

HIGHLIGHTS OF CABINET MEETING – FRIDAY 11 MARCH 2022

1. Cabinet has agreed to restore the payment of pensions (basic retirement pension, basic invalidity pension, basic widow's pension, basic orphan's pension and other allowances such as the carer's allowance, amongst others) for beneficiaries whose pensions are credited into their bank account on the first working day of each month as it was previously, instead of the fourth working day (working days refer to Mondays to Fridays, excluding weekends, public holidays and cyclonic days), with effect from April 2022.

2. Cabinet has agreed to the introduction of the National Flag, Arms, Anthem and Other Symbols of Mauritius Bill into the National Assembly. The object of the Bill is to consolidate and update the laws with regard to the national symbols of Mauritius, such as the Arms of Mauritius, the National Flag of Mauritius and the Seal of Mauritius. The opportunity is being taken to give legal effect to the National Anthem of Mauritius (Motherland), to the National Flower of Mauritius (*Trochetia boutoniana*) and to declare the Kestrel bird (*Falco punctatus*), as the National Bird of Mauritius. The Bill provides for better protection and use of the national symbols of Mauritius.

3. Cabinet has taken note that the Government of Mauritius would send a note of protest to the UK Government strongly objecting to the removal of the flags of the Republic of Mauritius from the Chagos Archipelago in blatant violation of international law.

4. Cabinet has agreed to –

- (a) the issue of a statement by the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate (MES) certifying that those subjects not offered for the GCE 'O' and 'A' Level June 2022 examinations, and which may be taken by a school candidate at the level of the SC/HSC/GCE 'O' and 'A' Level November 2022 examination series, be exceptionally considered as having been taken at one and same sitting; and
- (b) sponsorship being offered towards the payment of examination fees for those subjects that are not offered in the June 2022 examination series but taken by a school candidate in the October/November 2022 examination series for the School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate.

For the June 2022 examination series, Cambridge International would be offering mainly international syllabuses and for the SC/HSC/GCE 'O' and 'A' Level October/November 2022 examination series, the full range of syllabuses. These measures would be applicable solely for school candidates taking part in the June 2022 examination series. Further, the statement issued by the MES would be valid exclusively for the Republic of Mauritius.

5. Cabinet has agreed to the implementation of a short-term strategy for the tourism sector for the year 2022. The three following dimensions have been taken into consideration in the development of the strategy –

- (a) Demand: increasing bookings from international markets to attain the 2019 level of tourist arrivals and encouraging increase in length of stay;
- (b) Supply: improving tourism facilities to increase tourism spending and enhancing overall customer experience; and
- (c) Air connectivity: ensuring optimal conditions for travel and access to Mauritius.

The following ‘Strategic Thrusts’ have been identified on the demand side to increase bookings from international markets to attain the objective, namely –

- (i) Focusing on Main Markets;
- (ii) Exploring Opportunity Markets;
- (iii) Low Season Campaign;
- (iv) Exploiting the Full Potential of Meetings Incentives Conferences Exhibitions; and
- (v) Working as ‘One Mauritius’.

As regards supply, the following strategic priorities have been identified –

- (a) Ease Sanitary Restrictions;
- (b) Long-Stay Tourism; and
- (c) Enhancing Customer Experience Through a Public-Private Partnership.

An in-depth analysis has been carried out on the seat capacity required from each of the main markets of Mauritius to be able to attain the target of at least one million tourists by December 2022. Three main recommendations have, accordingly, been formulated to ensure optimal conditions for travel to Mauritius –

- (i) establish a close collaboration framework between tourism stakeholders and MTPA in order to support the take-off of Air Mauritius through provision of tangible support on jointly identified routes;
- (ii) re-establish the same level of connectivity and seat capacity as in 2019 as quickly as possible; and
- (iii) explore direct connectivity with new markets/new destinations not currently served.

6. Cabinet has taken note that a new NOTAM would be in force for the island of Mauritius as from 11 March 2022 to provide for new conditions of entry for incoming passengers in the country. Amongst others, the pre-departure test for COVID-19 within 72 hours prior to departure as well as the Day-5 test following arrival would no longer be applicable. However, the test on the day of arrival is being maintained. Quarantine is being replaced by self-isolation for unvaccinated/not fully vaccinated passengers.

7. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Health and Wellness would promulgate the Consolidated COVID-19 (Amendment No. 5) Regulations 2022 to add the following public sector institutions/workplaces/premises under the Fifth Schedule of the Consolidated COVID-19 Regulations 2021, to restrict access thereto to officers who are not fully vaccinated with a booster dose –

- (a) Civil Status Office;
- (b) Registrar General Department;
- (c) Wastewater Management Authority;
- (d) Corporate and Business Registration Department (Registrar of Companies);
- (e) Municipal and District Councils;
- (f) National Land Transport Authority;
- (g) Post Office;
- (h) Social Security Office;
- (i) National Empowerment Foundation; and
- (j) Mauritius Revenue Authority.

The new Regulations would take effect as from 04 April 2022.

8. Cabinet has agreed to Vivo Energy Mauritius Ltd (VEML) and Indian Oil (Mauritius) Ltd (IOML) commercialising a premium grade fuel known as V-Power Q1 and XTRAPREMIUM-100 respectively, on the Mauritian market at differentiated prices. Both VEML and IOML would use the same fuel imported by the State Trading Corporation and would transform it using their respective specific superior additives. The additives are expected to improve engine life and efficiency while being simultaneously environment-friendly with a much-reduced tailpipe emission.

9. Cabinet has agreed to –

- (a) the new dates for the taking of the Housing and Population Census;
- (b) the passing of a resolution at the sitting of the National Assembly with regard to the dates for the taking of the Census;
- (c) the draft 2022 Census Order being made by the President of the Republic; and
- (d) regulations being made by the President of the Republic prescribing the particulars and information to be collected at the Census.

The Housing Census would be carried out between 30 April 2022 and 20 June 2022, and the Population Census between 19 June 2022 and 01 August 2022.

10. Cabinet has taken note that in view of the COVID-19 pandemic in Rodrigues, the National Land Transport Authority would extend the delay for the renewal of Motor Vehicle Licences which expired in January and February 2022 to end of March 2022.

11. Cabinet has taken note that the Economic Development Board (Real Estate Development Scheme) Regulations 2022 would be promulgated. The Regulations would reinstate some provisions governing the Integrated Resort Scheme (IRS) and the Real Estate Scheme (RES) to allow the sale of remaining IRS/RES properties. The main provisions relate to –

- (a) the process for the acquisition or resale of residential property in an IRS/RES project;
- (b) the persons/entities eligible to acquire residential property under the IRS/RES;
- (c) a minimum selling price of USD500,000 in respect of residential property in an IRS; and
- (d) payment of a social contribution by an IRS company for an additional residential property developed in an existing project.

The other main conditions relating to the implementation of an IRS/RES project are also being reinstated except for the percentage of serviced land allowed to be sold in an IRS project. This threshold is being increased from 25 percent to 33 percent of land area planned for construction of residential properties.

12. Cabinet has taken note of the operationalisation of the Economic Development Board (EDB) representative office in Dubai. The EDB office would help articulate the investment promotion strategy of Mauritius in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), based on the actions initiated through promotional events in the margins of Expo 2020 Dubai, through the Mauritius Pavilion. A permanent presence within the market would –

- (a) ensure close follow up of investment/trade interests which have been generated in the margins of the Expo, through direct contact or through business events;
- (b) promote and position Mauritius as a business and logistics platform for the African Continent;
- (c) facilitate investment and trade through proper advisory services; and
- (d) enable the development of new markets within the UAE region.

13. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the yearly implementation of the White Grub Protocol for period 01 November 2021 to 15 January 2022. During the implementation of the protocol, daily trapping results submitted by the Entomology Division of the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security have indicated that 92 insects were collected in four different regions in Mauritius. As regards the daily trapping results from Reunion Island, a total of 124 insects were collected thereat with a peak of 60 insects on 28 December 2022 in Gillot. Due to that situation, one Alert was emitted by the '*Direction de L'Alimentation de L'Agriculture et de La Forêt*' on 28 December 2021 and same was subsequently removed on 03 January 2022.

Activities were carried out the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport and the Port Louis Harbour. For the period under review, as a result of the proper implementation of the Protocol, no live White Grub coming from Reunion Island to Mauritius and vice versa were intercepted at seaports and airports.

14. Cabinet has taken note that a High-Level Pledging Event for the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen has been convened by the United Nations Secretary-General on 16 March 2022. Ambassador J. D. Koonjul, GCSK, the Permanent Representative of Mauritius to the United Nations in New York, would participate in the Pledging Event. The Government of Mauritius would pledge a financial contribution of USD25,000 at the Event.

15. Cabinet has taken note that the following Mauritian weightlifters have qualified for the Commonwealth Games to be held in Birmingham from 28 July to 08 August 2022 –

- (a) Mrs Roilya Ranaivosoa;
- (b) Ms Ketty Lent; and
- (c) Mr Cedric Coret.

16. Cabinet has taken note that a joint mission of the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation was currently in Mauritius to work on the finalisation of the Completion Learning Review (CLR) of previous Country Partnership Framework (CPF) as well as the preparation of the new CPF and to conduct the Country Private Sector Diagnosis (CPSD) and design a proposal for private sector support services in Mauritius. The World Bank is launching discussions with the Mauritian Government for the preparation of a new CPF with the Republic of Mauritius.

The purpose of the CPSD mission is to identify relevant private sector stakeholders and counterparts, investigate topics of entrepreneurship, review the composition of the private sector with a focus on SMEs, identify and prioritise key constraints to private sector led growth initiatives, pre-identify sectors with strong potential for further investigation, evaluate support mechanisms for strengthening public-private dialogue and review the advancement of women entrepreneurship, among other issues.

17. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives, in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Office for Africa (UNECA) would organise a two-day National Policy Dialogue on the Manufacturing Sector on 23 and 24 March 2022. The Policy Dialogue is being organised with a view to assessing the present situation of the manufacturing sector in the light of new challenges that have emerged and to engage into an in-depth reflection to identify new proposals for the future development of the sector. The event would bring together representatives of UNECA as well as local organisations, namely the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Mauritius Export Association, the Economic Development Board and Association of Mauritian Manufacturers, public sector organisations and business operators.

During the Policy Dialogue, the stakeholders would be apprised of, inter alia, development in relation to the implementation of recommendations made by the Industrial Policy and Strategic Plan (2020-2025) for Mauritius for enhanced competitiveness and higher economic growth. It would also serve as a platform for the sharing of information and communication of relevant schemes and measures being provided by Government for the benefit of the manufacturing sector.

18. Cabinet has taken note of the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic prevailing across the world. Some 451.9 million cases have been reported globally, of which 386.3 million persons have been successfully treated.

With regard to Mauritius, as at 09 March 2022, there were 2,080 active cases of COVID-19, out of which 11 were admitted at the New ENT Hospital. Over the period 03 March to 09 March 2022, 21 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 10 March 2022, 1,001,380 persons had received a first dose of vaccine (representing 79.1 percent of the population). 964,898 persons were fully vaccinated (representing 76.2 percent of the population). 545,809 persons had received a booster dose (representing 43.1 percent of the population). 75.8 percent of adolescents aged 12 to 17 years had received a first dose of vaccine and 67.5 percent had received a second dose.

19. Cabinet has taken note of the COVID-19 situation prevailing in Rodrigues. As at 09 March 2022, there were 489 active cases. Eight persons were admitted at Mont Lubin Treatment Centre.

20. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development attended a virtual meeting of African Finance Ministers on the Ukraine crisis jointly hosted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The meeting which was co-chaired by the IMF Managing Director and the UNECA Executive Secretary discussed the impact of the escalating conflict in Ukraine on African economies. UNECA made a presentation which, inter alia, highlighted that –

- (a) the COVID-19 pandemic led to the worst economic recession in Africa in the last 50 years. Real GDP in Africa contracted by 3 percent in 2020. Prior to the Ukraine crisis, GDP growth was expected to reach 3.9 percent in 2022. However, the war was further exacerbating economic and social vulnerabilities;
- (b) food prices had reached a 14-year high whilst oil prices surged to its highest level since 2008;
- (c) domestic food prices had already spiked in Africa and were set to increase further due to the Ukraine crisis. This would further increase socio-economic inequalities;
- (d) as a result of the conflict, a contraction of 0.7 percentage point in Africa's GDP was expected;
- (e) a surplus of 2.2 percentage points in inflation rate was projected;
- (f) the crisis would further exacerbate food insecurity and poverty; and
- (g) borrowing cost would equally be on the rise for all countries.

In view of the adverse impact of the conflict and remaining uncertainty, the IMF Managing Director called for the strengthening of policy coordination between the Authorities at both national and international levels to find the right balance between growth and price stability.

21. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of a national workshop on "Developing Intellectual Property Generation, Management and Commercialisation in Mauritius", organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade recently. The main aims of the workshop were to –

- (a) promote the generation of intellectual property rights;
- (b) protect creations and innovations; and
- (c) use the registered intellectual property right to earn more revenue upon commercialisation of the innovative product.

22. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent participation of the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology in the 8th Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development held in Kigali, Rwanda. The Forum was jointly organised by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the Government of Rwanda in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and other entities of the United Nations system. The overarching theme was “Building forward better: a green, inclusive and resilient Africa poised to achieve the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063”.

The overall objective of the Regional Forum was to conduct a Regional follow-up and review of progress made on the implementation of five Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), namely Goals 4, 5, 14, 15 and 17 as well as the Agenda 2063 of the African Union. The Forum also aimed at facilitating peer learning, advancing transformative solutions and actions to boost recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and accelerating the implementation of the twin development agenda. The Vice-Prime Minister was invited as a panelist on the meeting on Quality Education.

23. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent mission of the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development to Brussels, Belgium where he attended the Sixth European Union - African Union Summit which was co-chaired by HE Mr Charles Michel, President of the European Council and HE Mr Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal and Chairperson of the African Union. The theme of the Summit was “Africa and Europe: A joint vision for 2030”.

The Summit involved seven thematic roundtable discussions with the participation of each country in two roundtables. The Minister participated in the Roundtables on Financing for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth as well as on the Health Systems and Vaccine Production. During the Roundtable on Financing for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth, discussions were held on how to build support to accelerate sustainable growth and decent jobs in Africa. The Minister intervened on the macroeconomic effects of the COVID-19 crisis on African economies and the resulting impact on the economic outlook of African economies as assessed by Rating Agencies.

During the roundtable on the health systems and vaccine production, both the EU and AU leaders agreed that the immediate challenge is to ensure a fair and equitable access to vaccines. The EU would also support a common agenda for manufacturing vaccines, medicines, diagnostics, therapeutics and health products in Africa, including investment in production capacities, voluntary technology transfers as well as strengthening of the regulatory framework to enable equitable access to vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics.

24. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent participation of the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change to the Resumed Fifth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly and the Special Session of the Assembly to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), held in Nairobi, Kenya. The theme of the Environment Assembly was “Strengthening actions for nature to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”. The main outcome of the Assembly relates to the adoption of a historic resolution to end plastic pollution and forge an international legally binding agreement by 2024.

The Assembly held a Special Session which was devoted to the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the creation of UN Environment Programme in 1972 (UNEP@50). The theme was “Strengthening UNEP for the implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.

25. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent mission of the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection to Dubai, United Arab Emirates in the context of the Expo 2020 Dubai. The Economic Development Board (EDB) organised the Freeport and Logistics week and the Minister was invited to deliver the keynote addresses at three Business Fora targeting different segments of the business community and the Freeport and Logistics sector of Dubai.

The Minister also had a working session with HE Robert Jreissati, Founding Chairman of the National Polish-Arab Chamber of Commerce and his team and Dr Samir Hamouni, CEO of the World Freezone Organisation and his team. The Polish-Arab Chamber of Commerce was prepared to engage further with the EDB in order to promote joint activities in the commercial, economic and tourism sectors.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the EDB and the World Freezone Organisation.

26. Cabinet has taken note that the Board of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund has approved the renewal of the contract of employment of Mr Hariduth Chand Ramgoolam as Director of that institution for a further period of one year.

27. Cabinet has taken note that the Board of the Mauritius Society of Authors has approved the renewal of the contract of employment of Mr Michaël Lyndon Veeraragoo as Director of that institution for a period of six months.
