

HIGHLIGHTS OF CABINET MEETING – FRIDAY 20 AUGUST 2021

1. Cabinet has agreed to the State Trading Corporation launching restricted bidding exercises for the procurement of -

- (i) 50 metric tons (MT) of Instant Full Cream Milk Powder from a shortlist of eight potential suppliers who can supply milk powder of New Zealand origin; and
- (ii) 95 MT of Soyabean Oil packed in 1 Litre PET (plastic) bottle from a list of 11 potential suppliers from Egypt.

These commodities would be imported on a pilot basis.

2. Cabinet has agreed to the ratification of the Treaty for the Establishment of the African Medicines Agency. The main objective of the African Medicines Agency is to strengthen the national regulatory systems through excellent back up at regional and continental levels. The African Medicines Agency would serve as the continental regulatory body that would ensure that there are harmonised and strengthened regulatory systems which govern the regulation of medicines and medicinal products in the African Continent.

Once the African Medicines Agency is operational, countries would be better equipped to –

- (a) increase access to medicines and health products that are safe, effective and of good quality;
- (b) combat substandard and falsified medical products;
- (c) improve efficiency; and
- (d) provide strategic directions in promoting good health practice.

3. Cabinet has taken note that the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Information Management System Portal (SPS) would be launched by the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security on 23 August 2021. The Portal would be operated by the National Plant Protection Office and the Livestock and Veterinary Division of that Ministry. The purpose of the SPS Portal is to provide a platform to traders in order to obtain, from one single source, all the SPS related information. Traders would be able to apply for their certificate at any time. The service would be accessible via mobile devices such as tablets and smart phones. The overall objective of the project is to facilitate trade and increase transparency by consolidating all sanitary and phytosanitary trade related information into one user-friendly website for the issuance of a phytosanitary certificate, in line with the International Plant Protection Convention.

4. Cabinet has taken note that the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority has fixed the price of Molasses for Crop 2021 at Rs4,707/T in accordance with the Sugar Industry Efficiency Act and the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority Act. Planters would, for Crop 2021, benefit from an additional revenue of Rs458.52/T of Molasses or Rs184/T of sugar. Necessary Regulations would be made accordingly.

5. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security would proceed with publication of the price of green tea leaf in line with the National Agricultural Products Regulations 2013. The National Agricultural Products Regulatory Office (NAPRO) has recommended that the Minimum Interim Price per kilo of green leaf payable monthly for the contractual year 2021-2022, be calculated as follows –

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| (a) | Producer of tea products to cultivator | Rs13.00 |
| (b) | Cultivator to métayer | Rs12.50 |

The new Minimum Interim Price would be applicable to the leaves harvested as from 01 July 2021.

Following consultations NAPRO had with tea growers and manufacturers, it has been agreed that the prices for the First Partial Payment of green leaves of tea be maintained as those of the previous year. Hence, the price per kilo of green leaves for the contractual year 2020/2021 would be as follows –

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| (a) | Rs3.00 per kilo of green tea leaves paid by a producer to a cultivator, and |
| (b) | Rs2.50 per kilo of green tea leaves paid by a cultivator to a métayer. |

6. Cabinet has agreed, in principle, to the setting up of a Contract Bus Operators Welfare Fund in order to cater for the socio-economic well-being of contract bus operators and their families. Drafting instructions would be conveyed to the Attorney General's Office for the preparation of the Bill and consultations would be held with the contract bus operators and other concerned stakeholders to obtain their views and finalise the Bill accordingly.

7. Cabinet has taken note that the Probation Hostel and Home (Amendment) Regulations 2021 would be promulgated in order to have only one Managing Committee for the Probation Home for Girls and the Probation Hostel for Boys, with a view to rationalising the costs of managing these two institutions.

8. Cabinet has agreed to the promulgation of the Private Secondary Education Authority (Board of Discipline) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. Amendments would be brought to Regulations 2 to 10 of the Private Secondary Education Authority (Board of Discipline) Regulations to, inter alia, –

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| (a) | better regulate disciplinary proceedings to prevent wastage of public funds;
and |
| (b) | align the provisions of the Board of Discipline with those of the Workers' Rights Act. |

9. Cabinet has agreed to the promulgation of the Energy Efficiency (Registration of Energy Auditors) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. Amendments would be brought to the Energy Efficiency (Registration of Energy Auditors) Regulations to provide –

- (a) for the registration period in respect of an energy auditor to be extended from two years to five years;
- (b) for the number of energy audits which an energy auditor has to carry out in non-residential buildings during his registration be reduced from three to one;
- (c) for the transition period regarding the registration process;
- (d) for energy auditors to be allowed the opportunity to register anew with Energy Efficiency Management Office without waiting for a period of one year from the date of deregistration.

The Energy Efficiency (Registration of Energy Auditors) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 shall come into operation on 16 September 2021.

10. Cabinet has taken note that in view of the increasing number of asymptomatic COVID-19 positive local cases and for the purpose of preventing the spread of the disease, the Ministry of Health and Wellness has worked out a Self-Confinement Protocol establishing the Eligibility Criteria, the Duration, the Exclusions/Waivers and the Monitoring and Evaluation mechanism, among others. The Monitoring and Evaluation mechanism would be carried out under the supervision of Medical Practitioners of the Domiciliary Monitoring Unit. The COVID-19 (Self-Confinement) Regulations 2021 has been made by the Minister of Health and Wellness and has come into operation on 20 August 2021.

11. Cabinet has taken note that the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development would promulgate the –

- (a) Customs (Amendment) Regulations 2021;
- (b) Customs Tariff (Purchase of Another Duty Exempted Motor Vehicle Before Expiry of 3 or 4 Years From Date of Exemption) Regulations 2021;
- (c) Customs Tariff (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 5) Regulations 2021;
- (d) Excise (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 5) Regulations 2021; and
- (e) Excise (Amendment No. 3) Regulations 2021.

The Regulations provide for the implementation of measures mentioned in the Annex to Budget Speech 2021-22 relating to revenue laws as well as other policy measures regarding, among others, the use of eco-friendly motor vehicles and the creation of new HS Codes for COVID-19 Home Self-Testing Kits to allow import control of these goods.

12. Cabinet has taken note of the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic prevailing across the world. Some 210 million cases have been reported globally, of which 188.1 million persons have been successfully treated. With regard to Mauritius, as from March 2020 to 20 August 2021, 7,573 cases (including imported cases) of COVID-19 had been registered. There were 3,073 active cases of COVID-19 in Mauritius (mostly asymptomatic), out of which 3,051 were local cases and 22 imported cases.

Cabinet has also taken note of the situation of COVID-19 in prisons and the measures being taken to prevent the spread of the virus thereat. The vaccination exercise was ongoing for Prison Staff and detainees.

Cabinet has further taken note of progress in the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme. As at 19 August 2021, 777,052 persons had received a first dose of vaccine (representing 62 percent of the population). 681,241 persons had been fully vaccinated (representing 55 percent of the population).

13. Cabinet has taken note of the findings and recommendations of the fifth Integrated Biological and Behavioural Surveillance Survey among People Who Inject Drugs which was carried out in Mauritius in November and December 2020. The specific objectives of the 2020 Integrated Biological and Behavioural Surveillance Survey were to –

- (a) monitor the trend in the prevalence of HIV, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, and syphilis among People Who Inject Drugs in Mauritius;
- (b) assess sexual and other risk behaviours among this target group;
- (c) assess health seeking behaviours, including harm reduction, HIV Testing and Counselling among this target group;
- (d) describe demographic characteristics of this target group and the nature of their high risk behaviours; and
- (e) provide information about this target group to assist policy makers in strategic planning.

The Ministry of Health and Wellness would disseminate the findings and salient features in the 2020 Integrated Biological and Behavioural Surveillance Survey Report to all stakeholders and the Report would be uploaded on the website of that Ministry.

14. Cabinet has taken note that there has been a rise in the felling of tree species *Santalum album* commonly known as sandal wood, a culturally significant tree species which form part of the few trees growing on dry lowland landscape of the country. Several groups of people have been entering private properties and State lands illegally to cut these trees for the purpose of procuring the said wood for exportation.

With a view to halting the destruction and theft of the sandal wood, the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security would stop the issue of phytosanitary certificate for export of sandal wood by the National Plant Protection Office as an immediate measure and would bring amendments to the Third Schedule of the Forests and Reserves Act 1983 to include sandal wood as a protected plant.

15. Cabinet has taken note that the 41st SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government was held recently in Malawi. The President of the Democratic Republic of Congo was elected as the Vice Chairperson of SADC for a period of one year. The Summit also elected the President of the Republic of Namibia as the Vice Chairperson of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation.

The Summit endorsed the recommendation of the Council of Ministers for the appointment of Mr Elias Mpedi Magosi as the new Executive Secretary of SADC.

16. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the Meeting of SADC Council of Ministers which was attended virtually by the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade. The interventions of the Minister at the SADC Council of Ministers focused, amongst others, on the following main issues -

- (a) the COVID-19 Pandemic;
- (b) the hosting of the African Medicines Agency Headquarters;
- (c) the adoption of a Draft Resolution on the Implementation of United Nations General Assembly Resolution 73/295 on the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965;
- (d) the recruitment of the Executive Secretary for SADC; and
- (e) the Post Cotonou - Programming of the Sub-Sahara Africa Multi-Annual Indicative Programme 2021-2027.

Cabinet also took note that the first prize of the regional SADC Secondary School Essay Competition would be awarded to Ms Stephanie Lee You Voon, a Mauritian Student.

17. Cabinet has agreed to the installation of the bust of Yuri Gagarin, Soviet pilot and cosmonaut who was the first human being to journey into outer space, in the premises of the Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre Trust Fund at Bell Village.

To mark the 60th anniversary of the historic flight of the cosmonaut, the Russian Embassy approached the Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre Trust Fund for the installation of a bust of Yuri Gagarin in its premises. All costs would be borne by the Russian Embassy.

18. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of a *Convention de Partenariat* between the *Conservatoire National de Musique François Mitterrand* and the *Pôle Régional des Musiques Actuelles* (PRMA), Reunion Island for the *Phonothèque Historique de l'Océan Indien et ses actions de valorisation*. The aim of this *Convention de Partenariat* is to enable the various islands in the Indian Ocean to bring together their respective music archives through the *Phonothèque Historique de l'Océan Indien* (PHOI) platform. The *Convention de Partenariat* includes the following elements –

- (a) the creation and development of a database for the collection of documents and knowledge on traditional music;
- (b) the organisation of workshops for traditional music of islands in the Indian Ocean;
- (c) the engineering of the platform for the PHOI;
- (d) the organisation of an exhibition on different forms of *segas* in the Indian Ocean; and
- (e) the organisation of a Cultural Mediation Day in islands which are partners in the PHOI project.

19. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation would organise an inter-region '*A Cappella*' competition for the first time ever. '*A Cappella*' is an Italian term that literally means 'in chapel style'. It is a song performed by a group of persons without the use of any instrumental accompaniment. Instead, the singers use their voice to replicate the sounds traditionally made by musical instruments. The local '*A Cappella*' competition would be called '*Sa Nou Lavwa*'. The objectives of the competition are to –

- (a) promote '*A Cappella*' as a recreational activity;
- (b) provide our youngsters with a platform to express their talents; and
- (c) provide guidance to young people who wish to further develop their skills with a view to becoming professional '*A Cappella*' singers.

The '*A Cappella*' competition would involve 10 teams of up to 15 youngsters which would compete against each other, and they would come each from the nine districts of Mauritius and also from Rodrigues.

20. Cabinet has taken note that Mr Arnasalon Ponnusawmy has been appointed as Chief Executive of the Gambling Regulatory Authority.

21. Cabinet has taken note that Mr Harvesh Kumar Seegoolam, Governor of the Bank of Mauritius, has been awarded the “Central Bank Governor of the Year” by the highly respected African Leadership Magazine. The Central Bank Governor of the Year Award recognises those who have led their countries’ economies through what has been another tumultuous year and have been able to stimulate growth and stabilise their macro-economic environment, thereby boosting investor confidence.

22. Cabinet has taken note that Dr Pushpawant Boodhun, one of the Commissioners on the Commission of Inquiry set up to inquire and report on, inter alia, the circumstances in which the Contract of Affreightment was awarded to Betamax Ltd, has tendered his resignation. Arrangements would be made for his replacement under the provisions of the Commission of Inquiry Act.

23. Cabinet has taken note of the reconstitution of the Board of Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd.
