

CABINET DECISIONS – 12 SEPTEMBER 2014

1. With a view to curtailing abusive practices, Cabinet has agreed to the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection making regulations under the Consumer Protection Act to provide for a maximum mark up on the sale of live cattle on the occasion of Eid al Adha. The retail selling price of imported live cattle for Eid al Adha 2014 should not exceed Rs 139.50 per kg.

2. Cabinet has agreed to the implementation of the recommendations of the High Level Committee set up to examine the implications of allowing nationals from countries affected by the Ebola Virus Disease, i.e., Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Senegal and the Democratic Republic of Congo, to enter Mauritius. The Committee has, amongst others, recommended that nationals from the six affected countries would temporarily not be allowed to enter Mauritius. All applications for work permit and visa would be put on hold, and no new applications would be entertained. All those Nationals from the above-mentioned countries to whom a visa has already been issued, would be informed not to travel to Mauritius. As regards the pilgrims who would proceed to Saudi Arabia shortly, the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, in collaboration with the Islamic Cultural Centre, would soon, start a campaign to sensitize them of the Ebola Virus Disease.

3. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Health and Quality of Life would make Regulations under the Human Tissue (Removal, Preservation and Transplant) Act 2006 to provide for a regulatory framework for renal transplantation. The Regulations would ensure that renal transplantation is performed in an enabling and safe environment in Government hospitals, as well as in private clinics for citizens and non-citizens, and also provide safeguards against racketing and commercialization of transplantation services.

Cabinet has also taken note that the Authorisation Committee, set up under the Human Tissue (Removal, Preservation and Transplant) Act, has been constituted under the chairmanship of the Acting Director, Health Services.

4. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Health and Quality of Life would make the Food (Amendment) Regulations to reduce the percentage of sodium chloride in raw and edible salts to 95%.

5. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment would publish a Workers' Pocket Guide on the Employment Rights Act to sensitize workers, local and foreign, on their rights as laid out in the Employment Rights Act. The Guide covers, amongst others, terms and conditions of employment, namely working hours; payment of overtime, meal allowance, travelling benefits, end-of-the-year bonus; leave; discrimination at work; protection against termination of agreement; payment of severance allowance; and violence at work. The Guide has been posted on the website of the Ministry.

6. Cabinet has taken note of arrangements being made to celebrate Divali at National level. The Ministry of Arts and Culture would hold a cultural show with artists from the Mahatma Gandhi Institute (MGI), the Indira Gandhi Centre for Indian Culture and the Cultural Centres on 21 October 2014 at the Auditorium of the MGI, Moka. The Ministry would also organize a popular show with the participation of the famous Indian actress Madhuri Dixit and the actor/filmmaker/singer Farhan Akhtar in October 2014 at the Anjalay Stadium, Belle Vue Harel.

7. Cabinet has taken note of developments in the implementation of housing and related projects. The National Housing Programme, launched in 2013, provides for the implementation of mixed housing schemes over a span of 10 years with an average of 1,000 housing units annually. The Programme consists of the construction of 10,000 housing units for the low income families drawing a monthly household income of less than Rs10,000, and the provision of 5,000 serviced lots for the lower middle income families with a monthly household income between Rs10,000 and Rs25,000. The Programme is being implemented on land obtained under the Government/MSPA Agreement, and on vacant plots of State land within NHDC housing estates. As at date, some 1,400 housing units are being constructed and 458 serviced sites provided in various regions of the country.

Cabinet has also taken note that for the period January to August 2014, some 1,523 families have benefitted from the grant for the casting of roof slab.

8. Cabinet has taken note of measures taken by the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security to contain the Varroa Mite, a pest of honey bees. A survey, carried out during the period 12 August to 08 September 2014, has revealed that 17 out of the 503 bee colonies have been affected with the Mite, namely at Pointe aux Sables, Roches Brunès, Vallée des Prêtres and Terre Rouge. The Apiculture Unit of the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security is carrying out preventive control, particularly in unaffected areas. Moreover, the Indian Ocean Commission has provided the services of Dr Olivier Esnault, expert in Apiculture based in Reunion Island, to help design and implement a containment/control programme. The Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security recommends that bee colonies should not be transferred in order to prevent the movement of Varroa Mite from affected to unaffected regions. A Survey is also being carried out in Rodrigues.

9. Cabinet has taken note that 78,475 tourists visited Mauritius in August 2014 as compared to 73,454 in August 2013, i.e., an increase of 6.8%. France, United Kingdom, South Africa, China and Reunion Island remain the five top tourist-generating markets. For period January to August 2014, tourist arrivals increased by 4.6% to reach 651,107 as compared to 622,492 for the same period in 2013. Tourism receipts for the months of January to July 2014 increased by 5.7%.

10. Cabinet has taken note that the Award Ceremony for the 6th Edition of the Mauritius Business Excellence Award would be held on 10 October 2014. The objectives of the Award are, amongst others, to encourage and stimulate best business practices to achieve higher productivity and competitiveness, identify role models adopting world class practices and promote the use of economic and productivity assessment tests.

11. Cabinet has agreed to Mauritius becoming a party to the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data of the Council of Europe, also known as Convention 108, and its Additional Protocol. The main objective of the Convention is to protect automatically processed personal data of individuals against infringements of privacy and the misuse of personal data. Mauritius has been invited by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to accede to the Convention in view of the legal framework for the protection of personal data already provided in the Data Protection Act 2004. Adherence to the Convention would enhance the attractiveness of Mauritius for Foreign Direct Investment.

12. Cabinet has taken note of the status of the National Inclusive Business Award which has been designed to reward companies that have adopted the inclusive business approach. The main objectives of the Award are, amongst others, to promote SME growth, enhance competitiveness of Mauritian enterprises and integrate micro and small businesses into the value chain.

13. Cabinet has taken note of the evolution of the small establishments in the economy of the country over the last six years. The number of production units (establishments and itinerant units) increased from 92,400 in 2007 to 125,500 in 2013, i.e., by 35.8%; employment during the same period grew from 211,600 to 283,000, i.e., by 33.7%; the Value Added (Rs million) from Rs43,040m to Rs82,060m, i.e., by 90.7%; and the contribution to the GDP of the small units which stood at 20% in 2007 increased to 25% in 2013.

14. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives is carrying out campaigns under the Cooperative Entrepreneurship Programme to raise awareness on the potential of cooperative entrepreneurship and the use of the cooperative model to become self-employed and be economically independent. Around 1,400 persons, particularly women and youth, have, so far, been trained on basic elements of how to start a business; 13 applications for the setting up of new women cooperative societies have been received and two have already been registered.

15. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, in collaboration with Emtel Ltd., would organize a workshop on the theme **The Future of Digital Banking and Payments** on 25 September 2014. The workshop would feature the latest insights on digital payment mechanisms, sharing of international best practices, and analyzing the right eco-system for the uptake of digital payment. Mr Bo Harald, an expert in Internet Banking from Finland, would share his experience and insights on the matter. He was a founding member and Chairperson of Mobey Forum, the leading global organisation for promoting mobile financial transaction.

16. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology and the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms would implement the Voice over IP Project (VoIP) on the Government Fibre Network. The VoIP allows users within the same environment to communicate on the fixed telephone line at no cost. It also allows IP telephony, high speed video conferencing, telepresence and webcam. The VoIP would be implemented on a pilot basis in the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology and the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms. Following the successful completion of the pilot phase, the VoIP service would be deployed, in phases, at the sites already linked to the Government Fibre Network.

17. Cabinet has taken note of the National Report on the Implementation of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands which would be submitted to the Ramsar Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance for examination by the Conference of the Contracting Parties. The salient features of the Report are -

- (a) the designation of Pointe d'Esny Wetland that harbour a rich mangrove forest, as the third Ramsar Site of International Importance;
- (b) launching of sensitization campaigns on the conservation and wise use of the National Ramsar sites;
- (c) monitoring of proposed developments on or near wetlands;
- (d) preparation of a Bill to provide for a legislative framework for the protection of wetland resources; and
- (e) maintenance of ecological features of National Ramsar sites.

18. Cabinet has taken note of the activities that would be organized in the context of the International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer, commemorated on 16 September, namely, -

- (a) holding of a Regional Training of Trainers Workshop, on Enforcement and Control Measures of Ozone Depleting Substances;

- (b) handing over of three Refrigerant Identifiers to the Customs Department;
- (c) distribution of an interactive DVD on ozone layer protection to students;
and
- (d) sensitization and awareness campaigns on ozone layer protection.

The theme for this year is “**Ozone Layer Protection: The Mission Goes On**”.

19. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development would publish pamphlets that provide practical and useful information on the safe handling, storage and disposal of chemicals, and on actions that should be taken in case of accidents. The pamphlets are being published in the context of the implementation of the Project “Sustainable Management of Persistent Organic Pollutants in Mauritius”.

20. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent mission of the Minister of Tourism and Leisure to Switzerland, Germany, Hungary and Czech Republic. The main objectives of the mission were to consolidate working relationship with trade partners in those markets and engage with them in:

- (a) an evaluation of the destination performance in the respective markets with regard to visibility campaigns undertaken and growth targets set and achieved;
- (b) identification of joint partnership with airlines to trigger demand and growth in tourist arrivals; and
- (c) joint initiatives to promote the multi facets of the destination.

21. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent mission of the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection to the Republic of Turkey, in the context of the participation of Mauritius as “Partner Country”, in the 83rd Izmir International Fair. The Minister led a private-public sector delegation comprising representatives from Enterprise Mauritius, the Board of Investment, the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority, the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Association of Mauritian Manufacturers and private sector operators. Products of 40 Mauritian companies were exhibited at the Fair and several potential buyers have scheduled visits to Mauritius in the coming months to conduct factory inspections and to work-out trial order details.

With a view to promoting closer Turkish-Mauritian linkages, the President of the Assembly of the Izmir Chamber of Commerce, Mr Rebi Akdurak has offered one full scholarship at undergraduate/graduate level at the Izmir University of Economics to one Mauritian student for the academic year starting at the end of September 2014.

In the margins of the Fair, the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Foreign Economic Relations Board of Turkey – DeiK, and another with the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey on exchange of commodities and at further consolidating relations between the business communities of both countries. The Mauritian Delegation was accompanied by a cultural troupe whose performance was highly acclaimed by the Turkish Public.

Moreover, the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection had bilateral meetings with HE Mr Jihad Hamza Hamed, Minister of State for Trade, Mr Mohamed Bin Youssef, Director General of the Arab Industrial Development, Mr Rakan Al Moussa of the United Fisheries of Kuwait and Mrs Alia Abbas, Director General of the Lebanese Ministry of Economy & Trade.

22. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection would make the Consumer Protection (Export Control) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations to allow the exportation of samples of textiles and textile articles to USA and Canada without the need for an export permit in order to maintain and improve the trade competitiveness of local industries. Exportation of the samples would, however, be subject to the following conditions:-

- (a) the sample should be exported for the purpose of analysis or marketing only; and
- (b) the sample's value should not exceed 250 US dollars.

23. Cabinet has taken note of the reconstitution of –

- (a) the Board of the National Solidarity Fund with Mrs F. Ng Cheng Hin, MSK, as Chairperson; and
- (b) the Executive Committee of the Senior Citizens Council with Mr Nunkeswar Ruhee, MSK, as Chairperson.
