



SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 12 APRIL 2022

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(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
Hon. Alan Ganoo	Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
Dr. the Hon. Renganaden Padayachy	Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development
Hon. Mrs Fazila Jeewa-Daureeawoo, GCSK	Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity
Hon. Soomilduth Bholah	Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives

Hon. Kavydass Ramano	Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change
Hon. Mahen Kumar Seeruttun	Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance
Hon. Georges Pierre Lesjongard	Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
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
Hon. Soodesh Satkam Callichurn	Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection
Dr. the Hon. Kailesh Kumar Singh Jagutpal	Minister of Health and Wellness
Hon. Sudheer Maudhoo	Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping
Hon. Mrs Kalpana Devi Koonjoo-Shah	Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare
Hon. Avinash Teeluck	Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage

Hon. Teeruthraj Hurdoyal

Minister of Public Service, Administrative
and Institutional Reforms

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

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MAURITIUS

Seventh National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 03 of 2022

Sitting of Tuesday 12 April 2022

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

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

ANNOUNCEMENTS**OBITUARY****MR VIJAYANATHAN VENKATASAMY**

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is with deep regret that we learnt of the demise of two former Members of Parliament, namely –

- Mr Vijayanathan Venkatasamy, on 12 December 2021, at the age of 87, and
- Mr Mohamed Feroz Aubdoollah, on 09 April 2022, at the age of 51.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr Vijayanathan Venkatasamy was born on 21 July 1934 in Rose Hill.

He attended New Eton College for his secondary education before being admitted to Hull University in England where he obtained, in 1961, a Bachelor's Degree in Chemistry and Physics. In the same year, he became Principal of New Eton College, a position which he held until 1980.

Mr Venkatasamy ran for the General Election in 1976 for Constituency No. 19, Stanley and Rose Hill under the banner of the MMM and was elected Third Member.

In December 1978, he also ran for the Municipal Council Election for Beau Bassin/Rose Hill and served as Mayor of the Council until April 1979.

In 1977, he was appointed Member of the Public Accounts Committee, and, later, acted as Chairperson of the Committee.

In January 1981, he became Parliamentary Secretary for the Ministry of Finance, a position he held until June 1981.

In 1982, Mr Venkatasamy ran for the General Election in the same Constituency under the banner of *Parti de l'Alliance Nationale* but was not elected.

Mr Speaker, Sir, may I request you to kindly direct the Clerk of the National Assembly to convey the deep condolences of the Assembly to the members of the bereaved family of late Mr Vijayanathan Venkatasamy.

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, I associate myself with the tribute paid by the hon. Prime Minister to late Mr Vijayanathan Venkatasamy, former

Member of the National Assembly, and on behalf of the Opposition, I request the Clerk to convey our condolences to the bereaved family.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I associate myself with the tribute paid to the memory of late Mr Vijayanathan Venkatasamy, former Member of Parliament by the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Leader of the Opposition and I direct the Clerk to convey the deep condolences of the Assembly to the bereaved family.

MR MOHAMED FEROZ AUBDOOLLAH

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr Mohamed Feroz Aubdoollah, also known as Abdoola, was born on 25 February 1971 in Castel. After his secondary schooling at Quartier Militaire State Secondary School and Sookdeo Bissoondoyal State Secondary School, he pursued further studies in Accountancy in London. He held a professional qualification awarded by the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants. He was also holder of a diploma awarded by the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Mr Aubdoollah ran for the General Election for the first time in 1991 in Constituency No. 15 - La Caverne and Phoenix as an independent candidate but was not elected. In the year 2000, he contested the General Election in Constituency No. 19 - Stanley and Rose Hill - under the banner of the MSM/MMM Alliance and was elected Third Member.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in October 2000, he was nominated to serve on the Public Accounts Committee. On 08 May 2002, he was appointed as Member of the Select Committee on Funding of Political Parties.

On 07 September 2004, he was nominated to serve on the Select Committee on the Trust Fund for the Soroptimist Day Care Centre for the Elderly Bill. On 09 February 2005, he became the Deputy Chief Government Whip, a position which he held until April 2005.

He was also engaged in social work.

Mr Speaker, Sir, may I request you to kindly direct the Clerk of the National Assembly to convey the deep condolences of the Assembly to the members of the bereaved family of late Mr Mohamed Feroz Aubdoollah.

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am very saddened to learn of the passing of Mr Feroz Aubdoollah. We worked together for five years at the then

Public Accounts Committee, and it is very sad that he died at such a young age. Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Clerk, on behalf of the whole Opposition, to convey our condolences to the bereaved family.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I associate myself with the tribute paid to the memory of late Mr Aubdoollah, former Member of Parliament by the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Leader of the Opposition and I direct the Clerk to convey the deep condolences of the Assembly to the bereaved family.

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**

Certificate of Urgency in respect of the Beach Authority Bill (No. IV of 2022). (In Original)

B. Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development

- (a) The Customs Tariff (Amendment of Schedule) (No.2) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 72 of 2022)
- (b) The Income Tax (Construction of Housing Estates) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 74 of 2022)
- (c) The Land (Duties and Taxes) (Construction of Housing Estates) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 75 of 2022)
- (d) The Registration Duty (Construction of Housing Estates) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 76 of 2022)
- (e) The Income Tax (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 77 of 2022)
- (f) The Land (Duties and Taxes) (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 78 of 2022)

C. Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities

The Annual Report 2019/2020 of the Central Electricity Board.

D. Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping

The Fisheries and Marine Resources (Toxic Fish) (Amendment) Regulations 2022.
(Government Notice No. 73 of 2022)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

RUPEE-US DOLLAR - EXCHANGE RATE - ONGOING FALL

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the ongoing fall in the exchange rate of the Rupee vis-à-vis the US dollar and the ensuing scarcity of this currency in commercial banks in Mauritius, he will state the measures, if any, Government and the Bank of Mauritius propose to take to reverse same.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, tout comme mardi dernier, je tiens à remercier le Leader de l'opposition pour sa question.

Cette question me donne une nouvelle fois l'opportunité d'apporter un éclairage sur le sens de l'action du gouvernement en faveur de la population et en premier lieu envers les plus démunis.

Pour ce faire et dans un premier temps, je donnerai rapidement quelques éléments de contexte.

M. le président, en effet, il n'est un secret pour personne que depuis mars 2020, et suite à l'apparition de la pandémie de la Covid-19, un ralentissement notable des activités économiques a été enregistré. Avec deux confinements et la fermeture de nos frontières, notre économie a été mise à rude épreuve.

Au global, Maurice a subi deux contractions successives. La première de 6,9% pour l'année fiscale 2019-2020 et la seconde, 5,4% pour l'année fiscale 2020-2021. Je rajoute à cela que le déclenchement du conflit russo-ukrainien a rajouté un halo supplémentaire d'incertitudes, entraîné une poussée inflationniste mondiale et pourrait conduire notre monnaie à se déprécier davantage.

A cet égard, je m'appuie sur le récent rapport de la Commission Économique Africaine des Nations Unies intitulé « *The impact of the Ukraine Crisis in Africa* » anticipant –

- une dépréciation de 10% de la roupie ;

- un surplus d'inflation de 2,2% en Afrique uniquement dû au conflit, et
- une pression accrue sur les comptes courants de 43 pays africains importateurs d'énergies et de denrées alimentaires, à l'instar de Maurice.

M. le président, j'en viens à la problématique de l'entrée de devises dans le contexte des deux dernières années que j'ai à l'instant étayé. Le choc a été particulièrement violent pour le secteur du tourisme, celui de l'export et celui des services financiers.

Encore une fois, les chiffres parlent d'eux-mêmes. D'une part, Maurice a ainsi dû faire face à une baisse drastique des arrivées touristiques. C'est-à-dire que nous sommes passés d'un flux annuel pré-Covid de 1,3-1,4 millions de touristes pour l'année 2019, à 300,000 touristes en 2020 et 180,000 touristes en 2021. Les conséquences en termes d'entrée de devises ont été majeures étant donné que sur la période que je viens de citer, nous avons facilement perdu 2,3 millions de touristes. Sachant que chaque touriste, en période pré-pandémique, dépensait en moyenne 1,200 euros par séjour hors transport, le manque à gagner cumulé est considérable.

D'autre part, les exportations de biens et services, qui avaient rapporté l'équivalent de 191,9 milliards de roupies en devises étrangères en 2019, sont tombées à 128,9 milliards de roupies en 2020 et à 132,9 milliards de roupies en 2021.

Enfin, le secteur des services financiers, bien qu'ayant démontré sa résilience, a enregistré une baisse de la valeur ajoutée brute de 51,8 milliards de roupies en 2019 à 49,3 milliards de roupies en 2020, indiquant une diminution des entrées de devises.

Au global, au cours des deux années de la pandémie, l'économie a ainsi enregistré un déficit de quelque 122 milliards de roupies d'entrées de devises étrangères rien que sur l'export de biens et services.

M. le président, pour répondre à la question de l'honorable Leader de l'opposition, permettez-moi de prime abord de préciser le mandat revenant à la Banque de Maurice et celui qui incombe au gouvernement.

Conformément à la section 4 de la *Bank of Mauritius Act*, la Banque de Maurice est l'entité en charge et en toute indépendance de conduire la politique monétaire et celle des taux de change. Elle seule en est le décisionnaire. Je cite -

*“The Bank is entrusted, inter alia, with the responsibilities to:
conduct monetary policy and manage the exchange rate of the rupee, taking into account
the orderly and balanced economic development of Mauritius.”*

En vertu de son mandat et pour faire face au déficit d'entrée de devises étrangères, j'ai été informé par la Banque de Maurice que cette dernière a vendu quelques 2,9 milliards de dollars américains sur le marché depuis le début de la pandémie, c'est-à-dire en mars 2020.

Je rappelle qu'en 2018 et 2019, Maurice avait reçu un montant de 12,67 milliards de dollars, comparativement à 7,35 milliards de dollars en 2020 et 2021. Soit une baisse de 5,32 milliards de dollars, équivalent à 230 milliards de roupies, représentant la moitié de notre PIB.

L'approvisionnement régulier du marché en devises étrangères par la Banque de Maurice, qui est en charge de la conduite de la politique monétaire, a permis de limiter les perturbations du fonctionnement normal du marché des changes. Et cela en conformité avec le régime de change flottant comme qualifié par le Fonds Monétaire International.

Au vu des perspectives relatives aux performances encourageantes du secteur touristique et en tenant en compte la tendance inflationniste mondiale, la Banque de Maurice a également porté à ma connaissance qu'elle est intervenue sur le marché à hauteur de 25 millions de dollars à un taux apprécié de 43,15 roupies contre 43,25 roupies lors de sa dernière intervention.

M. le président, je vais maintenant élaborer sur la stratégie déployée et les mesures implémentées par le gouvernement pour soutenir le pouvoir d'achat de la population et aussi la monnaie.

Premièrement, la réouverture totale de nos frontières en octobre 2021, dans le respect des protocoles sanitaires, a bien entendu été une étape importante pour assurer la reprise franche et durable des entrées de devises. Ce nouveau souffle, c'est la bouchée d'oxygène dont nous avons besoin pour atteindre les objectifs que nous nous sommes fixés.

Deuxièmement, le gouvernement, sous l'impulsion de notre Premier ministre, a travaillé d'arrache-pied pour faciliter les affaires à Maurice et maintenir l'excellente réputation de la juridiction comme un Centre Financier International. Je pense notamment à la sortie de Maurice des listes du GAFI, de l'Union Européenne et du Royaume-Uni. Une excellente nouvelle pour l'économie, tant en termes de croissance, d'emploi que d'entrée de devises étrangères.

Troisièmement, et sans porter préjudice à la viabilité de notre dette, le gouvernement a également contracté plusieurs prêts concessionnels en devises étrangères. Ces prêts aux conditions avantageuses et qui plus est souvent accompagnés de subventions ont permis de faire rentrer des devises étrangères sur le marché local.

Quatrièmement, notre stratégie pour faciliter l'entrée de devises étrangères s'est orientée vers l'ouverture de notre économie aux investisseurs et expatriés, notamment les seniors. Les Budgets 2020-2021 et 2021-2022 ont fait la part belle à la *Silver economy*.

Je rappelle qu'il est estimé que chaque retraité expatrié à Maurice amène au pays une moyenne de 9,000 dollars par individu, sur la base d'une résidence de 6 mois par an à Maurice.

Atteindre l'objectif de 25,000 retraités à Maurice permettrait, M. le président, d'accroître les entrées en devises étrangères de 250 millions de dollars.

Enfin, permettez-moi de rappeler les efforts considérables déployés par le gouvernement pour subventionner une large gamme de produits de nécessité, pour un montant total de 8,2 milliards de roupies.

M. le président, selon la Banque de Maurice, notre monnaie s'est dépréciée de 7,6% en 2020 et de 9,2% en 2021.

Au regard du contexte historique, la valeur de notre roupie aurait pu être plus largement affectée. Ce qui me fait donc poser la question de la dépréciation de la roupie à l'honorable Leader de l'opposition quand lui et ses amis étaient au pouvoir entre 2006 et 2014.

Une période caractérisée au niveau mondial par une expansion exceptionnelle, à savoir une croissance forte de 3,6% en 2014 et surtout une inflation faible, très faible de 2,9% en 2014, sans pandémie, sans guerre ni perturbations de la chaîne d'approvisionnement.

Auraient-ils cherché à délibérément dévaluer la roupie en 2012 ? La population se souviendra qu'à cette époque, le Leader de l'opposition, alors ministre des Finances, avait pris la décision non-conforme d'injecter 100 millions de dollars dans le but explicite de dévaluer notre roupie.

En 2012, alors que l'économie mondiale se portait bien, qu'il n'y avait pas de confinement ni de crise de la Covid-19 et que le secteur du tourisme avec près d'un million de

visiteurs apportait des devises étrangères et que le niveau de l'export de biens et services s'établissait à 188,6 milliards de roupies, la roupie a pourtant été dévaluée –

- de 29,9 roupies pour le dollar en 2011 à 31,2 roupies ;
- en 2012, la livre sterling de 46,7 roupies à 50,3 roupies, et
- l'euro de 39,4 roupies à 40,9 roupies.

Ainsi, entre 2005 et 2014, la roupie a été dévaluée de 11,2% par un gouvernement qui se souciait peu du pouvoir d'achat des Mauriciens, en particulier de celui des plus vulnérables.

Je conclus en rappelant au Leader de l'opposition que, pour comprendre le présent et pour préparer le futur, nous devons à chaque fois analyser le passé.

M. le président, notre budget alloué à l'Etat providence, notre *Welfare State*, était de seulement 48 milliards de roupies en 2014. Aujourd'hui, malgré la pandémie, malgré la crise, malgré la récession, ce gouvernement, porté par l'humanisme du Premier ministre, a fait doubler le budget du *Welfare State* pour l'amener à plus de 93 milliards de roupies en 2021-2022.

En y ajoutant le *Wage Assistance Scheme* et le *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme*, ce montant dépasse largement la barre des 100 milliards de roupies que nous avons retournés à la population. Ces chiffres démontrent la solidarité du gouvernement, de ce gouvernement, que ce gouvernement fait preuve envers la population.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr X. L. Duval: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Firstly, just quickly because of the vast upset in the population, anger in the population about what is happening in the country, I am going to stick to what is happening this year and forward, but just to remind you that there was hardly any depreciation when I was Minister of Finance, Rs2 over three years.

Now, I am going to go back to 2019. He was appointed on November 2019 as Minister of Finance. In the short space between November 2019 and March 2020, the Mauritian Rupee depreciated by 8%, that is, at three times more monthly rate than during the COVID-19 period. If we are to believe him that it is only COVID-19 that has led to a depreciation, which is 1/3 of before COVID-19, tell us then why the rupee was depreciated, as soon as he assumed office, of 8% over just five months?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, je reviens sur ce que j'ai dit précédemment. C'est que la politique monétaire et la politique des taux de change est le domaine réservé...

(Interruptions)

...de la Banque de Maurice...

An hon. Member : *Pa mwa sa, li sa !*

Dr. Padayachy: Non ! Je me permets de répondre. Moi en tant que ministre des Finances et nous en tant que gouvernement, il n'y a pas eu d'intervention directe de l'Etat pour faire dévaluer la roupie comme ça a été le cas dans le passé et sous l'ancien ministre des Finances qui est l'honorable membre de l'opposition actuellement.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thought he would have learned his lesson of last week. People out there in Manhattan and in Number 12, they want answers now! So, I am going to ask the hon. Minister...

(Interruptions)

...he has accepted the 8% depreciation when he joined office. Now I am going to ask him...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order!

Mr X. L. Duval: I am going to ask him whether he has looked at the experience of Seychelles, of Maldives, very similar to us, even South Africa where today, their currencies have already revalued to the pre-COVID level. If the Seychelles, Maldives, South Africa can do it, what is the problem, what is wrong with Mauritius?

Dr. Padayachy: Je répète encore une fois, M. le président. Je ne vais pas relire toute ma réponse...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, je crois avoir expliqué le fait qu'entre 2020 et 2021, depuis mars 2020 et octobre 2021, la fermeture concernant le secteur touristique, le fait que nous avons perdu en termes d'arrivées touristiques, qu'on est passé de plus de 1,3 millions de touristes à 176,000 touristes en 2021, le fait que pendant deux années consécutives on n'était à même pas 20% du potentiel du secteur touristique et que je rappelle, M. le président, à l'honorable membre de l'opposition, Leader de l'opposition qui, lui-même, dans un passé récent, disait que le secteur touristique, l'effet multiplicateur du secteur touristique est la plus importante à Maurice.

Donc, c'est sûr que le fait de ne pas avoir de touristes, le fait d'avoir eu les problèmes concernant les listes, l'inclusion de Maurice sur la liste de GAFI, tout cela a pesé lourd sur l'entrée des devises à Maurice, et c'est une question d'offres et de demandes. Si nous n'avons pas assez d'entrées de devises, comment faire pour maintenir notre régime flottant ? Nous ne pouvons pas aller contre le sens du marché. L'équilibre est déterminé par la Banque de Maurice. Elle doit agir en temps et lieu et aussi regarder le futur. Elle ne peut pas vider les réserves. C'est pour cela qu'elle intervient ; elle est intervenue, je pense je l'ai dit, à hauteur de 2,8 milliards de roupies pour maintenir la valeur de la roupie, pour freiner on va dire la dépréciation qui devait avoir eu lieu à l'époque parce qu'on n'avait que 300,000 touristes et que les frontières étaient fermées, qu'on avait eu deux confinements et qu'on a subi plus de 15 % de contraction économique.

M. le président, nous ne devons pas – je le dis bien ici – faire de la politique. Je ne fais pas de politique. Si vous voulez que j'aille regarder les chiffres du passé, je peux aller regarder les chiffres du passé par rapport à ce que vous avez fait, par rapport à ce que l'honorable Leader de l'opposition avait dit concernant la cherté de la roupie à l'époque, attaquant directement le Gouverneur de la Banque Centrale en disant que la Banque Centrale travaillait contre le développement économique et contre la croissance économique.

M. le président, nous, ici, nous devons faire face à la pire crise économique jamais eu lieu jusqu'à présent. Je le répète, en deux années, on a perdu la moitié de notre PIB...

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker,...

Dr. Padayachy:...concernant - je le dis - l'entrée des devises étrangères. Pour cela, il doit, M. le président, il devrait, le Leader de l'opposition en tant que comptable certifié et aussi en tant qu'ancien ministre des Finances et aussi en tant que ministre du Tourisme, savoir

l'impact de la fermeture du secteur touristique due à la pandémie sur notre économie et sur la valeur de notre roupie. Merci, M. le président.

Mr X. L. Duval: M. le président, j'ai un grave problème. Je lui pose une question sur la période novembre 2019 à mars 2020, on me répond Covid. Il n'y avait pas de Covid à cette époque-là, et pourtant, la dépréciation de la roupie, la dévaluation de la roupie a été de 8%. Maintenant, M. le président, j'aurais aimé demander au ministre des Finances concernant le *IMF Article 4 Report* de 2021 – il a soulevé cette affaire-là la semaine dernière – disant que le FMI pense que la roupie est surévaluée et ceci de 30 à 40 % sur un an. Est-ce que donc le ministre des Finances vient nous dire qu'il est d'accord – puisqu'il a cité le FMI la semaine dernière – avec l'évaluation du FMI que la roupie mauricienne est surévaluée de 40 %? Je pose la question en français pour que je puisse avoir une réponse certainement cette fois-ci en ce qui concerne le FMI et votre déclaration dans cet auguste Chambre la semaine dernière.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, j'apprécie énormément que le Leader de l'opposition...

(Interruptions)

...pose la question en français et je l'en remercie pour cette question encore une fois. Bien sûr, nous devons tenir en compte, je le dis bien, les notes du FMI, mais comme je l'ai dit ici plusieurs fois, nous en tant que pays souverain, en tant qu'Etat démocratique, nous recevons les notes, les recommandations, mais nous prenons notre décision en toute indépendance. Le FMI, je ne vais pas revenir dans le passé, je...

(Interruptions)

Et bien, je réponds! Oui, j'ai entendu que la roupie est surévaluée de 40%. Mais non, nous n'allons pas suivre les recommandations du FMI. C'est pour cela que je viens de vous dire que la Banque de Maurice, en toute indépendance, a décidé d'aller vers une politique d'appréciation de la roupie en mettant en perspective les entrées de devises liées au secteur touristique. Elle vient de démarrer cette politique parce que, maintenant, les perspectives concernant le secteur touristique sont saines, et qu'on est en train de parler d'une reprise forte des activités touristiques. Pour cela, la Banque de Maurice espère qui y ait plus d'entrées de devises. Donc, dès maintenant, elle commence à anticiper cette hausse au niveau des entrées de devises et d'aller vers une politique d'appréciation de la roupie. Merci, M. le président.

Mr X. L. Duval: *M. le président, l'espoir fait vivre la Banque de Maurice !* Very well, but it does not feed the population! Mr Speaker, Sir, we know that there has been interventions from the Bank of Mauritius. You mentioned Rs43.15. A few weeks ago, they sold at Rs43.10 a US dollar. Just check your figures! What happens now is that a few days the Rupee falls and then, of course, it increases because the amount that is put on the market - the 25 m. dollars - is about a tenth of the actual demand for US dollars at the moment. That is the problem! How are you going to satisfy the current actual demand for US dollars? I am sure you are aware of the pent up queue that there is for US dollars at the moment.

Dr. Padayachy : M. le président, je ne vais pas m'ingérer dans les affaires de la Banque de Maurice. La Banque de Maurice est en train d'intervenir toutes les semaines pour approvisionner les marchés et elle l'a fait depuis 2020 quand on avait fermé les frontières. Donc, ils sont en train de faire leur travail. Je ne vais pas m'ingérer, moi, en tant que ministre des Finances, dans le travail indépendant de la Banque de Maurice. Ils sont en train d'approvisionner le marché en devises. Et jusqu'à présent, à part certains - et là je tiens bien à le dire - qui sont en train d'essayer à un jeu spéculatif sur la valeur de la roupie et qui retiennent des devises sur leurs comptes, et c'est pour cela que vous avez des banques qui refusent de leur vendre des devises, mais, en général, la Banque Centrale est en train d'approvisionner les devises. C'est pour cela que nous avons tous les produits que nous voulons importer sur le marché. S'il y avait vraiment une rupture, M. le président, est-ce que vous croyez qu'on aurait eu tous les produits actuellement dans les supermarchés ? Bien sûr que non ! Bien sûr que non ! Le fait qu'on ait tous les produits sur les étals dans les supermarchés, dans les boutiques, démontre qu'il n'y a pas de pénurie de devises. Il y a une demande de la part de certains pour la spéculation alors même que leurs comptes en devises sont positifs. Ils veulent acheter des devises pour spéculer contre la valeur de la roupie. Et ça je félicite - je le dis bien - l'autorité monétaire d'empêcher ce genre de spéculation à Maurice. Merci, M. le président.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, I, myself, severely warned the Minister of Finance and the Government against the raiding of the coffers of the Bank of Mauritius by Rs158 billion over the last three years, and that is the reason why the Bank of Mauritius is so weak today. As for hoarding of foreign currency, I would agree with the Minister of Finance because balances in foreign currency, dollars, have increased to Rs844 billion as we speak, Mr Speaker, Sir – last figures of the Bank of Mauritius; 33% up from last year. So, people who receive dollars, because

they have no trust in this Government, because they have no confidence in this Government are keeping the money in US dollars. You can't blame them with a team like this. So, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am going to ask the Minister of Finance, *en français ou en anglais*, as you like: Tell me, what are you going to do to increase confidence in the Bank of Mauritius where if you have depleted the reserves, and in your *gestion de l'économie mauricienne*?

Dr. Padayachy : M. le président, je reviens sur quelque chose qu'il vient de dire concernant la faiblesse de la Banque Centrale. Ce genre de remarque, je me demande, moi, personnellement, d'où ça sort ? En tant que Leader de l'opposition, M. le président, il devrait faire attention à ce qu'il dit, parce que cela porte des coups à la réputation de la Banque de Maurice, de notre Banque Centrale. Je reviens, moi, sur les faits. Je vais lire tout simplement. Comment peut-il parler de faiblesse de la Banque Centrale quand actuellement - je ne vais pas parler du *gross reserves*, parlons du *net reserves*...

(Interruptions)

Parlons du *net reserves*! Actuellement, il y a 4,1 milliards de dollars en *net reserves*. En 2014, quand il part, quand il quitte cette fonction de ministre des Finances, il n'y avait que - attendez, je vais bien lire ; je prends mes lunettes - 3,2 milliards de dollars. Donc, comment pouvez-vous ? Non, M. le président, j'aimerais aujourd'hui qu'il arrête de dire des...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Padayachy:... faussetés ; qu'il utilise cette plateforme. Comment peut-il parler de faiblesse de la Banque Centrale quand on est en train d'être noté par le FMI ? Vous pouvez parler de la faiblesse de la Banque Centrale quand nous avons subi deux années de graves crises et maintenant on a quand même - je le dis bien - 4,1 milliards de *net reserves*. Pas un, pas deux ! 4,1 milliards, M. le président ! Et, eux, quand ils sont partis, il n'y avait que - je le dis bien - 3,3 milliards de dollars. Donc, Messieurs, et à l'époque - je le souligne bien - il n'y avait pas de pandémie ; il y avait des touristes ; le secteur financier fonctionnait bien !

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Padayachy : Il n'y avait rien ! Et à l'époque, voilà la gestion que vous avez laissée, fait qu'à l'époque...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Padayachy : ... il n'y avait que - je le dis bien et ça je le reprends vingt fois - et vous avez laissé 3,3 milliards en *net reserves*. Vous voulez parler de *net reserves* ? C'est pour cela que j'ai parlé en *net reserves*. Merci, M. le président.

Mr X. L. Duval: M. le président, *I am going to speak of the latest balance sheet of the Bank of Mauritius*. Un étudiant en *Senior* va comprendre ce que je dis. Il y a dans ce *balance sheet*-là environ 300 milliards d'*assets* en devises étrangères. N'importe qui va comprendre qu'avec des réserves, *shareholders reserves* de seulement 6 milliards, une fluctuation de moins de 5% dans la valeur du dollar mettrait la Banque de Maurice en situation de faillite. Ça c'est pure mathématique ; pure arithmétique ! Si le ministre ne comprend pas cela, M. le président, retournez à l'école mon cher !

(Interruptions)

Retournez à l'école !

Dr. Padayachy : M. le président, c'est encore une fois les gestes...

Mr X. L. Duval: I will table, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr X. L. Duval: I will table.

Mr Speaker: Order, there is a reply! Tabling is something else! Please, reply!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Padayachy : C'est encore des gestes ; c'est encore des mots. Il prend le *balance sheet* de l'année dernière et il vient de l'avant et il dit tout simplement que si jamais il y a une appréciation de la roupie de 5%, la Banque Centrale sera en faillite ? M. le président, cela démontre qu'il ne comprend rien - et je le dis bien, rien à la gestion d'une Banque Centrale. Si

vraiment c'était le cas, M. le président, est-ce qu'on n'aurait pas eu le même problème en 2014 ? Les *assets* à l'époque, c'était quoi ? Est-ce qu'il a vérifié ?

Mr X. L. Duval: Oui.

Dr. Padayachy : Est-ce qu'il a vérifié ?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Padayachy: Et s'il y avait...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You don't have the floor!

Dr. Padayachy: Et je continue dessus. M. le président, l'appréciation de la roupie dépend de l'offre et de la demande. Nous sommes dans un régime flottant. Il faut qu'il y ait des entrées de devises pour qu'il y ait une appréciation de la roupie. Là, actuellement, au vu de trouver l'équilibre entre le taux d'inflation et aussi les perspectives futures concernant l'entrée des devises avec les touristes, bien sûr que la Banque Centrale a entamé sa politique d'appréciation de la roupie parce qu'elle peut le faire. Elle ne pouvait pas le faire il y a un an de cela, et ça j'en parle sous le respect de la Banque de Maurice. Il y a un an de cela, il n'y avait pas de touristes. Il fallait qu'elle trouve l'équilibre. On ne devait pas entrer dans la catégorie des régimes fixes où on fixe le taux de change. Ça c'est ce que le Leader de l'opposition, à l'époque, voulait faire. Ça c'est ce que le Leader de l'opposition, quand il était ministre des Finances, voulait faire en 2012 quand il est intervenu à hauteur de 100 millions de dollars pour dévaluer la roupie.

Pourquoi il ne parle pas de cette période ? Quelle était la raison derrière cette intervention ? Pourquoi l'avoir fait à cette époque ? Parce qu'il pensait, à l'époque, que la roupie était surévaluée et il avait suivi, lui, M. le président, les recommandations du FMI, qui dès l'époque disait que la roupie était surévaluée. Et lui, il a suivi cette recommandation et il a intervenu. Il a mis 100 millions de dollars, M. le président! Pour faire quoi ? C'est perdu ; cet argent est perdu ! Vous mettez 100 millions de dollars simplement pour dévaluer la roupie. M. le président, je lui demanderai de regarder sa gestion et de venir donner des leçons plus tard.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Time Over! Prime Minister's Question Time! The Table has been informed that PQ B/227 has been withdrawn.

Hon. Uteem!

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE REPORTS - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY - DEBATE

(No. B/213) 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 Reports of the Public Accounts Committee, he will state if consideration will be given for the Standings Orders and Rules of the National Assembly to be amended to provide for the referral thereof to the Assembly for debate.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member will recall that in my reply to Parliamentary Question B/130 of 06 April 2021, I highlighted the fact that the composition, powers, and mode of operation of the Public Accounts Committee have so far guaranteed its effectiveness and usefulness as the main watchdog of our public finances.

Besides, I also mentioned that hon. Members always have the opportunity to seek information on the contents of both the Report of the Director of Audit and of the Report of the Public Accounts Committee through Private Notice Questions and Parliamentary Questions. Such an opportunity is exemplified by the number of Parliamentary Questions addressed at last Tuesday's and at today's Sittings to Ministers on the contents of both reports.

Moreover, hon. Members have, during the debates on the Appropriation Bill, the possibility to express their views amply on the contents of the reports of the Public Accounts Committee and that of the Director of Audit.

On this side of the House, we do not, therefore, see any need or any justification to amend the Standing Orders and Rules of the National Assembly to allow debate in the Assembly on these reports.

Mr Speaker, Sir, having said this, I hasten to add that the Government is not here to condone, nor shall it condone any mismanagement and wastage of public funds. However, we do seriously and responsibly believe that we need to act on the findings and recommendations of the Public Accounts Committee in its reports, wherever and whenever necessary and justified rather than engage in more debates and discussions in the Assembly.

The House will already have noted that, in the last Public Accounts Committee Report, it is stated, and I quote –

“the general perception is that the reports of the Director of Audit and of the Public Accounts Committee fall on deaf ears and no significant improvement is noted in the management of public finance.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is far from the truth.

As a matter of fact, since 2015, after successive reports of the Director of Audit and of the Public Accounts Committee, the Government has taken numerous steps to ensure that public funds are spent according to the authority of Parliament and that Government obtains value for money for all expenditure from public funds.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is both relevant and pertinent that I remind the House of the main measures taken by Government since 2015 following the observations made by the Director of Audit in his successive reports. These measures include the following –

- (i) in 2015, the Finance and Audit Act was amended to require every Ministry and Government Department to prepare an Annual Report on performance for submission to the Ministry of Finance;
- (ii) consequently, a guideline was issued in November 2016 by the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development to assist Ministries/Departments in the preparation of their Annual Reports on Performance;
- (iii) to further improve expenditure management, accountability and transparency, measures were announced in the 2018-2019 Budget Speech for the Finance and Audit Act to be amended to make it mandatory for Ministries and Departments to include an Implementation Plan in their Annual Report for preventing recurrence of shortcomings reported by the Director of Audit. Accordingly, the Finance and Audit Act was further amended in 2018;
- (iv) the Annual Report now includes a statement showing an Implementation Plan for remedial action and for preventing the recurrence of the shortcomings, including wastage of public funds referred to in the report of the Director of Audit;
- (v) in this respect, the guidelines on the preparation of the Annual Report on Performance were amended and circulated to Ministries/Departments, and

- (vi) as at date, all Annual Reports on Performance received from Ministries/Departments include the Implementation Plan for remedial actions on the issues raised by the Director of Audit.

Mr Speaker, Sir, moreover, the Government has already taken several other measures which include the following –

- (i) the setting up of Audit Committees at the level of Ministries/Departments to implement the recommendations of the report of the National Audit Office, the Public Accounts Committee and the Internal Control Units;
- (ii) the submission of financial statements by statutory bodies to the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development within the prescribed deadlines and as per the standards required;
- (iii) the setting up of the Project Implementation and Monitoring Agency to ensure the smooth and timely implementation of projects and budgetary measures;
- (iv) guidelines for the establishment of Risk Management in the Public Sector;
- (v) the development of appropriate training programme on Risk Management by the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms and the Mauritius Civil Service College, and
- (vi) the launching of the Corporate Governance Scorecard by the National Committee on Corporate Governance. The Scorecard will measure ‘objectively’ the level of compliance of Mauritian organisations with governance practices.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I must point out that the recommendations made in the last report of the Public Accounts Committee are currently being examined by the Ministries concerned.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with hindsight, the Director of Audit and the Public Accounts Committee have, in all their reports to all Governments, made criticisms on the management of public funds, and also made recommendations, and this is certainly not something new. However, what is important is that we accept the criticisms when they are justified, of course, and we take corrective measures so as to improve, over time, our public sector financial management and accountability framework so that it remains relevant and responsive to present day requirements and realities. Thank you.

Mr Uteem: Thank you. Mr Speaker, Sir, in this august Assembly, on two occasions, in 2016 and 2018, the former Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, stated that recommendation of the PAC has been examined by a committee of officials under the chairmanship of the former Secretary of Cabinet and Head of Civil Service, and that he is holding further consultation before proposing amendment to the Standing Orders. So, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister why this volte-face of this Government, whereas Sir Anerood Jugnauth gave the impression that he was all in favour of empowering the PAC and giving it more powers and now, today, we hear that your Government does not want to have the PAC Report debated in this House?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is no volte-face. The hon. Member has himself quoted what Sir Anerood Jugnauth, then Prime Minister, has stated; that there were recommendations and that those recommendations were being examined. But they have been examined, and we have come to the conclusion that there are sufficient opportunities for Members to study, to debate, and to ask questions on the report of the Public Accounts Committee and also, of course, on the report of the Director of Audit. So, this is the conclusion. And I have just stated the reasons why we have come to such a conclusion.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister state whether there is a follow-up mechanism in place to ensure that the recommendations of the Public Accounts Committee Report and that of the Director of Audit are being looked into for their implementation or otherwise?

The Prime Minister: First of all, there is already at the level of the Ministry of Finance, a team that looks at the recommendations that are made by the Public Accounts Committee. And obviously, when the report of the Director of Audit is tabled, instructions are also given to each Ministry to see to it that it looks at the comments that have been made with respect to itself so that ministries can come forward with any remedial measures that have to be taken. But we also have the Office of the Public Sector Governance, which is set up under the Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance, and it is mandated to review and monitor the effectiveness of the Audit Committees that have been set up at the level of ministries and departments. In fact, the Audit Committees are required to focus on the implementation of the recommendations of

the Public Accounts Committee and of the Director of Audit. These Audit Committees have to submit, Mr Speaker, Sir, quarterly reports to the Office of the Public Sector Governance.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Juman!

Mr Juman: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Since we are talking about PAC Report, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister, as pointed out in the last PAC Report where the then Minister of Commerce and Industry gave verbal instructions to civil servants in regard to procurements of medical supplies, whether there is an inquiry opened up at the level of ICAC or the Committee he just mentioned, as this is a very serious matter and where matters stand?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are so many serious matters. But I hope the hon. Member will look at the Standing Orders and know which question is relevant to this main Question and does not come to this House and just says anything which is blah, blah, blah.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

The Prime Minister: Learn your Standing Orders!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: Go and learn your Standing Orders!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Hon. Juman, your question is out of order, but I allowed it. It is up to the Prime Minister to answer. And he has told you the truth. And you have to keep quiet and stay within the Standing Orders.

Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, every year the Director of Audit and the PAC issue their respective reports, highlighting major adverse impact on public finance. And this has been the case for all Governments. Therefore, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister, even if he is not agreeable for a debate of the report of the Public Accounts Committee in the House, if at least he

can consider changing our legislation, so that those who are found responsible for misuse of public finance and misappropriation of public finance be brought to task?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am really surprised because probably the hon. Member has probably forgotten how the PAC works. Also, one of the very purposes of the PAC is when the Public Accounts Committee has evidence that there is wrongdoing by an officer or by anybody, it can always refer the matter to the relevant authorities for investigation. It is already there. So, what is there new to legislate for? It is up to committees, when they have sufficient elements, to refer matters for investigation.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Doolub!

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister thus inform the House whether the existing rules and regulations will be amended to enable appropriate action to be taken against those officers named and mentioned in the report for breach of standard practice or procedures, and thereby ultimately leading to waste of public funds? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just replied to the same question that was put. Actually, if there is any evidence with regard to any officer or anyone having gone against the law, the matter can always be referred to any of the investigative bodies for them to investigate, and then, ultimately, should there be any action to be taken, those bodies will be taking such action. I am also informed that in case any officer is found to be at fault, actions will, of course, have to be taken under the existing rules and regulations. There is thus no need for any amendment to the law.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Nagalingum!

Mr Nagalingum: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister if he will consider recommendation of the PAC to the effect that Government should come forward with legislation based on SADC Model Law on public finance management?

The Prime Minister: SADC Model Law? If I can recall, the Model Law that is being discussed is still in a draft form. There is no such SADC Model Law. It has not yet been approved. It is being discussed. Maybe the hon. Member can correct me, being given my information that the SADC Model Law on public finance management is still under discussion and has not yet been adopted by the SADC Parliamentary Forum. Let me add also that I am not

prejudging what is going to happen. It is going to be discussed eventually. Even if it is adopted, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is going to be a benchmark for all countries which will have to look at what is recommended and see whether it suits the system that is in place in each of them. We must also recognise that in SADC we have different parliamentary systems, with different practices, if I can say so. In Mauritius, as I have stated in my reply, there are so many measures that have been taken in order to address the issue.

Let me now say another thing also because we are talking about debate. The PAC is mandated to look at the report of the Director of Audit and make observations and, of course, recommendations. If we are going to debate again on these issues, where are we going to end up? Let us see what are the solutions, and rightly so, hon. Ameer Meea has said that throughout so many Governments, there have been criticisms from the Director of Audit about *la gestion des fonds publics*. There have been so many remarks that have been made before when we were in Government together, MSM/MMM, when the Labour and PMSD were in Government, and now when we are in Government. So, we need to look at how we address those issues, how we see to it that there is efficient use of public funds and, obviously and certainly, that there is no wastage of public funds.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Members from both sides have been talking about different amendments and I was made to understand that our parliamentary system is based on the Westminster System. So, I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister, is it a common practice to debate on these reports, like for example from the UK; do such debates occur in the Parliament? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: In fact, I tried to find out what obtains in the UK, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am informed, from advice sought and obtained from the UK House of Commons, that in the Westminster system there is no requirement for reports of any Select Committee, including, of course, that of the Public Accounts Committee, to be the subject of debates in the House. In fact, in the UK House of Commons, the Committee of the Public Accounts is governed by Standing Order 148 and the said Standing Order does not contain a provision requiring the report of the Committee on Public Accounts to be debated. In fact, as I say, there is no requirement for committee reports to be subject of debate in the House of Commons. Reports are not referred to

the House for debate but can be debated if desired, that is, upon a motion brought to that effect. And this is what obtains also here.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: The hon. Prime Minister, in his reply, mentioned a series of measures taken by his Government to reduce mismanagement of funds and he also said in his reply that actions are taken against officers who have been guilty of mismanagement of funds. Taking this into consideration, how is it then, hon. Prime Minister, that up to now, no action, no sanction has been taken against any officer, including any Ministers who have been involved in the allocation of contracts during the COVID-19 pandemic despite criticisms from the Director of Audit and in the report of the PAC?

The Prime Minister: You have been chairing the Public Accounts Committee. Have you been able to find any *prima facie* case against any officer or against anyone?

Mr Uteem: Yes!

The Prime Minister: Yes? If you have, then you have omitted your duty to refer the matter to the competent authorities for investigation!

(Interruptions)

You are condoning! That you are condoning!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can we know from the hon. Prime Minister whether any motion has been received by the National Assembly with regard to a debate on the report of the Public Accounts Committee?

The Prime Minister: If I can recall, Mr Speaker, Sir, according to records of the National Assembly from 1969 to date, it does not reveal any receipt of any such motion. But let me draw the attention of the hon. Members to Parliamentary Question B/1222 of 11 December 1979 in regard to discussion on the report of the Public Accounts Committee. The reply of the then Prime Minister was as follows, and I quote –

“Sir, as far as I am aware, the report of the Public Accounts Committee has never been discussed in the House. The practice has always been for the Ministry of Finance to submit its comments on the report of the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee and this practice will continue.”

Mr Assirvaden: Nous parlons ici du *Public Accounts Committee*. Nous voyons la réticence du Premier ministre à débattre du rapport du *PAC* dans l’Assemblée nationale.

(Interruptions)

Est-ce que le Premier ministre...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Assirvaden: Le fait que les membres du gouvernement siègent sur le *Public Accounts Committee*, l’honorable Ms Ramyad, *Chief Whip* du gouvernement, est-ce que le Premier Ministre confirme à la Chambre qu’il encourage tous les membres du *PAC* à faire une déposition à la police par rapport à ce que certains membres du gouvernement, les gaspillages qui ont été vus par le *PAC* ?

The Prime Minister: What nonsense are you talking about, hon. Member?

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: Point of order!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Real nonsense! This hon. Member...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, this hon. Member does not understand the functioning of the Committee.

(Interruptions)

When there is a Chair in the Committee, there are findings; the findings are from every Member of that Committee. Then it is for recommendations to be made; it is for actions to be

taken, and it is for the Chairperson to refer any case to any investigative authority. That is the way we function.

Probably, he should become a Member of that – I do not know if he is a Member of that Committee. He is not?

(Interruptions)

So, next time, maybe. Then, you will learn how this Committee functions.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le president, *on a point of order*. Permettez-moi. Le Premier ministre est acculé, il devient agressif.

The Prime Minister: *Eta ale do!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden: Je demande au Premier ministre de retirer le mot ‘*nonsense*’ par rapport à ma question.

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Arete tir exkiz!*

The Prime Minister: But when his question does not make sense...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! You said ‘accusations against Members of the Government’! You said it.

Mr Assirvaden: Pardon?

Mr Speaker: You said it.

Mr Assirvaden: Oui.

Mr Speaker: ‘Accusations against Members of Government’, you said that.

Mr Assirvaden: Oui. Dans le rapport il y a.

Mr Speaker: You have to withdraw that and I will ask the hon. Prime Minister to withdraw the ‘nonsense’ word.

(Interruptions)

Both of you!

Mr Assirvaden: Retirer que les membres du gouvernement ne sont pas accusés ?

Mr Speaker: Yes!

Mr Assirvaden: Mais il est dedans ! Il est dans le rapport !

Mr Speaker: No! You said that ‘Members of the Government are accused’.

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden: L’ancien ministre de la Pêche est cité !

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: It may be cited, but this is not the point! You are pointing towards Ministers of the Government! Withdraw that!

Mr Assirvaden: I withdraw, okay!

Mr Speaker: You withdraw?

Mr Assirvaden: I withdraw.

Mr Speaker: And the hon. Prime Minister will withdraw the word ‘nonsense’.

The Prime Minister: Okay, I withdraw.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, Sir. I listened to the Prime Minister very intently and he said that his policy is to eliminate wastage of public funds and to prevent recurrence of shortage. Can I ask him why is it that his Government has done away with what we call the Programme Based-Budgeting when it came into power in 2015, and when you were Minister of Finance you subscribed fully to this policy?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, when there are changes, it does not mean that we become less accountable with regard to the use of public funds. As I have said in my reply, not only do we see to it that public funds are being used judiciously but we have also taken a number of measures in order to see to it that this happens. But, of course, I must say it also depends on officers. They must act in a diligent manner; they must act promptly, and they must see to it that public funds are used in the most efficient way.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the Prime Minister, who has been Minister of Finance - going through records - how many accounting officers have been taken to task, either suspended or dismissed by Government following severe criticisms made in many Public Accounts Committee Reports and also recommendations made by that Committee? Can the Prime Minister at least give an indication of how many officers have been taken to task, dismissed or suspended following severe mismanagement of funds, and does he not consider that it is high time now to, at least, implement a Fiscal Responsibility Act and involve all these fraudulent acts caused in the management of public finance?

The Prime Minister: Even the Member of the Opposition has acknowledged, every year the Director of Audit has emitted a number of criticisms with regard to the use of public funds under different Governments. Now, how many officers have been taken to task? I would certainly look at the period from 2000-2005, the period of 2005-2014 and from 2014 to date and, obviously, I need notice of that question because I need to find out; I do not have this information with me.

Mr Speaker: The Table is advised that PQs B/219, B/220, B/222, B/223, B/224, B/225, B/227 have been withdrawn.

Questions to Ministers! The Table has been advised that PQ B/241 will be replied by the hon. Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development, and that PQs B/250, B/259, B/265, B/283, B/291 have been withdrawn.

Hon. David!

COMMONWEALTH CLIMATE FINANCE ACCESS HUB – NATIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE ADVISER

(No. B/229) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the National Climate Change Advisor hired under the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub, he will state if the latter holds office on a permanent or contractual basis, indicating the –

- (a) qualifications and experience held, and
- (b) monthly pay packet thereof.

Mr Ramano: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that in November 2015, the Commonwealth Heads of Government endorsed the setting up of the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub Programme with a view to assisting the adaptation and mitigation strategies of vulnerable States. Various donor agencies contributed to the implementation of the programme of the Hub. In that respect, the Secretariat of the Hub enlisted the services of National Climate Finance Advisers to provide long-term technical assistance to the vulnerable States.

From 03 May 2017 to 02 June 2020, Mr Patrick Karani of Kenyan origin was the first National Climate Finance Adviser to Mauritius on a three-year contract. He held a Bachelors of Education with specialisation in economics and business studies, Masters in International Development and Social change with specialisation in Economic Development, a Doctor of Philosophy in International Political Economy with focus on industrial rationalisation within the framework of the Montreal Protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer and a Certificate in Leadership and Management with specialisation in Natural Resources and the Environment; and he had over 25 years of experience in mainstreaming climate finance readiness into climate change policy, sustainable development, environmental matters, clean development mechanism climate infrastructure investment, amongst others.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in June 2020, following the termination of the contract of Mr Karani, the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub initiated actions for the recruitment of a new National Climate Finance Adviser. Pursuant to an international call from a pool of Consultants by the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub and a screening exercise effected at the level of my Ministry, Mr Irfan Tariq from Pakistan had been selected as the new National Climate Finance Adviser. However, Mr Tariq could not accept the post owing to delays in his release formalities at the level of the Government of Pakistan. Consequently, the Commonwealth Secretariat formally engaged with Mr Nyirenda from the Malawi, a second best candidate for the post of National Climate Finance Adviser. The latter unfortunately advised the Human Resources Department of the Commonwealth Secretariat that he was no longer in a position to accept the post. In light of those circumstances, the Commonwealth Secretariat advertised the post of National Climate Finance Adviser anew with closing date 14 March 2022. A total of seven applications had been received out of which five had been retained following an Entry Screening Exercise. An interview panel lead by the Commonwealth Secretariat thereafter

undertook an evaluation of those five applications from 06 April to 07 April 2022. The name of the new National Climate Finance Adviser is expected to be communicated to my Ministry by the Commonwealth Secretariat within two or three weeks.

With regard to paragraph (a) of the question, in line with the terms of reference, the prospective National Climate Finance Adviser should hold a postgraduate qualification in any of the following fields, namely –

- (i) Climate Change;
- (ii) Environmental studies;
- (iii) Economics;
- (iv) Natural Resources Management;
- (v) Energy;
- (vi) Project Management;
- (vii) Business Studies, and
- (viii) Other related subjects.

Moreover, the latter should possess at least eight years of work experience in Climate Policy Development and Management of Projects in the area of climate change, energy, forestry, biodiversity, agriculture and technical assistance initiatives.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub that Mr Karani was paid £55,000 annually excluding allowances and benefits, that is around £4,583.33 monthly excluding allowances and benefits. The incoming National Climate Finance Adviser would also be paid the same amount excluding allowances and benefits, of course.

Mr David: Merci, M. le président. Je comprends dans la réponse du ministre que ce conseiller national sur le changement climatique est essentiellement un conseiller sur les questions de finance. Ce qui tombe bien parce que le combat de notre pays face aux effets du changement climatique est un combat grandement financier et dans les dernières contributions déterminées au niveau national soumises par l'île Maurice, R 100 milliards doivent être trouvées d'ici 2030 pour financer les mesures d'atténuation et d'adaptation. Ce qui fait donc R 11 milliards par an. Puis-je demander au ministre si le conseiller national sur les questions de finance aura donc comme responsabilité un devoir de conseil auprès du gouvernement mauricien

sur les sources et les mécanismes de financement de ces R 11 milliards par an à trouver localement ?

Mr Ramano: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me add that during his assignment, Mr Karani has been able to mobilise climate finance to the tune of USD3,542,857 for two projects. I am giving this information just to say that yes, the future adviser will bring his contribution for us to have the necessary funds to finance the Nationally Determined Contributions.

Mr Osman Mahomed: The hon. Minister has mentioned that the adviser was also involved in policy formulation. Can I ask him whether the adviser has made positive contributions in that sense because our Nationally Determined Contributions for 2030 and 2050 timelines do not quite have clear targets at this moment in time? How to achieve these targets at this moment in time?

Mr Ramano: M. le président, je pense que l'honorable membre sera d'accord avec moi que le libellé de la question concerne principalement -

« ... hired under the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub, he will state if the latter holds office on a permanent or contractual basis, indicating the –

(a) *qualifications and experience held, and*

(b) *monthly pay packet thereof.*

Si l'honorable membre vient de l'avant avec une *substantive question* concernant le *policy decision*, je me ferais un plaisir de lui répondre, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

LA TOUR KOENIG & TERASSON, POINTE AUX SABLES - WMA - SEWERAGE PROJECT

(No. B/230) **Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to La Tour Koenig and Terasson, at Pointe aux Sables, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Wastewater Management Authority, information as to if an assessment of the number of overflow of septic tanks has been undertaken, indicating if consideration will be given for the implementation of a sewerage project thereat.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Wastewater Management Authority (WMA) that the region of La Tour Koenig in Pointe aux Sables is partly sewerred. The NHDC Housing Estates, Cité Débarcadère, Cité Illois, CHA Estates and the Industrial Zone are connected to the public sewer network while Terasson is an unsewered area where the inhabitants have an onsite disposal system.

The Wastewater Management Authority has received requests from the residents of Terasson and neighbouring regions for the provision of sewer facilities in order to mitigate the nuisance caused by overflow of pits. The Wastewater Management Authority has assessed that the permeability of the soil is quite poor.

A survey was thus carried out in the region to check the feasibility of connection to the main sewer line and in order to ascertain the extent of the area to be sewerred, a pre-feasibility study report was prepared in-house by the Wastewater Management Authority in December 2014. The regions identified were Terasson, Verger Mangue, Camp Firinga, Pointe aux Sables, Petit Verger, and Kensington. The pre-feasibility study recommended that a length of 41.8 km of sewer had to be laid to connect 4,000 households and 5 new pumping stations had to be constructed. The cost of connecting the above regions to the public sewer was estimated at more than Rs2 billion.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the considerable investment involved, it was decided in 2015 that the project be implemented in phases. Thus, the region nearest to the existing public sewer network, that is, Kensington, was identified as the first phase of the sewer project. The House may wish to note that the sewerage project at Kensington has been completed in September 2018 with 138 houses connected to the public sewer.

Moreover, given the acute sanitary and environmental nuisance prevailing at Flat Guillard due to overflow of wastewater from cesspit and septic tanks and complaints received from the inhabitants, the local authority and the sanitary authorities, the Wastewater Management Authority is currently implementing a sewerage project at Flat Guillard. Same is expected to be completed by February 2023. 64 apartments will be connected to the newly constructed sewer network along the municipal roads namely, Avenue des Peupliers, Jacquiers *et* Oliviers Street.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the remaining areas to be sewerred, the Wastewater Management Authority will hire the services of a Consultant in the next Financial Year to prepare the phasing of the implementation of the project. The Consultant will be required to take into consideration the complexity to sewer the whole region of Pointe aux Sables, the upgrading of the Montagne Jacquot Wastewater Treatment Plant, and the construction of new Pumping Stations including the upgrading of existing ones as well as the sanitary situation prevailing at the various areas.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Armance: Thank you, hon. Minister. On a short-term basis, can the Minister ensure that the WMA provide free pumping services to the inhabitants of Terasson on a regular basis, if possible, at least at the hardship cases of septic tank overflow? I have a picture with me, I can table to the Minister; that the situation is getting worse at Terasson, and also on the main road at Pointe aux Sables just in the corner of La Tour Koenig road.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Wastewater Management Authority provides such services. But, the hon. Member should understand that wastewater projects involve a lot of money and the Wastewater Management Authority has to find the required funds to implement those projects. As it is in that Constituency, let me bring to the attention of the House, the Wastewater Management Authority is already implementing projects in the region of Pailles worth more than Rs1 billion. The services will be provided whenever required, but free services cannot be considered at this stage, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Armance: I am grateful for the project done at Kensington, mentioned by the Minister, and even the one that is starting at Flat Guillard. But, concretely, hon. Minister, we wanted to know when are you starting the project at Terasson? There have been so many requests; there have been so many reported cases through the CSU, and at the time that I am talking to you, the people are just unaware of the situation. When is the Ministry going to start the project? You said there has been a feasibility study and it last dated 2014-2015. So, we are five years away now from the feasibility study.

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, I do understand the situation, Mr Speaker, Sir, prevailing in that region with regard to wastewater. And it is for this reason when they did that pre-feasibility study which was estimated at Rs2 billion, the Wastewater Management Authority decided to

implement the project in phases until feasibility study was carried out. I have told the Wastewater Management Authority to do the needful; that is why in the last paragraph of my reply I said that we will hire the services of a Consultant in the next Financial Year. We cannot do more than that. And from there we are going to give priority to the region of Terasson whenever we implement the project for the whole area because I understand that the biggest problem is in the area of Terasson. We are going to give priority to the region of Terasson when we will be implementing the project for that region, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Armance: Since the Minister has mentioned that the work is being done at Flat Guillard, can I find from him - if he has the information - whether the surrounding of Flat Guillard will also be connected or it will be only the apartments that he mentioned earlier?

Mr Lesjongard: From what I understand, Mr Speaker, Sir, the information that has been conveyed to me by the Wastewater Management Authority is that only Flat Guillard will be connected to the main sewer.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs B/296, B/298, B/311, B/273, B/292, B/313, B/254, B/266, B/276, B/281, B/285, B/271, B/299, and B/303 have been withdrawn.

Hon. Members, I suspend the Sitting for one and a half hours.

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

On resuming at 2.36 p.m., with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please remain seated and be seated! I have an announcement.

ANNOUNCEMENT

PRESS ARTICLE – PNQ TUESDAY 05 APRIL 2022

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I have an announcement to make. In a Press article which appeared in the newspaper “Le Mauricien”, in its edition of 06 April 2022, under the caption “POST-PNQ/XLD in regard to the proceedings of the Private Notice Question of Tuesday 05 April 2022, it is reported that the hon. Leader of the Opposition did not appreciate the manner in which I conducted the PNQ and having stated the following, I quote –

“Speaker pe mok de la constitution. Kan li anpes lider lopozişion fer so travay, li pe mok la constitution.”

Hon. Members, I wish to draw the attention of the House to the fact that the words uttered by the hon. Leader of the Opposition and its ensuing reporting may amount to a contempt of the Assembly under section 6 of the National Assembly (Privileges, Immunities and Powers) Act.

I take the view that the words uttered by the hon. Leader of the Opposition to my address with reference to the manner in which I conducted the business of the House during the Private Notice Question of Tuesday 05 April 2022 to be most inappropriate coming from a seasoned Member of this august Assembly, thereby bringing Parliament into disrepute.

I rely on your cooperation. Thank you very much. Next question!

Ms Ramyad: PQ B/231.

BAMBOUS VIRIEUX, VIEUX GRAND PORT & QUATRE SOEURS - WATER SUPPLY

(No. B/231) Ms N. Ramyad (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the water supply issues in the Bambous Virieux area, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to if solutions are being brought thereto and table the short and long term plans, respectively being envisaged to address the water supply in the region extending from Vieux Grand Port to Quatre Soeurs.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me at the very outset to express my appreciation to my colleagues MPs of the Constituency for their help and support in addressing this issue at Bambous Virieux.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Central Water Authority that the village of Bambous Virieux is located in the CWA water supply zone South and is supplied with potable water from Cluny Pumping Station.

I am further informed that several houses in Bambous Virieux are situated along the coastal road while others are located on the hill side at an elevation of about 40m above Mean

Sea Level. Moreover, the existing 150 mm diameter DI service main of a length of 11.5 km from Ferney to Bambous Virieux is old, defective and of low carrying capacity. Such a situation results in poor water supply and low pressure in Bambous Virieux.

As such, there are standing arrangements for the provision of water tankers at the village to attend to water problems.

I have to point out, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this situation has lasted for several years. There has been no pipe replacement nor water mobilization project in the region of Bambous Virieux since 2005.

The Ministry, in 2021, has worked out a Roadmap for the Dry season and same has been approved by Government in April 2021. The Roadmap addresses water supply deficiencies in several water stressed areas across the Island in the dry season. The Roadmap makes provision for harnessing additional water resources in the regions of Bambous Virieux, Quatre Soeurs, Bois Des Amourettes and Vieux Grand Port. It has thus been proposed to tap tail race water from Ferney and Champagne Hydro Power Stations to service these regions. Funds have been provided in the Budget Estimates of 2021/2022 for consultancy services for the mobilisation of water downstream of these power stations, including treatment and pipe works. The tender has been launched by the Central Water Authority on 07 March 2022 with closing date of 13 April 2022. With the commissioning of this project, 30,000 m³ per day will be mobilised.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as a short term measure, the Central Water Authority has increased the number of water tankers serving Bambous Virieux as well as the number of trips carried out. Moreover, it is in the process of installing four water tanks of capacity 30 m³ each on a concrete platform fitted with the surface pump at Anse Jonchée, Bambous Virieux to provide adequate water supply to the inhabitants of the said region. The contract for the execution of the project was awarded on 30 March 2022 and duration of works is six weeks.

Moreover, to provide a more efficient water supply in the regions of Quatre Soeurs, Petit Sable and Grand Sable, the CWA will reiterate its request for the provision of funds in Financial Year 2022-2023 to renew old pipelines from Quatre Soeurs to Pointe aux Feuilles and Grand Sable. In addition, a new borehole at Clavet will be explored to supplement these regions with additional volume of water. I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Ms Ramyad: Thank you, hon. Minister, for the clear answer. I would, first, take the short-time measures. It has been proposed by the inhabitants who live on the hillside, that pipes

be added with the tee at places where the tankers cannot get access. It seems that access is the problem and this is why CWA lorries go there, and it is quite difficult for them to get the water.

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, the proposal can be taken into consideration but let me assure the hon. Member that with the installation of those four water tanks of 30 m³ and a surface pump, all the 200 families living in that region of Bambous Virieux will be having at least eight hours supply of water on a daily basis.

Ms Ramyad: Thank you. There is also demand from the inhabitants that since they are getting two hours supply of water daily that they get it with an increased water pressure for that time limitation where they are getting the water. Can the CWA review its mode of distribution of water?

Mr Lesjongard: Do you mean distribution by water tankers or in the CWA pipe?

Ms Ramyad: CWA pipe, tap water.

Mr Lesjongard: Like I said earlier, Mr Speaker, Sir, the situation is that the water that is distributed in the region of Bambous Virieux is sourced from Cluny and the main pipe is some 24 km long and it goes back to the colonial days. The CWA has replaced some 12 km of that main pipe, whereas the other 12 km have to be replaced. And I understand from the CWA that there are quite a few leakages on the main pipe itself thus, resulting in a decrease in the pressure of water. Now, until we solve that problem, we will have low pressure in certain specific areas of the eastern region with regard to supply from the CWA pipes. So, I cannot, now, give an assurance that there will be an increase in the water pressure, but at least what I can guarantee is that there will be an increase in the hours of supply.

Ms Ramyad: I have a last supplementary. Thank you for the explicit answer on the long-term plan. But I wanted to add that there was a feasibility study done by the CWA to look for more sources of water as the population in that area has increased considerably. Can we know from the Minister what is the status of the study and what have been the findings, whether there are more sources and water treatment plant that can be looked into for the future?

Mr Lesjongard: I thank the hon. Member for her question. Like I have said, we are looking into all possibilities to improve the water supply, specifically in that region, that is, the eastern region. There are studies that have been carried out, there are projects to be implemented

in the long term. What has been proposed, that is, to mobilise water from the two power stations is a sort of quick win in the medium term, because that water is already available, that is, that tail race water is already available there. We are going to use that water, treat it through a treatment plant and inject it in the distribution network, so that we have more water for that region.

Like I said in my main reply, by implementing this project, we will have an additional of 30,000 m³ of water available per day for that region, which is quite enough because what we are getting right now from Cluny borehole is some 12,000 m³. Previously, it was 17,000 m³ but because of less rainfall in that region, it has decreased to some 12,000 m³, but with the implementation of the project at Ferney and using the tail race, we will have 30,000 m³ of water per day, which will be more than sufficient for that region. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Ms Ramyad: Let me end on this. May we know from the Minister the time range so that the long-term plan gets in action fully?

Mr Lesjongard: Like I said in my main reply, we have launched the tender right now and the closing date is on 13 April. These are consultancy services, once this is done, then we will be able to put a time frame on the implementation of the project. Thank you.

Mr Uteem: B/232!

WORLD BANK – SYSTEMIC COUNTRY DIAGNOSTIC

(No. B/232) 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 projection made by the World Bank in its Systemic Country Diagnostic update on Mauritius to the effect that debt to Gross Domestic Product ratio will spike to over 120 percent by 2035, he will state the measures, if any, that will be taken in relation thereto.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, je voudrais tout d'abord remercier l'honorable parlementaire de m'avoir posé cette question car elle me donne l'occasion de clarifier les projections de la Banque mondiale sur la dette du secteur public de notre pays.

En effet, à la fin du mois de juin 2021, la dette du secteur public s'élevait à 419,3 milliards de roupies, soit 96,2% du PIB, et non 101% du PIB comme publié par la Banque mondiale dans la mise à jour 2022 du *Systemic Country Diagnostic* sur Maurice.

Cette différence entre les chiffres officiels publiés sur le site web de mon ministère et ceux de la mise à jour du *Systemic Country Diagnostic* est due au fait que –

- la Banque mondiale n'a pas inclus l'ajustement de consolidation de 12,8 milliards de roupies pour les titres publics détenus par des entreprises non financières du secteur public, et
- elle a utilisé le PIB de l'année civile au lieu de celui de l'année fiscale.

Cela a été précisé dans la note de bas de page à la page 18 du document de la Banque mondiale.

Cependant, je voudrais ajouter que la section 3.152 du *Government Finance Statistics (GFS) Manual* du Fonds Monétaire International prévoit la consolidation d'un ensemble de comptes pour un groupe d'unités, de sous-secteurs ou de secteurs. En fait, je cite –

"A consolidated set of accounts for a group of units, subsectors, or sectors, is produced by, first, an aggregation of all flows and stock positions within the GFS analytical framework, followed by the elimination, in principle, of all flows and stock positions that represent relationships among the units or entities being consolidated. In other words, consolidation eliminates the double-count because a flow or stock position of one unit is paired with the corresponding flow or stock position recorded for the second unit with which it is being consolidated, and both flows and/or stock positions are eliminated."

En ce qui concerne les projections faites par la Banque mondiale dans sa mise à jour du *Systematic Country Diagnostic*, il convient de souligner que le chiffre du ratio dette publique/PIB mentionné par l'honorable Parlementaire est un scénario de base de la Banque mondiale.

Toutefois, dans le cas d'un scénario de changement de politique, la Banque mondiale prévoit que le ratio dette/PIB continuera à baisser pour atteindre 90 % du PIB à la fin de 2035.

M. le président, comme je l'ai dit précédemment, nous avons déjà inversé la tendance en ce qui concerne le ratio dette publique par rapport au PIB. Je souhaite informer la Chambre que la dette du secteur public a ainsi été ramenée de 419 milliards de roupies à la fin du mois de juin à 413,5 milliards de roupies à la fin du mois de décembre 2021, ce qui représente une baisse de 96,2% à 89,5% du PIB.

Quant à la dette du secteur gouvernemental qui été de 87,2% en juin 2021, elle se situait en décembre 2021 à 80,9%. C'est une diminution de près de 7 points de pourcentage en l'espace d'à peine 6 mois.

Pour en revenir à la dette du secteur public, je tiens à affirmer que cette dernière est viable en raison de son profil et de sa structure. Comme le mentionne la Banque mondiale elle-même, la composition de notre dette est favorable, avec des risques de taux de change et de refinancement limité. En effet, le coût et le risque de la dette publique ont été encore améliorés au cours de la période de juin 2019 à décembre 2021, comme suit –

- (i) la majorité de la dette publique soit 78% provient du marché domestique, la part de la dette extérieure ne constituant que 22% à la fin décembre 2021 ;
- (ii) tous les prêts extérieurs du gouvernement proviennent de sources bilatérales et multilatérales et la plupart d'entre eux sont à des conditions concessionnelles. Le gouvernement n'a pas eu recours à des sources commerciales pour les prêts extérieurs ;
- (iii) le paiement des intérêts de la dette publique en pourcentage du PIB a été maintenu à 2,7 %, alors que le taux acceptable va jusqu'à 3,5 % ;
- (iv) la durée moyenne jusqu'à l'échéance a été allongée de 4,8 ans à 5,8 ans ;
- (v) la composition de la dette extérieure libellée en dollars (USD) a été réduite de 32% à 6% ;
- (vi) Le risque de taux d'intérêt sur la dette extérieure a été minimisé. La part des prêts à un taux d'intérêt fixe a été augmentée de 35% à 65% tandis que celle des prêts à taux d'intérêt variable a été réduite de 63% à 34%. En ce qui concerne la dette intérieure du Gouvernement, près de 97% des prêts sont à taux d'intérêt fixe.

Notre objectif, tel qu'annoncé dans le discours du budget 2021/22, est de la réduire à 80% du PIB d'ici fin juin 2025 et à 70% d'ici fin juin 2030. Nous sommes déterminés, M. le président, à y parvenir. Merci.

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. When the hon. Minister of Finance came in Government, he amended the Public Debt Management Act to remove the obligation on this Government to bring down debt to 60% of GDP ratio. So, may I know from the hon. Minister of

Finance, now he is saying that we will reduce debt by 80% and 70% in five years' time, will he consider to propose an amendment to the Public Debt Management Act so that it has force of law and the Government cannot go on indebting this country?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, à chaque situation correspond une réponse. Nous avons été – je ne vais pas revenir, j'en ai parlé plusieurs fois de ça– heurté par la crise. A cet instant donné, nous n'avions pas d'autre choix que de considérer, de recourir à la dette pour soutenir l'économie mauricienne, d'où le fait d'avoir enlevé cette provision de la loi. Nous, de notre côté, nous n'avons pas besoin de loi.

M. le président, nous le faisons de nous-même. Même si la loi ne nous oblige pas à aller dans ce sens, nous sommes en train de le faire parce que nous pensons qu'il est important pour notre pays de constituer une réserve en diminuant la dette. Au cas où nous avons une crise comme nous l'avons eue dans le passé avec la pandémie de 2020. Notre but est de préparer notre résilience, notre réponse dans le cas où il y aura une autre crise dans le futur. C'est pour cela que nous sommes en train, dès maintenant, de prendre des actions avec la mise en place d'un comité sur la soutenabilité des finance publiques qui est présidé par le secrétaire financier dont le but est de diminuer, de trouver les moyens de développer des stratégies pour diminuer la dette gouvernementale mais aussi la dette publique. Pourquoi le faire? Pour dégager des marches de manœuvre, comme actuellement, dans le cas où on a, ou on aura d'autres crises et en ce sens dégager des marches de manœuvre.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Uteem: It is not about building reserves, it is about repaying the debt. Now, even before COVID-19, the debt level was above 70% – so, already very high. So, has the hon. Minister of Finance considered what would be the impact of a further downgrade by Moody's and especially on commercial banks with a bond having junk status and their inability to raise finance on the international market?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, je remercie l'honorable membre pour cette question concernant la position de Moody's. Comme vous le savez, Maurice fait partie – avec le Botswana, il n'y a que deux pays sur l'Afrique qui ont le statut de *Investment Grade*. Et c'est pour cela que nous – c'est quelque chose de très important de le maintenir malgré encore une fois tout ce que nous sommes en train de subir avec la pandémie mais aussi la guerre entre la

Russie et l'Ukraine. Nous travaillons en ce sens pour éviter un *downgrade* et pour cela nous avons, au niveau du ministère, mis en place une cellule qui travaille en ce sens pour éviter ce genre de note de la part de l'institution de notation.

Merci.

Mr Uteem: In the World Bank report, it is estimated that the debt level will rise up to 120% by 2030 and I quote –

“the GDP ratio starts rising again once CSG benefits are introduced in fiscal year 2023-2024.”

So, irrespective of what goes on in Ukraine war, what the World Bank is saying is that if you go ahead with the introduction of *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*, debt level will raise up to 120%. So, may I know from the hon. Minister of Finance, being given whatever has been said by the World Bank, if he will still go ahead with this *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* which will result inevitably in higher debt?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, je ne tiens pas à être désagréable mais nous avons passé une loi où j'avais réexpliqué tout ce qui concerne la CSG, l'importance de mettre la CSG, pour que les pensionnés puissent bénéficier d'une pension raisonnable au moment où ils prennent leur retraite. C'était ça l'objectif, et je le dis ici. Dans le rapport de la Banque mondiale, il parle de *targeting*, il nous parle qu'il faut faire du ciblage pour ceux qui touchent le *BRP*. Ce n'est pas la conception du gouvernement.

La Banque mondiale ou n'importe quelle autre institution, ils peuvent nous donner des conseils mais c'est à nous de prendre ce qui est intéressant pour notre pays comme je l'ai déjà dit, nous sommes souverains et nous prenons des décisions indépendantes pour le bien-être de la population. J'ai entendu l'honorable membre parler de ce rapport mais j'aimerais aussi lui lire une partie de ce rapport qu'il n'a peut-être pas lu. J'aimerais s'il m'autorise à lui lire deux, trois phrases de ce rapport.

(Interruptions)

“...Simulations for 2020 based on the 2017 survey GDP growth and no policy change suggests that in the absence of the Government's countermeasures, poverty could have increased to 15.9% in 2020 as a result of the pandemic.”

C'est ce qui est écrit noir sur blanc dans ce rapport et dans le rapport cela continu –

“...assuming that the type of inequality reducing growth continues from 2020 through 2030, we would see a rapid decline in poverty down to 6% by 2030 while a growth experience similar to that of the 2006 to 2012...”

Ce n'est pas moi qui le dis.

“...period would lead to poverty levels at almost double that figure in 2030. Inequality would increase under the latter and decrease under the former scenarios.”

Cela démontre, l'expertise de la banque mondiale, M. le président, concerne la lutte contre la pauvreté et là-dessus ils nous donnent raison concernant notre lutte contre les inégalités et contre la pauvreté. Je préfère me baser là-dessus, prendre les enseignements qu'ils sont en train de me dire, continuer à travailler dans ce sens pour diminuer les inégalités et ainsi diminuer la pauvreté à Maurice et comme l'a suggéré et comme l'a démontré de manière empirique l'OCDE, le moment qu'on commence à diminuer les inégalités c'est le moment qu'on augmente notre potentiel de croissance économique.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Question sufficiently canvassed. Next question!

Mr Woochit: B/233.

SSRN HOSPITAL ROAD, ARSENAL – ROAD DECONGESTION PROGRAMME

(No. B/233) **Mr R. Woochit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet)** asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the axe SSRN Hospital Road, in Arsenal, to the Verdun-Terre Rouge/Port Louis Motorway, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to if there is any project for the decongestion thereof under the Road Decongestion Programme.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Road Development Authority (RDA) that prior to 2017, the traffic from Triolet and its vicinity going towards Port Louis and the southern region, was using the Terre Rouge-Triolet-Grand Baie (A4) Road and subsequently the Terre Rouge Roundabout on the Motorway M2 to proceed to their respective destinations.

It was creating a heavy congestion at the Terre Rouge Roundabout, resulting in a long queue of vehicles, not only at peak hours, but at any time during the day on the Terre Rouge-Triolet-Grand Baie (A4) Road.

In this respect, in 2017, the RDA constructed the Arsenal Link Road, which connects the Motorway M2 to Motorway M3 to the Calebasses Branch (B97) Road. This new link road provides an alternate route to commuters from Triolet and its nearby villages to access directly the southern region via Motorway M3 and Port Louis via Motorway M2. This measure, no doubt, improved the traffic flow along the Terre Rouge-Triolet-Grand Baie (A4) Road and the Terre Rouge Roundabout.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that more and more road users are availing of the Arsenal Link road and this has increased the traffic flow, particularly on Calebasse Branch (B97) Road and the Plaine des Papayes (B11) Road, this is what the hon. Member is referring to as the SSRN Hospital Road.

In this context, with a view to alleviating the increasing congestion in that region, provision has been made under the Road Decongestion Programme for the construction of a flyover at Terre Rouge Roundabout on the Motorway M2. This measure will go a long way in ensuring the fluidity of traffic for users from Terre Rouge-Triolet-Grand Baie (A4) Road and Plaine des Papayes (B11) Road, to proceed to Port Louis and the southern region.

In addition, I am informed that with the implementation of the Beau Plan Smart City, the Beau Plan Roundabout on the Motorway M2 has recently been upgraded. In the same vein, the Powder Mills (B18) Road will be upgraded and consideration will be given for the construction of a new link road from Motorway M2 at Calebasses to connect directly to the Powder Mills (B18) Road and I must thank my colleagues hon. Callichurn and hon. Ramkaun for giving me lots of support...

(Interruptions)

...in implementing this project.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, as an immediate measure, to further improve the situation on the axe Plaine des Papayes Branch Road – Calebasse Branch Road – Arsenal Link Road to access

Motorway M2 to proceed to Port Louis and Motorway M3 to proceed to the southern region, the RDA, in consultation with the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit (TMRSU) and other stakeholders including the local MPs will identify traffic management measures for implementation.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Woochit: Thank you, Speaker, Sir, most of my supplementary questions have been canvassed but nevertheless I have two. What recent discussion he has had with the department for transport on the potential economic merits to improve road safety on these single carriageway roads?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said in the last part of my answer, all this is being done together with the different authorities concerned and the TMRSU and other stakeholders are working on the measures that you are mentioning and regarding the traffic measures as I said, we are constantly monitoring the traffic in that region. This is why in the first instance we brought that link road from Arsenal towards Calebasse. Now that this is congested because a lot of people are using it and the traffic happens to come at some point in time to a standstill on the Terre Rouge Road towards Port Louis. This is why the RDA has already a policy, Government is investing more and more into eliminating those roundabouts, we have already improved the Beau Plan one under the Smart City Scheme. We have already given contract to eliminate the Quay D one. Now, next financial year we will also be looking into the Terre Rouge Roundabout.

We are dealing with this in a holistic approach; we are looking at it as a whole. Not only for that road that you are mentioning but we are looking at it for the whole of the north, be it Grand' Baie, be it Triolet, be it Arsenal, be it Goodlands. We are watching it as a whole and I have also requested at the request again of my colleagues from the Constituency number 6 Avinash Teeluck and Dr. Ramdhany, we are also looking into including in our proposal for the next financial year to upgrade the roundabout at Labourdonnais as you know it gets congested because of the schools in the surrounding.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Woochit: In order to reduce the congestion of the said road during peak hours, can the Minister or his department propose to take steps in coordination with our local police administration to address congestion situation for the benefit of the road users over there?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think I have already replied in all what I said. So, obviously, the RDA will be doing the infrastructural part, but regarding your question, this falls under the TMRSU regarding road safety, which falls under the purview of my colleague, hon. Alan Ganoo. So, they are also doing their part to look about the Police, the safety; it is more them. All that concerns infrastructure, building of the road, that is my mandate. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

DIRECTOR OF AUDIT REPORT - FINANCIAL YEAR 2020-2021 - NON-COMPLIANCE - ENQUIRIES

(No. B/234) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance whether, in regard to the Report of the Director of Audit for financial year 2020-2021, he will state if he has taken stock of the content thereof and, if so, indicate if his Ministry will initiate inquiries wherever non-compliance with rules and regulations has been highlighted.

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the first part of the question, I wish to inform the House that I have taken note of the contents of the Report of the Director of Audit for the Financial Year 2020-2021.

As regards whether my Ministry will initiate enquiries where non-compliance with rules and regulations have been highlighted in the National Audit Office (NAO) Report, I wish to point out that the Office of Public Sector Governance (OPSG), which operates under the aegis of my Ministry, since November 2019, has the mandate of monitoring and reporting on the effectiveness of the implementation of the recommendations of not only the National Audit Office (NAO) Report but also those in the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and the Internal Control Unit (ICU) Audit Reports.

Moreover, the OPSG, that is, the Office of Public Sector Governance, is also responsible for establishing, reviewing and monitoring the effectiveness of Audit Committees (ACs) in Ministries and Departments.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the OPSG that further to the publication of the NAO's Report 2020/2021, a list of organisations is being drawn up where special enquiries are required. Based on the findings of the special enquiries, the OPSG will submit its recommendations to the concerned Ministry/Department for corrective measures, where appropriate.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the OPSG is also mandated, amongst other functions, to establish and monitor Audit Committees in Ministries and Departments which were set up following recommendations made by the National Audit Office. The main objective for the setting up of such Committees is to minimise the number of audit queries and to support Accounting Officers in the monitoring and reviewing of both risk control and governance processes.

The focus of the Audit Committees is the implementation of the recommendations of the Reports of the National Audit Office, the Public Accounts Committee, the Internal Control Unit and in any special enquiry carried out by the OPSG. Audit Committees are required to submit quarterly status reports to the OPSG and thus monitors the implementation of the recommended actions.

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, hon. Minister. Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister to consider something serious? There is a general perception among the population that in a few cases, there is a lack of good governance and transparency in spite of having a dedicated Ministry, in spite of the work done by the Office of Public Sector Governance. Let me quote the exact words of the Director of Audit, who, on page 1...

Mr Speaker: No! This is Question Time!

Dr. Gungapersad: Yes, but it is based on the question.

Mr Speaker: It is your privilege to put as many supplementary questions. Put questions!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Gungapersad: I am quoting so that he knows what I am referring. On page one, for the Financial Year 2020-2021, he quotes that –

“I am again drawing attention on lapses in procurement”

Again, this is coming. Hon. Minister, are you planning to revamp or review the existing legal and administrative provisions in order to address all the malpractices related to non-compliance with rules and regulations?

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think earlier on, the Prime Minister, in his reply to hon. Uteem, gave details of different authorities and institutions that exist, that are addressing these issues since 2015; as he mentioned in his reply. And I will go along that line to say that - at least at our level, at the level of the OPSG which is under my Ministry - since 2019-2020, we have been carrying out a number of reviews taking into account the recommendations and the findings of the National Audit Report. And I can inform the House that if we just take for the National Audit Report of 2018-2019, there were 9 Ministries/Departments that were identified whereby the OPSG was meant to carry out a review. Of those 9 reviews, reports have been submitted, except for two where there have been changes because those projects did not go further.

As for the Report 2019-2020, 14 reviews were identified and are ongoing. I must say, every time those reports are finalised, they are submitted to the relevant Ministries and the Minister concerned reports the findings of the report to Cabinet. Further to that, the OPSG has the mandate to follow up with the relevant Ministries to ensure that the recommendations in that report are implemented within a given timeline set between the two parties.

Dr. Gungapersad: Notwithstanding whatever you are saying, hon. Minister, Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask whether on page nine - I will not quote this time - where we are told that 56% of the issues have not been completed yet, hon. Minister, unfortunately, these days the focus has been on blame game, especially on civil servants, etc. What is your opinion? I would like to know. This is what I am asking the hon. Minister, that they are taken as an easy scapegoat...

Mr Speaker: Excuse me, please, are you asking the opinion?

Dr. Gungapersad: A question.

Mr Speaker: Please, let me talk! Are you asking the opinion of the Minister?

Dr. Gungapersad: Question!

Mr Speaker: No, your question is about...

Dr. Gungapersad: It is not opinion.

Mr Speaker: You said: 'I am asking what is your opinion?'

(Interruptions)

Dr. Gungapersad: Sorry, I take back that word.

Mr Speaker: Reframe! Reframe your question!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Gungapersad: Yes. The focus has been, hon. Minister, on public officers who have been blamed as easy scapegoats, but what about the collective responsibilities of Ministers and even the Prime Minister in procurement lapses? How are you going to address these lapses, where Ministers are engaged in giving verbal instructions and so on?

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as I can recall, when it comes to procurement, Ministers are not involved at all. I mean, we have a system in place in the public sector. If you go by the Public Procurement Act, it is all set how things are to be carried out. So, the notion about Ministers getting involved in the procurement exercise is totally wrong. That is what I believe.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether the House will be informed of specific disciplinary actions that will be taken against those who allegedly mismanaged public funds with regard to the recent National Audit Report?

Mr Seeruttun: Well, again, Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as it can be established that there have been any wrongdoings by any officer, they will be taken to task as per the set procedures in the public sector. I mean, that is something which is not new as far as I am concerned.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Nagalingum!

Mr Nagalingum: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister to state what action he proposes to take against the Statutory Bodies which have failed to submit their Financial Statements and Annual Reports as required under the Statutory Bodies Act?

Mr Seeruttun: Here, again, Mr Speaker, Sir, if you look at one of the assignments of the OPSG, it is to ensure that all Statutory Bodies adhere to the laws of this country with regard to filing their Financial Statements within the agreed set delay.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Dr. Gungapersad: Hon. Minister, what follow-up will take place further to the enquiries whatever agencies of your Ministry will be taking where non-compliance with rules and regulations has been highlighted?

Mr Seeruttun: Again, there are different institutions that look after in case of any wrongdoings. So, these will be referred to those institutions if it can be established that there are certain officers who have done anything that is not appropriate.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mrs Mayotte: PQ B/235.

FOSTER CARE - CHILDREN - NUMBER

(No. B/235) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to children in foster care, she will state the number thereof over the past five years.

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I propose to reply to PQ B/235 and PQ B/274 together as they relate to the same subject matter.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to PQ B/235, as at 06 April 2022, the number of foster children stand at 91, who are under the care and responsibility of 76 foster families registered with my Ministry.

As the House is aware, the Foster Care Programme was introduced in 2002 in Mauritius in accordance with the Child Protection (Foster Care) Regulations of 2002, as subsequently amended in 2005. With the proclamation of the Children's Act of 2020 on 24 January 2022, the Foster Care Programme is now regulated by the Child (Foster Care) Regulations of 2022 which is also effective as from 24 January 2022.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Foster Care Programme is among one of the alternative systems of care to children placed in our shelters and who cannot be reintegrated into their biological setting immediately.

The main objective of the Foster Care Programme is to give opportunity to the children, who have been victims of abuse or neglect or harm, and who are at risk in their own family

environment, and who have been removed under Court Orders and placed in institutions so that they can evolve in a substitute family environment.

The primary role of foster parents is to give support to the child and help him to grow physically, emotionally, socially and spiritually.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of PQ B/274, 79 foster children were placed in foster care since 2017 to date.

Mrs Mayotte: Can the hon. Minister inform the House on the criteria laid down by her Ministry with regard to child fostering?

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: The criteria, Mr Speaker, Sir, for a family to be registered at the level of My Ministry to foster our children, the applicants must –

- have a steady home;
- they must be aged between 25 to 60 years;
- they could be married or single;
- the family should be in good health emotionally as well physically;
- they should demonstrate and prove a genuine interest in parenting; and
- they should be willing to help the child reunite with the child's biological family or to be moved into an adopted family when the time is appropriate, and
- the applicant should also have appropriate and decent housing facilities with basic safety standards.

Mrs Mayotte: Can the hon. Minister inform the House on the follow-up that is carried out by the Ministry when a child is in a foster home?

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Yes, if I can just have a second to have a look through that. The follow-up that is carried out at the level of my Ministry: we undertake monthly visits to foster homes in the first trimester and quarterly visits. Regular visits are made to the school and progress of the child is taken note of. We take note of the general well-being of the child including his health and his general outlook. Once we have placed a child in a foster family,

officers of the Foster Care section, like I said, effect regular home visits, school visits, provide psychological support and counselling to both the minor and the foster parents, if required.

Mr Armance: Madame la ministre, permettez-moi de vous rappeler qu'aujourd'hui, le 12 avril, c'est la journée mondiale des enfants des rues, alors même que les ONG sont en train de soutenir que la situation est en train d'empirer et qu'il y a beaucoup plus d'enfants dans la rue.

De ce fait, avec un budget de R 12m. qui vous a été attribué en juin, après 9 mois, vous avez pu accueillir que 91 enfants sur le *Foster Programme*. Que comptez-vous faire pour augmenter ce nombre d'enfants? Avec R 12m., vous pouvez accueillir jusqu'à 125 enfants – donc, que comptez-vous faire, *on a short term*, pour pourvoir accueillir beaucoup plus d'enfants pour bénéficier du programme de soutien? Merci.

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a very pertinent and a very good question put by the hon. Member from the other side. The aim of foster care is obviously a rehabilitative work that is carried out between the biological parents and the child. So, the question of *les enfants de la rue*, Mr Speaker, Sir, we cannot just pick up a child and place that person in a foster family. There are criteria to be met. There are social, financial enquiries to be conducted. I think the hon. Member from the other side will note that through the enactment of the Children's Act, we are in the process of professionalising the foster care itself.

A paper has been prepared by my Ministry to that effect and we shall be reiterating our request through our budgetary meetings with the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development so that we can take better care and implement a more solid foster care program for our children.

Mrs Mayotte: Can the hon. Minister tell us if the prospective foster parents do benefit from training? If so, what kind of training do they benefit from?

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Yes, in fact, they do. The prospective foster parents do undergo training and it is actually, even after *ils ont accueilli un enfant*, the training is an ongoing feature. When it comes to foster care, regular trainings are organised for both the prospective parents as well as the foster parents who are entrusted with the child. Those trainings are organised by the Family Welfare and Protection officers, they are the legal resource persons of my Ministry, the

psychologists of my Ministry, and resource persons from other stakeholders also such as the Ministry of Health and Wellness are also involved.

Mr Armance: I am given to understand that you have a Foster Care Advisory Committee as well to ensure that there is proper follow-up on all procedures. Can we know who are the members of this Committee and do they have regular meeting? What about the last output of this Committee because now, I can understand that despite you have a big budget but you are not using the funds efficiently to accommodate more children?

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Despite the fact that I have a big budget? Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not have the composition of the Foster Care Advisory Committee. I shall be very happy to table this information to the House.

We are talking about the Foster Care Advisory Committee; this has come about with the Child Foster Care Regulations of 2022, which came into play on 24 January 2022. The Advisory Committee is going to consider a broader and a well set number of procedures having to do with the smooth running of the foster care system in Mauritius.

I agree with the hon. Member the work has to be done. It is being done. We are trying to align ourselves like stipulated in the Children's Act with the guidelines of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Mr Speaker: I am reminding the House that the Minister has just been replying to PQ B/235, B/274 asked by hon. Mrs Mayotte and hon. Armance.

No confusion.

The Table has been advised that PQs B/264, B/258 and B/314 have been withdrawn. Next question!

Mr Assirvaden: PQ B/236.

CEB - NATIONAL ENERGY POLICY - CONTRACTS

(No. B/236) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the National Energy policy, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board (CEB), information as to where matters stand as to the contracts signed between the CEB and the Independent Power

Producers using coal and coal/bagasse as fuel, considering that coal is due to be phased out in Mauritius by 2030.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, according to the latest published Energy and Water Statistics 2020, the main energy sources for electricity generation were coal standing at 39.5%, followed by fuel oil and diesel at 36.6%, and renewables representing 23.9% of the mix. The Independent Power Producers (IPPs) produced around 59.2% of the total electricity generated and the Central Electricity Board (CEB), the remaining 40.8%.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House is aware that in the Budget speech 2021/2022, it was announced that the utilisation of coal in electricity generation would be phased out by 2030. Moreover, targets for contribution of renewable energy in the energy mix would be increased to 60% by the same timeframe. All these measures fit in the vision of the Government to make the green energy industry a pillar of the economy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, against this backdrop, my Ministry has been having regular consultations with relevant stakeholders, and is in the process of finalising the revision of the Renewable Energy Roadmap for the Electricity Sector 2030 - document that was approved by Government in 2019 when the target was for an attainment of 40% of renewable energy by 2030.

Such factors as the relative affordability of various RE technologies, demand supply energy balance as well as the international geo-political and economic environment have been taken into consideration, among others, while working out the energy mix.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that at present, the Central Electricity Board has three Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) with three Independent Power Producers (IPP) that use coal/bagasse as fuel namely, Alteo Energy Ltd, Terragen Ltd, Omnicane Thermal Energy Operations (La Baraque) Ltd. One IPP uses solely coal as fuel namely, Omnicane Thermal Energy Operations (St Aubin).

Alteo Energy Ltd started its operations in December 1998. The initial term of 20 years of the PPA expired in December 2018 and was extended up to 31 December 2021 on terms and conditions mutually agreed between the two parties. The Central Electricity Board is currently negotiating an extension of the PPA beyond 31 December 2021 for a duration of 3 years.

Pending completion of negotiations, the contract has been extended from 01 January to 30 June 2022 on the same terms and conditions.

The initial term of the PPA of 20 years of Terragen Ltd expired in June 2020. The PPA was extended in two phases, up to 31 December 2022 and 30 June 2025 on terms and conditions mutually agreed between the Central Electricity Board and the Independent Power Producer.

Omnican Thermal Energy Operations (St Aubin) started its operation, as a coal-fired plant, in September 2005. It is not proposed to extend the PPA which would expire in September 2025.

Omnican Thermal Energy Operations (La Baraque) Ltd started its operation in August 2007. The initial term of 20 years of the PPA would expire in July 2027.

No Power Purchase Agreement using coal will be renewed.

Mr Speaker Sir, the Renewable Energy Roadmap makes provision for base load and firm power in the context of the phasing out of coal and a greater contribution of renewable energy in the electricity mix by 2030.

The Renewable Energy Roadmap Action Plan includes the deployment of various technologies such as solar, wind, ocean and wave and biomass. The Central Electricity Board has launched tenders for generating electricity using Solar Energy and Battery for a total capacity of 100 MW and Small Scale Renewable Energy Hybrid Facilities for a total of 40 MW. In addition, the Central Electricity Board will launch a Request for Proposal for biomass. I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, ma question concernant les contrats entre le CEB et les *IPPs* aura trait cette après-midi principalement concernant le charbon. Le Premier ministre dans son discours à l'assemblée du COP 26 et au Parlement le 23 novembre 2021 a affirmé *phasing out coal in the electricity generation before 2030*. Terragen Ltd dont le contrat a expiré en juin 2020 a eu une extension, M. le président, de 30 mois qui se termine décembre 2022 de cette année-ci. Terragen Ltd produit d'électricité autour de 60 MW de charbon. Et nous avons huit ans d'ici à 2030 pour cette transition énergétique pour éliminer le charbon comme l'a précisé le Premier ministre. Qu'est-ce que le ministère et le gouvernement préconisent dans les

négociations futures à partir de décembre avec Terragen pour éliminer le charbon comme l'a si bien dit le Premier ministre à Glasgow et à l'Assemblée nationale ?

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, in my reply, I have stated clearly what are the measures that are being taken at the level of Government first to do away with coal by 2030 and to increase the share of renewable energy in our energy mix by 60%. The announcement made by the Prime Minister is a very bold announcement with regard to the phasing out of coal, being a small island development state. We are working on different fronts, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The first thing that I said is that we are reviewing the roadmap which is a very important decision because we are in consultation with various stakeholders for reviewing that roadmap. I understand that the work is almost complete. We are at the last stage. And when this is done, we will make it public.

The second thing at the level of the CEB, I have stated in my reply that there are a series of measures being taken in order to move towards that 60% energy by 2030 or to do away with coal. Now, renewable energy being used as semi base and peaking energy. We all agree that for a certain period of time, we will require those coal bagasse fired power plant because we need base load. But in the meantime, the CEB is doing the needful to be able to cope with the situation. That is why in my main reply, I said the CEB has launched tenders for the generating electricity using solar energy and battery for a total capacity of 100 MW. And also, another tender has been launched for renewable hybrid facilities. Together with that, I have already stated earlier, Mr Speaker, Sir, the CEB is commissioning a battery energy storage system to be able to accommodate the intermittent energy of the order of 30 MW. And I believe the hon. Member last year had put a question to me on the issue. We are upgrading our substations again to be able to accommodate renewable energy. We are replacing the old traditional insulated switchgear by gas insulated switchgear. We are also moving on an atrial roadmap with regard to improving the grid by making it smarter and we have also embarked in a series of consultations with other stakeholders to be able to contribute to the share of renewable energy, for example, public entities. We have received proposal from public entities to be able to produce renewable energy. And in my reply I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is good that we move into that direction. And I said that because also of the prevailing international geopolitical and economic situation, that is why we are very confident, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we will achieve that target. I have said and I repeat

it, this is a very bold decision taken by this Government and we have the will to move into that direction. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le ministre, nous savons tous que seuls les *IPPs* brûlent le charbon ; le *CEB* ne brûle pas de charbon et nous parlons ici de 190 MW pour la production d'énergie en brûlant le charbon. Et vous parlez de solaire, vous parlez de *green energy*, c'est joli, tout comme la déclaration du Premier ministre à Glasgow, mais jusqu'ici l'honorable ministre, donnez-nous des réponses concrètes comment faire pour les 190 MW de charbon qui est, comme vous le dites avec raison du *base load* et nous savons que le *solar* ou les photovoltaïques sont intermittentes. Les 190 MW de charbon brûlé par les *IPPs* concrètement, à part leur batteries et le *green energy*, comment est-ce que vous allez faire pour produire de l'énergie pendant les huit ans jusqu'à 2030, concrètement, comment éliminer le charbon et qu'est-ce que vous allez mettre pour palier à ce manque de 190 MW ?

Mr Lesjongard : M. le président, l'honorable membre a fait une référence en mentionnant l'énergie renouvelable, il a qualifié l'énergie renouvelable de jolis projets. Ce n'est pas seulement de jolis projets, c'est une nécessité aujourd'hui. Il est impératif, M. le président, que nous bougeons dans cette direction.

Now, with regard to the IPPs, like I said, the roadmap will take care of all that and I have also stated, I believe in my reply, that in the near future we will also launch an RFP with regard to biomass. This is where we believe we will get the base load required within the five years, I should say, because by the time you look into a project and you implement the project in the five years to come. Like I said, we are very confident that we will get the required base load from other sources of energy and we are also confident that we will achieve the 60% target with regard to renewable energy.

Mr Osman Mahomed: In between now and 2027, when Omnicane CTDS contract will be over - CTDS uses coal; it produces about 8% electricity demand for Mauritius with a plant of 32.5 MW – can I ask the hon. Minister why is it that CEB does not use its own plant? For example, the Saint Louis Power station which has a capacity of 100 MW using HFO, producing about 8% of electricity supply for Mauritius which is probably cheaper - to my information cheaper - at a time when CEB is proposing to increase the tariff and at a time when the Prime

Minister has taken a commitment that he has taken at COP26. Therefore, I favour coal instead of HFO.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not a question of favouring coal. Like I said, we are looking into all the possibilities in producing electricity at the least cost today.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Mr Assirvaden: M. le ministre, je suppose que la déclaration du Premier ministre à Glasgow et au Parlement le 23 novembre 2021 par rapport au *phasing out* du *coal* a été prononcée en collaboration avec votre plan. Est-ce que vous préconisez d'ici 2022 à 2030 – ma question est directe, M. le ministre – que Terragen, Alteo, CTSav, Central Thermique Du Sud (CTDS) qui produisent de l'énergie à partir du charbon de 190 MW, d'ici à 2030 toutes ces centrales seront *phased out* en ce qui concerne le charbon pour respecter la parole du Premier ministre donnée à Glasgow ?

Mr Lesjongard: The reply is a direct reply, yes.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

MEDICAL OXYGEN - PROCUREMENT - CONTRACT

(No. B/237) **Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to medical oxygen procured by his Ministry through annual tender exercises, he will state the monthly volume and unit price thereof agreed within the 2018-2020 and 2020-2022 contracts, respectively.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Ministry procures its requirements for medical oxygen gas and liquid oxygen for a period of two years through competitive bidding at the Central Procurement Board level. The items are supplied to all regional and specialised hospitals on an “as and when required basis” in cylinders of different sizes while liquid oxygen is supplied to Dr. A.G. Jeetoo Hospital again on an “as and when required basis”. Payment is thereafter made upon receipt of invoice following verifications.

A contract was awarded for period 2018-2020 for the supply of, *inter alia*, 620,495 cubic metres of medical oxygen gas for a total of Rs31,535,887.08. The average monthly requirement under the contract is 25,853 cubic metres at the average rate of Rs50.80 per cubic metre.

The Ministry also procured 280,000 kg of liquid Medical Oxygen for Dr. A.G. Jeetoo Hospital for a total of Rs29,400,000 for period April 2018 to March 2020. The average monthly requirement is 11,667 kg at the rate of Rs105 per kg.

Following launching of bids in November 2019, the contract for period 2020-2022 was awarded, *inter alia*, as follows –

- for the supply of 530,365 cubic metres of medical oxygen gas for the sum Rs21,275,041. The average monthly requirement under the contract is 22,098 cubic metres at the average rate of Rs40.10 per cubic metre, and
- 250,000 kg of liquid medical oxygen for Dr. A.G. Jeetoo Hospital for a total of Rs22,250,000, on average, 10,416 kg of liquid oxygen at the rate of Rs89 per kg.

Mr David: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister is surely aware that there has been an investigation conducted by the Competition Commission regarding the collusive agreements in the supply of medical gases to his Ministry following which there has been a media release issued by the Competition Commission on 24 March 2022 informing the public that financial penalties have been imposed on two of the three local medical gas suppliers. May I know from the hon. Minister, the corrective actions taken to avoid any collusion in the procurement process of medical oxygen by his Ministry?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, as per my information, the evaluation of the procurement for medical oxygen is done at the Central Procurement Board and unless the hon. Member come with a specific question I will be able to give a reply for this.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Doolub!

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the Minister inform the House whether, his Ministry has procured oxygen from other suppliers when the country was at its peak of contamination with the Delta variant? If not misleading, it should date back to November 2021. Thank you.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, in November 2021, the outbreak of COVID-19 cases associated with the Delta variant during that time, had resulted into an increase use of oxygen. I am informed that cylinders from one company were sent to two other companies for refilling of

cylinders at their respective plants. The oxygen needed in excess was sourced from Reunion Island.

Mr David: The current contract for the supply of medical oxygen by Samlo Koyenco Company, awarded in June 2020 for a period of two years, is therefore coming to an end in two months. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the tender for the new contract has already been launched and how has the COVID-19 pandemic surely impacted the specifications and conditions of the coming supply agreement?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the tender for the previous procurement of oxygen, whether the Ministry has already informed CPB for launching of new tenders, I have yet to confirm these information which I do not have with me. Concerning oxygen for the demand, the Ministry already has two oxygen generation plants. There is one at New ENT Hospital and two more at regional hospitals and they are producing the oxygen at the level of these hospitals. These plants were donated by Larsen & Toubro and both are operational at these hospitals: Nehru hospital and at the North hospital, SSRN hospital. Both are at testing stage. Obviously, the amount of oxygen that would be procured will be based upon the local production of oxygen in these hospitals.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister informed the House about the oxygen plants in regional hospitals. Can the hon. Minister inform the House of the production capacity of the plants? Thank you.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have previously stated, these plants are under the testing phase. The biomedical and the surgical technicians will come up to tell us what the amount of daily production of oxygen is and then we can have a clear idea of the amount that we will have to procure but so far, it is still under the testing stage.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs B/260, B/268, B/279, B/310 have been withdrawn.

Next question!

Mr Osman Mahomed: B/238.

MAHMOODKHAN HYDERKHAN MEDICLINIC - EXPIRED DRUGS - DISPOSAL

(No. B/238) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether in regard to the alleged dumping of expired drugs in garbage areas at the Mahmoodkhan Hyderkhan Mediclinic at Plaine Verte, on or about 29 March 2022, he will state if an inquiry has been initiated thereinto and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) reasons therefor;
- (b) quantity, and
- (c) value thereof.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that my Ministry has a well-established protocol for the disposal of expired drugs, based on established procedures.

My Ministry stands guided by the –

- a) Circular No. 17 of 2012 dated 14 December 2012 on “Disposal of Unwanted Goods and Board of Survey” of the then Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, which makes provisions for the disposal of unwanted goods, and
- b) Environment Protection (Standards for hazardous wastes) Regulations 2001.

Unwanted goods include those which have expired while in stock. Expired pharmaceuticals therefore should be disposed of by appropriate mode of disposal and are considered wastes as follows –

- a) Non-hazardous non-recyclable, and
- b) Hazardous non-recyclable.

These items should be returned to the Central Warehouse on GF10 or Goods Return Inward Note (GRIN). The officer responsible for the management of drugs at the Central Supply Division (CSD) should submit to the Officer-in Charge of the Warehouse, the relevant Technical Diagnosis Report (TDR), which clearly indicates that the drugs are of the above-mentioned types.

With regard to the alleged case of dumping of expired drugs, an inquiry has been initiated at the level of my Ministry to determine the circumstances under which these drugs have been dumped in the garbage area of Mahmoodkhan Hyderkhan Mediclinic.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the quantity of drugs which has been discarded is as follows –

- i) tablets - 93,800 units;
- ii) syrup - 392 flasks, and
- iii) powder - 733 packs.

All of them are *ayurvedic* drugs.

As regard to part (c) of the question, the value of the drugs is estimated at Rs68,000.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. The hon. Minister has stated that an inquiry has been initiated but meanwhile six to seven officers have been transferred based on allegations against them. Can I ask the hon. Minister because I have read, the person who has filmed this action, Mr Raouf Khodabocus in *Le Défi* of 9 April - he says he lives in the locality and he has been watching such activities for quite some time and at the material time that he was filming, the employees were wild against him. Therefore, can I ask the hon. Minister why were these employees transferred to very faraway places and whether he can consider to return them until the inquiry is finalised?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the inquiry has not yet been completed and there is no recommendation of the inquiry. The transfer is something different; it is a normal procedure in the Ministry. Should I say that the staff of the Ministry of Health posted in the different centres, be it in the different units, be it in the regional hospital or in the health centres, they are routinely being transferred. There is no permanent posting in the Ministry of Health or any category of staff unless there is no other place where you have to be transferred. At the same time, an inquiry is being done and then for the transfer of these officers, I would request the member to give us the details of those persons who have been transferred, the number of years of posting at one place and whether, they have done the rotation because in a posting you are supposed to be rotated to different other units and at the same time, if ever there is a complaint for the transfer,

have they written any letter where they have informed the administration and secondly whether they have informed the unions also whether these transfers are justified or not?

Mr Assirvaden: M. le ministre, c'est un peu surprenant d'entendre dire que juste le lendemain de la vidéo chez Mediclinic à Plaine Verte que les *handymen* ont été transférés et comme vous le précisez vous-même, l'enquête est toujours en cours. Est-ce que les responsables – je veux dire le *management* de ce Mediclinic qui sont responsables pour la gestion de *wastes* de ce Mediclinic– est-ce que ces personnes-là ont été transférées ou seulement les *handymen* ?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, as per my information, the officers who are responsible for the disposal of drugs, they also have been transferred but I cannot relate this transfer with the video.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, following a press article published in the newspaper dated on 9 April which I shared with the hon. Minister myself, can the Minister inform the House whether, it is possible to tamper with expiry dates of drugs dispensed in hospitals?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, no, the Ministry of Health does not affix any expiry date on drugs. This is the responsibility of the manufacturer to affix the expiry of any drugs. So, there is no tampering by the Ministry to change the date of expiry.

Mr Osman Mahomed: The transfers were not routine; they were punitive! On a different note...

Mr Speaker: No, don't say things like this! This is your opinion.

(Interruptions)

Put questions!

Mr Osman Mahomed: The last three Audit Reports, and one specific report of 2020, have flagged issues about the way medicines are disposed and about the protocol which the Minister referred to in the 14 December 2012 Circular, and the specific mention about incinerators. Can I ask the hon. Minister how is it that being given the protocol, and all the issues that have been raised previously, we still had what we had at Mahmoodkhan Hyderkhan Mediclinic when medications were being disposed as solid municipal waste?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have the information that previously, since the last 3-4 years, all medications have followed what I have already stated in my reply, and that is why there is an enquiry on this video where expired medications are being disposed of. So, let us wait for the report.

Mr Speaker: The Table is advised that PQs B/255, B/272, B/290, and B/308 have been withdrawn. Next question!

PROTECTION FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT - AMENDMENTS

(No. B/239) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Protection from Domestic Violence Act, she will state if consideration will be given for proposed amendments to be introduced thereto to ensure better prevention from and protection of victims of domestic violence and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, the Protection from Domestic Violence Act dates as far back as 1997. It provides mainly for the protection from domestic violence and subsequent amendments were made in 2004, 2007, 2011 and 2016. However, in view of the constant dynamic societal changes, exacerbated, in fact, during the COVID-19 pandemic, domestic violence has taken new dimensions and hence there is a pressing need to amend the current legislation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has already initiated the process of amending the Protection from Domestic Violence Act (PDVA). A preliminary working document has been prepared after consultation with the relevant stakeholders and drafting instructions will be issued shortly to the Attorney General's Office for amendments to be brought once Cabinet's approval has been obtained.

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Merci, M. le président. La ministre est-elle en mesure de donner à la Chambre le nombre de cas de violence domestique rapporté à son ministère de janvier 2020 à ce jour et nous dire le nombre de cas poursuivis en cours ?

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, unfortunately, this is not directly related to the PDVA. We are talking about the legislation. Unfortunately, I don't have the statistics with me right now, but I am happy to table the requested information.

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, M. le président. Est-ce que la ministre pourrait indiquer à la Chambre si elle a rencontré le Premier ministre, qui est le Chairperson du *High Level Committee Against Domestic Violence*, pour l'informer de l'urgence et de la gravité de la violence domestique dans notre pays ? Je vous remercie, M. le président.

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member from the other side should take note that not only have we met the Prime Minister regarding this issue; the Prime Minister is the Chairperson of the High Level Committee for Gender-Based Violence. And that Committee comprises of no less than 16 Ministers along with other stakeholders. I think the High Level Committee has met - I am talking *de mémoire* - on four occasions. The National Strategic Plan has been launched. There is a National Steering Committee for Gender-Based Violence, which I, personally, chair. There are four technical working groups which are working on the outputs and the recommendations of that Plan, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Ms J. Bérenger: Merci. L'honorable ministre peut-elle nous donner la garantie que les recommandations des associations concernant la violence domestique, concernant les enfants et les recommandations des ONG qui ont déjà été circulées à son ministère seront prises en considération et intégrées dans les amendements ?

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: *Intégrées?* I cannot guarantee that they will be integrated. But, definitely, I can guarantee, Mr Speaker, Sir, that they will be considered, all the ones that are *valables* and pertinent, that are going to bring good changes to our society and further protect our women. Definitely, the Ministry will take into consideration all stakeholders' propositions.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: M. le président, sous la section 13 – *Offences de la Protection From Domestic Violence Act*, toutes les différentes offenses sont sur le même pied d'égalité, y compris le non-respect d'une *Protection Order* malgré la gravité de ce délit en particulier. Je demande à l'honorable ministre si afin de mieux protéger les victimes et dissuader plus, effectivement, les agresseurs, elle va considérer apporter des amendements pour que la violation d'une *Protection Order* devienne un délit séparé et spécifique et punie par une plus lourde sanction ?

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I might speak under the correction of my hon. colleague, the Attorney General, but I believe that this is already a violation on its own. When we speak about amending the Protection against Domestic Violence Act, it is logical that such amendments will be brought. We amend a law to strengthen it not to make it weaker. So, all propositions, when it comes to offences where there are aggravated offences, where there are higher penalties will be there, will be incorporated in the new legislation.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

**MOLNUPIRAVIR TABLETS - PROCUREMENT - SEPT. 2021 TO 12 APRIL
2022**

(No. B/240) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the procurement of Molnupiravir tablets from September 2021 to date, he will state if Dr B. O., Director General of Health Services in his Ministry chaired any meeting for the approval thereof and, if so, indicate –

- (a) when;
- (b) the gist of the said decision, and
- (c) if the latter has been interrogated by the relevant authorities following the statement given to the Police by the Principal Pharmacist of his Ministry and, if not, why not.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to parts (a) and (b) of the question, I am informed that the Director General Health Services chaired a meeting on 26 November 2021.

The meeting was attended by the Director Health Services (Curative), four Consultants in Charge; namely, one in Chest and Respiratory Diseases and three in Internal Medicine, another Specialist in Infectious Diseases, a Community Physician specialised in Field Epidemiology and two Officers of the Pharmacy Cadre.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed that the purpose of the meeting was to review the drugs being administered for treatment of COVID-19 patients. The Committee, *inter alia*, made the following proposals –

- a. inclusion of Molnupiravir in the protocol of treatment;

- b. Fabipiravir and Remdesivir would be gradually phased out;
- c. based on statistical observations provided by the Community Physician specialised in Field Epidemiology, some 500 COVID-19 patients might need Molnupiravir to be prescribed to them, on a daily basis and accordingly, the Committee recommended the purchase of Molnupiravir for 500 patients daily to meet requirements for 2 months;
- d. Tocilizumab would still be used, and
- e. Ronapreve would be introduced.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as for part (c) of the question, I am informed that the Independent Commission Against Corruption is presently investigating the matter and by virtue of section 81 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, information relating thereto is confidential and cannot be disclosed.

I also wish to add that the decision to interrogate anybody as part of its investigation process rests solely with ICAC.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the Minister inform the House on that particular Committee which Dr. B. O. chaired, how many Molnupiravir drugs were recommended to be purchased?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I stated 500 doses per day for a period of two months and one patient will require 40 tablets. So I believe it will come up around 2 million tablets if my calculation is not wrong.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether that Committee made a recommendation to him or to the Senior Chief Executive following that meeting for the purchase of this Molnupiravir?

Dr. Jagutpal: No, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister is not involved in the process of procurement or in the quantification of the drugs. So, all administrative matters have been dealt with at the level of the Senior Chief Executive.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether Dr. B.O. is still chairing the committee for the decision to purchase drugs?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the role and responsibilities of the Director-General Health Services is both technical and professional because the Director-General is responsible for the smooth running of the work of the professionals and the technical staff. He is also responsible, as per his scheme of duties, for the coordination and implementation of health policies. In the future, if he is required to chair a meeting, obviously, as per his scheme of duties, he has to chair.

Mr Speaker: Do you have a question?

Mr Mohamed: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I heard the Minister open the door and that is why I put the question on Section 81 of the Prevention of Corruption Act. He has said that because of that particular section of the law, he cannot give further details. Does he have a letter from any officer or member of the Board of the ICAC that states that because of Section 81, they shall not divulge any information or is he just saying it without any letter in his possession?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is no door to be opened. This is what I have been informed and this, obviously, will not come through me, it will come through the responsible authorities.

Mr Speaker: The Table is advised that PQs B/263, B/289, B/294 and B/297 have been withdrawn. Next question!

VICTORIA URBAN TERMINAL – DISABLED PERSONS – LIFTS, RAMPS & PARKING SLOTS

(No. B/241) **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 Victoria Urban Terminal, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) if provision has been made for lifts and ramps to allow access thereto for persons with physical disabilities, and
- (b) the number of parking slots reserved for the disabled thereat.

The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Mr M. Hurreeram): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this Parliamentary Question.

I wish, in the very first instance, to highlight that the concept of the Urban Terminal Project is primarily to generate the urban landscape in accordance with modern town planning principles. In this respect, this project is this Government's vision; this Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth vision and whoever wants to shout as loud as they want over whatever mic, that will not make this project theirs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, modernisation also means catering for the needs of all people, irrespective of the levels or conditions and include persons with physical disabilities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the Victoria Urban Terminal (VUT), a Request for Proposals was issued in December 2016 for the redevelopment, modernisation and operation of the former Victoria Bus Terminal.

Following that exercise, an Agreement was signed on 09 August 2019 between my Ministry and the successful promoter, the Victoria Station Limited. In the agreement, it was made clear, among other things, that the promoter had to provide safe, secure and disabled-friendly facilities and amenities for pedestrians and commuters.

Mr Speaker, Sir, accordingly, with regard to part (a) of the question, in line with the agreement signed, I am informed by the VSL that provision for lifts and ramps as well as other facilities have been made for persons with physical disabilities in the Victoria Urban Terminal as follows –

- (a) 9 lifts namely 6 in the main terminal, 2 in the shops with first floor retail space and one lift on the bridge to access the Metro Express services;
- (b) the lifts are equipped with tactile buttons for visually challenged persons;
- (c) the lift carriages meet international dimensional requirements for wheelchair users, and
- (d) all public areas and shop entrances within the terminal precinct are accessible for persons with physical disabilities by way of ramps.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed by the VSL that, in the first instance, 8 disabled parking spaces are dedicated for persons with physical disabilities, that is, two parking spaces on each of the four parking space levels. So, as I said, this is in the first instance. They

will obviously amend as and when it is open, and if there is need to cater for more, provision will be made accordingly. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr David: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Thank you for the detailed answer. I must say that many of our friends with disabilities are following this parliamentary question. May I know from the hon. Minister whether a specific accessibility survey will be carried out by local authorities or by officers of his Ministry, really to make sure that no one is left behind in the use of this new facility because I understand that there will be some evaluations in the construction of this Urban Terminal?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think I have given a lot of details in my reply. Whatever has been made, whatever has been constructed was based on a Request for Proposal that was already made in December 2016 and it was made according to an agreement. So, we have provided for the lifts, we have provided for the ramps, it is all in there. Obviously, now, the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity together with my Ministry are looking into it. The Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity will have the required survey and will give us the report required. But before we signed that agreement for the project, it has already been vetted by the officers and the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity. Thank you.

Mr Osman Mahomed: The Minister has definitely provided a lot of details for the users of the building; the clients who will be coming to the building. Can I ask him about the stallholders being given that the place is quite small in terms of space, whether if any stallholder is wheelchair bound, he will have access to manoeuvre within his stall?

Mr Hurreeram: Obviously, provision has been made for people with disabilities to shop around. The list of those who will hold the stalls is already a pre-set list; we already know who the people are. So, I do not know if there are people with disabilities and that will be dealt with on a personal basis.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

VACCINES - SIDE EFFECTS & TREATMENT

(No. B/242) Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the administration of each of the different vaccines

used, he will state the number of cases for each vaccine wherein side effects have been recorded and the treatment given as at to date.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, since the beginning of the vaccination campaign, my Ministry set up a National Pharmacovigilance Committee which has, as main objective, the early detection, investigation and analysis of Adverse Events Following Immunization (AEFI) and Adverse Events of Special Interest (AESI) to ensure an appropriate and rapid response.

Mr Speaker, Sir, according to the National Pharmacovigilance Committee, as at March 2022, a total of 1,576 cases of Adverse Events Following Immunization, has been reported. Most cases of side effects have been reported from amongst those who were administered the AstraZeneca/Covidshield vaccines, with a total number of 869 cases registered to-date.

As regards those inoculated with Sinopharm vaccines, 367 persons have reported side effects. On the other hand, 263 cases of Adverse Events Following Immunization, have been reported amongst those persons who received the Covaxin vaccines.

44 cases of side effects have been reported for those administered the Johnson and Johnson vaccines while 14 cases from amongst those who received the Sputnik V vaccines. 19 cases of side effects have been reported in those administered the Pfizer vaccine.

I further wish to point out that no side effect has been reported in those administered the Moderna vaccine.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the World Health Organisation classifies a minor A1 Adverse Effect Following Immunisation (AEFI) as an event that is not serious and has no potential risk to the health of the recipient of the vaccine. I am informed that seven (7) minor A1 AEFIs were reported. The vaccine administered was AstraZeneca in 5 cases and Sinopharm in 2 cases.

The main symptoms encountered by the patients were fever, chill, muscle pain, shortness of breath amongst others. Such cases were provided symptomatic treatment which constitutes administration of analgesics and intravenous fluids.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a serious A1 AEFI is defined by the World Health Organisation as an event that potentially results in persistent or significant disability/incapacity or death.

I am informed by the National Pharmacovigilance Committee that there were two (2) reported serious A1 AEFI. The vaccine administered in both cases was AstraZeneca. One of the

patients was diagnosed with Guillain Barre Syndrome and the other one, who, subsequently, passed away, was diagnosed with thrombosis with thrombocytopenia. In both cases, the patients were treated with Intravenous Immunoglobulin.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bodha!

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the Minister for the reply. May I ask him whether, he has some details as regard to which vaccine has created more side-effects and in which age group because we had the different age groups? We had the elderly, the adults and then the young people and we applied different vaccines to different age groups. So, may I ask him whether, there has been some sort of a fine tuning of these 1,567 cases to know which vaccine created more side-effects and in which age group?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the AstraZeneca created the most side-effects. Now, I do not have the information about the age group but surely, I will compile those figures and inform the Member.

Mr Ramful: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. In a question that I had put to the Minister in the past, the Minister stated in the House that his Ministry was considering the setting-up of a compensation scheme for those who have had severe side-effects or severe handicap as a result of the administration of the vaccine. Can we know where matters stand with regard to the compensation scheme?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, whenever we have done procurement of any vaccines from the manufacturer, in the contract, there is already a compensation mechanism for the side-effects. So, this compensation mechanism is there and whenever there will be need to have recourse to the compensation mechanism, the Ministry will follow the course.

Mr Speaker: The table is advised that PQs B/243, B/246, B/248 and B/249 have been withdrawn. Time over!

MOTION**SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)**

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

(4.24 p.m.)

STATEMENT BY MINISTER**HADJ PILGRIMAGE 2022**

The Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage (Mr A. Teeluck): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I wish to make a Statement on the Hadj pilgrimage 2022.

I am informed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade that the Ministry of Hadj and Umrah of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia had issued a Communiqué on 09 April 2022 on its website informing that one million pilgrims, both foreign and domestic, will be allowed to perform Hadj this year.

The number of pilgrims coming from specific countries will be in accordance with the quotas allocated to each country and in consideration of compliance with all health recommendations.

Moreover, as per the said Communiqué, the Ministry of Hadj and Umrah has further announced that this year's Hadj will be conducted according to the following regulations –

- (a) It would be open to those who are under 65 years old and have received the main COVID-19 vaccinations approved by the Saudi Ministry of Health, and
- (b) Pilgrims coming from outside the Kingdom would be required to submit a negative COVID-19 PCR test result performed within 72 hours of the time of departure to the Kingdom.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed by our Head of Mission of the Mauritian Embassy based in Riyadh, that during a meeting with the new Saudi Minister of Hadj and Umrah, Ambassador Soodhun was informed that the functions performed by the Muassasah, which used to be responsible for the organisation of Hadj, would now be fulfilled by a new body known as the Motawafoun Foundation.

Ambassador Soodhun also had a meeting with Dr. Ahmad Bin Abbas Sendi, the new Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Motawafoun Foundation on 28 March 2022. Dr. Sendi stated that Hadj 2022 would be organised differently compared to previous years although existing Hadj Guidelines would continue. In this regard, he underlined that the principal change would be that the Motawafoun Foundation would be responsible for providing all local logistical support to Hadjis. He, however, explained that the relevant authorities are still fine tuning the details and that comprehensive information would be provided as soon as they are ready.

Given the changes that are expected to occur with this new organisation established by the Saudi authorities, the Chairman of the Motawafoun Foundation has invited the Embassy of Mauritius in Riyadh and the Chairman of the organisation that oversees the organisation of Hadj in Mauritius, that is, the Islamic Cultural Centre to attend a meeting scheduled in Jeddah on 20 April 2022 and during which, all the details including the COVID-19 vaccinations requirements would be discussed and finalised.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the quota issue is a determining factor in all Hadj preparations, as no arrangements whether transportation nor accommodation, can be initiated without this crucial piece of information.

My Ministry, along with the Islamic Cultural Centre, is in close contact with the Mauritian Embassy in Riyadh and we are awaiting a final decision regarding the quota that would be allocated to Mauritius.

I thank you.

PUBLIC BILLS*First Reading*

On motion made and seconded the Beach Authority (Amendment) Bill (No. IV of 2022) was read a first time.

*Second Reading***THE VARIABLE CAPITAL COMPANIES BILL****(NO. III OF 2022)**

Order for Second Reading read.

The Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance (Mr M. Seeruttun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I move that the Variable Capital Companies Bill (No. III of 2022) be read a second time.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since I was appointed Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance and together with the Government under leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, we have been consistently, persistently and arduously fulfilling our pledges to the nation one after the other in a bid to enhance the attractiveness of Mauritius as an international financial centre of repute, excellence and substance. We have been tireless in our efforts, keeping our focus on delivering on our objectives and priorities. I am pleased to present today before this House, Mr Speaker, Sir, a piece of legislation which will prove to be an invaluable addition to the palette of financial services products which we are offering to the investor community.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our exit from the Financial Action Task Force list in October 2021, followed by our exit from the UK List at the beginning of November 2021 and finally our removal from the EU List of 'High-Risk Third Countries' in March 2022, bear testimony of our commitment to create a future proof regulatory framework for the Mauritius International Financial Centre (MIFC).

I am honoured to announce that Mauritius today does not appear on any adverse list with regard to either its fiscal regime or its anti-money laundering and counter terrorism regime. Whilst it is a time to rejoice, we cannot afford to sleep on our laurels.

Mr Speaker, Sir, during my participation at the Mauritius Finance and Investment week in Dubai in December last, we have been approached by many interested investors, who were pleasantly surprised by the plethora of financial services products which we offer as a financial centre. It is during such events that we have the opportunity to understand the need of the international investors and the features which need to be included in our product packages which will best fit their need. Whilst my Ministry and the Financial Services Commission (FSC) are working extensively on reassessing the attractiveness of existing financial products, we also have a duty to come up with innovative product offerings to the international investor community.

Therefore, with a view to further enhancing the competitiveness of the Financial Services Sector and diversify the product base of the Mauritius IFC, a set of measures was announced in the Budget Speech 2020-2021, including the introduction of Variable Capital Companies.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Bill which I am presenting today is a new milestone in the evolution of our Mauritius International Financial Centre. The Bill being introduced is by no means a big bang measure but rather is a logical sequence on the road to provide a larger choice of financial products to our investors and clients. It is a carefully researched and well-designed solution. At the conception stage itself, views and feedbacks were sought from various departments and agencies to gather ideas on what they believe should be the salient features of the would-be Bill. I wish to seize this opportunity to thank the teams of the Attorney General's Office, the Financial Services Commission and officers of my Ministry who have been diligently at work, drawing on experience elsewhere and devising the best model based on home-grown specificities, experiences and requirements.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me assure the House that this Bill has, for months, been subject to wide consultations with regulators and stakeholders both from public and private sector. Protracted discussions, particularly alerts as to potential pitfalls, led to refinements of various parts of the proposal. We have been very cautious in the conception and design of this piece of legislation, Mr Speaker, Sir, and once passed and enacted it will, without any doubt, serve our clients better. We have not lost sight throughout this process of Government's vision and commitment to steer the country towards social and economic prosperity. We have attempted to create such a legislation that would give the Mauritius International Financial

Centre (MIFC) an edge over other financial centres and ultimately assist in boosting economic development.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill has as objective to widen the offerings in the funds sector, which is one of the most dynamic segments of the financial services sector. As at end of February 2022, there were 988 Collective Investment Scheme (CIS) Funds and Closed End Funds which were set up and administered from Mauritius, and 432 CIS Managers were licensed by the Financial Services Commission. As at June 2021, Management Companies, most of which offer Fund administration services, employed around 4,500 persons while CIS Managers employed around 170 persons. Most of these employees are high skilled professionals and form the niche talent pool of our International Financial Centre.

Mr Speaker, Sir, these figures clearly demonstrate how crucial the investment fund sector is for Mauritius. However, it is important to acknowledge that we are not alone to have such products. Globally, other International Financial Centres (IFC) such as Singapore or more recently the Gujarat International Finance Tech (GIFT) City in India are constantly improving their financial products.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to bring to the attention of the House that a number of International Financial Centres around the world have greatly benefitted from the introduction of VCC in their palette of products such as Singapore. The Gujarat International Finance Tech City, known as GIFT City, has set up a Committee of Experts for examining the feasibility of the Variable Capital Company in India. This is the reason for which whilst following the international trends we have to innovate and ensure that Mauritius maintains its competitive edge.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with this objective in mind, the regulator and industry operators have brought forward new features to the commonly known Variable Capital Company to make sure that this new product will receive the right response from investors.

Traditionally, the Companies Act was the sole legislation governing the setting up and registration of companies in Mauritius. Thereafter, in 2002, the Protected Cell Company Act was enacted to introduce a new type of company which consists of one or more cells for the purpose of segregating and protecting cellular assets in the manner provided by the Protected Cell Company Act.

However, given that the Companies Act provides for the incorporation, governance, disclosure, protection of shareholders, mergers & acquisition of companies, it remained applicable to all companies including the Protected Cell Company whether domestic or those with a global business licence. Similarly, Mr Speaker, Sir, a Variable Capital Company will be governed by the provisions of the proposed VCC Bill but will be incorporated under the Companies Act.

However, the new VCC will be exempted of the application of certain provisions of the Companies Act which I will elaborate upon shortly.

This Bill is also bringing strategic amendments to other legislation such as Income Tax Act with a view to increasing our competitiveness and ease of doing business.

Mr Speaker, Sir, before I proceed into the details of this new Bill, allow me to highlight some key features of the Variable Capital Company.

Currently, a number of legal structures are being used for investment funds such as companies, trusts, protected cell companies and limited partnerships in the forms of Collective Investment Schemes or Closed End funds under the Securities Act.

Although some of the aforementioned structures allow for a single fund or an umbrella fund consisting of multiple sub-funds to operate, on the other hand, a VCC offers a palette of additional features which will undoubtedly increase the attractiveness of the Mauritius International Financial Centre (MIFC). These are –

- (a) a VCC can consist of collective investment schemes (CIS) funds and closed end funds within one structure;
- (b) flexibility for the increase and reduction of capital;
- (c) a VCC may issue shares of varying amounts and/or issue shares for payment of calls as agreed between its shareholders;
- (d) a VCC allows for flexibility regarding the distribution of dividend;
- (e) a sub-fund of a VCC may invest in other sub-funds of the same VCC;

- (f) in a VCC, investment portfolios are segmented through the sub-funds and Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs), whereby assets and liabilities can be clearly segregated and ring-fenced;
- (g) the winding-up of the individual sub-funds does not automatically initiate the winding-up of the entire VCC, and
- (h) VCCs may sue or be sued in respect of a particular sub-fund, hence mitigate the contagion risk of the whole entity.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will, now, elaborate on the salient features of the Bill -

- The Explanatory Memorandum sets out the object of the Bill which provides for the legal framework for the setting-up and operation of variable capital companies and ancillary matters.
- Clause 2 of the Bill defines the key terms which are used through the Bill.
- The setting-up of the Variable Capital Company or converting an existing company into a VCC are provided in Clause 3 of the Bill.
- Furthermore, a company which has already been established abroad can be converted into a VCC by way of continuation in accordance with procedures provided in Clause 4 of the Bill and it will also allow for domiciliation of funds set up abroad.
- Clause 5 of the Bill spells that a VCC shall be a body corporate and carries its business through sub funds and special purpose vehicles (SPVs).
- Clause 6 provides a requirement for a VCC to include the words ‘Variable Capital Company’ or ‘VCC’ in its name. It also provides for the minimum requirements for the Constitution of the VCC, including the requirement that the primary objective of a VCC is to operate as an investment fund.
- Clause 7 provides that no VCC should operate as a VCC Fund, without the authorization of the FSC; while its sub-funds can operate either as a collective investment scheme (CIS) or a closed-end fund, subject to the approval of the FSC.

It is to be noted that the sub-funds shall comply, *inter alia*, with all requirements of the relevant Acts.

- Clauses 8 and 9 of the Bill provide that the business of a VCC would be carried out by its sub-funds or its Special Purpose Vehicles. Furthermore, the VCC shall be a body corporate and each sub-fund or SPV may opt to have its own legal personality distinct from a Variable Capital Company.

This measure will provide additional flexibility to the VCC structure and would give a competitive edge vis-à-vis other IFCs.

- Mr Speaker, Sir, Clause 11 provides for segregated assets and liabilities of sub-funds and special purpose vehicles.
- Clause 12 of the VCC Bill is another important aspect of a VCC as it allows for economies of scale given a VCC can appoint one CIS manager, CIS administrator, custodian or other service provider for all of its sub-funds.

So, instead of setting up several individual funds, a Fund Promoter may set up one VCC with several sub-funds, thereby saving on operational costs.

- With a view to ensuring transparency, Clause 13 provides for disclosure requirements to protect creditors and other third parties.
- The process for winding up of the VCC is provided in Clauses 16 and 17 of the Bill. However, should a sub-fund or SPV holds legal personality; the provisions of the Insolvency Act shall be applicable.
- Mr Speaker, Sir, Clause 18 provides for the conditions upon which the Commission may withdraw an approval granted to a sub-fund or SPV.
- Clause 19 provides for the grounds under which the Chief Executive of the FSC may suspend the activities of a sub-fund or SPV.
- Clauses 20, 21 and 22 provide for procedures and requirements regarding the issuance of shares, redemption or buy back and reduction of shares of the sub-fund of the VCC.

- Clause 24 of the Bill allows a VCC to file separate financial statements in respect of each of its sub-funds and SPVs in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards or any other internationally accepted accounting standards.

Where a sub-fund or SPV has a legal personality that is separate from its VCC, it shall file its financial statements separately from that of the VCC.

- Clause 25 of the VCC Bill provides for any person who contravenes the provisions of the VCC Bill, to be liable to a fine not exceeding Rs500,000 and imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years.

Mr Speaker, Sir, amongst the consequential amendments being brought to existing legislations through Clause 26 of the Bill, sub clause 1 amends Section 2 of the Financial Intelligence and Anti-Money Laundering Act (FIAMLA) by including a VCC fund in the definition of financial institution. This would allow economies of scale in respect to AML-CFT requirements, for instance the VCC may appoint a single Money Laundering Reporting Officer or Compliance Officer for all of its sub-funds.

Furthermore, sub clause 3 will bring forward a major advantage to ‘our version’ of the VCC as it proposes to amend the Income Tax Act to include a new section 48A to provide for the taxation of each sub-fund or SPV separately.

Consequently, each sub-fund or SPV shall be liable to income tax in respect of its own income. In the event of default, the relevant Authority may recover any income tax due by a sub-fund or Special Purpose Vehicle of a VCC from that sub-fund or SPV or from the VCC itself.

Mr Speaker, Sir, finally, the Bill comprises a schedule which provides the sections of the Companies Act which are not applicable to a VCC, namely –

- (i) Section 6 refers to the computation of solvency test. In the case of a VCC, its Board itself will determine its solvency prior to distribution of dividend;

Section 62 which pertains to the process for reduction of capital will not apply as Clause 22 of the Bill already provides for an alternative process for a VCC;

Section 63 (2) (c) refers to requirement to pay dividend out of retained earnings. This provision will not apply in order to allow the VCC to pay dividend out of its capital;

Section 211 (2) regarding the application of International Accounting Standards will not apply as Clause 24 already provides for accounting standards applicable to a VCC, and

Section 226 which concerns the inspection of company records by shareholders will not apply given the nature of the VCC which constitutes different sub funds operating as investment funds.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this new piece of legislation has been the result of extensive consultation between the private and the public sector to come up with a product which will improve the competitiveness of Mauritius as an International Financial Centre.

As mentioned before, it is the most opportune time for the financial services sector to leverage on our recent exit from the FATF and EU List.

We are today planning ahead to strengthen the Mauritius IFC as a competitive and reputable jurisdiction.

With these words, Mr Speaker, Sir, I commend the Bill to the House.

Thank you.

The Deputy Prime Minister seconded.

(4.52 p.m.)

Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill comes at a time when there has been a sharp decrease in a number of new funds being incorporated in Mauritius. According to the official figures published by the Financial Services Commission on its website, last year there were only 57 new funds set up, and in 2020, there were 65 new funds. By way of comparison, in 2015, there were 147 global funds, and in 2016, there were 96 new funds. And while the number of new funds being incorporated in Mauritius is on the decline, the number of existing funds which have ceased to operate is on the increase. Last year, 101 funds left Mauritius or were wound up and in 2020, 87 funds ceased their operations in Mauritius.

In other words, there are more funds ceasing to operate in Mauritius every year than new funds being incorporated, and this is a very worrying trend. Of course, there was the COVID-19 pandemic which was beyond our control. There was also the fact that Mauritius was on the Grey

List of FATF and on the Black List of the European Union. And we are relieved; we are all relieved that we are now out of these lists. But one should not forget why we were placed on the Grey List and the Black List in the first place.

However, Mr Speaker, Sir, the downward trend in incorporation of funds and the upward trend in funds ceasing to operate in Mauritius started even before COVID-19. It started after this Government decided to renegotiate our Double Taxation Avoidance Treaty with India in May 2016. The full effect of which was felt after 01 April 2019. According to official figures published by the Department for Promotion of Industry and International Trade of India, Singapore has become the preferred jurisdiction to invest into India followed by the United States, Mauritius is a distant third. All the jurisdictions are taking measures to capture a share of the very lucrative fund industry. And Singapore, in order to get an edge over Mauritius, came up with a Singapore Variable Capital Companies Act in 2018. The Act came into force in 2020. When Singapore passed the law, Singapore fund industries spoke of it as being a game changer – and it was.

Now, I do appreciate all the efforts that have been put in the drafting of the Bill. I know that wide consultation has been held with various stakeholders in the fund industry. I also know that there was a sub-committee set up at the level of the FSC to discuss this Bill in detail. However, Mr Speaker, Sir, for reasons which I will come back later in my intervention, I personally think that we could have done more. We should have done more. And this Bill, although a step in the right direction, will not be a game-changer *et ce n'est pas de gaieté de cœur que je le dis*.

Now, turning to the Bill, we are creating a special type of company which can only operate as a fund. The hon. Minister has gone through the distinctive features of this company. I don't propose to go through them again, but I would rather talk about the advantages which this new company will bring. First of all, under the same umbrella structure of VCC, a company will be able to have many sub-funds. They will have, for example, a fund for investment in equity, a fund for investment in bond; a sub-fund for investment in sectors, for example, renewable energy or real estate; a sub-fund for ethical investment in Islamic product or a sub-fund which will be country-based or region-based. Now, although the FSC still needs to approve every sub-fund, in theory, at least, the time taken to approve the sub-fund should be less than to approve a new fund

that is to be setup. The sub-fund will share a common board of directors, will use the same service providers, the same fund manager, the same custodian and same administrator. Now, this will result in considerable cost saving and increase efficiency in terms of economies of sale. Cost savings will translate into higher return for the investors and higher performance fees to the fund manager.

Another advantage with having a VCC is that the solvency test will not apply. Hon. Members may be aware, before a fund which is set up as a company can make distribution today, before it can pay dividend, before it can redeem its shares/buy back its shares, it has to satisfy the solvency test. For a fund to satisfy the solvency test is when it is able to pay its debt when it's due, and when its assets exceeds its liabilities. Now in practice, we have seen many cases, especially real estate funds where the fund has disinvested and has got money, has got cash which they want to distribute to the investors, but they can't because overall, their assets are less than their liabilities. Now, with this VCC, it would be easier for VCC to make distribution because they will not need to satisfy the solvency test at all. The other advantage as highlighted by the hon. Minister of Financial Services is the requirement for dividend to be paid out of retained earnings has been disapplied. So it will be easier for VCC to make distribution, to buy back shares using capital. So, Mr Speaker, Sir, there are clear advantage with using a VCC.

We have had a Protected Cell Companies since 2002. The protected cell company also has the same feature as the VCC to the extent that the asset of each cell is legally segregated from each other. But the protected cell company was not really a success because the Indian Authorities refused to recognise it. For some reasons they thought that it was a structure to hide beneficial ownership. And there is still a risk for foreign courts not to recognise the fact that cells have assets and liabilities which are segregated. There still a risk that a foreign court will say that the VCC, for example, is one entity. So, in order to get round this problem, in this Bill, we are providing that a sub-fund can be set up as a separate legal entity. And, in fact, we are not the first country to do that, the Channel Islands did that before us, Jersey came up with the idea of Incorporated Cell Companies (ICC) with each cell being a separate legal entity.

I have to confess, Mr Speaker, Sir, and here I am talking as a law practitioner, I have strong reservation as to how a sub-fund can be set up as a company with separate legal personality and still remain a sub-fund of a VCC. Of course, nothing prevents a sub-fund, which

is a separate legal entity from having the same service providers, the same custodian, the same Fund Manager, or even having the same people sitting on the Board of both the VCC and the sub-fund, but at the end of the day, if a sub-fund is a separate legal entity, if it is a company, it would have its own shareholder, it would have its own Board of directors, it would have its own books and records and it will operate as an independent entity.

So, I am still not able in my legal mind to reconcile the fact that you have a VCC, which is a separate legal entity, and sub-fund of that VCC, which would be another legal entity. In my opinion, there will be two separate entities. But be that as it may, I am sure the FSC will come up with an FSC rule to clear out whatever needs to be cleared in order to make this entity workable. I have reservations because even in Singapore, which is a model that we have used, section 32 of the Variable Capital Companies Act, provides, and I quote –

“a sub-fund of an umbrella VCC is not a legal person separate from the VCC.”

So, in Singapore, it is very clear, and Singapore was enacted after Jersey came with their incorporated companies. So, Singapore knew and probably also had reservation about having separate legal entities for their sub-fund.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the global fund industry is constantly evolving, and there is a fierce competition among various jurisdictions to get a share of this very lucrative market. Singapore has its variable capital companies, Luxembourg has *Société d'investissement à Capital Variable (SICAV)*, Hong Kong introduced the open-ended fund company, Cayman Island has its own Private Funds Act, and even India is likely to adopt a version of Singapore Variable Capital Company for investment fund at its International Financial Services Centre in Gujarat City.

So our competitors are not sleeping on their laurels; they are all coming up with innovative structure to corner the market. And this is where, I think, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we could have done more, we should have done more. I have this feeling that there is a lack of innovative feature, except for the fact that we will give the sub-fund a separate legal entity for which I have serious reservation, there is nothing new compared to Singapore.

Let us start with the name itself. Why use the very same name as Singapore? Why use a Variable Capital Company (VCC) and give the impression that we are mimicking Singapore? Yes, Singapore's VCC is very successful, but it is not a reason to copy the brand. Is this the right

signal we are sending to the investors? Unlike Singapore and common law jurisdiction, we have a hybrid system of law. We are uniquely positioned to provide a fund vehicle which would appeal to investors both from civil law countries and common law background. Then why come up with a Bill which only concerns companies? What about *société*? What about limited partnership? What about funds set up as trust or contracted schemes? These are also vehicle used for fund. Why not have one fund that will cater for everything? If we wanted to come with a brand, we should have come up with a hybrid structure, which would appeal to investors of all jurisdictions. We should have come up with a full-fledged stand-alone legislation for funds; for all types of funds irrespective of whether they are companies or limited partnership. Just have one plain fund which can be sold to investors.

Another missed opportunity is when it comes to taxation. In Singapore, income from eligible VCC funds may be tax free if they qualify for the Enhanced Tier-Fund Scheme or the Singapore Resident Fund Scheme. In many jurisdictions, funds are not taxed. Even in the United States, funds are treated as tax transparent vehicle. In Mauritius, for years, there has been call from the industry for funds to be exempt from income tax, for funds that are set up as limited partnership or *Société*, it is possible today for the fund to elect, to be tax transparent, and to be taxed at the level of the investors. So, if we are able to do it for Limited Partnership Funds, why couldn't we have a similar tax regime for VCC and other fund vehicle? Taxing VCC, as an entity is, in my opinion, sending the wrong signal to the market that Mauritius is still taxing a vehicle when all other jurisdictions are moving towards taxing the investor and not taxing the fund.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not enough having good laws. Any country can enact legislation, but if you want attract fund business, you need first to attract the Fund Managers because they are the ones who take the decision as to where to locate a fund. So, the question that we have to ask ourselves today is why is it that despite all the efforts we have been doing for years and years now, we are not able to attract Fund Managers? We do license Fund Managers but they do not have a place of operation in Mauritius. They do not have staff in Mauritius. They do not live in Mauritius. They do not spend in Mauritius. All Fund Managers licensed by the FSC irregrettably have an investment adviser sitting somewhere else, with real people in real offices doing real work. So why are we unable to attract Fund Managers to base their operation in Mauritius?

Today, Indian professionals, lawyers, accountants, the very same people, Mr Speaker, Sir, who used to recommend and promote Mauritius as a financial centre, these same Indian professionals are telling their client to go and move to Singapore. These professionals are even doing tie-ups. We know, we had an adviser, a legal firm which has been in Mauritius for years, he never set up a foreign law firm in Mauritius but he has done tie-ups in Singapore. Why? Why not Mauritius? This is the question we have to ask ourselves.

The hon. Members today know how difficult it is to set up a fund and Fund Manager in Mauritius as compared to other jurisdictions. Do you know how long it takes to get a licence from the FSC? Do you know the kind of information that promoters have to provide? It was bad enough before we were on the Grey List and Black List, but today, the situation has considerably deteriorated. We seemed to have slipped into another extreme and I will end up by giving you just one example of a client that happened last week.

Together with the hon. Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance, I attended the Mauritian Week in Dubai, and I met an investor there, who I encouraged to come to Mauritius. He was engaged in vertical farming, a very innovative structure. So, I convinced him to come to Mauritius and he submitted all his documents, his CV, his business plan. Do you know what the FSC did? One of the queries from the FSC was: in your CV you mentioned you did an MBA, can you specify in which year and from which university? You know how offended that investor was? He left Mauritius and went to Cayman and within days, he had already set up companies, which in Mauritius he was not able to do. This is how the situation is in Mauritius. So, it serves absolutely no purpose coming up with legislation, Mr Speaker, Sir. We need to rethink our strategy and reposition ourselves. We have the people, we have the skills, we have the know-how, we have the competence. We have all the ingredients to be jurisdiction of choice, but we are not yet there.

I hope in the coming Budget, I really hope that the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development will come up with a suitable package to give a well needed boost to our financial sector. Thank you.

(5.09 p.m.)

The Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives (Mr S. Bholah):

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, for giving me the floor to give my views on the Variable Capital

Companies Bill. First of all, allow me to commend my colleague, the hon. Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance for bringing this important piece of legislation, which is very technical in nature. In fact, the Variable Capital Companies Bill is set to be a game changer for Mauritius Fund Management sector, contrary to the opinion, expressed by hon. Uteem.

The introduction of this Bill is yet another testimonial of Government's efforts to deepen, to diversify, and also to improve the product base of the Mauritius International Financial Sector. This Bill, therefore, will further augment the competitiveness of our financial services sector.

This Bill has been a long way coming, amidst a battery of other product-enhancing financial services, first announced as part of the Budget Speech 2020-2021.

The House will note that the Mauritius International Financial Centre is already known as an internationally recognised jurisdiction of repute. It has been evolving in a well regulated environment since more than two decades now. With a contribution of 13% to GDP according to Statistics Mauritius and generating some 9,450 jobs as highlighted in 2021 Survey of the Financial Services Commission (FSC), the financial services sector has the potential to attract more investors and consolidate further the path towards economic recovery.

As the sophistication of the global financial services ramps up, it is primordial for leading international financial centres to adapt to new industry demands, to solidify their offerings and also to develop a new competitive edge in this cut-throat global industry. I believe, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this Bill, in this respect, sets the tone for the development of new and sophisticated services regionally and globally.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now delve into some technicalities of this Bill.

First, it is of utmost importance to understand the concept of variable capital companies.

In the financial services industry, particularly in the fund management sector, variable capital companies are corporate entity structures which are design-built and purpose-built for investment funds.

Such investment funds are vehicles which are run by licensed fund managers under specific investment strategies with a view to achieving the fund's goals.

The global fund management industry has been progressing by leaps and bounds over the last decade and has seen strong investor inflows over recent times.

For a fact, according to the Investment Association, the global assets under management surpassed the USD100 trillion mark in 2020. Boston Consulting Group (BCG) – the leading American global management consulting firm - describes this as “the USD100 trillion machine” and other experts estimate that this has further grown by 5.8 per cent in 2021.

Now, given the strength of this global industry, the Mauritius International Financial Centre stands to gain from the adoption of the right tools to guide investors to our sophisticated and broad array of financial products.

The Variable Capital Companies Bill, hence, sparks light on the legal framework on the setting up, operation and administration of variable capital companies in Mauritius.

The Variable Capital Company (VCC) will be called upon to carry out its business through sub-funds and Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) and the latter will normally have their own distinct names. The umbrella structure of VCCs represents one of their biggest advantages for the following reasons –

- (i) They can file only a single corporate income tax return regardless of the number of sub-funds the umbrella VCC has.
- (ii) They can freely redeem shares and pay back shareholders in the form of dividends using its net assets.
- (iii) They can benefit from economies of scale in terms of cost efficiencies as sub-funds may share the same Board of Directors and common service providers for their administrative functions.
- (iv) They can adopt different open-ended and close-ended investment strategies for all existing sub-funds but within the same single VCC entity.

Cost efficiency as a driver of competitive edge can be one of the main focus for the development of the fund management sub-sector within the financial services industry in Mauritius, and as such, the creation of VCCs with their umbrella structure can indeed contribute a long way in achieving this.

Mr Speaker, Sir, VCCs also allow the creation of several sub-funds and SPVs, as mentioned before, with different investment strategies. This is a key element of having a plethora of financial services products, suitable for all types of investors and, more importantly, adapted for various global economic and financial events and investment themes.

The beauty of funds, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that they can be customised, tailored and moulded for themes that are prevalent and engaging for the investor community.

During the pandemic, for example, US Exchange Traded Fund Managers launched funds that tapped into the ‘Work from Home’ phenomenon, whereby the theme covered mostly those companies offering cloud technologies, cyber security, online document management and remote communications.

US Investment Management powerhouse BlackRock created its ‘Virtual Work and Life’ Exchange Traded Fund (ETF) in September 2020, garnering a fund size of USD5.3 m. Since the start of the Ukraine-Russia conflict in February 2022, that is this year, two months back, CNBC has reported that ETFs are “becoming a vehicle of choice for investors.” Such is the ability to customise funds based on themes.

Investor fund flows are projected to follow some key themes over the coming years, including but not limited to sustainable investing and ESGs, Video Gaming in the Metaverse, Blockchain Technologies and Infrastructure.

The Variable Capital Companies Bill comes at this opportune time – just after Mauritius progressed tremendously to come out of the FATF list of high risk third countries and thereafter from the EU list of High Risk Third Countries in January this year.

It adds steam to the new and revamped image of the Mauritian jurisdiction as an international financial centre. It can help both the establishment, as per the requirements of the Bill, of incorporated companies as VCCs as well as the re-domiciliation of investment funds as VCCs in Mauritius. This will definitely lead to a new avenue for investment for different investor classes, hence, generating fee revenue for players in the sector.

The confidentiality element of VCCs also will come a long way in creating trust amongst the investor community as share registries and audited accounts will not be made public, but only to the Commission.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill today is opening the doors for a new addition to the jurisdiction's spectrum of financial products and services and will boost the fund management activities in the sector.

The creation of VCCs has had a resounding success in other jurisdictions such as Singapore as mentioned by the hon. Minister and as also mentioned extensively by hon. Uteem. In fact, in 18 months of creating this new corporate entity structure, Singapore saw some 300 VCCs by June 2021, with early adopters being early stage wealth managers, smaller investment groups and debut funds.

Through the Variable Capital Companies Bill, we are also building a deeper and more diverse capital pool for investment into Africa, using Mauritius as a platform.

This Bill will enhance the image of Mauritius as being a provider for a comprehensive range of investment fund vehicles and structures to support investors' needs.

With the new legal structure for VCC provided in this Bill, there is potential for Mauritius to capture a greater share of the full value chain of fund management.

With the new legal structure of VCC provided in this Bill, there is potential for Mauritius to capture a greater share of the full value chain of fund management. We need to keep pace with other International Fund Management Centres if we are to capture the additional economic benefits of fund domiciliation. With an attractive international centre, rekindled from its experience of innovating, developing, and very recently, fine tuning its parameters, Mauritius can deliver this new corporate structure service and I believe that it can also attract more Niche asset and wealth managers regionally and globally in the jurisdiction, fostering a transfer of knowledge and technology as well as growth for the sector. So, any step which goes into the direction of consolidating Mauritius' position, as well as a well-reputed International Financial Centre should be appreciated. That is why I fully applaud and support the introduction of the Variable Capital Companies Bill. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(5.21 p.m.)

Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Financial Services Commission, way back on the 12 October 2021, published a draft Variable Capital Companies Bill on its website for consultation. The Bill aims to provide a legal framework for the incorporation, conversion, structure operation and termination of VCCs in Mauritius. And I must say, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have had the opportunity in my capacity as a legal practitioner to have been invited on couple of occasions to participate together with stakeholders of the Financial Services Industry in workshops organised to debate on the draft Bill that was in the public domain for consultation since October 2021. And as such, being well acquainted with the purpose and objective of same, I welcome this Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the proposed introduction of VCCs was first announced, as the hon. Minister rightly pointed out, in the Budget Speech 2020-2021 and is intended to further enhance the competitiveness of the financial services sector and diversify the product base of the Mauritius International Financial Centre.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as pointed out also by hon. Uteem, Singapore enacted the Variable Capital Companies Act 2018 for governing VCCs incorporated in Singapore, and same is in operation since 2020. Similarly, in the UK, Mr Speaker, Sir, they have enacted the Open-Ended Investment Companies Regulations 2001 governing open-ended investment companies under the provisions of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000. Similarly, Mr Speaker, Sir, Ireland enacted the Irish Collective Asset Management Vehicle Act 2015, and India, as pointed out by the hon. Minister and hon. Uteem, is currently working towards bringing in its jurisdiction similar legislation.

The Variable Capital Company, Mr Speaker, Sir, VCC, has been attractive in Singapore since 2020. Its success there is continuing and as such the timing of bringing this Bill before this House today should be welcomed as another positive step for our jurisdiction.

VCCs, Mr Speaker, Sir, are used by International Investment Funds and can be used for open or close ended investment funds and special funds, such as Hedge Funds, and Venture Capital Funds. The VCC provides flexibility as the capital of the fund is variable and is therefore attractive to Fund Managers and administrators. The VCC, which may also be used for private equity business, should bring a plus to the Mauritian jurisdiction. The VCC has characteristics of the French inspired *Société d'Investissement à Capital Variable*, which is omnipresent in

Luxembourg and widely used to structure investment funds there from investing around the world in all spheres of economic activities. Some attractive features of the VCC concern the increase or decrease of the share capital of the company and the possibility to pay dividends from capital. Very few jurisdictions offer the VCC, and furthermore, Singapore provides for the re-domiciliation of overseas offshore funds to its own jurisdiction. We should, therefore, offer the possibility for overseas existing funds to migrate and relocate to Mauritius and this Bill, in my opinion, caters for same. And the VCC should also be entitled to benefit from the tax treaties to which Mauritius is a party.

So the global trend, Mr Speaker, Sir, amongst International Financial Centres is to innovate and propose novelty, certainty and clarity to investors in terms of products. And I shall go a step further in requesting the hon. Minister to consider bringing more innovative products and here I shall refer to what we call the SPAC, the Special Purpose Acquisition Company. This is the new flavour of the day on World Markets. SPACs, developed last year and are in a driving mode as a means of raising capital for investment purposes. The SPAC is sometimes known as a Blank Check Company in the sense that investors give money in full trust that the promoters are going to put the funds to good use, *en bon père de famille*. The SPAC will normally be listed on a Stock Exchange and have a target which will be acquired and thereby transform the target itself into a listed entity. The acquisition is often made by way of a merger between the SPAC and the Target Company itself. The process will, therefore, allow the shareholders of the SPAC to become the new shareholders of the Target Company.

The trend for SPAC, Mr Speaker, Sir, has prevailed in the US but now it is an attractive prospect in some financial centres such as Hong Kong and Singapore, where the Stock Exchanges are providing for new regulations to attract and cater for them. In the Mauritius, Mr Speaker, Sir, the SPAC would simply be a company incorporated under our Companies Act, and if need be, with a Global Business License obtained from the Financial Services Commission. It seems, as per information, the amendments to the rules of our Stock Exchange would be necessary to accommodate SPACs. There are positive signs that the Stock Exchange of Mauritius would be receptive to the idea of new rules for SPACs. It is also possible to use the SPAC concept for the local market and it should not, therefore, be seen as a pure offshore product for international investors.

Mr Speaker, Sir, coming to this Bill, the VCC, as being proposed, will be a corporate structure that can be used for a wide range of investment funds and provides Fund Managers with greater operational flexibility and cost savings. It can be set up as a stand-alone entity or as an umbrella entity with multiples of funds.

As described, Mr Speaker, Sir, in clause 5 of the Bill, with regard to the legal personality and structure of a VCC and at clause 8 with creation of some sub funds, in the umbrella structure, Mr Speaker, Sir, each sub fund of the VCC can have different shareholders and investment objectives. They are completely segregated from other sub funds in respect of its assets and liabilities, thereby, preventing any contagion issues.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as couched in the Bill, sub funds can hold shares in other sub funds of a VCC, which gives the ability for investors or family members to invest into parts of the structure as they deem fit. This sub fund structure, Mr Speaker, Sir, enables a single VCC to be used in place of multiple companies, trusts, typically found in a group structure. The VCC can share a Board of Directors, a Fund Manager, auditors and other administrative agents, which provides significant economies of scale. The VCC can thus begin as a stand-alone fund with one pool of shareholders and assets and further sub funds can be added later.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill, in my humble opinion, is an enhanced version of the model put in place in Singapore, and the VCC being proposed is well adapted – should be well adapted – to our jurisdiction as it offers greater flexibility in respect of, share issuance, redemption and the payment of dividends and cost efficiencies can be achieved where sub funds share the same service providers and custodians but have segregated assets and liabilities.

Fund managers, Mr Speaker, Sir, can constitute investment funds as VCCs across both traditional and alternative strategies and as Open Ended or Closed End Funds. Open Ended Funds, Mr Speaker, Sir, typically used by Edge Funds allow investors to redeem investment at their discretion. While Closed End Funds typically used by Private Equity Funds restrict an investor's ability to redeem investments during the life of the fund.

The way ahead, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is imperative to provide high value added services and the management and administration of investment funds and private equity business are a fine way of doing so. All of this has to be done evidently in full respect of the rules to combat money laundering and the financing of terrorism. Our financial centre is now additionally, Mr Speaker,

Sir, a corporate administrative and outsourcing centre and we need imperatively to keep bringing innovative products to our jurisdiction.

As such, Mr Speaker, Sir, several legal and commercial considerations drive the selection of a fund vehicle. A critical consideration for investors is certainty and clarity. Investors seek this across a range of parameters whether it be the legal framework that governs the particular form of fund vehicle, the taxing provisions that would apply or the limitation of liability. A stable, predictable and consistently administered legal framework provides investors reassurance though this has brought up connotations, these considerations are equally relevant while considering and choosing a particular form of fund vehicle.

Similarly, Mr Speaker, Sir, investors seek clear and ambiguous taxing provision supplied with consistency because of a number of investors in funds tend to be funds themselves and as such funds invest in multiple jurisdictions managing uncertain taxing outcomes across jurisdictions can be particularly challenging. As a consequence, Mr Speaker, Sir, to be an attractive jurisdiction, the confidentiality of information about the fund's activities and its investor base is also of paramount importance to the fund manager and potentially to many investors as well.

Allowing third parties access to proprietary information, such variable capital company would give competitors a free ride on the meticulous efforts of the fund manager to identify and market its fund to its investors. Similarly, regulations which permit access to fund's financial statements could compromise the interests of the fund manager and also those of the fund's investors. An ideal fund vehicle would be one which preserves confidentiality of such commercially significant information and requires its disclosure only in limited circumstances.

Hence, Mr Speaker, Sir, the important role that the Financial Services Commission shall be called upon to play as a regulator but also, Mr Speaker, Sir, as a watch dog to see to it that confidentiality and consistency in applying the law will go hand in hand to preserve our reputation as a jurisdiction in terms of compliance but also to enhance our attractiveness for new investors. There will be challenges, Mr Speaker, Sir, since the VCC structure shall be a noble product the complexities and operational requirements are not fully understood by the service providers and there is a possibility of practical issues arising during this initial phase as rightly pointed out by hon. Uteem. As with all new legislations, that requires concise and proper

dissemination of the objective and operation of same. There is a degree of uncertainty regarding the actual working of the segregation of the assets and liabilities of the sub funds in this structure.

In that respect, Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall invite the hon. Minister that FSC should be given more manpower and expert assistance to properly and diligently play its role as a regulator but also seek international exposure of its personnel as to how the operation of VCCs have been performing in other jurisdictions in terms of compliance and supervision.

Finally, Mr Speaker, Sir, the internationalisation of finance has made the financial services industry extremely competitive and firms require conscious efforts to keep costs low. Umbrella and sub fund structure enable firms to keep the cost of floating and new fund low. For instance, Mr Speaker, Sir, UK open ended investment companies can act as an umbrella scheme holding various sub funds each with their own investment goals. Thus, Mr Speaker, Sir, the flexibility to set up each new fund as a sub fund of the umbrella rather than establishing a new entity reduces the cost substantially and achieves economies of scale.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the variable capital company could be a game changer for our jurisdiction as an International Financial Centre as it cements its valued proposition for cross border investors. It will be a legal structure that can be used in both the traditional and alternative investment fund market space.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the stakeholders in the sector expect that the advent of the VCC will garner the interest of private wealth managers and institutional investors thanks to its capital variability and cost efficiency. Mr Speaker, Sir, it will also be ensured that the legislative framework regulating the VCC will also comply with the anti-money laundering combating the financing of terrorism requirements. The VCC structure as laid down in this Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, can be used for all types of investment funds, including mutual funds, hedge funds, private funds, private equity and real estate funds. It will I am sure further diversify the Mauritian offering in respect of financial products and will help to cement its competitiveness at an international level and its value proposition for cross border investment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as a note of conclusion, I do hope that this Bill will provide more space and opportunities for our skilled and young professionals and offer a more employability environment and perspectives to young graduates in the financial sector.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I suspend the Sitting for 45 minutes.

At 5.38 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 6.32 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Remain seated and be seated!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Ms Jutton!

Ms T. Jutton (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle): Thank you. Mr Speaker, Sir, at the very outset, allow me to congratulate my colleague the hon. Seeruttun, Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance, for coming up with this Bill, which is a comprehensive piece of legislation carefully crafted for taking Mauritius to greater heights. I seize this opportunity to congratulate him and his team, under the visionary leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, for the arduous work put into removing our country from the FATF Grey List and the EU List of High-Risk Jurisdictions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to go back to the Budget Speech 2020-2021 where a set of measures were announced to enhance the competitiveness of the financial services sector and to diversify the product list of the Mauritius International Financial Centre, and that Mr Speaker, Sir, included verily the introduction of Variable Capital Companies, which I will refer to as VCC during the rest of my speech. The vision of this Government in ensuring that Mauritius be a reputed International Financial Centre (IFC) with a diversified product offering to best suit the needs of investors was deeply anchored then, and is still anchored and being translated into a reality today.

The VCC Bill concerns the investment fund sector which is one of the most dynamic segment of the financial services sector with a growing number of youth professionals equipped with the knowledge and skills working in the industry. Allow me, here, Mr Speaker, Sir, to refer to what hon. Uteem said earlier. He stated that bringing the VCC Bill in Singapore was a game changer but that, however, it will not be the case for Mauritius. I here quote hon. Lobine with his permission, who, on the other side, said that –

“It will be a game changer”

And we, on this side of the House, do have a positive attitude and believe that yes, definitely, it will be a game changer.

Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Uteem also stated, unfortunately, that Mauritius and the Ministry did not do enough. He stated, in his own words, that it could have done more and that there was a lack of innovation. But I believe, as hon. Lobine, again, said, that the timing is right. The time is now! And when we speak about the investment fund sector, I again think about all those young professionals, all those young graduates and having specialisation in the financial services industry, in the fund management services, and indeed, if we are able to tap into this now, it will create - I believe - a huge pool for more and more youth to join this important sector, which is a key pillar of our economy. Hon. Uteem mentioned this. He was comparing with the past that there are more funds ceasing to operate and that new funds starting operation is having a downward trend. But how to change things? This is how to change things, Mr Speaker, Sir, by bringing about this Bill, the amendments and disseminating it. Of course, we need the collaboration of all the stakeholders, and this is where I wish to reiterate what the hon. Minister stated in his speech earlier. Before bringing this Bill to the House, there has been extensive consultations and discussions with regulators and stakeholders both from the private and the public sector, and it is only with the inputs of all that this Bill in this form has been presented to the House today. As hon. Lobine mentioned, he was, himself, part of these stakeholder meetings and discussions. A concept paper on the VCC was circulated to the industry stakeholders and the draft of the Bill was also published on the FSC website for wider consultation last year, in October. Hence, this current Bill is the fruit of extensive consultations and discussions with all stakeholders, including the Ministry of Financial Services, the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, the Attorney General's Office, the Financial Services Commission, the MRA, and the Registry of Companies amongst many others.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if by now some are still wondering the rationale of this Bill, why this Bill is important, let us be reminded that we are living in an era of cut-throat competition. And with respect to the investment fund sector, be it from other International Financial Centres such as Singapore, Cayman, Isle of Man or more recently, the GIFT City in Gujarat, India, we, as a jurisdiction of choice, we need to innovate and keep up to the benchmark. Moreover, this Bill

has to make the offerings of our financial services sector more appealing to investors as explained in detail by the hon. Minister.

Mr Speaker, Sir, before me, hon. Lobine, hon. Bholah, and even hon. Uteem have dwelled extensively on the advantages of bringing a VCC and I will not dwell into that. Allow me to just come to a few main points. I hereby take the time of the House to talk about the regulation of companies in Mauritius, whereby the Companies Act is the main legislation governing the setting up and registration of companies in Mauritius. It applies to all companies whether domestic or those with a Global Business Licence. The Companies Act provides for incorporation, governance disclosure, protection of shareholders, mergers and acquisition of companies. Well, in the same vein, a VCC will be governed by the provisions of the proposed Bill, but it will still be incorporated under the Companies Act just like it was the case for the Protected Cell Companies. A VCC will, however, be exempted from the application of certain provisions of the Companies Act.

Mr Speaker, Sir, some of the salient features of this Bill include Part II which provides for a VCC to be incorporated as a variable capital company and which states that a company which has already been incorporated under the Companies Act may even be converted as a VCC; and a company incorporated outside Mauritius may be registered by way of continuation as a VCC. As hon. Lobine explained extensively again, how this can bring the investors to Mauritius and actually help us tap into this pool of investors or even existing companies which can now continue through Mauritius as a VCC, I believe that this is key.

Part III of the Bill which embeds Clauses 5 to 7 provides that a VCC shall be a body corporate and have a legal personality, but the business of the VCC will be carried out by its sub-funds or Special Purpose Vehicles. As hon. Uteem explained, it can be set up either as a separate entity or as an umbrella of sub-funds, each one having a separate legal entity.

Well, while hon. Uteem believes that this can be complex and he has been questioning the application of same, on the other hand, we believe that this will verily be the edge that we can provide over, for instance, the VCC of Singapore. So, as per Clause 5 that –

“(2) A sub-fund or special purpose vehicle” can opt to “have a legal personality,” which is separate from the VCC.

Clause 6 of the Bill provides for the requirement for a VCC to, of course, include the words variable capital company in its name and provides for minimum requirements that the constitution of a VCC has to comply with. Let us be reminded here that the main objective of a VCC is to operate as an investment fund. The reason why I am laying emphasis on this is, as hon. Lobine concluded, that the application of this Bill will indeed be challenging, and we have to be reminded of the objective of this Bill and especially to disseminate this to stakeholders in the industry.

Clause 7 stipulates that no VCC should operate without the authorisation as VCC fund by the FSC while its sub funds can operate either as collective investment schemes or as close-ended funds subject, of course, to the approval of the FSC.

Part 4 of this Bill consisting of Clauses 8-19, provides for procedures regarding the creation and incorporation of sub-funds or SPVs. The SPVs shall operate as vehicles ancillary to a variable capital company or as a sub-fund of the VCC.

Clause 11 provides for segregated assets and liabilities of sub-funds and SPVs, which again, the orators before me explained lengthily on the advantages of having assets and liabilities which are not attributable to any particular sub-fund or SPV but which shall be allocated between the sub-funds or SPV in a manner which would not be prejudicial to participants in the sub-funds or the SPV. The application, again, will be key here.

Clause 12 of the Bill is another important aspect of the VCC Bill as it allows for economies of scale. How? It allows for a VCC to appoint only one CIS Manager, CIS administrator, custodian or other service provider for all its sub-funds; hence making it more cost effective.

Part 5 of the Bill provides for procedures and requirements regarding the issuance of shares, redemption, buyback and reduction of shares on which the hon. Minister explained.

As for part 6 of the Bill, it mostly relates to reporting obligations. And part 7 of the Bill stipulates that anyone contravening the provisions of a VCC Bill shall actually commit a criminal offense and be liable to a fine not exceeding Rs500, 000 and an imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years.

Mr Speaker, Sir, consequential amendment under this Bill, which is being brought under Clause 26, also requires adjustment to the following –

- the Financial Intelligence and Anti-Money Laundering Act (FIAMLA) to include a VCC under the definition of financial institution;
- the Financial Services Act to include the variable Capital Company Act as a relevant act;
- the Income Tax Act to provide for the taxation of each sub-fund or SPV separately;
- the Financial Services Special Purpose Fund Rules 2021, and
- the Securities Real Estate Investment Trust Rules 2021.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me again to come to the words of hon. Uteem who said that we could have done this or we could have done that in the past. But the time is now because if you want to change things, the time to act is now.

So, to sum up, I wish to reiterate the main rationale behind this Bill today, which is to provide Mauritius with this competitive edge as not only a robust International Financial Centre but one which can satisfy the growing diverse needs of investors and make it verily be the undisputed choice.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell, now you have the floor!

(06.45 p.m.)

Dr. A. Boolell: (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, Sir. Since you have given me the floor with a nice smile, I will try to be polite.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are proponents of this Bill. It looks like a bunch of roses in the palette of financial services, but whether there are more petals than thorns, time will tell, and let us hope the thorns are not too prickly. Financial Services is a sector which is growing, though we had a setback, but I hope we will recover the lost ground. A sector where there is democratisation of the economy, a purveyor of gainful employment. But we have to err on the principle of caution. I have listened very intently to speeches delivered by friends on both sides

of the House. The Minister mentioned that this is a milestone; whether he will blaze the trail, time will tell. But it is true, this is a technical Bill with far reaching consequences.

I agree it is an attractive, innovative product but not without risk. Earlier, hon. Uteem made a very interesting point and canvassed the idea that there should be a legislation for funds. The VCC is used by international funds for open and close investment funds and special funds such as Hedge and Venture Capital funds. It is good we go back in yesteryears to understand the intricacies of the financial services and how the services evolved.

Successive Governments, since 1988, have always tackled aggressive tax evasion and avoidance to make the tax system fairer and simpler. Of course, the mantra has always been neat and clean, but it is fair to say that the narrative has begun to change as from 2015, with the consequences that we were on the Grey List of the Financial Action Task Force in February 2020, and the Black List, of course, taken off early this year following compliance to regulatory and enforcement measures in our commitment to wage war on anti-money laundering and financing of terrorism.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I stated in my opening speech and made a plea that we should err on the principle of caution, and the reputation of our jurisdiction has to be protected every inch of the way. The Bill is a strong link, but more vital links are needed to emulate the success of Singapore. Not that we want to be a copycat, but Singapore has set the trend and it is fair that we put on our best endeavour to emulate the success of Singapore, because this is a world, Mr Speaker, Sir, where there is no free lunch and the days of preferences are almost behind us and we have to tread cautiously. With one mistake made, our competitors would be too happy to damage the reputation of our jurisdiction.

Some argue that since the demarcation line between tax evasion and tax avoidance is narrow, any loophole would be exploited by money launderers to blur the contours and the edges. The Financial Services Sector is no risk high reward. And like the monetary authority of Singapore, we have to spare no effort and be on the constant watch out. The monetary authority of Singapore is paying attention to new ways that dirty money is channelling into the financial system, singling out the new breed of fund companies known as variable capital companies and virtual assets or digital payments, tokens. If loopholes are closed, monitoring and supervisory mechanisms are strictly adhered to, then Mauritius will be a much sought-after jurisdiction. It has

been stated, let me reiterate, that the Variable Capital Company has the potential to be a global game changer and a gateway to Africa for funds to be domiciled in Mauritius. It is precisely the reason when I listened to my good friend, and he reiterated it and reminded me that there was wide discussion at the bar of public opinion. But there is also room for the information to be widely disseminated because the more the information is disseminated, the better it is for the sector, the better it is for all stakeholders, because at the end of the day, it is the taxi driver also who will earn a living, not only the fine gentleman or the lady who is sitting at the director's table, Mr Speaker, Sir. But then this is the politics of empowerment; empowering young people, dedicated people who are academically well endowed, who are willing to make the leap to move from generic to areas of specialisation. This is why we have to put emphasis on training, on reskilling, on skilling, because awareness, endowment, academic prowess, and interaction exchange of information is important for the sector to grow.

There is one thing. Ushering a legislation, understanding the relevance and importance of a legislation, of course, matters a lot. But what matters more is that we need to be a centre of repute. Unfortunately, we are no longer cited as a showcase. How could I, Mr Speaker, Sir, forget the praise lavished on Mauritius at the African Growth and Opportunity Act meeting held in early August of 2009 in Nairobi? We were like peacocks, Mr Speaker, Sir. We could spread our wings and we were proud because we had a centre of repute. And this is what we need to do; turn this centre into a centre of repute. But we must say there are miles to go, but as I have stated earlier, we can easily recover lost ground.

The Minister argued that the provisions of the Bill, especially sections 3, 8, 9, 12, 15, 18 and 19 and the other provisions of the legislation provide safeguard, and the main object of the Bill is to serve the interests of the public. But to serve the interests of the public, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have to put investors at par with integrity. We have to make sure that we are dealing with investors who are fit and proper. It is not because penalty for offences are stiff and the amendments to the FIAMLA are wide that the battle is won. The Bill has been at the SLO since a year. Stakeholders have been privileged to interactive session to discuss the merits and the demerits of the Bill which have been highlighted by my good friend, hon. Bholah. And one of the merits of the Variable Capital Company and the ancillary sub-fund or the special purpose vehicle is its flexibility in the issue and redemption of shares and payment of dividends from capital or income. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, has the risk been waived?

Mr Speaker, Sir, to waive the risk and to minimise the risk, there is an obligation upon institutions like the MRA, the FSC, the Registrar of Cooperatives and the Director of the Insolvency Services. After all, MRA or for that matter any other body, has an obligation to report to relevant bodies to interact, to exchange information, to cluster their forces and their strength, and to act in unison and not act as separate entities. These institutions have to come together because the object is to ward off threat and to see to it where the opportunities are and to grasp the opportunities. We signed the FATCA and the DTA for the specific purpose. As I say, all relevant institutions have to be on the alert and it is a reawakening call. It is not because the VCC is flexible, easy to manage that it should have differential treatment. We are still under probation from our recent exit from EU Black list and the Grey list of the Financial Action Task Force. And it is good to remind the House that it was under the regime of the MSM/ML that Mr Sobrinho was granted a licence to operate a bank much to the dismay of the public and the then governor of the bank. The Sobrinho saga led to a near constitutional crisis, Mr Speaker, Sir. It provoked the departure of the then President of the Republic and our jurisdiction was brought into limelight because of greed and nexus with shady characters like Bastos and Sobrinho. And whose reputation was dent? The country's reputation! And you think they will leave us alone? A false move, our competitors will rub it up our nose. What is relevant is our level of preparedness. Transparency and accountability is the name of the game and the lessons to be learned and drawn from the Virtual Assets and Initial Token Offering Services Act, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, but then what is the main thrust of the Bill? Who are those who are on the prowl, watching and constantly watching? Of course, the heads and staffs of these service providers, namely the FSC. And the FSC has to be like Caesar's wife, above reproach. It has to act speedily but with utmost care. But it has to act and should not be seen to delay applications unnecessarily; act smart, be smart and be confident. I must say that since we exited from the Grey list of the FATF and the EU Black list, I still feel our friends from the FSC suffer from some kind of inferiority complex. It is time to stand up, be counted and ward off any threat and come back to senses and make it known to one and all that they are here today, here to stay and here to dispense services. The FSC has to live up to the expectations of investors and fund managers, because no one owes us a living and as I said earlier, there is no free lunch and competition remains fierce. We have to level up. Singapore is all out to smart us and to stab us if

we don't watch our back. And what about Mother India? Make in India and what does India think of our jurisdiction?

It wants to know if we have conducted feasibility study on the Variable Capital Company. Dr. Krishnan who headed an expert committee on Variable Capital Company had submitted his report on the feasibility of Variable Capital Companies in the International Financial Services Centre to the Chairperson of the International Financial Services Centres Authority. But where is our report? In whose drawer is it? How much dust has it collected? There is a call for clarification, and I hope the Minister will enlighten us and tell us where is the text document to highlight the merits and to answer to the genuine concerns expressed. There is still a quest for information as we are still recovering from severe bruises inflicted upon us by the Financial Action Task Force and the European Union.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the setting up and operation of variable capital companies and ancillary companies matters and should help to consolidate the financial ecosystem. Unfortunately, as I say, we don't have the zeal commitment and acumen of services provided by Singapore. Singapore remains a textbook reference on governance and transparency. And why is the VCC fund attractive to Singapore? Its legal jurisdiction, it has a high ranking globally for rule of law, order and security, and almost free from corruption, contrary to Mauritius.

Let us address economic fundamentals and their legal jurisdiction of repute before we come to other fancies. The Minister of Financial Services made a long statement to remind us that the risk of money laundering and financing of terrorism is always high despite his good intention to set the house of cards in order. And a member of the Deloitte legal network reminded us that VCC is subject to anti-money laundering and combating the financing terrorism obligation and must appoint an eligible financial institution to assist with performing customer due diligence, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the VCC, as I said, is subject to scrutiny under Section 6(4) but the Financial Services Commission has to rule the waves. Will they? As I said, they have an obligation to do so because safeguards, yes, but we want more than safeguards; we want the guardrails, also. The VCC, like the Singapore corporate entity, must be used for the standalone, the collective investment system and an umbrella CIS with multiple sub-funds.

Mr Speaker, Sir, financial statements of the funds have to comply fully to the International Financial Reporting Standards adopted by the International Accounting Standards Board, Mr Speaker, Sir. They remain the backstop, the guardrail and the best safeguard. Since the law is an ass, Mr Speaker, Sir, nothing is or should be taken for granted. It is not because Singapore has many edges on us that we should rush in. My advice, as I have stated earlier, is to err on the principle of caution.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me conclude by saying that there is no room for errors. Another setback will tarnish our reputation and we will be considered as a lone row man. The Minister has a responsibility to give us firm assurances that VCC is not a gateway for anti-money laundering and financing of terrorism. As we say, the devils are not always in the details. Sometimes, the writing is on the wall.

The new rules and guidelines of the FSC are yet to be published. We look forward to these rules and guidelines. As I say, safeguards, safeguards; otherwise, the sector will be off the rail again, which no one wants.

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Teeluck, you have the floor!

(7.05 p.m.)

The Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage (Mr A. Teeluck): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, over the years Mauritius has established itself as a vibrant and leading International Fund Management Centre. Hon. Seeruttun has provided the figures; they are around 1,000 Collective Investment Schemes, and Closed-End Funds which are setup and administered from Mauritius, and 432 CIS Managers which are licensed by the FSC. As at June 2021, management companies - most of them offer, of course, fund administration services – employed around 4,500 persons whilst CIS Managers employed around 170 persons. Most of these employees are high skilled professionals. This shows how crucial is the investment fund sector to Mauritius.

At the world stage, competition is tough with respect to the investment fund sector, be it from other International Financial centres, such as, Singapore, Cayman or most recently, GIFT

City. For this reason, we need to innovate and follow the international trend. The introduction of this corporate structure will allow us to capture value from the full fund management value chain. This corporate structure can be used like a traditional fund structure as well as in creative and innovative way. It is a combination of legal entity and a fund structure which may be used for all types of investment funds, including Mutual Funds, Hedge Funds, Private Equity, and Real Estate Funds.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our financial sector today is built up on three pillars: Cross-Border Investment, Cross-Border Corporate Banking and Private Banking and Wealth Management. The core area of specialisation is the facilitation of cross-border investments and related fund administration activities, which comprise an estimated 88% of IFC tax revenues, and 70% of the sector's employment.

In line with the Mauritian Government's Vision 2030 target to double the size of the financial sector, we thus aspire to grow its contribution to GDP to USD1.9 billion, which will increase IFC related employment by 1.5 times to approximately 17,000 jobs and increase tax revenue to approximately USD0.3 billion. Achieving these ambitions is dependent on many factors, including adapting our legislative framework to cater for vehicles and structures meeting the needs and demands of the international market. Hence, the very recent adoption of the Virtual Asset and Initial Token Offering Services Act and now, the introduction of the Variable Capital Companies Bill.

This sector, Mr Speaker, Sir, has its own dynamics and to reach the milestones and achieve the target set, we need to keep up with the pace of the market and match the fierce competition with other jurisdictions. The growth of our financial sector also rests on parameters of compliance with international norms and guidelines.

However, the expansion and growth of the sector were challenged. The sector was already subjected to growing international pressure, adverse Press coverage and the changing international economic landscape. And the fact that hon. Utem and hon. Dr. Boolell raised the issue, let me, therefore, also address the matter. Not only it is relevant but it is important to recall how challenging the past two years has been for the sector and to highlight the commitment and effort put in by the Prime Minister and the Government in ensuring that our financial sector lives to the reputation it has built itself.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in February 2020, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) placed Mauritius along with 17 other countries, on its grey list. And as a consequence of this listing, Mauritius was also listed on the EU's list of high-risk countries; the blacklist which was effective as from October 2020.

A serious challenge for a sector which is a core part of the Mauritian economy; a sector which contributes almost USD1 billion to GDP and approximately USD180 m. in tax revenues and provides nearly 12,000-15,000 jobs.

Ceci dit, the FATF did acknowledge the progress made by Mauritius in improving its technical compliance with the FATF recommendations and increasing the level of effectiveness of its AML/CFT system during the one-year observation period which started in October 2018 and ended in October 2019. Hon. Dr. Boolell is right. Successive Governments have contributed in building the reputation of our financial sector, but, unfortunately, the level of commitment has varied from Government to Government.

The listing in 2020, Mr Speaker, Sir, did not just crop up within a span of couple of years. *Il faudra remonter dans le temps pour cela*, far back as 2007 when Mauritius underwent a prior assessment in 2007 under the FATF methodology of 2004. The assessment was focused on technical compliance with the then FATF 40+9 Recommendations, and the mutual evaluation report was published in August 2008. Several deficiencies were identified therein, in particular regarding the AML/CFT regulation on the designated non-financial businesses and professions, including casinos, real estate agents, legal and accounting professionals.

However, limited action was taken to address these deficiencies. *En 2012*, the FATF reviewed its Recommendations and countries were requested to initiate actions to ensure compliance with the revised Recommendation. That is what we now call 40 FATF Recommendations. Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, unfortunately, no action was initiated by the authorities at that time and this resulted in the 2018 MER report with modest ratings for the country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is good to know that, in practice, after a country has undergone a mutual evaluation, it is expected that it will address all its technical deficiencies within the first two years following the adoption of this MER. Subsequently, the country has up to three years to improve its level of effectiveness. Actually, the inertia demonstrated at that time from 2008 and

subsequently 2012 led to a large number of technical deficiencies being highlighted in the Mauritius MER report, and we were rated low or moderate against all the 11 immediate outcomes. It is only, Mr Speaker, Sir, in 2015 that major changes were brought.

2015, the Asset Recovery Investigative Department under the Asset Recovery Act was introduced. 2018, amendments were made to 19 legislations relating to money laundering and furthermore, *toujours 2018*, a new Financial Intelligence and Anti-Money Laundering Regulation was promulgated, which set out the whole range of FATF preventive measures to be implemented by the relevant actors in the industry. Still 2018, we came up with a new Declaration of Assets Bill. 2019, another important piece of legislation, that is, the Anti-Money Laundering and Combatting the Financing of Terrorism and Proliferation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2019 was enacted. 2020, the AML/CFT Miscellaneous Provision Act 2020 was passed to be more direct.

Mr Speaker, Sir, from 2018 to date, 46 pieces of legislation were amended to assist Mauritius in strengthening its AML/CFT regime. The FATF noted that since the adoption of its MER in 2018, Mauritius has made significant progress in addressing most of the MER recommended actions to improve technical compliance with the FATF 40 Recommendations and to increase the level of effectiveness of its AML/CFT system. *Le gouvernement* was proactive in tackling the strategic deficiencies, *inter alia, creuser dans les détails*, through the setting up of an interministerial committee chaired by the hon. Prime Minister himself to monitor closely the progress made in the implementation of the action plan.

Mr Speaker, Sir, getting out of the Grey and the Black list was a result of considerable effort, commitment, determination and hard work by the Government but also the private operators. Things did not simply roll out of the box. *Le Premier ministre, le ministre des Services financiers* and all officers from different ministries and various stakeholders toiled to make it happen, and the result, Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius was commended for its strong political commitment and the sustained progress made in the implementation of the FATF action plan. Just 16 months after placing Mauritius on its Grey list, the FATF made the initial determination that Mauritius has substantially completed its action plan. In fact, FATF has concluded that Mauritius has strengthened the effectiveness of its AML/CFT regime and has addressed all the strategic deficiencies identified in its action plan. Several countries went on to congratulate and

commend Mauritius for successfully completing the FATF action plan despite challenges caused by COVID-19 pandemic and the significant progress achieved within such record time frame.

Using the words of hon. Dr. Boolell, this is when the peacock actually fully spread its feathers in splendour in front of the whole world. We now continue under the close supervision of the Prime Minister along this path and we will remain committed to maintain the standards set by international supervisory or advisory organisations. Our jurisdiction remains a reference in the financial sphere and remains an international financial centre of sound repute. We need to understand that this sector is crucial for the country. Singapore, yes, is a leading jurisdiction in this sector. We all acknowledge the fact that Singapore is rated, if I can term it as A-grade, but, in Singapore, the financial sector does not suffer from intense negative publicity of our jurisdiction from the press nor does Singapore has Members of the Opposition who resolve at creating propaganda to paint black the image of the country *vis-à-vis de la communauté internationale*. I say it again, we have to understand that this sector is crucial for the country; this sector employs nearly 15,000 people, and the livelihood of all those thousands of people is at stake. So, we need to be reasonable in our approach and at times leave politics aside and think in the better interest of the country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill is another stone being laid towards the development and growth of the sector. This Bill will help regenerate and rejuvenate the fund industry.

To conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am confident that this sector has untapped potentials that this Bill will bring forth and further confirm Mauritius as a competitive jurisdiction as opposed to our direct competing jurisdictions.

With these words, Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to commend the hon. Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance for bringing this Bill to the House.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(7.20 p.m.)

The Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance (Mr M. Seeruttun): M. le président, permettez-moi d'abord de remercier tous les membres qui sont intervenus sur ce projet de loi, projet de loi très technique je dois dire, mais je crois que chacun des membres qui sont intervenus ont pu expliquer le but de ce projet de loi.

Et j'espère que les autres membres présents, ici, aujourd'hui, ont mieux compris ce projet de loi et aussi le public qui nous écoute peut mieux comprendre de quoi il en est lorsqu'on parle de *variable capital company*. Je dois aussi noter que des deux côtés de la Chambre il y a eu plus ou moins consensus par rapport à ce besoin de ce nouveau produit, et que dans l'ensemble tous les membres sont d'accord que c'est un produit intéressant et qui va aider au développement de notre secteur financier.

Néanmoins, j'observe que l'honorable Lobine qui est aussi un opérateur, je dois dire, qui est un *player* dans ce secteur, qui a eu l'occasion de participer dans des réunions consultatives au moment où on discutait sur ce projet de loi, il a pu apporter sa contribution. Et de par son intervention, je suis heureux d'entendre qu'il est complètement d'accord avec ce projet de loi. J'attendais aussi à ce que l'honorable Uteem qui est aussi - allons dire - quelqu'un qui est très impliqué dans ce secteur, qu'il aurait aussi donné son soutien total à ce que ce projet de loi soit introduit aujourd'hui, ici, dans cette Chambre. Il a commencé par dire que voilà la situation est catastrophique à Maurice, le secteur connaît des difficultés.

C'est vrai, M. le président, on a connu des périodes difficiles avec la Covid en 2020-2021. Aussi, avec Maurice qui a été placée sur la liste grise du GAFI et aussi la liste noire de l'Union européenne. Maintenant qu'on est sorti de toutes ces listes, c'est le moment, bien sûr, de relancer et de redynamiser le secteur et c'est la raison pour laquelle on vient de l'avant avec ce nouveau produit. Ce n'est pas le seul qu'on a introduit, une nouvelle loi en décembre 2021 par rapport au *digital assets*. Aujourd'hui, avec ce projet de loi, en ce qui concerne le *variable capital company*, cela démontre l'effort du gouvernement, l'effort de mon ministère pour venir de l'avant avec des produits dont il y a un intérêt général dans cet espace financier. Il y a un appétit pour se produit et raison pour laquelle on vient de l'avant pour offrir encore une fois d'autres produits et services qui vont être, j'espère, très attrayants pour Maurice comme une juridiction, comme centre financier.

Alors, on a, bien sûr, vu un peu ce qui se passe ailleurs. Il ne faut jamais réinventer la roue comme on dit. Donc, il y a, bien sûr, le modèle singapourien mais il y a le modèle de Jersey ; mais il y a aussi d'autres modèles. Et à Maurice ce qu'on a fait lors des discussions qu'on a eues, que ce soit au niveau du régulateur mais aussi avec les opérateurs, c'est de voir comment rendre ce produit encore plus intéressant. La raison pour laquelle ce produit,

aujourd'hui, qu'on est en train d'offrir permet d'avoir des *features*, comme on peut l'appeler, plus ce qu'offre le Singapour ou les autres juridictions parce qu'on veut présenter un produit qui est mieux de ce qui est offert aujourd'hui sur le monde financier. Parce que comme j'ai dit, encore une fois, c'est qu'on veut relancer ce secteur, redynamiser le secteur qui, comme vous le savez tous, c'est un secteur qui est très dynamique, les choses bougent très vite et on ne peut pas comme ci dormir et ne rien faire. Donc, d'une part on veut que les choses bougent mais lorsqu'on vient avec des projets pareils où il y a des aspects innovants, l'honorable Uteem commence à émettre des réserves pour dire que : 'faites attention, ça risque de ne pas marcher'. Il a parlé sur le fait d'avoir le *sub-fund* ayant la possibilité d'être une entité à part entière, avoir une personnalité propre. Il pose la question : comment cela va fonctionner avec un VCC et aussi avec un *sub-funds* ayant chacun une entité propre. Cela existe partout, M. le président. Dans un groupe de compagnies il y a la *holding*, il y a les subsidiaires, donc il n'y a rien qui empêche à ce que ça puisse fonctionner. D'ailleurs, l'honorable Lobine a expliqué, donné un peu de justifications. Et encore une fois je dis ce n'est pas une obligation, c'est une possibilité qui offre dans ce projet de loi à ce que quelqu'un puisse aussi avoir un *sub fund* qui soit incorporé comme une entité à part entière. Donc, pour vous dire encore une fois, M. le président, c'est qu'on offre un produit aujourd'hui qui donne tout ce que les autres juridictions sont en train de donner. Alors, nous, on vient avec tout cela parce qu'il y a eu de longues consultations et il y a cette demande de l'industrie et raison pour laquelle aujourd'hui on vient de l'avant avec ce projet de loi.

La réserve émise par l'honorable Dr. Boolell par rapport à des risques de blanchiment des capitaux, j'avais fait mention dans mon intervention plus tôt qu'on vient avec un amendement au FIAMLA pour inclure un VCC comme un *financial institution* pour que justement ça soit capturé sous ce projet de loi afin qu'il s'adhère avec les provisions de cette loi par rapport à tout ce qu'est le blanchiment des capitaux. Donc, je peux donner l'assurance au niveau de cette Chambre et aussi à la population et à l'industrie, que ce gouvernement a fait tout ce qui est possible pour sortir Maurice de la liste grise du GAFI et de la liste noire de l'Union européenne. On a travaillé dur pour ça. Il y a eu beaucoup d'efforts, beaucoup d'énergie, et en temps record on est sorti de cette liste. Les gens qui ont été impliqués dans cet exercice, personne ne veut aujourd'hui se retrouver dans ces listes encore. C'est la raison pour laquelle l'effort du gouvernement c'est de faire tout ce qui est possible pour maintenir le niveau, le standard qui est

demandé par les agences comme le GAFI, l'Union européenne et autres afin qu'on reste toujours en dehors de ces listes. Tout à l'heure, l'honorable Dr. Boolell parlait de la réputation de Maurice d'antan comme une juridiction ou un pays où les gens regardaient Maurice comme une référence. Et on a tendance bien souvent, M. le président, de sous-estimer ce qu'on fait ici. Et je dis ça toujours parce que j'ai eu l'occasion ces derniers mois comme ministre responsable de ce secteur de rencontrer beaucoup d'investisseurs étrangers à Maurice comme ailleurs. Et quand ils parlent de Maurice, je dois dire qu'ils parlent avec des mots élogieux. Ils ont une image de Maurice où il fait bon vivre, où il y a un système et des infrastructures adéquates pour faire du business, où ils veulent venir mettre en place leurs structures. Mais à entendre certains ici à Maurice, on se demande est-ce qu'on a besoin des adversaires de l'étranger pour venir nuire à notre réputation ? Et c'est ça qui est dommage, malheureusement, M. le président.

On prend souvent l'exemple de Singapour, est-ce que vous entendez un jour un Singapourien dire quoique ce soit de mauvais de Singapour ? Il faut qu'on cesse ce genre d'attitude, M. le président. C'est un secteur qui emploie beaucoup de personnes, des jeunes professionnels, - comme a si bien dit l'honorable Dr. Boolell - des gens qui gagnent bien leurs vies. Mais ne faites pas cette erreur, honorable Dr. Boolell, de nuire à la réputation de notre juridiction.

Laissez-moi signaler, il y a peine quelques semaines, il y a eu une conférence d'ESAAMLG où il y a eu la participation d'une délégation mauricienne, - certains sont là aujourd'hui - ils n'ont pas arrêté de citer Maurice comme l'exemple en termes de se mettre en conformité avec toutes ces recommandations du GAFI. Aujourd'hui, Maurice est en conformité avec 39/40 des Recommandations du GAFI. Et probablement, dans quelques mois - j'espère que vous aussi vous allez nous soutenir dessus - on sera peut-être le seul pays au monde avec 40/40 Recommandations.

Donc, tout à l'heure, l'honorable Dr. Boolell parlait de Bastos, encore une fois, il ne sait même pas qu'à l'époque que Bastos est arrivé à Maurice, il était au pouvoir, il était dans le gouvernement.

(Interruptions)

Va demander l'honorable leader de l'opposition et il va savoir ! Je n'aime pas retourner en arrière mais comme il fait référence à ce monsieur, donc je voulais quand même ramener les choses dans ces perspectives, M. le président.

Donc, pour moi ce que je veux dire, M. le président, nous, nous voulons avancer. Le ministère, le gouvernement a un objectif clair par rapport à comment ce secteur doit développer, on veut doubler sa contribution sur l'économie mauricienne et pour cela, justement, on vient avec un certain nombre de nouveaux produits et il y a aussi les produits existants qu'on est en train de revoir pour les rendre encore plus attrayants. Vous avez parlé de la formation et je dois dire encore qu'on n'arrête pas la formation. On va continuer parce qu'il faut toujours préparer nos jeunes de pouvoir entrer dans ce secteur.

L'honorable Lobine a parlé justement, qu'il y a un besoin de *upscale* nos officiers et je dois dire qu'ici aussi, on n'hésite pas. C'est la raison pour laquelle beaucoup de Mauriciens sont *coached* par des juridictions comme Luxembourg. C'est pour dire quel niveau de formation on a parmi nos compatriotes. C'est pour cela que je dis qu'il ne faut pas trop souvent faire croire que rien ne va à Maurice. Or, c'est un secteur qui, pour moi, a un grand avenir, un secteur qui va contribuer beaucoup pour l'économie mauricienne et j'espère que bien sûr, cette attitude, cette mentalité qu'on a, continuellement à faire croire que tout est noir à Maurice, va changer une fois qu'on comprenne que c'est l'avenir du pays qui est en jeu.

Alors une dernière chose peut-être parce que l'honorable Dr. Boolell avait fait mention de ce rapport d'un monsieur Krishna. Ça c'est pour le GIFT City, l'honorable Dr. Boolell, ce n'est pas pour Maurice. Donc, je voulais juste corriger cette perception. On peut croire que c'était pour notre juridiction.

Donc, M. le président, voilà encore une fois un produit qu'on est en train de mettre à la portée des acteurs de cette industrie que pour moi, va servir à donner un nouveau souffle à notre secteur de services financiers. Je suis sûr que tous ceux qui ont travaillé et contribué pour arriver là aujourd'hui, vont être satisfaits qu'on a *deliver* sur nos promesses.

Je voulais tenir à remercier, avant de terminer, tous les officiers qui ont travaillé pour qu'on soit là aujourd'hui. A commencer par les officiers de mon ministère, les officiers du *Financial Services Commission*, il y a les officiers du bureau du *State Law Office*, bien sûr les opérateurs et tous ceux qui ont apporté leurs contributions. Et encore une fois, je remercie tous

les membres qui ont apporté leurs contributions lors de ce débat sur ce projet de loi. Avec ces quelques mots, M. le président, *I commend the Bill to the House.*

Merci.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

The Variable Capital Companies Bill (No. III of 2022) was considered and agreed to.

On the Assembly resuming with Mr Speaker in the Chair, Mr Speaker reported accordingly.

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Variable Capital Companies Bill (No. III of 2022) was read a third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 19 April 2022 at 11.30 a.m.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned! Adjournment time, I would invite the Deputy Speaker to take the Chair.

At this stage, the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Please, be seated! Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!
(7.40 p.m.)

MATTERS RAISED

PETIT RAFFRAY - FOOTBALL GROUND - LIGHTING FACILITIES

Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The matter I wish to raise is addressed to the hon. Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation. Hon. Minister, I am making this request on behalf of the inhabitants of Petit Raffray and the vicinity who have informed me that currently, they cannot use the Petit Raffray football ground in the evening because there is an issue with lighting. As you may be aware, an increasing number of people work during the day, and normally use the football ground in the evening. In the absence of lighting facilities, they are unable to use the football ground in the evening. On their behalf, I request you to do the needful so that the playground is soon provided with proper lighting. I thank you.

The Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation (Mr S. Toussaint): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member who had already given me advance notice that he is going to raise this issue. I am well aware of this situation. In fact, my colleagues MPs, hon. Minister Teeluck and hon. PPS Ramdhany have already raised this issue with me. And Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the officers of my Ministry that the ESD is actually looking into the matter and hopefully a solution will be provided soon. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

(7.42 p.m.)

BABY N. E. - NEUROLOGICAL DISORDER -TREATMENT FACILITIES

Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the hon. Minister of Health. I have had a very emotional request from the very close relatives of baby, whom I am not going to name, N. E., is three and a half years old, who has a very severe neurological disorder. As per her treating specialist, she needs much specialised treatment among which we are talking about stem cell treatment and cannabinoids. I humbly request you to see if you can use your good office to see that these treatment facilities be provided to her. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister!

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if the baby is having a treatment at the hospital centre and if this treatment is not available in Mauritius, there is always the recourse to have overseas treatment. So, I believe that they have to

follow the procedures and once the board decides that this baby should be sent abroad for treatment that will be done. Rest assured, hon. Member, I am going to follow this matter.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Hon. Dhunoo, please!

(7.43 p.m.)

CUREPIPE-MIDLANDS - DAMAGED BUS SHELTERS & ROAD MARKINGS

Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My adjournment matter is addressed to hon. Alan Ganoo, Minister of Transport and Light Rail. The matters that I would like to raise concern the Traffic Management Road Safety Unit. I would like to inform the Minister that many of bus shelters in my Constituency of Curepipe-Midlands have been damaged during the cyclone Batsirai, mainly at St Hélène, Midlands, Cité St Luc, Commerson and 16^{eme} Mille. As you are aware, Curepipe is a rainy place and this is causing many problems for the inhabitants and the users. I would request the Minister if he could use his good office to talk to the Traffic Management Road Safety Unit to *per se* repair and replace the bus shelters as mentioned earlier. And also, I would like to request the hon. Minister to request the TMRSU to look into the road markings in Curepipe and Midlands, which are causing a big problem for road users and ambulances travelling to hospitals and the nearby clinics. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Minister, please!

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr A. Ganoo): I thank the hon. Member, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for the two complaints he has raised. As regards bus shelters, I am informed that there are two types of bus shelters: one which falls under the control of the TMRSU and the others which are sponsored and fall under the NLTA. I am informed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, those under TMRSU undergo regular maintenance. With regard to those under the control of the sponsors, they are supposed to maintain their bus shelters. And I am also informed by the NLTA that in case these bus shelters require any repairs under any circumstances, including following passage of cyclone, the responsibility of the promoter is to ensure remedial actions. So, nevertheless, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will take up the matter with the NLTA and with the TMRSU with respect to any bus shelter which has been damaged during the cyclone.

With regard to road markings, again, the road markings fall under the aegis of TMRSU and these road markings, I am informed, undergo regular maintenance. However, some road markings fall under local authorities. But if the hon. Member would give me a list of the road markings which need repainting, I will request the TMRSU to do the needful and to carry out a survey in that respect.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Hon. Ms Tour!

(7.46 p.m.)

VALLÉE-DES-PRETRES, CONGOMAH – BUS SERVICE – IRREGULAR HOURS

Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête s'adresse aussi au ministre des Transports terrestres, l'honorable Alan Ganoo, concernant un problème d'autobus dans deux endroits de ma circonscription, notamment à Vallée-des-Prêtres, le trajet Chitrakoot-Caroline-Port Louis et à Congomah, le trajet Congomah-Port Louis. Il se trouve que les autobus passent à des heures irrégulières et ne respectent pas les horaires. Du coup, il y a des longues périodes d'attente et les élèves arrivent souvent en retard à l'école. Je demande donc au ministre de bien vouloir faire un rappel à la NTA afin de rétablir l'ordre.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Minister, please!

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr A. Ganoo): I will certainly look into the matter, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I will inform the NLTA about the request made by the hon. Member but may I inform the House that Vallée-des-Prêtres is a large locality, which is situated on the outskirts of Port Louis as we all know. In fact, it is divided into two distinct sub localities, commonly known as Lower Vallée-des-Prêtres and Upper Vallée-des-Prêtres, Chitrakoot. It is the UBS which is the public transport service provider for this locality. In fact, it operates along five different routes. And in line with the established bus schedule, the services are available during the whole day as from 5:25 in the morning up to 18:35 in the afternoon, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at intervals varying from 15 to 20 minutes during peak hours, and 30 to 45 minutes during off-peak hours. I am apprised that the NLTA has received several complaints regarding

the non-observance of timetable, especially during off-peak hours. Consequently, the UBS has been informed of the situation and the latter has agreed to ensure prompt remedial action.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Hon. Quirin, please!

(7.48 p.m.)

DR. JEETOO HOSPITAL - PARKING PROBLEM

Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête ce soir s'adresse au ministre de la Santé, a trait aux difficultés qu'ont les personnes qui se rendent à l'hôpital Jeetoo pour se faire soigner, à trouver un endroit pour pouvoir garer leurs véhicules. Et beaucoup de ces personnes résident dans ma circonscription de Beau Bassin – Petite Rivière et d'après les informations qui me sont parvenues, l'aire de stationnement étant occupée exclusivement par le personnel hospitalier, en particulier les médecins, donc, il est pratiquement impossible pour ces patients ou les membres de leurs familles qui souvent les accompagnent, de pouvoir trouver un endroit pour se garer ne serait-ce que quelques minutes. Et souvent, je dois faire sortir, il y a des altercations entre les chauffeurs de taxi et les membres du public par rapport à ce problème. Je demande donc à l'honorable ministre de la Santé de bien vouloir s'assurer qu'une solution soit trouvée urgemment.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Minister, please!

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal): Thank you, hon. Member. Yes, I agree with you that there is a problem for parking at Dr. Jeetoo Hospital. Obviously, we will look into that matter with the RHD over there.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. David, please!

(7.49 p.m.)

MORCELLEMENT SOOBRAH, POINTE AUX SABLES – BUS TRAFFIC

Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête ce soir s'adresse au ministre des Transports terrestres et renvoie une problématique que j'ai soulevée à l'ajournement du 3 novembre 2020 puis à celui du 23 novembre 2021. Il s'agit de la déviation du trafic de bus à travers Morcellement Soobrah à Pointe aux Sables. Cette déviation annoncée comme étant temporaire dure maintenant depuis deux ans à travers un

quartier résidentiel via la rue Guillaume Apollinaire qui est clairement inadaptée à la circulation des bus. Dans sa réponse du 23 novembre dernier, le ministre des Transports annonçait une date de fin de travaux de la NDU pour le 15 décembre 2022, à la suite de quoi un test routier devait être conjointement effectué avec la TMRSU le long de la route côtière de Pointe aux Sables. Quatre mois après la date annoncée de fin des travaux, deux ans après un trafic de bus incessant et épuisant, les habitants de la rue Guillaume Apollinaire ont tous signé une pétition pour demander l'arrêt de ce trafic routier - pétition que je dépose ce soir devant notre Assemblée tout en demandant au ministre où en est ce dossier. Merci.

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr A. Ganoo) : Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to this issue of traffic problems at Morcellement Soubrah, Pointe aux Sables, true it is that the hon. Member on two occasions raised the issue in the House, but, unfortunately, I am advised that works for the construction of the foot path and drains by the National Development Unit along the coastal road Pointe aux Sables are still ongoing. Therefore, the situation is due to the delays in the implementation of the project. From what I understand, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is expected that these works will be completed by July 2022, therefore, in view of that situation buses are still proceeding to the Traffic Centre via Morcellement Soubrah. Once the works would be completed, I can assure the hon. Member that buses would be rerouted. So, I hope the hon. Member will understand the situation and I thank him for having raised the issue once again. And I can assure him that on the part of my Ministry we will monitor the situation.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Nuckcheddy, please!

(7.51 p.m.)

CONSTITUENCY NO. 9 – COMMUNITY CENTRES – SAFETY HAZARD

Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My request tonight is addressed to the hon. Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare. It concerns some community centres of constituency no.9. However, there are two which require a special attention: that of Grande Retraite and Pont Blanc. The fencing and light poles have fallen down and that of Grande Retraite Community Centre which is also used as a refugee centre has floor tiles which are coming up and these damages are also a safety hazard. I

will humbly request the hon. Minister to please carry out an urgent refurbishment to these community centres. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Minister, please!

The Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare (Mrs K. Koonjoo-Shah): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for having brought the matter to my attention. I wish to reassure the House that at the level of the Ministry, under the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund, we are taking advantage of the fact that at the moment all centres are closed to effect renovation works. As to the specific Centre mentioned by the hon. Member, Grande Retraite Community Centre, that Centre I believe has a tender which is going to be awarded shortly; I do not have the closing date in mind, sorry. The work is going to be carried out. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Doolub!

(7.53 p.m.)

MARE D'ALBERT – SCHOOL CHILDREN – BUS SERVICE

Mr R. Doolub (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête s'adresse au ministre du Transport, l'honorable Alan Ganoo. Je suis en présence de doléances de quelques parents habitant le village de Mare d'Albert et dont les enfants voyagent dans le bus pour aller à l'école à Curepipe, donc je fais référence à la route no.9. Il se trouve que très souvent ils doivent attendre parfois jusqu'à 1 heure le matin pour qu'ils puissent trouver un autobus la raison étant que plusieurs de ces autobus qui desservent la route no.9 ne s'arrêtent pas. Je demande donc au ministre de s'enquérir de cette situation pour une solution. Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Minister, please!

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr A. Ganoo): I thank the hon. Member. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will look into the matter but perhaps I should inform the House that no public bus can refuse access to commuters, to school children if sitting accommodation is available in this bus and if such offences are reported to the NLTA, the latter will initiate actions, probably disciplinary actions against the defaulter.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, very much. Hon. Lobine!

(7.54 p.m)

LA MARIE ROAD B64 – CONSTRUCTION OF BRIDGES – TRAFFIC PROBLEM

Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to hon. Hurreeram, Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development. It concerns the construction that is ongoing at La Marie road B64. Three bridges are being built along Avenue Charles de Gaulle, La Caverne Dispensary and there is a diversion scheme in place since 17 March 2022 but the scheme is not working properly inasmuch as there are no policemen on site at peak hours to make the traffic go there smoothly. If you could look into the matter maybe with the contractor because they need to liaise with the TMRSU. I have sent you pictures, if you could look into the matter, please.

The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Mr M. Hurreeram): Thank you, my hon. Colleague. Thank you for giving me advanced notice of this question. I have checked with the officers, in fact the officers are confirming to me that they have checked with the contractor and there are Police Officers on site. But I will check it myself with PPS Bablee; we will go on site and have a look at it. As it is rightly said, we have three bridges being built and as you would have noticed during the recent flooding this region has not been affected, the works *sont en train de porter leurs fruits*. So, please bear with us, I know it is a difficult situation. We rely on your support for us to be able to address the situation and ask for patience from the public and this work will only last – now we are heading towards the end, so, we are remained hardly 10 days’ work more before we can open that bridge and we have three brand-new bridges that will alleviate the flooding problem and the traffic problem will be solved. And at the same time I thank my hon. Colleague Bablee for his help, we will now be constructing the Hollywood bridge and repairing that road. We will invite you for the site visit. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, very much. Hon. Ramful!

(7.56 p.m.)

**PLAINE MAGNIEN – RECENT FLOODING - AFFECTED FAMILIES -
COMPENSATION**

Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to raise an issue to the address of the hon. Prime Minister on behalf of the families who have been affected by the recent flooding at Plaine Magnien. Unfortunately, the hon. Prime Minister is not here but may I, through the Deputy Prime Minister, ask that these families have been severely affected by the recent flooding; many of them have sustained substantial material losses which include their appliances, furniture, school materials and all that. So, may I request the hon. Prime Minister to consider using the funds from the Prime Minister's Relief Fund to consider if a reasonable compensation could be provided to those families so that they can cover for the expenses for the purchase of their furniture and household appliances, etc. Thank you.

The Deputy Prime Minister: The message will certainly be conveyed to the Prime Minister, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. But should I remind the hon. Gentleman that the families concerned need to be advised first and foremost to give a proper declaration to the Police listing the list of all the attempts of property loss. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Sandra Mayotte!

(7.58 p.m.)

BAMBOUS & BASSIN NHDC – WATER LEAKAGE

Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête s'adresse au Premier ministre adjoint, ministre du Logement, de l'aménagement du territoire et du Tourisme et cela concerne les appartements de la NHDC de Bambous et de Bassin. Alors, après les grosses pluies il nous a été rapporté que pas mal d'appartements sont régulièrement inondés, il y a des fuites comme on dit *lakaz pe coulé*. Alors je demanderai humblement au ministre de bien vouloir considérer les doléances de ces habitants et traiter cette situation en urgence. Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. DPM!

The Deputy Prime Minister: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I was not aware of this situation until the hon. Lady raised it with me earlier today. So, I would be grateful if she could provide me with particulars of these complaints and I shall see to it that they are attended to at the earliest, by the NHDC.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

(7.59 p.m.)

ABERCROMBIE MARKET FAIR BUILDING – MULTI-SPORT COMPLEX & MUSIC SCHOOL PROJECT

Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue):

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to Dr. the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management, Dr. Anwar Husnoo, with regard to the project construction of the multi-sport complex and music school at the first floor level at the existing Abercrombie market fair building. The project started in August 2021 and is expected to be completed in August 2022, however, it has been brought to my attention that there are some serious delays which are causing inconvenience to the inhabitants and to the users of the market fair following, I think, a confusion with the Consultants. So, I would humbly request the Vice-Prime Minister to look into the matter. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Vice-Prime Minister!

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I know this project. I know there are a number of issues with this particular project, in fact I am planning to have a focus meeting on this particular project because there has been a lot of problems that have been going on for some time. So, I will be contacting all the stakeholders, municipality of Port Louis, the consultants, the contractor and the Members of Parliament in constituency no.4, and hopefully next week, if I have some time, if it is convenient to everybody, we will arrange a meeting next week to sort it out.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. Vice-Prime Minister. Hon. Ms Joanna Berenger!

(8.00 p.m.)

COMMUNITY CENTRES – EQUIPMENT FACILITIES

Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal) : Ma requête s'adresse à l'honorable ministre de l'égalité des genres du bien-être de la famille. Si je ne me trompe pas, les centres sociaux tombent sous sa responsabilité et en temps normal, ils fournissent des

équipements aux habitants de la localité tels que des chaises, des prélaris entre autres pour les évènements comme les mariages, les funérailles, les sessions de prières etc.

Nous le savons les centres sociaux sont encore fermés actuellement malheureusement. Cependant, les évènements que j'ai mentionnés continuent d'avoir lieu dans le respect des restrictions sanitaires et les habitants ont donc besoin de ces facilités. Je demande à la ministre de bien vouloir s'assurer que la livraison des équipements essentiels à ces différents types d'évènements puissent être possible bien évidemment dans le respect du protocole sanitaire.

Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Minister, please!

The Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare (Mrs K. Koonjoo-Shah): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I shall definitely look into the matter and make sure that it is being addressed.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ms Anquetil!

(8.01 p.m.)

NHDC CAMP MAPOU TO HENRIETTA – BUS SERVICE

Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal): Je vous remercie, M. le président. Ma requête s'adresse au ministre des Transports Terrestres et du Light Rail. Je sollicite l'intervention du ministre pour que la ligne de bus existante à destination et en provenance d'Henrietta puisse passer par la NHDC de Camp Mapou à Henrietta pour éviter que les enfants et les usagers des transports publiques de cette zone se retrouvent à marcher plus de 1,5 km pour prendre le bus. Je suis en possession d'une lettre du Syndic de la NHDC d'Henrietta en date du 02 novembre 2019, adressée au secrétaire permanent de ce ministère à cet effet. Aucune action n'a été prise à ce jour malgré les promesses datant de décembre 2015.

Je vous remercie, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Minister, please!

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

I have been informed by the NLTA, because the issue raised by the hon. Member was the subject matter of a PQ which, unfortunately, was not answered, therefore, I have the information that the NHDC estate of Henrietta is found at 500 metres from Bord Cascades bus station.

I am further informed that buses operating along the following routes serve this bus station –

- (i) 3B;
- (ii) 66;
- (iii) 134;
- (iv) 141, and
- (v) 255.

But, nevertheless, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as a result of the request made by the inhabitants, my Ministry will make the necessary arrangements for a joint route test to be carried out by the TMRSU and the NLTA, based on which a decision will be taken with regard to the extension of the aforementioned bus services up to the NHDC estate of Henrietta.

I am informed that the number of inhabitants residing at the NHDC estate of Henrietta is, in fact, approximately 500, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. And, as I said, four lines of bus services which are available from this bus station follow different routes, the 3B, the 66 as I just said and three other routes. So, everything will depend on the report which will be provided by the TMRSU and the NLTA and a decision then will be taken.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Good night!

At 8.05 p.m., the Assembly, was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 19 April 2022 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**MAURITIUS DUTY FREE PARADISE CO. LTD – RECRUITMENT – JANUARY
2020 TO 12 APRIL 2022**

(No. B/214) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Mauritius Duty Free Paradise Co. Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the number of persons recruited thereat since January 2020 to date, indicating in each case the –

- (a) post held, and
- (b) salary drawn.

Reply: The Mauritius Duty Free Paradise Company Ltd. is a private company governed by the Companies Act and by its constitution, which status makes it not in order for it to divulge information outside, as the hon. Member herself, a former Minister, surely knows.

Notwithstanding this, I am exceptionally giving the information requested. Henceforth, such information with regard to the Mauritius Duty Free Paradise Company Ltd. will not be provided.

I am informed by the Officer-in-Charge of the Mauritius Duty Free Paradise Co. Ltd. that the company presently has 436 employees on its establishment in different grades. Employees are recruited by the company in accordance with its recruitment policy established under the Collective Agreement signed between the Mauritius Duty Free Paradise Co. Ltd. and the Shops and Duty-Free Shops Employees Union.

Nine different job positions in the company are classified as entry grades whereby whenever any vacancy arises, recruitment may be made from outside the company through advertisements in local newspapers and from list of job seekers sought and obtained from the Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training.

I am informed by the Officer-in-Charge of the company that only one recruitment exercise has been carried out since January 2020 to date, namely for the position of Security Guard. The company had requested the Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training to furnish a list of potential candidates with specific profiles laid down in the Scheme of Service. A list of 199 candidates was provided by the said Ministry. The recruitment comprised a

physical measurement exercise carried out by a recognised sports federation whereby only 55 candidates passed according to the established criteria.

The company had set up a Selection Panel comprising members of Management team and the Security Officer to carry out the interview of the 55 eligible candidates. After the interview exercise, a merit list of 35 candidates had been established, and these candidates were required to undergo medical tests. Only 33 candidates turned up for the tests. On 16 March 2020, the 26 top most ranking candidates in the interview were offered employment to fill the vacant posts of Security Guards after obtaining the approval of the Board of Directors of the company. However, two candidates did not accept the offer of employment.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the 24 Security Guards were offered a monthly basic salary of Rs17,100 plus compensation.

I am further informed by the Officer-in-Charge that internal vacancies for non-entry grades have been filled from within the pool of existing employees in line with the company's Human Resource policy. According to the procedures, the vacancies are advertised internally, and only eligible candidates are called for interviews and a merit list is established according to the performance during the interview to determine the best candidates. It is pertinent to reemphasise that the company's recruitment policy has been established under the Collective Agreement signed between the company and the Shops and Duty-Free Shops Employees Union.

OVERSEAS MISSIONS - MINISTERIAL DELEGATIONS & HONOURABLE MEMBERS

(No. B/219) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to overseas missions, he will state the number of ministerial delegations and Honourable Members having undertaken same since the reopening of the borders in October 2021, indicating in each case the –

- (a) purpose and outcome thereof, if any, and
- (b) cost incurred.

(Withdrawn)

DANGEROUS DRUGS - AMOUNT SEIZED

(No. B/220) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to dangerous drugs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the total amount of drugs seized since 01 January 2022 to date, indicating where matters stand as to the seizure of an estimated Rs33 m. of drugs on a boat at Le Morne on Thursday 31 March 2022.

(Withdrawn)

MR S. K. - DEATH - INQUIRY

(No. B/222) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) ask the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the death of late Mr S. K. at Moka, he will for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand as to the inquiry carried out thereinto following the findings of the Magistrate of the District Court of Moka, indicating the number of statements recorded by the Central Crime Investigation Division, including if Mr Y. S. has been interrogated.

(Withdrawn)

MR P. M. - SENIOR ADVISOR - PUBLIC BODIES AND/OR STATE-OWNED COMPANIES - BOARDS

(No. B/223) 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 Mr P. M., Senior Advisor attached to his Office, he will state, since October 2021 to date, the number of Boards of public bodies and/or State-owned companies on which he is serving, indicating in each case the –

- (a) nomination date, and
- (b) monthly remuneration drawn.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS BROADCASTING CORPORATION - DIRECTOR GENERAL – QUALIFICATIONS & SALARY

(No. B/224) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister

for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the present Director General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to the –

- (a) qualifications held, and
- (b) salary and fringe benefits being drawn.

(Withdrawn)

ELECTORAL LAWS - CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

(No. B/225) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to electoral laws, he will state if he will consider appointing a consultative committee to look thereinto and make recommendations for the review of the –

- (a) powers of the Electoral Commissioner and Electoral Supervisory Commission;
- (b) manner in which –
 - (i) members and Chairperson of the Electoral Supervisory Commission are appointed, and
 - (ii) registration of electors are carried out, and
- (c) guidelines of how the Electoral Boundary Commission should carry out its function.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS BROADCASTING CORPORATION - MS M. J. - SUSPENSION

(No. B/227) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) 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 Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to if Ms M. J., Senior News Editor, has been suspended from duty and, if so, indicate the charges levelled against her.

(Withdrawn)

**COVID-19 PANDEMIC - DELTA, OMNICRON VARIANT & SUBTYPES -
CASES - 01 OCTOBER 2021 TO 12 APRIL 2022**

(No. B/243) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the COVID-19 pandemic, he will state –

- (a) the number of positive Delta variant and Omnicron variant cases recorded in public and private medical institutions on a monthly basis since 01 October 2021 to date, indicating the number of the said patients having passed away after having contracted same, and
- (b) if sequential studies are being carried out on every positive case admitted in public or private hospital with a view to identifying current or emerging new subtypes.

(Withdrawn)

**WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS – DEVELOPMENT BANK OF MAURITIUS LTD
– LOAN APPLICATIONS**

(No. B/246) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the women entrepreneurs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd., information as to the number of applications received therefrom to benefit from loans at a concessional rate of 0.5 percent per annum, as announced in the 2020-2021 Budget Speech, indicating the quantum of funds disbursed as at to date sector-wise.

(Withdrawn)

**MOLNUPIRAVIR TABLETS – TREATED PATIENTS – 01 JANUARY 2022 TO
12 APRIL 2022**

(No. B/248) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Molnupiravir tablets, he will state the

—

- (a) number of patients treated therewith since 01 January 2022 to date, and
- (b) current stock thereof.

(Withdrawn)

SUGARCANE PLANTERS – ELECTRICITY GENERATED FROM BAGASSE

(No. B/249) Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the undertaking given by Government to sugarcane planters to purchase electricity generated from bagasse at no less than Rs3.50 kWh, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to if the Board agrees to the implementation thereof.

(Withdrawn)

CAMP GARREAU SWIMMING POOL PROJECT

(No. B/250) Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the project for the construction of a swimming pool at Camp Garreau in Central Flacq, he will state where matters stand as to the implementation thereof.

(Withdrawn)

VALLÉE DES PRÊTRES – INCINERATOR

(No. B/252) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the incinerator at Vallée des Prêtres, he will, for the

benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal City Council of Port Louis, information as to the date of coming into operation thereof.

Reply: I will reply to PQs B/252 and B/275 together.

With a view to modernising the existing network of incinerators and also to providing a better service to bereaved families with respect to the incineration facilities, Government decided to upgrade the existing network of incinerators. Accordingly, after a survey, it was decided to install 16 units of LPG powered human incinerators.

I am informed that eight (8) incinerators at Richelieu, Camp Levieux, Berthaud, Highlands, Solferino, Belmont, La Marie and Allée Brillant have already been handed over to their respective Local Authorities and are operational since December 2021.

As regards the incinerators at Mahebourg, Grand Bois, Les Salines, Cipailles Brulée, Chamouny and Montagne Blanche, works have been completed thereat and the incinerators have been handed over to the concerned Local Authorities on 08 April 2022. These incinerators are now expected to be operational.

Regarding the remaining two sites at Bigara and Souillac, the contractor has to attend to a list of snags. It is expected that these works would be completed by the end of May 2022.

FOREIGN WORKERS – LOCAL WORKFORCE – PERIOD 2020-2022

(No. B/254) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the employment of foreign workers, he will state the number thereof recorded compared to the local workforce over the period 2020-2022.

(Withdrawn)

NATIONAL WHOLESALE MARKET

(No. B/255) Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the the Attorney-General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the National Wholesale Market, he will state when same will be operational.

(Withdrawn)

COVID-19 PANDEMIC – VACCINES – EXPIRY DATE & DISPOSAL

(No. B/258) Ms N. Ramyad (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the COVID-19 pandemic, he will state the number of vaccines purchased as at to date having reached expiry date before usage, indicating the manner in which same have been disposed of and if there is any established protocol for disposal of vaccines.

(Withdrawn)

**BON ACCUEIL, BELVEDERE, BRISEE VERDIERE, LA TAPIE,
LAVENTURE – PIPE LAYING – COMPLETION DATES**

(No. B/259) Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the uncompleted pipe laying works by Best Construct in the region of Bon Accueil, Belvédère, Brisée Verdière, La Tapie, Laventure, amongst others, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to where matters stand, indicating the expected completion dates thereof.

(Withdrawn)

**MAURITIUS TOURISM PROMOTION AUTHORITY – TOURISM
PROMOTION & DESTINATION MARKETING**

(No. B/260) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to tourism promotion and destination marketing, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority, information as to –

- (a) the quantum of funds spent in respect thereof since June 2021 to date;

- (b) the target markets, including the quantum of funds spent on each, and
- (c) where relevant, to whom contracts were awarded, indicating the fees paid and duration of contract.

(Withdrawn)

STATE & PRIVATE GRANT AIDED SECONDARY SCHOOLS - ASIAN LANGUAGES

(No. B/261) 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 asian languages, she will state the policies of her Ministry on the teaching and learning thereof in State and Private Grant Aided Secondary Schools.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that my Ministry promotes the teaching of Asian Languages in all schools. They are included in the panoply of subjects offered from Grades 7 to 9 in secondary schools as optional core subjects. The Ministry provides free textbooks to all learners having opted for Asian Language subjects from Grades 1 to 9.

Currently, the teaching of any Asian Language subject in secondary schools requires a minimum of 5 students as opposed to a minimum of 10 for other subjects. Schools where Asian Languages are taught in Grades 10 and 11 also offer these subjects in Grade 12 if there is a demand, regardless of the number of students taking the subject. This, with a view to offering students the opportunity to pursue the study of Asian Languages at upper secondary level.

As regards private aided schools, they are encouraged to offer these subjects whenever there is a demand.

PUBLIC BEACHES – PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES – EASE OF ACCESS

(No. B/263) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the public beaches, he will state where matters stand as to the implementation of projects earmarked for the easing of access thereto of persons with disabilities.

(Withdrawn)

**COMMISSION OF INQUIRY ON DRUGS – RECOMMENDATIONS &
MEASURES**

(No. B/264) Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to dangerous drugs, he will state the additional measures taken by his Ministry for the control thereof in the wake of the recommendations of the latest Commission of inquiry on Drugs.

(Withdrawn)

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS SHOW, DUBAI – DELEGATION

(No. B/265) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the International Women Entrepreneurs Show mission in Dubai held in October 2021, she will state the –

- (a) composition of the delegation of her Ministry which attended same, and
- (b) outcome of the mission.

(Withdrawn)

MEDICAL CANNABIS - USE

(No. B/266) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to medical cannabis, he will state where matters stand as to the consideration for the use thereof in Mauritius.

(Withdrawn)

MEDICAL NEGLIGENCE STANDING COMMITTEE - CASES -

JUNE 2020 TO APRIL 2022

(No. B/267) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Medical Negligence Standing

Committee, he will state the number of cases reported thereto since June 2020 to date, indicating

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- (a) the number thereof referred for Police inquiry or further inquiry, and
- (b) the number of cases in which disciplinary actions have been taken.

Reply: The Medical Negligence Standing Committee was set up in June 2020 to conduct preliminary investigation in cases of alleged medical negligence at public level.

I wish to inform the House that prior to the setting up of the Medical Negligence Standing Committee in June 2020, there were 44 cases of alleged medical negligence (31 for 2019 and 13 for 2020), which required urgent investigations as they had been unduly delayed.

With a view to addressing this situation and to clear the pending cases, the Medical Negligence Standing Committee has been meeting twice a week over the last 20 months, and even during the second lockdown period in 2021, to conduct enquiries into the outstanding list of cases and also to look into new cases that were referred to the Committee by my Ministry, as and when, allegations of medical negligence were made.

I am informed that since the constitution of the Medical Negligence Standing Committee in June 2020, my Ministry has referred 120 cases of alleged medical negligence to the Standing Committee for the conduct of preliminary investigations.

As at 08 April 2022, out of these 120 cases entrusted to the Medical Negligence Standing Committee, 83 cases have been completed, 7 cases are still under investigation and the remaining cases will be investigated shortly.

With regard to parts (a) and (b) of the question, out of the 83 completed cases, the Medical Negligence Standing Committee has concluded that 16 cases are acts of medical negligence and none of them has been referred to the Police for enquiry.

Consequently, my Ministry has referred these cases to the Medical Council and the Nursing Council respectively for further investigation and appropriate actions as deemed necessary.

OBESE & OVERWEIGHT CHILDREN - DIABETES - NUMBER - 2014 TO 12
APRIL 2022

(No. B/268) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to obese and overweight children, he will state the percentages thereof in Mauritius since the year 2014 to date, indicating

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- (a) the percentages thereof suffering from diabetes, and
- (b) if consideration will be given for the banning of advertising of high fat, salt or sugar (HFSS) food or drink products directed towards children.

(Withdrawn)

**CAVENDISH BRIDGE, VILLE NOIRE, MAHEBOURG – RENOVATION
 WORKS**

(No. B/270) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the renovation works of Cavendish Bridge at Ville Noir, Mahebourg, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to the –

- (a) nature of the works carried out, and
- (b) contract value thereof.

Reply: As the hon. Member may be aware, the Cavendish Bridge was built in 1911 to link Mahebourg to the village of Ville Noire. The span of the bridge is approximately 200 metres over the La Chaux River and consists of a carriageway of a width of 6.1 metres.

Since the construction of the bridge after more than a century now, that is, after around 110 years, its state had deteriorated, thereby requiring appropriate rehabilitation and upgrading works to ensure the safety of the road users and also to prevent its further degradation.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I wish to highlight that in undertaking the renovation works of the Cavendish Bridge, the historical cultural heritage of the bridge has been taken into consideration. In this respect, I am informed by the Road Development Authority (RDA) that the nature of works being carried out includes the following –

- (i) replacement of existing wooden planks on footway by treated timber boards fixed by steel rails;

- (ii) fixing of steel bracings to support the cantilever U-Section beams under footway;
- (iii) painting of handrails along footway;
- (iv) treatment of all corroded reinforcement bars as well as repair of spalling and cracks under soffit of bridge;
- (v) repair of all structural steel elements;
- (vi) sand blasting of bridge;
- (vii) upgrading of all drainage outlets;
- (viii) repair of faulty luminaires, and
- (ix) provision of adequate road furniture.

I am also informed that a new asphalt technique, known as the Street Asphalt Printing is being used for the resurfacing/asphalting of the bridge. This technique consists of printing the asphalt with a textured finish and applying a long-term coloured coat on printed areas.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed by the RDA that the contract for the rehabilitation of Cavendish Bridge was awarded on 14 July 2021 to the lowest responsive bidder, namely Transinvest Construction Ltd for the sum of Rs32,850,000.00 (exclusive of VAT).

I am further informed that, as at date, the overall progress of work is at 90%, with the main rehabilitation works having been completed and that, at completion of the project, the contract sum will not be exceeded.

MAHEBOURG HOSPITAL - RENOVATION

(No. B/271) Mr R. Doolub (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the renovation of the Mahebourg Hospital, he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

TOURIST ARRIVALS - 01 JANUARY 2022 TO 12 APRIL 2022 - COVID-19 POSITIVE

(No. B/272) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to tourist arrivals, he will state the number thereof since 01 January 2022 to date, indicating the number thereof having been COVID-19 positive tested and the number thereof having been admitted to the ENT Hospital.

(Withdrawn)

**CÔTE D'OR NATIONAL SPORTS COMPLEX – UPGRADING WORKS &
REVENUE GENERATED**

(No. B/273) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the Côte d'Or National Sports Complex, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Multisports Infrastructure Ltd., information as to –

- (a) the repairs, renovation and upgrading works carried out thereat since 01 July 2021 to date, indicating the cost thereof, and
- (b) if it has generated its own revenue as at to date and, if so, indicate the quantum thereof and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

FOSTER CARE PROGRAMME - CHILDREN - NUMBER - 2017 TO 12 APRIL 2022

(No. B/274) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the foster care programme, she will give details thereof, indicating the –

- (a) outcome thereof, and
- (b) number of children placed in foster care since 2017 to date.

(Vide Reply to PQ B/235)

CONSTRUCTION OF 16 INCINERATORS – ISLAND-WIDE

(No. B/275) Mr R. Woochit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the proposed construction of 16 incinerators island-wide, as announced in the Budget Speech 2019/2021, he will state where matters stand.

(Vide Reply to PQ B/252)

SAMU - STAFFING & LOGISTICS

(No. B/276) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the SAMU, he will state –

- (a) the number of doctors currently serving same, indicating the capacity in which they are currently employed, and
- (b) plan, if any, to increase the staffing and logistics thereof in the light of the demands for emergency services.

(Withdrawn)

DRAINS PROJECT - MORCELLEMENT DOMAH, 16 ème MILLE

(No. B/277) Mr M. Yeung Sik Yuen (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the drains project in Morcellement Domah, 16ème Mille, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the District Council of Grand Port, information as to where matters stand as to the implementation thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the District Council of Grand Port that as per the master list of the National Flood Management Programme of the Land Drainage Authority, the drain project in Morcellement Domah, 16ème Mille, has been earmarked for implementation by the National Development Unit for an amount of Rs18 m.

I am also informed by the National Development Unit that it is in the process of awarding a contract for consultancy services under its framework Agreement, for design and supervision of drain works.

The consultant would be required to submit a Detailed Design Report within a period of three months, following which consideration would be given for the award of construction works, subject to all clearances and wayleave being obtained.

Construction works would last for a period of ten months.

COVID-19 VACCINES - STOCK - STORAGE

(No. B/279) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to COVID-19 vaccines, he will state –

- (a) in each case, the quantity thereof in stock, indicating –
 - (i) the maximum shelf life at the temperatures currently stored, and
 - (ii) how temperature requirements are ensured, and
- (b) how the cold chain is maintained during the transportation thereof.

(Withdrawn)

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY – FUNDS

(No. B/280) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to Corporate Social Responsibility, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Social Inclusion Foundation, information as to the quantum of funds received as contributions and disbursed, respectively as at 30 June 2021.

Reply: I am informed by the National Social Inclusion Foundation that as at 30 June 2021, contributions amounting to Rs3,046,877,127 have been received, out of which an amount of Rs1,560,425,956 has already been disbursed and the remaining amount is committed for ongoing programmes.

FISHERMEN CARDS & RETIREMENT SCHEME FOR FISHERS

(No. B/281) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the proposed allocation of 500 fishermen cards and the implementation of a retirement scheme for fishers, he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

VACOAS - MARKET FAIR

(No. B/282) 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 actual location of the Market Fair of Vacoas, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix, information as to –

- (a) the cost incurred for the relocation of stalls due to the Metro Express Project;
- (b) when renovation works were carried out thereat and the costs thereof, and
- (c) the immediate measures taken for the market users and stall occupiers to operate in an environment conducive to proper health, safety and sanitary requirements.

Reply: With the advent of the Metro Express Project at Vacoas, certain amenities along the light rail alignment had to be relocated. I am informed by the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix that since part of the Vacoas Market, namely the fish and meat sections, were along the metro express alignment, these sections had to be relocated by the Council. Moreover, given the layout of the new road that had to be constructed next to the existing Sivananda Avenue at Vacoas, part of the Vacoas Fair comprising 34 fruit sellers and 16 kiosks occupiers had been relocated temporarily on part of the plot of land along Greenville Avenue, which was previously occupied by the SMF Quarters. Accordingly, I am informed that the total amount spent for these relocation works is to the tune of Rs2,449,893.90.

Concerning part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix that the renovation works at the fish and meat sections at the Vacoas market were carried out from 26 to 31 August 2020. These renovation works which have cost a total amount of Rs2,175,152.90 comprised the following, amongst others –

- (a) demolition works and carting away;
- (b) partitioning with Aluminum and Alucobond sheets;
- (c) electrical, plumbing, sewer and masonry works, and
- (d) acquisition of an extractor.

As regards the relocation of the seasonal fruit sellers and kiosks at the Vacoas Fair, I am informed that same were carried out in December 2020. The relocation of these stall holders has cost a total amount of Rs274,741 and comprised the following works –

- (a) provision of shed with iron sheets and tubes for seller of seasonal fruits;
- (b) setting up of a concrete base for sellers of seasonal fruits;
- (c) provision of water supply and electricity in newly built kiosks;
- (d) relocation of CEB poles;
- (e) extension of shed with square tubes near the Haberdashery Section, and
- (f) the pulling down of 3 housing units for the provision of parking.

With regard to part (c) of the question, I am further informed by the Council that the following measures have been undertaken to ensure that customers as well as market sellers operate in a conducive, healthy and safe environment –

- (a) stall occupiers have been provided with covered premises and metal tables;
- (b) stalls are placed on concrete platforms;
- (c) market users have access to relocated stalls through a tarred road;
- (d) drains have been constructed to evacuate water within the relocated premise;
- (e) water facilities have been provided for washing purposes and there is an existing toilet block both for male and female;
- (f) access is denied to vehicles during fair days;
- (g) parking facilities have been provided to fair users;
- (h) during fair days regular cleaning is done by in-house labour;
- (i) a trailer is placed at fair premises on fair days for the disposal of waste;
- (j) washing of fair is done on a monthly basis;
- (k) there is only one entry and exit to have access to the Market and Fair;
- (l) temperature checks are effected at the entrance of the Market and Fair, and
- (m) hand sanitizers have been provided at the entrance of the Market and Fair.

LA CIGOGNE & LA MARGUERITE SHELTERS

(No. B/283) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to La Cigogne and La

Marguerite Shelters managed by the Children's Foundation, she will state the actions taken, if any, by her Ministry for non-submission of the respective accounts thereof.

(Withdrawn)

**LAND DRAINAGE AUTHORITY - TORRENTIAL RAINFALL/FLOODING -
REMEDIAL MEASURES**

(No. B/285) Mr R. Doolub (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the torrential rainfalls in the region of Plaine Magnien, from 01 to 03 April 2022 and subsequent flooding, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Land Drainage Authority, information as to the reasons therefor, indicating the remedial measures being envisaged.

(Withdrawn)

**SOLAR WATER HEATER GRANT SCHEME - LONG-TERM ENERGY
STRATEGY ACTION PLAN**

(No. B/286) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the Solar Water Heater Grant Scheme, he will state if the implementation thereof has achieved the target set in terms of the Long-Term Energy Strategy Action Plan and, if not, why not.

Reply: In 2009, the then Ministry of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities (MREPU) developed a Long-Term Energy Strategy (LTES) 2009-2025 and its related Action Plan with a view to promoting the development of renewable energy, reduction of our dependence on imported fossil fuel and promoting energy efficiency. The Renewable Energy Development Strategy of the LTES provides a roadmap for the use of solar energy, whether for water heating or electricity production. Solar water heating, the most common solar energy conversion method in Mauritius, was not sufficiently tapped though the potential is high. A Solar Water Heater Grant Scheme (SWHGS) was set up to encourage householders to use solar energy and for Government to achieve its long-term strategic goals.

The Phase 1 of the Solar Water Heater Grant Scheme was owned by the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities and was implemented in collaboration with the DBM Ltd. Thereafter, the DBM Ltd has implemented the Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the Solar Water Heater Grant Scheme as defined in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the *Maurice Ile Durable* (MID) Fund which was under the aegis of the then Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MoESD).

With the dissolution of MID Commission in January 2015, the then Ministry of Environment, Sustainable Development, Disaster and Beach Management took over the Solar Water Heater Grant Scheme and launched Phase 4 thereof in July 2015 and it was implemented by the Development Bank of Mauritius (DBM) Ltd through a MoU.

For the first four Phases of the Scheme operated from 2009-2020 by the DBM Ltd for the benefit of households, Government granted some Rs780 m. to some 80,000 householders as subsidy for the purchase of Solar Water Heaters (SWHs). Furthermore, in October 2020, Government earmarked Rs300 m. for the operation of Phase 5 of the Scheme by the DBM Ltd.

With a view to assessing the impact of the SWH Scheme, the MID Fund sought the assistance of the Clean Energy Solutions Centre based in the United States to conduct an assessment of the SWH Grant Scheme. Around 500 on-site surveys were carried out by the Energy Services Division. The Centre submitted its assessment report in September 2013. The report demonstrates that many benefits such as energy savings, economic savings, emission reductions and societal benefits have resulted from the implementation of the SWH Scheme.

The key findings of the assessment were as follows –

- (i) energy savings: LPG (Liquefied Petroleum Gas) savings of 786 tonnes/year and electricity savings of 3,466 MWh/year;
- (ii) economic savings: Rs54.2 m./year on total investment of Rs146 m. for 2012 with a simple payback period of 2.7 years;
- (iii) emission reductions: 5,204 tonnes of CO₂/year on emissions from electricity generation and combustion of LPG, and

- (iv) societal benefit: 47% systems have been installed in houses without any existing water heating.

The assessment revealed that the SWH Grant Scheme had been very successful and would contribute largely to reduce our dependence on fossil energy. The environmental, economic and societal benefits of the scheme were very encouraging. The SWH Phase had offset a significant amount of fuel used and has extended the availability of hot water to a broader spectrum of Mauritian households, thus increasing their overall standard of living.

Furthermore, through a feasibility study conducted by the *Agence Française de Développement* in 2014, the Scheme was found to be in line with the Energy Strategy Action Plan 2011-2025 to equip 50% of households and businesses with SWHs over the short-term, near-eliminating in the longer term use of LPG and electricity for heating purposes.

The Solar Water Heater Grant Scheme was revised in 2018 through a new policy aiming at energy saving while bearing a social dimension so that the most deserving could benefit from the Scheme. On 01 June 2018, Government agreed to the proposal made by the then Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment, and Sustainable Development to provide a complete set of Solar Water Heater system, including one-bathroom shower set and associated plumbing works, to families who have become owners of NHDC housing units.

The objectives of the Scheme are to –

- (i) encourage the use of renewable energy instead of fossil;
- (ii) reduce greenhouse gas emissions;
- (iii) reduce home energy bills, and
- (iv) provide to selected target groups access to hot water.

The Solar Water Heater Scheme has, since, been implemented. Instead of allocating cash grants, solar water heaters units have been procured, installed and commissioned through contracted services so that families, who have become owners of NHDC housing units, benefit from same. The lists of NHDC housing units owners have been provided by the NHDC Ltd for the implementation of the Scheme independently of the one operated by the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd.

Accordingly, since 2018, a complete set of Solar Water Heater system, including one-bathroom shower set and associated plumbing works, has been provided to 1,829 families who have become owners of NHDC housing units by the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change.

Following a Performance Audit carried out in 2016 by the National Audit Office, consultations would be held with the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities and other stakeholders mainly to evaluate the Scheme and the achievement of the target set in terms of the Long-Term Energy Strategy Action Plan and make proposals on the operationalisation of an improved Solar Water Heater Scheme and also targeting more socially vulnerable groups.

QUARANTINES FACILITIES – FUNDS DISBURSED

(No. B/287) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the quarantines, he will state, since March 2021 to date, the facilities used therefor, indicating in each case, the –

- (a) number of persons residing thereat on behalf of his Ministry;
- (b) charges claimed per day per person, and
- (c) total quantum of funds disbursed as at to date.

Reply: In reply to part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the 72 quarantine facilities have been used since March 2021. Out of the 72, 69 are Hotel Resorts earmarked by the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA) and the remaining are three Recreational Centres, situated at Pointe aux Piments, Pointe aux Sables and Belle Mare respectively and which have been put at our disposal by the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity.

The total number of persons quarantined is 28,824 out of which 16,170 represents local residents quarantined following the contact tracing exercise and 12,654 representing incoming passengers.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that as from March 2021 till end of September 2021, the settlement of claims by incoming passengers was catered by the MTPA. For

quarantine facilities provided following contact tracing, the established rates for a period of 14 days quarantine period (full board) are as follows –

- i. For a Single room - Rs32,000
- ii. For a Double room - Rs54,000
- iii. Children sharing parents room between (0-5) years - free of charge
- iv. Children sharing parents room between (5-16) years - Rs850 per day

Regarding part (c) of the question, I am also informed that the total amount of funds disbursed by the Ministry as at date stands at Rs481,061,348.59.

AGALEGA ISLAND – ECOLOGICAL SURVEY – MARCH 2021

(No. B/288) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the ecological survey carried out at eight sites in Agalega Island in March 2021, he will state –

- (a) who carried out same;
- (b) if a tender exercise was carried out therefor, and
- (c) if the outcome thereof will be made public, and if not, why not.

Reply: I am informed that in November 2020, the Outer Islands Developing Corporation (OIDC) requested my Ministry to carry out surveys in Agalega in the context of the Development in the Fishing Sector in Agalega given that inadequate scientific information was available on fisheries resources in Agalega.

Thus, my Ministry conceptualised an ecological and fisheries resources survey which focused mainly on stock-taking, mapping and assessment of fisheries resources for a policy governed fisheries management and sustainable resources exploitation while obtaining important information on the wider marine environment in terms of corals, and seagrass, as well as other substrates to integrate marine conservation as a core initiative.

With regard to parts (a) and (b) of the question, I am informed that an extensive study of the eight sites was carried out by 10 officers of the Fisheries Division of my Ministry itself from 04 to 06 March 2021.

I am further informed that the ecological survey was, in fact, planned, executed and reported by the officers of the Albion Fisheries Research Centre of the Fisheries Division of my Ministry in close collaboration with the O IDC. Accordingly, no tender exercise was carried out for this survey.

With regard to part (c) of the question, due to time constraints, the interim report covers only eight sites from *Ile du Nord*. Subsequently, a similar survey needs to be carried out in the *Ile du Sud* of Agalega following which a final report would be submitted.

From the current study, it has been noted that seine netting and fishing with harpoon are a common fishing practice for the fishers in *Ile du Nord*. These practices are usually carried out by walking in the lagoons, thereby trampling over the substrate of the lagoons towards the reef.

The persistent trampling on the coral dominated ecosystem over the decades has resulted in the denuding of the lagoon (around 75%), which is now mainly composed of rubble and dead corals in the studied area. This may explain the low percentage (less than 10%) of live corals and low reef fish diversity encountered during the study. The remaining substrate cover is represented by seaweed, sand and rock.

Furthermore, during the ecological survey, it was noted that due to the degraded marine environment and overfishing of octopus in the easily accessible lagoons of *Ile du Nord*, the octopus population in Agalega has witnessed a massive depletion.

In this context, the interim report recommends, *inter alia*, that an intense sensitisation programmes with the fishers and the community in general in Agalega be initiated focusing on the sustainable fishing methods and its benefits along with the protection of the marine environment.

Moreover, the community in Agalega needs to be informed of the benefits of the octopus closed season.

Furthermore, given that Agalega is a nesting site for marine turtles, and that marine turtles are protected species, it is also important that the community in Agalega understands their ecological importance.

In the same vein, it is instrumental that the Agaleans are provided with appropriate training in sustainable fishing methods and in marine conservation, as well as protection of marine biodiversity, including marine turtles.

In light of the foregoing, a coral farming and restoration programme will be initiated by creating a nursery and training the locals for ongoing maintenance, protection and conservation of the marine biodiversity.

KREOL MORISIEN - TEACHERS - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

(No. B/289) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the Kreol Morisien, she will state the number of teachers available for the teaching thereof in primary schools, indicating –

- (a) the number of in-service General Purpose Educators seconded for duty therefor since 2012 to date, indicating the conditions of employment thereof ;
- (b) the number of Educators therefor recruited since 2013 to date, indicating the conditions of employment thereof, and
- (c) if consideration will be given for the granting of the status of Kreol Morisien Educator to the General Purpose Educators seconded for duty therefor since 2012 to date and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

CENTRAL WATER AUTHORITY - 24/7 BASIS SUPPLY

(No. B/290) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to water supply, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to where matters stand as

to the possibility thereof on a 24/7 basis following the recent heavy rainfalls and the fact that most of our reservoirs are in full capacity.

(Withdrawn)

LAND DRAINAGE AUTHORITY – DRAINS - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/291) Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the construction of drains, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Land Drainage Authority, information as to the measures, if any, being proposed in cases where –

- (a) wayleaves are being denied by private owners, and
- (b) owners are not being identified in respect thereof.

(Withdrawn)

EDB - CEO - OVERSEAS MISSIONS - RENUMERATIONS

(No. B/292) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Chief Executive Officer of the Economic Development Board, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Board, information as to the –

- (a) salary, allocations and other fringe benefits drawn, and
- (b) overseas missions attended since his appointment, indicating the cost thereof, including air tickets and *per diem* allowances.

(Withdrawn)

MFA - SEASON CANCELLATION

(No. B/294) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to football, he will –

- (a) state if his Ministry has been officially informed by the Mauritius Football Association (MFA) that the 2021-22 season has been cancelled and, if so, give details thereof, and
- (b) obtain from the MFA, information as to when all national leagues, including the women league, for 2022-23 season will start, indicating the terms and conditions thereof.

(Withdrawn)

PLAINE MAGNIEN - SME LTD - INDUSTRIAL PARKS - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/295) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the on-going construction of industrial parks for Small and Medium Enterprises at Plaine Magnien, allegedly responsible for the flooding of several houses on Sunday 03 April 2022, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the local authorities concerned therewith, information as to if the said project was issued with all required permits and clearances, including from the Land Drainage Authority.

Reply: I shall reply to both parliamentary questions B/295 and B/302 simultaneously as they relate to the same issue. I am informed by the District Council of Grand Port that –

- a Building and Land Use Permit was issued on 30 November 2015 to the State Land Development Company Ltd (SLDC) for the construction of ten buildings at ground floor to accommodate 40 SME Units on State Land at Plaine Magnien;
- as the SLDC did not start the construction within the required delay, the permit lapsed;
- on 18 June 2018, the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd submitted a fresh application for a Building and Land Use Permit for the same development on the same site;
- DBM Ltd submitted a copy of a letter dated 15 May 2018 from the then Ministry of Housing and Lands informing that the planning clearance issued to SLDC remained valid for the new application from the DBM Ltd.,
- a Building and Land Use Permit was issued on 16 May 2019 to the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd after approval by the Permits and Business Monitoring Committee (PBMC) of 02 May 2019.

I am further informed that –

- as per the Development Management Map of the Outline Planning Scheme for the Grand Port District Council Area and the Environmentally Sensitive Area Map, the site is not close to or found on marshy land/wet lands, and
- the development proposed by DBM Ltd does not fall within the undertaking listed under the fifth schedule Part B of the Environmental Protection Act 2002

as amended and as such does not require an Environmental Impact Assessment Licence.

Clearances have been obtained from the following authorities prior to determination of the application for Building and Land Use Permit from DBM Ltd –

- (i) Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning;
- (ii) Department of Civil Aviation;
- (iii) Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit;
- (iv) Waste Water Management Authority;
- (v) Road Development Authority, and
- (vi) Forestry Service.

I also wish to inform the House that at the time when the application was being processed, there was no requirement to obtain a clearance from the Land Drainage Authority as per section 117(3) of the Local Government Act 2011.

I am informed that the developer did not inform the Council of the date of the commencement of construction works in accordance with Section 120A (a) of the Local Government Act 2011 as amended.

Following the heavy rainfall of 02 and 03 April 2022, a site visit was effected by officers of the Council on 04 April 2022 and it was observed that the constructions are not being carried out according to the approved plan and the following discrepancies were observed –

- (i) the setbacks of the building are not in accordance with approved plans, and
- (ii) additional buildings have been constructed.

Accordingly, an Enforcement Notice dated 06 April 2022 has been served by the Council upon the Developer and a letter has also been issued to the latter to stop all works on the site.

CEB - RESERVES - ACCUMULATED SURPLUSES

(No. B/296) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Central Electricity Board (CEB), he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the surplus accruing from the operations thereof and the reserves and accumulated surpluses for each financial year since 2015 to date, indicating –

- (a) how same have been utilized, and
- (b) the contributions to the Consolidated Fund and investment in CEB-owned private companies yearly since financial year 2015 to date.

(Withdrawn)

**SOCIAL REGISTER OF MAURITIUS – BENEFICIARIES/HOUSEHOLDS –
YEAR 2022**

(No. B/297) 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 Recertification of Beneficiaries on the Social Register of Mauritius, she will state the total number of beneficiaries/households for the year 2022, indicating the number thereof –

- (a) having signed their social contract as at to date, indicating the duration and terms and conditions thereof, and
- (b) whose social contract
 - (i) are pending, giving reasons therefor, and
 - (ii) have been cancelled.

(Withdrawn)

MEDICAL WASTES - COLLECTION POLICY

(No. B/298) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to medical wastes, he will state the current collection policy thereof in the hospitals, medi-clinics and healthcare centres, indicating the –

- (a) number of medical incineration units presently being utilised therefor, and
- (b) if the implementation of a new policy therefor is being considered and, if so, give details thereof.

(Withdrawn)

CONSUMER GOODS - SUBSIDISY

(No. B/299) Mr R. Doolub (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the consumer goods in respect of which, Government provided a subsidy of Rs500 m., he will state if consideration will be given for the said products to be further subsidised after June 2022.

(Withdrawn)

SME – 10-YEAR MASTER PLAN – FUNDS BUDGETED

(No. B/301) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives whether, in regard to the 10-year Master Plan for the small and medium enterprise sector, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from SME Mauritius Ltd., information as to the quantum of funds budgeted for each financial year since 2017/2018 to 2021/2022 in relation to each scheme implemented thereunder, indicating the quantum thereof disbursed and number of small and medium enterprises having benefitted thereunder.

Reply: At the outset, may I inform the House that following the proclamation of the SME Act 2017 and the full operationalization of SME Mauritius Ltd. in January 2018, Rs25 m. was budgeted for support schemes to SMEs for Financial Year 2017-2018. A total of Rs619,500 were provided as grants to 24 SMEs in the four (4) months leading to the end of Financial Year 2017-2018.

For Financial Year 2018-2019, a sum of Rs30 m. meant to cover a series of schemes, all in line with the recommendations of the 10-Year Master Plan for the SME sector were implemented, namely –

- (i) the Barcode Registration Scheme to encourage access to new markets;
- (ii) the Online Presence Scheme, aimed at providing assistance to SMEs in developing and implementing various tools and means for online presence and marketing;
- (iii) the Inclusive SME Scheme, aimed at encouraging larger SMEs to integrate smaller SMEs into their supply chains;

- (iv) the SME Certification Scheme seeking to provide technical assistance to SMEs for accreditation to international standards and certification, and
- (v) the Foreign Expertise and Technical Assistance Scheme aimed at improving the innovative competencies craftsmen to enhance their uniqueness and differentiating capabilities.

I am informed that for the period July 2018 to June 2019, SME Mauritius Ltd. provided support to 245 SMEs for a total amount of Rs4,476,450.

Budget 2019-2020 made provision for Rs25 m. and three (3) other schemes were added to the above schemes namely –

- (i) the Mentoring and Hand-Holding Scheme, programme geared towards improving customised support through intensive and pragmatic coaching;
- (ii) the Solar Photovoltaic Rebate Scheme, aiming at the use of renewable energy sources and reducing electricity costs, and
- (iii) the SME Productivity Improvement Scheme, which was geared towards improving internal systems and processes of SMEs.

For Financial Year 2019-2020, 299 SMEs benefitted from the 8 schemes for a total disbursement of Rs11,770,580.

As for Financial year 2020-2021, taking in consideration the evolution on the market and to provide further impetus to SMEs to improve their resilience and sustainability, SME Mauritius Ltd. has reviewed the whole set of schemes offered to fit the customised requirements of SMEs. As such 35 components were proposed to SMEs under 5 major headings, covering the value chain and support functions of SMEs, namely –

- (a) the Internal Capability Development Scheme aimed at improving the efficiency of SMEs and their responsiveness to customer requirements as well as fast changing market dynamics in any sector of economic activity;

- (b) the Technology and Innovation Scheme to encourage SMEs to embrace and adopt technology, automated production capabilities and start their move towards accrued digitalisation;
- (c) the SME Marketing Support Scheme intending to improve SME market accessibility and competitiveness and respond to the stringent requirements of their diverse customer bases in whichever market they operate;
- (d) the Inclusiveness and Integration Scheme encouraging SMEs to favour collaboration, interlinkages, networking for mutual benefit, and
- (e) the SME Utility Connection Assistance Scheme to support SMEs connect their places of activity to mains of utility suppliers with a view to alleviating upfront costs of SMEs, easing their entry and operational resilience.

I am informed by SME Mauritius Ltd., that for Financial Year 2020-2021, 759 SMEs benefitted from the above schemes. The amount budgeted was Rs25 m. while disbursements amounted to Rs28.1 m. The excess amount of Rs3.1 m. was disbursed from the reserve of SME Mauritius Ltd.

Conscious of the need to further sustain SMEs with customised support, especially in the wake of the drastic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, SME Mauritius Ltd. has strengthened its commitment towards the SMEs community. Thus, for Financial Year 2021-2022, as at date 567 applications for a commitment of Rs32 m. have already been approved with a total disbursement of Rs20.3 m. to 479 SMEs, out of the budgeted sum of Rs40 m.

Figures clearly reveal the constant and continuous support provided by SME Mauritius Ltd to entrepreneurs amidst the current adverse economic conditions.

PLAINE MAGNIEN - SME LTD - BUILDING CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/302) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the construction of the building by SME Ltd in Plaine Magnien, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the District Council of Grand Port –

- (a) information as to if –
 - (i) a building and land use permit was obtained therefor and if the constructions are being carried out as per approved plan, and
 - (ii) the building site is found in or near marshy land and, if so, has an Environment Impact Assessment been obtained prior thereto
- (b) if an inquiry has been carried out to assess the incidence thereof, if any, on the recent flooding in the locality, and
- (c) table all documents and clearances pertaining thereto.

(Vide reply to PQ B/295)

MARE TABAC - PHASE 1 FLOOD MITIGATION PROJECT

(No. B/303) Mr R. Doolub (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the implementation of Phase 1 of the Flood Mitigation Project in Mare Tabac, he will state the –

- (a) reasons for the delay for the completion thereof over the period April to December 2021, and
- (b) cost thereof.

(Withdrawn)

ROUNDAABOUTS - TRAFFIC IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

(No. B/304) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the roundabouts on motorways and classified roads, he will state if Traffic Impact Assessments are carried out thereat, indicating if consideration will be given for a review of the layout thereof to enhance security thereat.

Reply: Government Programme 2020-2024 highlights Government's vision with respect to roundabouts. In fact, the policy is to construct more flyovers and bypasses with a view to eliminating roundabouts and junctions on motorways and improve traffic flows thereat.

In this respect, the Road Development Authority (RDA) has prepared a plan of work, not only to alleviate traffic congestion and improve traffic flow at the roundabouts on motorways and classified roads, but also, most importantly to enhance the security of all road users. The

plan is already being implemented with some roundabouts, such as Pont Fer, Jumbo and Dowlut already upgraded to flyovers and others such as Hillcrest, upgraded to interchange. Works for upgrading other roundabouts are ongoing, including at Quay D, Ebène, A1 M1 Link Road, Verdun and Wootun.

I am informed by the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit (TRMSU) that Traffic Impact Assessment is not usually carried out at roundabouts, except when the incidence of the junction onto forthcoming major developments has to be analysed thoroughly. However, I am informed that prior to upgrading a roundabout, the RDA, in consultation with the TMRSU, carries out a traffic study consisting of the analysis of the traffic volume and the turning movements of vehicles at such locus. Based on the information gathered, decisions are taken to upgrade the roundabouts either by the construction of slip lanes or flyovers or grade separated junctions, taking again into consideration the safety of road users.

I am informed by the TMRSU that for new roundabouts, Road Safety Audits are now mandatory for new roads and will include roundabouts, if so present in the scheme. As regards existing roundabouts, Road Safety Inspections are being carried out at some critical locations in order to recommend and implement traffic management and road safety measures in a holistic manner.

**LOCAL AUTHORITIES - CONSOLIDATED FUND, COVID-19 PROJECT
DEVELOPMENT FUND & NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE
FUND**

(No. B/307) Mr R. Wochit (Third Member for Pamplémousses & Triolet) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the local authorities, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the quantum of funds allocated to each one from the Consolidated Fund, the COVID-19 Fund and the National Environment and Climate Change Fund, respectively, since July 2021 to date, indicating how each local authority spent same.

Reply: I am informed by the local authorities that funds to the tune of Rs5.7 billion have been allocated to them under the Consolidated Fund, COVID-19 Project Development Fund and National Environment and Climate Change Fund.

The detailed list is being placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

GRADUATES – UNEMPLOYED & UNDEREMPLOYED

(No. B/308) **Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal)** asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the graduates, he will state the present number thereof being –

- (a) unemployed, and
- (b) underemployed.

(Withdrawn)

**CITÉ ST LUC & NHDC LES JASMINES, CUREPIPE - DRAINS PROJECT
IMPLEMENTATION**

(No. B/309) **Mr M. Yeung Sik Yuen (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the drains project in *Cité St Luc* and at the National Housing Development Company *Les Jasmins* in Curepipe, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Curepipe, information as to where matters stand as to the implementation thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal Council of Curepipe that the drain project in *Cité St Luc* and the National Housing Development Company (NHDC) *Les Jasmins* in Curepipe and *Cité St Luc* appear in the master list provided by the Land Drainage Authority, under the National Flood Management Programme and both these projects are to be implemented by the National Development Unit.

The Council has further informed that palliative measures have been taken to prevent overflow of excess water from the forest towards the NHDC. An open earth drain has accordingly been provided by the Municipal Council of Curepipe.

It is to be noted that the NHDC has recently undertaken works to reduce flooding within the compound.

I am also informed by the National Development Unit that it would be awarding the contract for consultancy services under its Framework Agreement for the Study, Design, Construction and Supervision of Drain Project at NHDC, *Les Jasmins, Cité St Luc*, and also Dr. Bour Lane 1 and surrounding areas in Constituency No. 17.

The Consultancy Services would be for a duration of eighteen months out of which three months would be allocated for the submission of the final design report.

The duration of the contract for consultancy services shall include an additional period of one year to cater for the Defects Liability Period for the construction contract.

**MV WAKASHIO OIL SPILL - CRAFT OWNERS & SKIPPERS -
ALLOWANCES**

(No. B/310) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to pleasure craft owners and skippers affected by the MV Wakashio Oil Spill, he will state if allowances have been granted thereto for loss of business during the period of interdiction to venture into the south east sea and, if so, indicate the quantum therefor.

(Withdrawn)

KUALA LUMPUR - MISSION - RELOCATION

(No. B/311) Mr R. Bhagwan (First 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 the relocation of our mission in Kuala Lumpur as reported in the Report 2020-2021 of the Director of Audit, he will state if the relevant parent Ministry had authorised same and, if not, indicate –

- (a) under whose authority same was effected;
- (b) if the High Commissioner had issued a letter to the Malaysian authorities stating that the Government of Mauritius had authorised same, and
- (c) if consideration will be given for the High Commissioner to be requested to step down pending the initiation and conclusion of an inquiry thereinto.

(Withdrawn)

**RODRIGUES IDEAL FOOD TRADING – MAURITIUS SHIPPING
CORPORATION LTD & VELOGIC – DAMAGES & REFUND**

(No. B/312) Mr J. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the incident which occurred in October 2020 whereby fruits and vegetables were damaged through the wrong setting of the refrigerated container by the Mauritius Shipping Corporation (MSC) Ltd. and Velogic, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the MSC Ltd., information as to the reasons why Ideal Food Trading, in Rodrigues, has not yet been refunded the value of the damages caused.

Reply: I have been informed by the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd (MSCL) that on 10 October 2020, two MSCL reefer containers, CXRU1076752 and CXRU1076686, were loaded on MV Black Rhino for shipment to Rodrigues as groupage cargo containing fruits and vegetables.

The reefer container CXRU1076752 contained 305 boxes of fruits for the client Ma Feed Co. Ltd.

The reefer container CXRU1076686 contained –

- (i) 82 boxes of fruits; 400 kg of vegetables and 340 kg of fruits for the client Ideal Food Trading;
- (ii) 134 boxes of fruits for the client Frigozoom;
- (iii) 99 boxes of fruits for the client Mrs Nafissa Maudarbocus;
- (iv) 50 boxes of fruits and vegetables for the client Cader Commer Centre Ltd;
- (v) 50 kg of vegetables for the client Rodrigues Agricultural Federation, and
- (vi) 2 boxes of natural flowers for the client Meunier Nicolson.

On 12 October 2020, the arrival date of MV Black Rhino at Port Mathurin, MSCL was informed by the MSCL Rodrigues Office that the above-mentioned two reefer containers were unloaded with a recorded temperature of -20 degrees celsius, instead +4 degrees celsius, which is the normal temperature for chilled cargo. It was reported that almost all the goods inside those

containers were apparently damaged and subsequently condemned by the Port Health (Ministry of Health and Wellness) Rodrigues.

I am informed that the following three parties are involved in the shipment of a reefer container from Mauritius to Rodrigues –

- (i) MSCL as carrier;
- (ii) Associated Container Services Ltd (one of the branches of Velogic), which is solely responsible for all stuffing and unstuffing of containers, and
- (iii) G. Sam-Soon Limited (MSCL appointed Surveyor), which is responsible for the pre-trip Inspection and the setting up of temperature prior to stuffing of reefer containers.

I am also informed that following the above incidents, MSCL had requested for a full-fledged report from the Associated Container Services Ltd (Velogic) and G. Sam-Soon Limited to situate responsibility.

An inquiry was carried out at the level of MSCL and the following were disclosed –

- (a) the reefer containers were pre-set at -20 degrees celsius at the start of the stuffing operations by G. Sam-Soon Limited at the ASCL (Velogic) depot;
- (b) in general, a pre-set sticker is affixed on the all reefer containers by G. Sam-Soon Limited and should read of +4 degrees celsius for chilled;
- (c) the containers were, thereafter, transferred from ACSL (Velogic) yard down to port for onward loading on board MV Black Rhino at a temperature of -20 degrees celsius under the supervision of G. Sam-Soon Limited;
- (d) the containers were eventually loaded at -20 degrees celsius, transported, and offloaded at Rodrigues at a temperature of -20 degrees celsius;
- (e) prior to loading, formal instructions were given by the MSCL to both ACSL (Velogic) and G. Sam-Soon Limited for the two containers to be regulated at +4 degrees, and
- (f) based on the above elements, MSCL has concluded that MSCL was not at fault in that mishap.

MSCL has had several rounds of discussions with its service purveyors, namely G. Sam-Soon Limited and ACSL (Velogic) to take them to task in that matter.

MSCL has worked out the normal payable amount claim as per declaration made under Bill of Entry by shippers to the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) which amounted to a sum of MUR567,168.94, inclusive of freight for all items mentioned earlier except the two boxes of natural flowers.

On Tuesday 05 April 2022, MSCL had a last meeting with both G. Sam-Soon Limited and ACSL (Velogic), whereby they had to bear their full responsibility for reimbursement of the due amount to the respective shippers.

I am informed that both service providers, ACSL (Velogic) and G. Sam-Soon Limited are being held liable for an equal payment of MUR283,584.47 calculated on the basis of MRA Bill of Entry declarations and apportioned paid freight charges made by the respective shippers.

I am also informed that MSCL has already initiated actions to compensate all the shippers concerned who have formally lodged their claims to MSCL for compensation including one shipper who has not submitted any claim so far. All disbursed amounts are being recovered simultaneously from ACSL (Velogic) and G. Sam-Soon Limited via deductions from their payables.

As regards the burnt container at Rodrigues depot on 09 March 2021, I am informed that after several meetings and investigation, the MSCL has been able to situate responsibility therein. The Labstore Ltd has been found fully liable for wrong declaration of cargo stuffed into the container.

After negotiations with Labstore Ltd, the latter has agreed to compensate the three shippers who had lodged their claim against MSCL, including the container repair charges.

I am also informed that MSCL is arranging for payment of compensation to all the parties concerned on the basis of their Bill of Entry declarations and apportioned paid freight charges. All disbursed amounts are being recovered simultaneously from Labstore Ltd.

I am further informed that MSCL has fully agreed that the two issues under reference are long outstanding, and that all efforts have been made to settle them amicably unlike Court procedures which might take years for settlement.

MTPA & LIVERPOOL FOOTBALL CLUB DEAL

(No. B/313) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the deal with the Liverpool Football Club for the promotion of Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority, information as to –

- (a) the quantum disbursed as at date, indicating the amount, if any, that has yet to be paid;
- (b) the benefits derived therefrom, if any, and
- (c) if the contract will be renewed or renegotiated.

(Withdrawn)

POINTE AUX SABLES ROAD (B31) – UPGRADING

(No. B/314) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the project for the upgrading of Pointe aux Sables Road (B31), he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to the –

- (a) name of the contractors therefor;
- (b) scope of works;
- (c) total cost, and
- (d) works schedule thereof.

(Withdrawn)