available in the current financial year.

17. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development participated in the 2021 Edition of the Sovereign Investor Forum, held virtually by Standard Chartered Bank on the sidelines of the 2021 Annual Meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank Group. The Sovereign Investor Forum is an annual event whereby sovereign countries' representatives update international investors on the latest economic developments and opportunities in their respective countries. More than 500 major investors participated in the conference and they represent the largest and most impactful investors in the world. These investors include sovereign investment funds, development banks, asset managers, commercial banks, insurance companies and corporate treasuries.

The Minister gave an insight on the macro-economic situation as well as the opportunities for investment in Mauritius. He also provided an overview of the strong measures taken to minimise the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

18. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent mission of the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities to the United Arab Emirates, in the context of the Expo 2020 Dubai. The Minister participated as Speaker and Panelist at the Session "Advancing RE Transition in SIDS: Challenges, Opportunities and COP26". The Session in which the Minister participated was a two-part event, hosted by the Government of UAE, the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD), the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) and Masdar, and focused on improving access to finance the global energy transition with a spotlight on Small Island Developing States (SIDS). During the first part of the event, the Energy Transition Accelerator Financing Platform was launched. During his intervention, the Minister elaborated on the major achievements in the renewable energy and energy efficiency sector in Mauritius.

The Minister had a joint meeting with the Director-General of the ADFD and the Acting Director General of the Abu Dhabi Export Office and discussed the assistance of ADFD to Mauritius and strengthening of the collaboration to enable implementation of critical projects for the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities to meet its targets for Renewable Energy. The Minister also met the Director-General of IRENA and the CEO of Masdar. The Masdar City has been intelligently designed to offer the highest quality of life within the lowest environmental footprint.

19. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent mission of the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change to Paris, where he attended the economic event "Ambition Africa" 2021. The event was organised by the French "*Ministère de l'Economie, des Finances et de la Relance*". The Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change was one of the four speakers for the Round Table discussions on the theme "*Eau et déchets: quels enjeux soulevés par la crise sanitaire?*". In his intervention, he laid emphasis on the supply/availability of potable water on practically the whole island and the role of Government in the distribution of drinking water. The private sector's contributions in the implementation of water treatment and infrastructural projects were also highlighted.

He also discussed on the concept of the Extended Producer Responsibility to involve the importers and producers of electrical and electronic goods for their sustainable use and disposal. The Minister seized the opportunity to meet Mr Charles Trottmann, Director of “Trois Océans”, a major department of the “*Agence Française de Développement*” (AFD) responsible for AFD funded projects in the Small Island Developing States in the Indian, Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and discussions focused on climate change, its impact on Mauritius and the challenges of the island to implement climate change adaptation projects funded by the AFD.

20. Cabinet has taken note of the reconstitution of the Board of the National Wage Consultative Council, with Mr Beejaye Coomar Appanna as Chairperson.
