

HIGHLIGHTS OF CABINET MEETING - FRIDAY 16 AUGUST 2024

The Cabinet met today under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister, the Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth. The highlights of the deliberations are as follows:

1. Cabinet has agreed to the introduction of the Revenue Appeal Tribunal Bill into the National Assembly. The object of the Bill is to provide for the establishment of the Revenue Appeal Tribunal which would take over the functions and powers of the Assessment Review Committee under the Mauritius Revenue Authority Act.

Any person who is aggrieved by a revenue determination of the Director-General of the Mauritius Revenue Authority or Registrar-General would now appeal to the Revenue Appeal Tribunal instead of the Assessment Review Committee. The Revenue Appeal Tribunal would conduct its proceedings in a more simplified manner and would, inter alia, have the power to:

- (a) make such order requiring the attendance of a person or the production of any record, document or exhibit as it thinks necessary or expedient for the disposal of an appeal; and
 - (b) take evidence on oath and, for that purpose, administer an oath.
2. Cabinet has agreed to the proclamation of the Mauritius Food Standards Agency Act 2022 which provides for the establishment of an advisory body to assess and propose food standards for adoption, as well as to coordinate and review the food control system. The objectives of the Mauritius Food Standards Agency would be to, inter alia:
 - (a) ensure a high degree of consumer confidence in the safety and nutritional quality of food;
 - (b) ensure a regulatory framework, which would enable the industry to operate efficiently;
 - (c) provide transparent and accessible information to the public to enable them to make informed choices;
 - (d) work collaboratively with the food industry in the implementation and compliance with food laws;
 - (e) prevent trade barriers without compromising on safety and nutritional quality of food; and
 - (f) ensure that food available on the market meets the dietary restrictions of consumers, including halal and vegetarian food.
3. Cabinet has taken note that the Finance and Audit (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 2) Regulations 2024 and the Finance and Audit (Climate and Sustainability Fund) Regulations 2024 would be promulgated.

The Regulations provide for the Climate and Sustainability Fund and the National Environment Fund to be considered as Special Funds under the Finance and Audit Act to finance projects to address climate change. The Climate and Sustainability Fund would support national initiatives to protect, manage, invest and restore the country's natural ecosystem and combat the effects of climate change.

4. Cabinet has agreed to the setting up of the Digital Health Agency, a Government-owned company which would have the overall responsibility, management and dedicated oversight for the successful implementation and sustainability of the eHealth Project and other digital initiatives within the Ministry of Health and Wellness. The Digital Health Agency would drive the digital transformation of healthcare, with the following key objectives of strategic importance:
 - (a) managing the implementation of the eHealth system in public health institutions;
 - (b) providing 24/7 technical IT support to the medical, paramedical and allied health staff in health institutions;
 - (c) assembling multidisciplinary teams of technical experts to support the design, development, maintenance and further development of the eHealth system;
 - (d) undertaking real-time data analytics on health information;
 - (e) providing strategic direction, robust governance and leadership in the development and implementation of digital health initiatives;
 - (f) facilitating capacity building initiatives to enhance the digital literacy and skills of healthcare professionals and stakeholders involved in the delivery of eHealth services;
 - (g) implementing rigorous quality assurance processes to ensure the reliability, security and usability of digital health solutions; and
 - (h) fostering a culture of innovation and continuous improvement through research, pilot projects and the adoption of emerging technologies including Artificial Intelligence in healthcare.

5. Cabinet has agreed to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the University of Technology, Mauritius and the INTI International University, Malaysia. The Memorandum of Understanding aims at fostering collaboration between the two institutions for the initiation and development of the following academic activities and programmes of mutual interest:
 - (a) student mobility and visiting scholars' programmes;
 - (b) joint publications and research activities;
 - (c) exchange of academic materials and other information; and
 - (d) organisation of joint scholarly activities such as courses, seminars, training, conferences and symposiums.

6. Cabinet has taken note of the status of implementation of the Manufacturing 4.0 Project which aims at supporting around 100 Small, Medium and Mid-Market Enterprises involved in manufacturing activities to incorporate Industry 4.0 technologies in their production processes to enhance their competitiveness. The Manufacturing 4.0 Project would comprise three components, as follows:
 - (a) a capacity building session to enhance the knowledge of beneficiary enterprises on the applications of Industry 4.0 technologies in production and operational processes;
 - (b) in-house interventions at factory level to gauge the digital readiness of beneficiaries and advise them on the appropriate Industry 4.0 technologies to be adopted for increased market gains; and
 - (c) elaboration of a Digital Roadmap for each beneficiary enterprise, focusing on the Industry 4.0 technologies to be acquired along with cost estimates, appropriate suppliers and skills upgrading requirements.
7. Cabinet has agreed to the implementation of the National Strategy for Adolescent Health 2024-2029 developed by the Ministry of Health and Wellness in collaboration with the World Health Organization. The strategic direction for implementing the National Strategy for Adolescent Health 2024-2029 would be based on a Whole-of-Government Approach, involving multi-sectoral collaboration with Ministries, Non-Governmental Organisations, civil societies and other stakeholders.
8. Cabinet has agreed to the Central Water Authority implementing the project relating to the renewal of pipeline from Sir William Newton Street to Georges Guibert Street in Curepipe, including all laterals.
9. Cabinet has agreed to the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund, revamping the Community Centre at St Aubin into a Community Wellness Centre. The purpose of the project would be to, inter alia:
 - (a) foster community engagement and participation in wellness activities such as Zumba, Keep fit activities and yoga, among others;
 - (b) optimise the use of public wellness infrastructure and activities by the community;
 - (c) promote holistic well-being where physical, mental and social well-being converge to create thriving communities; and
 - (d) enhance, through IT and social networking, the community's connectedness for an improved wellbeing.
10. Cabinet has taken note that the University of Mauritius, in collaboration with the Southern Africa Society for Disaster Reduction, the North-West University, South Africa, and the Energy Institute & Islands and Coastal Research Laboratory of the University College London, would organise from 21 to 23 August 2024 in Mauritius the 6th International Conference on Strengthening Disaster Resilience in Africa - Transdisciplinary Approaches and Sustainable Solutions.

The aims and objectives of the international conference would be to provide a platform for academics, researchers and postgraduate students to present and discuss the growing impacts of climate change in Small Island Developing States and in the African region. Experts in related fields of disaster risk reduction would explore pertinent themes such as how to build resilience to climate change for and with the community and how to create adaptive governance capabilities for equitable disaster risk reduction and resilience in development planning.

11. Cabinet has taken note that the Mauritius Revenue Authority would host a Practical Workshop on Common Reporting Standard (CRS) Compliance Audits from 16 to 18 September 2024 in Mauritius with the support of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

The objective of the workshop would be to support jurisdictions in effectively implementing the CRS - Automatic Exchange of Information standard by developing in-depth and sustainable capacities on how to verify that financial institutions comply with their reporting, due diligence and record keeping obligations in practice. The workshop would be conducted in hybrid mode, with around 50 participants from member jurisdictions expected to be physically present.

12. Cabinet has taken note of the holding of a workshop on the “Institutionalisation of Antimicrobial Use Data Collection and Reporting” organised by the World Organization for Animal Health from 03 to 05 September 2024 in Mauritius. The objectives of the workshop would be, inter alia, to:

- (a) develop a solid basis to produce an official Antimicrobial Use national report before May 2025;
- (b) enhance Antimicrobial Use data transparency within the selected member countries;
- (c) engage in further developments regarding Animal Antimicrobial Use (ANIMUSE) Global Database;
- (d) institutionalise Antimicrobial Use data collection, analysis and utilisation processes; and
- (e) maintain the participation of Mauritius in the 2025-2027 rounds of data collection in ANIMUSE.

13. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent participation of the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development in the 2024 African Caucus Meeting held in Abuja, Nigeria. The theme of this year’s Caucus meeting was “Facilitating Intra-African Trade: Catalyst for Sustainable Economic Growth in Africa”.

African Caucus Members identified four key pathways to boost intra-African trade, namely:

- (a) strengthening the pan-African payment ecosystem and accelerating digitalisation;
- (b) enhancing energy access, affordability and connectivity;
- (c) leveraging partnerships with Multilateral Development Banks; and
- (d) reforming the global financial architecture.

The Minister participated in various sessions organised during the Meeting to discuss pertinent issues with a view to facilitating intra-African trade. He was a panellist in the session on “Leveraging on Partnership with Multilateral Development Banks”. He shared the experience of Mauritius in transforming the sugar industry into the cane industry, with innovation and the diversification of activities within the industry.

14. Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the recent participation of the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training in the United States Sub-Saharan Africa Trade and Economic Cooperation African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Forum meetings held in Washington.

The AGOA Forum was preceded by the African Trade Ministers Consultative Meeting, the Private Sector Forum, the Civil Society and Organised Labour Forum, and the Civil Society Stakeholder Forum. The Civil Society and Organised Labour Forum and the Civil Society Stakeholder Forum discussed a wide range of labour-related issues. There was particular emphasis on workers’ rights, fair labour practices as well as sustainable and inclusive workforce, amongst others. The Organised Labour Forum adopted a Readout wherein it stressed that Organised Labour would continue to work with Governments and businesses to place the needs of workers, job creation, decent work and sustainable economic development at the centre of a new AGOA.

The Minister had a meeting with the Associate Deputy Undersecretary for International Labour Affairs at the US Department of Labour, to update the US Government on the actions taken by the Government of Mauritius to ensure compliance with international labour standards.

15. Cabinet has taken note that on 14 August 2024, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Mpox as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. The Ministry of Health and Wellness has updated the protocol for managing Mpox cases which was developed in 2022. The current protocol includes isolation measures, diagnostic procedures, and patient management strategies aimed at containing the spread of the virus within the country.

Proactive steps have been taken at the level of the Ministry of Health and Wellness to align national response with international and regional efforts to effectively manage and contain any outbreak in terms of:

- (a) enhanced surveillance and contact tracing, especially at points of entry such as ports and airports;
- (b) resource mobilisation including personal protective equipment, diagnostic tools and vaccine supplies;
- (c) vaccine authorisation and distribution as per WHO recommendations;
- (d) public awareness and risk communication; and
- (e) regional and international collaboration.

Note: Cabinet decisions are available on the internet. The address is <http://pmo.govmu.org>

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