

CABINET DECISIONS – 7 FEBRUARY 2014

1. Cabinet has taken note of arrangements being made by the Ministry of Housing and Lands for the sale of plots of State land, other than on Pas Géométriques, of an extent not exceeding 422.087 square metres (10 perches), and on which stands a residential unit, to holders of a building site lease at a nominal fee as announced in Budget Speech 2014. As at date, some 17,000 lessees, including those holding a building site lease under the Sites and Services Scheme, would be able to acquire plots of land under the new scheme. Under the scheme of the sale of the plots of State lands on which stand ex-CHA houses to their owners initiated in 2007, some 9,998 owners have, to-date, acquired plots of land, and some 253 applications are currently being processed.

2. Cabinet has taken note that, following an exercise carried out by the ICT Authority to measure GSM network coverage along the Terre Rouge-Verdun Link Road and M1 Motorway, dark spots, due to terrain topology, have been recorded in certain regions. With a view to improving the GSM network coverage in those uncovered areas, the Public Land Mobile Network operators would be requested to provide Home Roaming service in the immediate future, and, subsequently, come up with a deployment plan.

3. Cabinet has taken note that, between 2005 and 2012, the number of students travelling by bus has increased from 111,655 to 153,300, i.e., by 37.3%, and the number of pensioners and disabled persons from 44,100 to 67,340, i.e., by 52.7%. In order to improve bus service to commuters, particularly students and senior citizens, the National Transport Authority would grant additional road service licences to increase the number of buses along certain routes in Mauritius and Rodrigues. The extra buses would not only reduce load capacity of existing buses but also the waiting time at bus stops.

4. Cabinet has taken note that, as enunciated in Budget Speech 2014, the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment would promulgate the Non-Citizens (Work Permits) (Fees) Regulations to provide for a reduction in the annual work permit fees payable after the fifth year, i.e., from Rs10,000 to Rs6,000, in respect of non-citizens employed by the manufacturing industry.

5. Cabinet has taken note of the Stamp Issue Programme for 2014. The Stamp Advisory Committee has recommended the following themes for the issue of postage stamps for the year 2014: -

- (a) Fauna and Flora, illustrating a Bat (*La Roussette de Rodrigues*), the Dragon Fly, and the *Pignon d'Inde*;

- (b) Anniversaries and Events marking the bicentenary of the arrival of Reverend Jean Joseph Lebrun in Mauritius, the 25 years of the Introduction of Mobile Telephone in Mauritius, the 10th Anniversary of the Creation of the Ombudsperson for Children's Office and the 150th Death Anniversary of Père Laval; and
- (c) "*Animal Emblématique de L'Océan Indien*", a joint regional project headed by the *Association Philatelique de L'Océan Indien* featuring the green tortoise.

6. Cabinet has taken note that the Manufacturing Sector Workers Welfare Fund Act 2012 would be proclaimed to come into operation on 1 March 2014.

Cabinet has also taken note that the Manufacturing Sector Workers Welfare Fund Board would be chaired by Mr Hamidkhan Hyderkhan.

7. Cabinet has taken note that a National Workshop on SADC Trade in Services (Construction and Energy-related Services) would be held in Mauritius in April 2014. In the context of the Trade in Services negotiations, the SADC Secretariat has invited Member States to engage in negotiations in the Construction and Energy-related Services. The Workshop would provide technical support to enable Member States to better grasp the intricacies of the sectors and assist in the preparation of requests/offers.

8. Cabinet has taken note that the Advisory Board Meeting of the Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education would be held in Mauritius in March 2014. The Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education, established in June 2005 as an initiative of the Commonwealth of Learning and the Southern African Development Community Ministries of Education and Training, aims at -

- (a) capacity building in Open and Distance Learning;
- (b) facilitating collaboration between Open and Distance Learning institutions;
- (c) promoting research and publication in Open and Distance Learning in the SADC region; and
- (d) facilitating sharing of resources, materials, information and expertise.

9. Cabinet has taken note that the University of Mauritius would organize the third International Conference on Pure and Applied Chemistry in June 2014. The theme of the Conference is "*Crystallising Ideas: The Role of Chemistry*". The main objectives of the Conference are, amongst others, to highlight the science of crystallography, and allow participants to keep abreast of the latest research findings in chemistry.

10. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the third meeting of the Joint Committee on cooperation on the textile and clothing industry between the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection and the Ministry of Textiles of India, held in New Delhi, Republic of India. In February 2012, the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection and the Ministry of Textiles of India signed a Memorandum of Understanding to establish close cooperation in the field of textile and clothing with a view to addressing the challenges of globalisation, achieving mutual benefits by optimizing on the strengths and endowments in respect of raw material, human resource and production potential, as well as consolidating the textile and clothing industry. During the meeting, the parties reviewed progress on the various assistance offered by India and collaboration between Mauritian organisations and their Indian counterparts.

11. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the mission of Dr the Hon Navinchandra Ramgoolam, GCSK, FRCP, Prime Minister to Davos where he was invited by Professor Klaus Schwab, Founder and Executive Chairperson of the World Economic Forum, to attend the Forum's Annual Meeting 2014.

The theme of the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2014 was "*The Reshaping of the World: Consequences for Society, Politics and Business*". The main objective of the Meeting was to challenge long-held assumptions about society, politics and business so as to generate powerful ideas and collaborative spirit needed to manage the future course of world affairs.

In his intervention on the subject of Rethinking Ocean Economies, the Prime Minister explained the vision of Mauritius on the ocean economy. He highlighted that the vast resources of the EEZ of Mauritius, comprising a maritime area of approximately 2.3 million km², were still untapped and expressed his firm belief that the Ocean Economy Roadmap adopted by Government would transform the sense of geography of the people of the country and propel Mauritius from a Middle Income country to a High Income Economy.

The Prime Minister condemned the creation, in 2010, of the Chagos Archipelago marine protected area by the Government of the United Kingdom. He informed that the creation of the marine reserve by the United Kingdom was being challenged by Mauritius at an Arbitral Tribunal set up under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. He stressed that the dismemberment of the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, from the Mauritius territory prior to Independence went against the 1960 United Nations Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2066 (XX) of 16 December 1965. He also mentioned of the plight of the Chagossians, emphasizing the violation of their basic human rights by the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister also attended the session on The India Outlook in which the Panelists examined the challenges posed to Indian leaders to accelerate growth and restore investors' confidence. After the session, he had a meeting with Mr P. Chidambaram, Minister of Finance of India on the Double Taxation Avoidance Treaty between Mauritius and India.

The Prime Minister also participated in the session on Making Better Decisions on behavioural economics. Lord Stern, President of the British Academy, congratulated Mauritius, though a small country, for the courage to take ethical decisions based on principles in international fora.

In the margins of the Meeting, the Prime Minister met several Heads of State and Government, as well as Mr Al Gore, former Vice-President of the USA, Mr Gordon Brown, former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and Mr Sunil Bharti Mittal whom he encouraged to look for investment opportunities in Mauritius.

12. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent mission of the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities to Abu Dhabi where he participated in the 4th Assembly of the International Renewable Energy Agency, the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week, the first Indian Ocean Rim Association Renewable Energy Ministerial Forum, and attended the opening ceremony of the World Future Energy Summit, an event dedicated to renewable energies, energy efficiency and clean technologies.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities signed the declaration to participate in the elaboration of a global renewable energy ATLAS which would provide information to achieve universal access to sustainable energy services. The project would benefit to Mauritius in the preparation of a solar map and a wind atlas, which are indispensable tools for the development of renewable energy.

In the margins of the Meetings, the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities had a bilateral meeting with the Indian delegation led by Dr Farooque Abdulla, Minister of New and Renewable Energy, India, with whom he, amongst others, discussed areas of cooperation in the field of renewable energy and energy efficiency.

13. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent mission of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade to Addis Ababa where he participated in the 24th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the African Union (AU) and the 22nd Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly of Heads of Government and State.

The main theme of the meetings was "*Transforming Africa's Agriculture for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods, through Harnessing Opportunities for Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development*". The "*2014 Year of Agriculture and Food Security, marking the 10th Anniversary of the Adoption of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture and Development Programme*" was also launched. During the Meetings, the following were, amongst others, discussed –

- (a) the African Agenda 2063;
- (b) the state of peace and security in Africa; and
- (c) the Ouagadougou Declaration and Plan of Action on employment and Poverty Alleviation.

In the margins of the meetings, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade had bilateral meetings, amongst others, with –

- (a) Mr Norio Mitsuya, Parliamentary Senior Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, who has proposed that Japan would be willing to assist Mauritius in the Fisheries Sector; and

- (b) the Hon Mark Simmonds, UK Minister, with whom he discussed the Chagos Archipelago issue, the visa regime and recent development in Madagascar.

14. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent mission of the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection to India where he participated in the 20th Partnership Summit 2014 organised by the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Government of India, the Confederation of Indian Industry and the Government of Karnataka. The theme of the Summit was *Emerging Global Value Chains: Building Partnerships*. The Summit comprised plenary sessions on emerging issues impacting on global economic development, such as South-South development cooperation, the Post-Bali trade era, emergence of new mega-trading blocks, as well as effective pathways for sustainable growth.

In the margins of the Summit, the Minister had discussions, amongst others, with the Hon Shri Anand Sharma, Minister of Commerce and Industry, India; the Hon Aiyaz Sayed-Kayoum, Minister of Industry and Trade of the Republic of Fiji; the Hon Michaël C. Bimha, Minister of Industry and Commerce of Zimbabwe; the Hon Sultan bin Saeed Al Mansoori, Minister of Economy, United Arab Emirates. The Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection also met the Hon Dr K.S. Rao, Minister of Textiles, India, with whom he reviewed ongoing collaboration on textile and clothing and the Hon V. Moly, Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, with whom he discussed the supply of petroleum products.
