

## **HIGHLIGHTS OF CABINET MEETING – FRIDAY 25 FEBRUARY 2022**

1. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the visit undertaken by the Mauritius delegation led by Ambassador J. D. Koonjul, GCSK, the Permanent Representative of Mauritius to the UN in New York, to the Chagos Archipelago from 08 to 22 February 2022. On 11 February 2022, the vessel entered the Mauritius Exclusive Economic Zone. The first stop of the delegation in the Chagos Archipelago was Peros Banhos, more specifically Ile du Coin. The Chagossians who were part of the Mauritius delegation set foot on Ile du Coin with great joy and emotion. They cleaned the church on that island which was now in ruins as well as the cemetery where their ancestors were buried.

On 12 February 2022, the Mauritius delegation started the survey of Blenheim Reef which lasted for three days. The visit to the Chagos Archipelago has been highly successful as it has –

- (a) allowed Mauritius to collect crucial data for the maritime delimitation case which it has brought against Maldives under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea;
- (b) allowed Mauritius to assert its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, particularly after the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice of 25 February 2019 which made it clear that the Chagos Archipelago is and has always been an integral part of the territory of Mauritius;
- (c) enabled representatives of the Chagossian community to return to their place of birth without any foreign escort or restrictions; and
- (d) received a significant coverage in the international media.

\*\*\*

2. Cabinet has taken note of measures adopted to further streamline the procedures regarding applications made for Occupation Permits and Young Professional Occupation Permits in line with the business facilitation strategy as follows –

- (a) henceforth, Occupation Permits, which were so far, only granted to applicants arriving in Mauritius on Business visa, would also be extended to foreigners on tourist visa;
- (b) a Young Professional Occupation Permit holder would be allowed to switch to the Occupation Permit category with another company, only after termination of his current contract of employment and not during his running contract;

- (c) a Young Professional Occupation Permit would be allowed to switch to the Occupation Permit category within the same company during the validity of his contract of employment; and
- (d) applications for Occupation Permit from students would only be considered after completion of their studies. However, employment should be related to their field of studies.

\*\*\*

3. Cabinet has agreed, inter alia, to the following proposals subsequent to the recent decisions taken to extend the school calendar 2021-2022 to November 2022 and to re-schedule the local and international assessments -

- (a) the implementation of a dedicated curriculum for Grade 1 pupils born between 01 January 2015 and 31 May 2015 that would allow them to move to Grade 2;
- (b) allowing pupils having completed Grade 5 to sit for the PSAC Assessment, upon request from Responsible Parties, at the end of the year; and
- (c) students of Grades 10 and 12 to be allowed to sit for the Cambridge School Certificate/GCE O Level and Cambridge Higher School Certificate/GCE A Level respectively, upon request from Responsible Parties.

\*\*\*

4. Cabinet has agreed to the Fisheries and Marine Resources (Toxic Fish) Regulations being amended to provide for the importation of Bourgeois fish (*Lutjanus Sebae*) from the Seychelles for sale to both members of the public and hotels. Bourgeois fish is a highly valued fish and has great demand on the domestic market. The Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping would impose additional conditions for the importation of the fish.

That Ministry would carry out strict monitoring to ensure that the imported Bourgeois fish complies with the requirements of the Regulations and the special conditions to import Bourgeois fish from Seychelles. It would also monitor the landing of local fishing boats/vessel to ensure that no Bourgeois fish are being landed from the Mauritian banks or tampered with.

\*\*\*

5. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development would promulgate the Business Registration (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2022 to allow for the charging of a fee of Rs100 by the Corporate and Business Registration Department for issue of fresh business registration cards.

\*\*\*

6. Cabinet has taken note that the Excise (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2022 would be promulgated to provide for the implementation of a new option for public sector officers to benefit from excise duty exemption on the purchase of a motor car once in a lifetime. An officer would be eligible, once in a lifetime, to excise duty exemption of up to Rs150,000 on a motor car of up to 1,400 cc provided the officer -

- (a) draws a monthly basic salary of Rs31,000 or more; and
- (b) has at least five years' service.

\*\*\*

7. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Health and Wellness would make Regulations under the Dental Council Act for the recognition and listing of a dental institution, namely the Manipal University College, Malaysia, as recommended by the Dental Council of Mauritius.

\*\*\*

8. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping would promulgate the Fisheries and Marine Resources (Fishing Nets) Regulations 2022 with a view to enabling the prosecution of persons caught fishing with or having in their possession at sea, in any river, lake or dam, or on his premises, in his dwelling or house, a fishing net, other than a bait gear, canard net, gill net, large net, pocket net or shrimp net, unless he holds a licence under section 29 of the Fisheries and Marine Resources Act. The Regulations would come into force on 01 March 2022.

The Regulations would not apply to the Island of Rodrigues as the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has its own regulations pertaining to net fishing.

\*\*\*

9. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Health and Wellness has made the Consolidated COVID-19 (Amendment No. 4) Regulations 2022 which provide that the self-isolation period for COVID-19 positive patients would be seven days instead of 10 days. The Regulations came into force on 19 February 2022.

Direct contacts or contacts living in the same households as COVID-19 positive patients would no longer have to observe a period of self-confinement.

\*\*\*

10. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the National Risk Assessment Exercise carried out to identify and assess the money laundering and terrorist financing risks that may arise in relation to Virtual Assets and Virtual Asset Service Providers, and of the publication and dissemination of the abridged version of the Risk Assessment Report by end of February 2022.

According to the requirements of Recommendation 15 of the Financial Action Task Force, which concerns New Technologies, countries are required to, inter alia, identify, assess and understand the money laundering and terrorism financing risks arising from the business of Virtual Assets and Virtual Asset Service Providers. The deadline for the submission of the application for re-rating of Recommendation 15 to the ESAAMLG is 28 February 2022.

\*\*\*

11. Cabinet has taken note that on 21 February 2022, the European Commission's Delegation Regulation was published in the Official Journal of the European Union, providing for the removal of Mauritius from the EU List of High-Risk Third Countries. This Delegated Regulation would come into force 20 days following its publication in the Official Journal. The European Commission has concluded that Mauritius has strengthened the effectiveness of its AML/CFT framework and no longer presents strategic deficiencies as had initially been identified by the Financial Action Task Force in February 2020.

\*\*\*

12. Cabinet has taken note that following the passage of cyclone *Batsirai* in Mauritius, a loss assessment exercise was carried out to determine the extent of damage/loss caused to plantations. The Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security would be compensating planters to help them resume their agricultural activities. The Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (FAREI) conducted a preliminary assessment to determine the extent of loss incurred in different regions and it was observed that significant loss was caused to plantations. A loss assessment exercise was also carried out by the Small Farmers Welfare Fund (SFWF) and the Extension Services of FAREI.

In order to allow planters to restart their cultivation rapidly, arrangements have been made to distribute 300 kg of mixed vegetables seeds from the Horticulture Division of the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security and 625 kg beans seeds from the Agricultural Marketing Board to planters since 09 February 2022, on a first come first serve basis. Some 3,304 planters have, so far, benefitted from this facility.

Cabinet has also taken note that following the passage of cyclone *Emnati* on 19 and 20 February 2022, a loss assessment exercise was underway. Planters would be compensated only once for the loss incurred this year.

Cabinet has further taken note that the modalities to be applied to support the planters financially would be as follows –

- (i) Rs6,000 per arpent for open field and Rs6,000 per 500 m<sup>2</sup> for sheltered farms;
- (ii) a maximum of Rs6,000 per arpent to be paid for a maximum threshold of five arpents for open field plantations and 2,500 m<sup>2</sup> for sheltered farming; and
- (iii) assistance would be provided only to planters who have been registered with the SFWF prior to 31 January 2022.

\*\*\*

13. Cabinet has taken note that the Road Traffic Regulations 1954 were amended to provide that holders of provisional driving licences to renew such licence until 01 March 2022 for their provisional driving licence to be valid until March 2026. In view of the excessive queuing at the three Driving Test Centres at Line Barracks, Flacq and Curepipe, the deadline of 01 March 2022 would be extended up to 31 March 2022 to enable the remaining 52,000 holders of provisional driving licences to renew the said licence.

\*\*\*

14. Cabinet has taken note that a reconfiguration of traffic would be made as from Saturday 26 February 2022 along Saint Jean Road and in the region of Sodnac and Belle Rose at Quatre Bornes to allow for trial run of the Light Rail Vehicles (Metro). The following traffic schemes would come into effect –

- (a) Osman Avenue would be converted into a one-way road from its junction with Tagore Avenue up to Saint Jean Road in the direction of Saint Jean Road;
- (b) D'Epinay Avenue would be converted into a one-way road from its junction with Saint Jean Road up to C. Hall Avenue in the direction of C. Hall Avenue; and
- (c) the direction of the existing one-way Scheme on Tagore Avenue would be reversed such that Tagore Avenue would be a one-way road from its junction with D'Epinay Avenue up to Osman Avenue in the direction of Osman Avenue.

No vehicle would be allowed to right turn across the tracks on Saint Jean Road. Alternative routes have been designated for road users to cross/right turn across the tracks at signalized street junctions from side road. The necessary traffic signs would be set up to inform and guide road users and an information campaign would be ongoing as from 25 February 2022.

\*\*\*

15. Cabinet has taken note that both qualifying matches between Mauritius and São Tomé and Principe for the Africa Cup of Nations 2023 (Ivory Coast) would be played at the Côte d'Or National Sports Complex on 24 March and 27 March 2022. The match between Seychelles and Lesotho would also be played in Mauritius on 23 March 2022 at the same venue. The matches would be played behind closed doors in accordance with sanitary protocols.

\*\*\*

16. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the participation of the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change in the Ministerial Segment of the ninth Special Session of the African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN) held virtually. The objectives of the ninth Special Session of AMCEN were to, inter alia, consider matters relating to the Resumed fifth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) scheduled from 28 February to 02 March 2022, in Kenya and agree on Africa's common position for engagement at the Assembly, adopt Africa's resolutions on green recovery, circular economy, biodiversity and health and plastic pollution, nominate a Member State as incoming President for UNEA-6 as well as for the Bureau of the Assembly.

The Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change underlined the commitment of Mauritius to aligning to the common African position towards circular economy, green recovery, biodiversity and plastic management in the context of a sustainable transition. The need for support from international partners, scaling up resource mobilisation, capacity building and technology development was also underscored.

\*\*\*

17. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the National Crisis Committee meeting held on 18 February 2022 at the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre in connection with the intense tropical cyclone Emnati. The meeting, which was attended by the representatives from key Ministries/Departments and Business Mauritius, decided on the preparedness and priority measures to be put in place by key agencies in the light of forecasts from the Mauritius Meteorological Services.

\*\*\*

18. Cabinet has taken note that following the passage of tropical cyclone Emnati, 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 on public beaches, in particular on those sites which had already been affected during the passage of tropical cyclone Batsirai; and

- (b) monitor environmental issues including the overflow of effluents in some industrial and commercial sites.

With respect to industrial and commercial sites, overflow of effluents had not been observed, except for one site whereby the sewer network was blocked. With the assistance of the Wastewater Management Authority, the blockage had been cleared. As at date, cases of beach erosion from coastal resorts had not been reported to the Ministry following the passage of cyclone Emnati.

\*\*\*

19. Cabinet has taken note of the situation in Ukraine. Mauritius would be guided by its long-standing stance of non-intervention in matters of other States and would align with the position of the United Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement.

Mauritius calls for a peaceful resolution of the conflict given its adverse impact on global stability. Mauritius would also join calls for the resumption of dialogue between the concerned parties. The Mauritius Embassy in Moscow has been requested to monitor the situation of Mauritian nationals and particularly students in Ukraine and in that connection, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade has already issued appropriate Communiqués. Mauritius continues to follow closely developments on this issue.

\*\*\*

20. Cabinet has taken note that a national event would be organised at Sir Harilal Vaghjee Memorial Hall, Port Louis by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare to mark the International Women's Day 2022 on Tuesday 08 March 2022, in accordance with the prevailing sanitary protocols. Women would be gathering in the Municipal and District Councils to follow the event on MBCTV. The theme retained by the United Nations for this year is "Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow". The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare has retained the slogan: "*Shifting Gender Equality from the Margins to the Centre*".

\*\*\*

21. Cabinet has taken note of the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic prevailing across the world. Some 430.4 million cases have been reported globally, of which 359.06 million persons have been successfully treated.

With regard to Mauritius, as at 23 February 2022, there were 2,564 active cases of COVID-19, out of which 12 were admitted at the New ENT Hospital. Over the period 17 to 23 February 2022, 27 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 24 February 2022, 997,949 persons had received a first dose of vaccine (representing 78.8 percent of the population). 959,481 persons were fully vaccinated (representing 75.8 percent of the population). 491,390 persons had received a booster dose (representing 38.8 percent of the population). 75.2 percent of adolescents aged 12 to 17 years had received a first dose of vaccine and 64.4 percent had received a second dose.

\*\*\*

22. Cabinet has taken note of the COVID-19 situation prevailing in Rodrigues. As at 23 February 2022, there were 2,257 active cases. 15 persons were admitted at Mont Lubin Treatment Centre. 10 Oxygen concentrators and three ventilators have been sent to Rodrigues as well as medical gas cylinders, medicines and medical disposables.

\*\*\*

23. Cabinet has taken note of the situation following the grounding of three Fishing Vessels, namely Vessel FV Wen Hung Dar 168, FV Maan Yu Feng 1 and FV Maan Yu Feng 168 on 23 February 2022. FV Wen Hung Dar 168 ran aground off the coast of Pointe aux Sables and FV Maan Yu Feng 1 and FV Maan Yu Feng 168 ran aground on the sand bank in the bay of Grand River North West. The Mauritius Ports Authority mobilised its tugs to reach the casualty sites. The Crisis Committee met on 23 February 2022 to assess the situation on the grounding of the vessels. The Crisis Committee took the following decisions –

- (a) priority would be given to ensure the safety of the crews of the grounded vessels and all 53 crew members from the three vessels were rescued by the Helicopter Squadron/National Coast Guard of the Mauritius Police Force in accordance with all sanitary protocols;
- (b) the representatives of PolyGreen and the shipping agents, Jo & Jo Shipping Ltd and Chang Fong Marine Ltd, signed the Lloyds Standard Form of Salvage Agreement appointing PolyGreen for the pumping out of all the oil onboard the respective vessels and thereafter for their salvage;
- (c) in view of the risk of oil spill from these vessels, the Mauritius Ports Authority has already activated the Port Harbour Oil Spill Response Plan; and
- (d) the National Coast Guard in collaboration with the Mauritius Ports Authority deployed 290 metres of fence boom to protect the lagoon in addition to PolyGreen, who deployed about 500 metres.

The Salvage Master and his team had been able to board the vessel and started pumping operation on the vessel FV Wen Hung Dar 168. PolyGreen divers undertook assessments to verify the status of hull of the three grounded vessels. As at 18 00 hours on 24 February 2022, no oil spill had been observed on the casualty sites. Three Preliminary Inquiries, in line with requirements of section 10(1) of Merchant Shipping Act have been initiated, to be led by Capt. A. Coopen, Deputy Director of Shipping assisted by Capt. Hubert Noel, Principal Nautical Surveyor.

\*\*\*

24. Cabinet has taken note of the setting up of a temporary committee to manage the affairs of the *Association Mauricienne de Boxe* until the election of a new Managing Committee. The temporary committee would be chaired by Mr Noor S. Hussenee, Barrister.

\*\*\*\*\*