

HIGHLIGHTS OF CABINET MEETING – FRIDAY 16 DECEMBER 2022

1. Cabinet has agreed to appropriate Regulations being made to provide for the following -
 - (a) the amount to be paid to workers as the additional remuneration for year 2023;
 - (b) the financing of the payment of the additional remuneration 2023 up to Rs140 to Mauritian employees employed in the Export Oriented Enterprises, earning up to Rs50,000 a month from a special allowance granted under the Workers' Rights (Payment of Special Allowance) Regulations;
 - (c) the maintenance of the payment of the special allowance which was introduced in 2018 to top up the national minimum wage so that the workers have a guaranteed income of Rs13,075 per month as from January 2023, inclusive of the CSG Income Allowance; and
 - (d) the adjustment of the national minimum wage by the amount of the additional remuneration payable for the year 2023.

2. Cabinet has agreed to the promulgation of the Education (Amendment No. 5) Regulations 2022 and the addendum to the Annual Programme for the Primary School Achievement Certificate (PSAC) Assessment 2021-2022. The Education Regulations 1957 and the Annual Programme for the PSAC Assessment 2021-2022 provide that after the proclamation of results, the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate would simultaneously hold a re-assessment in core subjects (English/French/Mathematics) for candidates who have not met the minimum requirement as detailed below –

- (i) Grade 5 in at least three subjects including in at least two of either Mathematics, English or French; or
- (ii) Grade 5 in two of either English, French or Mathematics, and at least Intermediate Level in Communication Skills in respect of any two languages or Intermediate Level in ICT Skills.

Opportunity would also be given to those who were in isolation for having been tested positive to COVID-19 or who had any other medical conditions (supported by Medical Certificate) during the PSAC Examination period, to take the PSAC re-assessment papers. The PSAC re-assessment papers would be organised on 19, 20 and 21 December 2022.

3. Cabinet has taken note that the *Institutions Agréées* (Amendment) Regulations 2022 would be promulgated to designate the Rogers Capital Credit Ltd as an "*Institution Agréée*".

According to the Code Civil Mauricien, the Government of Mauritius, banks licensed by the Bank of Mauritius, insurance companies licensed by the Financial Services Commission, the Development Bank of Mauritius, the Mauritius Housing Company Ltd and cooperative societies are allowed to inscribe fixed or floating charges on assets of their clients. Any other institution should apply to the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development to be designated as an “*Institution Agréée*”.

4. Cabinet has taken note that the Code Civil Mauricien (Rate of Interest) Regulations 2022 would be promulgated. The Bank of Mauritius is proposing to implement a new monetary policy framework to enhance the transmission mechanism and strengthen the effectiveness of monetary policy. This framework includes a change in the policy rate used to signal the stance of monetary policy of the Bank with a renaming of the term ‘Key Repo Rate’ to ‘Key Rate’. This change would be effective as from 01 January 2023.

The Monetary Policy Committee would continue to determine the level of the new policy rate consistent with the inflation rate and growth outlook. The initial level of the ‘Key Rate’ would be set at the same level as the current ‘Key Repo rate’. The Code Civil Mauricien (Rate of Interest) Regulations 2017 would be revoked.

5. Cabinet has taken note that the following Regulations would be promulgated to provide for the implementation of the tariff liberalisation commitments under the Mauritius-China Free Trade Agreement as well as other policy and technical measures -

- (a) Customs Tariff (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 6) Regulations 2022;
- (b) Excise (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 5) Regulations;
- (c) Value Added Tax (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2022;
- (d) Customs (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2022; and
- (e) Excise (Amendment No. 3) Regulations 2022.

6. Cabinet has taken note of the current water situation in Mauritius for the Dry Season 2022-2023. As at 15 December 2022, the total storage was 38.47 million cubic meters, equivalent to 41.7 percent of the total capacity. The average groundwater levels for the period ending 15 December 2022, show a declining trend and are presently below average. Below normal rainfall is expected for December 2022.

Cabinet has further taken note that the Central Water Authority (Dry Season) Regulations 2022 would be promulgated so that –

- (a) no person shall without reasonable excuse, use any water for domestic purpose or water supply for non-domestic purpose through hosepipe, sprinkler or any similar apparatus in any wasteful manner; and
- (b) no person shall, without reasonable excuse, carry out sugarcane irrigation through abstraction of water resources.

The Regulations would be effective as from 17 December 2022.

7. Cabinet has taken note of the results of the National Certificate of Education (NCE) Assessment 2022. Out of the 16,385 school candidates of the Republic of Mauritius who took part in the NCE Assessment, 10,709 candidates have met the requirements for the NCE (65.4 percent).

There were 15,244 candidates who took part in the NCE Assessment 2022 in the Island of Mauritius, of whom 10,130 have met the NCE requirements (66.5 percent). As for Rodrigues, 1,132 candidates took part in the NCE Assessment and 572 candidates have attained the requirements (50.5 percent). In Agalega, out of the nine school candidates who took part in the NCE Assessment 2022, seven have attained the NCE requirements (77.8 percent).

8. Cabinet has taken note of the performance of Mauritian athletes at the 12th *Commission de la Jeunesse et des Sports de l'Océan Indien* (CJSOI) Games, which took place from 04 to 11 December 2022 in Mauritius. Mauritius won 46 Gold medals, 45 Silver medals and 48 Bronze medals.

9. Cabinet has taken note of the electricity tariff review approved by the Utility Regulatory Authority (URA). The publication of the decision of URA in two dailies and the gazetting of the new electricity tariff review would be effected by the URA.

10. Cabinet has agreed to the Government of Mauritius signing the first amendment to the “*Accord Révisé Portant création du Fonds de Solidarité Africain.*” The “*Fonds de Solidarité Africain*” (FSA) which is an international financial institution founded in 1976 by 12 French speaking African States, including Mauritius, currently has 16 Member States.

The main objective of the Fund is to provide guarantees for loans, financial support by way of interest subsidy or by facilitating the rescheduling of loans, amongst others, contracted by Member States. The main amendments to the revised Agreement would enable the FSA to, inter alia -

- (a) reshape the structure of its bodies, including the General Assembly, the Fund’s supreme body;
- (b) establish a Council of Governors, which would take over the powers initially vested in the General Assembly; and
- (c) include independent members on the Board of Directors, selected on the basis of their knowledge and expertise of the business credit market.

Cabinet has also agreed to the signing of an Agreement with the FSA for the opening of its Resident Mission in Mauritius.

11. Cabinet has taken note of the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic prevailing in Mauritius. As at 14 December 2022, there were 82 active cases of COVID-19, out of which 38 were admitted at the New ENT Hospital. Over the period 08 to 14 December 2022, one death was attributed to COVID-19.

12. Cabinet has taken note that there was no suspected case of mpox (Monkeypox) in Mauritius during the period 08 to 14 December 2022.

13. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the participation of the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology in the UNESCO India-Africa (UIA) Hackathon 2022 held recently in India. The objectives of the Hackathon 2022 which was organised by India in partnership with UNESCO, were to bring together young students from Africa and Asia to –

- (a) collaborate, discuss ideas and innovate;
- (b) offer solutions for problems pertinent to all participating nations;
- (c) jointly explore startup potentials; and
- (d) strengthen cultural ties.

The UIA Hackathon 2022 brought together some 603 students, 200 from India and 403 from African Countries. 16 Mauritian students participated in the event. Prizes were awarded to the 20 best digital solutions and three Mauritian students were among the prize winning teams.

In the margins of the UIA Hackathon 2022, the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology had a meeting with the Minister of Education of India, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan. Discussions centred on several educational issues.

14. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the participation of the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade in COMESA Council of Ministers held recently in the Republic of Zambia. The theme was 'Building Resilience Through Strategic Digital Economic Integration'.

The meeting, inter alia, assessed progress made on the implementation of the COMESA programmes/projects, status of Member States' contribution to the Secretariat's budget, restructuring of the Secretariat and audit and administrative matters.

The interventions of the Minister focused on issues such as health, the Tripartite Free Trade Area Agreement, the allocation of sugar quota under the Kenya Sugar Safeguard and maritime connectivity.

15. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the participation of the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade to the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Council of Ministers, held recently in the Republic of Bangladesh. The Republic of India was elected as Vice-Chair of the Organisation. The projects and programmes in the six priority areas of co-operation (maritime safety and security, trade and investment facilitation, tourism and cultural exchange, fisheries management, disaster risk management and academic, science and technology co-operation) and two cross cutting issues (Blue economy and women's economic empowerment) were reviewed and discussed.

The Council of Ministers took note of the continued negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on global economic development and the challenges being faced by IORA Member States. The various activities that have been organised by the IORA Secretariat with the support of the Government of Mauritius to mark the Silver Jubilee of the Association were acknowledged.

In the margins of the event, the Minister had bilateral meetings with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bangladesh and the Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan to review co-operation issues.

16. Cabinet has taken note of the recent official visit of the Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives to Rodrigues in the context of the Third “Salon des PME’s” (SMEs Fair) for 2022. An official function was held at the Rodrigues Prison where eight inmates have been initiated to an intensive course on “Start your own business”. The official launching of the “Salon des PME’s” was held in Port Mathurin. The aim of the Salon was to increase visibility of 85 local enterprises as well as help them sell their products especially during the festive seasons. Some 64 persons were awarded their certificate of completion for various courses. The “Salon des PME’s” also comprised a cultural show to mark the *Festival Kreol*.

A team from the Academy of Design and Innovation held intensive consultations with their counterparts such as the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development and the Commission for Education to pave the way for further collaboration in the fields of fashion and innovation.
