

HIGHLIGHTS OF CABINET MEETING – FRIDAY 04 FEBRUARY 2022

1. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the National Crisis Committee meeting held on 02 February 2022 at the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre in connection with the intense tropical cyclone Batsirai. Various Ministers as well as representatives from key Ministries/Departments and Business Mauritius were present. The Prime Minister also joined the meeting to take stock of the situation and actions being taken by the Ministries/Departments concerned.

2. Cabinet has taken note that following the passage of cyclone Batsirai, the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development would mobilise some Rs600 million to assist –

- (a) non-sugar planters registered with the Small Farmers Welfare Fund;
- (b) families affected by the cyclone based on police survey; and
- (c) for urgent repairs of public infrastructure and amenities damaged by the cyclone.

Furthermore, in addition to the bad weather allowance, the Fishermen Welfare Fund would provide a special support to those fishermen affected by the cyclone.

Cabinet has also taken note that the Development Bank of Mauritius would extend a new Rehabilitation Loan Scheme for sugar cane planters, vegetable, fruits and flower growers affected by cyclone Batsirai.

3. Cabinet has taken note that the utility services have been impacted to varying extents due to the intense gusts and heavy rain caused by cyclone Batsirai. The Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities, the Central Electricity Board, the Central Water Authority and the Wastewater Management Authority had been monitoring the situation regularly and emergency repairs were effected to the network.

4. Cabinet has taken note that following the passage of cyclone Batsirai from 01 to 02 February 2022, the Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (FAREI) and the Small Farmers Welfare Fund (SFWF) have conducted preliminary surveys to assess the extent of damage caused to open fields and sheltered plantations. Significant damage has been reported in vegetables, fruits and flowers plantations as a result of heavy and persistent rainfall as well as strong winds. The Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security would also take the following measures –

- (a) provision of 193 kg of tomato, bean, cucumber, squash and pumpkin seeds to small planters; and
- (b) import of vegetables such as carrot, bean and cabbage by the Agricultural Marketing Board (AMB) to cater for the shortage of supply on the market.

The AMB would import some 1,018 tons and 716 tons of potatoes which are expected to reach Mauritius on 08 and 14 February 2022, respectively. The AMB would also import some 50 tons of carrots, 2.5 tons of beans and 100 tons of cabbages.

Cabinet has also taken note that cyclone Batsirai has not caused significant damage to sugar cane. As at now, the rain is considered beneficial to the cane crop.

As regards Rodrigues, there has been no adverse effect on the agricultural sector.

5. Cabinet has taken note that following the passage of cyclone Batsirai in Mauritius, officers of the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change effected surveys across the island to –

- (a) carry out preliminary assessments of the impacts of the cyclone along the coastline;
- (b) monitor environmental issues including the discharge of effluents in industries and malls which were operating; and
- (c) follow up on compliance with the conditions of the Environmental Impact Assessment licences on some sensitive projects and Preliminary Environmental Report approvals.

6. Cabinet has taken note of the rescue operations of the crew members of Vessel MT Tresta Star flying Mauritian Flag carried out under the instructions of the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre Reunion near the south-eastern coast of Reunion Island. The 11 crew members were successfully evacuated and are safe.

7. Cabinet has agreed to the Road Development Authority implementing the construction of a bridge and the associated works at Holyrood, Vacoas project. The existing bridge, which is in a degraded state, is very narrow with a width of 2.9 metres, allowing traffic along one way only at a time, thus resulting in major traffic jam during peak hours. The bridge is characterised by a sag curve with sharp bends and limited visibility, representing a safety hazard for vehicular traffic.

8. Cabinet has agreed to the Road Development Authority (RDA) implementing a new policy for granting of wayleave to private institutions to carry out works along classified roads. With a view to adopting a harmonised approach for both public and private organisations when processing applications for wayleaves and, in a bid to ensure the proper rehabilitation of Motorways and classified roads to the required standards, the RDA is proposing to adopt the following policy for underground works to be undertaken by private institutions –

- (a) the private institution would have to submit an application for the wayleave with all the details, namely the location and the site plan, the nature of the works and a programme of work with its duration, amongst others;

- (b) the RDA would thereafter carry out a site visit to assess the requested works in connection with the wayleave;
- (c) the application would be evaluated by the Wayleave Committee at the level of the RDA; and
- (d) upon approval of the wayleave, various conditions would have to be fulfilled including the submission of a bank guarantee of Rs10M for major works and Rs10M deposit for minor works by the applicant and an undertaking that services would be relocated at the applicant's own costs within two weeks upon request by the RDA.

9. Cabinet has taken note that the National Land Transport Authority (NLTA) would, in the context of the COVID-19 situation in Rodrigues, extend the delay for the renewal of Motor Vehicle Licences in respect of motor vehicle owners in Rodrigues. The Rodrigues Regional Assembly has decided, amongst others, to proceed with the closure of all its Cash Offices, including those of the NLTA as from 31 January 2022, which would remain in force until further notice.

The delay for the renewal of Motor Vehicle Licences would be extended so that vehicle owners in Rodrigues whose licences expired at the end of January 2022 are granted with a delay to renew their Motor Vehicle Licences and are exempted from the payment of the surcharge provided that the Motor Vehicle Licence is renewed not later than 28 February 2022.

The Vehicle Examination Centre in Rodrigues would not be operational for the conduct of fitness tests. A vehicle whose fitness certificate has lapsed during the period of sanitary restrictions would be allowed to operate only in the event that the vehicle has a valid insurance cover. The vehicle owner would, however, need to proceed to the Vehicle Examination Centre as soon as the Cash Offices of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly are operational. As regards insurance, vehicle owners would need to liaise directly with their insurance companies or agents for the renewal thereof.

10. Cabinet has taken note that the temporary closure of the B104 Road from Case Noyale to Chamarel, in view of major excavation works being carried out in the context of the ongoing project for Landslide/Slope Stability Treatment Along Baie Du Cap – Chamarel - Case Noyale - La Gaulette Road, by the Road Development Authority, has been extended for a further period of three months, so as to ensure timely completion of the project. The traffic from Chamarel to Case Noyale and vice versa is diverted through Choisy, Baie du Cap, Le Morne and La Gaulette.

11. Cabinet has taken note that several cases of hawkers operating illegally along Motorways and main roads have been reported, mainly on the road reserves. They represent serious traffic hazards. The Road Development Authority (RDA) is implementing the following measures to address the problem –

- (a) a Communiqué has been issued in local newspapers to inform hawkers and the public in general that it is an offence to encroach on the road or the road reserve without any authorisation from the Highway Authority;
- (b) several teams comprising representatives of the inspectorate staff of the RDA, Local Authorities and the Police Department are undertaking joint site visits to sensitise and notify these illegal hawkers verbally; and
- (c) in the event the hawkers would repeatedly contravene the law, actions/sanctions under the appropriate legislation would be initiated.

As a last resort, any structures belonging to the hawkers on Motorways and Bypasses would be dismantled/removed in accordance with the existing legislative framework.

12. Cabinet has taken note of the entry into force of the SADC Protocol on Trade in Services on 13 January 2022 which was signed by the SADC Heads of States and Governments, including Mauritius, on 18 August 2012 in Maputo. Article 30 of the Protocol provides that the Protocol shall enter into force 30 days after the deposit of instruments of ratification by two-thirds of the Member States. SADC Member States were engaged in trade in services negotiations to open up access to their markets in six priority sectors under Phase I namely, Financial Services, Communications, Tourism, Transport, Construction and Energy-related services. Mauritius would now have market access in 10 SADC Member States on a transparent, legally secure and predictable basis in these sectors.

13. Cabinet has taken note of the proposal made by Mrs Mama Fatima Singhateh, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material to undertake a country visit to Mauritius in 2022. The Special Rapporteur is mandated by the United Nations to analyse the root causes of sale and sexual exploitation of children, identify new patterns of the phenomena, exchange good practices to combat it, promote measures to prevent it and make recommendations for the rehabilitation of child victims of sale and sexual exploitation.

14. Cabinet has agreed to the Government Online Centre continuing to operate under the aegis of the National Computer Board pending the restructuring exercise to be undertaken at the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation by the e-Governance Academy of Estonia.

15. Cabinet has taken note of the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic prevailing across the world. Some 385.9 million cases have been reported globally, of which 305.7 million persons have been successfully treated.

With regard to Mauritius, as at 02 February 2022, there were 1,261 active cases of COVID-19, out of which 12 were admitted at the New ENT Hospital. Over the period 28 January 2022 to 02 February 2022, 9 deaths were attributed to COVID-19.

Cabinet has also taken note of progress in the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme, including the administration of the booster dose in the Republic of Mauritius. As at 03 February 2022, 983,642 persons had received a first dose of vaccine (representing 77.7 percent of the population). 933,159 persons were fully vaccinated (representing 73.7 percent of the population). 378,152 persons had received a booster dose (representing 29.9 percent of the population). 72.1 percent of adolescents aged 12 to 17 years had received a first dose of vaccine and 46.5 percent had received a second dose.

16. Cabinet has taken note of the COVID-19 situation prevailing in Rodrigues. 1,656 local cases have been detected from 26 January 2022 to 02 February 2022. 11 persons were admitted at Mont Lubin Treatment Centre. The Ministry of Health and Wellness has already sent COVID-19 drugs, PCR test kits, protective equipment and oxygen concentrators to Rodrigues.

Cabinet has also taken note that the Prime Minister made the Temporary Restrictions of Movement Order on 28 January 2022 to impose a curfew in Rodrigues from 1900 hours to 0600 hours as from 29 January 2022 until 10 February 2022.

Cabinet has further taken note that the Minister of Health and Wellness has made the Consolidated COVID-19 (Amendment) Regulations 2022 to impose sanitary restrictions in Rodrigues as from 30 January 2022.

17. Cabinet has taken note of the activities being organised by the Computer Emergency Response Team of Mauritius (CERT-MU), a Division of the National Computer Board, in the context of the Safer Internet Day. The Safer Internet Day would be celebrated in Mauritius on 08 February this year. The slogan for this year is "*Together for a better Internet*". The following activities would, inter alia, be organised by the CERT-MU from 08 to 11 February 2022 –

- (a) the production of video clips on Internet Safety and dissemination to primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. The clips would also be uploaded on the CERT-MU website and other social media platforms as from 08 February 2022;
- (b) a digital guideline on Best Internet Practices for youngsters would be published by CERT-MU and would be disseminated to the general public through its website and other social media platforms;
- (c) a weekly Safety tip starting 08 February 2022 would be sent to all public officers through email to sensitise on the dangers and counter measures of the internet;

- (d) online awareness sessions would be organised for students and teachers during the year which would cover best online practices, online dangers and its countermeasure; and
- (e) collaboration with the Federation of Innovative & Numeric Activities in Mauritius to organise an online workshop for tertiary level students.

18. Cabinet has taken note that a delegation of youngsters from Uganda would be in Mauritius from 11 to 18 February 2022 to undertake their Adventurous Journey as part of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. They would be accompanied by six Award Leaders. The Award is a non-formal education and learning framework that operates in more than 130 countries and territories around the world, including Mauritius, through which young people's achievements outside of academia are recognised and celebrated. The purpose of the Adventurous Journey is to instil a sense of adventure and self-discovery whilst undertaking a journey within a group setting. During their journey, the participants would also have the opportunity to develop leadership, decision-making, and self-sufficiency skills. The delegation would observe the sanitary protocols in place.

19. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent mission of the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development to Dubai. The mission was in the margins of the Expo 2020 Dubai and also to reinforce the bilateral economic, commercial and business links with the UAE, particularly with Dubai and Abu Dhabi. The Minister had business, investor as well as institutional meetings, namely with –

- (a) HE Mr Mohammed Al Shaibani, Board member and Managing Director of the Investment Corporation of Dubai and owner of Kerzner International. The group would be investing in luxury villas and also envisaging to set up a Digital Banking Platform in Mauritius;
- (b) the Chairman of Mashreq Bank, the group is considering the possibilities of setting up a digital banking structure in Mauritius;
- (c) the Chairman of DAMAC, a global property developer and a lead master developer in the United Arab Emirates;
- (d) the Chairman of the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry and his Executive Vice President of international relations;
- (e) the Chairman and Director General of the Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Economic Development Board and the Abu Dhabi Chamber which lays the foundations for investment and trade promotion activities in Abu Dhabi;
- (f) the Secretary General of the UAE Chamber of Commerce; and
- (g) HE Sheikh Sultan bin Khalifa Al Nahyan, Advisor to the President of the United Arab Emirates. They discussed possibilities to reinforce cooperation between the Government of Abu Dhabi and Mauritius.

20. Cabinet has taken note of the Stamp Issue Programme for Year 2022. The Stamp Advisory Committee has recommended the issue of ten postage stamps for the year 2022 under three different themes –

(a) Theme 1: Fauna

- (i) one stamp which would feature the picture of the Mauritius Kestrel would be issued on 12 March 2022;
- (ii) three other stamps would be issued on 22 May 2022 to mark the International Day of Biological Diversity and they would feature the pictures of extinct birds of Mauritius, namely the Mauritius Wood Pigeon, Blue Pigeon of Mauritius and Rodrigues;

(b) Theme 2: Diplomatic Relations

One stamp would be issued in April 2022 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the Republic of Mauritius and People's Republic of China;

(c) Theme 3: Anniversaries and Events

Five stamps would be released in August and October 2022, respectively as follows –

- (i) three stamps would be issued in August 2022 on the inauguration of the Port Louis Municipal Theatre (200 years), the inauguration of Victoria Hospital at Candos, Quatre Bornes (100 years) and a commemorative postal stamp to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Indian Ocean Rim Association's (IORA) establishment; and
- (ii) two stamps would be issued as a single release to celebrate the 250th Anniversary of the existence of the Mauritius Post Limited, and 175th Anniversary of the first two Stamps issued by the Mauritius Post Limited in 1847, namely the Penny Blue and Penny Red on the World Post Day on 09 October 2022.
