

CABINET DECISIONS – 20 NOVEMBER 2020

1. Cabinet has taken note that the Freeport (Amendment) Regulations 2020 would be promulgated to provide for the extension of the period to allow the provision of warehousing facilities in a Freeport zone to non Freeport companies. The Freeport Regulations are being amended to describe the prescribed period until 31 December 2021.

2. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development would promulgate the Income Tax (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 3) Regulations 2020. The Regulations have been prepared to –

- (a) give effect to the measure contained in the Annex to the Budget Speech 2020-2021 whereby for avoidance of doubt, a clarification is being brought to the partial exemption regime on interest income;
- (b) exempt from income tax, the Civil Service College, Mauritius and the Investment Support Programme Limited, a non-profit making Government-owned company, with effect from their respective date of incorporation;
- (c) exempt from income tax, an allowance not exceeding Rs15,000 payable to an officer or employee who has been required to work on the frontline during the COVID-19 period where such allowance is paid by Government or financed by the COVID-19 Solidarity Fund;
- (d) bring a consequential amendment following the change in terminology of “Overseas Family Office” to “Family Office”; and
- (e) extend the time limit for a Peer-to-Peer Lending operator to start operations and benefit from incentives granted under the Scheme from 31 December 2020 to 31 December 2021.

3. Cabinet has agreed to Mauritius signing the following Agreements –

- (a) a revised Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) with the Kingdom of Lesotho;
- (b) a DTAA with the Republic of Estonia; and
- (c) a DTAA with the Republic of Angola.

The Agreements are in line with the OECD and UN Model Agreements on Avoidance of Double Taxation and are compliant with the Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) recommendations. The Agreements would not only clarify the taxing rights of each country on income covered by the concerned DTAA but would also –

- (i) provide certainty to investors in their dealings with Mauritius, Lesotho, Estonia or Angola as the case may be;
- (ii) create a conducive environment for greater cross-border investment flows between our countries; and
- (iii) provide mechanisms to combat tax evasion and other malpractices and resolve tax disputes that may arise.

4. Cabinet has taken note of the following funding possibilities for projects in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, namely the Green Climate Fund, the Adaptation Fund and the Adaptation Climate Innovation Accelerator. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade would act as a coordinating body to tap the opportunities available under these Funds.

5. Cabinet has taken note that that the Livestock and Veterinary Division of the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security has worked out a new protocol to be observed for the movement of goats and sheep from Rodrigues to Mauritius. The main aim is to ensure that Rodriguan and Mauritian traders are not penalised while ensuring the health conditions of the animals. The salient features of the new protocol are, inter alia, as follows –

- (a) goats and sheep from Rodrigues would be moved for slaughter only at the Mauritius Meat Authority;
- (b) any person wishing to move animals from Rodrigues should invariably be a holder of the following –
 - (i) a valid meat shop licence issued by the National Agricultural Products Regulatory Office; and
 - (ii) a Movement Permit issued by the Veterinary Services; and
- (c) strict animal health conditions would have to be observed.

The Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security would issue a communiqué with all relevant details.

6. Cabinet has agreed to the National Land Transport Authority extending the timeframe of new licensees to implement their Public Service Vehicle Licence for contract cars and reviewing the implementation age of a contract car. In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, applicants who have been granted a Public Service Vehicle (Contract Car) Licence since 01 January 2020 would be exceptionally granted an extension up to 30 June 2021 for the implementation of the licence. Furthermore, the age of contract car vehicles on which such licences are to be implemented would be reviewed from two to four years.

7. Cabinet has taken note that ex-workers of PADCO Limited would be paid remuneration due to them from the Wage Guarantee Fund. Cabinet has also taken note that the Workers' Right Act would be amended to review the definition of the term "insolvent".

8. Cabinet has taken note that the responsibility for the management of the Ebène Recreational Park was being temporarily entrusted to Metro Express Ltd (MEL) for a period of two years, after its completion and handing over by end of November 2020.

9. Cabinet has taken note of the status regarding the administration and maintenance of the Online Repository of documents set up in connection with the grounding and oil spill of the MV Wakashio. The purpose of the Repository would be to provide a centralised database that would be used for the environmental, social and economic impacts assessment exercises for further scientific use, for policy decisions in respect of any such incidents as well as for supporting claims to the insurance company. The Central Information Systems Division would be in charge of the technical administration of the Online Repository and the Government Online Centre would be responsible for maintaining access of the network and server, server administration, maintenance and back up.

10. Cabinet has taken note of the alarming situation of the COVID-19 pandemic prevailing across the world. With regard to Mauritius, one local case had been recorded on 12 November 2020. Currently, there were 48 active cases of COVID-19 in Mauritius. As at 20 November 2020, 494 cases of COVID-19 had been registered in Mauritius. The public should observe strict sanitary precautions.

11. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Health and Wellness would issue a Notice under section 4(1) of the Quarantine Act 2020 and make the Quarantine (COVID-19) (Amendment No. 5) Regulations 2020 to extend the quarantine period in Mauritius until 15 January 2021.

12. Cabinet has taken note that the Prime Minister would amend the Order made under section 3(1)(a) of the Quarantine Act 2020, to extend the prohibition of entry of aircraft and ships into Mauritius until 15 January 2021, except for those aircraft and ships as he may approve.

13. Cabinet has taken note of the Annual Report of the Independent Police Complaints Commission for the period 09 April 2018 to 30 June 2019 which would be tabled in the National Assembly shortly.

14. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation would collaborate with the State Informatics Ltd and Huawei to host the “Innovation for All: Summit 2020”, a technology summit, on 26 and 27 November 2020. The Summit is aligned with the new strategy of Government to harness the potential of existing technologies as well as to focus on emerging technologies for the sustained economic development of the economy in the new normal presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. The themes to be covered during the Summit would include Blockchain Technology, Artificial Intelligence, Cybersecurity, Digital Citizen, Smart Nation, Fintech and Emerging Technologies. Participants would have a broader insight and knowledge of the numerous new possibilities that emerging technologies offer and the ways and means to adopt same.

15. Cabinet has taken note that following a request of the Media Trust, the Ministry of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management would provide the services of experts to train journalists on climate-related matters and disaster risk management. A two-day workshop would be organised for journalists for them to have a better understanding and improve their reporting on weather and climate-related matters as well as disaster risk management. The resource persons would be from the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre, the Mauritius Meteorological Services, the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service and the Land Drainage Authority.

16. Cabinet has taken note of the reconstitution of the Valuation Tribunal, with Mrs Nadjiyya Dauhoo, Magistrate of Intermediate Court to serve as part-time Chairperson for a period of three years with effect from 01 January 2021.
