CONTENTS

QUESTIONS (Oral)

MOTION
## THE CABINET

(Formed by Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth</td>
<td>Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hon. Ivan Leslie Collendavello, GCSK, SC</td>
<td>Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hon. Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun, GCSK</td>
<td>Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. the Hon. Mohammad Anwar Husnoo</td>
<td>Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hon. Alan Ganoo</td>
<td>Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. the Hon. Renganaden Padayachy</td>
<td>Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hon. Nandcoomar Bodha, GCSK</td>
<td>Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hon. Louis Steven Obeegadoo</td>
<td>Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hon. Mrs Fazila Jeewa-Daureeawoo, GCSK</td>
<td>Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hon. Soomilduth Bholah</td>
<td>Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hon. Kavydass Ramano</td>
<td>Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hon. Mahen Kumar Seeruttun</td>
<td>Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hon. Georges Pierre Lesjongard</td>
<td>Minister of Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hon. Maneesh Gobin</td>
<td>Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hon. Yogida Sawmynaden</td>
<td>Minister of Commerce and Consumer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hon. Jean Christophe Stephan Toussaint</td>
<td>Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hon. Mahendranuth Sharma Hurreeram</td>
<td>Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hon. Darsanand Balgobin</td>
<td>Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hon. Soodesh Satkam Callichurn</td>
<td>Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. the Hon. Kailesh Kumar Singh Jagutpal</td>
<td>Minister of Health and Wellness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hon. Sudheer Maudhoo</td>
<td>Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hon. Mrs Kalpana Devi Koonjoo-Shah</td>
<td>Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hon. Avinash Teeluck</td>
<td>Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hon. Teeruthraj Hurdoyal</td>
<td>Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr Speaker</td>
<td>Hon. Sooroojdev Phokeer, GOSK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Speaker</td>
<td>Hon. Mohammud Zahid Nazurally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Chairperson of Committees</td>
<td>Hon. Sanjit Kumar Nuckcheddy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk of the National Assembly</td>
<td>Lotun, Mrs Bibi Safeena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Clerk</td>
<td>Ramchurn, Ms Urmeelah Devi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk Assistant</td>
<td>Gopall, Mr Navin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk Assistant</td>
<td>Seetul, Ms Darshinee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hansard Editor</td>
<td>Jankee, Mrs Chitra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serjeant-at-Arms</td>
<td>Pannoo, Mr Vinod</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MAURITIUS

Seventh National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 16 of 2020

Sitting of Tuesday 09 June 2020

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis, at 11.30 a.m.

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)
Mr Speaker: Prime Minister’s Question Time!

The Table has been advised that Parliamentary Questions B/74, B/110, PQ A/33 have been rescheduled. PQ B/74 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development; PQ B/110 will be replied by the hon. Prime Minister; PQ A/33 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development.

Hon. Bhagwan!

Dr. Boolell: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, I am raising a point of order in relation to paragraph 23 and I want to know from the Office of the Speaker the reason as to why my PNQ has been considered non-receivable. There has been no official communication in writing as to the grounds for refusal. As you know, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Leader of the Opposition will never put a question on the Order Paper for Oral Question. He is allowed to ask it by Private Notice Question. In the past, previous Leaders of the Opposition have been allowed to put question in relation to measures announced in the Budget.

Mr Speaker: Okay, you made your point.

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, Sir,...

Mr Speaker: One by one! I reply to your concern. According to the Standing Orders, if you have to raise this point, you should have done it privately in my office. I now move on. There is no point of order. I rule that there is no point of order to that point. I move to Prime Minister’s Question Time. Hon. Bhagwan, you have the floor.

Dr. Boolell: This is a mockery of parliamentary procedures.

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I be allowed to raise...

Mr Speaker: No, you are not allowed!

Mr Mohamed: I have a point of order which has not been raised!

Mr Speaker: You are not allowed!

Mr Mohamed: Am I being gagged?

Mr Speaker: No, you are not allowed! We move to Prime Minister’s Question Time.

(Interruptions)

We move...
Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are not...

Mr Speaker: I suspend the sitting for some minutes.

*At 11.35 a.m., the sitting was suspended.*

*On resuming at 11.45 a.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.*

Mr Speaker: Please be seated! Prime Minister’s Question Time!

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have a remark to make and I would...

Mr Speaker: No, you have no right to make any remark. Hon. Bhagwan, you have the floor!

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, Sir, at least listen to me!

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, I have ruled; you have the floor! Take your floor or your turn!

Mr Bhagwan: But you can’t shout at me!

Mr Speaker: I am not shouting at you. I am inviting you.

Mr Bhagwan: You are not shouting at me, yes.

Mr Speaker: Please! I am inviting you!

Mr Bhagwan: But can I, before coming to my question, ask why my PQ B/74 has been transferred? Is it not to have a reply as it will come last?

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan,...

Mr Bhagwan: I am asking!

Mr Speaker: The transfer of question rests with Ministers. I am not responsible for it. Put your question!

Mr Bhagwan: But, henceforth, we need your guidance when we send questions at least.

Mr Speaker: This is my guidance!

Mr Bhagwan: Now, when we send our question, you must give us guidance.

Mr Speaker: It is in the Standing Orders! I don’t have!

Mr Bhagwan: Your Office must give us guidance.
Mr Speaker: We take the second question.

Mr Bhagwan: B/75. But you must give us guidance when we send our question. This is your work.

**ICTA - EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS & DIRECTOR - SALARIES & FRINGE BENEFITS - REVIEW**

(No. B/75) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Information and Communication Technologies Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to if consideration will be given for a review of the salaries and fringe benefits of the Executive Directors and Director thereof in the wake of the financial difficulties amid the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Information and Communications Technologies Authority (ICTA) is currently composed of the following –

- One Director of Engineering who is also the Officer-in-Charge as the post of Executive Director is vacant;
- One Director of Finance and Administration, and
- One Director of IT.

I am informed that the management of the ICTA is considering different cost cutting measures, in view of the financial difficulties which have arisen in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes expenses related to the Top Management.

I am further informed that, as soon as the proposals are finalised, these will be submitted to the ICT Board for consideration.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether we have a full-time Chairman, Ag. Chairman and whether their conditions also are being reviewed in the whole process which is being undertaken?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member has asked a question about the Executive Directors and Directors. So, I have information which has been gathered according to this question.

Mr Speaker: Next supplementary!
Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister, as Prime Minister and former Minister of Finance also whether, in the wake of the COVID-19 financial difficulties, as pointed out by the Minister of Finance, Government is at least contemplating, considering seriously reviewing the conditions of part-time Chairperson, full-time Chairperson, as the Board there is doing? You, yourself...

(Interruptions)

I have not finished hon. Prime Minister. You have just stated that the Board...

Mr Speaker: A supplementary question should be short!

Mr Bhagwan: Yes, this is what I am asking.

Mr Speaker: Be short!

Mr Bhagwan: The Prime Minister has stated that the Management, the Authority is reviewing the conditions of service. So, can the hon. Prime Minister say as Prime Minister that he has given directive to the Board that same being done for the Board and other Boards?

The Prime Minister: I invite the hon. Member to put a substantive question in that respect.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: No, you have removed my question!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No comments against the Chair! Do not refer to the Chair! You have no right to refer to the Chair!

(Interruptions)

Do not make any comment!

Mr Bhagwan: I am not making any comment.

Mr Speaker: You have to learn parliamentary manners!

(Interruptions)

It is very unbecoming!

(Interruptions)
Mr Bhagwan: My question has been referred to Finance, unfortunately. Pe sauver. He is sitting there.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

ICTA & CYBERCRIME UNIT - FAKE NEWS CASES

(No. B/76) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the social media, he will –

(a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Information and Communication Technologies Authority and the Cybercrime Unit, information as to the number of reported cases of fake news and disinformation posted thereat during the curfew period, indicating the outcome of the inquiries carried out thereinto, and

(b) state if consideration will be given for the introduction of amendments to the ICT Act for the imposition of hefty fines and jail sentences in relation thereto.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, section 18 (1) (o) of the ICTA Act 2001 (as amended) provides for the Information and Communication Technologies Authority (ICTA) to entertain complaints from consumers in relation to any information and communication service in Mauritius, and where necessary, refer them to the appropriate authorities. As such, ICT consumers are able to lodge their complaints and queries to the Authority. The Authority handles these in accordance with the provisions of the ICTA Act. It uses a complaints mechanism and supports consumers by virtue of the provisions of the ICTA Act. The complaints are examined and channelled to the appropriate authorities with a view to resolving same or providing appropriate guidance to the consumer. On the basis of legal advice obtained, the Authority refers these complaints to the Commissioner of Police for investigation. The public is also advised to contact the Mauritian Cybercrime Online Reporting System, which is a national online system set up by CERT-MU that allows secure reporting of cybercrimes occurring on social media. It also provides advice to help in recognising and avoiding common types of cybercrime which take place on social media websites. The MAUCORS works closely with the Cybercrime Unit of the Police Department.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the ICTA that during the curfew period, that is, from Sunday 22 March to Saturday 30 May 2020, 31 complaints from members of the public
with respect to messages shared on social media, which were of the nature of causing annoyance, humiliation, inconvenience, distress or anxiety, in breach of section 46 (g) of the ICTA Act were received. Complainants were directed to refer the matter to the Police and also to the MAUCORS.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed by the Commissioner of Police that four cases pertaining to breach of section 46 (g) of the ICTA Act have been reported thereat during the same period and one case was identified during the Cyber patrol by the Cybercrime Unit.

The authors of three of the cases are being traced and, in the remaining two, where the authors have been identified, four persons have been arrested. Three of them have been released on bail and one was allowed to go after enquiry. Enquiry is ongoing in all the six cases.

As regards part (b), section 47(1) of the ICTA Act provides for a fine not exceeding Rs1,000,000 and penal servitude for a term not exceeding 10 years for a person found guilty of breach of the Act. Being given that the penalty for breach of the provisions of the ICTA Act is already hefty, it is not proposed to impose heavier sanctions for the time being.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Merci, M. le président. Puisqu’on parle des réseaux sociaux, peut-on savoir combien de cas ayant trait essentiellement à l’incitation à la haine raciale ont été rapportés durant la période de confinement et les actions prises à l’encontre des personnes, qu’ils soient fake profile ou pas, à la base de ces posts sur Facebook ?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, once again, this question relates to fake news and disinformation. It is not about racial hatred. So, I will invite the hon. Member to come with a substantive question with regard to racial hatred.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Can I know from the Prime Minister whether he is aware, his attention has been drawn that there was one animatrice de radio posting a false caricature of the Prime Minister and whether that is being inquired into and what is the status?

The Prime Minister: I did not get the question. The hon. Member said one Mr?

Mr Bhagwan: One or two animatrices de radio have posted caricatures on you on Facebook; whether an inquiry is being done on that and where matters stand. I am refraining myself from what she or he said on you. Everybody knows. It is on Facebook.
The Prime Minister: What she said, what he said; I do not know what he/she said. I am not aware, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You have another supplementary question?

The Prime Minister: But I have not finished!

Mr Speaker: You have not finished?

The Prime Minister: No. I, again, would refer the hon. Member to the question that has been asked. It is about fake news and disinformation. So, I have gathered all the information in relation to that, and I have answered the number of cases that are being investigated and in cases where the authors have been traced out.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I know from the Prime Minister whether it means that that comment, according to him, was not fake news? It was a caricature on you! Cartoon!

The Prime Minister: If you want to make a show in this House, please carry on!

Mr Bhagwan: You know what I am saying!

Mr Speaker: Let us move to the next question! Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: B/77, Mr Speaker, Sir!

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Yes, I have already asked!

DETAINEES - POLICE CUSTODY - DEATHS

(No. B/77) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to police custody deaths in Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof since December 2019 to date, indicating the outcome of the inquiry in each case, including the –

(a) cause of death, and

(b) if any Police Officer has been suspended in connection therewith.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, …
Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, are you addressing me? Are you threatening me?

Mr Speaker: Are you threatening me? Are you threatening me?

Mr Bhagwan: I don’t allow you to threaten me!

Mr Speaker: I don’t allow you to threaten me!

You cannot threaten me, and I will not be intimidated!

Mr Bhagwan: You are not allowed you to threaten me!

Mr Speaker: I am not threatening you and you don’t threaten me!

Mr Bhagwan: I am elected to be here! Not you!

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: I have been elected to be here!

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan! Show decorum to the House!

Show decorum to the House!

Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: I have already put the question, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will reply to Parliamentary Questions B/77 and B/84 together as they relate to the same subject matter.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since November 2019 to date, three persons have died in Police custody. Details pertaining thereto are as follows –

(i) On 10 March 2020, Mr M.D.M., aged 25, died at Vacoas Detention Centre, the cause of death being Asphyxia due to hanging;
(ii) On 20 March 2020, Mr A.B., a Malagasy National, aged 48 years, died at Jeetoo Hospital of Subarachnoid Haemorrhage due to drug concealment in his body, and

(iii) On 13 May 2020, Mr J.D.M.U, aged 29 years, passed away in a cell at Trou d’Eau Douce Police Station and the cause of death was Asphyxia due to hanging.

Police inquiry is ongoing in the three cases.

**Mrs Navarre-Marie:** M. le président, le Premier ministre est-il en train de nous dire qu’il n’y a pas eu de cas de brutalité policière depuis décembre 2019 à ce jour ? Qu’en est-il de Monsieur Permes récemment?

**The Prime Minister:** You asked a question about detainees in Police custody. You should have asked a question about inmates in prison! So, address your question properly!

**Mr Speaker:** Any supplementary question? Hon. Uteem!

**Mr Uteem:** Yes, thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. In the light of cases of death in Police custody, will the hon. Prime Minister consider ensuring that all Police cells are equipped with working cameras, which are operational, so that we can know what happened in the Police cells and whether, genuinely, people are committing suicide or murders are not being disguised into suicides?

**The Prime Minister:** I can inform the House that there are actually four Detention Centres. I am informed that for the one at Line Barracks Detention Centre, there are already installed 59 CCTV cameras, that is, 30 CCTV cameras in cells and 29 CCTV cameras covering buildings and surrounding.

For Moka Detention Centre, there are 81 CCTV cameras; 36 CCTV for covering the cells and 45 cameras covering the buildings and surrounding.

For Vacoas Detention Centre, 97 CCTV cameras; 44 CCTV cameras covering the cells and 53 cameras covering inside and outside the building.

For Petite Rivière Juvenile Detention Centre, there are 8 CCTV cameras in total; 6 CCTV covering the cells and 2 CCTV cameras covering inside and outside the building.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Lobine!
Mr Lobine: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether it is not high time to bring to this House the Police and Criminal Justice Bill that will contain a code of conduct with regard to what the Police do when they arrest somebody and what they do when they put them in a Police cell?

The Prime Minister: There is already a circular from the Commissioner of Police which gives in detail how policing should be done with regard to those who are in the Detention Centres. Of course, anything that we can do to reinforce security with regard to the detainees is most welcome. We need to continue to think about especially how we can prevent detainees from hanging themselves, and this has been the case in the past also. We have had so many cases, unfortunately. So, yes, we will consider any measure that can improve safety and security for the detainees.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Assirvaden!

MBC - DIRECTOR GENERAL - POST

(No. B/78) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the post of Director General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will –

(a) for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the number of incumbents thereof since January 2015 to date, indicating the –

(i) number thereof having held office in a substantive capacity, and

(ii) reasons for the said turnover, and

(b) state if consideration will be given for a review of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation Act in relation to the appointment of the General Director and, if not, why not.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Director General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation is appointed under section 13(2)(a) of the MBC Act, which provides that, I quote -

“The Director General shall be appointed by the Minister, with the approval of the Prime Minister on such terms and conditions as he thinks fit.”
In regard to part (a) of the question, since January 2015 to date, five persons were appointed successively as Director General of the MBC on a contractual basis, including the present one who has been appointed in an acting capacity.

In addition, three persons were appointed, at different periods, to act as Officer-in-Charge of the Corporation, as a temporary measure, pending the filling of the post of Director General.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a)(i) of the question, as I just mentioned, the terms and conditions of appointment of the Director General are determined by the Prime Minister, pursuant to section 13(2)(a) of the MBC Act. The appointment of the Director General of the MBC is normally made on a contractual basis for a fixed term of office and no appointment is made in a substantive capacity.

In regard to part (a)(ii) of the question, two out of the five Director Generals resigned from the post for personal reasons. One of the remaining three was invited to vacate his office on 24 August 2015 as he had already indicated that he would not be willing to continue for a further term. Another one left the post on 21 May 2017 to take up appointment as Chief Executive Officer of the MultiCarrier (Mauritius) Ltd.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (b) of the question, it is not proposed to bring any amendment to the provisions of the MBC Act regarding the appointment of the Director General.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Assirvaden!

Mr Assirvaden: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, in or about September or October 2019, not less than the Electoral Supervisory Commission found that there was a prima facie breach of law by the MBC. Could the Prime Minister enlighten the House what action has been taken by the Board of the MBC or by the IBA against the Director General at that material time?

The Prime Minister: I am not aware of the matter that has been mentioned by the hon. Member.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, c’est extrêmement choquant que la Commission Electorale ait rendu un rapport pour blâmer la direction de la MBC et le Premier ministre n’est pas au courant. Visiblement, M. le président, on veut protéger certains. Justement,
venez-en aux protégés. M. le président, je voudrais savoir du Premier ministre qu’est-ce qu’il a comme réponse à donner à la population ou du moins à une partie de la population qui s’est sentie humiliée par l’actuel directeur général par ses propos sectaires, et le Premier ministre trouve-t-il normal qu’une telle personne soit nommée après avoir tenu des propos aussi sectaires et fait subir ce qu’il fait subir à l’Eglise catholique de nos jours ?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Member has put a question with regard to the number of incumbents. If he has a question specific on the issue that he is mentioning, he should come with a substantive question.

**Mr Assirvaden:** M. le président,…

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** So, if you have no supplementary question, we move to the next question. No debate! Question time, no debate!

Hon. Ameer Meea!

**Mr Assirvaden:** Scandaleux!

*(Interruptions)*

Et l’Eglise catholique subit…

**Mr Speaker:** Behave yourself! Hon. Member, behave yourself! The floor is to honourable...

*(Interruptions)*

Behave yourself! Are you contesting my authority?

*(Interruptions)*

Are you contesting my authority?

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Assirvaden:** Non, mais ce que le Premier ministre dit…

**Mr Speaker:** Are you contesting my authority?

**Mr Assirvaden:** Non, jamais, M. le président.

**Mr Speaker:** Then be quiet! You are paid of tax payers’ money; you have to be obedient to the Chair.
Hon. Ameer Meea! You start.

**ROAD ACCIDENTS (FATAL) – JANUARY 2017-08 JUNE 2020**

(NO. B/79) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to fatal road accidents, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases thereof for each of the years 2017, 2018, 2019 and since January 2020 to date.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that during the period January 2017 to 08 June 2020, 456 fatal road accidents have been reported as follows –

- Year 2017: 152
- Year 2018: 132
- Year 2019: 130
- From 01 January 2020 to 08 June 2020: 42

A total number of 488 persons have, unfortunately, lost their lives during these accidents.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question!

**Mr Ameer Meea:** No, I have supplementary questions, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** Have you made a sign?

**Mr Ameer Meea:** I have two supplementary questions. There are numerous reasons for fatal road accidents and one of the reasons is drug consumption, and recently Police have been equipped to detect drug consumption amongst drivers. Therefore, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister if he has the statistics in relation to accidents that have been caused by drug consumption? I will also understand if the Prime Minister does not have it with him now; if he can circulate it later on.

**The Prime Minister:** It is good that Government has taken a measure in order to equip the Police with equipment, with apparatus, so that we may be able to detect any driver who has consumed drugs. I must say, for the information of the House, that the Police Force had launched a tender for the procurement of 500 units of Urine Drug Testing Cup Kits and 1,000
units of Saliva Drug Testing Kits in December 2019. Unfortunately, there has been no responsive bid, and I am informed that there is going to be another bid which is scheduled to finalise the specifications anew and then a new tender exercise will be launched shortly in order to hopefully be able to equip the Police with the appropriate equipment.

Mr Speaker: Next supplementary!

Mr Ameer Meea: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Another reason for fatal road accidents is illegal racing. Therefore, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister what Government and the Police are doing to address this issue?

The Prime Minister: I can recall, Mr Speaker, Sir, that there have been cases which have been reported to me by the Commissioner of Police where, in fact, late at night and early morning, they have had information that some people have been carrying on with this racing. Of course, Police have immediately attended to these spots and have dispersed those people, but, of course, we need to keep on being vigilant and tracking. But I must say that not many cases have involved fatal road accidents with regard to illegal racing late at night and early morning. It is dangerous but, in fact, there are other causes of fatal road accidents like carelessness and reckless driving, non-observation of regulation; these are the most. And now, it has gone down a lot, drunken driving, but, of course, we need to see to it that we don’t allow people to put at risk lives of other people.

Mr Speaker: Hon. David!

POLICE BRUTALITY – S. FAMILY

(No. B/80) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to alleged cases of police brutality towards members of the S. family on 24 March 2020 in Residence Vallijee, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand as to the inquiry initiated thereinto, indicating the number of Police Officers involved therein and actions taken in relation thereto, if any.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a Curfew Order was issued on 22 March 2020 so as to prevent and mitigate the spread of the disease. The Order, *inter alia*, stipulated that no person shall remain outdoors in Mauritius as from 23 March 2020 at 20.00 hours.
I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on Tuesday 24 March 2020, at about 08.37 hours, a team of Police Officers from Bain des Dames Police Station was on mobile patrol at Residence Vallijee, Bain des Dames, in order to ensure compliance to the Curfew Order.

At about 09.30 hours, the Police Officers came across a group of persons at Corner Dahlia and Chopin Streets at Residence Vallijee, near the residence of S. family. The Police Officers cautioned them to remain indoors and requested them to disperse peacefully to their respective residence. However, they refused to comply, turned hostile and started addressing the Police Officers in filthy terms. Some of them, including Mr R. S. and Mr B. S. started throwing projectiles on Police Officers and the Police vehicle. Consequently, three Police Officers were injured and the Police vehicle was damaged. In view of the prevailing situation, the team of Police Officers left Residence Vallijee for Bain des Dames Police Station.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed that, in view of the seriousness of this incident, on the same day, at about 11.00 hours, the Station Manager of Bain des Dames Police Station carried out an operation with the support of other Units of the Force to arrest the two suspects at the residence of S. family. In the course of the operation, the two suspects, namely Mr R. S. and Mr B. S. resisted and struggled with the Police. They were arrested and brought to Line Barracks Detention Centre. As they were injured, they were conveyed to Dr. Jeetoo Hospital at about 15.00 hours for treatment on the same day. Subsequently, Mr B. S. was detained at Line Barracks Detention Centre. Mr R. S. was detained on 25 March 2020 as he was discharged from hospital on that day. Two Police Officers were injured and received treatment at Dr. Jeetoo Hospital.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on 25 March 2020, both accused were provisionally charged with the offence of ‘Damaging Property by Band’ in breach of section 352 of the Criminal Code. Police objected to their release from bail and they were both remanded to Police cell until 01 April 2020. They were detained at the Line Barracks Detention Centre.

On 25 March 2020 itself, at about 20.30 hours, after Mr B. S. and Mr R. S. complained about their health, they were both conveyed to Dr. Jeetoo Hospital where they were admitted. They were discharged from hospital on 28 and 29 March 2020 respectively. They were again detained at Line Barracks Detention Centre.
Mr Speaker, Sir, on 01 April 2020, both detainees appeared before Port Louis District Court and they were released on bail after having each furnished a surety of Rs5,000 and a recognizance of Rs20,000.

Subsequent to a video clip being shared on the social media showing some Police Officers using violence against these two individuals, the then Commissioner of Police announced during a Press Conference on 25 March 2020 that the Central Criminal Investigation Department has been entrusted the responsibility to conduct an enquiry into the matter.

In the course of the investigation, on 26 March 2020, one Police Constable was arrested. On 27 March 2020, he was provisionally charged with the offence of ‘Torture by Public Officer’ before the Magistrate of District Court of Port Louis and released on bail after furnishing a surety of Rs5,000 and a recognizance of Rs20,000. On 27 March 2020, he was interdicted from duty.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that as at 05 June 2020, statements have been recorded from several Police Officers with a view to establishing the exact facts and circumstances of the case.

I am further informed that for the sake of transparency, Police have on its own initiative reported the case to the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC). A certified true copy of the Case File and a full report showing the status of the Police enquiry have been handed over to the Commission for investigation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, without prejudice to the investigation being conducted at the level of the IPCC, I severely condemn all acts of brutality, including those perpetrated by the Police. Such behaviour cannot be tolerated since Police Officers are supposed to be upholding the law and protecting citizens.

Mr Speaker: Hon. David!

Mr David: Puis-je savoir de l’honorable Premier ministre ce qui explique qu’un seul policier ait été visiblement sanctionné, alors que les vidéos qui ont circulé sur les réseaux sociaux, et que nous avons malheureusement tous visionné, démontrent clairement que plusieurs officiers de police ont tabassé, brutalisé et torturé les deux suspects à leur domicile, puis dans ce qui semble être les locaux de la police?
The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the enquiry will reveal who are the officers who have participated in this act of brutality. In fact, it is not brutality. As I mentioned, it is torture. So, whoever has to be arrested will, of course, in the course of the enquiry, be arrested.

Mr Leopold: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he can equip the Police with body camera so as to prevent Police violence as well as brutality against Police?

The Prime Minister: Well, this is a suggestion. We have to look into it and, of course, that will, I am sure, be one way of making sure that there is less brutality with regard to Police intervention.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Mr David: M. le président, ces faits dont nous discutons aujourd’hui se sont déroulés 11 semaines de cela ; c’était le mardi 24 mars. Dans sa conférence de presse du 25 mars…

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr David: ... le Commissaire de police a annoncé que l’enquête avançait déjà avec 75% d’avance. Faut-il, donc, 11 semaines pour avancer sur les 25% restants? Et je demande à l’honorable Premier ministre si l’enquête a révélé qui a filmé l’arrestation brutale au domicile des suspects ; qui a filmé la séance de torture de deux suspects dans les locaux de la police ; qui a diffusé les deux vidéos, et qu’elle était le but de la diffusion de ces vidéos sur les réseaux sociaux?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I hope that the enquiry will, of course, disclose who are the people. I mean, somebody has been filming, of course. I cannot say I have been provided with the information. And, in fact, now that there is an independent body which is enquiring into this matter, I join the hon. Member that all the light would be shed in this case. And I hope that all those who are at fault would be taken to task.

Mr Speaker: Time is over!

Parliamentary Questions! I have to announce that the Table has been advised that PQ B/94 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training; PQ B/98 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail; PQ B/114 will be replied by the hon. Minister of National Infrastructure and Community
Development; PQ A/36 will be replied by hon. Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail. PQ B/133, B/134 and B/135 have been withdrawn.

Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

**AREA HEALTH CENTRES - NEWBORN BABIES & CHILDREN – VACCINATION**

(No. B/85) **Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the vaccination of newborn babies and children in the Area Health Centres, he will state if special -

(a) sanitary and social distancing measures have been taken thereat, and

(b) measures are being taken to arrange for the vaccination of newborn babies and children who have missed the administration thereof, indicating if consideration will be given for the use of mobile health caravans reaching out thereto for the said purpose.

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the vaccination of new born babies and children are performed at 158 vaccination clinics, namely at Area Health Centres, Community Health Centres, Medi-clinics, Social Welfare Health Centres and Village Halls. Vaccination is carried out during dedicated time slot by vaccination team comprising of Senior Public Health Nursing Officer, Public Health Nursing Officer, Trainee Nursing Officers and Health Care Assistants. All necessary precautions are taken in order to ensure that vaccination is carried out in the best sanitary conditions. Mr Speaker, Sir, in order to avoid crowding and queuing, mothers are called at staggered hours.

As regards part (b) of the question, due to the lockdown, vaccination services were temporarily put on hold from 20 March to 11 May 2020. However, vaccinations for newborn babies and children have resumed as from 11 May 2020. As for those who have missed their vaccination, appointment is being given by phone. As I mentioned earlier, vaccination is being effected at 158 vaccination clinics. This arrangement is amply sufficient and the use of a mobile caravan is not contemplated.

**Mrs Luchmun Roy:** Could the hon. Minister give us figures, as from 11 May until to date, the number of newborn babies who have been vaccinated?
Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that a total number of 15,536 vaccines have already been done from 11 May 2020 to date.

Mr Aumeer: Will the hon. Minister consider domiciliary vaccination to avoid any risk of contamination of such fragile newborns in the light of still having the COVID-19 virus hanging around? Thank you.

Dr. Jagutpal: As I have already mentioned, since we already have 158 vaccination centres and the number of babies attending vaccination centres are limited, so, for the time being, this is not envisaged.

Mr Speaker: Next question hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

HOTELS – QUARANTINE CENTRES

(No. B/86) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the hotels, converted as Quarantine Centres, he will state the number of persons who stayed thereat, indicating the –

(a) facilities provided thereto, and
(b) damages caused thereat as a result thereof.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, following the global outbreak of COVID-19, and in an effort to contain the spread of the pandemic, Government, under advice of the Ministry of Health and Wellness, considered it necessary and expedient, in the interest of public health, to put in quarantine Mauritian coming from abroad. To this end, in addition to requisitioning the recreation centres for the elderly and other publicly-owned buildings and in consultation with l’AHRIM, 19 hotels were requisitioned and placed at the disposal of the Ministry of Health and Wellness to be used as quarantine centres. I must also add that the decision to use hotels as quarantine centres was also motivated by the fact that some of the public buildings were not fit to be used for the purpose of quarantine as bathrooms and toilets had to be shared and were not adequate in numbers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, from the figures compiled by the Ministry of Health and Wellness, 2,647 persons have been placed in quarantine in the hotels during the period 19 March till to date.

As regards, part (a) of the question, the House may wish to note that the persons who were placed in quarantine in hotels are being provided with towels and beddings by the hotels
and three meals, that is, breakfast, lunch and dinner, on a daily basis by the Government. In addition, each person is provided with a sanitary kit which contains some toiletries and cleaning material for the room. As regards medical facilities, I am advised that a Medical and Health Officer and two nurses, one male and one female for every 75 patients are posted in the hotels to look after the general health condition of these persons. In addition, a specialist is attached to these centres in case of emergency. Health Care Assistants and Hospital Attendants are also attached to these centres.

Mr Speaker, Sir, insofar as part (b) of the question is concerned, I am informed that as at date, a sum of Rs6,736,324 has been claimed by some hotels in respect of damages caused on the premises and thefts reported. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Can I ask the hon. Minister, currently how many quarantine centres do we have, bearing in mind the repatriation of our fellow citizens who were stranded abroad?

Mr Lesjongard: Right now, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have seven quarantine centres all around the island which are being used for repatriation of Mauritians stranded abroad.

Ms Foo Kune: Can I ask the hon. Minister what were the criteria taken into consideration for the choice of the hotels converted as quarantine centres?

Mr Lesjongard: As I stated in my main reply, Mr Speaker, Sir, one of the problems we have had to face was that people had to share bathrooms and toilets. So, these were among one of the kite trailers where rooms had annex bathroom and toilets in the hotels, that’s why we had chosen those hotels for Quarantine Centres, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Merci, M. le président. Peut-on savoir combien le gouvernement a payé à chacun des hôtels qui ont servi de centres de quarantaine pendant la période de confinement ?

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have the list with me. I will table the list later because it is a long list.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!
Mrs Luchmun Roy: Can the hon. Minister inform the House of the hotels which are concerned with the damages caused and can he give the quarantine cost on the State per person, please?

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the damages, we have six hotels concerned and with regard to the total amount disbursed to date, Government has dispersed an amount of Rs94,601,613.25.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Doolub!

PRIVATE SECTOR - CURFEW PERIOD - EMPLOYMENT - TERMINATION

(No. B/87) Mr R. Doolub (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training whether, in regard to the workers of the private sector whose employment have been terminated since the implementation of the curfew period to date, he will state the number thereof, indicating if the employers thereof have benefitted from the Wage Assistance Scheme and, if so, indicate the actions being envisaged against the said employers, if any.

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that some 1,035 complaints regarding termination of employment in the private sector have been reported to my Ministry since the implementation of the curfew period up to end of May 2020. The laid-off workers were employed in 164 enterprises. I am also informed that, as at today, some 150 employees have been reinstated.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed by MRA that a total amount of Rs205,440,657 has been paid under the Government Wage Assistance Scheme to some 109 employers for period March 2020 to 09 June 2020.

Mr Speaker, Sir, for those employees who have reported to my Ministry that during the confinement period, their employment have been terminated, an enquiry has been initiated by my Ministry to ensure that the employees are paid all their dues under the law and the MRA has also been informed about those cases.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is apposite here to remind the House that the Income Tax Act, as amended by COVID-19 Act, provides that where an employer terminates the employment of an eligible employee, the employer is not entitled to any allowance under the Wage Assistance Scheme in respect of any subsequent month. As at 05 June 2020, the MRA has not
paid financial support under the Wage Assistance Scheme to 207 businesses for any subsequent month after receiving complaints that the employment of the employees has been terminated, the employer has failed to pay the basic wage or salary of an eligible employee, or has reduced the basic wage or salary of an eligible employee. Furthermore, the employer is liable to refund the allowance that has been paid to an eligible employee.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me reassure the workers who have been laid off, that prosecution will also be initiated by my Ministry for unfair dismissal, and those unscrupulous employers run the risk of paying punitive rate to the tune of 3 months per year of service.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I know from the hon. Minister, out of the number of people who have been reinstated, how many could have claimed the severance allowance for punitive rate? Because, for example, the employers did not call them or did not refer the matter to the Redundancy Board. Did his officers advise those people that instead of being reinstated, they could have sued the employers for unfair dismissal?

Mr Callichurn: What actually happened is that the employers themselves, they came to the Ministry to state that they are willing to reinstate those persons. So, we deem it fit not to pursue the matter further and I am given to understand also that many of those employers have refunded the MRA the money they have taken under that scheme.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Doolub!

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister advise whether actions will be taken by his Ministry or the MRA against those employers who have benefitted from the Wage Assistance Scheme, but still firing employees?

Mr Callichurn: Well, I have just mentioned that, indeed, actions will be taken by my Ministry. My Ministry intends to prosecute those employers for unfair dismissal and also action has already been initiated by MRA to recover the sum dispersed under the Scheme.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: Thank you. The hon. Minister has, on the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, during an interview, stated that employees are entitled to be compensated, not only for the one month before the Redundancy Board, but he said that the compensation would also include two weeks per year of service as compensation. Those are the words that he used. Could he, please, clarify for the Mauritians who are today watching us, and all the
workers, that this compensation that he refers to, the two weeks, is, in fact, not compensation, but is, in fact, gratuity which he is referring to, gratuity upon retirement, and is not severance or compensations and that he should not mix the issues of gratuity with severance, and when will he come up with the new regulation that will dictate the quantum of gratuity under section 127 of the Workers’ Rights Act, as has been amended in clause 57 of the COVID-19 Bill 2020?

**Mr Callichurn:** Mr Speaker, Sir, when I was referring to the 15 days per year of service, indeed, I was referring to gratuity, which they are entitled to, because when someone is stayed off, who has worked for ‘X’ amount of years, he is entitled to be paid under the Portable Retirement Gratuity Fund (PRGF), at the rate of 4.5%. We have temporarily postponed payment, so they are still entitled for those 15 days’ gratuity, which will be paid to them, either by their employer or be put at the account at the MRA for them to benefit it later on.

*(Interruptions)*

The regulation is at the State Law Office. We will very soon come up with the legislation.

**Mr Speaker:** Honourable Members, I have to announce that PQ B/118 and PQ B/119 have been withdrawn.

Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie!

**SQUATTERS – HOUSES – PULLING DOWN**

*(No. B/88)* Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning whether, in regard to the squatters in Pointe aux Sables, Cité Tôle, Curepipe and Riambel whose houses were recently pulled down, he will state the reasons for the said pulling down during the curfew period, indicating if consideration will be given for an inquiry to be conducted to identify those who qualify for the allocation of social housing.

**Mr Obeegadoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the question of the hon. Member refers to squatters and it is important to know that section 22(1) of the State Lands Act provides that, I quote –

“No person shall take possession of, encroach upon, cultivate or put up any building or other structure on any part of any State land without the expressed authorisation in writing of the Minister.”
Now, all Governments have been confronted with the complex and recurrent problem of unauthorised occupation of State land, but in September 2015, the previous Government, under Sir Anerood Jugnauth, took a bold decision to regularise all cases of illegal occupation up to 01 July 2015. When I assume the office in November 2019, I immediately requested the status report on the issue and was informed that of 11,004 cases registered prior to 01 July 2015, some two-thirds had, indeed, been regularised, leaving a balance of some 450 cases, the most difficult ones.

I was also informed that between 01 July 2015 to November 2019, some 290 additional cases had been identified. However, before Government had the opportunity to spell out its strategy concerning long time squatters and social housing, we were affected by COVID-19 pandemic.

As from 23 March, the country was on the lockdown with a Curfew Order providing that only persons performing essential services could leave their homes. It was a matter of life and death as all contravening persons could not only be contaminated, but could contaminate others in the event. As the hon. Member knows, hundreds of our compatriots were hospitalised and 10, unfortunately, lost their lives. At that precise moment, while officers responsible for safeguarding public land were in confinement and the Police were focussed on protection of the public, behind their backs, behind our backs, some persons deliberately chose to set up illegal structures on public land, in flagrant breach of the curfew and with total disregard for public safety. It was then that we were informed by anxious and concerned inhabitants of Pointe aux Sables and Résidence Malherbes that strangers were occupying State land, while others were confined to their homes.

Now, the hon. Member would have noticed that I said Résidence Malherbes. Let me pause to remark that there is no Cité Tôle at Résidence Malherbes and this term coined by the Opposition media is deeply offensive to local inhabitants.

Mr Speaker, further to the information conveyed by anxious inhabitants of Pointe aux Sables and Résidence Malherbes, a survey was carried out on 09 and 10 May, that revealed that some 29 structures had been erected during the lockdown, I stress, during the lockdown, 29 structures on five sites around the island of Mauritius, including Pointe aux Sables, Riambel and Malherbes. However, of the said 29 structures, only 9 were found to be occupied. Despite repeated request to vacate, including legal notices served on 22 May, the
number of illegal structures actually increased more than five-fold from 29 to 159 by 27 May, of which about half, 67 in fact, were by then occupied.

Now, quite apart from its responsibility to enforce the State Lands Act, the State had to act, and act fast for at least five reasons. One, the numbers were increased exponentially. Remember, within 19 days, we eventually had 142 additional cases. So, the numbers were increasing exponentially and without immediate and decisive action the situation would have rapidly got out of hand with the message spreading that taking advantage of the curfew, each and every one could seize a plot of State land of his own choice and to his own advantage.

Secondly, the situation was different from any previous one inasmuch as for the first time, since the late 1960s, there was a Curfew Order in force for the public good, providing that, I quote from the Regulations made under the Public Health Act –

“Within Mauritius or within such area and during such hours as may be specified in the Curfew Order, no person or class of persons shall remain outdoor.”

Now, not to act or to postpone action to after an eventual lifting of the Curfew Order would have been tantamount to condoning a blatant violation of the curfew in a time of great danger to the population. Just imagine, Mr Speaker, Sir, the consequences if only one of these squatters had carried the deadly virus.

Thirdly, Mr Speaker, Sir, experience teaches us that each day an illegal occupier is allowed to remain in occupation, the harder it is to get him to leave and the stronger is the moral case he will later put up to stay put.

Fourthly, moreover, in the particular case of Pointe aux Sables, the sites squatted is classified as “a coastal fresh water marshy land”, that is, an environment sensitive area, according to the Ministry of Environment. As such, no building permission can be granted, and to do so, would be a serious risk for the dweller.

Fifth, squatting is a grave injustice to all the poor people experiencing housing problems and who have abided by the law and registered with either the NHDC or the National Empowerment Foundation and have been waiting in the queue for social housing, sometimes for several years. Does compassion demand that squatters be allowed to jump the queue at their expense? That, Mr Speaker, Sir, would represent a gross injustice indeed.

Now, as to an enquiry, mentioned in the question, the hon. lady should know that on 26 and 27 May, that is, before their eviction, each and every squatter received a visit of an
interministerial team, including officers of the Ministries entrusted with responsibility for Social Integration, for Health, for Education, for Family Welfare, for Housing, for Local Government, for registering applicants for the Self-employed Assistance Scheme as well as the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children to identify those genuinely in need of urgent assistance.

Moreover, the NHDC Ltd and the NEF are presently registering occupiers wishing to apply for social housing, if they are not already registered. In fact, we are proactively following up on each case with a view to addressing all live social issues. The challenge, Mr Speaker, Sir, is to distinguish between the genuinely homeless and squatters in general. To that end, we are already working with NGOs and social workers, including Caritas to identify those deserving of our immediate support.

In parallel, given the major commitment to social housing in the Budget, we are working on a plan to respond meaningfully and in an orderly manner to the housing problems not only of deserving families, among those having reached the Curfew Order, but of all poor people in Mauritius.

**Mrs Navarre-Marie:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister is playing on words when referring to Cité Tôle and Résidence Malherbes, as well as the word ‘squatters’. Nul n’est contre l’ilégalité, mais le ministre pourrait-il nous dire quelles sont les raisons ayant motivé la destruction de ces maisons en plein confinement et avant même qu’une enquête ait été effectuée?

**Mr Obeegadoo:** I believe I should repeat what I just said. We are not playing on words. I would invite the Minister to visit Malherbes. There are no maisons en tôle generally at Malherbes and squatters are concentrated in one street and one street only, which is called Bernardin de St Pierre. So, I would invite the Minister to go...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Member.

**Mr Obeegadoo:** The former Minister, because she should...

*(Interruptions)*

She is a former Minister and she should have a sense of responsibility on these matters. I would invite the hon. Member to go to Malherbes and visit, and the term ‘squatters’ is not
playing on words. I quoted the State Lands Act and shall be very happy to provide the hon. Member with an extract of that piece of law, if she does not have it.

Now, again, before the structures at Pointe aux Sables were removed on Friday 29 May, that is, on the eve of the lifting of confinement, a thorough unprecedented social enquiry was carried out by all the Ministries I just mentioned - and I will not repeat - to check if there were any children who were not attending school, any persons whose health was affected and required immediate transfer to hospital, any battered woman or abandoned children who needed to be provided with immediate shelter, any persons not having claimed the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme and deserving to be assisted in registering themselves, checked for NHDC registration, for NEF registration, for SRM registration. When under any Government, has this been done before, Mr Speaker, Sir? This was before – I stress - before the removal of these illegal structures erected during confinement. But we have not stopped there. We are presently continuing to survey all the persons who have left and those who have refused to leave on a case by case basis proactively so that we can identify the genuine cases.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether his Ministry has made an inquiry concerning the people, whether they have been registered with the NHDC or the NEF? Because many times people who are waiting could not afford to have a house either with the NHDC or the NEF. These people are forced to be squatters.

Mr Obeegadoo: Absolutely and I will speak slowly so that I do not have to repeat myself yet again. Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, on 26 and 27 May, if the hon. Member would care to listen, officers of the NHDC, accompanied by officers of the NEF, went from one structure to another taking down the names of each of the persons present, which names were then checked against the register at the NHDC to see whether these persons were registered, whether they had been called for interviews before, where they had asked for housing because some people have asked for housing in Goodlands, others have asked for housing in St. Pierre, we also double checked with the NEF whether they had registered maybe not with the NHDC, but asked the NEF for housing and all those who have not done also we went to check whether they already held leases for State land. For instance, at Riambel a lady, who had a video done, already had been regularised in 2005 by the MSM/MMM Government, given 10 perches of land and she was again occupying land of the State. There was another
case of a person who had an NHDC apartment and who had sold the NHDC apartment a year ago and was now occupying land. This is why and I need to give credit to hon. David who had the courage of going live on radio and saying, he acknowledged that many of these cases were undeserving but then again what is important today is to identify the real genuine cases and to help those people in whatever way we can.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Le ministre sait-il que sa réponse est en fait un aveu d’échec de la faillite de la politique du gouvernement en matière de logement pour les plus vulnérables ?

Mr Obeegadoo: M. le président, j’aurais tout à l’heure en réponse à une autre question l’opportunité de donner tous les chiffres. Le gouvernement sortant a construit dans les 2,300 maisons et maintenant nous avons annoncé la décision de viser les 12,000 maisons sur les prochains trois ans. Tout à l’heure, je vous donnerai en détail pour ne pas me répéter, il y a une autre question qui a été posée, les chiffres et nous voulons agir concrètement parce que croyez-moi vous n’avez pas le monopole du cœur.

(Interruptions)

Vous n’avez pas le monopole du cœur et au gouvernement c’est agir avec le cœur et la raison concrètement au quotidien pour porter secours à tous ceux qui sont dans le besoin et nous le ferons.

Mr Speaker: Hon. X. L. Duval!

Mr X. L. Duval: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that at this present day with the cold winds that there are families, women and children, living under tents at Riambel at this very moment in time. Given his previous statements that he made before he joined Government, what is he going to do today concerning these families living under tents under these terrible weather conditions today itself, please?

Mr Obeegadoo: I am grateful to the hon. Member to give me the chance to explain. Now, at Riambel, it was only on 19 May that 37 structures were identified on State lands and do you know how many occupants there were, Mr Speaker, Sir, on 19 May? Zéro! Not one of them was occupied. On 22 May, we had gone from 37 to 46 cases. Do you know how many occupied? Zéro! From 19 to 26, we had gone to 53 cases and suddenly between the 22 and the 26, half were occupied. Why? Because on 22, Government has served a legal notice to vacate! Now, we are working and I am grateful to the assistance of the three MPs,
Minister Ganoo and our two colleague MPs for their help, we are working with NGOs active in the region to identify the genuine cases.

Let me remind the hon. Member that if we speak of Riambel, it was the MSM/MMM Government in 2005 that regularised the squatters of African town. Let me remind the House that in 2015 the MSM/ML Government regularised all the squatters of Cité des Dieux at Riambel and it is this Government that will address all genuine cases in Riambel.

**Mr Speaker:** Now supplementary, hon. Nuckcherry! Do you have a supplementary question? Hon. Dhunoo!

**Mr Dhunoo:** Is the Minister aware that camping tents are being provided by a foundation to encourage these families to occupy the State land illegally and what are the actions his Ministry will undertake?

**Mr Obeegadoo:** Let me reassure the House and the hon. Member that we are following on a case by case basis so as to act firmly but with compassion, as I said, the priority being to identify genuine cases.

Next question, hon. Ms Foo Kune!

**HEALTH INSTITUTIONS - CURFEW PERIOD - PATIENTS - APPOINTMENT**

(No. B/89) **Ms K. Foo Kune (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether in regard to medical outpatient appointments and surgical procedures in public health institutions which were stalled amid the COVID-19 lockdown, he will state the number thereof pending in each speciality, indicating the measures taken to clear the backlog.

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, our health institutions continued to dispense routine services during confinement period. As such a number of patients - the little - attended the appointments as scheduled. Outpatients, irrespective of the nature of their illness or not on the appointment list, were seen by doctors at Accident and Emergency Departments in our hospitals and at various health care centres and Mediclinics.

On 18 May 2020, my Ministry issued a circular to all hospitals to schedule appointments for all new cases first and then for those who have missed their appointments due to confinement. I am told that routine cases were attended at OPD clinics or otherwise appointments were rescheduled. My Ministry has already re-programmed the appointments
and the patients have been informed accordingly. It is expected that all the backlogs will be cleared by end of July 2020.

From March 20 to 11 May 2020, 2088 surgeries were effected comprising of emergency cases including routine caesarean sections which were already scheduled. All cases not performed during COVID-19 are being rescheduled and new dates for operation have already been allotted.

As from 11 to 29 May 2020, 796 emergency cases have been operated and non-urgent surgical procedures have been re-programmed.

I am also informed that, as from 11 May to 31 May 2020, 784 routine cases have been attended to.

As at date, I am being informed that there are 3,367 cases awaiting surgeries in our five regional hospitals including the Cardiac Centre.

I am tabling a list of pending cases in each specialty.

Ms Foo Kune: Can I ask the hon. Minister if he is considering to request the assistance of retired specialists and the private sector towards addressing the issue of backlog?

Dr. Jagutpal: In the event that we have accumulated cases and it is getting too long to clear the backlog, this measure will be taken into consideration.

Ms Foo Kune: Can the Minister tell the House what are the criteria he will base himself on the choice of the doctors and the private sector?

Dr. Jagutpal: It all depends upon the speciality where there is a shortage of doctors. We will consider what are the specialities where operations are being delayed and from that on there would be a selection based upon advertisement and then from the interview onwards, we are going to have the speciality depending upon the field concerned.

Mr Speaker: At this stage, I will suspend the sitting for one hour.

At 1.00 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.04 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQs B/95, B/96, B/97, B/98, B/124, B/131 and B/132 have been withdrawn. Hon. Ms Foo Kune!
HYDROXYCHLOROQUINE - STOCK

(No. B/90) Ms K. Foo Kune (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to Hydroxychloroquine, he will state the present stock thereof, indicating the quantity thereof -

(a) purchased, indicating the -

(i) dates of purchase, and

(ii) cost thereof, and

(b) received as donation from the Indian Government, indicating the date thereof.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that there is currently a stock of 1,384,400 Hydroxychloroquine 200 mg tablets at the Central Stores Department.

With regard to part (a) of the question, my Ministry purchased 1.8M tablets in August 2019 at the cost of Rs1.571 per tablet.

I am informed that my Ministry has, on 26 March 2020, awarded another contract for an amount of Rs2,538,000 for the procurement of 1.5M tablets to be supplied in 2 equal instalments. The first instalment is expected to be delivered in one (1) month time and the second consignment in 2 months’ time.

As regards part (b) of the question, my Ministry has received 502,200 tablets of Hydroxychloroquine of 200mg as donation from the Government of India on 16 April 2020.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Foo Kune!

Ms Foo Kune: Can the hon. Minister tell us if, for all patients of Covid-19, Hydroxychloroquine has been used in a non-discriminative way irrespective of age and underlying conditions?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, but this question is not pertaining to the question that has been asked. Yet, yes, so far the information I have that all patients have been receiving chloroquine tablets till lastly when we have another advice from World Health Organisation.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Quirin!
Mr Quirin: Oui, M. le président. Je pense que ma question est pratiquement à celle de l’honorable Foo Kune, mais je la pose quand même. Peut-on connaître la position du représentant de l’OMS à Maurice par rapport à l’utilisation de hydroxychloroquine dans le traitement des patients infectés par le coronavirus ?

Dr. Jagutpal: The Ministry, with the experts of the different specialities internal physician, chest physician and the WHO representative, has made a concerted recommendation on the use of chloroquine. At present, chloroquine is being used, but by the consent of the patient.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ramful!

Mr Ramful: Can the hon. Minister provide to the House the particulars of the contractor who has obtained the contract to deliver the hydroxychloroquine medicine?

Dr. Jagutpal: I will table this information.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Assirvaden!

CÔTE D’OR NATIONAL SPORTS COMPLEX – INITIAL PROJECT VALUE

(No. B/91) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the Côte d’Or National Sports Complex, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Multisports Infrastructure Ltd, information as to the -

(a) initial budgeted cost;
(b) actual cost;
(c) expected completion cost thereof, indicating the reasons for the variation cost and table copy thereof and, if not, why not;
(d) expected completion date thereof, and
(e) if fees will be charged for the use thereof and, if so, give details thereof.

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that in August, 2017, the initial project value of the Côte d’Or National Sports Complex was estimated at Rs3.2 billion. The amount was reviewed to Rs3.9 billion in May, 2018 to include consultancy cost and off-site works.
This estimate was worked out on the basis of draft designs. At that time, the soil investigations were not yet completed and the international sports regulatory bodies such as the FIFA, the FINA and the IAAF had not yet submitted their construction standards.

With the final designs completed, taking into account the recommendations of the regulatory bodies, the project value was then again reviewed and had increased to Rs4.692 billion. This substantial increase was mainly due to poor soil conditions revealed by the geotechnical reports and soil improvement works were therefore required.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards parts (b) and (c) of the question, I am informed by the Mauritius Multisports Infrastructure Ltd that in October, 2018, the civil contractor was instructed to fast track the construction of the sports facilities at Côte d’Or. The sports complex was to be used to host some competitions of the Indian Ocean Island Games 2019. The major building and infrastructural works were to be completed by June 2019.

It is common knowledge that a fast track execution of a project has a cost. The contractor had to mobilise additional resources in terms of labour and machinery. The Mauritius Multisports Infrastructure Ltd had to disburse an additional amount of Rs163 m. as acceleration cost in addition to Rs14 m. for mechanical and electrical works as well as the Rs114 m. to equip the facility for the IOIG 2019. The project value now stands at Rs4.983 billion. I am further informed by Mauritius Multisports Infrastructure Ltd that this amount can be considered as the final project cost. No variation works are foreseen.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as for part (d) of the question, according to the report of Mauritius Multisports Infrastructure Ltd, the construction schedule was disrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Works have resumed on site and a work calendar is being prepared.

Insofar as the fees that would be charged, the new Board is working on it and once finalised, it will be made public.

**Mr Assirvaden:** Merci, M. le président. Merci, l’honorable ministre. Je suis sûr que le ministre va être d’accord avec moi que R 5 milliards dépensés pour ce complexe, il faudra impérativement rentabiliser cet investissement. Est-ce que le ministre peut informer la Chambre quels sont les évènements sportifs qui sont prévus pour les 12 prochain mois pour qu’on puisse rentabiliser ce stade que certains appellent un stade fantôme ? Je sais qu’il y a un business plan qui a été préparé et que dans la réponse de l’ex-ministre Boissézon, dans cette même Chambre, il était convenu que R 250 millions en termes de maintenance. Est-ce
que le ministre peut nous dire quels sont les événements sportifs prévus pour les prochains mois ?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, en mars de cette année, il y a un nouveau Board qui a été mis en place, et d’après les informations que j’ai, le nouveau Board est en train d’étudier le plan qui avait été déjà préparé. Je ne l’ai pas avec moi et j’attends très bientôt qu’il soumette un plan pour nous dire quelles sont les activités qui pourraient être prévues au niveau du complexe. Néanmoins, bien sûr il y a eu les jeux des îles l’année dernière, donc le complexe avait été utilisé pour les jeux. Nous avons aussi l’académie de football de Liverpool qui utilise le complexe.

Le 23 novembre de l’année dernière, le Japan Karate Association, International Karate Tournament a tenu sa compétition au complexe. Nous avons toujours en novembre, le National Police Swimming Gala qui avait été tenu à Côte d’Or. Le 21 décembre 2019, le Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Federation a tenu ses compétitions nationales toujours au complexe. Nous avons aussi, dans un premier temps prévu - bien sûr, dépendant de la pandémie – de tenir les jeux de la CJSOI l’année prochaine, si tout va bien, au complexe de Côte d’Or. Entre temps, les différentes fédérations ont pris contact - et c’est là que le Board va étudier le plan – avec les différentes fédérations internationales telles que la FINA pour tenir différentes compétitions sportives internationales au complexe.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, le ministre sera surement d’accord que pour rentabiliser un complexe de cette envergure, les petits événements proposés ne rentabiliseront surement pas ce complexe avec un investissement de R 5 milliards. Ça a été dit la fois dernière, la maintenance va coûter autour de R 250 millions par an. Est-ce que le ministre peut informer la Chambre combien d’argent ont été déboursé jusqu’ici de mai de l’année dernière - le 7 mai où la question a été répondue - à ce jour pour la maintenance de ce complexe ?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, je n’ai pas les chiffres au niveau de la maintenance parce que la question initiale parlait du projet dans la construction. Donc, je n’ai pas ce chiffre avec moi actuellement.

Mr Assirvaden: J’ai une dernière question, M. le président. Je comprends très bien qu’il y a un business plan en préparation avec le comité de Côte d’Or, mais en décembre 2018, le gouvernement a payé une compagnie, Horta Consulting Ltd - je suis sûr que le ministre connait ce rapport-là - pour préparer un business plan pour exactement ce complexe,
Mr Toussaint: Je n’ai pas ce renseignement avec moi, M. le président. Je le redis, la question initiale était sur la construction et non sur le *business plan*.

*(Interruptions)*

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ramful, last supplementary!

Mr Ramful: I hope the Minister has the answer. Can the Minister confirm that the monthly electricity bill for this unused complex is about Rs1.5 m.?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, je le redis, je n’ai absolument aucun problème à répondre à des questions, mais il suffit que les bonnes questions soient posées.

*(Interruptions)*

La question initiale de l’honorable membre parle du coût de construction. Si la prochaine fois on vient avec une question sur ….

*(Interruptions)*

Mo pas pe repone ar twa!

*(Interruptions)*

Mr Speaker: Order, please! No crosstalking! Order! The Minister has replied this question.

Mr Toussaint: *Si to envi poz mwa enn kestion, to poz mwa enn kestion. Pas nek asize to bla bla! Poz kestion si to envi!* 

*(Interruptions)*

Ferme to labous!

Mr Speaker: Hon. Assirvaden, next question! No crosstalking!

**CEB - OPTICAL GROUND WIRE NETWORK PROJECT**

*(No. B/92) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)* asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the
CEB (FiberNet) Co. Ltd, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board (CEB), information as to the –

(a) total investment made therein by the CEB, since the inception of the said company to date, and

(b) total sale of wholesale fiber connectivity services for the period 14 November 2018 to date by the said company.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the year 2001, the Central Electricity Board initiated a project for the installation of an Optical Ground Wire network (OPGW) all along its transmission lines. This network is a tubular structure containing optical fibres surrounded by layers of steel and aluminium wires. That project was completed in 2003. The OPGW is now about 340 kilometres long. It is used for CEB’s international communication and remote control of sub stations.

In the beginning of 2015, the Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation formally proposed to the Central Electricity Board that the existing Optical Ground Wire network be optimised so as to provide ultimate backhaul network capacity to existing telecom operators.

At the time I stood advised, that the OPGW was being used at only 5% of its capacity and that, if accepted, the proposal would spur the new government strategy for the digital transformation of Mauritius.

Following approval of Government, it was decided to use the OPGW to promote the deployment of high speed broadband services. In 2015, a feasibility study was carried out by Arteria and in 2016 a business model evaluation was carried out by the consultant IDATE. The recommended technology was Dense Wavelength Division Multiplexing Based Optical Transmission Network which, I am informed, is a well-known and tested optical transmission technology in the telecommunications sector.

On 07 September 2016, the CEB Act was amended so as to enable CEB to incorporate subsidiaries under the Companies Act.

Subsequently, on 11 October 2016, CEB incorporated CEB (Fibernet) Co Ltd, as a fully owned subsidiary.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the CEB that it has invested Rs100,000 as share capital in CEB (Fibernet) Co Ltd. Further, CEB has advanced amounts
totalling Rs385 m. to that subsidiary. Those advances were subsequently formalised in a Shareholder Loan Facility agreement signed on 12 February 2020. The loan is repayable in 15 years, inclusive of a grace period of three years. It has also advanced an amount of Rs71,680,875 to that subsidiary for the period 01 July 2019 to 04 June 2020. This will be converted into a loan.

I am informed by CEB (Fibernet) Co Ltd that to date, Rs207,789,646 have been paid to ECI Telecom, the designated contractor for backbone infrastructure development. For the METISS project, an amount of Rs214,508,008 has been disbursed.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the sale of fibre connectivity services can be envisaged only after all the stages leading to ultimate connection are completed.

This involves firstly obtaining a licence as well as tariff approval. CEB (Fibernet) obtained the network service provider licence from ICTA on 12 December 2018 and approval for the tariff was obtained on 12 April 2019.

Secondly and in parallel, backbone infrastructure works had to be completed and this was done in January 2019.

Thirdly, CEB (Fibernet) Co Ltd is testing on a pilot basis. This is being carried out in about 500 households in the region of Rose Hill and in CEB’s offices for communication purposes. This pilot testing is expected to continue until December 2020.

Fourthly, a critical component of the project is the ultimate connection to “METISS” which stands for Melting pot Indianoceanic Submarine System. The METISS project was initiated by the Indian Ocean Commission. It consists in the installation of a submarine cable of 3,000 km to link Mauritius, Réunion and Madagascar to Durban. I am informed that the cable has reached Madagascar and is expected to be commissioned in Mauritius by the end of this year.

Fifthly, CEB (Fibernet) Co Ltd is in the process of appointing a system integrator to ensure connectivity from the fibernet shelter to the end users.

It is only after all these processes are completed that sales can be contemplated.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Assirvaden!

Mr Assirvaden: Merci, M. le président. M. le président, en écoutant la réponse du Deputy Prime Minister, cela devient de plus en plus clair qu’il n’ya pas eu de sale of wholesale fibre connectivity?
**The Deputy Prime Minister:** Il a fallu quoi ? Je n’ai pas entendu.

**Mr Assirvaden:** Le *sale*, la vente des connectivités.

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** Il a fallu quoi ?

**Mr Assirvaden:** *The wholesale fiber connectivity*, il n’y pas eu de vente.

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** Non.

**Mr Assirvaden:** Oui, c’est cela. Donc, on 03 April 2018, the Deputy Prime Minister stated in PQ B/78 et B/79, je lis la phrase sur ce projet: "This is a very profitable initiative. The forecast is a cumulative revenue of 41.9 million USD in the first five years." Ceci dit, M. le président, après presque quatre ans où plusieurs centaines de millions de roupies de l’argent public ont été investies dans cette compagnie où le forecast était 41.9 millions de dollars. Aujourd’hui, le Deputy Prime Minister confirme à la Chambre qu’il n’y pas eu de vente, pas eu de revenu. Je voudrais savoir de l’honorable Deputy Prime Minister si après quatre ans où plusieurs centaines de millions de roupies ont été investies, s’il n’est pas mieux that we stop this venture on this very risky project?

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** Well, the answer is no. On the contrary, this is a venture which is highly profitable, but not only highly profitable, for the country and that includes Rodrigues. There will be increase connectivity, there will be a lowering of cost and that is the policy of Government. We have invested about, I think, Rs385 m. plus Rs500 m. The business plan shows that it is going to be profitable; stopping the project now would mean selling it to the private sector. This is probably what the hon. Member would wish to obtain. But we are not in the business of selling something so valuable to the private sector.

**Mr Assirvaden:** M. le président, quand ce projet dans quelque temps, dans deux ans ou trois ans, là, on est à R 500 millions, le chiffre de R 1.2 milliards est cité concernant l’investissement dans ce projet. Le ministre veut continuer, le gouvernement veut continuer déjà à dépenser encore d’argent en ce temps difficile. But being given that the CEB has invested plus de R 500 millions, et le Deputy Prime Minister me donne l’impression qu’il veut continuer encore de ce projet, l’argent public. And in view of the difficult economic situation, will the Deputy Prime Minister inform the House whether the contract of the actual General Manager will be reviewed on the same terms and conditions, that is, a salary de 13,000 dollars, R 500,000, en ce moment difficile, plus que la plupart des ministres ici? Est-ce que le contrat va être renouvelé sur les mêmes termes et conditions?
The Deputy Prime Minister: I am not used to answering multiple questions. There are about 3 questions in this statement. Mr Speaker, Sir, could you ask the hon. Member to just particularise the question he wants me to answer?

Mr Assirvaden: Oui, j’ai compris. M. le président, being given that CEB has invested some - je suis sûr que le ministre a compris - plus de R 500 millions dans ce projet, qui est l’argent public, et le ministre des Finances l’a si bien dit, on est dans des situations économiques extrêmement difficiles où il y a des coupes dans des salaires, où tous les allowances sont coupés. Est-ce que le Deputy Prime Minister peut informer la Chambre si le directeur général actuel du CEB FiberNet, qui a un salaire de 13,000 dollars par mois, Rs500,000, sera maintenu selon les mêmes termes et conditions ?

The Deputy Prime Minister: OK, there are two questions. One is on the difficult economic situation of Mauritius. Now, on that question, because that is what emerges from what I heard, on that question, I would say yes, we are in a difficult economic situation, we all know it, we do not need to be economists or whatever to understand that. We have listened to the Budget Speech of the Minister of Finance. We hope to be able to get out of that difficult economic situation.

As regards to the salary of the General Manager, well, I do not have it here but if the hon. Member tells me it is so many dollars…

(Interruptions)

Well, please, I cannot be interrupted like this! Heckling is not a solution in debates. If that is the figure that he wants to give, I am going to check, of course, what is the salary. I do not know if his contract needs to be renewed, but if his contract needs to be renewed, it will be renewed. But it depends on the Board of FiberNet, not on me.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Assirvaden: Une dernière question, M. le président. I am given to understand that over and above the investment of nearly R 250 millions, comme vient de le dire le Deputy Prime Minister, 6 millions d’euros, in its METISS submarine cable, the CEB FiberNet is on the point to buy additional international capacity to the tune of R 50 millions. Ça va se faire dans les jours à venir. Est-ce que le Deputy Prime Minister, pour la transparence, peut informer la Chambre si les procurement procedures as set out by the PPO have been followed on this particular contract?
The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not understand what the hon. Member is asking. He speaks a bit confusing. Let me see what I understand…

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Deputy Prime Minister: What I understand from him is why did we invest in METISS? That was a policy decision. We had to invest in METISS. There are other submarine cables which are nearing their survival date. We need to continue modernising our infrastructure. Then he asked me whether we are going to invest another Rs 50 m. something. I am not aware of this. I have never heard of this. I will check. If he has the information, he will ask me but I will check whether that is correct.

Then, he talks of procurement. I mean, we did not invent exemptions for procurement regulations. The hon. Member must surely be familiar with GN 68 of 2009, when the Government of the day, when he was the Chairman, I believe, of the CEB, introduced an exemption for CEB by way of regulations, not by way of Act of Parliament, by way of regulations to exempt CEB from the Public Procurement legislation and then promptly signed a contract with SARACO. So, I mean, let’s not talk too much about this. Then, who incorporated in 2007 the CEB Investment Company Limited, CEB/ICL, without going to Parliament, without having any approval? They incorporated a –

(Interruptions)

We went to Parliament. We got the sanction of everybody. We went to Cabinet. CEB/ICL was incorporated without any - and then to add additional - then CEB/ICL was for CT Power; to take customer’s money to put in CT Power, 26% And exempt this company from procurement proceedings. Mr Speaker, Sir, la boue mok la marre.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Next question! No more supplementary! Next question!

Mr Assirvaden: Last question?

Mr Speaker: No.

CONSTITUENCY NO. 15 - WATER SUPPLY

(No. B/93) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to
Constituency No. 15, La Caverne and Phoenix, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to when water will be supplied to the inhabitants thereof on a 24/7 basis, indicating the number of complaints registered on the hotline in relation thereto, since September 2019 to date, indicating the cost incurred in relation to water supply through water tankers –

(a) hired from private operators, giving the list thereof, and

(b) owned by the Authority

The Deputy Prime Minister: May I ask your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, to reply to B/93 and B/116 of the First Member of the same constituency because they are more or less on the same subject matter. May I?

Mr Speaker: Yes.

The Deputy Prime Minister: I can. Thank you. Mr Speaker, Sir, the Central Water Authority supplies water on the basis of six District Water Supply Zones and not constituencies.

The regions in the Constituency No 15 form part of the Upper Mare aux Vacoas Supply Zone and receive water from Mare aux Vacoas Reservoir, through La Marie Water Treatment Plant.

I am informed by the CWA that some ten localities in that constituency are receiving 24/7 water supply and other areas receive 12-hour supply daily. Water supply in these regions is expected to increase by 2 to 3 hours by December 2020, following the full commissioning of the Bagatelle Water Treatment Plant.

The CWA informs me that it is implementing water pipe replacement around the island in a phased manner to achieve 24/7 water supply, with priority given to most critical areas. During the past five years, an amount of Rs6.6 billion has already been invested and about 500 kms of pipes have been replaced.

This includes in that area replacement of about 27 kms of pipes in John Kennedy Street, 30 kms in Solferino, 4 kms in Henrietta, 6.4 kms from Piton du Milieu to Hermitage and all this for a total amount of Rs502 m. Under the Highlands Sewerage Project, 386 meters of pipes have been replaced and 100 meters will be replaced under the Valentina Sewerage Project.
CWA’s medium term plan includes a project to increase the treatment capacity of La Marie Water Treatment Plant from 130,000 m³ daily to 160,000 m³ daily. This will ensure 24/7 supply in the entire Upper Mare Aux Vacoas Supply Zone.

With regard to the number of complaints received, I am informed by the CWA that the hotline registered an average of less than 10 complaints daily since September 2019.

Now as regards water tankers, I am informed by the CWA that it deploys three of its own CWA tankers in the region, those are supplemented by CWA tankers from other regions, whenever this is necessary.

For the period September 2019 to date, the cost of CWA tankers amounts to Rs2,336,680.77, that include fuel, maintenance and labour costs.

During that same period, the CWA had recourse to one private tanker, owned by one Mr M. on 31 December 2019, following a broken pipe in Petit Camp, Valentina. The cost incurred amounts to Rs17,275.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: B/94.

(Interjections)

An hon. Member: I have a supplementary.

Mr Speaker: You have to raise your hand. You don’t wait for me to give the floor to another Member, then you…

(Interjections)

An hon. Member: I raised my hand.

Mr Speaker: I looked in that direction and you were not prepared.

(Interjections)

Okay, I will allow you because...

(Interjections)

But you are not important after asking more questions. The next Member is important.

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether he can give the names of those 10 localities that are getting water on a 24-hour basis in Constituency No.15?
The Deputy Prime Minister: Yes, I can –

- Clairfonds;
- Morcellement Boucan;
- Palmerston;
- Caro Laliane;
- Belle Terre, and
- Closel.

Those are the regions where you are very strong I understand. So, we give you preferential treatment.

Mr Speaker: Now, you are happy. We give the floor to hon. Ameer Meea!

COVID-19 PANDEMIC - INDUSTRIAL SECTOR - UNEMPLOYMENT

(No. B/94) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the unemployed, he will state the estimated number thereof, industry-wise, amid the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training (Mr S. Callichurn): Mr Speaker, Sir, with you permission, I will reply to this PQ. The number of unemployment industry wise amid COVID-19 cannot be quantified at this stage, as it is still too early to assess the damage done on the economic front. We shall have a better indication in the coming months and I will be glad to share the information sought for then.

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. In fact, my question was addressed to the hon. Minister of Finance. The reason is because of his statement that 100,000 people would lose their job. This was a very serious statement. Therefore, I would like to know from the hon. Minister how this figure has been determined by his colleague. Has there been any study, any report rather, to substantiate this figure of 100,000 people?

Mr Callichurn: Well, Mr Speaker, Sir, the assumption is based on industries that will be heavily affected by the effect of COVID-19. It is not just us that made assumptions. Forecasts have been made by different countries. Even the ILO has given figures regarding the number of persons that run the risk of losing their jobs. So, this is based on assumptions.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Uteem!
Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister just mentioned the ILO. Last year, the ILO published a report analysing our Workfare Programme and transition and unemployment benefit. It criticised that the Ministry does not publicize enough to people in the informal sector that become unemployed and, as a result, these unemployed from the informal sector don’t get their Workfare Programme, don’t get the transition benefit - unemployment benefit. So, may I know from the hon. Minister what measures he will take to encourage people who are going to lose their job in the informal sector to come forward and register with his Ministry to get the benefit of the transition.

Mr Callichurn: Well, Mr Speaker, Sir, the transition of unemployment benefit is applicable to those in the formal sector. The informal sector, hon. Shakeel Mohamed knows for a fact because in 2013 the Workfare Programme was introduced with a specific reason, that is, to target those who are in employment, who are working in the formal sector. We don’t know how many people are working in the informal sector. It is very difficult to quantify those people. We have put measures in the past to encourage those people to come and register with the system that is in place at my Ministry but, unfortunately, they don’t want to, we cannot do anything about it.

Mr Speaker: You invited hon. Shakeel Mohamed for a supplementary question.

Mr Mohamed: Thank you. I just wanted to pick up from where hon. Ameer Meea left off from his good question on the issue of the 100,000 people that the hon. Minister of Finance has made reference to. Now, since the hon. Minister of Labour has stated that this was a number, just like the ILO, qui a été prévu. There has been a calculation of some sort like other countries. Could he, at least, since his colleague - and together with him seated next to his colleague - has mentioned 100,000, table the report to which hon. Ameer Meea made reference that brings you to that 100,000. How does the hon. Minister reach that figure? I know the hon. Minister has said that it has been worked upon but give us the formal report, the physical report. Give it to us like other countries have the report. Does Mauritius have a physical report that the Minister could show us and share with the members of the public? How does he reach that figure?

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just mentioned that we have based our assumption on the industry…

Mr Speaker: No debate, question is being answered.

Mr Callichurn: … that will be heavily impacted by COVID-19 and they are –
• the tourism industry;
• the manufacturing sector, and
• all those small businesses that work together with those two industries.

There is no formal report. To tell the hon. Member frankly, there is no formal report.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Ittoo!

METRO EXPRESS PROJECT - PHASE II

(No. B/95) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail whether, in regard to Phase II of the Metro Express Project, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Metro Express Ltd, information as to –

(a) the amount of funds disbursed as at to date, and
(b) if any financial assistance has been provided to Larsen and Toubro Ltd during the curfew period and, if so, give details thereof, indicating the source of funding.

(Withdrawn)

INTERCONTINENTAL SLAVERY MUSEUM

(No. B/96) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to the proposed setting up of the Intercontinental Slavery Museum, he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS SOCIETY OF AUTHORS - ARTISTS - PAYMENTS

(No. B/97) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to the redevances des artistes, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Society of Authors, information as to the quantum of funds collected and disbursed for the year 2019 and since January 2020 to date and payable to the artists, indicating the –

(a) schedule of payments thereof, and
(b) rate applicable, indicating –

(i) when same was last reviewed, and
(ii) if consideration will be given for a review of the 65 cents payable.

(Withdrawn)

CONSTITUENCY NO. 1 - BUS SHELTERS

(No. B/98) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to Constituency No. 1, Grand River North West and Port Louis West, he will state if a survey has been carried out thereat to identify the places where the installation of bus shelters are required and, if so, indicate the timeframe set for the installation thereof.

(Withdrawn)

POST-COVID-19 LOCKDOWN - YOUTH ACTIVITIES - ACTION PLAN

(No. B/99) Mr A. Ittoo (Third Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to youth activities, he will state if any Action Plan is being envisaged in relation thereto post-COVID-19 lockdown.

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for his question which enables me to inform the House on actions taken by my Ministry to ensure continuity of services to young people despite COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent sanitary restrictions.

During the lockdown period, my Ministry extended special support to vulnerable young and their families through its Special Outreach and Volunteer Mauritius programmes. Our team assisted Non-Governmental Organisations with the distribution of food packs in different localities. Moreover, physical exercise sessions were organised on a daily basis on the Facebook page of my Ministry. The Duke of Edinburgh’s International Award Programme also continued through online training and home based participation, as recommended by the Duke of Edinburgh’s International Award Foundation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since May 2020, my Ministry has revised its programme of activities and reviewed the delivery methods by maximising the use of digital technology to reach young people as the Youth Centres are still closed. A series of programmes and activities have, thus, been scheduled for the next six months with the main objectives to empower the youth through online training, strengthen family ties and provide psychosocial support and counselling to the young people. The list of activities is being tabled.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to highlight that some of the activities have already started and have attracted the active interest of young people. For instance as at date, 408 young
people have registered for the online training course being organised by my Ministry on youth entrepreneurship. The two first online youth concerts known as ‘Le Live’ held on Saturday 30 May 2020 and Saturday 06 June 2020 got more than 18,000 views on Facebook.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question, hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger!

*(Interruptions)*

Are you serious, hon. Member? You should follow your own question.

**Mr Ittoo:** I was raising my hand for a supplementary question.

**Mr Speaker:** Never! You never raise your hand. Okay, I allow you.

**Mr Ittoo:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I thank the hon. Minister for his answer. Is there a campaign to make the activities organised by your Ministry known to the public at large and to the youth. If yes, how are the young people supposed to register for the various activities?

**Mr Toussaint:** M. le président, nous utilisons, bien sûr, tout ce qui est social media pour la campagne d’information. Je profite de l’occasion pour lancer un appel aux jeunes de la République de Maurice d’aller sur la page Facebook du ministère pour avoir tous les renseignements en ce qu’il s’agit des différentes activités et aussi comment faire pour s’enregistrer et participer aux différentes activités que mon ministère a préparé pour eux.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger!

**COVID-19 PANDEMIC – WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

*(No. B/100) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal)* asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the additional amount of unecological materials generated in terms of masks and gloves amid the COVID-19 Pandemic, he will state if an assessment thereof has been made and, if so, indicate if consideration will be given for the setting up of a waste management plan accordingly.

**Mr Ramano:** M. le président, l’apparition de la crise du Coronavirus a eu un impact social et économique sans précédent dans presque tous les pays du monde et a mis à l’épreuve la résilience de notre société. Cette urgence de santé publique a exercé et continue d’exercer une pression sans précédent sur de nombreuses activités économiques y compris celles qui sont indispensables non seulement à notre santé mais aussi à notre bonheur, à notre prospérité et à notre bien-être. La protection de vie et des moyens de subsistance est donc au
cœur de toutes les actions et décisions prises par le gouvernement pour faire face à la crise tant au niveau individuel que collectif.

M. le président, une bonne gestion des déchets fait partie des services essentiels fournis à notre société. Il est primordial de prévenir les perturbations dans notre gestion des déchets pour la santé et la sécurité de nos citoyens pour l’environnement et pour l’économie. Par conséquent, notre priorité, durant le confinement et le couvre-feu sanitaire, a été d’assurer une continuité dans les services de gestion des déchets.

Je suis informé par le ministère de la Santé et du Bien-être, qu’en ce qui concerne l’élimination des masques et des gants provenant des hôpitaux et des centres médicaux où les patients du COVID-19 sont traités, ceux-ci sont bien rangés dans des sacs à déchets en plastique jaune et envoyés pour l’incinération à l’hôpital de Brown Séquard. Les masques et les gants des centres de quarantaine sont également envoyés pour être incinérés à l’hôpital de Brown Séquard.

En outre, le ministère de la Santé et du Bien-être envisage de mettre en place une installation nationale de traitement des déchets des soins de santé après une phase de faisabilité du projet une fois que le type de technologie à mettre en œuvre sera finalisé.

M. le président, dans ces circonstances exceptionnelles, aucune évaluation qualitative et quantitative de l’impact des masques et des gants utilisés n’a été possible. Toutefois, des campagnes de sensibilisation ont été diffusées à la télévision concernant l’utilisation et l’élimination appropriée des masques et des gants. Ces campagnes seront poursuivies conjointement avec toutes les parties prenantes afin d’éviter que les masques et les gants usagés ne soient jetés dans les lieux publics. En ce qui concerne la gestion des déchets municipaux soupçonnés de contenir des matières contaminées par le COVID-19, le département de Occupational Safety and Health Administration, (OSHA) du ministère du Travail des États-Unis déclare que cela ne nécessite pas de précautions particulières autres que celles déjà utilisées pour protéger les travailleurs, des risques qu’ils rencontrent lors de leur tâche de routine dans la collecte des déchets solides.

Il est à noter que pour les déchets municipaux générés par les ménages dans un certain nombre de pays, à savoir l’Italie, l’Estonie, l’Inde, l’Allemagne et la Turquie, aucune collecte séparée des masques et gants usagés n’est effectué au niveau des ménages. Ceux-ci sont stockés dans des sacs et collectés comme des déchets normaux.
M. le président, conscient des grandes quantités de ces matériaux qui continueront à être générés dans les mois à venir et considérant également toute pandémie future, mon ministère en collaboration avec le ministère de la Santé et du Bien-être et le ministère des Collectivités Locales, de la gestion des catastrophes et des risques envisage de mettre en place un comité interministériel pour étudier l’élaboration d’un plan qui traitera de la question de sensibilisation, de la manipulation, du stockage, de la collecte et de l’élimination, en toute sécurité, des masques et des gants usagés et d’autres matériaux contaminés.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger!

Ms Bérenger: Merci, M. le président. Pour une meilleure efficience, pourrions-nous savoir de l’honorable ministre de l’Environnement s’il compte accroître les pouvoirs de la Police de l’environnement et est-ce que l’honorable ministre pourrait divulguer le nombre et la nature des contraventions émises par la Police de l’environnement depuis le début de l’année?

Mr Ramano: Donc, l’honorable membre parle des déchets médicaux ou bien des déchets en général ?

(Interruptions)

Non, si ce sont des déchets en général, malheureusement la question d’aujourd’hui concerne principalement les déchets médicaux. Mais en ce qui concerne les déchets d’ordre général, je n’ai pas ce renseignement là, mais en ce qui concerne les déchets médicaux, ce que je peux confirmer et aussi rassurer l’honorable membre c’est que la Police de l’environnement est très à cheval en ce qui concerne tout l’aspect littering et aussi illegal dumping. D’ailleurs, nous sommes en train de travailler sur des différents Regulations pour augmenter les pénalités en ce qui concerne l’illegal dumping et aussi le littering. Mais en ce qui concerne les déchets en général ou bien les déchets médicaux, je n’ai pas les chiffres avec moi en ce qui concerne les contraventions qui ont été entreprises par la Police de l’environnement, mais si l’honorable membre vient de l’avant avec une question substantive, je me ferai un plaisir de lui répondre.

Ms Bérenger: Merci, M. le président. Donc, si je comprends bien, l’honorable ministre de l’Environnement ne viendra pas de l’avant avec des poubelles spécialement dédiées aux équipements sanitaires dans les lieux publics ?

Mr Ramano: Comme j’ai dit à l’honorable membre, c’est que toutes les recommandations que nous avons eues et aussi toutes les pratiques qui sont pratiquées dans
tous les pays étrangers, il n’y a pas à ce jour le tri des déchets en ce qui concerne les déchets médicaux, en ce qui concerne les ménages. Mais par contre, en ce qui concerne les déchets médicaux qui sont produits par les hôpitaux, les services hospitaliers ou bien les centres de quarantaine, là, il y a une collecte séparée qui est organisée, mais en ce qui concerne les ménages, non, il n’y a pas de tri des déchets tel quel.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Est-ce que je peux demander au ministre s’il y a une indication au niveau de son ministère en ce qui concerne le nombre de masques qui ont été fabriqués localement et qui ont été utilisés, le nombre global que le gouvernement ou son ministère a estimé for disposal?

Mr Ramano: Non, au niveau du ministère de l’environnement, nous ne sommes pas en présence de ces chiffres, mais ce sont des chiffres qui peuvent être communiqués par les autres autorités concernées.

Mr Speaker: We move to the next question!

INFRASTRUCTURAL WORKS - CONTRACTS

(No. B/101) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to infrastructural works, he will give the lists of the ongoing contracts and of those which are awaiting commencement of execution, indicating in each case the –

(a) contract value thereof, and

(b) expected impact thereon of the COVID-19 curfew period and aftermath thereof.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for this question, my very first one.

The COVID-19 pandemic is, indeed, an unprecedented health crisis and a human tragedy that the world is going through since the beginning of March 2020. The Government of Mauritius decided to prioritise the well-being of the population of our economic considerations by imposing a sanitary curfew since 20 March 2020, to limit the spread of the deadly virus. As a consequence, onsite construction activities had to be suspended. Thereafter, following Government’s decision to allow a phased resumption of activities in certain key sectors, the construction sector started its activities gradually as from 18 May
2020 and on announcement of the deconfinement with effect from 01 June 2020, activities are almost back to normal now.

The lockdown entails significant economic implications never experienced before. The construction industry, which is a driver of economic growth, is not spared by the crisis. It is expected that stakeholders in the construction sector, will adopt a suitable, sustainable strategy for the successful delivery of projects in order to safeguard the long-term viability of the construction community.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that at the level of the Road Development Authority (RDA), several major ongoing projects worth billions of rupees had to be stalled due to the national lockdown. These include, among others, construction of great separated junction at Pont Fer-Jumbo-Dowlut roundabout and A1-M1 Link Road, project value: 4.2 billion; Fly-over across motorway M1 Hillcrest Avenue in Quatre Bornes, project value: 317.6 million.

Construction of A1-A3 Link Road, project value: 294 million; upgrading of B28 road from Deux Frères to Beau Champ, Phase 1 project: 109 million; improvement of bend at Nouvelle Découverte, project value: 83.1 million; construction of Cap Malheureux bypass, project value: 207 million; construction of La Croisette Link Road, project value 93.5 million. In addition, contracts for the following two projects were awarded just prior to the proclamation of the curfew, but works on site have not yet started. Upgrading of Choisy Bridge, Poste La Fayette, project value: 81 million; rehabilitation of Saint Marie Bridge, Bel Ombre, project value: 64 million.

As such, these two projects are not going to have any major impact apart from new completion dates to be mutually agreed between the RDA and the contractors. In addition, just prior to confinement, my Ministry had issued Works Order under the framework agreement for some 79 projects of a total value of 175.5 million for various Ministries/Departments. These projects were put on hold during confinement period. Works have now resumed for these projects. Any request for extension of time with or without costs will be determined on a case-to-case basis. The list of the project awarded under framework agreement is being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the projects being implemented by the National Development Unit of my Ministry, the information is also being compiled, as there are hundreds of projects, and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.
As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that all projects of the RDA are governed by contract agreement with explicit conditions. Therefore, it is important to follow the procedure laid down therein. Following the announcement of the two weeks lockdown on 19 March 2020, which was subsequently extended to 30 May 2020, the RDA took various steps to protect the interest of the projects and to mitigate future claims while, at the same time, giving the contractors the opportunity to optimise their resources with clear indications from the employer.

Contractors were instructed via a notice to suspend all works on site starting from 20 March 2020 up to the end of the lockdown in line with subclause 8.8 of the FIDIC Red Book 1999. Conditions of contract during suspension, the contractor has the responsibility to protect store and secure such part of the works against any deterioration loss or damage. Contractors, thus, given the opportunity to mitigate losses with regard to their mobilisation and to keep per records thereof.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the FIDIC Red Book 1999, subclause 19.1 ‘Force Majeure’ is defined as an exceptional event or circumstances –

(a) which is beyond a party control, which such party could not have reasonably provided against before entering into the contract which having arisen such party could not reasonably have avoided or overcome, and

(b) which is substantially attributed to the other party. In line with the above provisions, the RDA issued notices of ‘Force Majeure’ to all its contractors as a general rule.

Thank you.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you very much, indeed. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether in light of COVID-19, the list of projects will remain the same or there would be prioritisation of projects, because of the economic impact that COVID-19 will likely have on the public finances?

Mr Hurreeram: As I have already answered, Mr Speaker, Sir, all the projects where contracts were already given, have already restarted again and there is a contractual agreement with the contractors. So, we have to pursue with the works on sit.

Mr Osman Mahomed: May I ask the hon. Minister whether the COVID-19 confinement and other impacts will impact on the contract value of these projects because of
the lockdown and the likely increase in foreign currency rates? Because we know over the last few weeks, tourism and textiles are not faring so well, dollar has increased considerably. Whether the contracts are fully secured to protect Government’s interests against these currency fluctuations?

**Mr Hurreeram:** Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. Immediately after lifting of the sanitary curfew, the contractors were informed that they could resume work provided that they had the necessary work permit, etc., and the contractors have already notified the RDA of the claims under clause 19 ‘Force Majeure’. However, details are still being awaited. The claims are generally twofold, extension of time and costs associated with extension of time. So, the value of the contract will remain the same.

**Mr Osman Mahomed:** I will come with a question, maybe about the amount later. In the Budget Speech, provisions have been made to reduce the period of retention money disbursement from 12 months to 6 months. Can I ask the hon. Minister, being given that his Ministry handles a lot of Government projects, whether he has been consulted on this proposition, and whether he has agreed to this and, if so, the rationale behind giving his agreement to this proposition?

**Mr Hurreeram:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this question does not relate to the main question.

**Mr Speaker:** Move on to your next question, hon. Member!

**DES ROCHES STREET, WARD IV, PORT LOUIS - DRAIN & ROAD SURFACING PROJECT**

(No. B/102) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the Upgrading of Drain and Road Surfacing Project at Des Roches Street in Ward 4, in Port Louis, to be executed by the National Development Unit, he will state the –

(a) contract value, and

(b) contractual start and completion dates thereof.

**Mr Hurreeram:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the NDU is implementing a project for the Upgrading of Drain, Road Surfacing at Des Roches Street, Ward IV, Port Louis.
With regard to part (a) of the question, following a bidding exercise, the NDU has appointed a contractor for the execution of the works for an amount of Rs42.9 m., inclusive of VAT, on 25 September 2018.

Regarding part (b) of the question, the contractual start date and completion date were 14 November 2018 and 14 August 2019, respectively. However, works could not start on site as expected way leaves for road closure and road diversion from the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit was not obtained. There was also the need for relocation of services, which constituted of CWA pipes, underground CEB, and Mauritius Telecom cables. Moreover, the project was further delayed due to adverse weather condition.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I want to reassure the House that we are doing our very best to cause less inconvenience to the inhabitants of the region. The major works have been completed and the remaining works, that is, part of the drain work and asphalting of the road, are now expected to be completed by 30 September 2020 because as we all know, the confinement period due to the COVID-19 pandemic, has caused additional delays.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Can I ask the hon. Minister whose responsibility was it to get the necessary way leave, whether it is the client or was it the contractor’s responsibility?

Mr Hurreeram: It was the contractor’s responsibility, Mr Speaker, Sir, but, as my hon. colleague knows, the road at Des Roches Street is quite narrow and there is a lot of traffic. So, there have had to be some consultation with the TMRSU, CWA - there was not property concern regarding that particular project. So, we wanted to start the projects with less inconvenience to the inhabitants.

Mr Osman Mahomed: But way leave has nothing to do with traffic. How does traffic impact on way leave? Way leave means you obtain from other authorities to do your work. Can I ask the hon. Minister to clarify what way leave has to do with traffic and vice versa?

Mr Hurreeram: That’s more than obvious, Mr Speaker, Sir. This project was to improve the fluidity of the traffic along the road, providing drain and pavement at the same time. We all know that Des Roches Street is a one-way street where, very often, motor vehicles get stuck in the existing drain, which represented traffic hazard. So, we couldn’t start that work onsite without making sure that we were doing all that it takes to improve security and that we don’t indulge the inhabitants into hazardous situations.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary question!
Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes, can I ask the hon. Minister what is now the expected completion date, and being given that the contractor is at fault, whether this contract will be the subject of liquidated damages on behalf of the contractor, because the contractor is clearly at fault?

Mr Hurreeram: I have already said in the first part of my reply, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the completed date will be by 30 September, and I have never said that the contractor is at fault. All I have said is that we have had delays due to way leave issues. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Move to your next question!

INDEPENDENT POWER PRODUCERS - ELECTRICITY PRODUCTION - COAL USE

(No. B/103) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the Independent Power Producers using coal for electricity production, he will, in each case –

(a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to –

(i) the total tonnage of coal used since 2015 to date on a yearly basis, and

(ii) if coal ash was discharged in conformity with the EIA license held and

(b) table copy of the Environment Impact Assessment license.

Mr Ramano: M. le président, j'ai été informé que des licences EIA ont été accordées à cinq Producteurs Indépendants d'Electricité pour la construction et l'exploitation des centrales électriques utilisant exclusivement ou partiellement le charbon comme combustible, à savoir -

a) Omnicane Thermal Energy Operations (La Baraque) Ltd, anciennement connue sous le nom de la « Compagnie Thermique de Savannah Ltée » ;

b) Omnicane Thermal Energy Operations (St Aubin) Limited, anciennement connue sous le nom de la « Compagnie Thermique du Sud Limitée » ;

c) Terragen Ltd, anciennement connue sous le nom de la « Compagnie Thermique de Belle Vue Ltée » ;
d) Alteo Energy Ltd, anciennement connue sous le nom de « FUEL Steam and Power Generation Company Limited »; et

e) Consolidated Energy Ltd, qui a quand même cessé ses activités en décembre 2018.

Concernant la partie (a)(i) de la question, j’ai été informé par le Central Electricity Board (CEB) que la consommation annuelle de charbon par les Producteurs Indépendants d'Electricité depuis 2015, est comme suit -

a) 2015 – 654,893 tonnes ;

b) 2016 – 695,384 tonnes ;

c) 2017 – 711,860 tonnes ;

d) 2018 – 682,103 tonnes ;

e) 2019 – 625,296 tonnes.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne la partie (a)(ii) de la question, j’ai été informé qu'en raison de l'utilisation croissante du charbon pour la production d'électricité, un Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) a été mis en place sous le Ministère de l’Environnement en septembre 2007 pour examiner les moyens de gérer les cendres de charbon. Les recommandations du rapport ont été approuvées par le Gouvernement le 06 août 2010.

À la suite des recommandations du rapport du Technical Advisory Committee, le Ministère des Collectivité Locales qui était alors responsable de tous les sujets ayant trait aux déchets solides et dangereux, a, au mois de mai 2013, demandé aux cinq Independent Power Producteurs de gérer les cendres de charbon conformément aux recommandations du rapport, à savoir, les deux recommandations principales –

a) limiter l’application des cendres de charbon dans les champs de canne à sucre à un taux de 100 tonnes par hectare; et

b) appliquer une zone tampon d'au moins 200 mètres entre les sites de stockage et d'utilisation des cendres de charbon, et les cours d’eau incluant les forages.

J’ai été également informé que les rapports de surveillance environnementaux soumis régulièrement par les cinq Power Producers, ainsi bien que les suivis indépendants effectués par les officiers de la division de la Gestion des Déchets Solides de mon ministère, démontrent que l’élimination des cendres de charbon se fait conformément aux

M. le président, avec votre permission, je dépose les informations relatives à la partie (b) de la question concernant le EIA report.

**Mr Osman Mahomed:** I have two questions. The first one is, can I ask the hon. Minister - I know he says inspections and checks are done regularly - whether those checks and inspections are done randomly, because disposal in certain places like the sugarcane fields and all this, are done sometimes at very odd hours? You know, for people not to see. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether checks are done randomly and, whether as a consequence of this, there have been cases where surprisingly things are not done in conformity with what they are supposed to be doing in terms of tonnage per hectare and all these things?

**Mr Ramano:** Nous nous tenons aux deux conditions qui ont été imposées par le ministère des Collectivités Locales au mois de mai 2013, c’est-à-dire, que l’application des cendres dans les champs de canne à un taux de 100 tonnes par hectare. Donc, si l’honorable membre a des renseignements précis des cas où il y a violation de ces conditions, j’inviterai l’honorable membre de venir de l’avant et de nous donner des renseignements précis, bien sûr, les officiers de mon ministère prendront les mesures qui s’imposent, mais si non les checks qui sont effectués par les officiers de mon ministère, je peux dire que ces checks sont faits de façon régulière et jusqu’à présent nous sommes satisfaits qu’il y a *compliance* en ce qui concerne les conditions.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Mrs Tour!

**Mrs Tour:** B/104.

**Mr Speaker:** Who is replying to this Question? Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection, are you here?

**Mr Sawmynaden:** I am here. Present!

**Mr Speaker:** Answer!

**COVID-19 PANDEMIC – BASIC COMMODITIES – PRICE CONTROL**

(No. B/104) **Mrs J. Tour** (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the
basic commodities, he will state the measures taken to protect the rights of the consumers in relation to the control of the prices and supplies thereof amid the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Mr Sawmynaden: Mr Speaker, Sir, during the COVID-19 lockdown period, more than 1,600 complaints were received from consumers for the Hotline 185, the Citizens Support Portal and the Consumer Rights Mobile App, and by email against traders who resorted to unfair and abusive trade practices and profiteering.

No stone were left unturned to deal with these complaints and to ensure consumer protection as well as the supply of basic commodities. Officers of my Ministry have been on the frontline during the sanitary curfew in order to safeguard consumer rights by ensuring that prices are being duly affixed, prescribed prices are being compiled with and that there is adequate supply of essential commodities on the market as required under the various consumer protection legislation.

As at 04 June 2020, 7,016 trade premises have been visited and 2,723 contraventions have been established mainly for non-affixing of prices and selling above prescribed prices.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to also point out that, even before the first case of COVID-19 was reported in Mauritius, my Ministry brought face masks and hand sanitizers under price control with a maximum mark-up of 15% as from 20 June 2020, so as to make them affordable to the public at large.

Following massive complaints about the prices of onions and potatoes, my Ministry, after consultation with the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security, fixed the price for these two widely used products at Rs20 per half kg as per the prices had gone up to unacceptable levels.

Thirdly, following further representations about disproportionate prices for a number of other essential commodities, my Ministry further brought 12 additional widely used items under price control with effect from 25 April 2020. I am tabling a list thereof. Mr Speaker, Sir, so as to further protect the rights of consumers, the Consumer Protection (Price and Supplies Control) Act has been amended for the COVID-19 (Miscellaneous Provision) Act to enable the issue of fixed penalty notice to traders who contravene in law.

As regards supplies, whether for rice, flour, LPG or fuel, I maintain that there is no in short supply of any of these products. It is true that during the early days of the lockdown, there was panic buying and overconsumption which created a temporary artificial shortage,
particularly for LPG. However, adequate corrective measures were taken and the situation has been stabilised. I confirm that stocks levels are under control, overseas supplies are arriving as expected and both the supply distribution chain and retail are working satisfactorily.

Mrs Tour: Can the hon. Minister advise if the measures thereof are being envisaged post-curfew lockdown period?

Mr Sawmynaden: Yes, I can confirm to the hon. Member. Yes, the Consumer Affairs Unit is presently on the ground every day to check whether all these regulations that we have put in place are being well-maintained.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Tour! Next Question!

MARJOLAIN BRIDGE, CITE LA CURE – RECONSTRUCTION

(No. B/105) Mrs J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the proposed widening of the Marjolain Bridge in Cité la Cure by the National Development Unit, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for this question. First, let me point out that this has been a long-standing problem affecting the inhabitants of Cité La Cure, and thanks to the hon. Prime Minister who was also the Minister of Finance and Economic Development...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Hurreeram: … and responsible for the NDU in the various Governments, and who understood the urgency to resolve this issue that necessary funds were allocated to implement this project.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the project presently being implemented by the NDU is titled ‘Reconstruction of Marjolain Bridge and Construction of Drain at Marjolain Royal Road’.

The scope of works for the project comprises the following –

- Demolishing of the existing bridge deck and wall;
- Raising of the bridge deck by 1.3 metres from its original level;
- Cleaning of approximately 150 metres of the river;
- Construction of road side drains;
- Providing rock revetment along part of the river near the bridge;
- Reprofiling of about 70 metres of the road, and
- Relocation of the existing CWA, WMA and Telecom services.

As at present, all major works have already been completed and the bridge as well as the road have been opened to users as from 27 May 2020.

The only works that remain to be completed are the relocation of some services, namely, CWA pipes and WMA pipes which are minor pending issues which are not affecting users of the bridge and the road.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Tour! Next Question!

ATHLETE ASSISTANCE SCHEME – BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/106) Mrs J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the Athlete Assistance Scheme, he will –

(a) state the eligibility criteria for an elite athlete to benefit thereunder and
(b) give the list of the athletes eligible thereunder.

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, the Athlete Assistance Scheme is a result-oriented monthly financial package granted to an elite athlete who has recorded an outstanding performance at an international competition and who has the potential to improve his or her performance within a given period of time. I wish to point out that the financial assistance provided is not a salary. The exact quantum assistance within a category is determined by the importance of the medal won, results recorded, minima achieved, number of participating countries, number of participants, training requirements and ranking in accordance with technical criteria of the respective sports disciplines.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to highlight that this Scheme is a very transparent one and the conditions attached to it are publicly available on my Ministry’s Website, together with the list of beneficiaries. I am tabling for the benefit of the House the eligibility criteria and the general conditions set for an athlete to benefit from the above Scheme and a list of athletes who are benefiting thereof.
Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Tour!

Mrs Tour: Can the hon. Minister state whether there are athletes who don’t benefit from the Scheme anymore and, if so, why?

Mr Toussaint: Yes, indeed, Mr Speaker, Sir, the list is reviewed and for this period there are some six athletes who no more benefit from the Scheme as they have not been recommended by their respective federations. There are three athletes whose assistance have been withheld because of non-submission of the quarterly reports and we are still waiting for these quarterly reports so as to see if they can continue to benefit from the Scheme or not.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Mrs Tour: Can the hon. Minister advise if there will be a review of that list of Athlete Assistance Scheme in the future?

Mr Toussaint: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, as mentioned in the National Sports and Physical Activity Policy, il y a la possibilité de revoir le Scheme pour le rendre beaucoup plus dynamique et aussi pour le rendre beaucoup plus simple et facile pour nos athlètes.

Mr Speaker: Honourable Members, I have to inform you that Parliamentary Question No. B/120 has been withdrawn.

Time is over!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that all the business on today’s Order Paper be exempted from the provisions of paragraph (2) of Standing Order 10.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun) rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.