



SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 13 JULY 2021

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THE CABINET

(Formed by Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth)

Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth	Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity
Hon. Louis Steven Obeegadoo	Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism
Hon. Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun, GCSK	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology
Dr. the Hon. Mohammad Anwar Husnoo	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management
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Dr. the Hon. Renganaden Padayachy	Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development
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Hon. Kavydass Ramano	Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change
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Hon. Maneesh Gobin	Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security

Hon. Jean Christophe Stephan Toussaint	Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation
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Hon. Darsanand Balgobin	Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation
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Hon. Sudheer Maudhoo	Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping
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Hon. Avinash Teeluck	Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage
Hon. Teeruthraj Hurdoyal	Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms

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MAURITIUS

Seventh National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 24 of 2021

Sitting of Tuesday 13 July 2021

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

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Papers have been laid on the Table.

A. Prime Minister's Office**Ministry of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications****Ministry for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity**

The Certificate of Urgency in respect of the Social Contribution and Social Benefits Bill (No XII of 2021). (In Original)

B. Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development

The Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (Republic of Estonia) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 154 of 2021)

C. Attorney General**Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security**

The Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Botanic Garden Trust (Guides) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 152 of 2021)

D. Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training**Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection**

- (a) The Consumer Protection (Control of Sale of Imported Live Animals for Home Slaughter) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 153 of 2021)
- (b) The Consumer Protection (Price and Supplies Control) (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 3) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 155 of 2021)
- (c) The Consumer Protection (Consumer Goods) (Maximum Mark-Up) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 156 of 2021)
- (d) The Consumer Protection (Maximum Recommended Retail Price) (Code of Practice) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 157 of 2021)
- (e) The Consumer Protection (Maximum Price of Essential Goods) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 158 of 2021)
- (f) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 19) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 159 of 2021)

E. Ministry of Health and Wellness

The Public Health (Prohibition on Advertisement, Sponsorship and Restriction on Sale and Consumption in Public Places of Alcoholic Drinks) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 151 of 2021)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

PHARMACIES - MEDICINES - COST & QUALITY STANDARD

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Health & Wellness whether, in regard to the sale of medicines in pharmacies in Mauritius, he will state the actions taken to mitigate the rising costs thereof whilst maintaining quality standards, in the light of the Report of the Director of Audit published in February 2021 and the Market Study by the Competition Commission first published in September 2020, respectively.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, at the very outset, I wish to inform the House that the control of prices of medicines in Pharmacies is regulated by the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection.

With regard to maintaining quality standards, I wish to point out that according to the World Health Organisation (WHO), Quality Assurance is a wide-ranging concept covering all matters that individually or collectively influence the quality of a product.

Concerning Pharmaceuticals, Quality Assurance can be divided into major areas, including quality control, production and distribution. These three factors have been assessed in the case of procurement made during the sanitary curfew.

For each item procured, my Ministry ascertains that all manufacturers of medicines supplied are duly registered with the Indian Central Drugs Control Organisation (CDSCO), which is the National Regulatory Authority for Pharmaceutical Products in India.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in June 2020, I placed in the Library of the National Assembly a complete list of all manufacturers whose GMP (Good Manufacturing Practice) has been approved by the CDSCO of India. Allow me to point out that the GMP is a system aiming to ensure that medicines are constantly produced and controlled in accordance with quality standards applicable and covers all aspects of production.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the medicines we purchased were sourced from the Indian Market, which confirms that these medicines met all the quality criteria applicable.

In Mauritius, we have our own monitoring mechanism, which is the National Pharmacovigilance Committee. This Committee assesses all issues pertaining to the detection and the assessment of any adverse reaction to drugs. This Committee also ascertains the

therapeutic efficiency of the product. As at date, the Pharmacovigilance Committee has not flagged any concerns concerning the medicines supplied.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the Report of the Director of Audit on Pharmaceutical Products, the National Audit Office, in its summary of findings, highlighted that –

- (a) “The MOHW/Board displayed poor information management skills regarding medical products, people and establishments, which is mandated to regulate and license;”

However, I wish to point out that, with regard to persons working in pharmacies, each licensee, when not himself a pharmacist, should employ a pharmacist in accordance with the Pharmacy Act. Records of all licensees are available at the Pharmacy Board. All licensed pharmacies, in addition to the pharmacist, employ other persons as salespersons. There is no obligation for the Pharmacy to keep records of these persons. Section 18(1) and Section 18(9) of the Pharmacy Act allows Pharmacies to operate.

- (b) “The existing legal provisions to regulate all aspects of medical products were complex, fragmented, and in some cases outdated, resulting in regulatory gaps.”

Section 18(1) of the Pharmacy Act stipulates that no person shall operate a pharmacy unless (a) he holds a license, and (b) there is a pharmacist in charge of the pharmacy.

Section 18(9) of the same Act stipulates that no person in a pharmacy, other than a pharmacist, shall dispense a prescription, compound a medicine or sell a drug specified in the First and Sixth Schedules.

It follows that the database of persons handling dangerous drugs is the same as the database of pharmacists.”

- (c) “Several legal provisions were inadequately implemented, leading to compliance failures and restricted enforcement on behalf of the MOHW/Board.”
- (d) “Several regulatory controls were ineffective and they were not systematically implemented and monitored.”

In reply to these two observations, I wish to point out...

Mr X. L. Duval: The Minister here is reading the Report...

(Interruptions)

Shut up!

...of the Director of Audit! That is not what I asked him. I asked him what actions he has taken. He has taken no action! He should say no actions have been taken, full stop! The report is here; I have the report! All the hon. Members of the Assembly have the report. What is the use of the hon. Minister reading the Report?

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *To bizin ekouter!*

Mr X. L. Duval: What is the use of him reading the Report which has been tabled in the House, Mr Speaker, Sir?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Do you have anything else to add?

(Interruptions)

You have finished? Any question on this side? Any Leader of the Opposition? So, hon. Leader of the Opposition, you know very well; you have been an acting Prime Minister for this country for some time.

Mr X. L. Duval: Yes. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: You know I have no control over the reply of the hon. Minister.

Mr X. L. Duval: You only have control on me, Mr Speaker, Sir, not on him! This is not a right way to do it! You have Section 77, Mr Speaker, Sir, which you use very often, which gives you a very wide...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, Section 77 will not apply in this case because this is a clear-cut situation of separation of powers; the Legislative and the Executive.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am replying as per the PNQ...

Mr Nuckcheddy: On a point of order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard the Leader of the Opposition uttering the word ‘shut up’. May he please withdraw the word?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: He already withdrew the word.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am replying to the PNQ and I will give all the details as per the PNQ. I am especially going to give precise replies. At the same time, I am not going to make a Press Conference after the PNQ.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to these two observations, I wish to point out that registered wholesale pharmacies are authorised to import all drugs listed under the Dangerous Drugs Act. Although, as at now, there is no requirement for precursors to be registered, any person involved in the importation of precursors has to obtain a permit from my Ministry. My Ministry grants such permits based on a predetermined quota.

My Ministry, in collaboration with the MRA (Customs) is proposing...

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister is answering...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No, Leader of the Opposition, allow the hon. Minister to say whatever he has.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the question is what the Ministry has done.

My Ministry, in collaboration with the MRA – what is being done – is proposing amendments to be made to the Dangerous Drugs Act for an online platform for monitoring of precursors and dangerous drugs. These amendments will also make provision for licensing of importers for the precursors.

It is to be noted that both the Pharmacy Act and the Dangerous Drugs Act make it an offence for persons not duly licensed to dispense Dangerous Drugs or Pharmaceutical Products.

(e) “The integrity issues in regulatory processes were handled by the MOHW/Board in a soft and inadequate manner.”

This needs to have a precise answer. At the level of the Pharmacy Unit, there is a database of medical products which is available. Each medical product on every invoice is entered on the database whereby we can ascertain if the product is compliant.

The MOHW in collaboration with the MRA (Customs) and the Mauritius Networking Services has already developed a single window platform (in line with the TradeNet services whereby import permits are granted by the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection as part of the business facilitation strategy of the Government) where all importers will have to input data regarding type and quantity of product to be imported. This information was already imparted to the National Audit Office officers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in respect of the Report of the National Audit Office pertaining to the COVID-19 related expenditure, I wish to highlight the following facts –

- (i) the COVID-19 pandemic was and still is a unique and unprecedented phenomenon which not only disrupted economies but also threatened the very existence of the normal social fabric;
- (ii) international borders were closed, supply chains were disrupted, industries were closed down due to unavailability of raw materials or manpower;
- (iii) several countries, particularly the developed ones, started a panic buying spree for hoarding medical supplies and equipment;
- (iv) countries where there is mass production of medical supplies such as China, India, put embargo on the export of these materials.

My Ministry had already started working on a preparedness plan well before the announcement of the pandemic by the WHO. As part of this preparedness plan, my Ministry started procuring materials and equipment that would eventually be required in case there was an outbreak in Mauritius.

Several procurement exercises were initiated and orders were placed on several suppliers. Unfortunately, many suppliers defaulted due to the non-availability of the products or unavailability of transportation means. I have to repeat it, unfortunately, many suppliers defaulted due to non-availability of the products or unavailability of transportation means.

Following the first cases of local cases of COVID-19 and the lockdown as from 20 March 2020, the situation worsened. Officers of my Ministry continued to provide their services in order to ensure, amongst others, that –

- (i) frontliners had adequate protective equipment and materials;
- (ii) health services had a regular supply of medicines and other medical supplies;
- (iii) information and feedback was provided to the High-Level Committee on COVID-19 set up under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister to take timely policy decisions in order to contain the spread of the disease in our Republic.

In these circumstances, my Ministry followed the procedures laid down in Section 21 of the Public Procurement Act and Directive 44 of the Public Procurement Office. It was a survival momentum.

Section 21 of the PPO Directive 44 issued by the PPO provides guidance for emergency situations in normal urgent circumstances. It is worth noting that Directive 44 was issued on 19 March 2020, that is, before the announcement of the lockdown. There has been no directive or other guidelines issued after the lockdown for procurement in a lockdown period.

Since the very beginning, a Committee comprising Consultant in charge of various specialities was set up under the chairmanship of the Director Health Services responsible...

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a total mockery that the hon. Minister is...

Mr Speaker: Do you have much to...

Mr X. L. Duval: ...in fact the...

Mr Speaker: Just wait, just wait; wait a minute.

Mr X. L. Duval: The hon. Minister is continuing and I am withdrawing the question.

Mr Speaker: Wait a minute! Please!

Mr X. L. Duval: There is no point. I am withdrawing the question.

(Interruptions)

I am withdrawing the question.

Mr Speaker: I have no control either.

(Interruptions)

Next! Prime Minister's Question Time!

RED ZONES - SPECIAL WAP - APPLICATIONS

(No. B/640) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) 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 special Work Access Permit for Red Zones, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of applications received therefor, indicating the –

- (a) number thereof issued, and
- (b) criteria applicable for the issue thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, since 2020, the world has been struck by the COVID-19 virus, sparing no single country. Millions of persons have lost their lives as a consequence of the pandemic which is still present. Countries around the world have left no stone unturned to fight this deadly and invisible virus.

As the House is aware, as soon as the first case of COVID-19 was detected in Mauritius on Wednesday 18 March 2020, a sanitary confinement was imposed as from Sunday 22 March 2020, by virtue of Regulation 14(1) of the Prevention and Mitigation of Infectious Disease (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020.

The Curfew Order, *inter alia*, provided that no person shall remain outdoors as from 20.00 hours on Monday 23 March 2020 to Tuesday 02 April 2020 at 20.00 hours, with the exception of the following classes of persons, for the purpose of leaving their place of residence to proceed to their place of work and back –

- (a) Judicial Officers in respect of such minimum judicial services as the Chief Justice deems essential, and such employees of the public sector, including Ministries and Government Department, public enterprises and statutory bodies, providing essential services to the public as may be designated by the Head of the public bodies concerned, and
- (b) employees of the private sector providing strictly essential minimum services.

Subsequent Curfew Orders were issued to extend the curfew period. The Orders issued also provided for the Commissioner of Police to issue permits, commonly known as Work Access Permits, to persons on such terms and conditions as he may impose, where he is satisfied that the presence of such persons at their place of work is essential for the provision of minimum services. The objective of issuing the permits was to enable employees to attend their respective sites of work to carry out essential economic activities to ensure that the population at large obtains the minimum services and basic necessities such as food, utilities, and medical services, to enable them to sustain their livelihood during the confinement period.

The Prevention and Mitigation of Infectious Disease (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020 were amended on 26 April 2020 to also allow movement of –

- (a) a person who has to avail himself of medical treatment, or procure essential supplies, food stuff, medicines or any other item essential for his or his family's subsistence or livelihood;
- (b) a Judge or Magistrate for the purpose of attending Court;
- (c) a Barrister or an Attorney whose services have been retained by a person to attend a Police Station, place of detention or Court;
- (d) a Medical Practitioner for the purpose of attending a hospital, private medical institution or patient in need of urgent medical care;
- (e) a Pharmacist for the purpose of attending his place of work.

An online platform 'besafemoris.mu' was developed in collaboration with Mauritius Telecom and the Mauritius Police Force for the receipt of applications from public, private sectors, and private individuals, and for the issue of WAPS to them with a view to enabling them to travel from their place of residence to their place of work and back. The national confinement period lasted up to Monday 01 June 2020, and, thereafter, we resumed a relatively normal living, the new normal, with strict sanitary protocols still in place.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is also aware, on Tuesday 09 March 2021, a Temporary Restrictions of Movement Order was issued by virtue of Section 3(1) (b) of the Quarantine Act 2020, following detection of new COVID-19 cases locally, preventing persons from remaining outdoors in Mauritius as from 06.00 hours on Wednesday 10 March 2021 to 20.00 hours on Thursday 25 March 2021, except for -

- (a) employees of the public and private sector organisations providing essential services;
- (b) employees of the Disciplined Forces;
- (c) a person who has to avail himself of medical treatment or procure medicine or any other item essential for his or his family's subsistence or livelihood;
- (d) a Judge or Magistrate for the purpose of attending Court (in respect of minimum judicial services as the Chief Justice deems essential), and employees of Courts as may be designated by the Chief Justice;
- (e) a Barrister or an Attorney whose services have been retained by a person to attend a Police Station, place of detention or Court;
- (f) a Medical Practitioner for the purpose of attending a hospital, private medical institution or patient in need of urgent medical care;
- (g) a Pharmacist and his employees for the purpose of attending their place of work, and
- (h) employees of quarantine facilities, petrol service stations, port and airport and related businesses, cleaning and scavenging services and security services.

Thus, the website 'besafemoris.mu' was reactivated on Wednesday 10 March 2021 where applications for WAP could be submitted online. The Mauritius Police Force issued two Communiqués, dated Wednesday 10 and Thursday 11 March 2021, to inform the public of the procedures for the application of WAP.

Mr Speaker, Sir, during the second wave of the pandemic, certain clusters were identified where several persons were tested positive for COVID-19 in one specific geographical area. In order to contain the spread of the virus, the geographical area in and around the towns and villages situated within the Constituencies No. 15 of La Caverne and Phoenix, No. 16 of Vacoas and Floréal and No. 17 of Curepipe and Midlands, were declared as 'Red Zones' on Thursday 11 March 2021 in accordance with Government Notice No. 471 of 2021.

A Red Zone is a geographically demarcated area where incidence of cases of a contagious disease is high.

To allow certain classes of persons to enter and leave 'Red Zones', the issue of a special WAP was implemented, and these persons were eligible to apply for a special WAP through the 'besafemoris.mu' platform provided they were holders of a normal WAP and their trades or services were within the sectors predefined in accordance with the Communiqués of the Mauritius Police Force. A strict minimum of special WAP was issued and internal arrangements were made regarding many services.

As at date, clusters other than those I have mentioned were identified and declared as 'Red Zones' while some regions, previously in the Red Zone, were no longer classified as 'Red Zones' as the situation improved, and they no longer met the criteria for the 'Red Zones' and that all the tests carried out for the inhabitants after 14 days of the confinement, were negative.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, I am informed that out of 104,974 applications, 59,457 special WAPs and 3 special permits were granted.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the criteria used for the issue of special WAPs are –

- (a) for Public Officers residing in Red Zones and working outside the Red Zones who are working in essential services or performing vital and strategic activities and those residing outside the Red Zones and working in Red Zones who are engaged in essential services or performing vital and strategic activities, as approved by their Supervising Officers; and
- (b) for Private Sector employees residing within and outside Red Zones performing vital and strategic activities in an organisation as defined by the Police Communiqué of Wednesday 10 and Thursday 11 March 2021.

A Validation Committee was set up at the level of my Office comprising, amongst others, representatives of the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, of the Mauritius Police Force, and representatives of the Private Sector for validation of applications.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I must remind the House and the population that the fight against COVID-19 is not over. Presently, there are specific and localised areas which are still under Red Zone restrictions and they are strictly monitored by the Mauritius Police Force. To date, 25,100 contraventions have been established in breach of specific Regulations.

To contain the spread of the pandemic, we have embarked on a nationwide vaccination campaign which started on Monday 08 March 2021, and which aims at vaccinating 60% of our adult population by September 2021. We have been able to procure enough vaccines to that effect, and, to date, 600,000 people have had their first dose.

I am, therefore, urging the population to strictly adhere to the sanitary protocols in place in order to avoid the spread of COVID-19, and I appeal to all those who have not yet been vaccinated to avail themselves of the national vaccination programme which is being deployed all around the island.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we cannot afford to shut down our country for socio-economic reasons. With the positive outcome of the vaccination programme, my Government has opened up certain activities and allowed free movement of people as from Thursday 01 July 2021, subject to sanitary protocol being observed. As from Thursday 15 July 2021, we are also opening our borders under strict conditions, and, as from October 2021, foreigners will be able to come to Mauritius under certain conditions which are presently being finalised.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I seize this opportunity to thank our frontliners for their remarkable work and all those people who are strictly adhering to the sanitary measures put in place for their safety. Unfortunately, there are some irresponsible people, who by flouting those measures are putting their lives and those of our citizens at risk. In fact, we are witnessing an increase in positive cases daily because they have not been adhering to protocol put in place. I make a pressing appeal for understanding, responsibility and solidarity to prevail at all levels. Let us act as true patriots in our collective interest and the interest of our children and future generations.

Thank you.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, my question is very specific. It relates to special Work Access Permit for Red Zone. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister if consideration will be given for granting special Work Access Permit for the Red Zone for people who are going to transport cattle and slaughter cattle for the Qurbani which is going to be held next week?

The Prime Minister: We are already looking into that, and there are a few factors that we have to take into consideration mainly that we do not want people to expose themselves because the risks of contamination are great in the Red Zone. We already have a number of positive cases. We shall obviously see whether, through massive screening that is being done, we are going to have other cases, but, if not, we have to take the matter into

consideration. We have indeed to take into consideration the kind of protocol under which we are going to allow people to go and place an order - some of them need to place an order - to buy the cattle; and under what conditions the cattle has to be eventually transported at the time when it is required to be transported from what we call the feedlot, if I can say so, to the place where the cattle is going to be slaughtered. This is being looked into. I can assure the hon. Member that we are actually working on the different conditions that will be imposed to allow those who have bought their cattle to perform their religious rites on the very day they bought it.

Mr Uteem: In my Constituency, there was a region which was decreed Red Zone, and we have seen all the practical problems which inhabitants suffer when there is a Red Zone. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister, being given he is also the Head of the High Powered Committee, to consider giving sufficient warning, sufficient time to residents of Red Zones so that they can do whatever urgent business they have to do before they are completely locked down in that Red Zone?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, when we detect a number of cases of people who are contaminated and when all the criteria that have been laid down, although they are flexible criteria, warrant that we take a decision to impose a Red Zone in a region, we cannot wait. We cannot allow the virus and give it time to spread any further, and that is the reason why, first of all, we must act immediately and fast. And I see that the object of acting fast is going to be defeated if we tell people: 'look, this region is now going to be a Red Zone in the future, and we give them time'. Then, there is obviously going to be more movement of people which the very purpose of declaring a Red Zone tries to restrict as much as possible so that the risk is limited. I am very sorry that we do not have the same reasoning, and we differ, at least on this issue.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Juman!

Mr Juman: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My question has already been answered by the hon. Prime Minister. I want to thank the hon. Prime Minister for giving due consideration for the continuation of special Work Access Permit for the transportation of cattle.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

The Prime Minister: I said it is being worked out. I must add that we are looking at it favourably.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is the same issue that I want to address. Again, the question is being addressed and we thank the hon. Prime Minister for his reply because there is so much apprehension on this issue. My request to the hon. Prime Minister is to at least allow 2 to 3 days on whatever decisions are taken so that people can take necessary measures and precautions to celebrate this festival. My request to the hon. Prime Minister is if we can communicate this at least 2 to 3 days before the festival. Thank you.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, what we are doing now is to gather all the information with regard to the people who are concerned so that we can see what arrangements can be made for these people because, I know, for example, that in the Red Zones of Plaine Verte and Cité Martial...

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: ...and also Vallée des Prêtres, which are mainly concerned, there are these people. We are getting all the data with regard to those people, and, as I said, we are working on the arrangements that can be made to ensure safety, not only for them but for everybody else. But I also appeal to the collaboration, the cooperation, and the understanding of people. We cannot be doing what has been done in the past where so many people gather whenever the animal is being brought to a place, and I also rely on the hon. Members to sensitise people in their Constituencies so that we take maximum precaution.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Tour, last question!

Mrs Tour: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister state the reason why residents of Chitrakoot have to apply for a permit although they are not in a Red Zone?

The Prime Minister: This is because of a practical problem. In fact, when cases were detected, they were mainly in the lower part of Vallée des Prêtres. Of course, we declared that part to be a Red Zone, but the problem is that there is only one road that leads to Chitrakoot. So, people from Chitrakoot would have to take that road in order to move out or to go wherever they need to go. That is the reason why they had to apply for a Work Access Permit., which has been granted, I am aware, but the condition is that they cannot stop in the Red Zone. They just have to move on, and that is why they have to apply for WAP. There is no other way to go out or to move around Vallée des Prêtres.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Lobine!

FOREIGNERS - MAURITIUS - OVERSTAY

(No. B/641) Mr K. Lobine (First 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 foreigners overstaying in Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Passport and Immigration Office, information as to the number thereof, indicating the actions taken for the tracing thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Passport and Immigration Office that entry of foreigners in Mauritius is permitted pursuant to relevant provisions of the Immigration Act, the Passports Act and the Passports Regulations. Foreigners are thus permitted to enter the country on the strength of residence permits, of occupation permits, or of visas issued to them.

According to records kept at the Passport and Immigration Office, the number of foreigners who are overstaying in Mauritius is as follows -

- (i) 585 foreigners, whose tourist/business visas have expired, and
- (ii) 2,294 missing expatriate workers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards the second part of the question, I am further informed by the Passport and Immigration Office that the following actions are being taken to trace overstaying foreigners -

- (a) a dedicated team of officers, known as the Tracing and Tracking Team, mounts crack down operations as and when required, at different places simultaneously. To conduct these operations, the Passport and Immigration Office is supported by various units and branches of the Police Force such as the Special Supporting Unit, Emergency Response Service, the Field Intelligence Office, the Central Investigation Division and the *Groupement D'intervention de la Police Mauricienne*; and
- (b) the Intelligence Cell of the Passport and Immigration Office carries out necessary verification with a view to confirming the information provided by foreigners on their disembarkation cards. The Cell peruses the disembarkation cards and verifies the information given by foreigners on their arrival, tracks

the movement of irregular visitors and assists the Tracing and Tracking Team to conduct crack down operations.

Appropriate actions are then taken to arrest and repatriate the concerned foreigners.

Mr Speaker, Sir, foreigners, who have stayed illegally in the country, are served with a notification of illegal stay while leaving the country and they are informed that they should not undertake any travel to Mauritius without prior authority from the Passport and Immigration Office. Their names are added to the Controversial list of the Passport and Immigration Office.

Mr Lobine: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Prime Minister provide information as to the time frame that those 2,294 missing workers are in Mauritius and have not yet been tracked?

The Prime Minister: Time frame?

Mr Lobine: The years or months these people are just roaming around in Mauritius.

The Prime Minister: I shall have to ask the Police to compile that information and I can then provide it to the House.

Mr Lobine: The hon. Prime Minister can table it.

The Prime Minister: Yes.

Mr Lobine: Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that there are organised groups that are using and exploiting those illegal workers in Mauritius to the detriment of Mauritian workers, especially those who want to meet both ends, doing some part-time jobs? Those people are being exploited by those organised groups. Is the hon. Prime Minister aware of that situation?

The Prime Minister: In fact, I answered a PNQ of the hon. Leader of Opposition wherein I did mention that there are some cases where there are unscrupulous employers who have taken advantage of the situation to employ some of those expatriate workers, without the proper permits and without abiding by the law. Unfortunately, we have had a few such cases. In fact, I must say we have had a few cases of such workers who have been sent back to their country. But, of course, we need to keep on tracking them, and we need to take action against those employers also.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. In his reply, the hon. Prime Minister mentioned that there are 585 tourists, with tourist visas, who have overstayed in the country. Can the hon. Prime Minister state which nationality has most overstayed?

The Prime Minister: I see a breakdown of foreigners whose tourist visas have expired. I must say there are a few nationalities. There are actually 208 Nigerians; 110 from Madagascar; Indian also, 83; Ghanaian, 33, and others also.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Lobine!

Mr Lobine: Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that the Tracking Team at the Passport and Immigration Office is not properly manned? In fact, there are only some 10 to 15 officers, which is not sufficient to track down all those illegal workers in Mauritius. What remedial measures will be taken at the level of the Office of the Commissioner of Police to beef up that Tracking Unit at the Passport and Immigration Office?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, if you look at the Tracing and Tracking Team itself, as the hon. Member says, it is, of course, manned by so many Officers. But the Police team engaged in tracing and tracking to try to catch those people who are illegally staying is not restricted to only those Officers. I did mention in my answer that there is the collaboration of different other units which assist them in those operations. I have mentioned the Special Supporting Unit, the Emergency Response Service, the Central Investigation Division, and there are other Officers who also form part of the team. But, first of all, what this Tracing and Tracking Team does is to get all information with a view of locating the person who is illegally staying, and, then, they do mount operations depending, of course, on each case; how many people they will require, from which unit, and the support of the Commissioner of Police is readily available in the carrying out of the such operations.

Mr Speaker: Time is over!

The Table has been advised that PQs B/643, B/644, B/645, addressed to the hon. Prime Minister have been withdrawn.

Hon. Members, the Table has been also advised that PQ B/680 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms.

PQ B/689 will be replied by the hon. Deputy Prime Minister.

PQs B/658, B/698, B/699, B/700 and B/701 have been withdrawn.

ANNOUNCEMENT

VICE-PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF EDUCATION, TERTIARY EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY - PQS

Hon. Members, I have to inform the House that the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology has informed me that she has to attend to a Court case before the Supreme Court this afternoon. She has made a request for her questions to be taken out of turn and I have accepted to her request.

I invite hon. Members to be brief in their Supplementary Questions. Moreover, I will, as far as possible, restrict Supplementary Questions to the mover of the question.

Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

GRADE 10 STUDENTS - PROMOTION - CRITERIA

(No. B/646) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the private and state secondary schools, she will state the criteria established for the promotion of students to Grade 10 thereat.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, the criteria for the obtention of a National Certificate of Education are as follows –

- 1) Numerical grade 6 in six core subjects including English, French and Mathematics in at least intermediate level in two non-core subjects, or
- 2) Numerical grade 6 in seven core subjects including English, French and Mathematics in at least intermediate level in one non-core subject, or
- 3) Numerical grade 6 in eight core subjects including English, French and Mathematics.

Schools have been informed of same by way of a Circular in 2020.

Mr Speaker, Sir, however, the criteria applied for the promotion to Grade 10 for students who sat for the NCE assessment this year is at least numerical grade 6 in six subjects, including English.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I also wish to inform the House, that exceptionally for this year, students who were in quarantine or treatment centres and were unable to take the NCE assessment in 2020-2021 have been promoted to Grade 10.

Dr. Gungapersad: Hon. Minister, how many students who have been promoted to Grade 10 after this change in the criteria of promotion whereby the students without that numerical grade 6 in French or Mathematics have been able to be promoted in Grade 10?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not have this figure but all students having obtained a numerical grade 6 in French and Mathematics have been able to move on to Grade 10.

Dr. Gungapersad: Hon. Minister, I have a case here of a student of Petit Raffray, who goes to an SSS in Goodlands, who is from the extended stream, who has been successful in the NCE. She has been seeking a seat in Grade 10 and she has been refused same by the PSEA and by the Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology, and she cannot be promoted to Grade 10 in the school where she is admitted currently as an extended stream student. Will you look into the matter because this child has made a lot effort in order to succeed her exam?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know what are the results of this student because when we set a criteria, the criteria applies to all students.

Dr. Gungapersad: The child fully respects the criteria laid on.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

An hon. Member: *Don detail la!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You have another supplementary?

NCE EXAMINATIONS - VACANT SEATS

(No. B/647) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the National Certificate of Education Examinations, she will state the number of seats vacant in regional schools after the admission of students in Grade 10 in the twelve Academies.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that as at 21 June 2021, out of 2,160 seats allocated at Grade 10 in the twelve Academies, 1,935 have been filled. Consequently, there are 1,935 vacant seats in regional secondary schools.

Dr. Gungapersad: Is the hon. Minister aware that in a few regional secondary schools, at least 50 to 60 students have been transferred to Academies, leaving behind vacant seats. Will the Ministry be contemplating the idea of filling these vacant seats?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, research has shown that the smaller the class size, the greater the teaching and learning effectiveness. So, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are planning to move on to smaller class sizes with a better and enhanced teacher-pupil ratio and this is why, we do not intend to fill up these seats.

Dr. Gungapersad: Lateral transfer is in our culture, hon. Minister, and the schools where we have these 50 or 60 vacant seats are high-demand regional secondary schools and I do not think if we fill the vacant seats, we are going to have a decline in quality of education there.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the very spirit of the reform is that all schools graduate to schools of excellence. So, I think that when a school has prepared the student and the student has got good results, it is not fair to allow the students to move out of the school to another school. What we intend to do is to ensure that all schools manage to grow and become high-demand schools and not feed only few high-demand schools.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

NATIONAL E-LEARNING PLATFORM

(No. B/648) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand’Baie & Poudre d’Or) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the proposed creation of a National e-Learning Platform to connect educators of secondary schools with the students, as announced in the Budget 2020-2021, she will state where matters stand.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, an e-Learning Platform is a tool that creates an interactive and virtual system for teaching and learning. It

allows the creation of educational contents and permits interaction between students and educators. Presently, the e-learning is being carried out on two fronts.

Firstly, low secondary students, Grade 7-9, have access to educational resources available within the student support portal that has been set up by my Ministry in collaboration with the National Council of Educational Research and Training of India. The student support portal is a comprehensive resource that is comparable to India's *ePathshala* Platform that enables students to learn at their own pace and place.

Secondly, classes are conducted online for upper secondary students, Grade 10-13, using Microsoft teams. About 40,000 students and 8,500 educators have been provided with log-ins for Microsoft teams for educators to connect online with their students to ensure continuity in learning during the confinement.

To enable this endeavour to be sustained, my Ministry has renewed and upgraded some 100,000 Microsoft licenses with more features that are available under the Office 365 Ecosystem. This modular and flexible platform is a comprehensive cloud based solution that can be installed in any of the devices that educators and students own and can then be used both in schools and at home.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to inform the House that the National e-Learning Platform is also on the way. All the features I have mentioned will become an integral part of that platform which will be further enhanced phase wise, allowing monitoring of the virtual classes as well as assessments.

The e-learning transition is being reinforced with the advent of the pilot project known as the virtual classroom, which will be implemented in Grade 7 in the first instance to support blended mode of teaching and learning and internet connectivity will be enhanced in these schools.

Dr. Gungapersad: Can the hon. Minister confirm whether we are ready to switch to online teaching - she referred to *e-Pathshala* in India - and learning, in case schools have to be closed down at any point in time for one reason or the other?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is presently being done. In fact, I have just mentioned that we already have 40,000 students who have got logins and 8500 educators who have also got logins and online classes can be held using Microsoft Teams and a number of other links also through Zoom and other facilities.

Dr. Gungapersad: Regarding primary school students, hon. Minister, you know like me that tablets are kept at school...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Address the Chair! Not 'You Minister', address the Chair!

Dr. Gungapersad: Okay! Mr Speaker, Sir, the tablets are kept at school, instead of allowing those students to take the tablets home. Because we are talking of online education, will the hon. Minister consider allowing students to take these tablets home?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: This is not the policy of the Ministry, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell, your question! No. Hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha! No. So, we move on to hon. Ameer Meea.

BETAMAX LTD – PRIVY COUNCIL CASE – COSTS

(No. B/650) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to Betamax Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to the costs incurred in relation to the Privy Council case, giving details thereof.

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to a Private Notice Question at our Sitting of 17 June 2021 on the subject.

On 15 June 2021, the State Trading Corporation (STC) received a legal claim for a sum of around Rs5.68 billion representing damages, legal and arbitration costs incurred before the Singapore International Arbitration Centre and interest. However, this amount excludes the legal costs associated with the Hearing of the review before the Supreme Court of Mauritius and the appeal before the Privy Council, which are not yet known.

I am informed by the STC that payment to Betamax Ltd. has been effected on 22 June this year.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, am I to understand that the claims for the case at the Privy Council and in the Supreme Court of Mauritius have not yet been received by the Ministry and not yet been paid?

Mr Callichurn: This is what I have been informed, Mr Speaker, Sir. Yes, indeed, we have not received any claim as such as to date.

Mr Ameer Meea: I mean claims from Betamax.

Mr Callichurn: Yes, in terms of legal costs.

Mr Ameer Meea: Does the hon. Minister have the figures for the legal costs, what the State has incurred for the Privy Council? I mean all the associated costs, travelling to the Privy Council and paying the Council there in U.K.

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just answered. We are still awaiting the costs incurred at the Supreme Court and for the appeal before the Privy Council.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: I understand the hon. Minister saying that the costs are still being taxed. So, that will be the cost which Betamax will have to pay *in toto*. The question of hon. Ameer Meea is very specific. As at today, STC has paid its own lawyers. So, you don't need to wait for the Privy Council to give you a taxed cost to be able to tell the House today how much money has the STC paid to its own lawyers for arbitration, Supreme Court and Privy Council. So, this is the question.

Mr Callichurn: But, unfortunately I do not have the information requested for at the moment. I shall undertake to table same.

Mr Speaker: You already replied to the question? I would give hon. Dr. Gungapersad his last question.

CENTRALIZED DIGITAL LAND BANK OF STATE & PRIVATE AGRICULTURAL LAND

(No. B/649) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the setting up of a Centralized Digital Land Bank of State and Private Agricultural Land, as announced in the Budget 2020-2021, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Landscape (Mauritius) Ltd, information as to where matters stand.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, la création d'une *Centralised Digital Land Bank*, sous l'égide de *Landscape (Mauritius) Ltd*, pour répertorier les terres agricoles gouvernementales et privées a été annoncée dans le Discours du Budget 2020-2021.

Cette initiative s'intègre dans le cadre du *National Agri-Food Development Programme* du Gouvernement.

Au mois de septembre 2020, *Landscape (Mauritius) Ltd* a nommé un Consultant pour développer un *Electronic Data Management System (EDMS)* pour gérer la *Land Bank*.

Le système a été achevé et est opérationnel depuis le 2 février 2021.

Il est conçu pour afficher graphiquement chaque parcelle de terre de la *Land Bank*.

Il rend également compte des détails de chaque parcelle de terre, y compris les informations obtenues concernant les caractéristiques du sol, la pluviométrie moyenne et l'aptitude de la terre à des cultures spécifiques.

Depuis le début du projet, *Landscape (Mauritius) Ltd* a travaillé en étroite collaboration avec le ministère de l'Agro-industrie et de la Sécurité alimentaire, la *Mauritius Cane Industry Authority (MCIA)*, le *Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (FAREI)* et le *Sugar Insurance Fund Board (SIFB)* pour identifier les terres agricoles gouvernementales et privées susceptibles d'être intégrées dans la *Land Bank*.

Un premier ensemble de 161 lots de terrains agricoles de l'État totalisant une superficie de quelque 321 arpents a été identifié.

Les lots de terrain ont été loués à *Landscape (Mauritius) Ltd* par le ministère de l'Agro-industrie et de la Sécurité alimentaire le 18 janvier 2021 pour une période initiale de 10 ans.

70 de ces lots pour une superficie totale de 139 arpents sont situés dans le district de Plaines Wilhems.

77 autres lots pour une superficie totale de 153 arpents sont situés dans le district de Moka.

Il y a également 14 lots de terrain pour une superficie totale de 28,51 arpents dans le district de Grand Port.

La première phase de la *Land Bank* a été officiellement lancée le mardi 2 février 2021. A partir de cette date, toute personne souhaitant soumettre une demande de location d'une parcelle disponible de la banque foncière pour la culture devait le faire en ligne via l'*Electronic Data Management System (EDMS)* développé pour la *Land Bank*.

Landscape (Mauritius) Ltd sous-louera les terres aux petits planteurs pour une période initiale n'excédant pas 10 ans et le loyer annuel a été fixé à un montant nominal de R 5,000 par an.

Au 22 février 2021, un total de 1,016 demandes a été reçu pour les 161 parcelles de terrain.

M. le président, un comité d'évaluation indépendant a été mis en place pour évaluer les demandes reçues. Ce comité est composé de -

- (a) deux représentants du Ministère de l'Agro-industrie et de la Sécurité alimentaire ;
- (b) un représentant du ministère des Finances, de la planification économique et du développement ;
- (c) un représentant de la *Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd* ;
- (d) un représentant de la *Landscape (Mauritius) Ltd*, et
- (e) une personne indépendante ayant de solides connaissances en agriculture.

Le comité a tenu plusieurs réunions. Ses travaux ont toutefois été ralentis par le confinement national imposé pour lutter contre la pandémie de la Covid-19.

A ce jour, un premier lot de 17 demandeurs a été recommandé et une lettre d'intention a été délivrée en conséquence par *Landscape (Mauritius) Ltd* à chaque candidat.

J'ai été informé qu'un deuxième lot de terres agricoles d'État d'une superficie totale de 175 arpents sera loué à *Landscape (Mauritius) Ltd* en juillet 2021 pour être sous-loué à des petits planteurs.

Dans la deuxième phase du projet de la *Land Bank*, *Landscape (Mauritius) Ltd* lancera un appel à manifestation d'intérêt pour rechercher des propriétaires privés intéressés à louer des terres à *Landscape* pour une période de 10 ans.

Ces parcelles supplémentaires seront incorporées dans la *Land Bank* pour être sous-louées aux planteurs.

Dr. Gungapersad: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister inform the House how many acres of private agricultural lands have been acquired so far by the *Landscape (Mauritius) Ltd* with the support of SIC?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, je n'ai pas ces informations concernant les terres, les terrains privés, je vais demander les informations auprès de *Landscape* et je déposerai à la Chambre.

Dr. Gungapersad: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister tell us what incentives will be given to these small planters because they face a lot of problems regarding access to the land, quality of land, theft, etc.?

Dr. Padayachy: Ce projet a été mis en place, M. le président, pour essayer d'aider les petits planteurs, d'où une tarification peu élevée concernant la location de ces terres. Nous sommes en train de travailler avec le ministère de l'Agriculture et aussi avec d'autres ministères pour voir comment aider encore plus les petits planteurs mais ce n'est pas que pour ceux qui vont bénéficier de ces terres avec la *Land Bank*.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Ramful: On the criteria that have been laid down for the beneficiaries of the land, are they going to be on a first-come first-served basis, how is it going to be distributed?

Dr. Padayachy: Il y a un comité indépendant qui a été mis en place, j'ai déjà donné la liste des participants. Ils travaillent dessus, en général ce n'est pas *first-come first-served*, c'est une série de critères qui est établie et je déposerai à la Chambre cette série de critères pour l'évaluation.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan you lifted your hand?

Mr Bhagwan: I am waiting for you. Thank you. Est-ce-que je peux demander à l'honorable ministre qui peut nous dire, au niveau du *Board de Landscape*, au moment où ce premier *batch* a été approuvé, la composition du *Board*, qui sont les membres du *Board* qui ont siégé à ce comité pour donner l'*approval* de ce premier *batch*?

Dr. Padayachy : M. le président, c'est du domaine publique la composition de ce *Board* mais je le ferai déposer par plaisir à l'honorable membre la composition de ce *Board*. Je ne l'ai pas avec moi là pour tous les membres, donc je crois que j'avais déjà déposé mais ce n'est pas un problème, on va déposer...

Mr Bhagwan: At the time it has approved?

Dr. Padayachy: *Oui!* At the time, it has approved *la composition*.

Mr Speaker: Last question!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, Sir. Am I to understand that this responsibility has been entrusted to Landscape because the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security has not been able to live up to the expectation of planters?

Dr. Padayachy: Non! M. le président, c'est un projet qui a été travaillé avec *Landscape* pendant la préparation du budget 2020-2021 et surtout avec le ministère de l'Agriculture. Donc, on a mis en place un *Land Bank* au niveau de *Landscape* pour pouvoir diffuser. C'est le travail de cet institution de travailler avec les petits planteurs, ce n'est pas du tout par rapport au commentaire qu'a fait l'ancien Leader de l'opposition. Merci.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs B/690, B/695 and B/696 have been withdrawn!

We move to the next question! Hon. Ameer Meea!

**COVID-19 SOLIDARITY FUND - MOGAS & GAS OIL – FUNDS
COLLECTED**

(No. B/651) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection, whether, in regard to Mogas and Gas Oil, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to the total quantum of funds collected on the retail price thereof and contributed to the COVID-19 Solidarity Fund since November 2020 to date, indicating till when money will be collected on the retail price thereof and contributed to the said fund?

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the State Trading Corporation (STC) that the total quantum of funds collected on the retail price of Mogas and Gas Oil and contributed to the COVID-19 Solidarity Fund since November 2020 to date is Rs527,842,920 for both Mogas and Gas Oil.

The item - Contribution to the COVID-19 Solidarity Fund - of Rs4 per litre was introduced in April 2020 in the price structure of Mogas and Gas Oil in order to meet expenses in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic. This quantum was subsequently reduced to Rs1 per litre in December 2020.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards the last part of the question, I wish to remind the hon. Member that Mauritius is still COVID-19 affected and the question of till when the amount collected on this item will be contributed to the COVID-19 Solidarity Fund remains a policy decision for Government to take at the appropriate time in the light of the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir. This COVID-19 Solidarity Fund was introduced last year and Mogas and Gas Oil were taxed to finance this fund, if I can say like this and it was introduced in April and then reduced in December but recently, Government introduced Rs2 per litre plus VAT again on Mogas and Gas Oil, so, therefore, can I ask the hon. Minister, in order to reduce the burden on consumers does he think that it is right to say that we have to remove the tax that has been imposed last year to finance the Solidarity Fund?

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, this tax was the result of a policy decision of the Government and I cannot question same. So, I leave it to the appreciation of the hon. Member.

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister at least tell us, out of these millions of rupees transferred from STC to the COVID-19 Solidarity Fund, what has been the amount of money spent last year by the COVID-19 Solidarity Fund, out of these millions that have been transferred to it?

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, if the hon. Member comes with a specific question and address to the Minister concerned, I am sure the answer will be given.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

MINISTRIES & GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS - OFFICE SPACES - RENTAL

(No. B/652) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to office spaces rented by Ministries and Government Departments, he will give the lists thereof in each case, indicating the respective –

- (a) location;
- (b) name of owner;
- (c) extent;
- (d) monthly rental, and
- (e) duration thereof.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, the list of the office spaces rented by the Government, Ministries, Government Departments, as well as other information requested by

the hon. Member are being compiled and will be laid in the Library of the National Assembly.

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes, I understand the reply of the hon. Minister because it is a very lengthy reply, the first time I asked this PQ dates back to April 2011 and at that time, the then Minister of Infrastructure, Hon. Bachoo, give the same reply. But he did give the reply after and it was an amount of Rs500 m. that was rented by Government for spaces. So, therefore, can I ask the hon. Minister, what is the timeframe are we looking for to have this reply?

Mr Hurreeram: As soon as possible. So, we are verifying the information and I almost have it ready, in fact I must say. But, I have noticed some information were missing, so, I asked my officers to look into it carefully, so I do not want to give an approximate reply to your question, hon. Member, you will appreciate it.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

STATUTORY BODIES/SPECIAL FUNDS/OTHER BODIES – FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - NATIONAL AUDIT OFFICE

(No. B/653) 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 default by statutory bodies, special funds and other bodies falling under the aegis of his Ministry to submit the financial statements thereof to the National Audit Office, he will state the measures taken, if any, at the level of his Ministry in relation thereto.

Dr. Padayachy: Je souhaite informer la Chambre qu'afin de garantir la soumission en temps voulu des états financiers au National Audit Office par les organismes statutaires, les fonds spéciaux et autres organismes opérant sous l'égide de mon ministère, le 16 février de cette année, mon ministère a publié une circulaire à l'intention de tous les ministères et départements (circulaire no.1 de 2021) sur la soumission tardive des états financiers par les organismes statutaires au *National Audit Office*.

La circulaire prévoit que les officiers en charge de la supervision et de la comptabilité doivent –

- (i) s'assurer que les organismes statutaires qui relèvent de leur compétence soumettent leurs états financiers dans les délais et les exigences réglementaires ;
- (ii) informer les officiers siégeant au conseil d'administration d'un organisme statutaire afin qu'ils s'assurent que l'organisme statutaire prépare son rapport

annuel selon les normes requises et le soumettre au directeur de l'audit dans les délais légaux ;

- (iii) s'assurer du suivi des mesures disciplinaires prises par le conseil d'administration d'un organisme statutaire relevant de sa compétence en cas de non-respect de la présentation des estimations annuelles et du rapport annuel, conformément à l'article 7A (2) de la *Statutory Bodies (Accounts and Audit) Act*, et
- (iv) veiller à ce que les organismes statutaires, les autorités locales, les fonds spéciaux et les autres organismes qui soumettent des états financiers au *National Audit Office* respectent la nouvelle approche en matière de présentation des états financiers dans les délais impartis.

À la suite de la publication de la circulaire n° 1 de 2021, mon ministère a adressé une lettre à tous les organismes relevant de sa compétence afin qu'ils se conforment aux instructions qu'elle contient.

Selon le rapport 2019-2020 du *National Audit Office*, les entités suivantes relevant de mon ministère n'ont pas encore soumis leurs états financiers au *National Audit Office* –

- (i) la *Gambling Regulatory Authority* pour les exercices 2018/2019 et 2019/2020 ;
- (ii) le *COVID-19 Project Development Fund* pour la période du 28 avril au 30 juin 2020, et
- (iii) le *National Resilience Fund* pour les exercices 2018/2019 et 2019/2020.

Il a été porté à mon attention que pour la *Gambling Regulatory Authority*, en juillet 2020 le *National Audit Office* a recommandé que la *GRA* consolide les états financiers de l'Autorité et de la *Responsible Gambling and Capacity Building Fund* en un seul document avant de le soumettre au *National Audit Office*.

Après plusieurs discussions avec toutes les parties prenantes concernées, y compris son conseiller juridique, l'approbation du Conseil d'administration de la *GRA* a été obtenue le 26 janvier 2021 pour que les états financiers de l'Autorité et du Fonds soient ainsi consolidés.

Il convient de noter que la soumission tardive est en grande partie due à la décision concernant la consolidation des états financiers.

En conséquence, la *GRA* a déjà préparé ses états financiers consolidés pour l'exercice 2018-2019. Le document sera soumis à l'approbation de son conseil d'administration prochainement, avant d'être soumis au *National Audit Office*.

En ce qui concerne les exercices financiers consolidés pour l'exercice 2019–2020, ils sont en cours de finalisation et seront soumis à l'approbation du Conseil d'administration dès que possible.

Pour ce qui est du *COVID-19 Project Development Fund*, ce fond a été mis en place en avril 2020. Cependant, étant donné qu'il n'est rentré en opération qu'à partir de juillet 2020, il n'y a pas d'états financiers qui soient dus pour la période allant d'avril 2020 à juin 2020.

Pour ce qui est du *National Resilience Fund*, les états financiers du *National Resilience Fund* pour l'année financière s'étant clôturés au 30 juin 2019 ont été soumis au *National Audit Office* le 18 juin 2021.

Les états financiers du *National Resilience Fund* pour l'année s'étant achevée le 30 juin 2020 sont en cours de préparation par le comptable du Fonds. Ils seront soumis au *National Audit Office* avant le 30 juillet 2021.

Enfin, le *Management Committee* du *National Resilience Fund* a déjà pris les mesures correctives pour éviter tout retard futur dans la soumission des comptes et pour garantir le respect de ses obligations légales. Les états financiers pour l'exercice clos au 30 juin 2021 devraient donc être soumis dans le délai légal imparti.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not understand why the hon. Minister took the example of GRA and also COVID Fund and National Resilience Fund because in the Report of the Director Audit, if may refer to this document, this issue has been severely criticised by the Director of Audit and it is not the first year, this has been like this for so many years. And just to give briefly two figures, there are 21 financial statements in respect of five special funds that were already certified by the National Audit Office but not laid to the...

Mr Speaker: Put your question now! Put your question!

Mr Ameer Meea: ...National Assembly. And also...

Mr Speaker: Tell me your question.

Mr Ameer Meea: Please, Mr Speaker, Sir, let me state this figure. There are in some cases, financial statements for more than 15 years that have not been audited and we are talking about public funds. So, my question to the hon. Minister, does he think that it is not acceptable to send only circulars because every year there is this circular...

Mr Speaker: Your question already put to the hon. Minister.

Mr Ameer Meea: ...and there is no change in the state of affairs.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, comme je l'ai souligné dans ma réponse, nous travaillons pour améliorer l'efficacité et aussi l'efficience de ces organismes. Donc, nous travaillons à travers les circulaires et nous sommes en train de travailler pour qu'au niveau de mon ministère, tous les rapports soient disponibles avant la date fixée. Donc, c'est là ce qu'on est en train de faire, on va essayer de travailler encore plus pour qu'il n'y ait plus de retard dans la soumission de ces rapports. C'est ce que nous pouvons dire ici parce que nous travaillons en permanence avec les circulaires et jusqu'à présent, les circulaires sortant du ministère des finances font foi. Merci.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: B/654.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not finished!

Mr Speaker: Yes, sure?

Mr Ameer Meea: No, I have already asked one supplementary.

Mr Speaker: No, listen there is the rule of questions...

Mr Ameer Meea: Seriously?

Mr Speaker: ...and I already said at the beginning.

Mr Ameer Meea: What you said?

Mr Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

MAURITIUS AFRICA FUND – APPLICATIONS – INVESTMENT PROJECT

(No. B/654) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Mauritius Africa Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information

as to the number of applications received for funding thereunder, indicating in each case, the

—

- (a) nature of the investment project and country in which same is to be implemented, and
- (b) quantum of funds disbursed.

Mr Speaker: Are you ready?

An hon. Member: *Sanz sanze sa boug la ein.*

Mr Speaker: I can hear some comments and keep the comments for yourself!

(Interruptions)

You should respect the Chair.

(Interruptions)

You know what you are doing and you know what I am doing. Please!

Dr. Padaychy : M. le président, le *Mauritius Africa Fund Ltd...*

(Interruptions)

Le *Mauritius Africa Fund Ltd* a été constitué le 17 février 2014 en tant que *Public Company Limited by Shares*, le gouvernement étant l'unique actionnaire de la société.

Le mandat initial du Fonds comprenait la participation aux fonds propres d'entreprises mauriciennes investissant dans les projets viables sur le continent africain, à hauteur de 10 % maximum de leurs fonds propres.

Le *Mauritius Africa Fund* m'a informé qu'en août 2014, il a invité, par le biais d'annonces publiques, les entreprises mauriciennes à manifester leur intérêt à accéder au soutien et aux services du Fonds pour investir dans des projets en Afrique.

Quatre entreprises ont répondu à l'expression d'intérêt mais n'ont pas fait de demande officielle de financement.

En ce qui concerne les parties (a) et (b) de la question, aucun fonds n'a donc été déboursé pour l'une de ces quatre entreprises.

M. le président, la Chambre a été informée à plusieurs reprises que depuis début 2015, le gouvernement a revu le mandat du *Mauritius Africa Fund* en vue d'élargir la zone

économique de Maurice et d'avoir un impact plus important sur la facilitation des investissements du secteur privé mauricien en Afrique.

Dans le cadre de son nouveau mandat, le *Mauritius Africa Fund* s'est concentré sur le développement d'infrastructures commerciales, telles que les zones économiques spéciales dans les pays africains sélectionnés, dans un cadre de gouvernement à gouvernement.

Dans l'exécution de ce nouveau mandat, le *Mauritius Africa Fund* travaille actuellement sur le développement de zones économiques spéciales dans cinq pays à savoir –

- (i) le Sénégal ;
- (ii) la Côte d'Ivoire ;
- (iii) le Ghana ;
- (iv) Madagascar, et
- (v) le Kenya.

Au Sénégal, le *Mauritius Africa Fund* détient 51 % des parts de la Société des Infrastructures d'Affaires Atlantic S.A. (SIAA), constituée au Sénégal en *Joint-Venture* avec le Fond Souverain d'Investissement Stratégiques (FONSIS, le Fond Souverain du Sénégal).

La SIAA développera 40 hectares de terrain par le biais de partenaires publics-privés (PPP) et gèrera à terme les 53 hectares du parc industriel de Diamniadio près de Dakar.

En Côte d'Ivoire, le *Mauritius Africa Fund* a négocié avec succès un accès préférentiel pour les entreprises mauriciennes afin qu'elles investissent dans la construction d'une cyber-tour, de deux tours administratives, d'un hôtel d'affaires et d'un parc aquatique au sein du *Technology Parc* de Grand-Bassam.

Au Ghana, le *Mauritius Africa Fund* détiendra 60 % du capital social de *Ghana Smart City Ltd*, une coentreprise avec le gouvernement ghanéen. Le projet consistera en la construction d'un *Technology and Research Hub* au sein de l'*University of Ghana* à Central Accra au cours d'une première phase, suivie du développement d'un *Technology and Business Park* à Dawa au cours d'une seconde phase.

À Madagascar, le gouvernement malgache a identifié 80 hectares de terrain pour que le *Mauritius Africa Fund* développe conjointement une "Textile City" à Moramanga, située le long du principal corridor économique reliant la capitale Antananarivo au port de Toamasina.

En outre, les négociations sont en cours entre le gouvernement de Maurice et le gouvernement du Kenya pour le développement d'un centre industriel à Navaisha.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister replied stating verbatim, what the hon. Prime Minister had stated in answer to a PQ two years ago, on 07 May 2019, exactly the same words except translating it in French. So, do I take it that since May 2019 till date, there have not been any new projects or completion of those five projects that were already announced two years ago?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, peut-être que l'honorable membre n'est pas au courant, mais je tiendrai quand même à l'informer l'honorable membre que depuis qu'on est entré dans une pandémie, que chaque projet d'infrastructure ça prend des années pour le développer. En général, un projet d'infrastructure ne se fait pas en une journée. Ça prend des années pour pouvoir développer un projet d'infrastructure ou un projet d'investissement. Parfois des dizaines d'années pour pouvoir développer ce genre de projet surtout quand vous avez des accords de gouvernement à gouvernement. Et entre-temps, malheureusement, on a été quand même sérieusement touché par la pandémie que ce soit localement ou au niveau de l'Afrique on n'y est toujours. Et c'est le genre d'événement qui freine encore plus le développement de ce genre de projet parce qu'on n'a pas de liaison aérienne, nous ne pouvons pas nous rendre sur place, nous ne pouvons pas nécessairement avoir les contacts privilégiés avec les opérateurs. Donc, c'est sûr que cela retarde les projets, et c'est sûr qu'il y a eu du retard dans ces projets. Et au fur et à mesure que nous sommes en train de sortir de cette pandémie, nous allons reprendre les opérations concernant le *Mauritius Africa Fund*.

Mr Uteem: In his Budget Speech, the hon. Minister of Finance, at paragraph 138, announced and I quote, that –

“The MIC has earmarked Rs10 billion to invest in African projects, including SEZ projects under a G2G framework.”

Which is exactly what he has just mentioned, is being done by the Mauritius Africa Fund. So, may I know from the hon. Minister of Finance whether there is not an overlapping? Because I know MIC did not spend one cent that was earmarked for African projects last year.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, ce projet est un projet de la MIC qui devait passer par le *Mauritius Africa Fund* pour investir en Afrique. Ce projet c'est quoi ? C'est comme dans beaucoup de pays où on utilise un fonds d'investissement local pour développer le secteur privé local à l'étranger. C'est-à-dire, demain s'il y a un projet d'infrastructure dans un

des pays africains où il y a besoin de fonds, on utilisera les fonds à Maurice pour développer ce projet. Mais en contrepartie, ils doivent utiliser le secteur privé Mauricien pour développer le projet sur le territoire africain.

Mr Uteem: Will the hon. Minister of Finance agree with me that, if Mauritius Africa Fund was serious about what they are doing, first of all, they would have updated their website; secondly, they would have employees? Because as far as I am concerned, there is only one staff, an Executive Director, today working at Africa Mauritius Fund, and surely with one person you would not be able to invest Rs500 m. in five different countries.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, le *Mauritius Africa Fund* s'appuie sur le staff de l'*EDB*. Et comme je l'ai dit, c'est un projet de la MIC d'investir sur l'Afrique. Mais ils ne vont pas aller en Afrique, ils utilisent l'institution qui est le *Mauritius Africa Fund* à travers *EDB* pour faire ses investissements sur le continent africain. Mais c'est un projet, encore une fois, comme tout projet cela va prendre du temps et surtout en pleine pandémie.

Mr Speaker: I will suspend the sitting for one and a half hours.

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

On resuming at 2.32 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

MAURITIUS – INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL CENTRE

(No. B/655) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the promotion of Mauritius as an International Financial Centre, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Economic Development Board, for each of the years 2018, 2019, 2020 and since January 2021 to date, information as to the –

- (a) quantum of funds budgeted and spent in relation thereto;
- (b) number of staff members dedicated thereto, and
- (c) measures taken therefor.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, en ce qui concerne la partie (a) de la question, l'*Economic Development Board (EDB)* a, pour les années fiscales 2018-2019, 2019-2020 et 2020-2021, affecté respectivement R 6,668,193, R 15,209,341 et R 328,120 à la promotion du Centre financier international mauricien, le « *Mauritius IFC* ».

Je tiens à préciser que la réduction du budget pour l'année 2020 est essentiellement due à la crise de la Covid-19.

Les restrictions sanitaires liées à la pandémie ont en effet rendu les missions de promotion de la juridiction à l'étranger difficiles et peu à propos au regard du contexte international.

Pour les trois années mentionnées, des montants réels de R 4,691,035, R 18,650,878, et R 9,698,716 ont été respectivement utilisées pour les activités de promotion du *Mauritius IFC*.

Il convient de noter qu'en raison d'attaques persistantes contre la juridiction mauricienne et d'enjeux internationaux émergents au cours des années 2019 et 2020, l'*EDB* a utilisé un montant supérieur aux fonds initialement budgétés pour ce poste de dépenses.

Je préciserai dans quelques instants les activités et actions spécifiques entreprises pour chaque année par l'*EDB* dans le but de protéger efficacement l'image et la réputation de la juridiction.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne la partie (b) de la question, et en vue d'une synergie des efforts préexistants entre les différents acteurs institutionnels, l'*EDB* a été institué en 2017.

L'*EDB* a débuté ses activités en janvier 2018, et le mandat de l'ancienne *Financial Services Promotion Agency (FSPA)* a été subsumé par le département des services financiers de l'*EDB*, dont les missions sont de -

- promouvoir et développer le secteur des services financiers de Maurice;
- entreprendre des initiatives de relations publiques et de communication pour protéger et maintenir l'image de Maurice en tant que centre financier international de substance et adhérant aux meilleures pratiques et standards internationaux ;
- assurer le développement et améliorer les offres de produits du *Mauritius IFC* ;
- attirer de nouveaux acteurs dans les segments clés du secteur des services financiers, tant bancaires que non bancaires ;

- soutenir et faciliter la domiciliation et l'expansion des sociétés de services financiers à Maurice et
- fournir des services après-vente de qualité pour retenir les investisseurs et les clients existants.

En conséquence, le département des services financiers de *l'EDB* compte actuellement huit techniciens hautement qualifiés et spécialisés. Chacun d'entre eux a en charge des marchés distincts pour la promotion et la visibilité du secteur, ainsi que de produits de services financiers spécifiques pour attirer de nouveaux acteurs. Chaque membre de l'équipe s'occupe également de la facilitation et du suivi, de la recherche et des relations publiques pour le secteur.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne la partie (c) de la question, je vais développer les mesures prises et les actions initiées par *l'EDB* pour promouvoir le *Mauritius IFC* et préserver encore davantage la réputation de la juridiction.

En 2018, des missions promotionnelles ont été organisées à Dubaï, à Abu Dhabi, en Inde, au Royaume-Uni, en Allemagne et en Afrique du Sud. L'objectif principal de ces missions était d'explorer les opportunités de nouveaux marchés et de consolider les marchés existants pour les investisseurs portés sur le marché africain et les pays émergents.

En outre, pour renforcer la visibilité de la juridiction, deux conférences ont eu lieu localement, et une conférence majeure a été organisée à Kigali, au Rwanda. Par ailleurs, en juillet 2018, suite à la publication d'articles de presse dans les médias indiens sur la juridiction mauricienne, *l'EDB* a retenu les services d'une société de relations publiques. L'agence de relations publiques « *MSL India* » a ainsi été missionnée et a mené avec succès une campagne percutante sur une période de deux mois pour inverser la perception négative de Maurice.

M. le président, pour 2019, j'ai été informé que 11 missions de promotion à l'étranger ont été organisées par *l'EDB* dans le but de renforcer nos marchés traditionnels et d'améliorer la visibilité de notre Centre financier international. Cela s'est opéré via le parrainage de conférences de renommée mondiale telles que *l'Africa CEO Forum*, *l'AFSIC*, *l'IMARC* et *Super Return*, entre autres. De plus, des fonds ont également été déboursés pour retenir les services de *BCW* en tant que cabinet de relations publiques. La mission donnée à cette société était d'adresser les enjeux de réputation et d'image de Maurice ainsi que d'améliorer la visibilité du *Mauritius IFC* sur les marchés clés. *L'EDB* a également donné à *BCW* la mission

de conceptualiser le site Internet du *Mauritius IFC*. En 2019, suite à la publication desdits "*Mauritius Leaks*", l'*EDB* a collaboré avec ces deux sociétés spécialisées en relations publiques, à savoir *BCW* et *MSL Group*.

M. le président, en 2020, l'*EDB* a organisé une mission à l'étranger à Londres et deux campagnes de communication en Inde. J'ai été informé que l'institution a commandé une étude indépendante intitulée "*The Role of the Mauritius International Financial Centre in driving economic growth and prosperity in Africa*". De plus, en raison des restrictions de voyage après le début de la pandémie et poursuivant sa transformation digitale, l'*EDB* a organisé 9 *webinars* qui se sont tenus de juin 2020 à décembre 2020.

Ces *webinars* ont été menés dans le but de rassurer la communauté d'affaires internationale suite à l'inclusion de Maurice sur la liste noire de l'Union Européen ainsi que de présenter les différents segments du *Mauritius IFC*.

L'*EDB* s'est également engagée auprès des banques de développement et des investisseurs à la suite de l'inscription sur cette liste afin de prévenir l'érosion des investissements. J'ai été informé que l'*EDB* a d'ailleurs communiqué les progrès en la matière au « *Core Group on AML/CFT* » institué pour suivre le dossier de la lutte contre le blanchiment de capitaux et de financement du terrorisme. Au cours de l'année, l'*EDB* a également mis en œuvre une campagne de communication en Inde suite à la ratification de Maurice en tant que juridiction de catégorie I pour les investissements de portefeuille étranger.

La campagne comprenait des expositions médiatiques à fort impact dans les principales publications financières papier et en ligne ainsi que des interviews dans des chaînes renommées telles que *Mint*, *The Hindu Business Line*, *Business Standard* et *CNBC TV-18*. Grace à l'ensemble de ces actions, la réputation de Maurice comme centre financier international a pu être préservée.

Merci.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Economic Development Board repealed the Financial Success Promotion Agency, who was responsible for marketing financial services. Is the hon. Minister satisfied with the fact that today EDB does not even have a Directorate for Financial Services and there are only eight staff and less than Rs10 m. per year are spent on promotion of financial services compared to although Rs300 m. that was allocated over the years to Financial Success Promotion Agency?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, *EDB* a été instituée pour canaliser les efforts de promotion à travers tous les secteurs, que ce soit l'export de bien mais aussi l'export des services, en particulier pour les secteurs financiers. Nous avons eu à savoir gérer les deniers publics de manière efficiente d'où la mise en place de l'*EDB*. C'est sûre que peut être avec une autre institution on aurait dépensé plus. Dépenser plus ne veut pas dire dépenser mieux. Le but de l'*EDB* c'est de savoir utiliser chaque roupie de manière efficace pour avoir une bonne image du secteur financier. C'est ce qu'ils sont en train de faire mais c'est sûre qu'avec la pandémie, on a des problèmes concernant les missions à l'étranger et là, si on avait cette opportunité de pouvoir aller à l'étranger pour défendre cette juridiction, bon il y aurait plus de coûts, mais en même temps on aurait encore plus de résultats. La question de l'honorable membre, 'est-ce je suis satisfait ?' Je suis satisfait avec ce qu'on est train de faire actuellement pour sortir de notre liste. On est en train travailler, l'*EDB* avec toutes les autres institutions sont en train de travailler pour qu'on puisse sortir. Après la sortie de cette liste, on aura une mission à faire pour redorer encore une fois le blason de Maurice au niveau de notre Centre financier. C'est ce qu'on va faire.

Mr Uteem: Looking up on this precisely because the hon. Minister rightly pointed out that the image of Mauritius is suffering from its inclusion and we all hope that we will get out of this list as soon as possible. But does the Minister of Finance agree that a lot of money needs to be put to promote the financial services sector and relooking of the image of our financial sector once we are out of that list?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, je suis au courant qu'il y a des négociations actuellement entre les différents services et aussi le secteur privé pour promouvoir le secteur parce que d'un côté on ne peut pas mettre énormément d'argent public pour promouvoir mais de l'autre côté on doit savoir faire le juste équilibre avec les autres dépenses qu'on a. On ne peut pas simplement dépenser pour un secteur d'activités, on doit savoir avoir le juste équilibre ; c'est là qu'on doit faire attention avec les fonds publics. Nous ne pouvons pas dire on va dépenser R 500 millions, R 300 millions, R 250 millions pour faire quoi. Le but ce que chaque roupie qui est dépensée pour défendre l'image soit bien utilisée. C'est la mission première de l'*EDB* que chaque roupie dépensée soit bien utilisée pour défendre l'image de l'île Maurice. C'est ce qu'ils sont en train de faire.

Merci.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you. Mr Speaker, Sir, will the Minister inform the House whether the services of these two promotional agencies had been enlisted on an *ad hoc* basis or there is a contractual obligation and what has been the amount paid to each of the promotional agency?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, je n'ai pas plus d'informations concernant ces deux institutions. Je vais essayer d'avoir les informations et je vais *table* à l'Assemblée.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Mr Bhagwan: Thank you. Can the Minister at least provide us with information since it is a very important institution according to the Minister itself, the composition of the Board, who is chairing, who are the members of these very important institutions and whether we have the right person in the right place.

Dr. Padayachy: Je vais, M. le président, je vais déposer à la Chambre les noms de tous les membres et aussi du président.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

SOCIAL REGISTER OF MAURITIUS – APPLICATIONS – PERIOD 2020-2021

(No. B/656) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the Social Register of Mauritius, she will, for the year 2020 and since January 2021 to date, state the –

- (a) number of applications received for registration thereon, indicating the number of successful applications;
- (b) aggregate number of persons registered thereon, and
- (c) criteria for rejection of applications, if any.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, our Government introduced the Marshall Plan in 2016. This Plan entrenches the key elements of the poverty reduction strategy. The poverty threshold was set at Rs9,520. Families falling under the poverty threshold are called upon to register themselves under the Social Register of Mauritius. These families benefit from concrete and meaningful schemes such as a Subsistence Allowance, school materials,

school premium, free examination fees, crèche-scheme, social housing, life-skill training as well as other training, including vocational training so that they can be lifted out of poverty.

I am informed that a recertification of all households on the Social Register started in July 2020. 10,111 existing eligible households on the Social Register were called upon to attend Social Security Offices for recertification if the need is felt. However, only 9,092 households turned up. Out of the 9,092 households, 4,469 were found to be still eligible under the social register to benefit from all schemes.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am further informed that for the year 2020, a total of 2,241 new applications for Registration under the Social Register of Mauritius have been received, out of which 739 households were found eligible and for period January 2021 to date, a total of 1,669 applications have been received out of which 960 households were found eligible.

With regard to part (b) of the question, there are currently 5,389 eligible households comprising of 21,808 beneficiaries under the Social Register of Mauritius.

With regard to part (c) of the question, a household is found not eligible under the Social Register of Mauritius due to the following reasons –

- (a) both the total verified income and the assessed income based on the living standard of a household are greater than the poverty threshold of that household; or
- (b) the total verified income is greater than the poverty threshold of that household; or
- (c) the assessed income based on the living standard of the household is greater than the poverty threshold of that household.

Mr Uteem: Thank you. May I know from the hon. Minister whether there is any appeal mechanism for households who used to be on the Social Register but are no longer on the Social Register or for applicants who have applied to be on the register but have not found their way to the register.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Yes, there is an appeal mechanism put in place. When the recertification exercise was done, there are certain applicants who have made an appeal but it appears that all the appeals have been dismissed, but I must say that now that Government

has reviewed the poverty threshold from 9,520 to 10,500, so they can still make new applications.

Mr Uteem: One of the reasons why households fall outside the criteria, the poverty threshold is that they are in receipt of certain social benefit, for example, children who are handicapped, their parents get a pension from the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity and that take them outside the threshold of 10,000. So, does the hon. Minister find it fair and logical that someone who is receiving extra-assistance because there is extra need for his child, is then penalised because the total household income exceeds the poverty threshold and, if the hon. Minister can look into these cases, at least, on a case by case basis so that no hardship is caused to families who have handicapped persons or other persons receiving social benefits?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say that we have always put poverty at the heart of Government policy-making and we ensure that all the decisions that are made genuinely help and support the needy.

Yes, I am aware that when the assessment is made, we do take into consideration any income derived, social aid or under Invalidity Pension but the hon. Member will appreciate that all the benefits have considerably increased since 2014. For example, the Invalidity Pension was very low in 2014. It was only Rs3,000 and now it is Rs9,000. I must also remind the House that Government does provide huge sum of money to (NSIF) National Social Inclusion Foundation to the tune of Rs656 m. to support NGOs to look after and take care of persons who are in need. I understand your point so that is why I made it a point in the presentation of the Budget to review the poverty threshold from Rs9,520 to Rs10,500.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs B/661, B/674, B/675, B/676 and B/677 have been withdrawn.

Hon. Ms Anquetil!

**CAP MALHEUREUX RELAY CENTRE/SHELTER *L'OISEAU DU PARADIS* -
MEDICATION PROTOCOL**

(No. B/657) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether in regard to the Cap Malheureux Relay Centre, also known as Shelter *L'Oiseau du Paradis*, she will state if her Ministry has put in place –

- (a) a Medication Protocol for the residents thereof, and
- (b) an Insurance Policy for the residents and employees thereof and, if so, give details thereof and, if not, why not.

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the Cap Malheureux Relay Centre which is also known as Shelter *L'Oiseau du Paradis*, is, in fact, a Government-owned shelter and is presently being run by the National Children's Council (NCC).

I am informed by the Council that there is an appropriate protocol in place as regards the administration of medication to the residents. Each resident has a personal medication file. Information such as –

- (a) the medication doses;
- (b) the name of the medication;
- (c) the intake frequencies;
- (d) name of the administrator of the medicines, and
- (e) the date, time and signature of the staff

can be retrieved from those files. Each resident's medication is kept secured and is dispensed at prescribed frequencies to the resident concerned. To ensure accountability, a signed medication sheet is kept as record each time.

Furthermore, following a meeting with the Ministry of Health and Wellness on 21 October of last year, my Ministry was advised that Shelters may avail themselves of the services of the 19 Area Health Centres and 144 Community Health Centres and the 5 Regional Hospitals as well. The recruitment of Psychiatrists, on a contract basis, was also recommended. Financial Clearance has been obtained for the recruitment of two Psychiatrists on a sessional basis on 12 May this year.

Moreover, on a weekly basis, the Shelter receives the visit of a psychologist of my Ministry who assesses the minors. In addition, a Psychiatric Nurse posted at the Child Development Unit of the Ministry verifies the administration of medications.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, it is worth noting that the employees of the Shelter run by the National Children's Council are public sector employees and their terms and conditions of employment are governed by the provisions stipulated by

the Pay Research Bureau (PRB) and as per the PRB Report 2016, the Government, as Employer, assumes responsibility for occupational risks for public sector employees.

In so far as residents are concerned, I am advised that no insurance policy is required as the residents are provided with medical assistance from public hospitals as and when needed.

Ms Anquetil: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I request the hon. Minister to table a copy of the medication protocol? Further, may I ask the hon. Minister as to whether she has been made aware of an incident that occurred on 18 May 2021 involving 10 residents who had allegedly taken non-prescribed strong medication from Brown Sequard Mental Hospital?

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware of the case but I will find out more details and report back to the House on the matter. As to the request to table the medication protocol, I am happy to do so. I do not have it right now on me but I will table it to the House.

Ms Anquetil: Merci, M. le président. La ministre, est-elle aussi au courant qu'actuellement, il y a un staff, je précise bien, un staff, qui prend de gros risques au *shelter* Cap Malheureux en achetant des médicaments avec la bénédiction de l'administration pour les donner aux enfants, sans l'avis d'un médecin?

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, there are very severe and serious allegations. I am not aware that there is a case like that, but you have put it into my attention, I thank you. I will look into it and address the matter if that proves to be right.

Ms Anquetil: *Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.* Est-ce que la ministre pourrait nous informer si elle envisage d'approcher le ministre des Finances pour demander un budget nécessaire afin de financer une police d'assurance pour les enfants placés, surtout que nous parlons des enfants vulnérables? Je vous remercie, M. le président.

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already replied to that part of my hon. colleague's question. I am advised that there is no requirement for an insurance policy because the residents of those shelters, they are provided with medical assistance. We have a decentralised health care system across the island, from public Hospitals to Area Health Centres. So, the question of providing an insurance policy *est un peu prématuré* at this stage, because they are being provided the medical service as and when they require so.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

SHELTERS – CCTV CAMERAS

(No. B/658) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the shelters for children, she will give the list thereof equipped with Closed Circuit Television cameras.

(Withdrawn)

MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS - PUBLIC OFFICER - DEATH

(No. B/659) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms whether in regard to the death, on 09 June 2021, of a public officer of the Procurement Department posted at the Ministry of Health and Wellness, he will state if his Ministry will cause an internal inquiry to be carried out thereinto.

Mr Hurdoyal: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will reply to both Parliamentary Questions B/659 and B/680, as they relate to the same issue.

At the very outset, it is with deep sadness that we learned about the tragic accident that occurred on 09 June 2021, and I seize this opportunity to present my sincere condolences to the bereaved family.

Late Mrs Faheza Bibi Mooniaruth, Office Management Executive, had 33 years of service, and was a hard working officer who had no adverse report during her whole career.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the public officer was an Office Management Executive belonging to the General Services grade and not to the Procurement Department and neither was she posted to the Procurement Section of the Ministry of Health and Wellness.

Following the death of an Office Management Executive at the Ministry of Health and Wellness on 09 June 2021, the Occupational Safety and Health Division and the Human Resource Management Division of my Ministry carried out separate inquiries on 09, 10 and 11 June 2021 respectively.

Immediately after the death of the Office Management Executive, two officers of the Occupational Safety and Health Division of my Ministry carried out an investigation which revealed that the officer jumped from the roof of the Emmanuel Anquetil Building with the help of a chair and fell onto a motorcycle which was parked on the pavement of the premises at the intersection of Sir William Newton and Sir Virgil Naz Streets. The victim was

temporarily posted to the Confidential Registry of the Ministry of Health and Wellness located on level 5 at the Emmanuel Anquetil Building.

A second visit was effected on 10 June 2021 by officers of the Occupational Safety and Health Division of my Ministry, to assess the prevailing condition on the roof of the Emmanuel Anquetil Building. It was noted that access to the roof was opened for maintenance and cleaning activities by the officers of the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development and employees of the private contractors responsible for cleaning. It was also noted that the access doors leading to the roof of the building were not locked as the locking devices were defective.

In addition, another inquiry was carried out by officers of the Human Resource Management Division of my Ministry on 11 June 2021. It was reported that the Office Management Executive was posted to the Ministry of Health and Wellness since 21 September 2016 and she was working in the Training Unit of that Ministry. As she was suffering from depression, she proceeded on prolonged sick leave on four occasions since 18 January 2021 as follows –

- two weeks' sick leave from 18 January to 31 January 2021;
- one-month sick leave from 15 February to 15 March 2021;
- two weeks' sick leave from 29 March to 11 April, and
- thirty days' sick leave from 12 April to 14 May 2021.

The sick leave was followed by 19 days' vacation leave from 17 May to 04 June 2021.

Her absences on sick leave are duly supported by relevant medical certificates from her Consultant – Psychiatry and Psychiatrist. On her resumption of duty on 07 June 2021, she was temporarily posted at the Confidential Registry, taking into consideration that the Training Unit was being reorganised and the work load thereat would have been too hectic for her in view of her health condition. Unfortunately, two days after her resumption, she committed this tragic and fatal act.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish also to inform the House that an in-depth investigation is currently being carried out by the Police to determine the cause of the incident.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. I also wish to present my sincere condolences to the family whom I have met during the weekend, in the wake of this question. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether anyone saw Mrs Mooniarut jump and if so, who, and if not, how can the enquiry report conclude that she actually jumped from the roof?

Mr Hurdoyal: Well, this should be determined by the investigation which is being carried out by the police. Our investigation is internal through the Occupational Safety and Health Division of my Ministry, who went there to see on the roof and they found out that there was a chair. So, that is the report. If you want, I can table the report that was carried out by the division of my Ministry.

Mr Juman: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I join the hon. Minister and my colleague, hon. Osman Mahomed to present my sincere condolences to the family. Can the hon. Minister state whether she was given a posting inferior to her rank and if she had been subjected to any other undue pressure after resuming duty following the leave? And, also, if the Minister can inform the House whether the case is being treated as suicide or homicide?

Mr Hurdoyal: At this stage, I cannot determine whether it was suicide or homicide. It is the Police that is going to - the investigation is being carried out. As it concerns whether there was pressure or she was obliged to work in another department, I clearly explained in my answer earlier that she was posted at the Training Unit but due to several medical certificates and due to her health conditions, she was posted to the Registry Department due to the load of work is lesser there.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bodha! Hon. Bodha, you had a question? Then it would be hon. Osman Mahomed.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you Mr Speaker, Sir. As a matter of fact, no one from the Ministry of Health attended her funerals nor did anyone from the Ministry give the family a call. I wish to say this because the family has told me so. Now, contrary to what is the practice, I have been in service as well myself.

Mr Speaker: Put the question.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Can I ask the hon. Minister, whether...

(Interruptions)

Mr Osman Mahomed: This is what the family told me, what politics are you talking about?

Mr Speaker: Please put your question. Address the Chair!

Mr Osman Mahomed: The family asked me to say this.

Mr Speaker: Address the Chair and put it well.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes, can I ask the hon. Minister whether the inquiry has revealed that she was subjected to harassment? Because it is very unusual for someone who is at the rank of Office Management Executive, which is one level below an Assistant Secretary, to be posted in a Confidential Registry, sitting on a table, facing a wall, having nothing to do. The Minister has mentioned himself...

Mr Speaker: Do not come to any conclusion. Put your question. There is a Police inquiry going on. Try to be fair. Put your question directly.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Has the inquiry revealed this aspect of things?

Mr Speaker: Very good!

Mr Hurdoyal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I already mentioned earlier in my reply that Mrs F. M. was going through a depression, and I also stated that there were several medical certificates which were attached to her sick leave and it was done through doctors, consultants. I do not agree that the hon. Member is saying that she was posted to another department due to pressure or anything like that. This does not stand good.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Patrick Assirvaden, this is the last warning I am giving you, and you stop there. If not, you will have to withdraw from the Chamber.

Mr Assirvaden: *Mais qu'est-ce que j'ai fait ? Je n'ai rien fait!*

Mr Speaker: And now I am telling you, withdraw from the Chamber! Withdraw from the Chamber! Second time.

Mr Assirvaden: Il y a quelqu'un qui est malade quelque part !

Mr Speaker: Third time, withdraw from the Chamber!

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, with all due respect, on what basis are you...

Mr Speaker: Disorderly conduct.

Mr Assirvaden: For what?

Mr Speaker: And the Speaker does not have to justify his decision. The ruling of the Speaker is final. The Speaker is not being cross-examined. Move out from the Chamber instantly for the rest of the Sitting!

Mr Assirvaden: *Je ramasse mes affaires !*

Dr. Boolell: This is not the way to talk to an hon. Member.

Mr Speaker: No, this is not the way to address me.

Mr Assirvaden: *Je ramasse mes affaires !*

Dr. Boolell: You have to be fair also.

Mr Speaker: Okay, I am not going to wait for that. I suspend the Sitting.

At 3.09 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 3.17 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please be seated. Hon. Juman!

Mr Juman: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Listening to the reply of the Minister, does he imply that the lady was unfit to work as Office Management Executive, that is why she was posted in a lesser responsible job?

Mr Hurdoyal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I clearly mentioned in my reply that there were medical certificates mentioning that the lady, Mrs F. M. was already going through a depression. So, I do not know what really is causing that she has been shifted to another department under pressure.

Mr Speaker: The question has substantially been canvassed. So, we move to the next question. Hon. Osman Mahomed!

COVID-19 VACCINES - INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION STATUS & INSURANCE COVER

(No. B/660) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the COVID-19 vaccines being administered in Mauritius, he will state –

- (a) the international recognition status thereof for international travel purposes, and
- (b) if Government will come up with a policy for same to be reimbursable under medical insurance cover.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, at present, the vaccines being administered or have been administered are Covishield, AstraZeneca, Sinopharm and Component I of the Sputnik vaccines.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, countries around the world have adopted varying measures of travel restrictions into their territories, mainly based on the prevalence of the COVID-19 virus and its variants in the countries of origin of the travellers and the rate of vaccination.

Therefore, international travel is possible irrespective of the type of COVID-19 vaccine that the traveller has received, but this is subject to the protocols in place in the country of destination, that is the type of test required prior to travel and, whether passengers arriving from certain countries should quarantine or self-isolate.

Many countries have adopted a list system (red, amber and green) for countries from which passengers travel defining the type of travel restriction imposed on them. Red indicates complete travel ban, orange indicates travel subject to conditions and green indicates no travel restrictions. Mauritius is on the orange list of many countries such as U.S, France, and Canada implying that travellers from Mauritius can enter these countries under certain specific conditions according to the health protocols in place in those countries. As for United Kingdom, Mauritius is on the amber list that indicates travel subject to conditions.

The European Medicines Agency (EMA) has the role of accrediting recommended vaccines to vaccinate citizens of the European Union. The role of the European Medicines Agency is not to accredit vaccines that provide protection against the COVID-19 for entry in the European Union. Each country decides on the recommended vaccines to enter its territory.

Some European countries, such as United Kingdom, Austria, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Netherlands, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland and Iceland have started recognising Covishield vaccines.

At present, the list of approved vaccines to enter a territory is evolving rapidly. Requests are being made by the World Health Organisation and many countries across the world for recognition of different vaccines. Mauritius has also written to the European Union and France in view of recognising the vaccines approved by the World Health Organisation to waive travel restrictions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to point out that as at present, the World Health Organisation does not recommend COVID-19 vaccination as a mandatory condition for entry to or exit from a country. Countries are free to consider lifting testing and/or quarantine requirements for international travellers who have been fully vaccinated. Proof of vaccination should not

be a pre-requisite for travel and may deepen inequalities, the more so, as the vaccines continue to be in short supply. No region or country should face restrictions because they are unable to access vaccines.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, Government is providing the COVID-19 vaccines freely. These are presently being administered free of charge to all persons attending public health institutions or vaccination centres around the island whereas the private health institutions charge a nominal fee of Rs300 to cover administrative charges only.

In light of the above, the question of reimbursing the cost of the vaccines under medical insurance cover does not arise.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. The specific conditions that the hon. Minister has mentioned in his original reply has to do whether the traveller is the holder of a passport of that particular country, second passport, even though he is a Mauritian, and whether he is going to that particular country for very important reasons. Now, being given that borders are being opened on 15 July, and being given also that the Minister has cited what the World Health Organisation policy is with respect to vaccination passport, can I ask him whether he has had consultation and conversation with Dr. Laurent Musango, the local representative of WHO in Mauritius to enforce that position of the WHO, for reasons he has mentioned himself? Because Mr Musango so far is...

Mr Speaker: Please, you have put your question already. Stop there, let the hon. Minister reply.

Mr Osman Mahomed: ... has been quite quiescent on this position.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think I have explained it clearly that countries have their own strategies and policies for incoming passengers, and up to now there are certain countries that have imposed that some specific vaccinations have to be done. Yet, passengers may come subject to other conditions, but, as for the opening of borders, Mauritius also has already given the list of vaccinations, especially approved by the WHO, that have been accepted for incoming passengers. And for Dr. Laurent Musango, we are daily in the High-Level Committee and it is a daily discussion that we are doing.

Mr Osman Mahomed: My question was for outbound passengers. Now, the policy for reimbursement - my specific proposition - can I ask the hon. Minister whether it can be considered? Because Sinopharm and Covishield, if you go to the European Union, for

example, you will not be allowed access at this moment in time. Can it be open to importers to import vaccines like Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson, albeit it is more expensive, it is reimbursed to people who are going for these jabs, because if someone goes to the vaccination centre...

Mr Speaker: Why are you explaining? Put your question! Do not show me the hand! Put your question!

Mr Osman Mahomed: You are showing me the hand as well.

Mr Speaker: I am showing you the hand. This is my ruling.

Mr Osman Mahomed: You are allowed to do that?

Mr Speaker: Yes, I am showing you the hand. You do not have to make a speech. Put your question directly. It is a supplementary question. You cannot take three minutes for a supplementary question.

Mr Osman Mahomed: You are very selective on this issue, because...

Mr Speaker: No, please, do not comment on the conduct of the Speaker. You have no right to do that. Learn your Standing Orders! Please, go ahead.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, so far countries are not selective on their vaccination for inbound passengers, but at the same time they have different conditions and this will keep on evolving by the time the vaccines are available.

Now, as for the second part of the question, that is, whether this will be reimbursed, even as up to now, local companies have tried to import vaccines but they have not got access to these vaccines. But with time, I am sure that local companies will import these vaccines and that will be subject to the insurance policy, whether this will be reimbursable or not.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ B/681 has been withdrawn. Next question!

RIVIERE DES ANGUILLES DAM – CONSTRUCTION COST

(No. B/661) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the *Rivière des Anguilles* Dam, he will state the reasons for the increase in the estimated construction cost thereof from Rs7.5 billion to Rs9.4 billion within a year.

(Withdrawn)

**NEW SOCIAL LIVING DEVELOPMENT LTD - PROJECT MANAGEMENT
CONSULTANTS**

(No. B/662) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the Request for Proposal for the appointment of Project Management Consultants in Construction issued by the Social Living Development Ltd., for the proposed development of 12,000 housing units, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the outcome thereof.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the New Social Living Developments Ltd (NSLD) that the processing of the Request for Proposal for the appointment of Project Management Consultants in Construction for a proposed development of 12,000 housing units and the evaluation of the responses thereto is still ongoing.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether this exercise, which is the second one of the NSLD, on the proposed appointment of a Project Consultant, is being actually challenged on the technical evaluation by at least 2 bidders?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the simple reason is I do not know. I am not even aware that there is a second exercise. I do not know what the practice was when the hon. Member headed the NHDC, having regard to ministerial interference, but as a Minister I do not get involved in this process. The NSLD is a wholly owned subsidiary of the NHDC.

Now, I am aware that there is an exercise following an RFP for appointment of Project Management Consultants. Now, in the past, the Minister has alleged that there was impropriety in the process, only then did I inquire and I learned factually that it was not correct. There had been no allegation of impropriety and now the question is, what has been the outcome, and I am telling the hon. Member and the House that the process is still ongoing.

Mr Osman Mahomed: I would like to ask a question that maybe the hon. Deputy Prime Minister can answer. Now, can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether in the wake of this bidding exercise, one of the Board members of NSLD – a respected person within the construction industry – has submitted his resignation as Board Member?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I have been informed and I sought information after the hon. Member raised the matter here, that there was a perception that one Board Member

had – for whatever reason and I am not here to judge the individual –done something that he should not have done. I think this was brought to the attention of the hon. gentleman who no longer sits on the Board of the NSLD. That is what I know.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary! I should give you the floor first! Let me give you the floor, then you put your supplementary question and it is the last one!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Very important, has he submitted his resignation or was he asked to go?

The Deputy Prime Minister: All I can say is that the hon. gentleman is no longer a member of the Board. That is the information I have been provided with.

Mr Speaker: What is this? What is for you! Let the Minister reply!

Mr Osman Mahomed: But he is not replying to my question!

Mr Speaker: No! Let the Minister reply!

The Deputy Prime Minister: Now, I understand, according to the information that has been provided to me, is that the gentleman was invited to leave the Board and that he is now no longer a member of the Board.

Now, I have said to this House, I wish to be totally transparent concerning the NSLD issues. If there is a precise question that is put, I will answer. If the hon. gentleman has any information that worries him as to the integrity of the process, please come to me, write to me, communicate the information, I shall investigate and provide all the information I can.

Mr Speaker: Hon. David!

WAKASHIO - OIL SPILL - COMPENSATION

(No. B/663) **Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the compensation payable following the Wakashio Oil Spill, he will state the –

- (a) total number of claims received, indicating the corresponding total amount thereof, and
- (b) number of claims received from registered artisanal fishers, fishmongers and applicant fishers, indicating the corresponding amounts thereof disbursed thereto.

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have to inform the House that on Friday, 14 August 2020, an e-platform was launched on the website of the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping in order to enable any person or entity who had sustained a loss or damage as a consequence of the grounding of MV Wakashio and ensuing oil pollution, to submit their claims to my Ministry for onward transmission to the insurer of MV Wakashio.

As at 08 July 2021, 4,543 claims have been made by individuals, companies and organisations through the e-platform to the tune of about Rs1.9 billion. Out of the total, 1,497 fishers, both registered, unregistered and applicant fishers as well as 237 fishmongers have submitted their claims for compensation to the insurers of MV Wakashio through the e-platform amounting to about Rs594 m.

In order to alleviate the financial distraught of the fishermen and fishmongers, Government took the initiative to pay a solidarity grant to every registered fisherman, fishmonger and even to applicant fisherman equivalent to the minimum wage of Rs10,200 from August 2020 to March 2021. To date, an amount of approximately Rs83 m. has been paid as solidarity grant to registered fishers, applicant fishers and fishmongers.

As a caring Government and with a view to obtain adequate compensation for these three categories, that is, registered fishers, applicant fishers and fishmongers, my Ministry has submitted an additional claim of Rs134,616 per fisherman and Rs140,160 per fishmonger to the insurer of MV Wakashio for economic loss. Thus, 628 registered fishers, 197 applicant fishers and 174 fishmongers would be concerned with the additional compensation.

With regard to other small claims effected by the insurers, up to now, a total of Rs6.4 m. has been paid as compensation to 348 individuals from the affected regions, mostly unregistered fishers, seashell collectors and helpers who are the most vulnerable ones and not benefiting from any solidarity grants. The payments have been effected on a weekly basis by the insurers to batches of approximately 50 persons.

Mr David: Merci, M. le président. Je comprends dans la réponse du ministre qu'il y a donc un montant forfaitaire par pêcheur et par poissonnier qui va être versé. Puis-je savoir du ministre quels sont les critères qui ont été pris en compte ainsi que la méthode de calcul déployée pour évaluer et approuver ce montant d'indemnisation?

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the registered fishers, fishmongers and applicant fishers, as we are aware, dealing with the livelihood of our people, we have ensured

that the claims have been calculated on the basis of the data available for the last 3 years ranging the declared catches from 2017 to 2019 at the 4 fisheries posts, namely, *Trou d'Eau Douce*, *Grande Rivière South East*, *Bambous Virieux*, Mahebourg, that is, the casualty areas. And especially from the period August to September have not only been compiled, but analysed and a conservative figure for an average monthly catch. Thus, with the accepted price sold to fishmongers, we have calculated that the average income for a fisher to be Rs27,027 monthly, which after deduction of the solidarity grant of Rs10,200 would come up with an additional monthly compensation of Rs16,827. Thus, for the eight months it came to Rs134,816.

Similarly, Mr Speaker, Sir, for fishmongers applying a similar calculation method, came to an estimated monthly compensation of Rs27,720 which will ultimately lead to Rs140,160.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the Minister whether, apart from the persons mentioned, fishers, fishmongers, etc., there have been claims from others, the boat operators, regarding the same Wakashio issue, and whether these claims have been entertained or are being processed, and, if yes, how many are there pending, especially the boat operators?

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have mentioned earlier, in fact, we have received 4,543 claims on the e-platform amounting to skippers, pleasure craft operators, hotels, small business. We have received them and we have put them to the insurer and they are dealing directly with the claims.

Mr David: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister whether in addition to the compensation paid and to be paid by the Japanese insurer, whether there has been or will be paid any compensation by the Japanese Government and if so, may we know the quantum?

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have to inform the House that no compensation has been paid by the Japanese Government. In fact, the practice for salvage operation is that the cost is borne by the owner and the insurer.

However, the Japanese Government has granted a concessionary loan of 11.5 billion under the bilateral agreement and as a matter of goodwill and our excellent diplomatic relations.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Ramyad!

Ms Ramyad: May I ask the hon. Minister, out of the 4,543 claims that he had mentioned whether they have been assessed and the assistance made whether it has been rejected or entertained, has been communicated to the different people who have claimed the compensation?

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as it concerns all those in the fisheries sector this is being taken care at the level of my Ministry and with regard to skippers and pleasure crafts, it is at the Ministry of Tourism with our hon. Deputy Prime Minister and as regards small claims this is already being attended, as I said earlier, 348 individuals have been paid and the rest have been submitted to the insurer and some are still being finalised.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary! Hon. Ramful!

Mr Ramful: Can we have an indication from the hon. Minister. Globally, what is the claim that Government has made vis-à-vis the insurer if there is any global sum and how much has been paid so far?

Mr Maudhoo: I do not have the total information, Mr Speaker, Sir. For the total amount claimed, I do not have the information right now. If you have a particular one, I can answer.

Mr Speaker: Hon. David!

CONSTITUENCY NO. 1 – CHILDREN PLAYGROUNDS – MAINTENANCE

(No. B/664) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the Municipal children playgrounds located in Constituency No. 1, Grand River North West and Port Louis West, he will state where matters stand as to the maintenance, rehabilitation and upgrading thereof.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Municipal Council of Port Louis that the 12 children playgrounds located in Constituency No. 1 are regularly cleaned and mowed by the council and it is to be noted that –

- (i) repairs of play equipment have been completed at children playgrounds at La Tour Koenig, Emmanuel Anquetil, GRNW, Borstal and Montebello;
- (ii) lighting and painting works have been completed at the children playgrounds at La Tour Koenig, Emmanuel Anquetil, Camp Chapelon and Morcellement

Raffray, whereas lighting works have been completed at GRNW and Borstal children playgrounds;

- (iii) lighting, fencing and painting works have been completed at children playgrounds at Débarcadère and Montée S;
- (iv) painting and fencing works have been completed at children playgrounds at Cité Dargahed and St Louis, and
- (v) new play equipment will be fixed by the Contractor by end of August 2021 at children playgrounds at GRNW, Débarcadère, Montée S, Camp Chapelon, Morcellement Raffray, Cité Dargahed,, St Louis and Cité Mauvilac.

Mr David: M. le président, en lien avec ma question, je tiens à faire ressortir que nous avons à Plaine Lauzun un jardin d'enfant qui a été détruit. Ce jardin d'enfants réhabilité en 1998 ...

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr David: ... par le ministre des collectivités locales de l'époque le Dr. David a été rasé en 2018 pour le projet du Métro Express. Puis-je demander au vice-Premier ministre ce qui est prévu pour la réhabilitation du jardin d'enfants de Plaine Lauzun ?

Dr. Husnoo: Well, I do not have any information about this but I can look into it. I do not have this information with me now.

Mr Speaker: Next question. Hon. Quirin!

COVID-19 VACCINES – DOSES & TYPES

(No. B/665) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the COVID-19 vaccines, he will state the number of doses and types thereof purchased by Government and obtained as donation from friendly countries as at to date, respectively, indicating the –

- (a) number of persons vaccinated and types of vaccine administered as at to date under the National Deployment and Vaccination Programme;
- (b) actual stock thereof, and
- (c) additional number of doses thereof required to reach 70% herd immunity and the period targeted therefor.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, as at today, the total number of doses of COVID-19 vaccines procured by my Ministry is as follows –

- (i) 62,400 doses of AstraZeneca vaccines;
- (ii) 100,000 doses of Covishield vaccines;
- (iii) 200,000 doses of Covaxin vaccines;
- (iv) 1,000,000 doses of Sinopharm vaccines, and
- (v) 60,000 doses of Component I of Sputnik vaccines.

As regards, vaccines received as donation –

- (a) 100,000 doses of Covishield vaccines were received from the Government of India on 22 January 2021;
- (b) 100,000 doses Sinopharm vaccines from the Republic of China on 13 April 2021, and
- (c) 5,000 doses of Hayat Vax from the United Arab States on 22 May 2021.

With regard to part (a) of the question, in accordance with our National Deployment and Vaccination Plan, the National Vaccination Campaign started on 26 January 2021 and is ongoing.

As at 07 July 2021 –

- (a) 140,082 persons have been administered their first dose of Covishield/AstraZeneca;
- (b) 100,119 persons have received their first dose of Covaxin, and
- (c) 356,054 have got their first shot of Sinopharm.

Likewise, as at 07 July 2021 –

- (a) 109,243 persons have been administered their second dose of Covishield/AstraZeneca;
- (b) 98,088 persons have received their second dose of Covaxin, and
- (c) 126,012 have got their second dose of Sinopharm.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that as at 09 July 2021, there is a stock of –

- (i) 26,660 doses of the Covishield/AstraZeneca vaccines and 880 doses of COVAXIN for second dose administration;
- (ii) 579,092 doses of the Sinopharm vaccines for the first and second dose administration, and
- (iii) 60,000 doses of Component I of the Sputnik vaccines for first dose administration.

In reply to part (c) of the question, as at 13 July 2021, a total number of 1,627,400 doses of the COVID-19 vaccines have been received which will enable us to vaccinate 813,700 persons.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this represents 64.3% of our population and it is expected that the first dose and second dose administration of the 813,700 persons will be completed by end of September 2021.

Mr Quirin: Merci, M. le président, peut-on savoir de l'honorable ministre si son ministère compte mettre en place une campagne de communication claire et précise tout en mettant l'emphase sur les avantages de la vaccination et cela afin d'encourager les sceptiques et les retardataires à se faire vacciner ?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, from the beginning of the campaign, intensive campaigns are done for people to vaccinate and I believe that is why we have reached, yesterday we have already crossed 600,000 doses. Vaccines are already being administered along with the second doses, that is also progressing very fast and I think that, so far, the daily doses being administered to so many people, get beyond 13,000 that we were not expected and in line of those who are attending the vaccination centres, I believe that the progress is adequate and in the future if the need be to again do a campaign for vaccinations, the Ministry will definitely go on this side.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, il y a certains pays dont la Grande-Bretagne qui préconisent une troisième dose de façon à mieux protéger leur population contre les variants, tels que le variant Delta. Peut-on savoir si on envisage d'en faire de même ici à Maurice car nous le savons tous qu'avec le temps, l'efficacité des deux premières doses diminue ?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member is totally right, vaccines if they need to be repeated after certain months or after one year, the Ministry will obviously go along this line as it has been for so many vaccinations, even for flu vaccination, it is a campaign that is being done yearly. And obviously, for the vaccines that have already been administered, this campaign, I believe it will go for a long duration of time.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Uteem, last supplementary!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The question relates to donations from friendly countries. The President of the United States, Joe Biden has stated that the United States is going to distribute 500 million doses of vaccine to various countries in the African Union. May I know from the hon. Minister, whether Mauritius is one of the beneficiaries, and

whether there have been talks between our two countries to see what vaccines we will get and how much?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, in this respect the COVAX Facility where these vaccinations will be channelled, has informed my Ministry on 06 July 2021 that Mauritius will be receiving 165,600 doses of Johnson & Johnson vaccines as donation as part of the COVAX dose-sharing mechanism, maybe by end of July or in the beginning of September. So, the doses will be 165,600.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Quirin, move to your question!

LA VALETTE – INTEGRATED SOCIAL HOUSING ESTATE - PUBLIC TRANSPORT

(No. B/666) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to public transport at the Integrated Social Housing Estate at La Valette, he will state if he is aware of the hardship caused to the inhabitants due to a lack thereof and, if so, indicate the remedial actions taken in relation thereto, if any and, if not, why not.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the National Land Transport Authority (NLTA) that the locality of La Valette-Bambous is currently served by buses operating along Routes 52, Bambous-Port Louis and 229, Bambous-Rose-Hill as follows –

- Route 22, Bambous-Port Louis which is served by the NTC. In the morning at –
 - (i) 06 00 hours;
 - (ii) 07 00 hours, and
 In the afternoon at –
 - (i) 16 00 hours;
 - (ii) 16 40 hours, and
 - (iii) 18 10 hours.
- Route 229, Bambous-Rose-Hill, served by the UBS, in the morning at –
 - (i) 06 00 hours;
 - (ii) 06 40 hours;
 - (iii) 07 10 hours;

(iv) 08 10 hours, and

(v) 11 30 hours.

And in the afternoon at –

(i) 14 50 hours;

(ii) 15 15 hours;

(iii) 16 40 hours, and

(iv) 17 20 hours.

With regard to the transport problems being encountered by the inhabitants of the Integrated Social Housing Estate at La Valette, I am made to understand, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the residents have to walk a long distance, more than 1km to reach the bus stop at Winners Bambous, at the main road of Bambous, in order to avail the public transport outside the scheduled timetable or whenever buses do not come on time. In order to remediate this situation, I am informed that the NLTA has on 14 June 2021 invited application for taxi licences to serve the said region and the closing date for the submission of the application is 16 July 2021.

Additionally, my Ministry is contemplating in producing a dedicated shuttle bus service, the ‘H’ Licence in that locality in order to enhance accessibility to bus transport system by the inhabitants. To that effect, amendments to the Road Traffic Act include the provision of the new ‘H’ Public Service Licence Vehicle is under process at the level of my Ministry. Subsequently, the NLTA will ensure prompt implementation of this ‘H’ Licence accordingly. Furthermore, the NLTA has been requested to effect close monitoring to ensure that buses are available as per the timetable.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, selon les informations qui me sont parvenues, en week-end la situation est pire et il n’y a qu’un seul bus le matin, et les habitants de la région éprouvent des difficultés si jamais ils ont quitté leur endroit le matin pour retourner chez eux l’après-midi ou le soir. De ce fait, l’honorable ministre peut-il s’assurer que des ajustements soient aussi apportés à ce niveau ?

Mr Ganoo: I will certainly look into the matter, Mr Speaker, Sir. Besides the point raised by the hon. Member, there are some complaints received from the inhabitants of La Valette with regard to other issues regarding the buses not respecting the timetable, that is why I said we have requested the NLTA to monitor the situation. But, I will certainly look into the issue raised by the hon. Member.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Minister, whether he has received representations, or his officers, the NLTA or his *attaché de presse*, concerning the quality of buses? So, we have seen, I have heard, myself, representations made by the inhabitants on radio, I would say good suggestions also, with regard to the quality of buses, the cleanliness, the sheets and so on. If ever the attention of the companies have been drawn and inspectors have been asked to verify the buses?

Mr Ganoo: In fact, I did answer in my reply, Mr Speaker, Sir, that it could be that the buses do not come in time, they do not respect the timetable and the regularity of service. I have received complaints to that effect and this is why I said we have asked the NLTA to monitor closely the situation.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Quirin, move to your question!

TRUST FUND FOR EXCELLENCE IN SPORTS - BOARD COMPOSITION & BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/667) **Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the Trust Fund for Excellence in Sports, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) if the composition of the Board thereof has been renewed and, if so, indicate same and the date of appointment in each case,
- (b) the list of the beneficiaries thereunder for financial year 2020-2021, discipline-wise, indicating the quantum disbursed in each case and if same will be reviewed for financial year 2021-2022.

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the Trust Fund for Excellence in Sports is currently running three schemes, namely –

1. support to students/athletes pursuing secondary, prevocational school's studies either locally or abroad;
2. support to students/athletes pursuing tertiary, vocational studies either locally or abroad, and
3. the State Recognition Allowance Scheme for retired athletes.

In addition to the three schemes, the Trust Fund for Excellence in Sports is also running an *ad hoc* scheme, namely: support to athletes for the Olympic Games, Paris 2024.

With regard to part (a) of the question, the board composition of the Trust Fund for Excellence in Sports was renewed on 11 September 2020. Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am tabling the composition of the Trust Fund for Excellence in Sports Board.

With regard to (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that for the Financial Year 2020-2021, there were 246 beneficiaries under the four schemes, being run by the Trust Fund for Excellence in Sports, and the total amount disbursed to the beneficiaries for the same period is Rs11,280,077. Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am tabling the list of beneficiaries discipline-wise and the quantum disbursed in each case.

I wish to reassure the House and all the beneficiaries of the Trust Fund for Excellence in Sports, the Trust Fund is not envisaging a review of the quantum payable under each scheme for the Financial Year 2021-2022.

Thank you.

Mr Quirin: Merci M. le président. Dans les dotations budgétaires 2021-2022, la somme allouée au *Trust Fund for Excellence in Sports* est passée de 19 millions à 12 millions. Et, de ce fait, dans une politique où on soutient au maximum les athlètes de haut niveau, peut-on savoir pourquoi est prévue une baisse aussi importante dans le budget du *Trust Fund for Excellence in Sports* ?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, comme je viens de le dire nous n'allons pas diminuer le montant alloué à chaque athlète dans les différents *schemes*. Même si le budget global a diminué, le budget que nous avons reçu du ministère des Finances nous permettra de continuer à soutenir nos athlètes avec le même *quantum*.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, l'honorable ministre peut-il nous donner les noms des athlètes et leurs disciplines respectives qui bénéficient d'une allocation pour leur paiement de leurs études universitaires à Maurice et à l'étranger et de nous préciser la somme qui est leur allouée ?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, les noms se retrouvent dans la liste que j'ai *table*. Il y a plusieurs, donc ce sera un peu difficile de les lire tous.

Mr Quirin: Dernière question, M. le président, peut-on savoir vu que l'honorable ministre a déposé la liste de membre du *Board*, je ne l'ai pas sous les yeux, peut-il nous dire qui c'est qui occupe le poste *Chief Executive Officer*?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, à l'heure actuelle le *Chairperson* du *Board* c'est le *PS* de mon ministère et nous n'avons pas de *CEO* depuis le dernier renouvellement du *Board* et c'est un officier de mon ministère qui est en charge du *day-to-day running of the Trust Fund* et je peux dire que grâce à cela aussi nous avons pu quand même économiser pas mal d'argent. A titre indicatif, la dernière *Chief Executive* touchait autour de R 75,360 mensuellement avec un *travelling allowance* de R 11,500 mensuellement, tandis que l'*Officer in Charge*, qui fait tout le travail qu'un *CEO* aurait dû faire, touche seulement R 15,000. Et donc c'est un peu cette différence qu'on économise qui nous permet de donner le maximum de soutien à nos athlètes.

Mr Speaker: Your next PQ!

MACOSS - COMPOSITION

(No. B/668) **Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the Mauritius Council of Social Service, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the composition of the Executive Committee thereof, indicating the –

- (a) date of appointment of the Chairperson and members thereof;
- (b) names of the other office bearers thereof, indicating in each case the date of appointment;
- (c) number of meetings thereof held, and
- (d) number of staff attached thereto, indicating their respective responsibilities.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Mauritius Council of Social Service is an independent statutory body. It does not fall under the ambit, control or responsibility of my Ministry.

Mr Quirin: Donc doit-on déduire que l'honorable ministre n'a aucun droit de regard sur tout ce qui se passe au niveau de la MACOSS, sur le mauvais fonctionnement, sur le comité exécutif qui se retrouve, comment dirai-je, où le Chairman ou le *Chairperson* fait ce qu'il veut, la pluie et le beau temps, il expulse, il ne reconnaît plus certaines organisations qui

n'arrivent même plus à payer leurs cotisation ou l'affaire où une affaire a du être entrer en court, est-ce que l'honorable ministre est en train de nous qu'elle n'a aucun, aucun droit de regard sur tout ce qui est fait au niveau de la MACOSS ?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do hope the hon. Member has listened to what I have just said. I have just replied saying that MACOSS does not fall under my responsibility. Now you are saying that MACOSS is doing this and that, so this is not my concern. You have to listen to what I have said. MACOSS does not fall under my purview.

Mr Quirin : M. le président, peut-on savoir si...

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary! It looks like you do not have supplementary questions. Last one!

Mr Quirin: *Yes, thank you.* Peut-on savoir de l'honorable ministre si la MACOSS reçoit/perçoit des allocations, des *grants* du ministère de la Sécurité sociale?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: MACOSS does not receive any grant from the Ministry of Social Security. MACOSS receives financial assistance from NSIF, National Social Inclusion Foundation as an NGO. That is it.

Mr Speaker: Time over!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism (Mr S. Obeegadoo): 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.

Mr Ganoo seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

(4.00 p.m.)

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

METRO EXPRESS PROJECT - PRESS ARTICLES

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr A. Ganoo): Mr Speaker Sir, I propose

to make a Statement with regard to the recent articles in the press and to the points raised by hon. Osman Cassam Mahomed during the Parliamentary Sitting of Friday, 09 July 2021 and provide clarifications on the issues raised in relation to the Metro Express project.

Mr Speaker, Sir, first of all, the construction of the Metro Express project started in 2017. The Phase 1 connecting Port Louis to Rose Hill over a length of 12.5 km was successfully e-launched by the hon. Prime Minister Pravind Kumar Jugnauth and the Prime Minister of India, Sri Narendra Modi on 03 October 2019. Following which, on the 22 December 2019, a free passenger service was implemented and subsequently the commercial service started on 10 January 2020.

Indeed, since the start of the operations, Metro Express has been running successfully and has demonstrated more than satisfactory performance, as evidenced by the positive feedback from passengers using the high-quality service provided by Metro Express Ltd.

To date, nearly 4 million passengers have traveled onboard the Light Rail Vehicles, this, despite the occurrence of two lockdowns and the current difficult situation worldwide for all transport operators.

Recently, the Phase 2A which connects Rose Hill to Quatre Bornes was launched by the Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth on 20 June 2021 and on the same day commercial service started.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with the coming into operation of the new Quatre Bornes service, the ridership has more than doubled.

Moreover, a survey conducted recently shows the enthusiasm and satisfaction of the metro passengers with MEL services and the new LRT system which procures comfort, security and a rapid and reliable service.

As for the works in progress in the Caudan area in Port Louis, they form mostly part of the ongoing development of the Metro Express project for Phase 2, with an integration element with various infrastructural facilities in this part of Port Louis.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the works being carried out by Larsen & Toubro, will be at their own cost as per the contract and same will include the connectivity and integration works of Port Louis Victoria Station and Victoria Urban Terminal, the maintenance and enabling works at the Caudan entrance, erection of a temporary new rail station, the construction of a bridge

over the Le Pouce River; a new platform at the Waterfront and the planning for the construction of the Aapravasi Ghat main station which is waiting for UNESCO approval.

Mr Speaker, Sir, at the Victoria Urban Terminal, connectivity works such as the installation of the elevator and escalators, canopy, among others are planned in the coming months and will take approximately 4 months. For now, the Victoria Urban Terminal has built an overhead pedestrian structure that connects to the metro Victoria station.

Mr Speaker Sir, along this section of the alignment, there is also the Le Pouce Bridge, which needs to be upgraded to cater for the metro light rail system. This will entail preparatory works, traffic diversions, piling works, utilities diversions and girders installation.

In addition, as part of Phase 2B, a station at Aapravasi Ghat has been planned. However, pending approval of UNESCO, MEL requested for a temporary platform to be constructed by the Waterfront's underpass as a temporary measure to facilitate commuters' journey to Immigration Square and to the surrounding.

Furthermore, works on the Aapravasi Ghat Metro main station will start once approval from UNESCO is obtained for its appropriate location. Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the numerous projects in this region, L&T is also undertaking enabling works at the entrance of the Caudan ramp taking into account the land settlement issue that arose at the Decaen Flyover. The works on the new Caudan temporary station will be completed by mid-August, at which point, the train operations will temporarily be shifted from the PLV station to this new Caudan station until mid-December 2021. All facilities at this new Caudan Flyover Station will be the same as the Port Louis Victoria Central Station and also a shuttle service will be available for convenience of passengers to Port Louis Victoria Station.

Mr Speaker, Sir, L&T, being the Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) contractor, is responsible for all the works I mentioned earlier including the costs.

M. le président, je voudrais préciser à la Chambre qu'il n'y a eu aucune malfaçon ou rampe défectueuse. A la suite d'inspections par le contracteur L&T, un léger affaissement du sol a été détecté et immédiatement des mesures préventives ont été mises en place; parmi, la vitesse d'exploitation des *Light Rail Vehicles*, dans cette zone, a été réduite. Je dois affirmer que ce léger affaissement du sol, n'a aucunement compromis l'opération du Metro Express et la sécurité des passagers.

I repeat, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is no *malfaçon* or no *rampe défectueuse*, as alleged in some media reports.

The matter is being followed closely by my Ministry.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

COVID-19 - VACCINATION PROGRAMME

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I wish to make a statement on our COVID-19 Vaccination Programme.

As previously stated, in January 2021, Government approved the National Deployment and Vaccination Plan for COVID-19 vaccines, developed by my Ministry and with the support and collaboration of the World Health Organisation (WHO).

The Plan highlights the vaccination of the target population of Mauritius, including Rodrigues and Agaléga, as follows -

- Priority No. 1 covers 15,000 frontline healthcare workers, 5,000 frontline Police and Prison Officers and 25,000 other frontliners;
- Priority No. 2 covers 9,000 healthcare workers from the public and private sectors; 10,000 personnel from the Mauritius Police Force and 52,000 other essential workers;
- Priority No. 3 covers persons above the age of 60 years, and
- Priority No. 4 covers adults with at least two comorbidities, residents of dedicated homes, teaching and non-teaching staff of educational institutions, fire-fighters, staff of supermarkets, bank, front office personnel and scavenging personnel.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our vaccination programme started on 26 January 2021 in Mauritius and on 06 February 2021 in Rodrigues. The vaccination programme started with the front liners, that is, the medical staff, Port and Airport staff and staff of the tourism sector. It continued with the vaccination of the senior citizens and patients with two comorbidities.

Given that the vaccination team of my Ministry and the private clinics had the capacity to administer the vaccines to 10,500 to 12,500 persons per day, my Ministry had worked out different scenarios.

Based on the assumption that 10,500 persons would be administered the vaccine per day, it was expected to immunize 62 % of the population by August 2021. In the initial phase, the vaccination was being carried out in the Regional Hospitals. Subsequently, in a bid to scale up the vaccination programme, vaccination was carried out in other settings having medical posts or medical facilities such as the port, airport, Police posts, hotels and other tourist resorts.

Mr Speaker, Sir, given the high response shown from the public to be vaccinated and in order to carry out the vaccination in a more conducive set up, the vaccination was thereafter carried out in large spaces. Vaccination was thus organised in spaces such as stadiums, village halls, sport complexes, gymnasiums and conference centres. This means that, in addition to the five regional hospitals, vaccination is being carried out at 16 dedicated centres.

Moreover, there are three mobile teams who are carrying out vaccination at specific sites where there is a high demand, such as Universities and worksites.

In addition, as from 17 March 2021, the EDBMRU platform has been created to register applications for vaccination from business operators including SMEs, general retailers, grocery stores, planters, vegetable growers, animal breeders, fishermen and all operators dealing with the general public.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this considerable effort has enabled us to achieve one of our targets ahead of schedule. In fact, as at Monday 12 July 2021, a total of 600,215 persons have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. This represents 48% of the whole population and 60% of the population aged 18 and above. Further, as at 12 July 2021, 391,443 persons have received a second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. This represents 31.3% of the whole population vaccinated with the 1st and 2nd dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has been informed by the African Union and the COVAX facility of the imminent availability of Johnson and Johnson vaccines and Pfizer vaccines. This would enable us to consider extending vaccination to our adolescents in the age bracket of 12 to 17 years. This would still ensure better protection from the virus.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I seize this opportunity to thank the personnel of my Ministry who have been at the forefront to achieve this feat. I am confident that with their dedication and unflinching support, we will soon achieve our overall target which is to vaccinate at least 60% of our population before September 2021.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Dr. Boolell: In the light of the statement, I can put question ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: First of all, it is good you have the floor. Introduce what would that be, is it a point of order, a point of clarification, a point of explanation?

Dr. Boolell: In the light of the statement made by the hon. Minister, I have a right to ask for certain queries, which is normal practice. I have done it before. You can refer to Erskine May.

Mr Speaker: Wait!

Dr. Boolell: Yes, sure.

Mr Speaker: There should be no debate, you can ask for some clarifications.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, Sir. In the light of what the hon. Minister has stated, can he enlighten the House as to whether Government intends to abandon its policy of Zero-COVID or COVID-free and to move towards what we call a policy and strategy of living with COVID?

(Interruptions)

No, it is related.

(Interruptions)

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the statement I made about the...

Mr Speaker: Order, please!

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the statement I made about the vaccination programme has nothing to do with the COVID cases that have been in Mauritius since quite some time.

Mr Speaker: So Clerk, move on!

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Social Contribution and Social Benefits Bill (No. XII of 2021) was read a first time.

*Second Reading***THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT BOARD (AMENDMENT)
BILL****(NO. V OF 2021)**

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Construction Industry Development Board (Amendment) Bill (No. V of 2021).

Question again proposed.

(04.13 p.m.)

The Minister of Arts and Culture (Mr A. Teeluck): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me at the start to congratulate hon. Bobby Hurreeram for coming to the House with this Bill and for proposing these amendments to the Construction Industry Development Board Act.

This Amendment Bill comes to the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, after extensive consultations with the relevant stakeholders. The amendments proposed in this Bill have faced resistance to some extent.

Changing established practices often meet such resistance. It is normal and very natural. But what we need to understand is that these changes are required today, so as to provide for a more appropriate and modern legislative framework in view of the accelerating development in the construction industry. These changes will help the country in meeting its objectives in terms of development. These changes, Mr Speaker, Sir, align with the fast-growing construction industry in Mauritius.

The country over the past few years has been a *chantier* with so many high-rise buildings, with state of the art designs, numerous Governmental and private sector infrastructural projects and other real estate projects being constructed, with Government construction projects being implemented, worth billions of rupees.

The construction industry is not just about buildings or infrastructural work, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is an industry which has an economic incidence on so many other sectors, including the labour sector, with job opportunities at several levels. Hon. Osman Mahomed said it, if we limit the statistics only to registered professionals practicing in this sector, there is no less than 1,400 professionals, Architects, Engineers and QS combined.

Mr Speaker, Sir, despite COVID-19, les *chantiers* across the island have not fallen through whether it be in the private sector or the public sector. *Au contraire, le secteur de la construction connaît aujourd'hui une croissance.*

And, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is why these amendments, these changes to the existing law are important.

It is again important to highlight that professionals of the sector have been consulted. The hon. Minister Hurreeram has been attentive to the representations made by all the professionals, including architects and their input and suggestions have been taken into account even after the Bill was tabled for the first reading in the House.

Hon. Osman Mohamed will perfectly agree that once a Bill goes through the first reading, any amendment to the proposed Bill may only intervene at Committee Stage and thus, these amendments are circulated during the second reading of the Bill. This is Standing Orders. There is nothing surprising about amendments being circulated during the second reading.

We should, on the contrary, commend the hon. Minister for showing his willingness to work *en accord* with the relevant stakeholders. When he knew professionals of the sector are requesting for changes to the proposed Bill, he promptly reacted and acted thereon. *Moi, au contraire, je lui dis bravo!*

Mr Speaker, Sir, amongst the changes, one which has been largely canvassed and debated by professionals is, of course, the possibility for foreign architects to practice in Mauritius initially without the need for them to enter into a joint venture with local architects or local firms, but now amended, so that there is a requirement for a collaboration. We need to understand and see the rationale behind this proposed amendment.

Today, a foreign engineer or a foreign Quantity Surveyor is not subjected by this condition which applies to architects, that is the requirement for a joint venture with a local professional. Right now, foreign expertise is sought on so many occasions, on so many projects and so many foreign architects are already working on so many local projects, local projects of international standard.

Let us take the example of developments in the real estate sector. We aim at attracting foreigners in acquiring real estate projects, property and these real estate projects are designed with specificities beyond the local cultural factors. Big smart cities and other constructions of similar nature today aim to equal international projects and, Mr Speaker, Sir,

I talk as the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage. Today, we need these foreign expertise for the restoration of our heritage sites. So many of our heritage sites date back to the colonial times and we require foreign and specific expertise in the restoration of these sites. Those who have specifically been trained to work on colonial buildings and these amendments open doors to these foreign expertise.

Therefore, we need foreign expertise to match the need of the market. Okay, let us say that these were already satisfied by foreign architects joint venturing with local architects but these amendments, they do not preclude joint ventures. These amendments do not restrict joint ventures. Actually, it leaves room for a better free-willed negotiation and collaboration with local architects to work on local projects. This Bill brings all the professionals in the construction sector at par with the same set of rules of collaboration.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Bill also proposes to clear an existing ambiguity in law and here, I refer to the consequential amendments being proposed under the Bill to certain definitions applying to quantity surveyors, architects and engineers. I will take as example the definition of “practice of engineering” which, henceforth, will be read as including in addition to community planning, “bid evaluations and includes the preparation of bidding documents” in the field of engineering and as I said, with similar amendments brought to definitions for quantity surveyors and the practice of architecture.

It is clear in law, as at now, that professional Quantity Surveyors may handle the commercial aspects of construction projects. It is clear in law because the current definition of the term quantity surveying in the Professional Quantity Surveyors Council Act 2013 expressly includes the commercial aspect of construction projects whereas the Registered Professional Engineer Council Act 1965 has a restrictive definition which would suggest that this definition would have the effect of limiting the scope that professional engineers can undertake and which may suggest that the scope of work would exclude commercial aspects of projects.

Having said so, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is nothing expressly provided in the Registered Professional Engineer Council Act which prevents a professional engineer from handling the commercial aspects of construction, civil engineering or mechanical and electrical engineering projects. If I go by the representations of the Association of Consulting Engineers, professional engineers have the skills and knowledge to deal with commercial aspects of projects. I am not an engineer, but I am made to understand that engineering

courses at undergraduate or postgraduate level include modules for subjects such as contracts of construction, bill of quantities and costing, supervision, contract management, price increase and claims which means professional engineers have competencies in relation to this particular matter and there is no reason why the “practise of engineering” for instance, should not be extended to the preparation of bid documents.

In any event, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am made to understand that this is the current practise and engineers do get involved in the preparation of bidding documents, though the ambiguity prevailed because of a lack of clarity in law and the further amendments proposed to clause 29, not only brings clarity but also certainty on the mandate of the different professionals in the sector by expressly providing the specific field in which the respective professionals are meant to prepare the bidding documents.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, this amendment is most welcomed and, again, Mr Speaker, Sir, I congratulate hon. Hurreeram for coming to the House with this Bill and I am sure that these amendments will not only cure certain *lacunes* in our laws but will also help to *redynamiser le secteur de la construction*.

I am done, Mr Speaker, Sir. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Tour, you have the floor!

(4:24 p.m.)

Mrs J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, before I begin my speech, please allow me to take the time of the House in the spirit of debates to share my views on a few points brought forward by hon. Osman Mahomed. In his intervention, the latter criticised the CIDB for being too focused on administrative issues and just collecting fees. He also recognised that since the creation of the institution in 1997, the objective laid by the then Government never materialised.

Rightly so, Mr Speaker, Sir, because it is factually correct to suggest that the CIDB has effectively been in operation since 2014, when it started the registration exercise and the achievements of the CIDB today speak for themselves. Just to name a few, Mr Speaker, Sir, as an MQA approved training institution, CIDB has conducted numerous training courses and workshops, to date, for the benefit of the construction industry stakeholders, using local as well as internationally renowned resource persons and the CIDB has produced a guide to house construction that highlights sustainability principles for the benefit of all stakeholders.

The hon. Member, Mr Speaker, Sir, also took example of Singapore but he was very selective in his choice of examples, brushing an ideal business model of Singapore but he fails to mention examples of structures and excavation work failures.

For instance, on the Building and Construction Authority of Singapore's website –

- 6 examples of Temporary Earth Retaining Structures/Excavation Works Failures are listed;
- 2 examples of Foundation Failures are listed, and
- 1 Roof Trusses Failure listed.

We can certainly learn from the CIDB of Singapore but we should be careful when we compare ours to theirs and the quality of the structures being constructed.

Hon. Mahomed also suggested that foreign companies will come with their foreign labour and, thus reduce the chances of employment of our local professionals. This statement is not correct. It will certainly depend on the competencies of our professionals and the projects to be implemented. Regardless of that, as an engineer, I think that he should be aware that currently contracts below Rs300 m. are reserved for local contractors as per the Public Procurement Act and this is a bold measure taken by Government to guarantee that our local contractors benefit from public contracts.

Mr Speaker, Sir, also allow me to also reassure the hon. Member who suggested that foreign consultants should partner with local firms with experience. I am informed that this has already been decided whereby a minimum of ten years' experience will be required from local partners, well before the intervention of the hon. Member on Friday.

So, Mr Speaker, sir, let me seize this opportunity to congratulate my colleague, hon. Hurreeram, Minister of National infrastructure and Community Development for coming up with such bold and prompt actions to further consolidate the construction industry through the introduction of the CIDB (Amendment) Bill 2021.

In his recent Budget Speech 2021-2022, the Minister of Finance, Economic Development and Planning laid much emphasis on the construction industry where Government is in the process of investing billions of rupees in this sector, whether for the construction of drains, schools, hospitals and dams, amongst others. He stated and I quote –

“The surge in public sector investment over the next three years will be a tremendous stimulus to the construction industry.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, the presentation of this Bill in Parliament today translates the firm commitment and ambitious goal of Government in addressing the shortcomings of the current legislative frameworks and replacing them by a modern and comprehensive one to better adapt to respond to the new challenges, subsequent to the emergence of new trends in the construction industry in a rapidly changing global economy.

Mr Speaker, sir, since we took office in November 2019, a holistic approach has been adopted as Government is constantly working towards introducing new legal requirements and compliances like this piece of legislation so that industries and their stakeholders can be more efficient and productive despite the fact that we are evolving in a new normal. And, protecting the population against discrimination, precarious employment, the health and sanitary situation we are currently facing and encourage the emergence of new industries, such as the emerging technologies, and in fact we recently voted this new legislation to hearten this industry last week.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our efforts have not been an easy task for sure. While creating the flexibility needed for businesses to flourish, thrive and generate new jobs in a vibrant economy like ours, the law should make provision for security and protection of stakeholders to meet the imperatives of this dynamic world.

As we stand at the crossroads of history, I am proud to give my full support to the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development to bring this novel approach and testify our commitment as a caring Government.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the superiority of a person is not asserted through destruction, but through construction. From my perspective, the overarching objectives of this new legislative framework are positive and encouraging.

De ce côté de la Chambre, nous sommes un gouvernement qui construit. Nous sommes des bâtisseurs, et cette loi va nous permettre de construire la République de Maurice sur le roc, car ce texte de loi qui est présenté aujourd'hui par mon collègue vient répondre à des urgences dans le secteur de la construction.

Un secteur, M. le président, qui a été revigoré par les dernières mesures budgétaires du ministre des Finances. Rien que pour la construction des drains à Maurice et à Rodrigues, R 11 milliards seront investies par le gouvernement pour les trois prochaines années.

Là encore, M. le président, je ne parle que pour un item à savoir la construction des drains qui est devenu une nécessité absolue après les grosses pluies de mai dernier. Car si je

prends en considération les autres projets de développement annoncés dans le budget 2021-2022, qui va mobiliser tout le corps de métier dans le secteur de la construction, le gouvernement déboursera plus de R 20 milliards.

C'est pour dire, M. le président, à quel point l'enjeu est colossal, puisque durant les trois prochaines années, Maurice sera transformé en un chantier à ciel ouvert et même la BACECA, l'Association qui regroupe les compagnies de constructions à Maurice, s'est félicitée des mesures prises par le gouvernement pour ce secteur-clé de notre économie.

De ce fait, je voudrais encore une fois saluer le courage et l'audace du ministre Hurreeram qui s'est donné les moyens afin de revigorer ce texte de loi après plus que 13 ans.

Du reste, M. le président, dans son intervention lors des débats sur le budget, le ministre des Infrastructures nationales et du développement communautaire avait indiqué qu'il y avait un besoin urgent de revoir *The Construction Industry and Development Board Act* afin que le pays et les entrepreneurs locaux tirent le maximum de bénéfices du boom que connaît actuellement le secteur de la construction.

Selon mes recherches, il revient que le secteur de la construction à Maurice emploie plus de 56,000 personnes et plus de 7,000 travailleurs étrangers, alors que le poids économique de cette industrie pèse quelques R 70 milliards. Avant la COVID-19, cette industrie tablait sur une croissance à deux chiffres, ce qui fait de ce secteur un pilier de notre économie et représente entre 4 à 5 % du Produit Intérieur Brut (PIB).

M. le président, me basant sur ces chiffres, il est évident que c'est une industrie qu'on doit désormais être mieux encadrée, structurée et professionnalisée.

Ceci dit, le ministre a déjà indiqué que tous les acteurs de ce secteur ont été consultés dans le cadre de l'élaboration de ce texte de loi et je suis convaincu qu'ils trouveront un consensus juste et équitable pour l'épanouissement de l'industrie de la construction à Maurice.

Néanmoins, l'objectif de cette loi n'est pas de s'immiscer dans les affaires des professionnels du métier car ils disposent chacun de leur *rules and regulations*. Au contraire, ces amendements viennent consolider la position des uns et des autres dans le secteur.

D'autre part, M. le président, je suis ravie en tant que jeune car ces amendements ne vont pas uniquement assurer la pérennité du secteur de la construction, mais ils vont

également permettre à nos jeunes professionnels, qu'ils soient architectes, ingénieurs ou QS, avides de se bâtir une solide expérience dans le domaine, de se frotter à ses experts étrangers.

Ce sera une opportunité unique d'acquérir des connaissances, d'avoir accès aux dernières technologies, et à un partage de savoir qui n'est malheureusement pas aussi accessible actuellement. La faute, M. le président, à des conditions archaïques et abusives, imposées aux consultants étrangers qui les dissuadent de venir à Maurice.

Nos jeunes professionnels ont besoin de ce tremplin afin de pouvoir collaborer avec des étrangers sur ces projets d'envergure sur le sol Mauricien car ce sont eux qui seront les bâtisseurs de demain. C'est sur eux que reposera la lourde tâche assurer que notre infrastructure soit en phase avec les avancées dans le secteur de la construction. Et, cette connaissance, cette expertise et ce savoir-faire, elles s'acquièrent dès maintenant à un moment où le secteur de la construction connaît un vrai boom.

Avec le nombre de chantier à travers l'Ile, M. le président, il nous est primordial de saisir la balle au bond et d'ouvrir le marché. Le ministre l'a dit dans son discours, nous protégeons déjà nos opérateurs locaux. Il faut toutefois se rendre à l'évidence que pour cela il faut aller plus loin. Nous avons besoin de cet échange d'expertise et il ne faut pas ralentir ce processus, voir l'en empêcher avec des règlements rétrogrades.

Nous ne devons pas avoir peur de s'ouvrir au monde, bien au contraire. Ces amendements ne peuvent qu'être bénéfiques pour le secteur de la construction, qui se positionne aujourd'hui comme un solide pilier de notre économie par ces temps de crise.

Ce gouvernement est un gouvernement social et cette philosophie se traduit dans chaque projet de loi présenté dans cette auguste Assemblée, M. le président. Ce n'est pas aujourd'hui que nous allons déroger à cette règle et permettre à des étrangers de nous exploiter au détriment de nos jeunes professionnels.

Sans aucun doute, donc, M. le président, les amendements proposés vont propulser ce secteur, et c'est à ce titre que voudrais, avec votre permission, formuler une suggestion au ministre concernant ce que j'appelle le *community-based participation*. Je viens avec cette suggestion après une expérience que j'ai personnellement vécue dans ma circonscription, notamment dans la région de Cité la Cure, où pour un projet, le contracteur avait sollicité de la main-d'œuvre des habitants de cette région. Cette expérience, je dois l'avouer, a donné des résultats inespérés et surtout que ce projet a été mené jusqu'au bout sans anicroche. D'où j'espère, et je fais confiance au ministre Hurreeram pour la synergie que ces amendements

apporteront au secteur de la construction, pourvoyeur d'emploi par excellence, tout en valorisant les talents et les aptitudes dont regorgent notre pays, car je sais qu'il existe d'autres régions comme Cité la Cure où les habitants veulent, à leur manière, participer au développement de leur localité.

M. le président, je voudrais aussi mentionner les amendements qui sont apportés à la section 20 du *CIDB Act* avec notamment l'inclusion d'une nouvelle section 20A sous le titre *Registration of Service Provider and Supplier*. S'il y avait un exemple à donner que nous sommes un *caring Government*, il n'y a pas mieux comme exemple.

En effet, savez-vous, M. le président, combien de familles mauriciennes qui ont vu leur rêve d'avoir une maison s'évaporer en raison d'un contracteur véreux qui du jour au lendemain décide de quitter le chantier après avoir encaissé une bonne partie de l'argent du contrat ? Ils sont nombreux à être victimes de ces contracteurs sans scrupule. J'en ai moi-même fait l'expérience et je suis heureuse de constater que les amendements qui sont apportés à la section 20, principalement sous la sous-section 4 du *CIDB Act* viennent mettre bon ordre sur ce point.

M. le président, la politique de ce gouvernement, sous l'impulsion du Premier ministre, est de faire, d'ici 2024, que chaque famille mauricienne ait un toit. Quoi de mieux que d'établir des lois qui empêcheraient à certaines personnes de voler le rêve de ces familles qui ont choisi d'investir chaque roupie économisée dans la construction de leur demeure. Bientôt, le grand chantier des 12,000 maisons pour les personnes en situation de précarité sera lancé et malgré les sempiternelles critiques « *tou napa bon* » de l'opposition, le gouvernement, sous la direction du Premier ministre, Pravind Jugnauth, reste concentré sur ses projets et notre mission.

Et le projet du gouvernement, c'est avant tout de protéger chaque famille mauricienne. Les amendements qui sont proposés aujourd'hui vont dans ce sens et je suis fier non seulement de faire partie de ce gouvernement, mais aussi d'apporter mon humble contribution dans ce projet de loi.

M. le président, je voudrais aussi évoquer les changements qui s'opèrent au sein de l'industrie de la construction qui, comme je l'ai indiqué plus haut, est un gros pourvoyeur d'emploi et qui évolue aussi avec les nouvelles technologies.

A ce titre, je voudrais être la porte-parole des femmes qui depuis quelques années déjà ont commencé à investir les chantiers de construction à différents échelons. Ingénieure,

chauffeuse, cheffe de projets, ou encore maçon, ou autres. On voit de plus en plus des femmes sur les chantiers de construction. Je voudrais, de ce fait, faire une suggestion à l'honorable ministre, que dans les projets de construction des conditions adaptées soient mises en place pour ces femmes, afin de faciliter davantage leur intégration et leur épanouissement. Malgré la dureté de ce métier, une femme a besoin d'intimité et tout contracteur a besoin de respecter cela.

M. le président, quand la construction va, tout va à Maurice. Et désormais, depuis la reprise après le premier confinement national, le secteur de la construction se porte bien, puisque la BACECA a reconnu que les mesures prises dans le budget sont favorables au secteur de la construction.

À l'entame de la dernière partie de mon intervention, M. le président, *I will quote the CIDB Strategy Paper for the Construction Industry dated back July 2013 –*

« Over the past decade the construction industry has become a pillar of the Mauritian economy. On its own, it contributes on average 6% of the GDP and employs around 55,000 persons. Given the importance of this industry to the economy and its role in the context of the Maurice Île Durable Project, there is a need to have a clear direction for its future. »

Here we go, Mr Speaker, Sir, with this Amendment Bill, we now have a clear direction for the future of the construction industry.

Alors, M. le président, les membres de l'opposition peuvent continuer à nous critiquer, nos détracteurs peuvent continuer à s'acharner sur nous et crier BLD sur tous les toits. Ce gouvernement est un gouvernement social, et le gouvernement de Pravind Juganuth restera fidèle au programme sur lequel il a été élu, c'est à dire toujours mettre le peuple au centre de nos décisions, et c'est ensemble, *enn sel lepep enn sel nasion*, que nous continuerons à construire une île Maurice inclusive sur le roc.

Sur ces paroles, M. le président, *I commend the Bill to the House and I thank you* pour votre aimable attention.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Léopold! You may start!

Mr J. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, for calling me to speak.

Mr Speaker, Sir, construction is very important to our economy, it is an industry which generates jobs, and helps a lot in curbing unemployment. And this industry is among the biggest contributors to our GDP.

Modern Mauritius needs more appropriate and modern legislative framework to accelerate development in this industry. And it is clear, that modern Mauritius tends to embrace itself in all the sectors of construction, and it is noticeable, in particular, the engineering construction, be it the railway, heavy industry and other infrastructures which are so visible nowadays.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Amendment comes at the right moment, in the middle of COVID-19 pandemic, which has of course impacted on the construction industry. As the Amendment comes to ease the task of providers of construction works, construction services, suppliers of construction material and equipment, and so on, these new measures will bring remedial measures to the construction industry and giving the possibility to continue construction works in such difficult moment and in turn, reducing economic downturn and unemployment.

If we have been able to resist to the severely disrupted economy due to COVID-19, which have affected households, businesses, financial institutions, industrial establishments, and infrastructural companies, it is because of our healthy construction industry and our resilience to the present situation that is allowing Mauritius to continue with construction works.

And that is why I am supporting the Amendment tonight, as the Board will further ensure continuous supply of construction materials and labour through its mechanism, by making prompt assessment to potential suppliers to cope with the pressure caused by the current sanitary crisis.

Modernising this legislative framework, through this Amendment, means innovation in the construction industry, research, evidence based actions and the use of rapidly evolving technologies. This Bill will need to bring transforming performance and productivity in the construction industry. And for this to happen, the Construction Industry Development Council will need to be empowered, to ensure the highest standard, that all the professionals involved are regulated and their registration and eligibility are maintained to practice accordingly.

Innovation in construction can tackle the undersupply of housing. Mr Speaker, Sir, why is it that clients have fund for construction of new houses, but still demand is not satisfied? With the changes that this amendment will bring, this will help to palliate housing shortage, which will contribute to maintaining and making property prices affordable.

The construction industry is the final stage of housing supply. Therefore, the Board must be able to find ways for effective response to the housing demands by forecasting on the housing outlook in Mauritius. This capacity can be improved through innovation, of course.

Modernising the legislative framework also entails that the Board needs to ease and facilitate all skilled workers involved in construction industry, to keep skills and knowledge up to date. Nowadays, we need people in construction industry with knowledge that want to build for ourselves, for the future generation with respect to the environment.

Increase in population, increasing economic development and demand for more natural resources are putting pressure on our planet. So, Mr Speaker, Sir, in the same line of modernity, the legislative framework needs to give responsibility through its Council, to meet the needs of current population, while preserving the needs of future generation, by thoroughly assessing the know-how of Architects and Engineers.

The Council will need to have the responsibility to ensure that construction is done more ethically and transparently, transparency in procuring with construction suppliers who are more environmentally friendly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we need a Board which can assess a construction service and the Council needs to empower so that it can assess the principles of sustainable development industry to suppliers who can maximise the use of sustainable resources while causing less pollution and less waste and support the natural environment and habitats.

This Bill is also about the rethinking and reviewing of our construction labour model. Offering the same treatment to all professionals involved in construction industry is, in fact, actions which will help to reduce the industry's vulnerability to skill shortages.

As construction industry is one of the pillars of our economy, it is important that this industry remains alive. And this Bill will allow the Board to ensure a good recruitment practice which will impact on skill development and allow the introduction of more novel techniques. With the Metro Project, we are seeing that and one of the examples is the off-site construction techniques.

To achieve all these, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Council needs to certify, of course, all professionals involved in construction industry. Together, it must be a representative forum for all professional bodies, research association. As I have said, innovation needs to be evidence-based and representative of specialist business associations in the construction industry.

It is also important, with the infrastructural development in Mauritius, the council needs to encourage employers, through its structure, to uptake apprentices into employment in partnership with our education and training system, which is in line with the national education reform, to invest in skills to meet the needs of the country. This is my participation in this Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir.

I thank you for your kind attention.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I will suspend the Sitting for 30 minutes.

At 4.50 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.32 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

ANNOUNCEMENT

HON. ASSIRVADEN – ‘RADIO ONE’ – STATEMENT – 12 JULY 2021

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I have a short announcement. My attention has been drawn to a statement made by the hon. Patrick Assirvaden during the “*Face à Face*” programme on *Radio One* yesterday, 12 July, in which he almost accused me of not allowing hon. Members to raise points of order.

The hon. Assirvaden was referring to the Sitting of 09 July when, in the course of the winding-up speech of Dr. the hon. Jagutpal, Minister of Health and Wellness on the Optical Council Bill, Dr. the hon. Aumeer attempted to raise a point of clarification, to which I did not accede. Dr. the hon. Aumeer insisted, to which I once again informed him that he did not have the floor and I requested the hon. Minister to continue with his speech. However, Dr. the hon. Aumeer continued to insist, to which I once again informed him that I have already given my ruling and in view of his continued insistence, I ordered him out of the House.

I have to draw the attention of the House to Standing Order 39(13) (a) according to which no Member shall interrupt any other Member except on a point of order.

Clearly, since Dr. the hon. Aumeer was not raising a point of order, I could not give him the floor unless he had sought and obtained that the hon. Minister gave way for him to raise his point of clarification.

I must also add that the hon. Assirvaden attempted to compare the above situation to one which arose during a meeting of the Committee of Supply on the Appropriation Bill where he averred that on 22 June, the Deputy Speaker who was in the Chair at Committee of Supply apparently gave permission to the hon. Minister Ganoo to comment on a ruling which he had given.

I must state that this attempt to compare what took place before the Committee of Supply on 22 June and what happened on 09 July is totally inappropriate as the circumstances are not the same. In fact, according to Hansard, the Deputy Speaker never gave the floor and the permission to the hon. Minister to comment on his ruling.

It is regrettable that the hon. Assirvaden did not take the necessary precaution to consult the relevant Hansard before making such a statement on the radio, which I consider serious, misleading and a deliberate attempt to cast aspersion on the authority and the integrity of the Chair, which amounts to an offence of contempt of the Assembly under Section 6(1) (s) of the National Assembly (Privileges, Immunities and Powers) Act.

Thank you for your attention.

Hon. Mrs Mayotte!

(5:36 p.m.)

Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River): Merci, M. le président de me donner l'occasion de commenter sur les amendements proposés au projet de loi concernant le *Construction Industry Development Board*.

Tout d'abord, permettez-moi de féliciter le ministre de l'Infrastructure nationale et du développement communautaire, l'honorable Hurreeram pour ses efforts visant à corriger les écarts existant dans le *CIDB Act* de 2008 amendé en 2015 et 2018, respectivement.

Pour les moins érudits, permettez-moi, M. le président, de dresser un petit tableau bref de ce qu'est le *CIDB*. Le conseil de développement de l'industrie de la construction, plus communément appelée *CIDB*, est un organe statuaire établi en vertu de la loi *CIDB* de 2008. L'objectif primordial du *CIDB* était de promouvoir le développement et l'amélioration de l'industrie de la construction. Le *CIDB* opère sous l'égide du ministère de l'Infrastructure

nationale et du développement communautaire. Il est dirigé par un conseil composé de 11 membres dont le président.

Le *CIDB* vise à fournir un leadership et des conseils pour le développement d'une industrie de la construction compétitive et de classe mondiale. Le *CIDB* est maintenant reconnu comme l'un des points focaux de l'industrie de la construction à Maurice.

L'une des activités principales du *CIDB* est l'enregistrement des consultants et des entrepreneurs. La loi prévoit des dispositions pour l'enregistrement des consultants et entrepreneurs locaux et étrangers. Ceci est soutenu par des règlements d'habilitation qui stipulent des dispositions détaillées de la loi principale sur la législation du processus d'enregistrement. L'enregistrement est désormais étendu à d'autres domaines du secteur de la construction. De nouvelles réglementations ont été adoptées pour l'enregistrement des prestataires de services autre que les consultants, à savoir les opérateurs de conception assistés par ordinateur pour les travaux de construction, notamment les dessinateurs, les techniciens en construction, et les tiers certificateurs en construction. De nouvelles réglementations ont également été adoptées pour l'enregistrement des fournisseurs de matériaux de construction, d'installation et d'équipements de construction.

Et aujourd'hui nous sommes ici dans cette Chambre, dans cette auguste Assemblée, pour débattre sur les nouveaux amendements que propose ce projet de loi du *CIDB*. M. le président, je pense que ces amendements arrivent à un bon moment. L'industrie de la construction est un pilier majeur, le socle économique du présent et du futur pour tous les pays développés. En effet, la construction au sens large a un impact direct sur de très nombreux secteurs économique. Je citerai l'emploi, tout d'abord, les transports, le monde des finances mais aussi le confort de nos concitoyens dans leur quotidien. Moins de bouchons sur les routes, plus de confort dans les habitations et les bureaux, plus de sécurité moins de pollution etcetera.

Le dynamisme de l'industrie de la construction rejaillit sur l'ensemble de l'économie du pays. Plusieurs objectifs ont prévalu à la mise en place de ce projet de loi qui est un acte volontaire. Je pense, M. le président, qu'il est bon que nous revenions sur ces objectifs pour mieux comprendre ceux en quoi les amendements proposés dans ce projet de loi stimuleront l'économie de la construction. Parmi les objectifs, M. le président, je note en premier lieu le développement du pays dont l'ensemble de sa population pourra bénéficier par un élèvement du niveau de vie, la création d'emplois nouveaux, un cadre de vie moderne et sain. C'est ceux

à quoi nous nous employons dans notre quotidien et que nous avons une fois de plus le moyen de concrétiser.

Quels sont les liens entre ces objectifs très transversaux et le projet de loi dont il est question aujourd'hui ? Et bien, ils sont nombreux, M. le président. Permettez-moi de citer quelques-uns. D'abord –

- la promotion de l'île Maurice, de son développement qui permettra d'afficher sans équivoque, que notre pays c'est résolument tourné vers la modernité et le développement durable ;
- l'encouragement de la participation de petites et moyennes entreprises au travers d'un savoir-faire maîtrisé, avec des techniques locales, des hommes au savoir-faire établi aux côtés des grands groupes internationaux qui nous apporteront, bien évidemment, des compétences complémentaires ;
- l'optimisation de la qualité de construction que ce soit dans le résultat immédiat mais également dans la durée,
- une meilleure prise en compte de la sécurité au travail qui permettra de sécuriser nos chantiers et la santé des concitoyens.

Tout ceci, M. le président, sera également un moyen qui permettra de valoriser le savoir des professionnels de la construction ainsi que leur maîtrises et à leur tour de favoriser l'exportation des entreprises locaux dans des pays qui eux aussi veulent emboîter le pas de notre dynamisme et nos valeurs. Nous sommes dans une ère qui force à l'ouverture, à l'internationalisation, sans cela le repli sur soi qui en résulte et le choix du court terme qui conduira à un appauvrissement de nos savoirs, de notre pays et de sa population.

Le protectionnisme que certaines réglementations ont favorisé dans le passé, ont été hélas une forme d'encouragement à la médiocrité. Non pas que nos concepteurs soient ainsi, mais nous ne devons pas avoir peur de la froissement, de la compétitivité qui résultera de cette ouverture. Elle poussera les créateurs, les architectes, les designeuses, les ingénieurs ainsi que les constructeurs à plus d'innovation, plus de recherches, plus de richesses professionnelles. C'est l'essence même de l'évolution, de l'ouverture sur le futur et du développement des compétences, de l'enrichissement du citoyen. C'est aussi le meilleur moyen de projeter notre pays dans un avenir plus qualitatif et de gérer efficacement et durablement l'investissement public.

M. le président, notre république, comme tous les autres Etats, se prépare au changement post-COVID. Nous devons porter un nouveau regard sur la façon de gérer le développement, la créativité dans les projets, dans les solutions techniques et technologiques à intégrer dans le monde de la construction. Le *CIDB* a besoin de ce vent de modernisme et de richesse. Pour se faire, il a besoin de s'ouvrir simplement tout en restant attentif.

Sur le contenu même de ce projet de loi, nous notons avec satisfaction que plusieurs sections du *principal Act* ont été amendées pour classer avec discernement les *contractors, service providers and suppliers* séparément tout en incluant de nouvelles sections, c'est-à-dire la section 20(A) par exemple, concernant le *Registration of service provider and supplier*. Ici nous pensons plus particulièrement aux équipements de construction, les échafaudages, les équipements de maintenance, de manutention, des terrassements.

Ce projet de loi, M. le président, démontre clairement la volonté du gouvernement de vouloir consolider la sécurité et le bien-être de tous ceux concernés dans ce secteur, surtout les ouvriers qui sont les plus exposés aux accidents du travail au quotidien. Et là, si je puis me permettre d'ouvrir cette petite parenthèse pour rendre hommage à cette assemblée, à Fabrice Toolooa qui est décédé il y a quelques jours à l'âge de 37 ans sur son lieu de travail, au *New Victoria Urban Terminal*. Je présente mes plus sincères condoléances à sa famille.

Nous saluons également, M. le président, l'initiative du ministre de infrastructures d'accorder le même traitement à tous les professionnels de l'industrie de la construction, que les architectes étrangers puissent maintenant, bien sûr on est dans cet esprit d'échange, exercer librement à Maurice comme c'est le cas pour les autres consultants.

M. le président, il est établi que l'industrie de la construction est un secteur dynamique qui pèse de façon significative dans la balance économique de Maurice. Elle emploie environ 50 000 personnes, ce qui représente environ 10% de la population active. A l'ère de l'autoroute de l'informatique, virage que nous avons su parfaitement négocier, les frontières même pour une île, n'existe plus dans le domaine du business. Nos acteurs locaux, concepteur, créateur et constructeurs, sont dans l'obligation d'être de plus en plus compétitif. Nous devons donc, nous de notre côté nous adapter aux exigences dans des domaines tel que la durabilité, la préservation de l'environnement, de résilience au changement climatique. Nous devons être réactifs au progrès sociaux, économique et technologique. Nous œuvrons aujourd'hui pour nos enfants et petits-enfants.

Le *CIDB*, en tant que principale organisme de réglementation du secteur, jouera un rôle plus qu'affirmatif dans ce secteur qui ne cesse de croître avec les nombreux projets infrastructures en cours de réalisation mais également les nombreuses études qui dessinent les chantiers de demain.

Aujourd'hui, pour beaucoup, le *CIDB* est synonyme de politique d'enregistrement et de réglementation. L'enregistrement des consultants et des entrepreneurs est en effet un processus important car il nous permet d'évaluer leur degré de professionnalisme et de compétences en vue de garantir le développement d'une industrie de construction de haute qualité.

Cependant le rôle du *CIDB* ne peut pas se résumer à celui d'un régulateur et un chien de garde. Le *CIDB* doit également jouer le rôle de facilitateur et faire prendre conscience aux acteurs de la construction que la durabilité environnementale et le développement ne sont pas incompatibles.

M. le président, ce projet de loi contribuera certes à ce que les aménageurs dans les différentes étapes de la vie d'une opération, c'est-à-dire dans son étape de conception, de réalisation mais également lors toutes les étapes de maintenance intègre de façon majeur dans leur stratégie la réduction au maximum de l'impact environnemental nocif.

C'est ainsi que nous construisons un pays d'avenir. Pour se faire, nous aurons besoin de nous ouvrir sur le monde extérieur. Nombreux sont les pays qui ont pris en compte ces valeurs depuis de nombreuses années et peuvent nous permettre rapidement de combler notre retard. Les professionnels de la construction ont des choses à apprendre. Ils pourront alors les mettre au profit de notre pays et à leur tour demain, ils seront exposés ses acquis.

L'île Maurice est un immense chantier à ciel ouvert. C'est une réalité, M. le président. L'amendement au *CIDB Act* est incontournable. Nous avons fait le choix, d'engager le pays, dans un cycle de développement sans précédent avec des investissements majeurs qui dessinent sur ce que sera Maurice demain. Nous construisons des projets structurants, des routes, un système ferroviaire faisant appel aux meilleures technologies, des quartiers d'affaires et commerciaux au plus haut standard international. Nous sommes devenus pour nombreux de nos pays amis un modèle réel, un pays moderne tout en sachant conserver nos valeurs, nos racines, nos richesses.

L'amendement au *CIDB Act* contribuera à faciliter le business de nos entreprises, à avoir une meilleure qualité de prestation et à continuer à faire de Maurice une vitrine pour l'avenir.

M. le président, je terminerai cette brève intervention en affirmant qu'avec ce projet de loi, le gouvernement au milieu de la forte perturbation résultant de la crise sanitaire sans précédent que nous traversons, est capable de travailler pour l'avenir en choisissant la voix de la raison et du lendemain, de la meilleure façon qu'il soit, en permettant au secteur de la conception et de la construction de continuer d'évoluer et d'avancer. En acceptant l'ouverture et non pas le repli sur soi, en favorisant le mélange et le partage plutôt que l'autosatisfaction. Nous ne devons pas avoir peur de tout ceci. Au contraire faisons confiance aux femmes et aux hommes de notre pays en leur permettant de s'enrichir et d'apprendre vite. Notre pays n'a plus de temps à perdre. Nous devons cela à notre peuple. Nous devons travailler qualitativement pour le bien-être de notre pays.

C'était ma contribution, M. le président, et bien sûr, je recommande ce projet de loi à la Chambre.

Je vous remercie.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

(5.51 p.m.)

Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The Construction Industry Development Board (Amendment) Bill 2021 contains measures that will help improve and regulate the construction industry such as the registration of providers of construction and construction services as well as suppliers of construction materials, equipment, plant and labour.

But I must state at the outset that some clauses of the Bill are not unanimously accepted, more specifically from quantity surveyors and architects. But I have not heard anything from engineers which I suppose are very happy with the Bill. May be there is a reason for that, may be later on the hon. Minister could tell us the reason about this.

The Mauritius Association of Quantity Surveyors and the Association of Architects have expressed concern about the future of the local construction sector. Both Associations have called upon the Authorities concerned to back track on certain amendments that they believe could threaten their respective profession before the Second Reading in Parliament

today. But apparently this appeal has not been taken into consideration. And before I move to clauses that will have a direct impact on the QS profession, let me state that what the Association has stated in a letter dated on the 05 April 2021, that is, amendments affecting the QS profession were handled during the period of lockdown, when most of its members did not receive their Work Access Permits. There were no consultations whatsoever by CIDB with the stakeholders prior to the Bill being circulated.

Having said so, Mr Speaker, Sir let me come to Clause 29 of the Amendment Bill where the bulk of the amendments are found and that would affect the life of many. At paragraph 29(2) of the Bill – preparation of bidding documents is being included in the scope of duties of Professional Architects and at Paragraph 29(4) of the Bill – preparation of bidding documents and bid evaluations have been included under the Registered Professional Engineers duties.

The amendment brought to the House is to open up the preparation of bidding documents to all professionals – architect, engineer, quantity surveyor, according to their relevant field of competence. It is only the builder that is not included, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, according to the QS Association, one of the reasons that prompted the Ministry of National Infrastructure to introduce an amendment to the law is to enable extension of the responsibility for preparation of bid document to engineers so as to align with the scheme of services of engineers at the Ministry of National Infrastructure. Mr Speaker, Sir, what is the logic behind such a drastic move? For the whole community of quantity surveyors in the country are being penalised just to allow the engineers at Ministry of National Infrastructure to amend its scheme of duties.

This amendment to the Professional Quantity Surveyors Council Act of 2013 is argued by the QS Association will hit the core functions of the quantity surveyors. These functions, as set out in the said Act, are the outcome of 13 years of consultation by the then MPI with all stakeholders of the construction industry including the CIDB. And, according to the QS Association, the present initiative of the MNI, Ministry of National Infrastructure is to tantamount to a collective destruction to the very foundation of its profession.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the scope of services of quantity surveyors already includes the preparation and evaluation of bid documents. These are recorded as core duties of quantity surveying profession. The overall responsibility for the preparation of bid evaluation report and assessment of bids is a duty of the quantity surveyor. The financial appraisal of bids

which is the most important component of the bid evaluation exercise falls directly under the competence and responsibility of a quantity surveyor. These are not performed by engineers or architects and the amendments circulated last Friday to the Professional Architects' Council Act and the Council of Registered Professional Engineers, that is preparation of bidding documents in the field of architecture and in the field of engineering are merely cosmetic.

What does it mean in field of architecture? What does it mean in the field of engineering? It is not clear at all Mr Speaker, Sir. It can be anything. It is too vague and it is not defined in the Bill. There is this ambiguity, as I said in the field of engineering, it is extremely vague and we do not know exactly what that means. As such, it is not appropriate to include such services in the scope of duties of professional architects and professional consulting engineers when these professionals, that is, architects and engineers have only superficial knowledge of same. These changes could make the role of QS almost obsolete. And at paragraph 29(3) (c) of the Bill, the Bill allows for a foreign quantity surveyor to practice as quantity surveyor in Mauritius, without the need for him to enter into a joint venture agreement with a local quantity surveyor or a local firm of quantity surveyor. Of course amendments have been circulated and the concept of "collaboration" has been added.

I will come with this concept of "collaboration" later on Mr Speaker, Sir. Let me explain how the present Law is in terms of joint venture agreement. The need for foreign consultants to enter into joint venture agreement with local counterparts has greatly helped professionals in the construction industry as well as the construction industry at large over the years. The objective of the law as it currently stands, that is, 51% for the Mauritian counterparts and 49% for foreigners, is to protect our local industry including its professional employees and business they create. It also helps the industry to maintain and develop against unfair competition from foreigners proposing to set up in Mauritius to offer services to a local client.

The joint venture also helps to promote transfer of technology, provides long term security to Mauritian clients, whether be it public or private and against potential professional negligence post-project completion as the Mauritian counterpart of the JV holding the majority may be held accountable for any issue arising thereof. Within the above scenario, it is up to the Mauritian partner of the joint venture to set up the internal share of responsibility within the JV, especially on the matter of maintaining the relevant professional indemnity cover for the required duration. This results in a win-win situation - local consultant win and

the foreign consultant as well, and the local clients, that is for all parties. And with the relevant use of modern technology, any professional can offer service up to a certain level, without necessarily setting foot on local soil or alternatively visiting the country, a short stay tourist visa, delivering his service and leaving without further ado.

With the present mandatory requirement of the joint venture, such a scenario would be difficult, rather remote and on the other hand, the client's interest is not protected. Now, amendments that have been circulated on Friday are the result after severe criticisms from both the QS and the architects. This is how the term "collaboration" has been added. Mr Speaker, Sir, as per the current law, joint venture is currently defined in the law and everything is set out. Now, this is being removed from the law and will come through regulations.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we all know that regulations are made by a Minister, not by Parliament. We all know that regulations come from Minister and this can be done at any time, without scrutiny of Parliament. Mr Speaker, Sir, is this good governance? Is this the way forward now? The law, the present law, has gone through much debate in the House and at times, there is consensus on law, at times, there are amendments in a Bill which becomes an Act afterwards. Now, this is completely being repealed in our existing law and it will come later on by regulations. And coming back to the new term "collaboration", Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a loose definition and using the word of the Minister, I will quote –

“It will be up to both parties to determine their respective percentage of liability and apportioning of fees and tasks, based on their corresponding input on the projects, like responsible and mature adults will do.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, “like responsible and mature adults will do”. No, seriously? We are amending the law. We will now go through regulations to state that “like responsible and mature adults will do.” Do you know how many bad things happen between responsible and mature adults? Do you know Mr Speaker, Sir? I am sure you know by the look of it and do you know how many disputes, how many court cases are there between responsible and mature adults? So, now we want to add this concept of “mature adults” in our regulations. Come on, this is not serious. This is, Mr Speaker, Sir, a floodgate for problems and disputes. There can be fake collaboration - 5% to Mauritian guy and 95% for the foreigner. What will happen to potential professional negligence post-project completion? Who will be held

accountable on any arising issue? And, Mr Speaker, Sir, in the end, it is the client's interest that will not be protected.

Amending the 51%: 49 % downwards would weaken the position of the local client, whether it be public or private, because the local partner of the JV would have strictly no motivation, no interest in assuming the responsibility. A foreign consultant would reap all the benefits without necessarily assuming what should essentially be his fair share of responsibility and would leave the client fully exposed post-project completion. It would result in a win-lose situation. Foreign consultant will win and local one will lose and the local client also will lose, with the client being unable to turn to anyone in case of later problems. It would be fully detrimental to our local industry and economy as a result.

I perfectly understand the new world order, as the Minister said, ease of doing business, globalisation and the consequences needed for our country to open up to the rest of the world. Our country is indeed a free economy, judging it by the number of foreign traders in our trades and in our local soil for the past 30 to 40 years. However, one cannot ignore the fact of our status of Small Island Developing States, whereby we are and we remain a small country with a small and somewhat fragile economy, where a dose of protectionism is indeed required to prevent total destruction of its fragile economic fabric.

And, Mr Speaker, Sir, numbers speak for themselves. Foreign investors are, by definition, often large corporations, counting employees in the hundreds if not thousands, having offices in more than one country and could easily undercut prices, sometimes bringing our local companies to their knees and sending them into oblivion, a measure that according to professionals of the construction will upset the local sector, already heavily affected by the pandemic. We must be mindful not to open our doors for foreign Architects and QS to flood in and consequently have our local Consultants out of jobs. To my knowledge, there are approximately more than 200 QS in Mauritius and Architects as well, maybe more. And also, it is not exact to say that there has not been any joint venture. I can give two examples of private projects with joint ventures between Architects. Firstly, the MRIC building in Ebène and the International Financial Services (IFS) building in Ebène.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this can be defective in law and will lead to a lot of abuse unless the word collaboration is clearly and amply defined under the Bill which is in front of the House today and proper and genuine consultations be held with all stakeholders to define the

mechanism for collaboration, as defined under the Bill, under the amendments that have been circulated, and also to the satisfaction of all stakeholders.

Having said so, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not defending any QS, I do not have any vested interest, I do not know any personal friend of mine who is a QS. The only QS that I know is in the House and he is smiling at me today because I am defending his interests. So, Mr Speaker, Sir, I guess he is very happy because I am defending his profession.

Having said so, Mr Speaker, Sir, let me move to paragraph 7 of the Bill, which proposes that a representative of an association of consulting engineers be appointed by the Minister. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is clearly a double standard. The Registered Professional Engineer, being a member of the Council of Registered Professional Engineers of Mauritius, already sits on the CIDB Board. What is the need to have a second member? This shall create an unfair and biased regarding other professionals on the Board. Now, if the Ministry finds the need to have a second member on the Board, why not have a second member of the Architects or the QS? What is the need of having two representatives for Engineers, not Architects and not the QS? I do not want to be nasty but this Bill clearly is biased towards the Engineer and I was being told that the person heading the CIDB is an Engineer. As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, it should be an equitable treatment to all professionals in the construction industry.

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, paragraph 24 of the Bill proposes a new provision of the confidentiality under the CIDB Act. The objective of the CIDB, amongst others, is to promote the development and improvement of the construction industry and the CIDB aims at providing leadership and guidance towards the development of a competitive and world-class construction industry. The objective of the CIDB does not call for secrecy or confidentiality issues. All the actions of the CIDB should be transparent to abide by good governance. I do not understand the logic behind the deprivation of the right of a representative of a particular body sitting on the CIDB Council from communicating to the body he or she represents matters pertinent to that particular body, especially so, in the case where the very foundation of that body he or she is representing is at stake, as is the present case now.

The idea of an association sending someone in a Board, which represents the authority, is to send the views of its association. Now, how can you send someone in a Board, in a Council, in an authority, to send your views but in return that person would not be

allowed to give a feedback to his or her association? It does not make sense at all to have this clause in the Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir.

As I said, we also failed to comprehend what matters which are in the public domain can be termed as secrecy at the Board of the CIDB to warrant such an amendment. Clearly, this is not in line with democratic rights under our Constitution, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Now, let me come to clause 26(a) (1) - compounding of offences. Mr Speaker, Sir, I think that there might be a problem with this clause and it can be dangerous as well. In simple words, this means that if a contractor, a Consultant, a service provider has defaulted in the performance of his contract, and we all know the numerous cases that we have every year; you just need to read the Director of Audit's Report, year after year, you see the numerous cases where contractors, service providers have defaulted in terms of their contract, have not respected any clause of their contract.

Now, with this clause of compounding offences, the same service provider, Consultant, just name it, they can come to the Board, to the CIDB and negotiate his return on the market. So, they have faulted, the defaulter comes and says: "Okay, I have done something wrong, well, I want to come back, just tell me how much do I need to pay to come back." This is also a new concept in our law, Mr Speaker, Sir. I know cases where the MRA does it or the Customs does it but the penalty to get someone cleared is three times the amount of the penalty. Whereas, in this Bill, it is said –

“to pay such amount not exceeding the maximum penalty specified for the offence as may be acceptable to the Council.”

And also –

“where the Council compounds an offence in accordance with this section, no further proceedings shall be initiated in respect of the offence so compounded against the person.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, what does the Bill say on an agreed amount? No further proceedings in regard of an offence that has been compounded! Mr Speaker, Sir, what type of message are we sending for illegal activities? That is you can go and do whatever you want, if you get caught, you go and pay and if you do not get caught, you can carry on with your activities. I do not think this is a good idea to have such a clause despite we have a provision of consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions. There are provisions in some Acts, as I said, where penalties are three times higher when there is a default in contract.

To conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to add that the Associations, be it QS & Architects, have sent several letters to the Ministry and to us, Members of Parliament, and, to some extent, I have referred to these letters in my speech. Before ending, official correspondences were received from official international organisations, namely the Africa Association of Quantity Surveyors. If I can quote just a paragraph of it –

“In finality we would counsel the Mauritius Legislative Assembly should be extremely cautious and to exercise due diligence to ensure that roles in construction procurement are appointed to the best fit professions and in accordance to global standards. Role pertaining to determination and management of construction costs should be left solely to the best fit professions, quantity surveying the profession for financial, contractual and administration of construction projects and not to other professions who are engaged in other roles like designing.”

This is a letter from the Africa Association of Quantity Surveyors, which I shall table.

Again, another letter from Africa Union of Architects, they go in the same line as the Africa Quantity Surveyors. I would quote the main paragraph of the letter –

“We would like to remind the Government that architecture is one of the most important cultural expression of a people.”

And as such, both the Africa Union of Architects as well as the International Union of Architects that defend professional mobility but establish that any architect who work in a foreign country must collaborate with a local architect. In this way, it guarantees employability, safeguards local *contexto*, cultural and environmental, promotes knowledge sharing and avoids institutional conflicts between counterparts of the origin of the architects who intend to project in Mauritius.

As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, the word ‘collaboration’ should have been in the Bill and not in regulations because there is no certainty how ‘collaboration’ will be defined and, lastly, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is another letter from International Union of Architects (UIA) which is based in France; I will quote the last paragraph of it –

“In the interest of safeguarding important cultural, legal and ethical principles, we urge the Government of Mauritius to reconsider an ill-advised course with respect to legislation governing the practice of architecture and to adhere to the provision of this widely respected international professional accord.”

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, these are not my views, these are the views of international independent bodies. Having said so, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am done. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Nuckcheddy you have the floor.

(6.20 p.m.)

Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil): Thank you. Mr Speaker, Sir, the mover of the Bill that is the hon. Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development started the second reading by saying –

“We have before the august Assembly today, a very important piece of legislation.”

And, this CIDB Amendment Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, is no doubt a very important piece of legislation, as here we are talking of a Bill which has as its primary objective to regulate the construction industry.

In a country like ours, a responsible Government cannot allow the construction industry to be lagging behind in terms of various reforms and not providing it with the necessary legislative framework. The policy choices governments make today will determine their success in rebuilding the economy, and making growth more robust, resilient and sustainable for tomorrow.

There is a necessity worldwide to boost up the national economy. For us here to make our economy more resilient, we need systems that can build and retain more human, physical capital and technical know-how from developed and emerging countries using policies that reflect and encourage the post-pandemic need for new types of jobs, businesses and governance systems.

The hon. Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development pointed out that, so far, we have failed to understand the supply chain as the suppliers of building materials, plant and equipment are not considered as stakeholders of the construction industry. However, I would add that we have also not emphasised much on the value chain in the construction industry.

Now, what is the Value Chain model in the construction industry and how is it different from other industries? Simply because other industries have a value chain which is linear whereas the value chain of the construction industry is a closed loop value chain and this close loop value chain ultimately follows a linear system which is a bit complicated to conceptualise and a value chain in construction is a type of business model that includes all

the different activities that are needed for the project. Within the construction industry, a value chain is created to ensure that a project is successful from the planning stages all the way to the completed and approved building structure.

The end product of the construction industry, Mr Speaker, Sir, is what determine the achievement of a nation as it provides to its people the everyday infrastructure which is meant to be serving the current and future generation for centuries and also in most cases the end products are factors of production for enhancement of a firm and national economy. Well, when I say the end products are meant to serve for centuries, we did have some exceptions which were becoming the norms some time back and I will come to that later. For the time being let me stick to the value chain.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, if we want to have buildings and infrastructures which provide value, we must understand that values are transferred all along the supply chain and each of these stakeholders must be able to create and transfer the value all along the supply chain.

Now, let us see the CIDB Act 2018, that is, the current Act that we have. At Section 2(1), the Act defines the term “construction works” as follows. It says that the construction works include temporary and any preparatory works required to undertake the works, dismantling or demolition of all types of buildings. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, the supply of materials is not included in this current Act.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the construction industry, work does not only mean work. We have to consider the suppliers of the industry. It is only then that we are going to provide a value along the supply chain and the value chain for any construction project, a specific variation is achieved within a fixed framework of distinct stages, that is, the design, the production of raw materials and the conversion of the raw materials into manufactured products and construction itself.

And, this is one of the objectives of the amendments to this Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, is to take on board the suppliers of the industry and consider them as a stakeholder.

The construction industry is the world’s largest consumer of raw materials and predictions before the pandemic projected a growth at 4.2% annually up to 2023 in terms of market value. So, it is the need of the hour, Mr Speaker, Sir, to consider the suppliers as part of the team and enhance our value chain.

I am laying much emphasis on the value chain, Mr Speaker, Sir, as we have to understand the importance of the internal stages of each process, each stakeholder and every aspect that interact to bring a project to success.

I listened to the hon. minister carefully the other day, and he mentioned the following, I quote –

“We have had several legislations that regulate the construction sector and each and every stakeholder operating in quite an unsynchronised manner”.

Being someone from the construction industry myself, as my friend just pointed out, with more than 30 years of experience in the field, being a past president of the Mauritius Association of Quantity Surveyors, having been an Executive Member of the African Association of Quantity Surveyors, I can say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the stakeholders are not only operating in an unsynchronised manner but operating in an industry which is fragmented. And this Bill will eliminate the distinctness of these processes, as well as the fixed-term, project-based nature of relationships along the supply chain, which results in this highly fragmented industry structure.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we cannot allow the construction industry to be fragmented. This industry is one among the biggest employers of the working population. I have heard figures of 50,000 or 65,000, but, actually, the construction industry employs some 75,000 employees. These people earn their living in the construction industry, either directly or indirectly, which in fact absorbs, which is more important, Mr Speaker, Sir, a large percentage of the working population with the minimum level of education and manual skills thus also playing a vital social role in the economy.

With the current massive investment in our infrastructure and you may recall the hon. Minister of Finance announced in his Budget Speech of 2020-2021 that the construction industry will be the engine of our recovery, we need to move the construction industry to another level of development.

A few weeks ago, I was reading a paper prepared by McKinsey Engineering, Construction and Building Materials Practice. The paper, Mr Speaker, Sir, is about reimagining the next normal under which the construction industry will have to operate...

Mr Speaker: You do not have the floor there!

Mr Nuckcheddy: There are some loudspeakers over there.

Mr Speaker: They all have usurped my power as loudspeaker!

Mr Nuckcheddy: The paper, Mr Speaker, Sir, is about reimagining the next normal under which the construction industry will have to operate so as to thrive and mentioned that it has to be in 5 stages, which will help to look beyond the immediate crisis and to plan for the future.

The 5 stages are also described as the 5 Rs which are as follows –

1. Resolve;
2. Resilience;
3. Return;
4. Reimagination, and
5. Reform.

Resolve: We have to determine the scale, pace and depth of action required to address the situation.

Resilience: There is also a need to prepare for a rapid succession of financial challenges, liquidity, then solvency and then profitability.

Return: We also need to return to businesses. On return, we have to reimagine our way of doing things.

And finally, the reform, Mr Speaker, Sir. If required, when required and where required, we need to reform the system.

And this Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, is coming with a reform in the construction industry.

In order to achieve this objective, there is a need for commitment at all levels and there is also need for an apex body to provide the necessary guidance and direction to lead the transformation process of the construction industry, and the CIDB could aptly play this role and certain amendments is being brought through this Bill so that the required authority and empowerment is provided to CIDB to be able to meet this expectation.

With these powers which this Bill will confer upon the CIDB, like the hon. Minister so clearly explained, especially in terms of additional ground, to cancel and suspend registration under clause 17 and empowering the CIDB to issue compliance notice to contraveners under clause 20, there is no doubt that the objectives will be attained and also

the construction industry in general will be the winner and so will be our professionals and operatives of the industry.

Before I go further on other clauses which are added and amended, Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now, I will not say refute some points and apprehensions raised by hon. Osman Mohammed, but rather complement on some aspects as he only mentioned half of the stories and I feel, as a Member of the Parliament, that it is my responsibility to tell our people the full story so that they can know the truth.

First of all, Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member mentioned about the footing of bill concerning the repairs of defects. Now we all know, as per the law, that prior of deciding the cost, who is going to foot the bill, we have to determine the liability. As the hon. Member seems to believe more on what Weekend paper, for me which is more of a shouting brigade paper than anything else, he relies more on these articles than the replies which are given here, in this House, in this august Assembly, by our hon. Ministers.

In his reply to PQ B/106, raised by hon. Mrs Mayotte on 30 March 2021 and PQ B/865 raised by hon. Uteem on 17 November 2020, maybe you have forgotten, hon. Uteem, but let me remind you, hon. Hurreeram replied that the particular project was a design and built project, thus all associated costs for the remedial construction works were being borne solely by the Contractor. It was determined that the Contractor was liable and had to bear the cost.

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, having said that, let me take two other cases, first the Ring Road and then the Verdun Link Road. There, Mr Speaker, Sir, you know who paid the bill? You, me, everybody in this House and all the people who are outside this House also.

And, moreover, Mr Speaker, Sir, the then Minister of Public Infrastructure, whom I once heard one of the hon. Members from the Opposition call *Ministre Coaltar*, was never questioned by hon. Osman Mahomed.

An hon. Member: He was!

Mr Nuckcheddy: I was not a witness to that and so I cannot say whether you did or not. It is good if you did. The former Minister was seen walking next to you in Port Louis on 13 February like a *sadhu*; in fact, he is a *daku*, just beware of him!

And hon. Osman Mahomed was praising the “Building on Quality” of Singapore CIDB.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Nuckcheddy, I heard a word which is not so appropriate. Please withdraw that word!

Mr Nuckcheddy: Okay, I remove the word.

(Interruptions)

Mr Nuckcheddy: No, he is not a *daku*.

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Sadhu! Sadhu!*

Mr Nuckcheddy: *Sadhu!*

An hon. Member: *Pa fer mwa dir twa ki kalite daku to ete!*

Mr Speaker: Hey!

An hon. Member: *Al bwar dite!*

Mr Speaker: What is happening here?

An hon. Member: Well, he is threatening me!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I told him to withdraw! You do not have the floor! Please!

An hon. Member: *Ale bwar enn tass dite!*

Mr Nuckcheddy: The Minister seems to have seen some lawyers here in this House and we heard hon. Tour who explained that things are not rosy there as well, I mean in Singapore. But the quality of work which was being carried out by the Labour Government is hard to beat in terms of disaster. They had a capacity to do things so bad that hon. Bodha who is not present actually in this House, was the Minister looking after the repair of Verdun Link Road actually took longer to repair the defect that it actually took to construct the road. It is a real record.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our Government is doing its utmost to provide a better life for our fellow citizens. This Bill also goes in the same direction. Improvements are being made and we are moving ahead.

Allow me now, Mr Speaker, Sir, to dwell on some of the amendments that this Bill is proposing; as the hon. Minister mentioned the amendments proposed at Section 15 by adding

new Clauses 21 (c) and 21 (d) will allow the CIDB to collect statistical information for strategic planning purposes and to obtain information.

I am sure this will be helpful to the stakeholders of the industry and also to our young students. The Central Statistics Office will still be responsible for the collection, compilation, analysis and dissemination of official statistics relating to various aspects of the economic and social activities of the country. The CIDB will provide statistics related to the construction industry and this will help to clear the perception that the CIDB is only focused on the administrative office activities of registering contractors and consultants and collecting fees.

Let me now, Mr Speaker, Sir, comment on consequential amendments, i.e, the amendments to the various Council Acts. There is a famous saying which says “a place for everything and everything in its place”. This is what these amendments are proposing. These amendments describe the various profession boundaries within which they are to operate.

For example, as per the amendments that are going to be moved at Committee Stage, I appreciate that the various professionals will be allowed to prepare bidding documents in the field of competencies and the Bill makes explicit mention of field of architecture for architects and field of engineering for the engineers.

This is important, Mr Speaker, Sir, as we need for a partnering among all the stakeholders and more so among the professionals. This is the case in other jurisdictions like South Africa, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia.

Concerning the profession of Quantity Surveyors, the professional Quantity Surveyors they have the Royal Institution of Quantity Surveyors of UK which already describes the core duties of the profession of quantity surveying and I am happy to see that most of these duties are described in the PQSC Act already. However, I propose that all the financial aspects of bidding, i.e, the preparation of the bid documents, especially the Bills of Quantities and evaluation of bidding exercise, the submission of bids, i.e, the evaluation is to be the sole duty of the Quantity Surveyor.

I am done, Mr Speaker, Sir, thank you for your attention.

Mr Speaker: Thank you, hon. Dhaliah you have the floor!

(6.40 p.m.)

Mr R. Dhaliah (Second Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, for giving me the opportunity to contribute to the debate on the Construction Industry Development Board (Amendment) Bill.

Yes, the world is changing faster than ever before. The global megatrends are shaking up the construction industry and vulnerabilities in the construction industry in turn affect the economy, the environment, and the society as a whole.

The population needs affordable housing as a basic need and the construction industry is part and parcel of one's development and is also the source of earnings of many of our compatriots. The construction industry further serves almost all other industries and is among the largest consumer of raw materials. When the world is striving to keep pace with daunting challenges, we cannot afford to be a mere spectator and remain complacent. We have to be a player. We have to act, and we have to act now.

Today we are debating on amendments brought to an important piece of legislation governing the construction industry. Over the past two decades, the construction sector has developed into an important pillar of our economy and has witnessed rapid growth at an unprecedented pace. Several support schemes have accordingly been put in place to cater for the growing demand for both residential and non-residential buildings.

A new legal framework therefore became a necessity to promote the development, improvement and the sustainable growth of the construction industry. It was with this perspective that the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) Act was enacted in 2008. The CIDB provides both a platform and guidance for all the different stakeholders within the construction industry. The contributions of the various stakeholders in the industry are taken on board before reaching a consensus on the recommendations that would take the construction sector to the next level within a well-defined legal framework.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in an evolving society, legislations must be regularly updated to reflect changing circumstances. Notwithstanding the fact that the CIDB Act has, since its enactment in 2008, been amended on 6 occasions, there were still some shortcomings which needed to be rectified in the wake of transformational changes this Government has pledged to the nation.

In line with the philosophy and vision of our Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, to modernise the country towards its next phase of its development, the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development, hon. Mahendranuth Sharma

Hurreeram, has introduced key amendments to the CIDB Act and I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate him. These amendments aim at aligning the local construction industry with best practices around the globe with a view to effectively implement the Government's vision in a sustainable manner.

Sustainability, Mr Speaker, Sir, is made up of three pillars; the economy, the society, and the environment, and this involves striking the right balance between people, profits and the preservation of the environment. The object of this Bill, therefore, is a proactive reflection of Government's intention to proceed with the modernisation of the construction industry, in a sustainable manner.

M. le président, en d'autres termes, ce gouvernement préconise un développement qui transformera le pays sans pourtant porter atteinte au respect de l'environnement et des lois. Ce gouvernement, accorde une très grande importance à la préservation de l'environnement. En tant qu'ingénieur enregistré de par ma vocation, député et Secrétaire Parlementaire Privé, mais avant tout en tant que citoyen, cela me fend le cœur, comme à de nombreux de mes compatriotes, de voir un nombre conséquent de constructions mal planifiées.

Je ne citerai qu'un exemple. Notamment les nombreuses constructions faites carrément sur des drains et des systèmes de canalisations. Est-ce que ces constructions ont fait l'objet d'une planification de la part de professionnels qui ont à cœur leur métier et qui ont agi dans l'intérêt de leurs clients et du pays ? Imaginez simplement les conséquences de tels actes alors que Maurice, comme le reste du Monde, subit de plein fouet les conséquences du changement climatique. Permettez-moi de rappeler les nombreux cas d'inondations enregistrés à travers le pays récemment et les conséquences désastreuses que cela aurait pu avoir.

Je ferai ici une parenthèse pour saluer, une fois de plus, le Premier ministre et le ministre des Finances pour l'ambitieux projet d'aménagement de drains à travers le pays.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the construction industry, like many other sectors of the economy has been seriously affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and has witnessed negative growth. The total construction output has fallen significantly in many countries mainly on the back of renewed lock downs and bottlenecks in the supply of construction materials. In view of the sensitivity of the construction industry relative to economic cycles, construction enterprises and workers are particularly vulnerable to the drastic decline in economic activity amidst the scarring effects of the pandemic.

On the upside, however, construction has a great potential to stimulate recovery, thanks to its ability to create jobs. According to the Central Statistical Office, the contribution of the local construction industry to GDP shrank by 19% from Rs6 billion during the fourth quarter of 2020 to Rs4.9 billion in the first quarter of 2021. In addition, the Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF), which is defined as the net additions to the physical assets of the country in a year, comprising principally of investment in buildings, plants, machinery and transport equipment, has witnessed a slump of 7.2% over the same period.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would further like to underscore the monumental growth witnessed by the construction sector since 2016 thanks to the efforts of this Government under the able guidance and leadership of hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth. This very sector would have achieved double digit growths had the spillover effects of the pandemic not affected this country.

This Government strongly believes that a vigorous construction sector is a vital component towards ensuring the economic prosperity of our nation. We have not remained insensible to the pressing need to give some additional impetus to this sector. And as announced in the Budget Speech 2021-2022, Government will invest some Rs65 billion in various priority projects over the next three years. These projects include the National Flood Management Programme, Social Housing Units, Rivière des Anguilles Dam, community development infrastructure and land transport infrastructure, including roads and the Metro Express. These priority projects will be implemented across all regions in the Republic of Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, coming back to the new provisions of the Bill, I will comment on a few amendments which I believe are essential for the smooth functioning of the CIDB. For instance, Clause 20 of this Bill now allows foreign Consultants who have obtained a contract directly, to practice independently - another view from what has been said before, Mr Speaker, Sir - and this is without the need to enter into a joint venture with an architect or a local firm of architects, subject to applying for and obtaining registration.

Mr Speaker, Sir, much has been said about abolishing the obligation of a foreign Consultant to form a joint venture with a local firm with 51% shares to the latter. I believe that no such requirement should be made compulsory as it is completely detrimental to the spirit of ease of doing business. Furthermore, we all know, here in this Chamber, that this rule

has never been respected. On the contrary, there are agreements which are made outside of the law, and thus portraying a very gloomy picture of our country to foreign investors.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we cannot tolerate such malpractices which benefit only a few, and at the same time tarnish the reputation of our country at international level, especially when this Government has left no stone unturned in its efforts to remove Mauritius from the grey list of the FATF.

Concurrently, Clause 20(A) is being introduced to provide for registration of service providers and suppliers. Previously, this requirement was laid down in the accompanying regulations. These provisions, now, need to be brought in the principal Act in order to exert better control over these service providers who quite often fail to perform satisfactorily.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the proposed amendments will widen the scope of registration to include providers of construction works and construction services and suppliers of construction materials, equipment, plant, and labour for construction purposes.

M. le président, comme évoqué précédemment le *ease of doing business* est un facteur essentiel pour notre économie. Mais, malheureusement, nous constatons que certains professionnels concernés par le secteur de la construction semblent réticents et considèrent que les amendements apportées à travers le présent projet de loi sont antipatriotiques. Les questions qui devraient nous venir à l'esprit sont : est-ce antipatriotique de vouloir le meilleur pour le développement du secteur de la construction à Maurice ? Est-ce antipatriotique de vouloir ouvrir le marché et permettre à un plus grand nombre de professionnels de mettre leurs services et leurs compétences au service du secteur local de la construction ? Vous conviendrez avec moi que la réponse est non. Et je tiens, ici, à rassurer les professionnels locaux, l'intention derrière les amendements apportés n'est nullement de mettre en doute leurs compétences. Nous avons aussi eu droit à des commentaires à l'effet que les professionnels ou cabinets étrangers profiteront des lacunes de la loi pour damer le pion aux professionnels locaux. Loin de là, M. le président. Croyez-vous qu'avec l'expérience que nous avons vécue depuis l'année dernière avec la Covid-19 et le ralentissement des activités de nombreux professionnels locaux, nous au gouvernement, nous voulons que davantage de nos compatriotes se retrouvent en difficulté?

Au contraire, je dirais que nous devons agir en patriotes et mettre toutes les chances de notre côté pour la relance et la prospérité de notre secteur de la construction. Plus il y aura de projets, plus il y aura de l'emploi pour nos nombreux compatriotes (maçons, fournisseurs

de matériaux, plombiers, électriciens, urbanistes, entres autres), tous qui se sont vus contraints de rester à la maison ou qui ont vu leurs activités être drastiquement diminuées ces derniers temps.

De plus, les experts étrangers qui viendront à Maurice auront sans nul doute besoin de la collaboration de professionnels locaux qui connaissent bien les particularités du pays. Avant la pandémie de la Covid-19, sous l'impulsion du gouvernement en place depuis 2014, Maurice était déjà un vaste chantier. Et avec les mesures mises en place, il ne fait aucun doute que le développement du pays retrouvera sa vitesse de croisière et il y aura, de ce fait, de la place pour tout le monde.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our professionals should be responsible and they should understand that without a healthy competition, we will never be able to overcome an important milestone in the history of this country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, based on my own experience as a registered professional Engineer, I can tell, as a matter of fact, that any registered professional engineer can be qualified to prepare bid documents, as long as they relate to their field of expertise. This has been the practice for generations now and I firmly believe that it should remain so. I also note under Clause 2 of the Bill, that additional powers will be conferred upon the CIDB, in particular, to regulate not only the conduct of professionals such as architects, quantity surveyors and registered engineers but also contractors, service providers and suppliers of goods. This provision, Mr Speaker, Sir, has, unfortunately turned out to be a necessity to protect the integrity of noble professions such as engineers, architects and consultants whose names are being tarnished because of the ill practices from a few, those who leverage on existing loopholes in regulations governing these professions.

Des pratiques illicites, M. le président, auxquelles s'adonnent des soi-disant professionnels, pour s'enrichir au détriment de notre pays et on est forcé de se demander, à qui profite le crime? Je m'abstiendrai, d'ailleurs, de revenir sur certains méga projets initiés avant 2014 et qui ont coûté cher au pays et à notre économie. Cela, soit parce qu'il a fallu les refaire presque complètement, soit parce qu'il a fallu puiser des fonds publics pour les améliorer et leur donner un visage digne de ce nom.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in addition to sanctioning offences through the Court Mechanism, this Bill also empowers the Board of the CIDB to compound offences committed by these professionals and impose penalties, as per the CIDB Act. This measure, Mr Speaker, Sir and I

wish to stress on this, which is based on the same principles as for compounding of offences under the Customs Act and I believe it is a laudable one as it will allow for the prompt sanctioning of misconduct and there is ample evidence of several cases where construction projects have suffered delays or even abandoned due to the negligence of professionals. In that respect, we welcome the amendment to section 26 of the Act which provides for more stringent penalties notably up to 5 years' imprisonment and Rs1 m. fine in case of offences. This is in addition to forfeiture of assets of offenders.

Such provisions, Mr Speaker, Sir, will certainly act as a strong deterrent for unscrupulous service providers who by all means are only interested in maximising profits at the expense of poor work and service quality. This will further aid at minimising professional misconduct.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the proposed amendments in this Bill, paves the way further to attract foreign investors and to subsequently lead our country towards Major infrastructural development that will benefit all the stakeholders concerned, be it engineers, architects or quantity surveyors.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the amendments brought in this Bill will complement our local construction industry with foreign knowhow, expertise, competence and technology and will add value and guide the industry towards a sustainable path.

In addition, the proposed amendments will lead the construction sector towards a new era of development with a distribution of value which will benefit all the stakeholders involved.

M. le président, le secteur de la construction est un élément important de la compétitivité de l'économie mauricienne. La capacité de réaliser des projets d'investissement à un coût concurrentiel, dans les délais prévus et à la satisfaction de l'investisseur est un déterminant de la capacité d'une région à supporter les entrepreneurs locaux et à attirer des investisseurs étrangers. Il est donc normal que l'état mauricien intervienne à travers des lois appropriées et des amendements aux lois existantes pour régler la construction, d'une part et d'autre, pour améliorer le fonctionnement de l'industrie de la construction à l'île Maurice.

Les amendements prévus au *CIDB (Amendment) Bill 2021*, vont dans cette perspective, dans la vision et la philosophie d'un gouvernement moderne et avant-gardiste.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the construction sector will continue to remain a significant provider of jobs and an essential pillar of our economy. Developments in this sector are expected to materialise rapidly in the coming years. It is, therefore, obvious that as caring and forward-looking government, it is our duty to enhance the legal framework to cater for the future and more importantly to safeguard the interests of all concerned parties. The proposed amendments which are being introduced are therefore fully justified and warranted in light of circumstances that initially prevailed. This Government has proven over the years to be a socialist Government that has at heart the interest of its people. I firmly believe that the amendments brought in the CIDB (Amendment) Bill 2021 would modernise and professionalise the construction sector and respond to the needs of our citizens.

The path to success will always require adaptation to changing circumstances and we are amending the legislation to bring the construction industry to the path of success. With these words, I fully support the amendments brought to the CIDB (Amendment) Bill 2021.

Long live the Republic of Mauritius.

I am done, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister you have the floor.

(7.01 p.m.)

The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Mr M. Hurreeram): Thank you Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to thank the hon. Members from both sides of the House who have participated and contributed in the debates on the Construction Industry Development Board (Amendment) Bill.

I would wish to highlight that I was quite surprised that, after all that has been said in a section of the Press on this Bill, after hearing hon. Ameer Meea, that is only two Members from the Opposition who ventured to try and criticise. I believe that they had no choice as this is a clear indication that the proposed amendments to the CIDB Act have obtained consensus.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my colleagues have already commented and rebutted the issues raised by hon. Osman Mahomed and to some extent, hon. Ameer Meea. I would wish, however, to add further thereon.

Firstly, I will start with the comments made by hon. Osman Mahomed, who, I must say, gave it a good try but instead of making valid propositions, or even just criticise, he shed the light on the amazing work being done at the level of my Ministry in favour of the

construction sector. He deplored the late circulation of the proposed amendments to the Bill. Hon. Minister Teeluck and hon. Mrs Tour already rebutted but what I will add to this, is if he mastered the Standing Orders of the National Assembly, he would have certainly found that amendments to a Bill are circulated at Second Reading stage, not before, and certainly not after. Maybe the hon. Member was eager to criticise that part specifically and was left with no arguments. He further mentioned that the Regulations which will describe the type of collaboration proposed in the Amendments circulated should have been promulgated together with the Bill and so was also the suggestions of hon. Ameer Meea.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member should be aware, unless he does not know the procedures, that Regulations are made by virtue of the powers conferred upon a Minister in a legislation. Accordingly, the relevant Regulations will indeed be promulgated, Mr Speaker, Sir, after this Bill will be passed and enacted and this makes me wonder if the hon. Members understood what the Bill was all about.

Above all, Regulations are there for a purpose. If not, every single one of them would be in a Bill. Then there will not be any deed for any Regulations. In fact, issues which are dynamic and are subject to regular review are prescribed by way of Regulations and are not included in a Bill purposely, like it has been the case previously in the Architects Bill, where those 51% were included in the Bill and despite it is not working, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have mentioned that in my Second Reading. Nothing could be done. No one could come and change it. It was there and there has not been any - and I beg to differ from the hon. Member who said there have been two collaborations. He is mentioning two collaborations. In a country where we are spending billions of rupees in construction, two joint ventures, and he finds it 'wow'!

Mr Speaker, Sir, if this joint venture has been done, so let me put it clearly here in this House, it was not registered at the CIDB otherwise we would have been aware. So, what he is mentioning in his House has been an illegal joint venture.

Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Mahomed also questioned the delay that separated the introduction of the Bill in the National Assembly and the debates that started on Friday. Of course, this is purely in the spirit of democracy to allow all stakeholders to take cognizance of the contents of the provisions in the Bill and come up with appropriate suggestions. We received several valid propositions which have eventually been taken on board following extensive consultations with all parties concerned.

Mr Speaker, Sir, indeed, we cannot understand the hon. Members on the other side of the House. When we allow sufficient time for all those concerned with the legislation to make constructive proposals, they ask: 'why this delay'? And when a Bill is debated immediately after its introduction, then they claim: 'why this emergency'? This is purely demagogical on the part of the Opposition, or should I say, as usual, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Hurreeram: I am not giving way, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Mahomed raised the issue of sustainable development, which he claimed he could not find in the Bill. What on earth has this Bill got to do with sustainable development? Maybe my good friend, the hon. Minister Kavy Ramano can *éclairer nos lanternes plus tard*, but I do not find anything that pertains to sustainable development in this Bill. If the hon. member wants to know more about what we are doing at the level of the Land Drainage Authority with regard to sustainable development, I invite him to come with a relevant PQ, and then we will answer and he will understand.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. member also quoted the then Minister of Infrastructure, the then hon. Siddick Chady, who brought the CIDB Bill in the National Assembly in 1997, and he described a certain vision therein, which the hon. Member is fully conscious, has never materialised.

Well, to be honest, there was no better way to describe the notorious incompetence of the Labour Government which was in power up to 2014. And yet, they never managed to make the CIDB a pivotal organisation in the construction sector, as the hon. Member himself suggested. Mr Speaker, Sir, I believe the hon. Member shot himself straight in the foot by referring to the vision of the 1997 Labour Government.

It is under the MSM Government and its allies that the Construction Industry Development Board has thrived, and we are now going even further with this new legislation, to give even more power to the CIDB. Allow me to mention here that the CIDB, unlike what hon. Mahomed said, is not focusing only on administrative matters.

In fact, the Bill now will allow the CIDB to assume its role fully as the Regulatory Body of the construction industry. And I take it as a compliment from the hon. Member when he pointed out that the CIDB is raising revenue to become self-sufficient. Of course, Mr Speaker, Sir! This is what this Government aims at: efficiency and efficacy of our institutions! Thank you, hon. Member.

M. le président, l'objectif principal de ce projet de loi est de donner un nouveau souffle au secteur de la construction.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to re-emphasise that there was an absolute need to harmonise the existing legislations, especially given the dynamic nature of the construction industry. Mr Speaker, Sir, I will also refer to the proposition of hon. Mrs Tour with regard to community-based participation. In fact, Government policy is already heading into this direction. We encourage contractors to avail of the services of the local labour force in the implementation of the projects.

In addition, as I mentioned in my Second Reading speech, the reboot of the construction sector involves a revival of the whole supply chain and, of course, here, the local stakeholder will benefit from any development in the region.

With regard to the setting up of a specific environment for women in construction industry, we appreciate the concern of the hon. Member. In fact, at the level of my Ministry, we are also sensitive to this matter. In this respect, I will suggest the CIDB to work in close collaboration with the relevant institutions concerned, including the Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations, Human Resource Development and Training to find the best option forward.

Regarding my hon. friend, hon. Nuckcheddy positioned that he wishes that all financial aspects of a project to remain the sole responsibility of his colleagues of the profession of Quantity Surveyors. However, after intense deliberations with all parties concerned, my officers and I, after two years, have concluded that the provisions in this Bill are the best way forward. In fact, the amendments circulated in Clause 29(b)(ii) do state 'quantity surveying, preparation of bidding documents in the field of quantity surveying and cash flow forecasting, due diligence and replacement of cost assessment, respectively'. So, the provision that has been made in the PQSC Act is being respected fully.

Let me now come to hon. Ameer Meea. In fact, contrary to what he said, Mr Speaker Sir, I have in front of me a mail from Mr Satyen Deepchand, the Chairperson of PQSC. He himself has agreed to a series of all our propositions. I can let the hon. Member consult it afterwards.

So, with regard to hon. Adil Ameer Meea, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not surprised that his speech should have truly been through the hands of some QS or architects, as it was filled with many inaccuracies and issues of vested interests. I wonder if the hon. Member did get it right about who is an architect, who is a QS and who is an engineer?

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is completely incorrect to suggest that there has been no consultation with the stakeholders before the circulation of this Bill, since consultation dates back when the former Minister of Public Infrastructure was still on this side of the House. He may take time after one of the press conferences on a Saturday to ask him, *en aparté*, and he will tell you how far the consultations have lasted. Let me also confirm that more than 10 consultation sessions have been held with the relevant bodies, either by myself or by officers of my Ministry and the CIDB together. What more consultations do we need, Mr Speaker, Sir? Also, I understand hon. Ameer Meea has come here to defend the interests of a few who were benefitting from the protectionist clauses in certain laws.

With regard to bidding documents, for ages now, engineers have always been preparing bid documents, even before the advent of the QS profession; I hope the hon. member is aware of that. The hon. Member quoted International Bodies. I hope he is aware that the QS profession does not even exist in many jurisdictions around the world, where engineers have been performing the full range of these services. I hope that the engineers themselves have taken very good note of the insult of hon. Ameer Meea that they have superficial knowledge of the work, I mean. Hon. Mahomed will appreciate; unfortunately, he is laughing to that.

Et on est même allé jusqu'à attaquer le Directeur de CIDB. Excusez-moi, M. le président, je trouve cela lâche.

These amendments...

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order! This is what we call imputing improper motive to a hon. Member. I would ask the hon. Minister to withdraw this word!

Mr Speaker: No, you cannot ask that. I should ask!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: And you should say, so help me God!

(Interruptions)

Mr Hurreeram: I will withdraw it, if that pleases the Member, but attacking *les fonctionnaires, c'est malheureux! En tant que ministre aujourd'hui, nous de ce côté de la Chambre, nous voyons le travail que nos fonctionnaires sont en train de mettre pour améliorer le sort de nos compatriotes et je profite ici pour leur dire merci!*

Mr Speaker: Then, you will have to withdraw your words also!

Mr Ameer Meea: Which word?

Mr Speaker: I do not know, you are making noise!

Mr Ameer Meea: In fact, I said the guy comes from the constituency of the hon. Minister.

Mr Hurreeram: No, he is imputing motive again, Mr Speaker, Sir, but I will not ask him to withdraw. Yes, these amendments will certainly not jeopardise the job of any professional, on the contrary and, I wish to reiterate, Mr Speaker, Sir, that up to now, no joint venture between foreign and local consultant under current conditions has been registered to the CIDB. However, there have been many agreements *au noir*, outside of the eyes of the law, which brings me back to what I meant to say when I mentioned that some need to behave like responsible and mature adults. Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, and I am saying it again!

As I mentioned in my intervention at the Second Reading, we cannot understand how a foreign consultant will come to invest in Mauritius when he knows at the very start, that for every rupee, he will have to relinquish 51 cents to a local partner, irrespective of the latter's input or expertise. We know what happens in such cases in practice, there is exploitation. The most junior and inexperienced professionals are on boarded.

Now, with this Bill, the CIDB will be able to track these people and regulate more effectively. With regards to the term collaboration, let me inform the House, like the hon. Member himself, when reading the letter from the International Union of Architects mentioned, it forms part of their guidelines, *on ne peut pas être plus royaliste que le roi!* And they say in their guidelines, that there should be a form of collaboration, not necessarily joint venture. That form of collaboration should be determined by the parties according to the prevailing rule and environment of the host country. This is what the international guidelines say.

Hon. Ameer Meea mentioned about compounding of offences. Unfortunately, Mr Speaker, Sir, once again he has not understood the principle behind that or he is purposely taking us astray. In fact, the compounding of offences relate to violations to the CIDB Act and not defaulting in contractual obligations under specific contract. This is why, Members will remember, we came last year with an amnesty of those contractors who were working but who were not registered with the CIDB, *parce que nous avons aussi un devoir pédagogique vis-à-vis de nos contracteurs*. We are not here just to try and apply the laws without knowing what the reality is about. Likewise, Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member has

come here maybe to defend some vested interests, he is not aware that there is a difference between an individual engineer and a firm of consulting engineer. It is an association of firms providing consultancy services as opposed to an association of individual professionals.

With regards to the confidentiality clause, I wonder who is afraid of such a provision. This clause is precisely consistent with corporate and good governance requirements. It is worth reminding here, that any Council member owes his allegiance to advancing the interest of the organisation and not those of his nominating body. You come in the CIDB to discuss about the advancement of the construction industry, this is why we have had the need to have a member from the Association of Consulting Engineers because he, being an engineer, is in a totally different type of business, they offer consultancy. So, we need their input and that was the decision of that Board because when taking some decisions, they feel they need that particular competency in the Board to have their views also. This is what we call a dynamic situation, Mr Speaker, Sir. If tomorrow we feel we need, I do not know, a lawyer, we will change the regulation and make provision for a lawyer, this is a dynamic situation.

To sum up the hon. Member comments, I thank him for trying, it has been 11 years now and I know he wishes to bring real contribution to our country. Well, to reach that goal he knows what to do.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been consultations with all stakeholders concerned on the Bill before this House today, I am saying it again, and also on the proposed regulations which will follow. We cannot continue with the situation where different regulatory bodies, meant for individual construction industry professionals and the CIDB, meant for the construction sector as a whole, are governed by pieces of legislations that are not in harmony with each other and I think hon. Nuckcheddy has canvassed this beautifully, so I will not dwell further on that.

Mr Speaker, Sir, what seemed impossible a year ago, is now a reality. The construction sector is driving infrastructural developments and is an engine for economic growth. The hard work starts only now. There is also a need to open ourselves to the world. In order to push our limits even further, we need foreign investment and more importantly, foreign expertise.

We need to improve the ease of doing business, in order to attract those foreign experts to participate in the infrastructural development of our country. This is a unique opportunity to lay the foundation of Mauritius of tomorrow.

Construction has evolved over the years and developed countries are years ahead in terms of technology, the built environment and most importantly, resilience to climate change. We need their knowledge and expertise to go the extra mile. We need this competence and technology transfer that will shape, not only our physical landscape, but also the young architects, quantity surveyors, engineers and all other professionals involved in the project delivery, so that one day, we can stand on our own feet and undertake projects for which presently, we neither possess the knowhow nor the skill and competence.

There are, at present, Mr Speaker, Sir, foreign investors, with considerable amount of money, who are ready to participate in major infrastructural projects in the country. Imagine how instrumental it would be, in such trying times, to reap Foreign Direct Investment, through our strategy to boost growth with the construction sector as a major pillar of our economy. And, this is exactly, Mr Speaker, Sir, the overall goal of the Bill before the House today. Before I conclude my intervention, Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to raise an important issue which I believe is worth mentioning.

This Bill has been heavily criticised through various medias. Unfortunately, I fail to understand how come, when it was my turn to speak on the subject, in this very Assembly and explain the purpose of each provision, not even a word has been relayed in those so called independent Press, except one. I guess, Mr Speaker, Sir, indeed good news is no news!

Ce qui est très dommage, M. le président, vu l'importance de ce projet de loi qui a généré pas mal de commentaires des professionnels du secteur, qui ont enchainés entretien après entretien, et puis aujourd'hui plus rien. J'espère que la population dans son ensemble en tire les conclusions qui s'imposent.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish, before I conclude, to extend my gratitude to the Attorney General's Office, the CIDB, and the officers, - I will add to that - very competent officers of my Ministry, my Advisers, as well as everyone who contributed to making this Bill a reality. With these words, I commend the Bill to the House.

Thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT BOARD (AMENDMENT)**BILL****(No. V of 2021)***Clauses 1 to 11 ordered to stand part of the Bill.**Clause 12 (Section 20 of principal Act amended).**Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stand part of the Bill.”***Mr Hurreeram:** Mr Chairperson, I move for the following amendments in clause 12—
“in clause 12 –

- (i) by adding, before paragraph (a), the following new paragraph, existing paragraphs (a) to (c) being relettered as paragraphs (b) to (d) –
 - (a) in subsection (1), by inserting, after the word “unless”, the words “he or it undertakes to work in collaboration with a local consultant or local contractor, as the case may be, and”
- (ii) by deleting the newly relettered paragraph (c) and replacing it by the following paragraph –
 - (c) in subsection (3), by deleting the words “After considering an application under subsection (2),” and “it may determine” and replacing them by the words “Subject to section 19(4) to (8),” and “may be prescribed”, respectively;

*Amendments agreed to.**Clause 12, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.**Clauses 13 to 28 ordered to stand part of the Bill.**Clause 29 (Consequential amendments).**Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stand part of the Bill.”***Mr Hurreeram:** Mr Chairperson, I move for the following amendments in clause 29—
“in clause 29 –

- (i) in subclause (2)(a), by deleting subparagraph (ii) and replacing it by the following subparagraph –
 - (ii) in the definition of “practise architecture”, by deleting the word “building” and replacing it by the words “building, and includes the preparation of bidding documents in the field of architecture”;
- (ii) in subclause (3)(a), by deleting subparagraph (ii) and replacing it by the following subparagraph –
 - (ii) in the definition of “quantity surveying”, by deleting the words “preparation of bidding documents” and “mediation, arbitration and adjudication” and replacing them by the words “preparation of bidding documents in the field of quantity surveying” and “cash flow forecasting, due diligence and replacement cost assessment”, respectively;
- (iii) by deleting subclause (4) and replacing it by the following subclause –
 - (4) The Registered Professional Engineers Council Act is amended, in section 2, in the definition of “practice of engineering”, by deleting the words “community planning” and replacing them by the words “community planning, bid evaluations, and includes the preparation of bidding documents in the field of engineering”.

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 29, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 30 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

The Schedule ordered to stand part of the Bill.

The title and enacting clause were agreed to.

The Bill, as amended, was agreed to.

On the Assembly resuming with Mr Speaker in the Chair, Mr Speaker reported accordingly.

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Construction Industry Development Board (Amendment) Bill (No. V of 2021) was read a third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism (Mr S. Obeegadoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 20 July 2021 at 11.30 a.m.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo) seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned. Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie!

MATTERS RAISED

(7.33 p.m.)

FOREIGN UNIVERSITIES STUDENTS - VACCINES

Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête est adressée à la vice-Première ministre et ministre de l'Éducation, le ministre des Affaires étrangères et le ministre de la Santé, et concerne une problématique urgente.

M. le président, je suis en présence des représentations d'étudiants ayant été inscrits dans des universités étrangères et ayant déjà payé leur année scolaire. Ils sont dans la confusion totale et s'inquiètent qu'aucune information n'est disponible quant à leurs éventuels départs par rapport à la pandémie et la problématique de la vaccination. Est-ce que les vaccins administrés à Maurice sont acceptables dans ces pays ? Je fais donc un appel pour la mise sur pied d'un comité regroupant l'éducation, les affaires étrangères et la santé, et de communiquer les informations nécessaires aux étudiants dans les meilleurs délais pour dissiper toutes inquiétudes et confusions.

Je vous remercie.

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal): Mr Speaker, Sir, in the PQ addressed to me by hon. Osman Mahomed, I have already given all the information pertaining to anybody who wish to travel to any other countries; what are the rules and the regulations imposed. Now, at the same time, students who know that they have to travel to

some other countries, have to contact the Embassy to know what is the criteria that has been already established or if there is no criteria, to go to their universities.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Anquetil!

(7.34 p.m.)

MR & MRS N. - STILLBORN BABY – SSRN HOSPITAL

Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal): Je vous remercie M. le président. Ma requête s'adresse au ministre de la Santé concernant le cas du bébé mort-né de Monsieur et Madame N. survenu le 21 juin 2021 au Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Hospital. Monsieur et Madame N. en présence de leur avocat se sont rendus à l'hôpital il y a deux semaines pour rencontrer la *Superintendent*, mais cette dernière a refusé de les rencontrer. La secrétaire a dit que la *Superintendent* n'était pas autorisée à leur parler. Dans un souci de transparence, de justice et de compassion, j'interpelle le ministre pour qu'il intervienne personnellement auprès des préposés de l'hôpital afin que ces derniers reconsidèrent leur position et reçoivent Monsieur et Madame N. en présence de leur avocat dans les meilleurs délais.

Je vous remercie, M. le président.

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal): Mr Speaker, Sir, briefly, I will only outline what is the procedure when a complaint is lodged in a hospital. The complaint may be lodged by the CSU; a verbal or a written complaint, or the complaint may be to the Police Station that is in the vicinity of a hospital. Once the complaint is lodged, the Regional Health Director will conduct a preliminary enquiry and then, this preliminary enquiry will be submitted to the Ministry of Health and Wellness and in the Ministry there is already a Medical Negligence Standing Committee that is going to, again, review all the inquiries.

Concerning this case, anybody who will look for information at the Office of the Medical Superintendent, the Medical Superintendent is an administrative officer, he is not someone who may give any information concerning a case, especially a complaint. This person, whenever the Medical Negligence Standing Committee will conduct the enquiry, they will be called at that instance and where they can have all the questions or all the queries raised. So, this is the procedure.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dhunoo!

(7.37 p.m.)

**CONSTITUENCY NO. 17 – LA VIGIE & LA BRASSERIE – NEW ROAD
CONSTRUCTION**

Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My request tonight is addressed to the hon. Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development, hon. Hurreeram. I thank the hon. Minister for the good work being done in the Constituency No. 17. As he is aware that the work for the new road connecting *La Vigie* to *La Brasserie* has already been started, the contractor, General Constructions, has started with the clearing of land more precisely at *Mont Vert* along A10 leading to *16ème Mille* Village. The lorries leaving the site using A10 towards *16ème Mille* Village are living lots of mud on the road. With the rainy season, the road is very slippery and with the mud on the road it is more dangerous for the automobilists using this road. It is also causing a lot of inconvenience for the inhabitants of *16ème Mille*. I would like to make a request to the hon. Minister to use his good Office to talk to the Road Development Authority. I know that the engineers are doing a very good work there and to request also the contractor to clean the tyres of his lorries before using the A10 road so that we can remedy the situation before any accident happens. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Mr M. Hurreeram): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. First of all, I would like to thank the hon. Member for raising this issue and drawing our attention to that. This is what we expect from dynamic and young MPs like you. And I can only apologise to the inhabitants of *16ème Mille* and rest assured that I will act on it immediately after Parliament. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Lobine!

(7.38 p.m.)

HIGHLANDS - FOOTBALL GROUND

Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My request today is addressed to the hon. Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management. It concerns the sad state of the Highland football ground. I will table some pictures that I took for the sake of the hon. Vice Prime Minister to have a look and please kindly attend to same because several requests have been made to the Municipal Council of Vacoas/Phoenix for the past six months but to no avail. If you could use your good office to remedy the situation, please.

D24/TAKE062/ER/03

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I will contact the Chief Executive of the Municipal Council of Vacoas/Phoenix to do the needful.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

(7.39 p.m.)

VALLÉE-PITOT – RED ZONE - SELF-EMPLOYED ASSISTANCE SCHEME

Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am glad that the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development has just stepped in, however, I would like to raise an issue which concerns his Ministry and in particular the MRA. Following the Red Zone imposed on Vallée-Pitot, a lot of inhabitants have been making applications to the MRA to get their Self-Employed Assistance Scheme. Unfortunately, there was a lot of applications which have been rejected. Many of these people have made an appeal either online or to the MRA office, but up to now, there are many people residing in Vallée-Pitot who have not received the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme that was due to them by way of regulations. So, I would really ask the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development if he can take up the matter with the Mauritius Revenue Authority so that the inhabitants of Vallée-Pitot could get the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme. Thank you.

The Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development (Dr. R. Padayachy): M. le président, je remercie l'honorable membre pour la question. L'honorable Adil Ameer Meea m'avait parlé de cela aussi et je suis en train de faire le nécessaire pour voir qu'est-ce qui s'est passé parce que c'est sûr que tous ceux qui sont dans les zones rouges ont le droit au *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme* et aussi au *Wage Assistance Scheme*. Donc, ils doivent en général faire une application et par la suite, la MRA procède et verse l'argent sur les comptes. Mais là, il y a eu un petit souci, je suis en train de voir cela et d'ici la fin de la semaine ce sera réglé. Merci.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

(7.41 p.m.)

MISS H. B. - VACCINATION - RELAPSE SYNDROME

Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand’Baie & Poudre D’or): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness. I am making a pressing appeal to you in regard to Miss H. B., a 20-year-old University of Mauritius student and inhabitant of Goodlands, in spite of her medical history of *guillain-barré syndrome*, the Vaccination Board which went through her case approved that she had to be vaccinated and now, Miss H. B. shows signs of relapse of the *guillain-garré syndrome*. She is currently admitted at the SSRN Hospital. I humbly request the hon. Minister to look into that matter so that she gets the appropriate treatment, so that Miss H. B. recuperates fully and please, kindly liaise with the family members as they are desperately trying to reach you. I thank you, Hon. Minister, on behalf of the family for doing the needful.

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal): Mr Speaker, Sir, rest assured, hon. Member, I will do the needful.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ittoo!

(7.42 p.m.)

BORD CASCADES - HENRIETTA – BUS TERMINAL

Mr A. Ittoo (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal): Merci, M. le président, ma requête s’adresse au ministre des collectivités locales, l’honorable Dr. Husnoo. Cela concerne le *bus terminus* de Bord Cascades, Henrietta. Cela fait quand même presque 4 semaines les représentants de la municipalité et moi sommes partis sur le site pour voir l’état de ce terminus qui demande une rénovation et en même temps on avait regardé par rapport aux requêtes des habitants pour un terrain de pétanque. Donc, je veux demander au ministre s’il peut *use his good office* pour faire activer les choses du côté de la municipalité de Vacoas.

Merci.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for having given me advance notice for this question. I am told that tender has already been launched and in fact it is at an evaluation stage now. So, we will take care of this problem and that is for the bus station and as far as the petanque pitch is concerned, we will look into that as well.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms J. Bérenger!

(7.43 p.m.)

PFIZER VACCINE – PREGNANT WOMEN

Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal): Merci, M. le président. De nombreuses femmes à Maurice et ailleurs dans le monde, dont le docteur Kate Clancy aux États-Unis, ont fait part d'un certain dérèglement dans leurs cycles menstruels après avoir été vaccinées contre la COVID-19. Ma requête s'adresse au ministre de la Santé, toutes mes excuses, j'ai oublié de préciser. Donc ce qui a pour effet d'augmenter la peur chez certaines femmes qui m'ont contacté et qui souhaitent pouvoir enfanter et qui ont peur que leur projet de grossesse soit mis à mal. Si je ne me trompe pas, le vaccin *Pfizer*, dont on a eu la confirmation ce matin qu'une cargaison arrivera bientôt, ce vaccin serait non seulement recommandé pour les adolescents, comme l'a dit la ministre lui-même, mais aussi pour les femmes enceintes, celles qui allaitent et celles qui ont un projet de grossesse. Donc, j'aimerais demander au ministre de la Santé de bien vouloir éventuellement procéder à un sondage sur le nombre de femmes dont le cycle menstruel serait perturbé après la vaccination contre la COVID-19 et de bien vouloir donner priorité pour le vaccin *Pfizer*, non seulement aux adolescents, mais également aux femmes enceintes, à celles qui allaitent et à celles qui sont en projet de grossesse.

Merci.

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal): Studies and reports on COVID-19 vaccines, especially on pregnant women, we will keep on having them but at the same time we have to see what is the recommendation from international reviews, from international bodies, organisations and then we can decide which type of vaccine will suit the pregnant women. To conduct a study, that will take months or even years, so, we have to rely on what is the international information and what is information from other countries and then we are going to base on these information so that we can administer vaccines, be it Pfizer or any other vaccines. So, time will tell us and will guide us about the vaccine process for pregnant women. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Juman!

(7.45 p.m.)

SCHOOLS & COLLEGES – COVID CASES

Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Education but unfortunately she is not here, I request the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to pass on the message, if possible. Since I have been solicited by many worried parents regarding

COVID cases, registered during the last days in various schools and colleges, resulting in higher rate of absenteeism. It would much be appreciated if the hon. Minister can come forward to clarify the situation, reassure the parents, students, teachers and I urge the hon. Minister to please communicate. In such situations, communication is very important, it is a keyword.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal): Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning COVID cases that we have detected in the different localities or in the COVID Testing Centres, the contact tracing team first will contact the person who has been tested positive and we will do contact tracing and at the same time inform the school if in case there is suspected contamination in the school, whether this child has attended the school or not, so all these is based upon what are the information that has been conveyed to the contact tracing team.

So far, the Ministry of Health is liaising with the Ministry of Education to send all the information that is required, especially in positive cases.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

The Deputy Prime Minister: If I may add, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: I am sorry.

The Deputy Prime Minister: If I may just add for the sake of clarity. There are specific agreed protocols that are immediately applied by the health authorities and the educational authorities whenever and wherever there is a reported case of contamination or at least a positive case in schools. Disinfection automatically ensures, isolation of classmates automatically ensures and the Minister of Health only yesterday explained this very forcefully and clearly in public.

Of course, we need to communicate. The battle of communication is a constant one and we owe it to the public and to our population to constantly be communicating more and better, more effectively if I may say so and we shall continue doing so. But do rest assured that there are objective criteria as per well-established protocol helping the sanitary authorities and the educational authorities to address each and every case as it arises.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

(7.48 p.m.)

PORT LOUIS RESIDENTS - EID-UL-ADHA - PERMITS

Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East):

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, the issue I am raising tonight is addressed to the Minister of Agriculture and I am sure his colleague will take on the matter. As the House is aware, every year for every person who wish to slaughter an animal for festival of Eid-ul-Adha, they must have a permit from the Ministry of Agriculture and for those buying on official farms, they do get the permit there but for those buying with individuals, they go to the Ministry of Agriculture and get the permit and in the case of the residents of Port Louis, they go to Abercrombie Agro Office.

I was told today that about 35 individuals went to the Agro Office at Abercrombie and they were not able to get the permit and I do not know exactly what was the reason why they did not get the permit. And, I must say that normally it is a straightforward permit, everybody gets it all year round. So, I will urge the hon. Minister if he can look into the matter urgently because the festivities are scheduled for next Wednesday.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance (Mr M. Seeruttun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I take note of the request of the hon. Member. I know that usually during that time of the year when the Eid-ul-Adha is going to be celebrated, there are offices that are opened around the island where people can go and apply for the permit. So, if there is any issue with the one at the Abercrombie Office, then I convey to my colleague Minister, to look into it and as to why things are not being taken as it should have been. So, I will convey that to the Minister concerned.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ramful!

(7.50 p.m.)

**LA ROSA, NEW GROVE - D. BASANT RAI GOVERNMENT SCHOOL –
STUDENT – COVID POSITIVE**

Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have an issue which concerns the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education as well as the Minister of Health. It concerns the case of the D. Basant Rai Government School at La Rosa, New Grove where one Grade One student has been found to be positive. In fact, there is contrary to what the hon. Deputy Prime Minister just said, there is

a lack of communication from the authorities with regards to contact tracing, with regards to screening, with regards to closure of the school. I have been informed that two days back, the authorities have conducted contact tracing in New Grove but the parents of the school have not been informed. There was no communiqué whatsoever from the Ministry.

So, may I call upon the relevant authorities to kindly look into the matter and if there could be effective communication to the parents and staff of the school.

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal): Mr Speaker, Sir, whenever a positive case is detected, there is a scientific way of conducting contact tracing and quarantine those who have been in contact. It goes in the same way for the schools also. Once a pupil or a student is being tested positive, that will follow the same course. At the same time, the contact tracing team if ever they will come to know that there is more contamination, then it is question of giving direction to the school to be closed. Otherwise, it is only the class that is involved. So, the class will be closed for a period of two weeks. The school will be disinfected and then in due course, other information will be given to this school and the parents.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

(7.52 p.m.)

**PORT LOUIS - CENTRAL MARKET – FAULTY CCTV CAMERAS -
VEGETABLES & FRUITS THEFT**

Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you. I would like to address to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management regarding the CCTV cameras of the Central Market in Port Louis. Many of them are currently faulty at the moment and this gives rise to theft of vegetables and fruits and to the prejudice of the store owners who made the request to me to ask the hon. Minister to kindly request the Chief Executive of the Municipal Council of Port Louis to have these faulty CCTV Cameras repaired at the earliest.

Thank you.

The Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I will pass on the message to the Chief Executive of the Municipal Council of Port Louis.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Nuckcheddy!

(7.53 p.m.)

BON ACCUEIL & L'AVENTURE – CWA PIPES

Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My request tonight is addressed to the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities. It concerns the CWA pipes in the region of Bon Accueil and Laventure because these pipes are still on the surface, have not been buried yet and they are often being damaged by vehicles and the CWA personnel are taking too long time before they repair it. May I request the Minister to see with the personnel of CWA if the repairs can be done at the earliest?

Thank you.

The Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr G. Lesjongard): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have taken note of what the hon. Member has stated in the House. I shall definitely pass on the message to the management of the CWA.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. David!

(7.54 p.m.)

ST MARTIN, BEL OMBRE - EXCAVATION WORKS - MANGROVES - REMOVAL

Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête de ce soir s'adresse au ministre des Infrastructures publiques et du développement communautaire et concerne les travaux de dragage qui sont effectués dans la région de St Martin à Bel Ombre par les services de ce qui semblent être ceux de la *NDU*. Je comprends que ces travaux ont initialement pour objectif de dégager le passage de l'eau en zone inondable mais ce qui m'interpelle c'est que plusieurs plants de mangroves ont été arrachés et je tiens à déposer à la Chambre deux photos qui illustrent mon propos. Alors, sachant que la mangrove est une barrière naturelle contre les catastrophes climatiques et notamment l'érosion, puis-je demander au ministre, d'éclairer la Chambre sur le bienfondé de ces travaux à St Martin et surtout de nous dire si ces travaux de dragages sont issus d'une étude préalable d'évaluation des risques écologiques et climatiques.

Merci.

The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Mr M. Hurreeram): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I thank the hon. Member for having given me

advance notice of this question. I have been informed by the NDU that no mangroves have been removed by the NDU works.

District Council had recently done some desilting works during the heavy rainfalls and flooding at Bel Ombre and St Martin but no information is available regarding the removal of mangroves and I know that the Ministry of Environment is closely following up on all disturbances of mangroves that has been happening but we do also understand that if we have had a choice to make between mangroves and the lives of the people living in Bel Ombre, I think the choice is very clear, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

(7:56 p.m.)

MISS MARIE CHRISTIE A. - CARER'S ALLOWANCE

Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête ce soir s'adresse à la ministre de l'Intégration sociale, de la Sécurité sociale et de la Solidarité nationale qui, malheureusement, n'est pas dans l'hémicycle. Il concerne le cas de Mademoiselle Marie Christie A. de Barkly, atteinte de trisomie 21, souffrant d'hypertension pulmonaire, cardiaque de surcroît, et doit être sous oxygène dix heures par jour ; ayant aussi des troubles de comportement et une déficience intellectuelle.

En effet, Mlle Marie Christie A., âgée de 27 ans, est bénéficiaire d'une pension d'invalidité depuis sa majorité, mais a aussi bénéficié d'un *Carer's Allowance* pendant ces dix dernières années. Et voilà que subitement, le *Medical Board* décide de supprimer le *Carer's Allowance* alors qu'elle ne peut en aucun cas être livrée à elle-même et a besoin d'aide accompagnée en permanence. Merci, donc, à l'honorable ministre, à qui j'ai déjà remis les documents y relatifs, de bien vouloir demander au *Medical Board* de reconsidérer ce cas.

Merci.

The Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives (Mr S. Bholah): Mr Speaker, Sir, I will pass on the message. The more so, I understand, you have already submitted the documents to her. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: No more matters? Let us suspend!

At 7.57 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 20 July 2021 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

MAURITIUS PORTS AUTHORITY - TUGS

(No. B/643) 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 tugs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Ports Authority, information as to –

- (a) the number thereof in operation as at to date, indicating in each case the –
 - (i) capacity, and
 - (ii) date of commissioning thereof;
- (b) if new ones are being purchased and, if so, indicate the –
 - (i) capacity thereof, and
 - (ii) procurement method used therefor, and
- (c) if additional ones are presently being leased and, if so, indicate the leasing procedures resorted to.

(Withdrawn)

SIR GAËTAN TUG – COMPENSATION & ASSISTANCE

(No. B/644) 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 families of the officers lost at sea in the wreck of the Sir Gaëtan tug, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Ports Authority, information as to if –

- (a) all compensations due have been paid thereto and, if so, when, and
- (b) assistance has been extended for the payment of the education fees of the children thereof.

(Withdrawn)

**RADIO TOWER CONTROL - AUTOMATED IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM
& VESSEL MONITORING SYSTEM - PERSONNEL - TRAINING**

(No. B/645) 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 new Automated Identification System and Vessel Monitoring System installed at the radio tower control, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Ports Authority, information as to if training has been given to the personnel for the use thereof.

(Withdrawn)

VACOAS MARKET FAIR - RELOCATION

(No. B/671) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the proposed relocation of the Vacoas Market Fair, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Vacoas and Phoenix, information as to where matters stand.

Reply: The advent of the Metro Express Project has paved the way for the rejuvenation of our town centres through the implementation of modern Urban Terminals along the metro corridor from Port Louis to Curepipe. In this respect, Government identified suitable plots of land in town centres for the development of these urban terminals with a view to accommodating numerous facilities and services for the benefit of the inhabitants of the locality.

Regarding Vacoas, consultations were held with various stakeholders for the determination of the plots of land to be earmarked for the Urban Terminal Project.

In this context, a decision was taken to relocate the Vacoas Market Fair on the portion of land formerly occupied by the SMF Quarters. This plot of land of an extent over 3 *arpents* in the heart of the Vacoas Town Centre is suitable for the setting up of a modern market fair due to its proximity to the existing one, the more so, it is located in the vicinity of the existing bus station and the forthcoming metro station.

The Request for Proposals for the development and operation of a modern Urban Terminal at Vacoas was launched on 29 October 2020 and same is currently at evaluation stage. At this point, the question of relocating the Vacoas Market Fair does not arise as same is subject to the outcome of the evaluation exercise.

**EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE - MAURITIUS - FOREIGN FISHING
VESSELS - LICENSES - PERIOD 2015-13 JULY 2021**

(No. B/672) Mr R. Woochit (Third Member for Pamplémousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the fishing sector, he will state the number of licenses issued to foreign vessels to fish within our territories, since 2015 to date, indicating the terms and conditions thereof in each case.

Reply: I am informed that, fishing licenses, to fish in the Exclusive Economic Zone of Mauritius, are issued to two categories of foreign fishing vessels.

The first category concerns vessels operating under fishing agreements, namely the EU Mauritius Sustainable Fishing Agreement, the Mauritius Seychelles Fishing Agreement and the Agreement between Mauritius and the Japan Tuna Fisheries Cooperative Association.

The second category of foreign vessels to which my Ministry issues licenses to fish in the EEZ are vessels which are not under any fishing agreement. These vessels are from countries like Taiwan, Province of China, People's Republic of China, Republic of Korea and Oman.

Since 2015 to date, my Ministry has issued a total of 1,423 licenses to these two categories of foreign fishing vessels, which ranges from 58 to 298 fishing vessels annually.

I am placing the information in the Library of the National Assembly with regard to the number of licences issued to foreign vessels to fish in our waters since 2015 to May 2021 and the terms and conditions thereof.

PRIVATE SECTOR - INDUSTRIAL INJURY ALLOWANCE

(No. B/673) Mr R. Woochit (Third Member for Pamplémousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the Industrial Injury Allowance payable to employees of the private sector, she will state, since 01 July 2020 to date –

- (a) the number of such employees having applied therefor and been granted same, indicating the total quantum of funds disbursed in terms thereof, and

- (b) if the payment of the said allowance has been put on hold and, if so, indicate the reasons therefor.

Reply: I am informed that since 01 July 2020 to date, a total of 953 applications have been received for Industrial Injury Allowance. Out of the 953 applications, 164 employees have been paid the Industrial Injury Allowance for a total amount of Rs2,938,673.

The National Pensions Act was amended through the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2020 to abolish the payment of contributions to the NPF and to introduce the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* as from 01 September 2020.

In the Budget 2021/2022, an amount of Rs50 m. has been allocated to my Ministry for payment for all outstanding applications.

EFW – RODRIGUES - FUNDS & CAPITAL PROJECTS 2014-2021

(No. B/674) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Employees Welfare Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

- (a) quantum of funds thereof invested in Rodrigues Island over the past five years, and
- (b) list of all capital projects undertaken over the period 2014 to 2021.

(Withdrawn)

SCHOOL MATERIALS – BIDDERS & CONTRACT VALUE

(No. B/675) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the procurement of school materials by her Ministry, she will give the list of the successful bidders therefor over the past six years, indicating in each case, the –

- (a) procurement method used, and
- (b) contract value.

(Withdrawn)

NEF - BOARD MEMBERS - APPOINTMENT, ALLOWANCES & BENEFITS

(No. B/676) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the National Empowerment Foundation, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the present composition of the Board thereof, indicating in each case the –

- (a) date of appointment, and
- (b) allowances and benefits drawn.

(Withdrawn)

COVID-19 PANDEMIC- QUARANTINE CENTRES

(No. B/677) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Quarantine Centres set up amid the COVID-19 pandemic, he will state the –

- (a) procedures followed for admission thereto, and
- (b) sanitary protocols put in place thereat.

(Withdrawn)

MRS F. M. – DEATH – INTERNAL INQUIRY

(No. B/680) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the fatal fall of Mrs F. M. whilst on duty, on 09 June 2021, he will state if an internal inquiry has been initiated thereinto at the level of his Ministry from an occupational health and safety perspective.

(Vide Reply to PQ B/659)

STC - GENERAL MANAGER

(No. B/681) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to Mr R. S., General Manager of the State Trading Corporation, he will state the –

- (a) date of appointment thereof, indicating if a prior due diligence exercise was carried out to ascertain if he is a fit and proper person for the post;
- (b) terms and conditions of appointment thereof, including the total monthly pay packet, and
- (c) number of boards of parastatal bodies and funds of which he is a member.

(Withdrawn)

INFANTICIDE CASES – NUMBER – JANUARY 2015-JULY 2021

(No. B/684) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to infanticide, she will state the number of reported cases thereof since January 2015 to date, indicating the measures taken in each case.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that cases of infanticide are not reported to my Ministry but rather to the Commissioner of Police where the Major Crime Intervention Team (MCIT) and the Central Criminal Investigation Department (CCID) conduct investigations at their level. Such criminal investigations are not initiated or conducted by my Ministry.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since January 2015 to date, there have been seven cases enquired into by the Police where children had lost their lives.

However, I wish to inform the House that in all cases of tragic death, a site visit is conducted by the Family Counselling Officer and the Psychologist of my Ministry at the residence of the family of the victim to offer psychological support. If consent is obtained, counselling sessions are conducted with the parents and family members. The sessions are focused mainly on bereavement dynamics and re-orientation. Follow-up sessions are also offered to the family members in terms of psychosocial support.

POSITIVE DISCIPLINE IN EDUCATION - TEACHERS

(No. B/690) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to training in Positive Discipline in Education, she will state the number of teachers having benefitted therefrom, indicating the –

- (a) frequency thereof,

- (b) expenditure incurred therefor on a yearly basis since the start thereof, and
- (c) institution/s providing same.

(Withdrawn)

BUSES & LORRIES - HEAVY SMOKES - CONTRAVENTIONS

(No. B/692) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to heavy smokes emanating from buses and lorries, he will state the –

- (a) number of contraventions booked and convictions secured over the past three years, and
- (b) additional measures taken to deal with this issue.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that a total number of 364 contraventions have been established from 01 January 2018 to 08 July 2021 relating to buses and lorries emitting heavy smokes in breach of section 83(1)(a) of the Road Traffic (Construction and Use of Vehicles) Regulations 2010, as follows –

- *Police de L'Environnement* - 290
- Police Department - 74

During that same period, the *Police de L'Environnement* and the National Land Transport Authority (NLTA) issued a total number of 2,172 Prohibition Notices under provisions laid down at section 119(2) of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2016 requiring vehicles concerned to undergo verification at an Authorised Examination Vehicle Station, as follows –

- *Police de L'Environnement* - 883
- NLTA - 1289

I am further informed that 134 convictions have been secured during the said period.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I should highlight that several measures have been taken by this Government to address the issue of heavy smoke emission from vehicles. Accordingly, –

- (i) the fine under the Fourth Schedule to the Road Traffic Act relating to Fixed Penalty for breach of section 83(1) (a) of the Road Traffic (Construction and Use of Vehicles) Regulations 2010 has been increased from Rs1,000 to Rs5,000 with effect from 31 December 2020;

- (ii) moreover, on 31 December 2020, the Road Traffic (Control of Vehicular Emissions) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 came into force, bringing the fine for vehicles in breach of these regulations from Rs10,000 to Rs20,000;
- (iii) in line with my reply to Parliamentary Question B/411 in July 2020, my Ministry has already awarded the contract for the supply, installation, testing, training and commissioning of 15 units portable smoke meters to enable authorised officers to conduct opacity tests by virtue of powers vested in them under the Road Traffic (Control of Vehicular Emissions) Regulations;

Upon delivery by the end of August 2021, the equipment will be allocated to different implementing agencies. Out of the 15 units portable smoke meters, 9 units will be provided to the *Police de L'Environnement* (7 for Mauritius and 2 for Rodrigues); 1 unit to the Traffic Management Branch of the Police; 4 units to the National Land Transport Authority and 1 unit to the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development for conducting tests on Government Vehicles at its Mechanical and Engineering Division;

In this context, a sensitisation campaign is being worked out at the level of my Ministry to educate the public, particularly road-users and owners of diesel-propelled vehicles on health and environmental impacts of heavy smoke emissions and how these emissions can be avoided;

- (iv) moreover, the Ministry of Land Transport and Light Rail is currently in the process of further amending the Road Traffic (Control of Vehicular Emissions) Regulations to introduce a new protocol for the conduct of a free acceleration test for opacity and a time frame of 14 days for vehicles emitting black smoke to report to an Authorised Examiner;
- (v) pursuant to one of the key recommendations of the Global Fuel Economy Initiative (GFEI) in which Government partook from 2013 to 2018, the State Trading Corporation, on its part, amended its vehicle fuel specifications in November 2020 for the importation of diesel and Mogas with lesser Sulphur content. Accordingly, the Sulphur content in diesel has been reduced from 50 parts per million (ppm) to 10 ppm. As regards Mogas, the Sulphur content has been revised from 1,000 ppm to 10 ppm. Specifications have been also laid

down in respect of aromatics being 35 per cent volume by volume, as compared to previous consignments where no specifications for aromatics were established. The specifications for Benzene have been concurrently reviewed from 5 per cent volume by volume to 1 per cent volume by volume;

- (vi) besides, as the House is very much aware, the current Budget also makes provision for a series of incentives to encourage consumers to shift to the purchase of electric buses from conventional diesel or petrol ones, as follows –
- the subsidy for the purchase of electric buses is being increased from Rs1 m. to Rs1.2 m. for 9-meter buses; and from Rs1.3 m. to Rs1.5 m. for buses above 9 meters;
 - operators acquiring electric buses will be eligible to a lease under the Transformation Fund; and
 - 25 electric buses for the National Transport Corporation to renew its fleet.

In fact, to address the problem of air pollution caused by heavy vehicular smokes, fiscal incentives are being provided on other types of vehicles like electric vans and motor vehicles as well.

- (vii) in addition, as announced in the last Budget Speech, the light rail system introduced by this Government in December 2019 is being extended to other parts of the island. This endeavour demonstrates the willingness of the present-day Government to adopt an eco-friendlier mode of public transportation;
- (viii) on a similar note, I am also informed that the Ministry of Land Transport and Light Rail is receiving support from the Global Environment Facility to promote Low-Carbon Electric Public Bus Transport in Mauritius, and
- (ix) last but not least, reckoning the importance of preserving the quality of air that we breathe, my Ministry has been monitoring the ambient air quality over the past two decades. Significant investment on state-of-the-art air monitoring stations has been made in recent years and is being continued to cover the whole island in terms of ambient air monitoring by the National Environmental Laboratory (NEL). As I stated in my reply to PQ B/483 in May 2021, arrangements are underway at the level of my Ministry for the introduction of an Air Quality Index (AQI). The AQI would constitute an

indexing tool that would be used by the National Environmental Laboratory of my Ministry to communicate, in a simplified manner, the prevailing air quality in selected regions. This index is expected to facilitate policy making for the preservation of the air quality.

**PLAINE LAUZUN PUMPING STATION-UPPER MONNERON
RESERVOIR - DEDICATED PIPELINE**

(No. B/694) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the proposed construction of a dedicated pipeline from the Plaine Lauzun Pumping Station to the Upper Monneron Reservoir, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to where matters stand, indicating –

- (a) the start and completion dates thereof, and
- (b) if 24/7 water supply will thereafter be available.

Reply: In reply to PQ A/50 at our Sitting of 11 May 2021, the House was informed that with a view to improving the water supply in the regions of Vallée Pitot and Tranquebar, the CWA proposed to lay a dedicated pipeline from New Plaine Lauzun Pumping Station to Upper Monneron Reservoir. This dedicated pipeline is expected to bring an additional 3,000 m³/day to Upper Monneron Reservoir and improve hours of supply generally from 10 hours to 16 hours per day.

The CWA has informed that the bids have been floated on 14 June 2021 at the Central Procurement Board with closing date of 12 July 2021.

However, on 18 June 2021, one potential bidder submitted a challenge under Section 43 of the Public Procurement Act 2006 concerning some conditions of the Contract in the Bidding Document.

On 29 June 2021, the CWA was informed by the Independent Review Panel (IRP) that the same company had made an application for review to the IRP and that pursuant to Section 45(4) of the Public Procurement Act 2006, the procurement proceedings were suspended until the appeal is heard and determined by the IRP. The Central Procurement Board (CPB) was informed accordingly to suspend the procurement proceedings.

**ENGRAIS MARTIAL, LA PEYROUSSE & CAMP ROUILLARD - SEWAGE
WORKS**

(No. B/695) Mr A. Ittoo (Third Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the sewage works undertaken in Engrais Martial, la Peyrouse and Camp Rouillard, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Wastewater Management Authority, information as to the work progress thereof.

(Withdrawn)

COVID-19 PANDEMIC – OVERSEAS TREATMENT - PROTOCOL

(No. B/696) Mr A. Ittoo (Third Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to overseas treatment, he will state the protocol put in place therefor amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

(Withdrawn)

COVID-19 HOME SELF TESTING KIT – PROTOCOL

(No. B/698) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the COVID-19 Home Self Testing Kit, he will state –

- (a) the number of requests received therefor, and
- (b) if a protocol has been established by his Ministry to ensure that those who are COVID-19 positive tested through the use thereof report to the hospitals/COVID-19 Treatment Centres.

(Withdrawn)

ZONE D'ÉDUCATION PRIORITAIRE SCHOOLS – NUMBER

(No. B/699) Mrs J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the *Zone d'Éducation Prioritaire* schools, she will state the present number thereof, indicating the –

- (a) initiatives taken by her Ministry to support the teaching and non-teaching staff, the students and the parents thereof for the promotion of education;
- (b) achievements thereof in the Primary School Achievement Certificate Examinations 2021, and
- (c) new avenues being explored in respect thereof.

(Withdrawn)

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE - VICTIMS - SAFETY & SECURITY

(No. B/700) Mrs J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to domestic violence, she will state the mechanism presently in place between her Ministry and the Mauritius Police Force to ensure the safety and security of victims or potential victims thereof, indicating the mechanism, if any, existing between her Ministry and the Mauritius Police Force for information sharing in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

ASPHALT - RECYCLING

(No. B/701) 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 recycling of asphalt in Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)