

CABINET DECISIONS – 13 MARCH 2020

1. Cabinet has agreed to a “*Plan de Soutien*” to give the necessary support to economic operators across all sectors of activities, including local manufacturing and SMEs so as to minimise the adverse impact of COVID-19. At the macroeconomic and cross-sectoral level, the following measures would be taken –

- (a) the State Investment Corporation (SIC) Ltd would launch an Equity Participation Scheme to assist enterprises to overcome their financial difficulties in the wake of COVID-19;
- (b) schemes under the Investment Support Programme Ltd and SME Equity Fund Ltd would be reviewed;
- (c) a Revolving Credit Fund of Rs 200 million would be established at the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd to help companies with turnover of up to Rs 10 million to ease their cash flow difficulties up to 31 December 2020;
- (d) enterprises being affected by COVID-19 would be entitled to a double tax deduction on their investment in Plant and Machinery for the period 1 March 2020 to 30 June 2020;
- (e) all work permits that would expire this year would be extended automatically up to 31 December 2021;
- (f) to minimise human contacts, Government would give full support to promote the Work at Home Scheme that was announced in the 2018-2019 Budget Speech; and
- (g) an e-Government Digital Bureau would be set up to fast track the provision of public services through electronic means.

At the sectoral level, the following measures would be taken –

- (i) the Passenger Fee on Air Ticket would be suspended for tourists from Reunion Island, Australia and South Africa up to 31 July 2020;
- (ii) the Environment Protection Fee of 0.85% charged on the monthly turnover of hotels, guest houses and tourist residences would be suspended up to 31 July 2020;
- (iii) the training levy would be reduced from 1% to 0.5% for operators in the tourism sector as from 1 April 2020 up to 31 July 2020;

- (iv) Air Mauritius Ltd would pursue its promotional fare strategy to attract tourists from Reunion Island, UK, South Africa and Australia. Fares for travel from and to Reunion Island would be reduced by 50% while for the other destinations the reduction would be 40%. These reductions would be applicable up to 31 July 2020;
- (v) hotels would provide a discount ranging from 15% to 35% for tourists from Australia, Reunion Island and South Africa;
- (vi) port charges imposed by the Mauritius Ports Authority and Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd would be waived for all exports up to 31 December 2020;
- (vii) the Freight Rebate Scheme would be extended for exports to South Africa and Tamatave up to 31 December 2020;
- (viii) the Speed to Market Scheme would be extended for exports of the manufacturing sector to Africa, Japan, Australia, Canada and the Middle East up to 31 December 2020;
- (ix) to boost local production of food crops and ensure greater food security for the population, sugar estates would be requested to also put at the disposal of small planters additional rotational land for the cultivation of crops like potato, onion, pulses and other vegetables;
- (x) seeds for the cultivation of potato, garlic, bean and onion would be provided through the Seed Purchase Scheme. In addition, the Agricultural Marketing Board would purchase at a guaranteed price, products such as potato, garlic and onion on a long term basis;
- (xi) an amount of Rs100 million has been earmarked to encourage local production of food crops; and
- (xii) funds to the tune of Rs208 million are being made available to the Ministry of Health and Wellness for the acquisition of new medical accessories and equipment, of which Rs108 million have already been disbursed.

A number of actions has already been initiated, namely –

- (a) the Agricultural Marketing Board has taken precautionary measures to increase significantly its Strategic Buffer Stock in potato, onion and garlic;

- (b) five new schemes are being launched by SME Mauritius Ltd, namely, the Internal Capability Development Scheme, the Technology and Innovation Scheme, the SME Marketing Support Scheme, the Inclusiveness and Integration Scheme, and the SME Utility Connection Assistance Scheme.

An Implementation and Monitoring Committee under the chair of Mr Dev Manraj, GOSK, Financial Secretary, and comprising representatives of both the public and private sector has been set up.

2. Cabinet has agreed to –

- (a) amendments being made to the Catering and Tourism Industries (Remuneration) Regulations 2019 and the Private Hospitals and Other Related Health Services (Remuneration) Regulations 2019; and
- (b) a new Regulation being made to cater for payment of wages to employees, if ever they are placed in quarantine in respect of COVID-19 outbreak.

The Catering and Tourism Industries (Remuneration) Regulation 2019 would be amended to provide for –

- (i) time off to be granted to workers of that industry in lieu of payment of overtime during the period of the outbreak; and
- (ii) a worker to resume work, with his consent, before a lapse of eleven hours after having completed a normal day's work.

The Private Hospitals and Other Related Health Services (Remuneration) Regulations 2019 would be amended to provide that a worker might, with his consent, work up to 12 hours a day instead of 8 hours. New Regulations would be made to provide for payment of wages to workers, who are placed in quarantine, to be offset against their leave entitlement.

3. Cabinet has agreed to instructions being conveyed to the Attorney General's Office for the drafting of a Sports and Physical Activity Bill and to repeal the existing Sports Act 2016. The Sports and Physical Activity Bill would, inter alia, –

- (a) provide for the setting up of a Registrar of Sports Organisations to facilitate the registration of Sports Clubs, National Sports Federations and other Sports Delivery Organisations;

- (b) provide for the setting up of a Sports Profession and Educators Council;
- (c) review the concept of sports regionalisation as a whole;
- (d) address the professionalisation of sports in the Republic;
- (e) safeguard the interests of athletes and protect them from any form of abuse;
- (f) regulate the sale of tickets during sporting events and deter the emergence of black markets; and
- (g) regulate the bidding and hosting of international sporting events in the Republic;

Consultations would be held with relevant stakeholders.

4. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Health and Wellness would increase the financial assistance under the Overseas Treatment Scheme, from Rs800,000 to Rs1 million, as announced in the Budget Speech 2019-2020. The Scheme would cover all medical expenses for a patient travelling overseas for medical treatment, including cost of airfare and other services.

5. Cabinet has agreed to Mauritius adhering to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Joint Ministerial Statement on Investment Facilitation for Development. The purpose of the Joint Ministerial Statement is to reaffirm the need to intensify work among WTO Member States with a view to developing a WTO Framework on Investment Facilitation by the next WTO Ministerial Conference to be held in June 2020, in Kazakhstan.

6. Cabinet has taken note that the Ministry of Health and Wellness would sign a Memorandum of Understanding with Mr Shashichandra Desai, proxy of late Dr (Mrs) Hansa Gunesees for the donation of Rs25 million for the purchase of equipment for the New Cancer Hospital. Late Dr (Mrs) H. Gunesees was the first lady Gynaecologist employed in Mauritius and the first lady doctor to go on a tour of service to Rodrigues in 1969. The contribution would help in the successful implementation of the new Cancer Hospital project and ultimately in the improvement of diagnosis and treatment of cancer in Mauritius.

7. Cabinet has taken note that the 5th Trade Policy Review of Mauritius would be held at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Secretariat on 27 and 29 April 2021. The purpose of the Trade Policy Review Mechanism is to contribute towards the improved adherence, by all Members, to rules, disciplines and commitments made under the various WTO agreements. The fifth Trade Policy Review of Mauritius would be based on the reports by Government and the WTO Secretariat.

8. Cabinet has taken note of the setting up of an Organising Committee at the level of the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation for the 12th edition of the “*Commission de la Jeunesse et des Sports de l’Océan Indien*” (CJSOI) Games to be held in Mauritius in July 2021. Six Member States, namely Madagascar, Mayotte, Seychelles, Reunion Island, Djibouti, and Union of Comoros have already confirmed their participation to the Games.

9. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the 34th Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) held recently in the Seychelles. The main decisions taken at the Meeting were -

- (a) the adoption of the Moroni Declaration which defines the new strategic orientation of the IOC and highlights the needs for institutional reforms to respond to new challenges and exigencies of the new business environment;
- (b) approval of the “*Accord de Victoria Révisé*” which, inter alia, provides for the holding of a Summit every five years to be chaired by the host country, the creation of the post of Deputy Secretary-General and the extension of the duration of the term of office of the Secretary-General to five years instead of four years;
- (c) the grant of Observer Status to India, Japan and the United Nations;
- (d) the signing of an agreement with the International Organisation for Migration for the setting up of a platform on “*Dialogue sur les Migrations au sein de l’espace de la COI*”;
- (e) the approval of the Emergency plan proposed by the Secretariat in the context of COVID-19, which includes exchange of information among the health authorities of Member States on the status of Coronavirus;

- (f) the approval for the setting up of an “*Agence Régionale de la Biodiversité*” and for the holding of a Ministerial Conference on biodiversity; and
- (g) the approval of the appointment of Mr Velayoudon Marimoutou, as the new Secretary-General of the IOC.

10. Cabinet has taken note that Mrs Jenny Mootealoo has been appointed as Commissioner of the Utility Regulatory Authority for a period of five years and Mr Sadatmanund Narain has been reappointed as Commissioner for a period of five years.

11. Cabinet has taken note of the reconstitution of the Board of Directors of the Mauritius Multisports Infrastructure Ltd with Mr Jean Pierre Sauzier as Chairperson.

12. Cabinet has taken note of the reconstitution of the Board of Directors of the Civil Service College, Mauritius, with Mr Harry Ganoo, GOSK, as Chairperson.
