

HIGHLIGHTS OF CABINET MEETING – FRIDAY 21 OCTOBER 2022

1. Cabinet has agreed to the introduction of the Dangerous Drugs (Amendment) Bill into the National Assembly. The main object of the Bill is to amend the Dangerous Drugs Act so as to implement the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry on Drug Trafficking (2018). Accordingly, where a person is suspected of having committed a drug offence for his personal consumption, he will, on the recommendation of the Director of Public Prosecutions, not be prosecuted for that offence but will instead be referred to the Drug Users Administrative Panel (DUAP). On being referred to the DUAP, the drug user will be directed to undergo rehabilitation such as education, counselling, treatment, aftercare, social reintegration or any other therapy at a public health institution or such other institutions as the Ministry of Health and Wellness may approve. The Panel will monitor the progress of the drug user during the period of rehabilitation and will assist the drug user to overcome his addiction to drugs.

The Bill also makes provisions for a patient to be treated with medicinal cannabis where that patient suffers from specific therapeutic conditions and those therapeutic conditions have failed to respond to conventional treatment. A Medicinal Cannabis Therapeutic Committee will be set up in every regional hospital and will, on a case to case basis, determine whether a patient needs medicinal cannabis for his treatment. The use, dispensing and importation of medicinal cannabis will be supervised by the Ministry of Health and Wellness under very strict conditions.

The Forensic Science Laboratory will be empowered, as is the case in other several jurisdictions, to analyse a sample of dangerous drugs seized rather than analysing all the dangerous drugs seized. In addition, the Police will be given wider powers so as to enable it to detect drug offences and will, on the order of a District Magistrate, be able to destroy dangerous drugs seized rather than keeping same to be produced in Court.

2. Cabinet has agreed to the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development conveying instructions to the Attorney General's Office for the drafting of an appropriate legislation with regard to the setting up of a Construction Industry Authority and a Construction Industry Training Council. One of the measures announced in Budget Speech 2022-2023 is the merging of the Construction Industry Development Board and the Building Control Advisory Council into the Construction Industry Authority as well as the setting up of a Construction Industry Training Council.

3. Cabinet has agreed to instructions being conveyed to the Attorney General's Office for the drafting of the Protection from Domestic Violence (Amendment) Bill 2022 with a view to reinforcing the legal parameters to protect victims of domestic violence and making the perpetrator of domestic violence accountable for his or her behaviour and acts through mandatory provisions. Consultations have been held with key stakeholders regarding the proposed amendments to be made to the Protection from Domestic Violence Act.

4. Cabinet has agreed to the accession of the Republic of Mauritius to the Hague Agreement concerning the international registration of Industrial Designs. The Hague Agreement is an international registration system which offers the possibility of obtaining protection for industrial designs in a number of States and intergovernmental organisations by means of a single international application with the International Bureau of the World Intellectual Property Organization. Some of the advantages of acceding to the Hague Agreement are –

- (a) the international registration of industrial designs would result in simplified registration procedures and Industrial Property portfolio management;
- (b) there would be savings in terms of costs inasmuch as an applicant can obtain protection for his designs in multiple jurisdictions with a minimum of formalities; and
- (c) it provides for a streamlined mechanism for the maintenance and management of industrial design rights.

5. Cabinet has agreed to the accession of the Republic of Mauritius to the Madrid Protocol concerning the International Registration of Marks. The Madrid System for the International Registration of Marks is governed by the Madrid Agreement concluded in 1891 and the Protocol relating to that Agreement was concluded in 1989.

The system makes it possible to protect a mark in a large number of countries by obtaining an international registration that has effect in each of the designated Contracting Parties. The Protocol makes it possible to file an application for the registration of a trademark in a large number of countries by filing an international application.

6. Cabinet has taken note that the following Regulations would be promulgated –

- (a) the Income Tax (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2022 which would allow the additional deduction in respect of a child pursuing tertiary studies to be claimed for a maximum period of six years instead of six consecutive years;
- (b) the Income Tax (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2022 which would update the PAYE formula following the reduction in tax rate from 15 percent to 12.5 percent for individuals earning annual net income above Rs700,000 and not exceeding Rs975,000, and also legislate for the information currently being requested on a monthly basis by the Mauritius Revenue Authority from employers to be able to pay the CSG income allowance of Rs1,000 to employees earning a gross income of up to Rs50,000; and
- (c) the Mauritius Revenue Authority (Alternative Tax Dispute Resolution) (Amendment) Regulations 2022 which would now enable the Alternative Tax Dispute Resolution panel to entertain cases where the tax in dispute exceeds Rs5 million.

7. Cabinet has taken note that the Insurance (Third-Party Administrators) Regulations 2022 would be promulgated. It was announced in Budget Speech 2021-2022 that the Insurance Act would be amended to cater for licensing and regulatory requirements for Third-Party Administrators. The Regulations would provide a structured environment for Third-Party Administrators to operate in the best interest of policyholders. A Third-Party Administrator is defined as a person who, with the authority of an insurer, provides specific services under a service agreement to policyholders.

8. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Public Service Commission of Mauritius and All India Institute Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi.

The objectives of the Memorandum of Understanding are, inter-alia, to assist the Public Service Commission in the –

- (a) setting of question papers; and
- (b) marking answer scripts for the enlistment of Medical and Health Officers/ Senior Medical and Health Officers and Dental Surgeons/Senior Dental Surgeons.

9. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Economic Development Board and the Eastern Africa Association. Partnering with the Eastern Africa Association which is an association regrouping investors and corporations within the Eastern African region, would increase the prospects of those investors and corporations to use Mauritius as the platform for investment into the eastern African region.

The Memorandum of Understanding has the following main objectives –

- (a) establishing a practical framework for cooperation and collaboration with regard to investment, trade promotion and facilitation;
- (b) maintaining a continuous working relationship for the promotion of the partnership between both parties; and
- (c) strengthening institutional relations and identifying areas of comparative advantage, competence and complementarity.

10. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping and the Mauritius Prison Service. The Ministry is collaborating with the Prison Service under the Pay Back Mauritius Scheme which helps to improve facilities for public use and at the same time supports the reintegration of inmates into the mainstream society by helping them build their self-esteem, unleash their skills and contribute to the upgrading of the environment.

Both Parties intend to use the existing Pay Back Mauritius Scheme for collaborative training to detainees in renovation work and other related activities for the rehabilitation of Government buildings falling under the purview of the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping.

11. Cabinet has agreed, in principle, to action being initiated regarding the implementation of a Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Project by the Central Electricity Board (CEB) to meet electricity demand and ensure security of supply. The operating capability of the LNG Thermal Power Plant would enable the integration of additional intermittent renewable energy to create a cleaner, greener and a more climate resilient country as announced in Budget Speech 2022-2023. A plot of land of an extent of two Hectares has already been earmarked in the Port area for the implementation of the first planned LNG power plant.

A Steering Committee would be set up to discuss the implementation thereof, including sourcing of the LNG, the setting up of the LNG Facility at the Port and the infrastructure to bring the LNG onshore to the Power Station as well as the construction of the Power Plant/s.

12. Cabinet has agreed to the launching of a Request For Proposal for the setting up and operation of an Integrated Waste Processing Facility on a Design-Build-Own-Operate project model of the Public-Private Partnership. The project would consist of the setting up and operation of an Integrated Waste Processing Facility with a composting plant, a sorting unit and might include a Refuse-Derived Fuel manufacturing unit. The composting plant would process a mix of food wastes and garden wastes. The sorting unit would process dry recyclable materials such as paper, plastics, cartons and metals while the Refuse-Derived Fuel manufacturing plant would process mostly wood wastes.

13. Cabinet has taken note that tablets, projectors and notebooks would be procured for the implementation of Phase IV of the Early Digital Learning Programme. The aim of the project is to induce a paradigm shift in teaching and learning through the use of digital tools right from an early age.

14. Cabinet has agreed to the provision of paraphernalia kits to Injecting Drug Users of the Needle Exchange Programme of the Ministry of Health and Wellness. Given the scientific evidence that HIV and Hepatitis C could be transmitted through the sharing of drug paraphernalia, the High-Level Drugs and HIV Council, chaired by the Prime Minister, has decided to offer the full package of consumables to the Needle Exchange Programme clients.

In addition to syringes and needles, a full paraphernalia kit would also be given to Injecting Drug Users on a daily basis. The HIV and AIDS Act would be amended for the inclusion of paraphernalia kits.

15. Cabinet has taken note that ship-to-ship bunkering activities outside the port limits of Port Louis would not be allowed due to the potential environmental risk associated with ship-to-ship bunker transfer outside port limits at high seas and also the considerable amount of fuel transferred during one operation.

16. Cabinet has taken note of the status regarding the implementation of the Premium Visa regime as at 30 September 2022. Some 3,545 applications were received from mid-November 2020 to 30 September 2022, out of which –

- (a) 2,648 applications have been approved;
- (b) 452 applications have not been entertained for not fulfilling the required criteria;
- (c) 398 applications were incomplete and awaiting missing documents; and
- (d) 47 applications were set aside as applicants were no longer interested in the Premium Visa scheme.

17. Cabinet has agreed to the Special Education Needs Authority being governed by the Pay Research Bureau for its general and specific conditions of service as well as its pay and grading structure.

18. Cabinet has taken note of the activities that the Ministry of Health and Wellness would organise to mark World Diabetes Day 2022, observed on 14 November. The theme for this year is “Education to protect tomorrow”. The official launching of World Diabetes Day 2022 would be held on Monday 14 November 2022 at Sir Harilal Vaghjee Memorial Hall. The Ministry of Health and Wellness, in collaboration with the Prime Minister’s Office and the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms, would organise the following –

- (a) the launching of Health Promotion Clubs for Ministries/Departments;
- (b) the screening and counseling for Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) for all public officers targeting some 80,000 officers;
- (c) an exhibition on health-related issues; and
- (d) talks on diabetes and associated risk factors.

Other activities would include -

- (i) the screening for NCDs, including diabetes, in the community and at worksites;
- (ii) distribution of pamphlets on diabetes related topics to sensitise the public; and
- (iii) talks on the risk factors of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus and special interventions on MBC TV and radio.

19. Cabinet has taken note of arrangements made by the Central Electricity Board (CEB), the Central Water Authority (CWA) and the Wastewater Management Authority (WMA) with regard to the provision of electricity, water and sanitation services in the context of the celebration of the Divali festival.

Stand-by teams of the CWA, CEB and WMA would be available round the clock for any emergency and the hotlines would be available on a 24-hour basis.

20. Cabinet has taken note of the projects being implemented under the Enhancement of Work Environment Programme (EWEP) and the Improvement of Counter/Customer Services (ICCS) Schemes across the Public Service during the current Financial Year. The Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms received 327 projects under the EWEP and 84 projects under the ICCS Schemes for consideration, following a call for project proposals in August 2022. After a screening exercise, the Ministry has retained 179 projects under the EWEP and 41 projects under the ICCS Schemes based on their viability, impact on service delivery and welfare of the public officers.

21. Cabinet has taken note of the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic prevailing in Mauritius. As at 19 October 2022, there were 39 active cases of COVID-19, out of which 16 were admitted at the New ENT Hospital. Over the period 13 to 19 October 2022, no death was attributed to COVID-19.

22. Cabinet has taken note that there is no suspected case of Monkeypox in Mauritius.

23. Cabinet has taken note that the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, in collaboration with the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre and other relevant stakeholders would organise a “Regional training workshop on measuring the effectiveness of multi-hazard early warning systems (MHEWS) in the Indian Ocean” from 03 to 04 November 2022 and a symbolic march to commemorate the World Tsunami Awareness Day on 05 November 2022, in Mauritius.

The regional workshop is within the project framework of the Climate Risk Early Warning Systems Global Initiative titled “*Supporting regional cooperation to strengthen seamless operational forecasting and multi-hazard early warning systems at national level in the South-West Indian Ocean*”. The aim of the regional workshop would be to strengthen capacities of national disaster risk management offices and their partners in developing and implementing early warning systems. Some 30 government representatives from the Comoros, Madagascar, Seychelles, Mozambique and Mauritius would attend the workshop.

24. Cabinet has taken note of the activities that would be organised by the Ministry of Land Transport and Light Rail over three days, as from 20 November 2022, in the context of the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims, commemorated on the third Sunday of November each year. The chosen slogan and theme for this year are 'We do NOT want MORE victims to remember, we want to live our lives TOGETHER' and 'JUSTICE', respectively. The following activities would be organised in order to sensitise the population on road safety issues –

- (a) a 'Mass' at Sainte Famille Church, Rose Belle, on Sunday 20 November 2022;
- (b) inauguration of a Stele at Gandhi Square, Rose Belle, on Sunday 20 November 2022 in the memory of the victims of the road accident which occurred on 12 May 1975 at Baramia, Rose Belle, followed by a wreath laying ceremony at the Stele;
- (c) a Road Safety Day with the collaboration of the Senior Citizens Council would be organised at *Salle des Fêtes*, Plaza, Rose Hill, on Wednesday 23 November 2022; and
- (d) an Award Ceremony for the Road Safety Slam Competition at Wolmar Public Beach on Friday 25 November 2022.

25. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, would organise a national workshop on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) on 09 and 10 November 2022. The aim of the workshop would be to sensitise national stakeholders, both from the public and private sectors, on the state of play of the AfCFTA negotiations, in particular the forthcoming Protocol on Women and Youth in trade as well as inform them of opportunities and challenges arising on the African Continent under the Agreement.

The study entitled "The Mauritian Strategy to leverage the opportunities in the AfCFTA", would also be officially launched during the workshop.

26. Cabinet has taken note that an International Conference on Digital Economy and Digital Banking would be held in Mauritius on 31 October and 01 November 2022. The Conference which is being organised jointly by the Bank of Mauritius and the Economic Development Board under the patronage of the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, would provide a platform for Mauritius and other African States to discuss the opportunities and challenges arising from the digitalisation of the economy and the banking sector.

Mr Mathias Cormann, the Secretary-General of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, has confirmed his participation at the Conference and would deliver a keynote address. Ministers of Finance and Governors of Central Banks of African States as well as high-level representatives of regional and international institutions would also participate in the Conference.

27. Cabinet has taken note that a national event would be organised to mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2022 on Saturday 03 December 2022 at the J & J Auditorium, Phoenix. Some 2,300 persons with disabilities, including representatives from NGOs are expected to attend the event which would, inter alia, comprise a cultural programme.

28. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent mission of the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism to Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, in the context of the 65th Meeting of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Commission for Africa (CAF). Prior to the Meeting, the Deputy Prime Minister was invited by the Tanzanian Prime Minister for a one-to-one meeting, during which they exchanged views on, inter alia, the global political situation and the relaunch of the tourism industry, including the challenges facing the sector. They also deliberated on the need for the UNWTO to consider Africa a priority for tourism development.

During the CAF session, the Secretary-General of the UNWTO presented a report on the strategic objectives and priorities for the region, based on the realignment of the priority areas of the agenda for “Africa-Tourism for inclusive Growth”. A Forum on the theme “Rebuilding Africa’s Tourism Resilience for Inclusive Socio-Economic Development” was also held and the Deputy Prime Minister intervened as a Panelist in the session on “Pathways to tourism recovery and the role of regional integration”. He had the opportunity to meet and discuss with the Ministers of Tourism of the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Madagascar, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Tanzania.

29. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent mission of the Minister of Financial Services and Governance to UK and Germany. The Minister participated in the 9th Edition of the Africa Financial Services Investment Conference (AFSIC) 2022. The AFSIC is a highly focused investment event and is one of the most important Africa investor events globally. More than 1,500 of Africa’s most important investors, financial intermediaries and business leaders attended the Conference.

In the margins of AFSIC in London, the Minister had bilateral meetings with Gillian Keegan, UK Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for Africa), the Rt. Hon. Vincent Keaveny, Lord Mayor of the City of London, and the British International Investment. He also attended various working sessions with a number of international law firms. A presentation on the investment opportunities and panoply of products and services offered by the Mauritius International Financial Centre (IFC) was made to all of them

In Frankfurt, Germany, the Minister had a meeting with representatives of KfW, a Development Financial Institution. The main objective was to share the positive development of the Mauritius IFC and assure the KfW that they can continue to use Mauritius as a platform to monitor their investment interests across Africa.

30. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent mission of the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation to Romania, where he attended part of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Plenipotentiary Conference 2022. The theme of the Conference was *“Connect and Unite”*. Mauritius was elected as a member of ITU Council for the term 2023-2026 in Region D – Africa.

In the margins of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference 2022, the Minister participated in a Ministerial Round Table under the theme “Building a better digitalised future for all”, organised by the Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitalisation of the Government of Romania. He also attended a Consultation meeting on the Global Digital Compact chaired by the United Nations Secretary-General’s Envoy on Technology, Under-Secretary-General Amandeep Singh Gill.

31. Cabinet has taken note that the COMESA Business Council Board (CBC) and Management has announced the appointment of Mr Teddy Yagambaram Soobramanien as Chief Executive Officer of CBC as from 01 November 2022. Mr Soobramanien has held several leading positions in international organisations.
