

**CABINET DECISIONS – 29 SEPTEMBER 2017**

1. Cabinet has agreed to the implementation of the Negative Income Tax being brought forward by six months, i.e., 1 July 2017 instead of 1 January 2018, as announced by the Prime Minister in his summing up speech to the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2017, and to the payment of the appropriate allowance being effected on a quarterly basis. The introduction of the Negative Income Tax system would provide financial support to some 150,000 employees in full time employment, and earning emoluments less than or equal to Rs9,900 monthly. The Negative Income Tax allowance payable to eligible employees is as follows -

Monthly Earnings	Monthly Payment (Rs)
Less or equal to Rs5,000	1,000
Above Rs5,000 but less or equal to Rs7,000	800
Above Rs7,000 but less or equal to Rs9,000	500
Above Rs9,000 but less or equal to Rs9,750	250
Above Rs9,750 but less or equal to Rs9,900	100

Sections 26(zk) and (zr) of the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2017 relating to the Negative Income Tax would be proclaimed, and the Income Tax (Negative Income Tax Allowance) Regulations 2017 would be promulgated to enable the implementation of the system.

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2. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the participation of the Hon Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Prime Minister, in the 72<sup>nd</sup> UN General Assembly Debates. The theme of the General Assembly was “*Focussing on People: Striving for Peace and a Decent Life for all on a Sustainable Planet.*”

In his address to the Assembly, the Prime Minister called, inter alia, for the reform of the United Nations System including the reform of the United Nations Security Council, and raised issues linked to peace and security, terrorism, the situation in the middle-east, climate change and its effects on Small Island Developing States, the challenges of Mauritius as a Middle Income Country, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. He also expressed the satisfaction of Mauritius on the adoption by the General Assembly of the resolution requesting an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965. He thanked UN Members for their support during the vote, and called for their continued cooperation in making the written submissions.

During the launch of the United Nations Development Programme’s book on “Inequality in Africa”, the Prime Minister highlighted the measures taken by Government to combat poverty and inequality.

In the margins of the General Assembly, the Prime Minister had bilateral meetings with a number of Heads of State, Heads of Government, and Ministers, including the President of the Seychelles, the President of the UN General Assembly, the Secretary General of the United Nations, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, the Secretary General of the ACP Group, and the Secretary General of the Commonwealth.

During the meeting the Prime Minister had with the Prime Minister of Belgium, the latter agreed to the conclusion of a cooperation in the field of medicine, particularly the fight against cancer.

The Prime Minister had a meeting with the President of Senegal when he reviewed progress in the implementation of the Special Economic Zone. In this respect, a high level technical team from Senegal would visit Mauritius in October 2017 to learn from the Mauritian experience in the management of the Freeport.

In London, the Prime Minister had a working session with Mr Philippe Sands, QC, Legal Adviser, on the submissions to be made to the International Court of Justice on the Chagos Archipelago.

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3. Cabinet has taken note that, in the Global Competitiveness Report 2017-2018, Mauritius remains the most competitive country in Africa at 45th in the overall Global Competitiveness Index (with a score of 4.52 as compared to 4.49 in 2016-2017), with South Africa dropping 14 places and Rwanda seven places. The Global Competitiveness Index 2017-2018 that covers 137 countries, measures factors that drive long term growth and prosperity.

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4. Cabinet has agreed to the Reform Institutions Act 1988 being amended with a view to –
- (a) deterring persons who have access to the prisons premises, bringing unauthorized items;
  - (b) allowing the serving, consecutively, of sentences imposed on a detainee by a Court in respect of other offences committed; and
  - (c) introducing the concept of earned remission with a view to encouraging convicted prisoners to earn remission through good conduct and behaviour, and participation in rehabilitation programmes.

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5. Cabinet has agreed to the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities signing a Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Fields of Renewable Energy, Construction Energy Efficiency, and Climate Change with the Ministry for the Environment, Land and Sea of the Republic of Italy. The Memorandum of Understanding aims at encouraging cooperation between the relevant agencies, enterprises or other entities of both countries in, among others, the following fields -

- (a) renewable energy technology and energy;
- (b) electricity grid strengthening efficiency;
- (c) improvement of water resources management, including rainwater harvesting and desalination;

- (d) developing standards for solar panels;
- (e) promotion of joint ventures for manufacturing of renewable energy and energy efficiency related products; and
- (f) improvement of the waste water treatment system.

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6. Cabinet has agreed to the Energy Efficiency Management Office of the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities signing a Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Field of Energy Efficiency with the Bureau of Energy Efficiency of India. The Memorandum of Understanding aims at strengthening, developing and promoting cooperation, among others, in the following fields –

- (a) technical assistance for the establishment of an Energy Efficiency Information data base;
- (b) establishment of an Energy Efficiency Cell by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency;
- (c) technical assistance in economic modeling of energy efficiency;
- (d) development of a framework for the implementation of a green building scheme;
- (e) implementation of energy audits in small and medium enterprises; and
- (f) framework and guidelines for energy efficiency in agriculture.

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7. Cabinet has agreed to the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities signing a Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the New Renewable Energy with the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy of India. The Memorandum of Understanding aims at strengthening, promoting and developing cooperation, among others, in the following fields –

- (a) exchange of information in the field of renewable energy techniques, particularly solar technology;
- (b) economic modeling of renewable energy;
- (c) technical assistance for standards, testing facilities and certification of renewable energy technology and equipment; and
- (d) development of guidelines and standards for renewable energy and for evaluation and approval of on-grid and off-grid renewable energy projects.

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8. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent mission of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade to Brussels and Geneva.

In Brussels, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade had meetings, among others, with Mr João Aguiar Machado, Director General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of the European Commission, to discuss the request put up for the grant of a normal derogation from the applicable EU rules of origin for a quantum of 4000 tons of canned tuna.

In Geneva, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade attended the 64th Session of the Trade and Development Board of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) where he, as Guest Speaker, shared the experience of Mauritius on Investment in the Digital Economy.

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9. Cabinet has taken note that, following the First Session of the Permanent Joint Commission between the Republic of Mauritius and the Union of Comoros held in April 2017, -

- (a) HE Mr Souef Mohamed El Amine, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation of the Union of Comoros, would, during his forthcoming visit to Mauritius in the context of the Indian Ocean Commission Extraordinary Council of Ministers, sign –
  - (i) a *Convention-cadre relative à la coopération éducative*; and
  - (ii) a *Protocol d'Accord* on cooperation on law enforcement and security;
- (b) a delegation from the Union of Comoros would be on a study tour to Mauritius to learn about the social security system and the pre-primary education system; and another delegation would hold Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement negotiations; and
- (c) an investment delegation of 25 businessmen from Mauritius proceeded to Comoros to look for investment opportunities.

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10. Cabinet has taken note of progress achieved in the negotiations on the Continental Free Trade Area. The main objective of the negotiations is to achieve a comprehensive and mutually beneficial trade agreement among the Member States of the African Union with the ultimate goal of creating a single continental market for goods and services. Successful negotiations would enable operators of Mauritius to have better market access opportunities on the Western, Northern and Central Africa regions.

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11. Cabinet has taken note that a national survey on households' out-of-pocket expenditures on health for the Republic of Mauritius would be carried out as from October 2017. The main objective of the Survey is to generate data for the development of National Health Accounts that provide a systematic description of the financial flows related to the consumption of healthcare goods and services in a country.

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12. Cabinet has taken note that the World Meteorological Organisation would hold a consultation meeting in Mauritius in December 2017 to launch the activities of the Indianocéanie-Hydrological Cycle Observing System, which is a framework programme dedicated to improving basic observation activities and promoting exchange of data in the field of hydrology. The project aims at building capacity for the collection, analysis and dissemination of accurate data on water resources, and assessing the impact of climate variability and climate change effects on water resources.

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13. Cabinet has taken note that the Household Waste Partnership Working Group Meeting, set up under the Basel Convention, would be held in Mauritius in November 2017. The Working Group is responsible for overseeing organisational matters pertaining to the implementation of the Partnership's activities, including the establishment of project groups, and review of work deliverables and reports. Participants from 25 countries, including representatives of Government, Industry and non-governmental organisations, would attend the Meeting.

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14. Cabinet has taken note that a Sub-regional Workshop to share and discuss the findings of the Global Fuel Economy Initiative Project, would be held in Mauritius in October 2017. The objectives of the Initiative are to improve public health through cleaner fuels and stricter vehicle emissions standards, and facilitate large reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and fuel use through improvements in automotive fuel economy of at least 50 % worldwide by 2050. Some 40 international delegates and experts are expected to attend the Workshop.

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15. Cabinet has taken note of the activities that would be organised to mark the World Mental Health Day, commemorated on 10 October, namely -

- (a) an official function, followed by a cultural programme, at the Brown Sequad Mental Health Care Centre;
- (b) an exhibition on products to highlight the creative talents of the patients of the Brown Sequad Mental Health Care Centre;
- (c) holding of a workshop and sensitisation campaigns on the theme of the Day; and
- (d) a solidarity walk from Promenade Roland Armand, Rose Hill to the Brown Sequad Mental Health Care Centre on 14 October 2017.

The theme chosen by the World Health Organisation for this year is “**Mental Health at the Workplace.**”

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16. Cabinet has taken note that, in the context of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, commemorated on 17 October, the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment would –

- (a) hand over keys of the first four fully concrete housing units of 50 square metres to beneficiaries in the district of Moka;
- (b) organise a Job Fair targeting eligible households in the district of Grand Port; and
- (c) launch of the Community Working Group for the districts of Savanne and Grand Port; the Rodrigues Information and Support Desk, a training course in pastry and life skills education; and the “Unveiling Talents” Competition in slam, songs, dance, drawings and music.

The theme chosen by the United Nations for this year is “**Answering the Call of October 17 to end poverty : A path towards peaceful and inclusive societies**”.

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17. Cabinet has taken note of the activities that would be organised by the Mauritius Post Ltd, on the occasion of the World Post Day, commemorated on 9 October, namely –

- (a) the launching of a First Day Cover for stamps on the theme “*sea shells*”;
- (b) a Mega Blood Donor’s Day on 9 October 2017 at the Central Mail Office, and the Rose Hill Post Office;
- (c) free Entrance for Mauritians at the Postal Museum on 9 October 2017;
- (d) a stamp exhibition at Gallery Nicolas Nobert at the Postal Museum; and
- (e) open days at Post Offices located in shopping malls and other regions.

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18. Cabinet has taken note of -

- (a) the appointment Mr Marie Armand Tadebois as Chairperson of Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund Board; and
- (b) the reappointment of Mr Gaston François Desmarais as Chairperson of the Central Water Board.

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19. Cabinet has taken note of the reconstitution of -

- (a) the Board of the National Art Gallery with Mr Darmarajen Veerasamy as Chairperson;
- (b) the Board of the Rights Management Society with Mr Michaël Lyndon Veeraragoo as Chairperson;
- (c) the Parole Board with Mr Pramaavnse Bissessur as Chairperson; and
- (d) the Board of Visitors of the Rehabilitation Youth Centre with Mrs Leelawtee Ramsaha as Chairperson.

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