

HIGHLIGHTS OF CABINET MEETING – FRIDAY 01 MARCH 2024

1. Cabinet has taken note that HE Smt Droupadi Murmu, President of the Republic of India, would be the Chief Guest on the occasion of the National Day Celebrations 2024. She would be on a State Visit to Mauritius from 11 to 13 March 2024. During the visit, the President of the Republic of India would, inter alia, pay a courtesy call on the President of the Republic of Mauritius, have a *tête-à-tête* with the Prime Minister and would attend the Flag Raising Ceremony at Champ de Mars.

2. Cabinet has taken note of the activities being organised for the National Day Celebrations 2024 on the theme “Ansam Nou Avanse”. The Flag Raising Ceremony would be held on 12 March 2024 at Champ de Mars, Port Louis. The programme of the Official Ceremony would comprise, inter alia, a Fly Past by Mauritius Police Helicopters, Dornier Aircraft, March past by the Disciplined Forces, Uniformed Organisations, *defilé* of vehicles and floats, performance by Majors and Majorettes of Queen Elizabeth College, culminating with a Cultural Programme by Mauritian artists followed by a popular show.

3. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent participation of the Prime Minister in the 37th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union (AU) Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and his mission to Dubai. The AU Summit opened under the theme ‘Educate an African Fit for the 21st Century - Building Resilient Education Systems for Increased Access to Inclusive Lifelong Quality and Relevant Learning in Africa’. At the Opening Session of the AU Summit, the Chairperson of the AU Commission, emphasised on the need to address the challenges currently faced by the continent in terms of, inter alia, inter-States conflicts, unconstitutional change of Government, rise in terrorism, instability within States, climate change, increasing poverty and the decline of great principles. The Prime Minister intervened –

- (a) during the presentation of the report on activities of the Peace and Security Council and the State of Peace and Security in Africa and he reported on the status of negotiations between Mauritius and the UK on the exercise of sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago. Following his intervention, the Summit adopted a declaration calling upon the UK to expedite the conclusion of the negotiations and thereby complete the decolonisation of Mauritius and of Africa;

- (b) on the Report presented by the President of Kenya on Climate Change where he expressed his appreciation on the operationalisation of the “Loss & Damage Fund” and emphasised that its success would depend on the continued commitment of developed nations as well as an effective and transparent resource distribution to affected countries in a timely manner; and
- (c) on the Report on the situation on Palestine. He underscored the unflinching support of Mauritius to the cause of Palestinian people and expressed concern on the unabated war in Gaza, despite the recent Order of the International Court of Justice requesting Israel to take immediate steps to prevent the Commission of all acts which could amount to genocide in Gaza and allow access to humanitarian aid. He also appealed to the International Community to multiply its efforts at different levels to bring an immediate and permanent ceasefire and reset the momentum to Israel-Palestine peace process in line with the two-State solution.

In the margins of the African Union Summit, the Prime Minister had bilateral meetings with the President of the Republic of Central Africa, the President of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the President of Madagascar, the President of the Union of Comoros, the Prime Minister of Lesotho and the Vice-President of Seychelles.

During his mission in Dubai, the Prime Minister had several meetings, namely with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, the Minister of State for Foreign Trade, and the Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates. He also met the Chief Executive Officer of G42 and the Chairperson and Chief Executive of Emirates Airline and Group.

4. Cabinet has taken note that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has, in a press release issued on 23 February 2024, following the conclusion of its Article IV Consultation Mission to Mauritius, revised upwards its real GDP growth estimates for Mauritius for both 2022 and 2023.

For the year 2022, the IMF has raised the GDP growth rate for the third time, i.e., from 6.1 percent estimated in October 2022 to 8.3 percent in April 2023, then to 8.7 percent in October 2023 and now to 8.9 percent in February 2024. As for the year 2023, the IMF has upgraded the GDP growth rate for the second time, i.e., from 4.6 percent in April 2023 to 5.1 percent in October 2023 and now to 6.9 percent in February 2024.

The IMF has highlighted that “the Mauritian economy has rebounded strongly from the impact of the pandemic, supported by the deployment of pre-pandemic fiscal and external buffers”.

5. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Public Service Commission of Mauritius and the Union Public Service Commission of India. The areas of cooperation would include, among others -

- (a) exchange of experience on modern approach to public service recruitment and selection;
- (b) sharing of expertise in the use of Information Technology in the preparation of written examinations and holding of Computer Based Recruitment Tests and Online Examinations; and
- (c) sharing of experience and expertise on various processes as well as organising training sessions for officials.

6. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Independent Commission Against Corruption of the Republic of Mauritius and the Central Bureau of Investigation of the Republic of India. The objectives of the Memorandum of Understanding would be, inter alia, to -

- (a) share relevant information on anti-corruption and anti-money laundering strategies;
- (b) undertake joint activities and collaborate where appropriate, in each Party's efforts to detect and prevent money laundering and corruption and exchange ideas, knowledge, skills, technological abilities and experience in the application of international standards in the fight against corruption and money laundering cases;
- (c) assist and provide technical assistance, share knowledge, skills, experience and best practices on corruption prevention and anti-corruption education; and
- (d) share knowledge on effective investigative techniques and best practices to carry out information gathering and intelligence operations for the purpose of detecting money laundering and corruption-related offences.

7. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Financial Services Commission of Mauritius and the International Financial Services Centres Authority of India. The Memorandum of Understanding would cover major areas of collaboration between the two jurisdictions and would aim at promoting the development and regulation of financial products, financial services and financial institutions on the principles and procedures outlined therein. Furthermore, the Memorandum of Understanding would contribute to establishing a framework for mutual assistance and to facilitate the exchange of information between the regulatory authorities for development, regulation and enforcing or ensuring compliance with their respective law or regulatory requirements.

8. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities of Mauritius and the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure of the United Arab Emirates on cooperation in the fields of water, sanitation and energy. The main areas of collaboration would include Energy, Renewable Energy, Hydrogen and Derivatives, Liquefied Natural Gas, Energy Efficiency, Water, Water Efficiency and Desalination, Application of Digital Technology, Wastewater and sanitation and other areas of mutual interest.

9. Cabinet has agreed to drafting instructions being given for the preparation of a Bill to enhance the Anti-Money Laundering and Combatting the Financing of Terrorism and Proliferation framework of Mauritius. The main objectives of the new legislation would be to –

- (a) address any legislative gap identified during the recent Money Laundering/Terrorism Financing National Risk Assessment exercise carried out by the Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance;
- (b) address minor deficiencies in technical compliance with the Financial Action Task Force Recommendations; and
- (c) sustain the effectiveness of the regime to combat money laundering and financing of terrorism and proliferation.

10. Cabinet has agreed to the promulgation of the Motorways and Main Roads (Amendment) Regulations 2024. The Regulations would provide for the classification of the newly constructed A1-M1 Link Road and the A1-A3 Link Road. The A1-A3 Link Road starts from the junction with A1 Road at Chebel Roundabout, passes through Malabar Hill Roundabout and ends with a signalised junction on the A3 Road at Gros Cailloux. The A1-M1 Link Road connects the A1 Road at Chebel Roundabout, passes through the bridge spanning over the Grand River North West Valley to end at the junction with Motorway M1 at Sorèze.

11. Cabinet has taken note that the Road Traffic (Construction and Use of Vehicles) (Amendment) Regulations 2024 would be promulgated. The Regulations would provide for the removal of restrictions on the operation of high-floor buses in Mauritius.

12. Cabinet has taken note that the Road Traffic (Public Service Vehicle, Road Service and Carrier's Licence) (Amendment) Regulations 2024 would be promulgated. These Regulations, inter alia, provide for the implementation of a Public Service Vehicle, Road Service and Carrier's Licence by the National Land Transport Authority.

13. Cabinet has taken note that the Central Water Authority (Dry Season) Regulations 2022 would be amended to allow a person entitled to carry out irrigation of sugarcane to abstract water from a watercourse provided that such watercourse does not feed impounding reservoirs and where the Central Water Authority does not abstract water for domestic water supply. In addition, such abstraction should not cause prejudice to any interest that a person may hold in the concerned watercourse. The Regulations would apply over the period 04 to 31 March 2024.

14. Cabinet has taken note of the status of road capital projects being implemented by the Road Development Authority. Some of these projects include -

- (a) the construction of La Vigie - La Brasserie - Beaux Songes Link Road (Phase 1) project, which was completed and opened to the public in December 2023;
- (b) the construction of the Grade Separated junction to link the Verdun Bypass and St Pierre Bypass project, which was expected to be completed by April 2024; and
- (c) the construction of Terre Rouge Flyover on Motorway M2 project, which was expected to be completed by November 2024.

15. Cabinet has agreed to the construction of drain networks and culvert at Morcellement Sans Souci, Montagne Blanche by the Drain Infrastructure Construction Ltd.

16. Cabinet has agreed to the “Reconstruction of Beau Champs Bridge at Bel Ombre” project being implemented by the Road Development Authority.

17. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of a Loan Agreement with the World Bank/International Bank for Reconstruction and Development to finance the Rodrigues Airport Project. The scope of the project would cover -

- (a) infrastructure development in relation to the construction of a new airport runway and associated facilities. Other infrastructure that would be erected include a new control tower, meteorological building, rescue and fire-fighting station;
- (b) technical assistance to support the project implementation and the aviation sector development;

- (c) support to Rodrigues' Sustainable Integrated Development with focus on access to water and food security through technical assistance and small key investments; and
- (d) technical assistance to the sustainable development of the tourism sector in Rodrigues, with respect to tourism promotion, skills development and strengthening of tourism infrastructure.

18. Cabinet has agreed to Mauritius accepting the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies and depositing the instrument of acceptance with the WTO. The Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies would be incorporated in the broader WTO Agreement (Marrakesh Agreement) by way of a Protocol amending the said Agreement. The Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies would be a major step forward for ocean sustainability by prohibiting harmful subsidies. The prohibition of subsidies for overfished stocks is critical to the development of sustainable fishing and goes in the direction of the initiatives taken by Mauritius to promote sustainable fishing. The Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies would also provide for targeted technical assistance and capacity building for developing countries for implementation purposes.

19. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the 7th Meeting of the *Groupe de Contact Maurice-Réunion sur la Sécurité* held on 20 February 2024. The meeting focused mainly on internal and maritime security. Discussions centered, inter alia, on cooperation in the fight against narcotics, money laundering, illegal immigration, terrorism, and environmental issues. Both countries also agreed on future collaboration in new areas of concern regarding internal security such as fight against domestic violence, road safety and cybertechnics.

The technical agreement on the exchange of information on vessel traffic monitoring and training of staff and the *arrangement technique relatif à la lutte contre les trafics des stupéfiants et de substances psychotropes* were signed during the meeting.

20. Cabinet has taken note that, as at 28 February 2024, there were 585 active cases of Dengue Fever in Mauritius, of which 65 had been hospitalised in both public and private hospitals. For Rodrigues, 458 active cases of Dengue Fever had been recorded as at 28 February 2024, of which five were hospitalised. Fogging, larviciding and vector control activities were ongoing across the island. In addition, a mass sensitisation campaign was being carried out.
