SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES
(HANSARD)
(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 18 JULY 2023
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*(Formed by Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth)*

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MAURITIUS

Seventh National Assembly

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FIRST SESSION

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Debate No. 23 of 2023

Sitting of Tuesday 18 July 2023

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

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)
PAPERS LAID

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

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

   (a) Certificate of Urgency in respect of the Private Recruitment Agencies Bill (No. XII of 2023). (In Original)

   (b) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation for the year ended 30 June 2022. (In Original)

B. Attorney General
   Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security


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

   (a) The Consumer Protection (Control of Imports) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 99 of 2023)

   (b) The Consumer Protection (Importation and Sale of Second-hand Motor Vehicles) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 100 of 2023)

D. Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage

Mr Speaker: Please be seated!

Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/1076 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping, and PQ B/1111 will be replied by the hon. Prime Minister, time permitting.

**ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

**SOCIAL MEDIA - ILLEGAL COMMENTS & POSTS - CHARGES - JAN 2015 TO JULY 2023**

(No. B/1073) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand’Baie & Poudre d’Or) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to arrests effected in connection with illegal comments and posts on the social media, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of persons provisionally charged with offences in connection therewith since January 2015 to date, indicating the nature of the comments and posts thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, according to section 46(1) (ga) of the Information and Communication Technologies Act 2021, it is an offence if a person, and I quote –

“uses a telecommunication equipment, an information and communication service, a telecommunication service or information and communication technologies to send, transmit, transfer, post, publish, deliver, show or otherwise communicates by means of the telecommunication equipment a message which is obscene, indecent, offensive, abusive, threatening, menacing, false or misleading, which is likely to cause or causes harm to a person.”

In the light of this provision, it is an offence to use any telecommunication device to post on the social media in the form of speech, data, text, writings, images, signs, signals or code, or a combination of forms, which are obscene, indecent, offensive, abusive, threatening, menacing, false or misleading in nature and which are likely to cause harm to any person.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the types of cases include using telecommunications equipment to cause annoyance, humiliation, inconvenience, distress or anxiety to any person; to impersonate another person; and for the transmission of
messages which are of a nature likely to endanger or compromise State defence, public safety or public order.

Any person who commits an offence under the ICT Act, shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding one million rupees and to penal servitude for a term not exceeding 10 years. Provisional charges are usually determined following the outcome of Police investigations.

In the conduct of the enquiries, the Police take into consideration the language used, the age and characteristics of the alleged victim, whether the message was anonymous, the extent of circulation of the message, the context in which the message appeared, amongst others.

Mr Speaker, Sir, social media, which comprises “Internet-based applications,” has seen an unprecedented growth during the last decade and has taken a prominent place in the lives of people, mostly because of easy accessibility to internet and smartphones. There has been a marked rise in usage of social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, TikTok, WhatsApp and Instagram. Although digital technology has democratised the public sphere, unfortunately, some people are making an abuse and misuse thereof causing prejudice to other persons. In fact, today, social media platforms are increasingly being used as a means for settling scores, spreading false news and hatred speech, character assassination, extortion, illegal betting, stirring social and racial unrest, attacking the integrity of persons and fraud.

Mr Speaker, Sir, not only our country, but also other countries are struggling to find ways and means to control and minimise the misuse and abuse of social media. For instance, in the European Union, the Council of the European Union has, in July 2022, adopted the Digital Services Act and the Digital Markets Act which aim at creating a safer digital space in which the fundamental rights of users of digital services are protected, through the imposition of risk assessments and sanctions such as fines and temporary bans. In the same vein, the United Kingdom is coming up with the Online Safety Act. Some countries are also negotiating with social media agencies to open offices in their countries for a better control and moderation of contents.

Countries such as Canada and India are enacting laws to address the issue of social media threats. These measures are possible because all the social media companies have a point of presence in these countries which is not the case in Mauritius. I am also informed that countries in the region like Madagascar, Maldives and the Seychelles are in the same situation as Mauritius whereby there is no prompt response from social media companies to social media threats and this is also due to the absence of these companies locally.
Mr Speaker, Sir, to be in line with international trends regarding safer digital space, in Mauritius, the Computer Misuse and Cybercrime Act 2003 was repealed in 2021 and replaced by the Cybersecurity and Cybercrime Act in line with the Budapest Convention on cybercrime. This Convention is the first international treaty on crimes committed via the internet and other computer networks, dealing particularly with infringements of copyright, computer-related fraud, child pornography and violations of network security. It also contains a series of powers and procedures such as the search of computer networks and interception. Its main objective is to pursue a common criminal policy aimed at the protection of society against cybercrime, especially by adopting appropriate legislation and fostering international cooperation.

The Cybersecurity and Cybercrime Act 2021 provides, amongst others, for offences such as cyber-bullying, computer-related forgery and misuse of fake profile. Under this Act, undesirable content includes any online content that is deceptive or inaccurate, posted with intent to defame, threaten, abuse or mislead the public; threatens public health or public safety; threatens national security; and promotes racism.

Mr Speaker, Sir, moreover, the Computer Emergency Response Team Mauritius (CERT-MU) was set up in 2008 under the aegis of the National Computer Board to provide information and assistance to organisations in implementing proactive measures to reduce the risks of information security incidents as well as responding to such incidents as and when they occur. The CERT-MU, which now falls directly under the purview of the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation operates the Mauritian Cybercrime Online Reporting System (MAUCORS) which is the national online system that allows the public to securely report cybercrimes occurring on social media. It is a centralised cyber incident reporting system that connects the CERT-MU, the Cybercrime Unit of the Mauritius Police Force, the Data Protection Office and the Information Communication Technologies Authority (ICTA). It provides advice in recognising and avoiding common types of cybercrime which take place on social media websites. I am informed that complaints regarding illegal and offensive contents are reported to the Police either directly or through the MAUCORS. On the basis of the information received, the Police decide whether to open case files and conduct further investigations.

In addition, the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation had a meeting with representatives of Facebook in July 2021 to discuss on incident escalation and resolution. Following the meeting, a two-day sensitisation workshop was held by Facebook/Meta involving stakeholders from the public and private
sector. Following a request from Mauritius to Facebook, the latter has recruited personnel from the Mauritian diaspora to look into the content, especially in creole. A similar request has been made to TikTok recently and a reply is awaited.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since January 2015 to date, 1,308 cases of illegal comments and posts on the social media have been reported to the Police. Out of these cases, 47 persons have been provisionally charged and arrested in relation to 42 cases. The nature of these comments and posts were mostly offensive language, racial hatred, sextortion, threats, blackmailing, character assassination, fake profile, false information and endangering public order.

Thank you.

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister why further to the different Police complaints filed by three journalists of Le Défi Media Group and the Managing Director of TopFM on 10 November 2022 regarding online harassment linking them to drug trafficking by people close to the MSM like the Sun TV, no arrests or identification of these individuals have been carried out so far?

The Prime Minister: First of all, let me say that Sun TV is not close to the MSM!

An hon. Member: Sun! Sun!

The Prime Minister: It is not…

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: You think any key is close to the Labour Party?

An hon. Member: Sun! Sun!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Anywhere you will put a key, it is close to the Labour Party?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order! Hon. Assirvaden!

The Prime Minister: I would say that Sun TV News has nothing to do with the MSM. Yes, I am informed that there was an article under caption: “urgent, very serious news” and so on.
Now, on the same day, Mr A.R.A., the Director of Public Prosecutions had phoned and insisted the Police to call at his place at Residence Trianon and register his complaint in connection with the aforementioned article. An officer from the Cybercrime Unit of the Central Criminal Investigation Department proceeded to his place and a statement was taken. I am informed that the statement relates to what was posted and as such, he requested the Police to initiate an enquiry. An enquiry on his behalf was opened in the Occurrence Book. I don’t need to give all the references.

The enquiry into the matter was immediately initiated and the extract of the post was captured for the purpose of enquiry. On Sunday 26 February 2023, the Mauritius Police Force made a request to the Computer Emergency Response Team of Mauritius to remove a derogatory post from the Facebook page of Sun TV News. This complaint was escalated to Facebook on the same day for removal of the defamatory content, and further cyber patrols on other social media platforms were carried out by the Police in order to look for similar articles.

Subsequently, after three days it was observed that the Facebook page with profile named Sun TV News has been deactivated and the said post has been removed. The reported content is no longer available and so far the author of the article is unknown, but the enquiry is still in progress.

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister, because there is a general perception, whether these provisional charges – especially when they are used against political opponents – are used as a political what we call ‘zarm’ or tool to squash political opponents’ activism and activities because often these charges are struck out by the court of law?

The Prime Minister: Why are you saying that these charges are struck out by the court of law? How many charges are struck out? Do you have statistics? Do you know?

Dr. Gungapersad: There are a few examples.

The Prime Minister: No, examples! But when you say most of the charges are struck out, there are cases where some people have been convicted. I have figures. Mr Speaker, Sir, let me say, generally anyone who posts any comment or any of their own views on the social media, they have to assume their responsibility. Now, if they go against the law or if it is defamatory, of course, people who are subject or who are being victimised have to report the matter either to the Police or to MAUCORS through online reporting or if through cyber patrol, the Police ever come on any post that they believe is going against the law, they will take action.
Now, I have been provided with some information, that is, status of cases for period 2015-2023. So, the status of 42 cases –

(i) where filed and no further action - 3;
(ii) sent to DPP for advice - 7;
(iii) caution administered - 4;

Caution administered means that they have been found to be at fault but the sentence is to give a caution.
(iv) convicted and fined - 6;
(v) pending trial in Court - 5, and
(vi) still under enquiry - 17.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Nuckcheddy!

Mr Nuckcheddy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Is the hon. Prime Minister aware of a recent post on the social media where a media reporter, one Mr A. K. R. uttered some words of vulgar nature while reporting on proceedings held at the Privy Council and whether any action is envisaged in that case? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, yes, I think all of us are aware of this post where that media reporter, Mr A. K. R. not only uttered words of vulgar nature but also made vile accusations while reporting on proceedings held at the Privy Council.

In his live intervention, posted at around 20.00 hours on Monday 10 July 2023, the media reporter, A. K. R. stated, and I quote –

“Section 64 de la Representation of the People Act, se enn argiman en substance ki Timothy Straker devan bann Law Lords inn fer. Represantan legal Suren Dayal soutenir ki sa bann reproches la li constitue bann actes de corruption, bann actes kokin, ‘kass L’.”

I cannot say that, Mr Speaker, Sir. That media reporter dared to utter ‘kass L’ after ‘actes kokin’, which is filthy and altogether shocking coming from a media person.

As regards the other part of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that an enquiry has been instituted into the matter following cyber patrol.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Tour!

Ms Tour: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House as to the number of cases reported on MAUCORS since its creation?
The Prime Minister: So, 1,366 cases of illegal and offensive content have been reported on MAUCORS from March 2018 till date and these illegal contents are classified under the following categories –

(i) content instructing or promoting crime or violence;
(ii) content promoting racism, hate speech and criticism;
(iii) sexually explicit content, and
(iv) footage of real violence or accidents from video clips, games or films.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House as to the outcome of the complaint made to the Police by the Minister of Health and Wellness against a post on social media dated 27 February 2020 where foul wordings were used against him?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that in this case, the accused was prosecuted and upon pleading guilty in the Court, he was fined Rs10,000, and had also to make for costs of about Rs500.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. In his answer, the hon. Prime Minister mentioned about CERT-MU and also 42 cases which were reported. Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House as to whether there has been any kind of sensitisation campaign with regard to the illegal post ongoing on the social media?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Police Cybercrime Unit of the Central Criminal Investigation Department, which is the main body of the Mauritius Police Force investigating into cases related to such breaches with regard to Information and Communication Technologies Act and of Cybercrime and Cybersecurity Act, also conducts regular sensitisation for the general public with regard to safety and proper use of electronic devices, the internet and social media.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can we know from the hon. Prime Minister whether with regard to cybercrime, there will be another department that will be created to empower with regard to how social media is being misused and we are having so many complaints? Whether there will be an empowerment with regard to these departments.
The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, what I can say is that with the advance of technology, fortunately, I must say, we are making a lot of progress and on a number of occasions, it is very difficult to be able to trace those perpetrators because their platform is not within the control of the authorities here. As we know, the policy with regard to those platforms, they themselves leave it for free expression for anybody to publish anything on their platform, except then when it is reported to them and, even when it is reported to them, it depends on whether they decide to remove any such post. So, what we are doing is providing capacity building, giving more training to our people, and I believe that this is the measure that has to be ongoing in the light of development of technology.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister – because we are talking about freedom of expression and human rights – why, when political opponents are arrested, then, unnecessary humiliation, inhumane conditions are meted out to these political opponents? We suggest that same treatment, fair…

Mr Speaker: You already stated your question.

Dr. Gungapersad: Okay.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, it does not concern political people; it concerns everybody, anybody. I have a list of cases here, Mr Speaker, Sir, because the hon. Member asked from 2015 to date. There are people who are not connected – I believe who are not known politicians, I would say – and who have been subjected to all sorts of accusations and allegations. They have reported cases to the Police, on MAUCORS, and enquiry has been initiated in all these cases. As I said, ultimately, if the offenders are able to be identified and if there is a case, then, they will be taken before a court of law.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Doolub!

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. In his reply earlier, the Prime Minister mentioned the increasing misuse of social media. Can the hon. Prime Minister thus provide us information on where exactly a complaint regarding illegal posts or comments can be registered?

The Prime Minister: First of all, complaints can be registered directly to the Police or it can be registered on MAUCORS. As I said, it is an online facility for anyone, without having to come physically to the authority to report a case, of course, by providing all the necessary information. It can also be reported to ICTA. ICTA also has a way of providing all the information to the Police eventually for investigation.
**Mr Assirvaden:** Le Premier ministre peut-il dire à la Chambre s’il a soulevé la question avec le commissaire de police, concernant la question de l’honorable Dr. Gungapersad, quand les trois journalistes de Radio Plus et Top FM ont donné leurs dépositions? Cela fait presqu’une année et rien n’a été fait. Dans le cas du Premier ministre, qui a donné une déposition, le lendemain, une internaute a été arrêtée pour une blague. Est-ce que cette question a été soulevée avec le commissaire de police concernant cette politique de deux poids, deux mesures? Le Premier ministre, le lendemain et…

**Mr Speaker:** Okay!

**Mr Assirvaden:** …et les journalistes, une année après.

**Mr Speaker:** You already stated. You already stated!

**The Prime Minister:** M. le président, je crois que l’honorable membre n’écoute pas quand je réponds à une question. Son collègue, l’honorable Dr. Gungapersad, a posé la question sur cette publication concernant *Sun TV*, et j’ai pris le temps de la Chambre pour donner les détails sur ce que la police a fait. Il n’écoute pas, et il vient dire toutes sortes de choses. *So, I will refer him to the answer that I have given previously to hon. Dr. Gungapersad.*

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

**Mrs Luchmun Roy:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House as to whether any female MPs have ever had recourse to MAUCORS, CERT-MU or Cybercrime, where some of them gave some information? Has there been any arrest with regard to those kinds of online posts, and where matters stand with regard to that? Is there any *deux poids, deux mesures* where MPs get favourable treatment? Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House?

**The Prime Minister:** I cannot recall anyone here having been arrested, but anyone is free to, of course, make a complaint if he feels that he has been subjected to any offence which has been committed by anybody.

**Dr. Boolell:** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, Sir. The Prime Minister did make reference to the Online Safety Bill, which is the subject of much debate in the UK and is quite controversial. Am I to understand, from what the hon. Prime Minister has said, that Government intends to come with legislation which is going to be more stringent or will Government carry on with existing legislation?

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, what I mentioned in my answer is what is being done in other countries, like in the UK. They are coming up with new legislation.
That does not mean to say that we are going to follow exactly what others are doing. We will, of course, be inspired, drawing lessons from the problems that they are facing, from the same situation that has arisen. Of course, we will see in the future whether we can be inspired by those legislations. Government will decide on this issue in due course.

Mr Speaker: Time over! The Table has been advised that PQ B/1080 has been withdrawn.

MAURITIUS & RÉUNION ISLANDS – DRUG TRAFFICKING BY SEA – 2020 TO 2023

(No. B/1080) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to drugs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information since 2020 to date, as to the amount seized during the trafficking thereof by sea between Mauritius and Réunion Island.

(Withdrawn)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell! B/1083! Minister of Education!

GRANT-AIDED COLLEGES - GRANT FORMULA - REVIEW

(No. B/1083) Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to grant-aided colleges, she will state if consideration will be given for a review of the grants formula established by Private Secondary Education Authority therefor and, if not, why not.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, the grant formula is reviewed at regular intervals of three years. The last review exercise, which covered period 2020 to 2023, has been implemented since 01 November 2020 and will lapse in December 2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, accordingly, a Technical Working Group has been set up under the Chair of the Senior Chief Executive of my Ministry and comprising representatives from the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, the Office of the Public Sector Governance, the Private Secondary Education Authority, to review the grant formula in respect of the period 2024 to 2026.
Mr Speaker, Sir, the Federation of Union of Managers was informed accordingly and they have been invited to submit their proposals which have been received by the Technical Working Group. The Technical Working Group is expected to submit its report by the end of September 2023.

**Dr. Boolell**: Can the Vice-Prime Minister state how many times the Technical Group has met?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun**: Mr Speaker, Sir, it has been set up for some time now. In February 2023, the Technical Working Group was set up and they have been examining the proposals made, I suppose, on a fortnightly basis. But I do not have the exact figure.

**Dr. Boolell**: Thank you very much, Madam. I know you have not said the date, but when do you think the Committee will submit its report?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun**: I have just mentioned, September 2023.

**Dr. Boolell**: Okay, thank you.

**Mr Speaker**: Next question!

**CASINOS DE MAURICE – PRIVATISATION – BIDS PROPOSAL & MONEY INJECTED – 2020 TO 2023**

(No. B/1084) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the proposed privatisation of the Casinos de Maurice, he will for the benefit of the House obtain from the State Investment Corporation, information as to where matters stand, indicating in each case the –

(a) names of the bidding companies therefor, if any, and their respective bid proposal, and

(b) amount of money injected by Government thereinto in Financial Years 2020-2021, 2021-2022 and 2022-2023.

**Dr. Padayachy**: M. le président, en 2021, le gouvernement a mis en place un comité de pilotage chargé de gérer l'ensemble de l'opération relative à la cession des actifs non stratégiques identifiés, y compris les casinos sous le contrôle de la SIC, et cela, avec l'appui de conseillers en transaction ayant l’expérience et l’expertise pertinentes.

Dans le cas des casinos de Maurice, un conseiller en transactions, *KPMG Advisory Services Ltd*, a été désigné le 04 avril 2022. Une déclaration d'intérêt pour les
soumissionnaires potentiels a été publiée au cours de la première semaine de juillet 2022. À la date de clôture, le 29 juillet 2022, 16 entités avaient manifesté leur intérêt.

Par le biais d'une demande de proposition, les 16 parties susmentionnées ont été invitées à soumettre une offre indicative et sept parties ont soumis une proposition avant la date limite du 16 septembre 2022.

Sur la base des propositions reçues, le conseiller en transactions a présélectionné quatre des sept soumissionnaires. Les quatre soumissionnaires présélectionnés ont été invités à procéder à une vérification préalable et à soumettre leur offre ferme. Chose faite, le 12 décembre 2022 avec trois parties qui ont soumis une offre ferme.

En ce qui concerne la partie (a) de la question, le nom des soumissionnaires et leur proposition d'offre ne peuvent pas être divulgués à ce stade pour éviter tout risque de collusion, car le processus est toujours en cours.

De plus, j’ai été informé par la SIC que toutes les parties prenantes sont régies par un accord de confidentialité. Suite à l'analyse des offres reçues, j’ai été informé que les trois soumissionnaires ont été invités par le Transaction Advisor le 12 janvier 2023 à revoir leurs offres.

En contrepartie, les soumissionnaires, par le biais du Transaction Advisor, ont également fait des propositions pour rendre le secteur plus attrayant. J’ai été informé par la SIC que les propositions sont actuellement à l’étude.

M. le président, pour ce qui est de la partie (b) de la question, j’ai été informé que le Gouvernement n’a pas injecté de fonds directement dans les casinos. Toutefois, il convient de rappeler qu'au cours des trois derniers exercices financiers, les activités des casinos, comme toutes les autres entreprises du secteur de l'hôtellerie et des loisirs, ont été gravement affectées par les mesures sanitaires strictes et la fermeture des frontières liées à la pandémie de la Covid-19.

À ce titre, les casinos ont bénéficié, comme toutes les autres entreprises, du programme gouvernemental de Wage Assistance Scheme comme suit –

i. 58,8 millions de roupies pour l’exercice clos au 31 décembre 2020, et
ii. 106,7 millions de roupies pour l’exercice clos au 31 décembre 2021.

Merci, M. président.

Mr R. Duval: Merci, M. le ministre. Concernant la tentative ratée du rachat des casinos par les firmes étrangères, le ministre peut-il indiquer à la Chambre la somme payée par la SIC à la firme KPMG?
Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, je n’ai pas en ma possession ce montant et je dois toute façon demander la légalité concernant la transaction avant de soumettre mais s’il y a une possibilité, je soumettrai à la Chambre.

Mr R. Duval: Du fait que le gouvernement n’investit plus dans ce secteur et qui met en péril l’avenir de quelques 700 employés, le ministre peut-il nous éclaircir quelles sont les mesures prises actuellement par son ministère pour assurer l’équilibre financier des casinos à fin de préserver des emplois ?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, pour assurer la pérennisation de ce secteur d’activité, l’objectif pour nous est de trouver soit un repreneur soit un partenaire stratégique car la SIC n’a pas toutes les expertises requises pour gérer les casinos de Maurice d’où la nécessité pour nous de travailler avec la SIC et aussi le Transaction Advisor pour trouver le meilleur partenaire pour reprendre soit complètement soit en partie les activités des casinos pour assurer encore une fois la pérennisation et aussi l’emploi de ces quelques 700 employés.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Nagalingum!

ROYAL ROAD, ROSE HILL – PAVEMENT CONSTRUCTION – COST

(No. B/1085) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the construction of pavement along Royal Road in Rose Hill, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to when works will start, indicating the total cost thereof.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the RDA that the A1 Road at Rose Hill, commonly known as Royal Road, as mentioned in the question itself, is already endowed with amenities such as pavement, drains and handrails on both sides of the road for safety of the pedestrians. Hence, the question of construction of pavement along Royal Road, Rose Hill does not arise. Thank you.

Mr Nagalingum: Mr Speaker, Sir, maybe the hon. Minister is not aware, he has not been there to find out the real state of the pavement along Royal Road, Rose Hill. It is in a very bad state.

Mr Speaker: Now, put your question!

Mr Nagalingum: So, I ask the hon. Minister to find out with the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill so that he may be aware of the situation of the pavement in Rose Hill.
Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think we all read the question. This is not what is written here. What the hon. Member is saying pertains to upgrading of the existing infrastructures and not construction. So, let me tell him through you, that weekly inspections are carried out by the Officers of the RDA and there is absolutely no reason that I doubt of their competencies.

Regarding the status of the pavement along the classified road and based on resources available and scope of work, routine and periodical maintenance are carried out either by in-house or outsourced to framework contractors of the RDA. Those works include repairs of damaged slab, upgrading of existing footpath and construction of new pavement. It is an ongoing process not only in Rose-Hill but throughout the island. For instance, along A1 Road, replacement of damaged slab and other ancillary works have already started, been implemented, starting from Gamma Civic at Coromandel towards KFC at Rose Hill; repair of pavements, slabs along the remaining stretch from KFC up to St Jean is scheduled for implementation in the forthcoming weeks. So, this is an ongoing process.

Mr Nagalingum: Mr Speaker, Sir, I re-ask the hon. Minister to find out because what I am saying is exactly…

Mr Speaker: Put a question!

Mr Nagalingum: I am putting the question.

Mr Speaker: This is Question Time; put a question!

Mr Nagalingum: You will find out that the pavement, some shop owners have slippery tiles, some are uneven, and some do not have any pavement at all. So, we have to do it once again. It is not a question of repairs. It is a question of doing it…

Mr Speaker: No, put the question! You are making a statement.

Mr Toussaint: Pena kestion!

Mr Speaker: I can understand your situation, but, this time, in Parliament, it is Question Time. Question the Minister! Please, try! Try!

Mr Nagalingum: Just try to find out in good faith hon. Minister to see the state of the pavement…

Mr Speaker: No. Again, come on! I stop you there because you have no question. Prepare your questions well!

Mr Toussaint: Pena kestion!
Mr Speaker: This is a time for you to put questions!

Mr Nagalingum: Because the hon. Minister does not even know the state of the road there.

Mr Speaker: No! Okay. Next question! Hon. Assirvaden!

Mr Toussaint: Poz kesion!

CEB FIBERNET CO LTD – GENERAL MANAGER & BOARD MEMBERS

(No. B/1086) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)
asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to CEB Fibernet Co Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the names of the –

(a) General Manager, and

(b) members of the Board of Directors thereof.

An hon. Member: Toussaint get enn ti kou…

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Central Electricity Board…

Mr Nagalingum: Pa fer remark!

Mr Toussaint: To p koz ar mwa la?

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Nagalingum: Pa fer remark!

Mr Speaker: Order! This is gross misconduct!

An. hon. Member: Contan riye dimoun!

Mr Toussaint: Ki to problem ar mwa?

Mr Nagalingum: Mo pena problem!

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed…

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!
Mr Toussaint: Get to zafer!

Mr Speaker: What is happening?

Mr Nagalingum: Li p dir get mo zafer!

Mr Speaker: It’s too early for you to go out! It’s too early! Bear with us! Bear with us! Quiet!

Mr Toussaint: Kas poz! Relax!

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Central Electricity Board that the post of General Manager of the CEB Fibernet Company Ltd is currently vacant. Mr V. Ramgolam, Business Development Executive has been assigned the duties of Officer-in-Charge of the company to oversee its operation since 30 June 2021.

With regard to the Board of Directors of CEB Fibernet Company Ltd, Mr Amoordalingum Pather is the Chairperson. Mr Rajnish Hawabhay and Mr Chavansingh Dabeedin are the Directors.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, ça fait presque deux ans que le CEB Fibernet n’a pas de General Manager alors que le gouvernement a investi plus de R 850 millions dans cette subsidiaire du CEB. Le ministre trouve-t-il normal que le CEB Fibernet n’a pas de directeur général, de General Manager à plein temps alors que presqu’un milliard de roupies a été investi dans cette compagnie?

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, in my main reply, I have stated that we have an Officer-In-Charge and he is doing the work.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, l’insolence et la légèreté du ministre concernant l’argent public…

Mr Speaker: You cannot… No, you cannot…

Mr Assirvaden: … est inquiétant!

Mr Speaker: Wait! Remove that word ‘insolence’ or whatever you said!

Mr Assirvaden: Okay, I remove. Depuis l’arrivée du ministre, M. le président, en tant que ministre de l’Énergie, il a démoli tout ce que son prédécesseur, l’honorable Collendavelloo…

Mr Speaker: No! No! You have no question!

Mr Assirvaden: Il a démoli…
Mr Speaker: You have no question!

Mr Assirvaden: Mais laissez-moi…

Mr Speaker: You have no question!

Mr Assirvaden: R 850 millions…

Mr Speaker: Put question!

Mr Assirvaden: Okay, I put question. Est-ce que le ministre peut dire à la Chambre aujourd’hui…

Mr Speaker: This is a question!

Mr Assirvaden: …est-ce qu’il compte nommer un directeur général à plein temps car R 850 millions ont été investies dans cette compagnie ?

Mr Speaker: Okay. You already put your question! Let the hon. Minister reply!

Mr Lesjongard: M. le président, je constate que c’est lui l’insolent en fin de compte.

(Interruptions)

We will do so when the need arises, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: So, to avoid any… Hon. Minister…

Mr Lesjongard: I withdraw, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Assirvaden: Il n’a pas répondu !

Mr Lesjongard: J’ai répondu, il aurait dû écouter.

Mr Speaker: So, next question!

GRA - HORSE RACING - STAKES MONEY

(No. B/1087) 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 stakes money for horse racing, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Gambling Regulatory Authority, information as to if the Horse Racing Division of the Authority has been made aware of the substantial reduction thereof and, if so, the actions, if any, being taken in relation thereto.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, je remercie l’honorable membre pour sa question. J’ai été informé par la Horse Racing Division de la Gambling Regulatory Authority que, par une lettre datée du 15 juin 2023, accompagné d’un courriel daté du 28 juin 2023,
l'organisateur des courses hippiques, People's Turf PLC, a notifié à la Horse Racing Division qu'il procédait à une réduction des mises d'argent avec effet immédiat.

Les principales raisons invoquées dans la lettre pour justifier cette réduction sont que l'industrie des courses hippiques souffre d'un manque de revenus dû à une diminution massive des recettes des paris et à une baisse drastique des redevances respectives.

M. le président, j'ai également été informé que le paiement des mises d’argent relève de la seule responsabilité de l'organisateur des courses de chevaux et que ni la Gambling Regulatory Authority Act ni les Rules of Racing de la Horse Racing Division ne prévoient de réglementer le montant des mises à payer par l'organisateur des courses de chevaux.

De plus, en vertu de la règle 61 des Rules of Racing, les conditions de chaque réunion de courses, y compris le montant des mises à payer par l'organisateur de courses de chevaux pour une course donnée, doivent être publiées au moins cinq jours avant le début de la réunion de courses. En conséquence, la Horse Racing Division a publié un communiqué le 3 juillet 2023 pour informer toutes les parties prenantes concernées des nouvelles mises offertes par l'organisateur de courses de chevaux.

En outre, l'article 30 de la GRA Act prévoit que l'organisateur de courses de chevaux doit être une société anonyme et que, conformément à la loi et à ses conditions de licence, il doit être solvable et financièrement sain pendant toute la durée de la saison des courses. Il est donc de la seule responsabilité de l'organisateur de courses de chevaux de prendre des décisions concernant le paiement du montant des mises qui garantit la solidité financière de la société.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is the second time for this season that the stake money is being drastically reduced. Does the hon. Minister find it normal that when the MTC reduced the stake money, the then GRA had requested it to revise its decision but today, when People's Turf is reducing the stake money for a second time, the Horse Racing Division is quiet and says that it is none of my business?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, je réponds à la question en fonction des éléments qui me sont donnés et selon la loi – je l’ai bien dit, selon la loi, selon le GRA Act, la GRA n’a pas le droit de demander à un organisateur des courses d’augmenter ou de diminuer les mises. Donc, si cela a été fait dans le passé, je vais vérifier et je reviendrai dessus parce que je ne suis pas au courant des pressions qu’a fait la GRA pour d’autres organisateurs de courses.
Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, the stake money is the main reason why people participate in horse racing. Doesn’t the hon. Minister agree that if the stake money is reduced so low by People’s Turf, then the trainers and owners will have to resort to illegal betting just to be able to have sufficient funds to maintain their horses?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, c’est une question très pertinente. C’est sûr qu’il faut trouver le juste équilibre entre les mises concernant les courses mais aussi par rapport à la profitabilité de l’organisateur de courses. Je demanderai à l’honorable membre de me donner un peu de temps pour que je puisse regarder en profondeur ce secteur parce qu’il y a eu beaucoup de questions qui sont venues sur ce dossier et j’aimerais prendre un peu plus de temps pour analyser qu’elles sont les raisons qui poussent à la diminution des mises et aussi de voir un peu concernant la profitabilité et les recettes pour l’organisateur des courses. Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Tour!

PARIS 2024 OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES – ATHLETES’ MONTHLY ALLOWANCE

(No. B/1088) Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the monthly allowance to be provided to athletes preparing for the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games as announced in the 2023-2024 Budget Speech, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, let me first congratulate our Para athletes for their recent outstanding achievements at the 2023 Paris Para Athletics World Championships namely, Miss Noemi Alphonse for clinching both the silver medal in the 100m (T54) and the bronze medal in the 400m (T54) and Yovanni Philippe who not only set a new world championship record in the semi-final of the 400m T20 with a remarkable time of 47 seconds 38 but also demonstrated his exceptional skills in the final, earning a well-deserved bronze medal.

Miss Noemi Alphonse, Miss Anaïs Angéline, Mr Roberto Michel and Mr Yovanni Philippe are qualified for the 2024 Paris Paralympic Games. Their success not only brings pride to our nation but also serves as an inspiration to countless others.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the present Government is committed to promoting excellence in sports. For the first time ever, a sum of Rs3.6 m. has been allocated in the 2023-2024 budget to provide financial assistance to 10 elite athletes who are preparing for the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic games. Thank you, hon. Minister of Finance.
These talented athletes possess immense potential but they often face financial constraints that require them to work hard during the day before attending their training sessions.

The Government’s aim is to provide the necessary financial assistance ensuring that these athletes can solely focus on their training and strive for an Olympic or Paralympic podium. A technical committee has meticulously evaluated the performance and the progress margin of a list of elite athletes till 2024, resulting in the selection of 10 deserving beneficiaries including four para-athletes namely –

- Miss Noemi Alphonse;
- Miss Anaïs Angéline;
- Mr Roberto Michel, and
- Miss Brandy Perrine.

Two boxers –

- Mr Richarno Colin, and
- Mr Merven Clair.

Three Judokas –

- Mr Rémi Feuillet;
- Miss Christianne Legentil, and
- Miss Priscilla Morand.

And, one Mr Noa Bibi from athletics.

To further motivate these athletes and encourage them to compete at their fullest potential, they will receive a special monthly allowance of Rs30,000 starting from the end of July 2023. This supplementary assistance complements the existing support they already receive through the High-Level Sports Assistance Scheme and the Trust Fund for Excellence in sports. Thank you.

Ms Tour: Merci, M. le président et permettez-moi aussi de me joindre à l’honorable ministre pour féliciter nos athlètes qui ont fait briller notre quadricolore au niveau mondial. Ceci dit, dans la liste qu’a mentionnée le ministre, je note que le nom de Yovanni Philippe n’y figure pas. L’honorable ministre peut-il nous dire s’il compte inclure le nom de notre recordman mondial sur la liste de ceux qui vont bénéficier de cette allocation mensuelle ?

Mr Toussaint: Oui absolument, M. le président. Cette liste avait été préparée avant la compétition et Yovanni Philippe est une belle découverte. C’est un jeune de 21
ans qui nous a agréablement surpris et qui a tout le potentiel pour être médaillé olympique. Il y va de soi, M. le président, que nous allons trouver un budget additionnel pour inclure Yovanni dans cette liste.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

AFTER-SCHOOL SPORTS & FITNESS PROGRAMME - ACTIVITIES PROPOSED & COACHES ENLISTED

(No. B/1089) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to After-school Sports and Fitness Programme, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Sports Council, information as to the –

(a) number of youth who participated therein since 2021 to date;
(b) different sports activities proposed, and
(c) number of coaches enlisted therefor.

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Mauritius Sports Council (MSC) that the After-School Sports and Fitness Programme was launched in 2017 to motivate and encourage the participation of children aged 5 years to 13 years in regular physical and sports activities.

With respect to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the MSC that the total number of youth involved in the After-School Sports and Fitness Programme for primary schools was 20,816, 16,154 and 13,525 for the years 2021, 2022 and 2023, respectively.

With regard to the After-School Sports and Fitness Programme for the secondary schools, I am further informed by the MSC that the total number of youth who participated therein was 1,849, 2,800 and 2,017 in 2021, 2022 and 2023, respectively.

As for part (b) of the question, I am informed by the MSC the four activities are being carried out namely, ball games, racket games, fundamental movement skills and games and values within the school compound as from 15.30 hours to 17.00 hours for primary schools, and as from 14.30 hours to 16.00 hours for secondary schools.

Concerning part (c) of the question, I am informed by the MSC that for the year 2023, a total number of 330 coaches, including 25 for Rodrigues have enlisted for the programme.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Peut-on savoir de l’honorable ministre à quel intervalle les entraîneurs, que ce soit à plein temps ou contractuel, reçoivent leurs salaires?
Mr Toussaint : M. le président, je ne saurais vous dire par rapport à leurs allocations, mais je présume que c’est comme tout le monde, c’est peut-être à la fin du mois. Je vais vérifier.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Veuillez vérifier. Les statistiques ont démontré un pourcentage élevé d’enfants en surpoids à l’île Maurice et le taux de diabète chez l’enfant ne fait qu’augmenter. Dans ce contexte, est-ce que l’honorable ministre peut nous dire si ce programme intègre aussi les cours de nutrition, parce que le sport, c’est important, mais tout aussi important, c’est de bien savoir s’alimenter ?

Mr Toussaint : Je pense qu’au niveau des cours de nutrition, de comment bien manger, si je ne me trompe pas, ceci est déjà pris en charge par l’éducation nationale. Donc, je pense qu’ils ont déjà des formations à l’école. Pour complémer cela, le MSC s’occupe des activités physiques. Donc, encourager les jeunes à pratiquer une activité physique.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

PETREDEC LTD – LPG RENTAL FEES – 2015 TO JULY 2023

(No. B/1090) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the storage of Liquefied Petroleum Gas, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to a detailed yearly breakdown of the amount paid to Petredec Ltd., since 2015 to date, indicating if there has been an increase in the rental value and if so, the reasons therefor.

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the State Trading Corporation started renting the Liquefied Petroleum Gas storage facilities from Petredec (Mauritius) Ltd. since May 2020. The rental fees paid for the period May 2020 to October 2021 was USD 27.50 per metric ton. I am tabling the yearly breakdown of the rental fees paid to Petredec (Mauritius) Ltd. from May 2020 to June 2023.

I am further informed, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the rental fee was increased to USD 28.66 per metric ton as from November 2021, and the increase was due to inflation.

Mr Juman: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can I know from the hon. Minister why from year 2002 to 2020, for 18 years, the total amount of rental paid for storage of cooking gas to ESCOL amounts to Rs797,315,000 while for 2022 onwards till date, for only three years, Rs750 m. was paid to Petredec. Why such a gap?
Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, if I may be allowed to explain thoroughly. Prior to May 2020, the State Trading Corporation stored Liquefied Petroleum Gas only in tanks owned by two local oil companies, namely Vivo Energy Ltd and Total Mauritius Ltd. The total storage capacity was 5,495 metric tons only, which when full, represented only 27 days of stock under normal conditions, including some 420 metric tons for non-pumpable products.

During COVID-19 pandemic, the production and supply of LPG in most part of the world decreased and there was a disruption in the entire supply chain. With a view of assuring security of supply, on 17 April 2022, a decision was taken to proceed with the negotiations for the rental of the entire storage facility owned by Petredec Mauritius Ltd, which in total is 14,420 metric ton.

It is to be noted that this storage facility was the largest LPG storage capacity available in Mauritius representing 60 days of stock when full. So, after negotiation Petredec Ltd agreed to rent the storage tank to STC with a capacity of 14,220 tons at the rate of USD 27.50.

Mr Juman: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Hon. Minister, we are talking from January 2020 to December 2020, 30 m. to 184 m. for year 2022, of 500% increase. Now, hon. Minister, we paid Rs750 m. for the last 3 years…

Mr Speaker: No, put your question!

Mr Juman: Yes.

Mr Speaker: Maybe you got lost!

Mr Juman: Can I know hon. Minister, if you intend to see if STC can buy or construct its own warehouse because the asset value of Petredec Ltd. now is Rs1.1 billion and it is getting 750 m. for 3 years?

Mr Speaker: Okay, you have put your question already! You have already put your question! Let the Minister reply!

Mr Callichurn: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are envisaging it. We have already enlisted the services of a consultant who is working on the project. We are looking at either buying the existing storage facility or constructing a new one.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

SME GRANTS – ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA
Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives whether, in regard to the Small and Medium Enterprises, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the SME Mauritius Ltd., information as to the amount of grants advanced thereto for the past three years, indicating the eligibility criteria to benefit therefrom.

Mr Bholah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by SME Mauritius Ltd. that in 2020-2021, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, a series of 5 schemes covering 35 components relating to functional areas of SMEs were devised and implemented to improve the resilience and endurance of SMEs in the face of emerging and more complex environmental dynamics. The 5 schemes were as follows –

i. the Internal Capability Development Scheme;

ii. the Technology and Innovation Scheme;

iii. the SME Marketing Support Scheme;

iv. the Inclusiveness and Integration Scheme, and

v. the SME Utility Connection Assistance Scheme.

For the Financial Year 2020-2021, 676 SMEs benefitted from the above schemes for a total amount of Rs28 m. in grants.

I am further advised that during the Financial Year 2021-2022, the same set of schemes were made available to SMEs. 818 SMEs benefitted from the schemes for a total amount of Rs45 m. in grants.

During the Financial Year 2022-2023, taking into consideration evolving trends, SME Mauritius Ltd. reviewed and revamped the existing set of schemes to respond more adequately to the requirements of the SME sector.

The schemes currently on offer at the SME Mauritius are as follows –

i. the Business Transformation Scheme aimed at helping SMEs consolidate their internal capabilities, redesign their business models for improved agility, develop organisational and marketing strategies and improve their risk management, compliance and governance structures;

ii. the Technology and Innovation Scheme aimed at incentivising SMEs to continuously invest in technology and automated production capabilities and adopt robotics, AI and cloud-based specialised softwares and solutions;
iii. the Market Readiness Scheme to support SMEs in improving their market accessibility and competitiveness and respond to more stringent requirements with regard to packaging, design and market compliance;

iv. the Greening Support Scheme to encourage SMEs to adopt renewable energy, recycling mechanisms, water treatment and anti-pollution initiatives and energy conservation solution, and

v. the Agri-Business Scheme to incentivise SMEs in food processing, hydroponics, aquaponics and smart agriculture, amongst others.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that, during the Financial Year 2022-2023, 896 SMEs benefitted from the above schemes for a total amount of Rs51 m. in grants. To summarise, over the past three years, 2,384 SMEs have been supported with grants of Rs125 m. through the implementation of the different schemes.

It is also worth noting that these beneficiaries have a cumulative turnover of Rs7.9 billion and provide employment to some 10,800 people.

In terms of scheme distribution by SME classification and turnover range, on average 73% of the schemes went to Micro SMEs, 19% to Small SMEs and 8% of schemes provided went to Medium SMEs.

The four main sectors of activity that were supported were Manufacturing with an average of 55%, Services with 20%, Construction 15% and Agri-Agro Business with 10%.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the eligibility criteria to benefit from grants, I am further advised that an SME should –

i. be involved in any legal value creating economic activity, except pure trading enterprises;

ii. hold a Business Registration Card;

iii. hold a valid trade license, relevant permits and licenses;

iv. be duly registered as an SME with the Registration Unit of my Ministry;

v. provide financial returns whether with the MRA or the CBRD for the previous year;

vi. be compliant with the Contribution Sociale Généralisée;

vii. have an annual turnover of less than Rs100 m., and

viii. preferably, have been in operation for at least 6 months.

In addition, a minimum of 51% shareholding by a Mauritian national is required to benefit from the schemes.
Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the value of grants depends on the turnover and number of employees of the SME. SME Mauritius Ltd. has a calculator on its website to help SMEs find the value of grants they could expect to receive by entering their turnover and number of employees. The total amount of grants within a specific scheme or across schemes were capped to a maximum of Rs200,000 till 30 June 2023 and has been reviewed to Rs250,000 as from 01 July 2023. Moreover, there are also caps on specific components to prevent any abuse.

Beneficiaries can reapply after a cooling off period of 9 months, after the date of the last disbursement if they do not reached their maximum limit for that financial year. Spouses or same Directors/Shareholders do not benefit twice in any financial year, even if their applications are filed under different entities.

It is to be noted that the ultimate decision to approve or reject any applications rests on a specifically established Grant Approval Committee (GAC) whose decision is final.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed that during the present financial year, namely 2023-2024, SME Mauritius will, apart from serving its main segments, put additional emphasis and resources on the support of start-ups and social entrepreneurship programmes involving women and youth.

Mr Abbas Mamode: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the scheme will be improved in the future? As we all know, SME Mauritius is doing a very good job, so, whether the scheme will be improved?

Mr Bholah: Mr Speaker, Sir, the scheme which is presently operational is subject to constant monitoring and assessment, and in the light of changing circumstances, of course, it will be revamped and revisited.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

MAURITIUS STANDARDS BUREAU – GENERAL MANAGER

(No. B/1092) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives whether, in regard to the Mauritius Standards Bureau, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to –

(a) the reasons for the non-renewal of the contract of Mrs D. B. as the General Manager thereof, and
(b) when a new General Manager will be appointed therefor.
Mr Bholah: Mr Speaker, Sir, Mrs D. B. was offered employment as General Manager of the Mauritius Standards Bureau (MSB) on a contract basis for a period of three years. Mrs D. B. assumed duty on 21 July 2020, and her contract of employment will expire on 20 July 2023.

Part (a) of the question does not arise as I am informed by the Mauritius Standards Bureau that Mrs D. B. informed the Standards Council on 29 June 2023 that she had been offered a contract of employment in another institution which she has already accepted and that she would leave the Mauritius Standards Bureau at the expire date of her present contract of employment.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the Standards Council of Mauritius Standards Bureau has decided to fill the vacant post of Director.

I am further informed that the post of Director has already been advertised since 01 July 2023 and the closing date for submission of application was 14 July 2023. It is expected that the Mauritius Standards Bureau would complete the recruitment process at the earliest.

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that there have been several allegations of malpractices against Mrs D. B. and same has been reported to the ICAC and a letter was copied to you? Are you aware of those malpractices at the Mauritius Standards Bureau against that lady?

Mr Speaker: Wait! It is enough! It is enough!

Mr Bholah: I have received numerous anonymous letters and I am aware that some letters have been sent to ICAC and even to the Police, but up to now, I have seen nothing on the basis of these letters.

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Is it the case that now the Mauritius Standards Bureau will not proceed with appointment of a new General Manager for the very simple reason that this post never existed as per the Act? There was only the post of Director.

Mr Speaker: No. What is the question?

Mr Lobine: This is what I have asked.

Mr Speaker: Put the question again!

Mr Lobine: This is what I have asked: whether the hon. Minister is aware that now the post of the new General Manager will not be…
Mr Speaker: Is that a question?

Mr Lobine: But this is the question!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: This is the question.

Mr Speaker: No!

Mr Lobine: Is he aware that as per the law, as per the Mauritius Standards Bureau Act, there was no post of General Manager; this was created for that particular lady? Now that we are not proceeding with filling of this post and proceeding with the filling of the post of Director, is he confirming to the House that this was created specifically for that lady? This is the question!

Mr Bholah: No, I am not confirming that. But you are stating the obvious in the sense that the post of Director has been advertised.

Mr Speaker: I will just remind the hon. Member as a matter friendship; your first question was hypothetical. Mind well, in the Standing Orders, you cannot put a hypothetical question, but the second question was good. Members are reminded that they have to read their Standing Orders. This will help you to put questions. It is your duty to put questions; it is your right to put questions but the point is that many Members do not know how to put questions.

Mr Bhagwan: You have become an expert!

Mr Speaker: Next question!

BON ACCUEIL – MARKET – CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/1093) Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the construction of a market at Bon Accueil, he will state where matters stand.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the District Council of Flacq that the proposed construction of a mini-market at Bon Accueil was earmarked in Budget 2022-2023 as a project under preparation.

A plot of land to the extent of 2000 m² has been vested into the District Council of Flacq. Presently, on the said plot of land, there is an existing synthetic mini soccer pitch which should be relocated during the implementation of the project.
On 24 January 2023, bids for consultancy service for the design of the market fair at Bon Accueil were launched. However, after evaluation of the bids, it was observed that the price quoted by the bidder was 39% above the cost estimate and the Executive Committee decided not to proceed further with the bidding exercise.

A request was made to the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development on 16 May 2023 to seek the service of a technical team to design and supervise the project.

However, in a meeting on 05 July 2023 with the elected members of the Constituency, it was proposed that the Council proceed through ‘design and build’ instead of the service of the technical team.

On 12 July 2023, I personally chaired a meeting with 4 District Councils, including that of Flacq, to take stock of the progress in the implementation of the project in each District Council. The decision to implement the project on ‘design and build’ was approved. Presently, the ‘design and build’ documents are at preparation stage at the level of the District Council of Flacq.

**Mr Nuckcheddy:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, in his reply the hon. Vice-Prime Minister mentioned that the initial bidding exercise was carried out and the bidding amount exceeded the cost estimates by about 39%. So, can the hon. Vice Prime Minister inform the House who actually does the cost estimates at the level of the District Council of Flacq, please?

**Dr. Husnoo:** There is an engineer at the District Council of Flacq.

**Mr Nuckcheddy:** Thank you Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Vice Prime Minister inform the House if it is not high time for the District Councils to have a Quantity Surveyor for the cost estimates so that we avoid this type of variances between the cost estimates and the actual cost? Thank you.

**Mr Armance:** Hey pose kestion!

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Dr. Husnoo:** I agree with the hon. Member but there is shortage of QS on the market.

**Mr Nuckcheddy:** We have one here.

**Dr. Husnoo:** We have 12 Councils and if I have to take 12 QS, it will not be that easy to fill these posts.
Mr Speaker: Next question!

**SCHEDULED BREADS - ADDITIONAL SUBSIDY - ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

(No. B/1094) 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 grant of an additional subsidy to bakeries producing scheduled breads, he will state the total amount paid since the introduction thereof, indicating the eligibility criteria to benefit therefrom.

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, on 09 September 2022, Government decided to provide an additional subsidy of 9 cents per scheduled bread of 100 grams in order to compensate bakeries for the increase in cost of production and maintain the current prices of scheduled bread.

The financial incentive is effective as from 01 October 2022 and the Mauritius Revenue Authority has been entrusted with the responsibility to effect payment of the subsidy on a monthly basis accordingly.

I am informed by the Mauritius Revenue Authority that Rs18,015,901 has been paid to bakeries producing scheduled bread from period October 2022 to June 2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regard the eligibility criteria, bakeries are required to register with the State Trading Corporation and the following documents have to be submitted –

(a) An application letter from the owner of the bakery, along with a copy of his or her National Identity Card and the location plan of the bakery, and

(b) A Baker Declaration Form, signed by the owner of the bakery, with basically the following information –

i. details of monthly production of scheduled bread, and

ii. Business Registration No. including Business Registration Certificate mentioning “Manufacture of bread”.

Mr Speaker: Finished?

Mr Callichurn: Yes.

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the Minister inform the House about the procedure that has been put in place for the payment of this subsidy to bakers?

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has provided the Mauritius Revenue Authority with a list of the bakeries registered with the STC as well as the expected monthly production of each type of scheduled bread by each bakery and that is based on a
survey done in May 2022. So, eligible bakeries are required to manually submit their monthly return to the Mauritius Revenue Authority, declaring the monthly production of each scheduled bread.

I have another information; the Mauritius Revenue Authority then proceed with the payment of each type of scheduled bread based on either the number of scheduled bread declared in the monthly return, based on the survey done, whichever is lower and multiply by 9 cents for each 100 grams of scheduled bread.

**Mr Doolub:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am informed that some bakers, they purchase flour directly from the STC, whereas some purchase through approved distributors of the STC. Can the Minister inform the House whether both of these bakers will benefit from the subsidy?

**Mr Callichurn:** I am informed that bakers who buy flour from STC, they purchase it up Rs108.50 whereas wholesalers and distributors who purchase directly from STC, they purchase it at the price of Rs217.50. So, obviously, those distributors will be getting less subsidy compared to direct buying from STC.

**MASA ARTISTS SOLIDARITY SCHEME – BENEFICARIES’ MONTHLY ALLOWANCE**

**(No. B/1095) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to the Mauritius Society of Authors Artists Solidarity Scheme, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to if the monthly allowance payable to beneficiaries thereof has been stopped and, if so, indicate when and the reasons therefor.

**Mr Teeluck:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the MASA that the MASA Artists Solidarity Scheme was launched in 2010 and its objective was to provide a monthly allowance to members of MASA having reached the age of 60.

MASA has stated that in respect of copyright fees collected, it retains 30% of the royalties to meet its administrative costs and 7% is transferred to the MASA Provident and Benevolent Fund. This Fund caters for the MASA Artists Solidarity Scheme and other purposes, such as medical schemes, death grants, costs for the annual general assembly and the elections.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by MASA that the monthly payment made to beneficiaries having reached the age of 60 has indeed been stopped and the last payment was effected in June 2023.
As to the reasons thereof, I wish to inform the House that, still according to MASA, in the year 2010 when the MASA Artists Solidarity Scheme was launched, no actuarial exercise was carried out to determine the capacity to pay of MASA. Such exercise was of utmost importance to foresee and ensure that financial stability, sustainability as well as the feasibility of the Fund over the ensuing years. Consequently, the funds of the MASA Provident and Benevolent Fund has considerably depleted over the years, leading to a decreasing sustainability of the Fund.

Moreover, taking into consideration the financial projections for new beneficiaries, that is, new full fledge members reaching the age of 60 and the payments which will have to be made, the financial viability of the Fund could no longer be sustained. Thus payments could no longer be effected.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by MASA that a market survey was carried out with a view to securing a costing for professional services from insurance companies for a fully sustainable pension plan. Actually, one proposal from the NIC has been received which is under consideration by MASA.

I wish to inform the House that all necessary actions are being taken by MASA to provide the best options for treatment to our artists. However, many discrepancies and inconsistencies are still to be corrected and in this optic, a restructuring exercise of the MASA has been initiated. The tender procedure is under process.

Mr David: M. le président, dans sa réponse, le ministre a indiqué que 7% des royalties sont transférés au Provident and Benevolent Fund de la MASA et c’est de ce fond qui est puisé l’argent pour la pension des artistes. Puis-je demander au ministre, car il ne l’a pas clairement dit, de ces 7% de royalties – et 7% de R 50 millions, c’est R 3.5 millions alors que la pension des artistes est moins R 1 million par un – quelle est la part qui alimente la MASA Solidarity Scheme ?

Mr Teeluck: I think I did not get the question properly but I will still try to reply. You mentioned about Rs50 m. Mr Speaker, Sir, I mentioned 2 rates – 30% of royalties being redirected for administrative costs and that 30% is out of the royalties collected, copyright fees collected. So, it is not grant being allocated by the Government to MASA and the 7%, again, royalties out of copyright fees collected from users of work.

There is no fixed Rs50 m. fund. It depends on the rate of collection and it depends on how pressing MASA has been over the financial year to get money in from users of work. It varies. But the 7% comes out of all the fees collected over the financial year and
that is directed to the MASA Provident and Benevolent Fund. Out of that 7% that goes out
to the fund, part of it is earmarked for the MASA Artists Solidarity Scheme.

**Mr David:** Precisely, my question was: out of those 7%, what amount is earmarked
to supply the Artists Solidarity Scheme? That was my question actually.

**Mr Teeluck:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not have the exact figures, but as I mentioned,
the MASA Provident and Benevolent Fund caters for the solidarity scheme, the pension,
medical schemes, death grants, cost for annual/general assembly and elections. But, of
course, I will be very happy to table *le décompte des allocations et* where the money is
being redirected in that fund.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Members, I will suspend the Sitting for one and a half hour.

*At 1.01 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.*

*On resuming at 2.34 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.*

**Mr Speaker:** Please be seated! Next question would be for hon. Bodha!

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**SRI LANKA, APRIL 2021 – MV MAURITIUS TROCHETTIA – COVID
LOCKDOWN – DISTURBANCE ALLOWANCE**

(No. B/1096) Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the
Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard
to the vessel MV Mauritius Trochetia drydocked in Colombo, Sri Lanka during the
COVID-19 lockdown in April 2021 with 28 crew members, he will, for the benefit of the
House, obtain from the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd., information as to if –

(a) the disturbance allowance payable thereto, if any, have been disbursed, and

(b) the Corporation is considering the replacement of the local workforce thereof
by foreign workers.

**Mr Maudhoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Mauritius Shipping
Corporation Ltd that on 12 April 2021, MV Mauritius Trochetia left Mauritius for its dry-
docking in Sri Lanka. The vessel reached Colombo on 20 April and with 28 crew
members on board, comprising of 4 foreigners and 24 Mauritians.

The four foreign crew members were the Master, the Chief Officer, the Second
Engineer Officer and the Third Engineer Officer. The vessel came back to Mauritius on 14
September 2021 after the dry-docking.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when the vessel reached Sri Lanka, COVID-19 Pandemic was at its
full swing worldwide. On 22 April 2021, a first meeting was held with the shipyard on
board the vessel. The repairs work started at berth from 23 April 2021 up to 05 May. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, procurement of parts, repairs of crane and testing were completed on 26 August 2021. The vessel left Sri Lanka on 27 August 2021 and reached Mauritius on 03 of September. All crew members who on are in Colombo for the dry-docking returned to Mauritius.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the MSCL that, in practice, during a dry-docking exercise, whether in Mauritius or abroad, the crew members are paid their salaries as per their contract of employments signed with the MSCL.

To that end, no disturbance allowance has been paid to the crew members as they have worked as per their normal scheme of duties as per their contract of employment. There is already a provision of monthly allowance of Rs3,000 for crew working on board vessels in their salary.

As regards part (b) of the question, it has never been and will never be the policy of MSCL to replace the local workers by foreign workforce. As per prevailing policy at MSCL, as far as possible, local workers are recruited on board the vessel.

However, at times, MSCL has to resort to the employment of foreign crew to cater for the shortage of seafarers on the local market for certain positions. This has been the case for MV Mauritius Trochetta during its dry-docking where nine crew members signed off after they were infected with COVID-19. Thus, MSCL had to resort to Sri Lankan foreign workers. In fact, I am informed by the MSCL that out of those nine crew members who signed off, six have already been reemployed on board the Mauritius Trochetta.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the required posts on board the vessel, which are scarce and not easily available in Mauritius, include the Master, the 2nd Officer, the 3rd Officer, Chief Engineer, 2nd Engineer, and of Able Seaman Deck and Able Seaman Engine also.

I am further informed by the MSCL that, as at date, out of 34 crew members, there are eight foreign crew members on board MV Mauritius Trochetta. The eight foreign crew members on the vessel occupy the post of 2nd Officer, 3rd Officer, 2nd Engineer, 3rd Engineer, Able Seaman Deck. Most are Sri Lankan, Indian and Malagasy.

I am informed also that training for seafarers on Deck and in Engine room are being provided by the Mauritius Maritime Training Academy in collaboration with the Shipping Division of my Ministry to replace these foreigners, of course, as far as possible.

Mr Bodha: I thank the hon. Minister for the answer. May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware in what harsh conditions the Mauritian crew lived during those months in Sri Lanka?
Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we all know, especially hon. Bodha – we were together – how harsh it was, not only for our crew over there, but in Mauritius, worldwide and everywhere, even for the Mauritian working on cruise vessels abroad, so many were stranded. It was not a normal situation. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, when they were tested COVID-19 positive, the Mauritius Shipping Corporation took care of all facilities with regard to medical care provided to them in Sri Lanka.

Mr Bodha: Given the fact that the crew was away from home for five months in harsh conditions, may I ask the hon. Minister, whether a special allowance cannot be granted to them? I think they have made a request to him. I think, on humanitarian grounds, being given that he says that the disturbance allowance is not payable – because of the contract – and the dry-docking allowance either.

Can he consider the possibility of a special allowance being given to them given the harsh conditions in which they spent five months in Sri Lanka?

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, COVID-19 pandemic caused major disturbance in all sectors. Many can recall, as I said rightly, not only in the shipping but also in the Police, everywhere. Now we start with COVID-19 Disturbance Allowance Programme; I know where to start and where to end with this. But anyway, this will be sent to the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Board for them to take stock of it and decide upon that.

Mr Bodha: I thank the hon. Minister for his time but may I ask him a last question?

Mr Speaker: Exceptionally!

Mr Bodha: May I know from the hon. Minister what is the status today of the 24 members of crew, whether they are still on board the ship; whether they have been granted the possibility of upgrading their skills at the school? What is the status of that crew today as he has already confirmed that foreigners are not going to be recruited unless there is no other possibility?

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I mentioned, actually we have eight foreigners working on board and out of the nine who signed off, six have been re-employed on board. So, it is an on-going programme on board with regard to training. To upgrade our crew on board Mauritius Trochetia, there are courses which are being done at the Mauritius Maritime Training Academy and this is done at the cost of the Mauritius Shipping Corporation.

Mr Speaker: So, next question!
ST MARTIN - PIG BREEDERS - POLLUTION & WATER SHORTAGE

(No. B/1097) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the pig breeders at St Martin, he will state –

(a) the number thereof operating thereat;
(b) if his Ministry is in presence of any representation in regard to pollution and water shortage;
(c) where matters stand as to the integrated plan for the –
   (i) waste disposal access, and
   (ii) infrastructural works in terms of road access, lightning, fencing, water availability and installation of camera thereat.

Mr Gobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that there are presently 174 pig breeders who have been allocated State land for pig breeding activities at St Martin at two different phases known as St Martin Phase I and St Martin Phase II, which are adjacent to each other.

There are 39 pig breeders in St Martin I on agricultural State land of an extent of 10 arpents. They fall under the purview of the Cooperatives Division of the Ministry of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives. These pig breeders had backyard pig rearing activities in regions such as Plaisance, Stanley, Camp Le Vieux and Rose Hill and had relocated to St Martin Phase I in 1983. They are re-grouped under the Plaisance Pig Credit and Marketing Cooperative Society. As for St Martin Phase II, there are 135 pig breeders on agricultural State land of an extent of 25 arpents.

Mr Speaker, Sir, following the outbreak of African swine fever in 2007, a policy decision was taken to establish St Martin Phase II in order to relocate pig breeders operating in their backyards in the regions of Albion, Roche Bois and other areas in the vicinity of Port Louis.

71 out of these 135 pig breeders have a valid lease agreement of a period of seven years. The remaining 65 breeders’ lease agreements have expired and will be renewed after a survey exercise by my Ministry and after obtaining a Parcel Identification Number from the Ministry of Housing and lands. The plots of land leased to these breeders vary from 10 to 30 perches.

Officers of the Land Use Division of my Ministry and the Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (FAREI) carry out sites visits at Phase II, that is, St
Martin II, at least four times a year to ascertain whether the lessees are occupying the plots of land and complying with other conditions of the lease agreement.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in relation to part (b) of the question on pollution, I wish to inform the House that several Government agencies, including my Ministry, the Ministry of Health and Wellness, the District Council of Black River and the Police de L’Environnement have received complaints with regard to odour and wastewater nuisances originating from St Martin Phase I.

Furthermore, FAREI has also received complaints with respect to the following issues, namely –

(a) Odour nuisance emanating from St Martin;
(b) Air pollution due to burning of domestic waste;
(c) Discharge of waste in Magenta Canal;
(d) Overflow of waste on access roads, and
(e) Erratic water supply.

The Central Water Authority (CWA) carried out a site visit in St Martin I in November 2020 and following an assessment, it was noted that the central wastewater facility thereat was not functioning properly.

In the light of this assessment, remedial action was taken by my Ministry and a contract for the cleaning and rehabilitation of the wastewater system at St Martin Phase I was awarded to contractor Prakash Foolchund Contracting Ltd for an amount of Rs3.5 m. The project was completed in October 2022 and since then, all wastes emanating from St Martin Phase I are channelled through this central waste treatment facility which is fully operational. Furthermore, FAREI is giving constant training to pig breeders on good husbandry practices at both St Martin I and II.

Mr Speaker, Sir, contrary to St Martin Phase I, St Martin Phase II is not provided with a wastewater treatment facility due to technical reasons. Therefore, at St Martin Phase II, most of the breeders are using an uncovered absorption pit to collect the waste. The remaining breeders have installed sceptic tanks. Around 20 of the breeders do not have a waste disposal system.

With a view to alleviating the problem of obstruction of drains caused by discharge of wastes at St Martin Phase I, my Ministry is proposing the construction of individual waste treatment plants for each breeder and maintenance of the new individual treatment plants at regular interval of three months. In that respect, a study will be carried out on the
feasibility and cost estimate for this project with technical specifications, following which funding will be identified in consultation with the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as for part (b) of the question concerning water shortage, I have been informed that such situation was prevailing during the dry season which had, in fact, affected the whole island. However, during the said dry season, the CWA was assisting the breeders through provision of water tank service.

Furthermore, St Martin Phase I also obtains water from a borehole. Necessary action is being taken by the CWA to connect the breeders in St Martin Phase I with domestic water supply. All the farms in St Martin Phase II are already connected to the domestic water supply. My Ministry is in the presence of a proposal from the Plaisance Pig Credit and Marketing Cooperative Society to review the penalty ceiling limit of borehole water to 3,000 m³ and to fix the daily water extraction per day by the said cooperative society to avoid payment of penalty. The said proposals are being looked into.

Mr Speaker, Sir, coming to part (c) of the question, in respect of an integrated plan at St Martin, my Ministry is proposing the setting up of a Technical Committee to look into the said integrated plan.

With regard to infrastructure on site, I am informed that the main road and internal access roads are asphalted and that street lighting is available. Some of the breeders have secured their respective plots with metallic fencing as well as CCTV cameras.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bhagwan: I would like to thank the hon. Minister for his reply which is very comprehensive, because this is a region with pig breeders, small breeders who have been facing lot of problems over the years and different governments have been trying to help them. Can I ask the hon. Minister, I am, through you, sending a request by the pig breeders if he can see and attend to these requests and whether he is agreeable to go and do a site visit with the co-operators and responsible authorities as well and the Ministry of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives to see de visu by himself the situation actually prevailing at the St Martin Site II?

Mr Gobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, we shall look into the matter jointly with my colleague, the Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bhagwan: A supplementary question. Being given that there are underground water tables in the region and also the villages of Canot, Gros Cailloux and Albion which
are affected with regard to these pollution problems, can I make a request to the Minister to at least see with the Minister of Environment what can be done to alleviate the problem of pollution pending the implementation of the projects mentioned by the Minister?

Mr Gobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, we shall indeed have a holistic approach to this long-standing problem around St-Martin. As I have stated in my reply, a number of initiatives are being implemented and the request of the cooperative society will be taken into consideration. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: MP Quirin!

GRA – HORSE RACING INDUSTRY – COST, TAXES & REVENUE

(No. B/1098) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Horse Racing Industry, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Horse Racing Division of the Gambling Regulatory Authority, information as to the –

(a) cost incurred by Government in connection with the organisation of horse racing, giving details thereof;

(b) amount of money collected by Government in terms of –

(i) taxes, and

(ii) other revenues therefrom in the years 2020, 2021 and 2022, and

(c) funds allocated to the Authority for each of the Financial Year 2020 to 2023.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, je remercie l’honorable membre pour cette question. J’ai été informé par la Gambling Regulatory Authority que la Horse Racing Division est entrée en fonction en janvier 2022 avec pour principal objectif de réglementer, contrôler et surveiller les courses hippiques à Maurice conformément à la section 15(a)(i) de la Gambling Regulatory Authority Act.

En ce qui concerne la partie (a) de la question, j’ai été informé que le coût encouru par le gouvernement par l’intermédiaire de la Horse Racing Division pour la saison des courses hippiques 2022 était de R 51,7 millions. Le détail des postes se présente comme suit –

(i) R 29,3 millions au titre des frais de laboratoire pour les tests d’échantillons avant et après les courses et hors compétition;
(ii) R 15,3 millions pour les honoraires des expatriés employés comme Head of Horse Racing, Stipendiary Stewards and Handicapper ;

(iii) R 5,2 millions pour l’équipement informatique, le mobilier, le matériel de bureau et d’autres dépenses annexes, et

(iv) R 1,9 millions pour les frais de personnel.

S’agissant de la partie (b) (i) concernant la collecte de taxes, les montants sont comme suit –

(i) pour l’année 2020 : R 476,2 millions ;

(ii) 2021 : 413,2 millions, et

(iii) 2022 : 446,4 millions.

Pour les autres revenus, à savoir les licences, les pénalités et autres –

(i) 2020 : R 58,6 millions ;

(ii) 2021 : R 57,3 millions ;

(iii) 2022 : R 53,4 millions.

S’agissant la partie (c) de la question concernant les montants alloués par le gouvernement, je vais parler en année fiscale parce que ce n’est pas en termes d’années calendaires –

(i) pour l’année financière 2020/2021 : R 43 millions ;

(ii) 2021/2022 : R 37,9 millions ;

(iii) 2022/2023 : R 92 millions.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Quirin : M. le président, les spécialistes de ce secteur avancent que les revenus sont à la baisse et les chiffres que vient de mentionner l’honorable ministre vont définitivement dans ce sens. De ce fait, honorable ministre peut-il nous dire quelles sont les mesures prises par son ministère pour lutter contre les paris illégaux qui constituent le principal fléau de ce secteur ?

Dr. Padayachy : M. le président, je laisse le soin aux régulateurs de par leur indépendance de proposer des mesures pour mieux contrôler les courses. De notre côté, nous, nous apportons tout notre soutien aux régulateurs pour mieux réguler ce secteur.

Donc, n’étant pas moi-même un spécialiste des courses, je l’ai dit plusieurs fois ici, je ne pourrais de prime abord, comme ça, sorti de nulle part, avancer des propositions pour
dire comment mieux réguler les courses parce que je ne suis pas un expert des courses. Merci.

Mr Quirin : M. le président, avec ce qui se passe actuellement au Champ-de-Mars, le public a perdu confiance dans cette industrie et principalement, avec la nouvelle compagnie organisatrice de courses. De ce fait, le ministre peut-il nous dire ce que son ministère compte faire pour restaurer cette confiance ?

Dr. Padayachy : M. le président, je pense que n’étant même pas un expert concernant les chevaux, je sais qu’il y a eu des problèmes avec Covid, on n’a pas pu organiser les courses avec le confinement, avec le fait qu’il fallait y avoir une distanciation, il y avait eu beaucoup de problèmes concernant l’organisation des courses. Par la suite, nous avons un nouvel organisateur qui est en train d’organiser les courses. Nous allons voir comment cela évolue et par la suite, nous ferons les recommandations au niveau de mon ministère avec la GRA.

Mr Speaker: MP Armance!

LIVESTOCK & LIVE CATTLES – IMPORTATION FROM RODRIGUES

(No. B/1099) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Meat Authority, information as to the number of live cattles and other livestock imported from Rodrigues since January 2022 to date.

Mr Gobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would refer the hon. Member to my reply given to Parliamentary Question B/848. I reiterate that the Livestock and Veterinary Division (LVD) of my Ministry has issued, from January 2022 to date, 41 movement permits to the Mauritius Meat Authority (MMA) following which, 842 cattle, 1,723 sheep and 1,562 goats have been moved from Rodrigues to Mauritius.

I wish to point out that in was in January 2022 that the restriction on the movement of animals from Rodrigues to Mauritius was partially lifted.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Armance: May I know from the Minister when was the last importation of cattle from Rodrigues and when will be the next one?

Mr Gobin: It all depends on the movement of the ship from Mauritius to Port Mathurin and back. I don’t have the exact date of the last voyage.
Mr Armance: Concernant l’embargo que le ministre lui-même vient de mentionner, pendant sa visite à l’île Rodrigues, le ministre avait mentionné qu’il allait enlever l’embargo sur l’importation de bétails à Rodrigues. Est-ce qu’il peut nous dire si oui ou non il va considérer à enlever l’embargo sur l’importation de bétails à Rodrigues ?

Mr Gobin: I reiterate that it was partially lifted in January 2022, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Now, concerning the complete lifting of the restriction, it will depend on the vaccination programme against the foot-and-mouth disease followed by a serosurveillance exercise. I wish to point out that the foot-and-mouth disease prevalence is estimated at around 10% right now in Rodrigues and there is a third vaccination programme which is ongoing since last month, that is, June 2023. One Vet Officer has moved to Rodrigues to help the two veterinary officers in Rodrigues for the said vaccination programme. Once this vaccination programme will be completed, a serosurveillance will be done and in the light of the result of the serosurveillance, then a decision will be taken whether to completely lift the restrictions or not depending on the results.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

SOCIAL SECURITY – ENLISTED DOCTORS – CONTRACT PERIOD

(No. B/1100) 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 the doctors enlisted by her Ministry, she will state the number thereof, indicating the contract period thereof.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that as at date, there are 316 medical practitioners whose services are retained by the Ministry on a sessional basis for a duration of one year renewable for another period of one year on the basis of satisfactory performance, conduct and upon mutual agreement.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, the contract of 200 doctors has expired since 28 May this year but they are continuing to work and prescribe dangerous drugs. May I ask the hon. Minister if ever there is a case of medical negligence, who will bear the responsibility? Is it a doctor or your Ministry?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: As you have rightly said, they are working. Needful is being done to renew their contract but I have been told that they have made representations before the Conciliation and Mediation Division of the Ministry of Labour and we are waiting for the outcome of the report but at the same time, we are trying to get information from the SLO to clarify all matters and a letter will be sent to them. Since they are working, everything is being looked at by the Ministry.
Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, it seems that it is a recurrent feature at the Ministry, that is, the last time the contract was to be renewed, it was renewed after six months, and doctors…

Mr Speaker: So, what is the question?

Mr Ameer Meea: Will the hon. Minister agree with me that this situation, that a doctor has to wait for six months for his contract to be renewed, is a humiliating one, because they are doing a noble job…

Mr Speaker: Let the Minister reply!

Mr Ameer Meea: …and also…

Mr Speaker: Let the Minister reply!

Mr Ameer Meea: It is also tantamount to an infringement…

Mr Speaker: Are you making a speech now?

Mr Ameer Meea: …to labour laws!

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: I do not agree with the hon. Member because I have been told that out 316 medical practitioners, the contract of 72 medical practitioners has already been renewed in January and February 2023, and offer of employment for at least 10 medical practitioners will expire in August, September and October this year. I agree with you that there are some 234 medical practitioners whose contracts have expired, but as I have said, we are looking into the matter. I am sure that needful will be done in the months to come.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, M. le président. PQ B/1101 !

L'OISEAU DU PARADIS RELAY SHELTER – CARE GIVERS’ DUTIES

(No. B/1101) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the 43 care givers currently serving 12 residents at Relay Shelter Cap Malheureux, also known as l'Oiseau du Paradis, she will state the duties assigned thereto.

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the National Children’s Council that there are presently 38 child care givers working on a roster basis at the Cap Malheureux Relay Shelter instead of 43, as mentioned by the hon. Member.

I am further informed that the number of residents admitted thereat as at date stands at 20. I wish to inform the House that there are actually 14 care givers who are...
suspended. Moreover, the National Children’s Council was previously managing the Notre Dame Relay Centre and 14 June of this year, the management of that shelter has been handed over to a NGO. 13 care givers who were working over there have been redeployed at the Cap Malheureux Relay Shelter. Consequently, the services of these child care givers have been retained in order to consolidate the existing workforce.

Mr Speaker, Sir, according to the National Children Council, in addition to the normal duties performed, the care givers are also called upon to accompany and take care of a child who has been admitted in hospital around the clock basis, to work with residents with serious behavioural problems on a one to one basis, to cater for those who are on vacation, sick leaves or casual leaves. Since the number of residents fluctuates constantly, Mr Speaker, Sir, the services of these care givers are required in order to maintain a child to child care giver ratio. Thank you.

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, M. le président. La ministre, peut-elle indiquer à la Chambre si cette situation de sureffectif chronique du personnel découle d’une planification lourdement défaillante lors du transfert de gestion de l’abri de Notre Dame à une ONG, il y a plus d’un mois ?

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, not at all, to be putting it like this, because I have just explained in my main answer that there is a child to child care giver ratio that has to be respected. The duties of the care giver are not limited to a two line scheme of service. It is a very extensive list of services that are delivered to the residents of the Cap Malheureux or any other residential institution for that matter.

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, M. le président. J’ai bien écouté la réponse de la ministre, mais je maintiens, je suis en possession du roster de Cap Malheureux, et je maintiens qu’il y a une situation de sureffectif chronique dans ce shelter. Puis-je demander à la ministre de fournir des éclaircissements sur la décision de ne pas déployer le personnel de l’abri de Notre Dame vers d’autres départements ou services au moment du transfert de la gestion à une ONG, étant donné – écoutez bien – que le sureffectif a un impact…

Mr Speaker: No! Now…

Ms Anquetil: ….sur les enfants placés…

Mr Speaker: …you are going too much. Put your question!

Ms Anquetil: Merci, M. le président.

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: No, Mr Speaker, Sir, once again, the hon. Member is not correct in what she is purporting in the House. I reiterate – like you maintain, I maintain
too – that the care giver ratio to children at the moment, at Cap Malheureux Relay Shelter is adequate and they are fulfilling what is required of them. Any policy or any decision of redeployment of those care givers is not going to come through one of your recommendations.

We have, at the level of the Ministry, capable officers who are in charge of a specific unit which is the Child Development Unit of the Ministry. Those shelters are run by the National Children Council. The decision to redeploy or reallocate any care giver or any human resource, as we say, will be up to them. They will be very well informed decisions as well. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

**SOCIETE VALLÉE DE STE CROIX– MORCELLEMENT PROJECT**

(No. B/1102) 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 project for the residential *morcellement* at Société Vallée de Ste Croix, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to where matters stand, indicating –

(a) if there was any tampering of natural drainage path thereat, and

(b) the number of Building and Land Use Permits granted therefor.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Land Drainage Authority that the project for the residential *morcellement* at Société Vallée de Ste Croix is located upstream of Vallée Le Cornu which has been declared as high risk flood prone area.

I am also informed that a Letter of Intent was granted by the then Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning on 08 June 2018 to the Société Vallée de Ste Croix for subdivision of a portion of land of an approximate extent of 9 to 3000 m² into 78 plots plus one green space. The proposed *morcellement* was overlain over the existing GIS data set available at the Land Drainage Authority, namely the digital elevation model and the natural path. The said site is found to be crossed by several natural drainage paths. The site downstream of the proposed *morcellement* has been impacted during the past flooding events, whereby it was observed that clearing of the subject *morcellement* site at Vallée de Ste Croix has obstructed the natural drainage path and the Land Drainage Authority has informed the Municipal Council of Port Louis accordingly.
Mr Speaker, Sir, in a letter dated 13 April 2023, the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development, National Development Unit has informed my Ministry that the *morcellement* project at *Vallée Le Cornu* will disrupt the natural drainage system and accentuate the flooding downstream. As such, the Government has taken the decision to put on hold the *morcellement* project in that region. Subsequently, my Ministry has, on 20 April 2023, instructed the Municipal City Council of Port Louis not to issue any Building and Land Use Permit for the said *morcellement* until further notice. However, as per the Land Drainage Authority, the natural drainage path has not yet been restored by the promoter.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am further informed by the Municipal Council of Port Louis that the application for 11 permits has been received for the specific region and no Building and Land Use Permit has been issued in line the instruction from the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development.

*Mrs Luchmun Roy:* Thank you, hon. Minister. I have received numerous complaints from future inhabitants of that region who have invested a lot of money for that plot of land and they have been inquiring and waiting for answer as well. May I request the hon. Minister to kindly advise what the way forward is? What is he proposing as Minister towards those inhabitants of that region? Thank you.

*Dr. Husnoo:* Actually, the remedial works that have to be done by the promoters. When the remedial work is acceptable to the LDA, then I think that we can reconsider afterwards. But until these works are not done, it is a bit difficult to reconsider the issuing of the permits now.

*Mr Speaker:* Put a question!

*Mrs Luchmun Roy:* Yes, one last question to the hon. Minister. Can the hon. Minister confirm to the House that no reinstatement work has been done following the different site visits and the different reports of the LDA?

*Dr. Husnoo:* That is what I have been told, yes.

*Mr Speaker:* Next question!

**PUBLICS HOSPITALS – IPC SCORE**

(No. B/1103) *Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)* asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the public hospitals, he will state the Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) score of each hospital.
Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the National Infection and Prevention Control (IPC) Committee was set up in May 2021. The main objective of the National IPC Committee is to provide strategic guidance and directives on infection prevention and control activities to ensure that the risks caused by transmission of preventable infection are minimized.

In 2022, a national action plan on IPC was written in collaboration with WHO to address the gaps that were identified.

Mr Speaker, Sir, assessment on IPC is carried out as follows –

- By the National IPC Committee: twice a year (March/December);
- By the World Health Organisation: once yearly (July).

In 2021, the National IPC Committee carried out assessment four times, with mean score at 64% while the WHO carried out the assessment on two occasions with the mean score at 62%.

In 2022, the National IPC Committee undertook the assessment thrice, with mean score at 68% and the WHO obtained a mean score of 78% during its assessment.

In 2023, the National IPC Committee carried out an assessment in March 2023 and the mean score was 59%. The assessment by the WHO is in progress.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that according to the national checklist, the IPC score of each hospital in March 2023 was as follows –

- 63% at Dr. Bruno Cheong Hospital;
- 63% at Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital;
- 48% at Victoria Hospital;
- 72% at Dr. A.G. Jeetoo Hospital, and
- 52% at Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Hospital.

Mr David: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister mentioned about a National IPC Committee. May I ask him to clarify whether there is an IPC Department with a dedicated team within his Ministry to assess the IPC targets and measures?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have a National IPC Committee and the Regional IPC Committee. So, the task of the members of the National IPC Committee is to –

- set up planned and relevant objectives in keeping with IPC;
develop and regularly update IPC guidelines and to review and approve IPC policies;
• develop a system to monitor infection control;
• coordinate continuous training;
• ensure access to products essential to IPC;
• review epidemiological surveillance data;
• coordinate outbreak investigations, and
• communicate and cooperate with other committees.

So, this is for the National IPC Committee. It is chaired by the Director of Health Services, co-chaired by the Deputy Permanent Secretary and all the different Directors of the Ministry.

Then, the Regional IPC Committee is at the hospital level, with the Regional Health Director and the Nursing Administrators and so on.

Mr David: Mr Speaker, Sir, IPC is all about infectious diseases. May I know from the hon. Minister how many Infectious Disease Medical Specialist Doctors are employed by his Ministry?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ministry has only one Infectious and Control Specialist in the service. But this control of infection is dealt at all different levels, be it from the nursing staff, from the doctors working in the wards, from the nursing officers working in the operation theatre in the IPC. So, it does not mean that you need to have many specialists in infectious control but you need to train all grades of staff for infection control.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

FINANCIAL SERVICES COMMISSION – STAFF SALARY REVIEW EXERCISE

(No. B/1104) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance whether, in regard to the salary review for the staff of the Financial Services Commission, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commission, information as to where matters stand.

The Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation (Mr D. Balgobin): Mr Speaker, Sir, at the very outset, I wish to inform the House that the last salary review exercise was undertaken at the Financial Services Commission in 2016. The next report was due in January 2021.
I am informed by the FSC that following a procurement exercise launched in January 2022, a Salary Commissioner was appointed on 03 June 2022. The terms of reference of the Salary Commissioner included the following –

(a) to conduct a review of the existing salary and terms and conditions of employment;

(b) to carry out a review of the existing employee handbook and code of conduct, and

(c) to provide recommendations with respect to review of organisational structure, including manpower plan.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed that the Salary Commissioner started the review exercise on 22 June 2022 and all staff had the opportunity to make their representations. The Salary Commissioner submitted his report to the Board in March 2023. The report was considered at the level of the Board over several meetings. The report was due in January 2021 and the review in the salary would have considered the loss in purchasing power up to 2020, which would have amounted to 14.65%.

However, the Salary Commissioner recommended to include the loss of the purchasing power of 2022. The loss of the purchasing power up to 2022 was computed at 27.03%. Consequently, the recommendation of the Salary Commissioner was to grant an increase of 23.67%, taking into consideration the Government compensation of 3.36% which was already paid up. Hence, all staff on substantive capacity will be granted an increase 23.67%.

The final version of the report was approved by the Board of FSC on 22 June 2023 and the process is still ongoing administratively.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed by the FSC that the report on the revised salary and terms and conditions of employment have been imparted to the staff on 29 June 2023. Staffs were invited to accept the report through an Option Form with a deadline of 12 July 2023. At the expiry of the said deadline, save and except for one staff, all staff have exercised the acceptance of the report.

Mr Uteem: Thank you. I understand that the hon. Minister is not the substantive Minister but will he consider tabling a copy of the report of the Salary Commissioner?

Mr Balgobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, in my reply I said that the report was approved by the Board on 22 June and the process administratively is still ongoing. So, it is not proper to table any report as they have not completed the whole process at the level of the FSC.
**Mr Uteem:** One last question. One of the main problems which the staff had with the report is that it was to take effect from January 2023, whereas the hon. Minister, himself, mentioned that review was due as far as back January 2021. So, may I know from the hon. Minister, who I know is not the substantive Minister, whether this question as to the date of application of the report has now been resolved between management and staff?

**Mr Balgobin:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have also asked some information on this particular topic raised by the hon. Member and as I have mentioned that once the report was approved by the Board and that the process is ongoing, these are the discussions happening to finalise the effective date of the report. I am sure once it is done, my colleague, the Minister could eventually answer the hon. Member.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question!

**MEDICAL NEGLIGENCE – ALLEGED CASES – INVESTIGATION**

(No. B/1105) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to medical negligence, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as the number of alleged cases thereof investigated, since 2022 to date, indicating the –

(a) number of officers found guilty thereof;

(b) disciplinary actions taken, and

(c) department/s concerned therewith.

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Medical Negligence Standing Committee (MNSC) has been constituted in June 2020 to carry out preliminary investigations into cases of alleged medical negligence in public health institutions. The objective of the MNSC is to expedite matters and to ascertain as to whether there has been any act of medical negligence during medical treatment and hospitalisation of a patient.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that since the constitution of the MNSC in June 2020, a total of 138 cases have been investigated. For the period January 2022 to June 2023, a total of 68 cases have been investigated by the MNSC.

Out of the total of 138 cases investigated, the MNSC has concluded that 37 cases need to be referred to the Medical Council of Mauritius and Nursing Council for further investigation and appropriate actions as deemed necessary.

Following the investigations at the level of the Medical Council of Mauritius –
• 19 cases have been set aside;
• 5 cases have been referred back to my Ministry;
• 1 case has been referred to the Medical Disciplinary Tribunal;
• 1 Warning and 6 Severe Warnings have been issued;
• 1 Suspension has been effective, and
• 4 cases are still under investigation.

Disciplinary actions are taken by the Public Service Commission following recommendation of the Statutory Bodies through which delegation of powers is entrusted as per PSC Regulations.

With regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed that the 138 cases investigated by the MNSC pertain to the departments of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Paediatrics, General Surgery and Orthopaedics.

**Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha:** M. le président, les négligences médicales ont des conséquences graves comme perte de vie ou séquelles permanentes. Je demande donc à l’honorable ministre si son ministère a une stratégie pour réduire et protéger la population contre ces négligences médicales parce que le nombre ne baisse pas au fil des années qui démontre clairement que la stratégie actuelle ne marche pas.

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to whether the number of cases referred and whether the number of cases that have medical negligence has been going up since the last few days; in fact they have been going down and the number of cases with proved medical negligence has been going down for the last three-four years. Now the question is – what is the strategy? Obviously, the strategy would be how we improve the service delivery in terms of so many issues – in terms of capacity building, Information and Technology (IT). So these are being undertaken at a pace and obviously with time, we will have different services but that takes quite some time to improve on all the different aspects so that we can get a better service in the public health sector.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question!

**ILLICIT DRUGS CONSUMPTION – YOUNGSTERS’ ADMISSION IN HOSPITALS – TREATMENT & ACTIONS**

(No. B/1106) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the consumption of illicit drugs, he will state the number of young persons, under the age of 20, admitted in the five regional hospitals and other related centers since January 2020 to date, gender wise, indicating the –
(a) treatment provided in relation thereto, and
(b) remedial actions taken in relation thereto.

**Dr. Jagutpal**: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the consumption of illicit drugs, the number young persons under the age of 20 admitted in public hospitals and residential drug treatment and rehabilitation centres since January 2020 to June 2023 is 479 that is, 444 males and 35 females.

In Public Hospitals, 300 admissions, that is 272 males and 28 females, have been recorded from January 2020 to June 2023 in regard to consumption of illicit drugs for this age group. For the same period, the number of admissions for males in residential drug treatment and rehabilitation centres are as follows –

a. 100 at Nenuphar Centre at Montagne Longue;

b. 36 at Mahebourg Detoxification and Rehabilitation Centre, and

c. 36 at Frangipane Centre, which is operational since July 2021.

And with regard to female patients, 7 were admitted at the Centre Orchidée which became operational in July 2022.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question about treatment provided, substance use disorder patients in the centres of the Harm Reduction Unit are seen by a multi-disciplinary team comprising of Doctors, Specialised Nurses, Psychologists, Psychiatrists and also Non-Governmental Organisations and Social Workers to ensure their holistic management.

The medical management of substance use disorder patients is tailor made to the need of each patient. The different treatments available in our hospitals/centres are as follows –

a. Detoxification with suboxone in the context of suboxone/naltrexone treatment;

b. Methadone Substitution Therapy Programme, and

c. Addressing comorbidities related to substance use disorders like HIV infection, Hepatitis infections and sexually transmitted diseases and psychiatric comorbidities are also addressed.

All these programmes are in line with the protocol - *Protocol de Prise en Charge de l’Usage de Drogue*, which is in place since March 2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, patients also undergo psycho-social management and rehabilitation which encompasses the following –
a. Preparation to stay for treatment and other routine activities contributing to a successful rehabilitation, including daily hygiene;

b. Physical exercises;

c. Indoor games;

d. Literacy and numeracy exercises;

e. Creative arts;

f. Counseling activities;

g. Psychosocial support;

h. Agriculture and gardening, and

i. Relapse prevention sessions.

After treatment and care at regional hospitals and related centres, the follow-up of patients is carried out at the regional hospitals and Methadone Day Care Centres and Addiction Treatment Units thereafter.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (b) of the question about remedial actions for this target group, the following measures have been taken by my Ministry –

a. Drug use prevention activities in line with the National Drug Control Master Plan 2019–2023. Prevention is carried out in educational and training institutions, the community including Correctional Youth Centres and Rehabilitation Youth Centres and the workplace;

b. The National Mass Media/Social Media Campaign is carried out targeting adolescent and young adults;

c. The Youth Empowerment Programme Against Drugs, launched in 2021;

d. The setting up of a Drug Users Administrative Panel in order to give the population, including young drug users, an opportunity to rehabilitate and re-integrate the mainstream society.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, selon un rapport du bureau de l’ audit intitulé ‘Enhancing The Effectiveness of Interventions Related To Drug Demand And Arm Reduction’ datant d’avril de cette année, mention est faite que plus de 150 jeunes de 15 à 19 ans sont admis chaque année dans les hôpitaux pour des complications liées à la consommation de drogue. De ce fait, le ministre peut-il nous dire quelle est la stratégie à part de ce qu’il a mentionné dans sa réponse initiale, que son ministère a mise en place pour aider ces jeunes à sortir de cet enfer et pour ne pas rechuter à l’avenir ?
Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, so the different treatment and different program being proposed as I already mentioned. Now, the question is whether we have to redevise another strategy. So we will be having a new Masterplan – the National Drug Control Masterplan 2019-2023 and in that Masterplan we are going to see again what is happening in terms of the people who use drugs, Intravenous Drugs and then we can have another strategy for the next five years.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, au niveau des jeunes de 14 ans, dans ce même rapport, on fait état que de sept admissions par an, par rapport aux jeunes de 14 ans. De ce fait, le ministre peut-il nous dire ce qui est fait actuellement par son ministère pour inverser cette tendance, cette situation, surtout que le rapport du bureau de l’audit a fait un constat d’échec du programme Get Connected pourtant implanté dans 24 écoles secondaires?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have to look at it again with the different stakeholders, Ministry of Education and the National Secretariat Against Drugs, the NDS as well. We have to work it again and then probably I will be able to give an appropriate answer.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Dr. Boolell: Next question?

Mr Speaker: Next! Your…

Dr. Boolell: No supplementary! Next question!

Mr Speaker: No supplementary!

RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR – CLUSTER MUNITIONS CONVENTION

(No. B/1107) Dr A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, he will state if Mauritius is a signatory thereof and, if so, indicate the stand of Mauritius on the use of these types of munitions in the Russia-Ukraine war.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for having asked this question which I am sure will help me to enlighten the House on this issue.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions is a legally binding international treaty that prohibits the use, the production, the transfer and the stock piling of Cluster Munitions in accordance with human rights and humanitarian law. The commonest type of cluster munitions is air dropped or ground launch explosive weapons that eject explosive bomblets that kill indiscriminately over a wide area and are known to linger unexploded
for years and then suddenly detonate causing life loss and injury to civilians and infrastructure alike. Certain cluster munitions can disperse chemical or biological weapons.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Convention on Cluster Munitions entered into force on 01 August 2010. To date, the Convention on Cluster Munitions has 111 State parties and 12 signatories. The USA, Ukraine and the Russian Federation are neither party nor signatory to the Convention. Mauritius deposited its instrument of accession to the convention on 01 October 2015. Accordingly, the convention entered into force for Mauritius on 01 April 2016 pursuant to its Article 17 (2). Mauritius, therefore, is a State party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions has been incorporated into Mauritian law through the Anti-Personnel Mines and Cluster Munitions Prohibition Act of 2016. The law strictly prohibits cluster munitions among other level weapons and provides for hefty punishment for offenders. The law also provides for extra territorial jurisdiction by Mauritian courts where the alleged offence has been committed outside Mauritius and that the person to be charged of the offence is either a natural or legal person of Mauritian nationality or where the offence affects any natural or legal person in Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius is among those countries that enforce a complete ban on cluster munitions by virtue of being a State party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. It is also the result of our adherence to human rights approach to address the humanitarian consequences and unacceptable harm to civilians caused by cluster munitions. Mauritius, therefore, subscribes to a complete prohibition of such weapons that cause excessive victims, including among civilian populations and infrastructure.

We recognise, Mr Speaker, Sir, that disarmament is an essential part of conflict prevention and is paramount to achieving lasting peace. Therefore, Mauritius will continue to work with like-minded countries and the Secretariat of the Convention in Geneva to sensitize stakeholders and non-state parties to the convention against the use of cluster munitions in any military conflicts and to reserve all disputes in a peaceful manner and in accordance with established norms. We also follow closely the work of the Secretariat of the Convention for the universalization of the convention; the surest way to achieve a world ban on cluster munitions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the light of the foregoing, Mauritius is against the use by any party of cluster munitions at anytime and anywhere and in any circumstances. Accordingly, we call on all countries, whether or not signatory to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, not to frustrate the aims and objectives of the convention and to be
compliant with International Humanitarian Law. Accordingly, Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius deplores the transfer of any such weapons to a third-party for eventual use by the latter. Thank you.

**Dr. Boolell:** Thank you very much, hon. Minister. I subscribe to the comprehensive reply given by the hon. Minister, but can I ask him whether, – well, of course, we all expressed our deep-seated concern – he had meetings with the Russian Ambassador and with the US Ambassador to express our deep-seated concern, notwithstanding the fact that we are working with like-minded countries, of course?

**Mr Ganoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I think the answer to the hon. Member’s question is already found in the reply to the question. I have already replied, in fact, to this question, Mr Speaker, Sir. I will repeat the stand of our country is that we call on all parties not to use such weapons in any circumstances, whether against a foreign country or within one’s own territory or in any occupied zone of one’s own territory. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have gone far enough also because the call of Mauritius with regard to the conflict in Ukraine has been that all parties should renounce the use of cluster munitions, which as I just said, is an internationally banned weapon and both countries should accede to the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

This is our call, Mr Speaker, Sir, cluster munitions stockpiles should have been declared and destroyed and must be destroyed as soon as it is safe to do so. International support must be given to enable clearance efforts. Mr Speaker, Sir, our call also goes in the direction that governments worldwide should continue to condemn the use of these munitions in Ukraine and elsewhere, and call for all States to join the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

**Dr. Boolell:** Hon. Minister, you forgot that I was also Minister of Foreign Affairs. I am not asking that we have to punch above our weight. I have asked a specific question. Did you have a meeting with the Ambassador of US and the Ambassador of Russia to express our deep-seated concern?

**Mr Ganoo:** Well, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just said that the stand of Mauritius is that we are not only a State party to this convention. We have also incorporated...

**Ms Anquetil:** *Mais il ne répond pas à la question!*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Ganoo:** Let me finish.

**Dr. Boolell:** *Zot in zwenn, zot pan zwenn?*
Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Ganoo: Let me finish!

Ms Anquetil: Repon kestion la.

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! What is happening?

Ms Anquetil: Mais il ne répond pas à la question!

Mr Speaker: Who are you?

Ms Anquetil: Reponn kestion!

Mr Speaker: Who are you?

Mr Ganoo: We have also…

Mr Toussaint: Ambassador!

Mr Speaker: Who are you? Ambassador?

Dr. Boolell: Minister!

An hon. Member: Ambassador ki repon sa! Pa p don tiket la!

Mr Ganoo: We have also domesticated this convention. We have incorporated it in our law since 2016, Mr, Speaker, Sir. So, the stand of Mauritius is very clear with regard to this convention and with regard to the parties involved in the conflict.

Mr Toussaint: Li bien kone.

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. In his reply, the hon. Minister informed the House that USA, Russia, Ukraine are not signatory of the convention. But can they act regardlessly under the cluster munitions?

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: Li pa konpran kestion la!

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the answer to this …

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Toussaint, what is happening?

Mr Toussaint: Sorry.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the answer to this question is that regardless of whoever has joined the Convention on Cluster Monitoring, the rules of International
Humanitarian Law must be respected. Regardless of whether you are a State party or not, the rules of International Humanitarian Law must be respected by all parties to any armed conflict, Mr Speaker, Sir.

In fact, media reports are to the effect that Russia has been using these weapons since the beginning of this military conflict in Ukraine, but the media reports also are to the effect that Ukraine has also used its own ex-Soviet stockpile of cluster bombs. But the nature and the characteristic of these weapons, Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have just said, is that these weapons can scatter 10th or 100th of explosive sub munitions over a wide area and these sub munitions do not explode on delivery, but they are left sinking in water, in muddy areas or in soft grounds and can explode years or decades after, and can injure or harm children or civilians who can come and pick up these munitions, Mr Speaker, Sir.

This is why adhering to the rules of war – there is a principle called the rules of war which is strictly required, Mr Speaker, Sir. These rules are, in fact, designed to balance military necessity and humanitarian considerations, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The use of such type of weapons, in fact, breaches International Humanitarian Law. This is the answer to the hon. Member’s question because the use of these weapons, Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, breaches two principles; the principle of distinction which upholds the need in an armed conflict to distinguish between combatants, soldiers and civilians, and also another principle called the principal of proportionality which upholds the role of indiscriminate attacks.

Mr Speaker Sir, having said this, let me just finish on one point. According to me, Mr Speaker, Sir, by way of the declaration of President Biden on 07 July at the NATO Summit, we all are conscious and are aware of what declaration I am referring to. In fact, the US on that day sent a very poor message to the world, especially to countries who were not yet parties to the convention, but, fortunately, the declaration of President Biden did not erode the fundamental value and importance of this convention.

Mr Speaker, Sir, any modern nation using cluster ammunition loses its moral leadership under International Humanitarian Law and Practices.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, the following questions have been withdrawn. Parliamentary Questions B/1109, B/1113, B/1116, B/1121 and B/1133. 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.

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Private Recruitment Agencies Bill (No. XII of 2023) was read a first time.

Second Reading

THE FINANCE (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL

(No. XI of 2023)

Order for second reading read.

(3.40 p.m.)

The Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development (Dr. R. Padayachy): Mr Speaker, Sir, I move that the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (No. XI of 2023) be read a second time.

The Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill No. XI of 2023 provides for the implementation of measures announced in the Budget Speech 2023-2024 and its Annex, and for matters connected, consequential or incidental thereto.

The Bill brings amendments to 90 enactments which cover the 3 themes of the Budget, namely –

(a) Strengthening the Foundations of our Economy;

(b) Continuing the Transformation of Mauritius into a Sustainable Economy, and

(c) The Future We Deserve.

Mr, Speaker, Sir, the main amendments contained in the Bill will be explained.

I will now speak on the main amendments which relate to Strengthening the Foundations of our Economy.
A. STRENGTHENING THE FOUNDATIONS OF OUR ECONOMY

Advertisements Regulation Act

Clause 2 amends the Advertisements Regulation Act to provide that the fee payable on an advertising structure will be reduced by half as from 01 January 2024.

Allied Health Professionals Council Act

Clause 3 amends the Allied Health Professionals Council (AHPC) Act to provide, inter alia, for–

(a) a representative of the Ministry responsible for the subject of finance to be a member of the AHPC, and

(b) application for registration as an allied health professional to be considered as approved in case the AHPC does not determine the application within 30 working days.

Asset Recovery Act

Clause 6 amends the Asset Recovery Act to –

(a) impose the requirement of keeping documents beyond the prescribed timeline in cases where a restraining order or restriction order has been granted, and

(b) exempt the Asset Recovery Investigation Division of the Financial Intelligence Unit from payment of any duty, tax or registration fee pertaining to seizure of assets.

Bank of Mauritius

Clause 8 amends the Bank of Mauritius Act to clarify that transfers from the Special Reserve Fund are no longer warranted.

Banking Act, Landlord and Tenant Act and Mauritius Cane Industry Authority Act

Clauses 9, 43 and 45 amend the Banking Act, Landlord and Tenant Act and Mauritius Cane Industry Authority Act, respectively, to replace the term “Repo Rate” by “Key Rate” in the context of the implementation of the new monetary policy framework.

Civil Aviation Act

Clause 12 amends the Civil Aviation Act to increase the Passenger Fee with effect from 01 January 2024 and applicable fines for offences made under the Act.

Clinical Trials Act
Clause 14 amends Clinical Trial Act to, amongst others –

(a) review the composition of the Clinical Research Regulatory Council (CRRC), and

(b) provide for the determination of an application for clinical trials within 30 working days.

**Companies Act**

Clause 15 amends the Companies Act to, amongst others –

(a) provide that listed companies shall have a minimum of 25 percent of women on their boards to promote gender equality;

(b) require a company to send its annual report to shareholders at least 21 days, instead of 14 days, prior to the annual meeting, and

(c) enable a company to send its annual report and financial statements electronically coupled with a right for shareholders to request for a hard copy of the documents.

**Construction Industry Development Board Act**

Clause 16 amends the Construction Industry Development Board Act to, *inter-alia*, exempt foreign contractors and consultants from the requirement of sub-contracting to local firms in cases where no local consultant or local contractor has the necessary experience or expertise.

**Dental Council Act**

Clause 22 amends the Dental Council Act to, *inter-alia* –

(a) review the composition of the Dental Council, and

(b) provide for application for registration to be considered as approved if the application is not determined within 30 working days.

**Economic Development Board Act**

Clause 24 amends the Economic Development Board Act to, amongst others –

(a) allow professionals from all sectors to be granted occupation permit provided that they draw a monthly basic salary of at least Rs30,000;

(b) provide for the establishment of a National Contact Point, under the EDB, in line with OECD guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct.
(c) open the Young Professional Occupation Permit to all fields of study, and

(d) enlarge the objectives of the Premium Investor Scheme with a view to allowing the implementation of projects under an Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) framework.

**Finance and Audit Act**

Clause 29 amends the Finance and Audit Act to provide for, *inter-alia*, statements to be prepared by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly in line with IPSAS.

**Financial Intelligence and Anti-Money Laundering Act**

Clause 31 amends the Financial Intelligence and Anti-Money Laundering Act to exempt the FIU from payment of registration duty or fee in respect of any document signed or executed by the FIU.

**Financial Services Act**

Clause 32 amends the Financial Services Act to, amongst others –

(a) empower the FSC to take enforcement actions in case of breach of AML/CFT legislation;

(b) provide that the FSC can enter into arrangements and extend assistance to a foreign supervisory institution provided that confidentiality requirements are met;

(c) enhance the role of Management Companies with respect to ensuring compliance of their clients with relevant laws, and

(d) provide for the electronic filing of documents by licensees.

**Freeport Act**

Clause 34 amends the Freeport Act to add minting and refining of precious metals as new freeport activities.

**Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2021**

Clause 30 amends the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2021 to facilitate the winding up of the Fishermen Investment Trust.

**Immigration Act 2022**

Clause 37 amends the Immigration Act 2022 to, amongst others –

(a) allow for the Young Professional Occupation Permit to be opened to all fields of study;
(b) allow a non-citizen and his family to be granted a residence permit on the acquisition of property of a minimum price of USD 375,000 under the Sustainable City Scheme, and

(c) grant a residence permit to a retired non-citizen and his family on the acquisition of a property in a Property Development Scheme (PDS) project relating to senior living.

**Independent Broadcasting Authority Act**

Clause 39 amends the Independent Broadcasting Authority Act to allow foreign investors to invest in companies holding a Subscription Television Direct to Home Satellite Broadcasting and Rebroadcasting Licence.

**Insolvency Act**

Clause 40 amends the Insolvency Act to, inter-alia, clarify that a liquidator cannot set aside any transfer from an insolvent party to a non-insolvent party unless there is a clear and convincing evidence that the insolvent party made the transfer to defraud the entity to which the insolvent party was indebted.

**Insurance Act**

Clause 41 amends the Insurance Act to enable the Insurance Industry Compensation Fund to provide for appropriate non-pecuniary assistance to victims of hit and run road accidents.

**Land (Duties and Taxes Act)**

Clause 42 amends the Land (Duties and Taxes) Act to, amongst others, –

- re-introduce the Arrears Payment Scheme for another year. A debtor will benefit from the full waiver of interest and penalties if he settles his debt on or before 31 March 2024, and

- grant exemption of land transfer tax and registration duty on the transfer of immovable property from Wellness-Related Activities provided the company holds an Investment Certificate issued by the EDB.

**Medical Council Act**

Clause 50 amends the Medical Council Act to, *inter alia* –

- review the composition of the Medical Council, and
(b) provide for application for registration as a medical professional to be considered as approved in case the Medical Council does not determine the application within 30 working days.

**Merchant Shipping Act**

Clause 51 amends the Merchant Shipping Act to, amongst others –

(a) make it mandatory for the Director of Shipping to hold preliminary inquiry in case there is a loss of life, presumed loss of life or serious injury to any person as a result of a shipping casualty, and

(b) empower the Director of Shipping to recover from the owner of a ship all Government expenses incurred in respect of measures taken to prevent any damage to the environment or mitigate any hazards to safety of navigation.

**Morcellement Act**

Clause 52 amends the Morcellement Act to exempt the Mauritius Investment Corporation Ltd from the payment of processing and morcellement fee.

**Meat Act**

Clause 49 amends the Meat Act to allow the Mauritius Meat Authority to, amongst others, purchase or import livestock for slaughter, resale or slaughter and resale.

**National Agricultural Products Regulatory Office Act**

Clause 53 amends the National Agricultural Products Regulatory Office Act to enlarge the definitions of “tea” and “tobacco”.

**Non-Citizens (Employment Restriction) Act**

Clause 58 amends the Non-Citizens (Employment Restriction) Act to -

(a) make it mandatory for applications for work permit to be made on NELS, and

(b) introduce a silence is consent principle of 30 working days for the determination of applications for work permit.

**Non-Citizens (Property Restriction) Act**

Clause 59 amends the Non-Citizens (Property Restriction) Act to review the criteria relating to sale of Immovable Property outside the Schemes to Resident Non-citizens.

**Nursing Council Act**
Clause 60 amends the Nursing Council Act to, amongst others –

(a) review the composition of the Nursing Council, and

(b) provide for application for registration as a nursing professional to be considered as approved in case the Council does not determine the application within 30 working days.

**Ombudsperson for Financial Services Act**

Clause 62 amends the Ombudsperson for Financial Services Act to exclude financial services not licensed by the Bank of Mauritius and the Financial Services Commission from the purview of the Ombudsperson for Financial Services.

**Ports Act**

Clause 65 amends the Ports Act to increase the fines applicable when a person fails to comply with or contravenes any other provision of the Ports Act.

**Private Pension Schemes Act**

Clause 66 amends the Private Pension Schemes Act to, amongst others –

(a) provide for settlement of unclaimed benefits by a beneficiary’s assignee, legal heirs or legal representative, seven years or more after death of the beneficiary;

(b) enable the FSC to maintain records of abandoned funds so as to ensure the refund of these funds to the legal representative as well, if need arises, and

(c) introduce micro pensions through the setting up of a private pension scheme targeting the informal sector.

**Securities Act**

Clause 74 amends the Securities Act to enable funds to invest in loans or similar debt instruments.

**Shooting and Fishing Leases Act**

Clause 75 amends the Shooting and Fishing Leases Act to, *inter alia*, have better control on the Biodiversity and Ecosystem restoration activities, eco-tourism activity, Forest Management activity and Agroforestry activity on leased State land.

**Small Farmers Welfare Fund Act**
Clause 76 amends the Small Farmers Welfare Fund Act to enlarge the scope from small planters to small farmers.

Sugar Industry Efficiency Act

Clause 82 amends the Sugar Industry Efficiency Act to, amongst others -

(a) provide that a Government entity, undertaking a project in the national or economic interest of Mauritius on State land, will not require Land Conversion Permit to put the State land into non-agricultural use;

(b) provide that applications for land conversion will have to be made on the National E-Licensing System, and

(c) exempt the New Social Living Development Ltd (NSLD) and the Mauritius Investment Corporation Ltd from payment of the Land Conversion Tax.

Tourism Authority Act

Clause 84 amends the Tourism Authority Act to remove the restriction on the number of restaurants a hotel can have under a Tourism Accommodation Certificate.

Variable Capital Companies Act

Clause 85 amends the Variable Capital Companies Act to extend the scope of the Variable Capital Companies to allow their use for family offices and wealth management.

Veterinary Council Act 2020

Clause 87 amends the Veterinary Council Act 2020, to, inter alia, –

(a) review the composition of the Veterinary Council, and

(b) provide for application for registration as a veterinary professional to be considered as approved in case the Council does not determine the application within 30 working days.

Virtual Asset and Initial Token Offerings Services Act

Clause 88 amends the Virtual Asset and Initial Token Offering Services Act to, amongst others allow a Virtual Asset Custodian to also hold custody of securities tokens.

B. CONTINUING THE TRANSFORMATION OF MAURITIUS INTO A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY
Mr Speaker, Sir, I now come to the second theme which is about continuing the transformation of Mauritius into a sustainable economy.

**Ayurvedic and Other Traditional Medicines Act**

Clause 7 amends the Ayurvedic and Other Traditional Medicines Act to cater for specialists in traditional medicines.

**Civil Status Act**

Clause 13 amends the Civil Status Act to, *inter alia*, –

(a) empower the Central Civil Status Office to generate a NIC number for a child born in another country provided that at least one parent is Mauritian;

(b) give an additional period of 15 days to parents for the declaration of birth of their child, and

(c) share information with Agencies for the discharge of their respective functions.

**Early Childhood Care and Education Authority Act**

Clause 23 amends the Early Childhood Care and Education Authority Act to, amongst others –

(a) enlarge the functions of the Early Childhood Care and Education Authority, including payment of grants to aided pre-primary schools in the context of the free pre-primary education scheme, and

(b) review of the composition of the Board of the Early Childhood Care and Education Authority Board to include a representative of the Special Education Needs Authority.

**Education Act**

Clause 25 amends the Education Act to, amongst others –

(a) establish the framework for implementation of the free pre-primary education scheme, and

(b) provide for two scholarships annually, to the best performing candidates having opted for the HSC Professional National Scheme.

**Firearms Act**
Clause 33 amends the Firearms Act to, *inter-alia*, reduce the time period for a holder of firearm licence, who intends to leave Mauritius, to surrender any firearm and ammunition in his possession from 3 months to 2 weeks.

**Mauritius Institute of Education Act**

Clause 46 amends the Mauritius Institute of Education Act to –

(a) review the composition of the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE) Council, and

(b) include the Director of the Special Education Needs Authority in the Academic Board of the MIE.

**Mauritius Qualifications Authority Act**

Clause 47 amends the Mauritius Qualifications Authority (MQA) Act to, amongst others, empower the MQA to –

(a) approve and recognise micro-credentials in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), and

(b) monitor the implementation of the National Credit Value and Transfer System in TVET under the National Qualifications Framework to facilitate mobility and lifelong learning.

**National Identity Card Act**

Clause 55 amends the National Identity Act to, amongst others –

(a) provide for the establishment of a National Identity Card Unit to ensure proper functioning and administrative efficiency of the National Identity Card, and

(b) cater for the introduction of Mobile ID as a new feature in the new Mauritius National Identity Card system.

**Pharmacy Act**

Clause 64 amends the Pharmacy Act to facilitate registration of locally manufactured products under a technology transfer agreement with good manufacturing practices of the World Health Organisation.

**Roads Act**

Clause 72 amends the Roads Act to introduce a Fixed Penalty System for persons who commit offences under the Roads Act.
State Lands Act

Clause 79 amends the State Lands Act to, _inter-alia_, –

(a) provide for a reduced rental in respect of a socio-economic project implemented on State land leased by a statutory body or a Government-owned company in which the Government directly or indirectly holds at least 90% of the share capital;

(b) grant to a lessee holding an industrial or commercial lease and facing financial difficulty, to pay annual rental for any particular year in not more than 3 consecutive equal yearly instalments without interest provided no dividend is distributed during that period, and

(c) grant a reduction in annual rental for a period not exceeding 5 years in respect of lease granted for any particular business activity.

Waste Water Management Authority Act

Clause 89 amends the Waste Water Management Authority Act to, _inter-alia_, allow the Wastewater Management Authority to enter into an agreement with an approved entity for the purposes of implementation, management and funding mechanisms of wastewater projects and systems.

The Future We Deserve

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will now elaborate on the third theme of my speech which is about the future we deserve.

Animal Diseases Act

Clause 4 amends the Animal Diseases Act to, amongst others, include diseases listed by the World Organisation for Animal Health in the definition of “diseases.”

Animal Welfare Act

Clause 5 amends the Animal Welfare Act to, amongst others –

(a) review the composition of the Council;

(b) require a person to register his dog with Mauritius Society for Animal Welfare (MSAW) not later than 60 days after he becomes the owner, and

(c) empower MSAW, instead of the Division of Veterinary Services, to issue breeder’s permit.
**Consumer Protection (Price and Supplies Control) Act**

Clause 17 amends the Consumer Protection (Price and Supplies Control) Act to, *inter alia*, make it mandatory for traders, with annual turnover exceeding Rs50 million, to submit information electronically to the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection for the ‘MOPRI’ application.

**Customs Act**

Clause 19 amends the Customs Act to, amongst others -

(a) allow a right of appeal to an importer who imports goods on behalf of another person entitled to tax exemption, and

(b) provide that the penalty provision applicable when an importer has not submitted a Bill of Entry for the clearance of goods within 5 working days after the time an aircraft has landed or a vessel is berthed will not apply until 30 June 2024.

**Customs Tariff Act**

Clause 20 amends the Customs Tariff Act to *inter alia*, -

(a) exempt from the payment of customs duty any contractor engaged in the construction of social housing units by the New Social Living Development Ltd, and

(b) provide for NGOs registered with the National Social Inclusion Foundation to be entitled to customs duty exemption on a motor vehicle.

**Dangerous Drugs Act**

Clause 21 amends the Dangerous Drugs Act to, amongst others, provide for an Electronic Drug Register.

**Employment Relations Act**

Clause 26 amends the Employment Relations Act to, *inter alia*, provide that the Employment Relations Tribunal will have to make its order in cases of reinstatement within a period of 60 days instead of 90 days.

**Employment Relations (Amendment) Act 2019**

Clause 27 amends the Employment Relations (Amendment) Act 2019 to, amongst others provide for a wage grid for graduates to ensure that they are remunerated accordingly.
Excise Act

Clause 28 amends the Excise Act to, *inter alia*, -

(a) extend the Negative Excise Duty Scheme on electric vehicles up to 30 June 2024;

(b) exempt from the payment of excise duty any contractor engaged in the construction of social housing units by the New Social Living Development Ltd;

(c) provide for NGOs registered with the National Social Inclusion Foundation to be entitled to excise duty exemption on a motor vehicle, and

(d) provide for an increase in the rate of refund payable for waste PET bottles recycled into reusable goods from Rs15 per kg to Rs30 per kg.

Gambling Regulatory Authority Act

Clause 35 amends the Gambling Regulatory Authority Act to, *inter alia*, -

(a) empower the GRA Board to issue warnings to its licensees in case of non-compliance with the GRA Act and conditions of licence, rules, directions or guidelines;

(b) allow the Horse Racing Committee to provide for veterinary services in and out of competition, pre-race and post-race sampling and testing of horses;

(c) empower the Gambling Regulatory Authority to issue directives in respect of interactive gambling sites outside Mauritius, and

(d) enlarge the duties of Inspector to carry out Anti Money Laundering/Counter Terrorism inspections and compliance audits.

Human Resource Development Act

Clause 36 amends the Human Resource Development Act to reinforce the sustainability of the Workfare Programme Fund (WPF). The contribution rate of levy remitted to the WPF will be aligned to that of the National Training Fund (NTF), that is, at 0.75%, for the period 01 July 2023 to 30 June 2025.

Income Tax Act

Clause 38 amends the Income Tax Act to, amongst others -
(a) implement the holistic and progressive tax reform of our personal income tax system as from 01 July 2023;

(b) grant a double deduction in respect of emoluments paid to a woman employed under the *Prime à l'Emploi* Scheme for a period of 2 years and triple deduction in respect of emoluments paid to a disabled person;

(c) allow taxpayers to deduct from their taxable income Rs10,000 for each animal adopted from an NGO registered with the MRA up to a maximum of Rs30,000 in an income year;

(d) grant a company a triple deduction in respect of donations to a charitable institution involved in supporting persons with health issues and disabilities, protection or rehabilitation of street children or animal welfare and protection;

(e) grant to a company a double deduction in respect of the cost incurred for setting up a Child Day Care Centre;

(f) extend the investment tax credit granted to manufacturing companies for up to 30 June 2026, and

(g) exempt from income tax, interest income derived from bonds, debentures or sukuks issued by an overseas entity to finance renewable energy projects.

**Local Government Act**

Clause 44 amends the Local Government Act to, *inter alia*, exempt a religious institution from payment of local rates on its halls and buildings.

**Mauritius Revenue Authority Act**

Clause 48 amends the Mauritius Revenue Authority Act to, *inter alia*, re-introduce the Tax Arrears Settlement Scheme which provides for full waiver of penalties and interest where tax arrears are paid in full by 31 March 2024.

**National Employment Act**

Clause 54 amends the National Employment Act to ensure that real time information is available on the number of registered jobseekers who are willing to follow training and take up employment.

**National Pensions Act**
Clause 56 amends the National Pensions Act to, *inter alia* –

(a) extend payment of Child’s Allowance to all beneficiaries of Basic Retirement Pension;

(b) provide for Child’s Allowance to be Rs2,000 monthly irrespective of age, and

(c) increase Basic Retirement Pension, Basic Invalidity Pension, Basic Widows Pension and Basic Orphan’s Pension by Rs1,000 monthly.

**National Wage Consultative Council Act**

Clause 57 amends the National Wage Consultative Council Act to provide that the Council may proceed with review of minimum wage before the prescribed period of 5 years.

**Occupational Safety and Health (Amendment) Act 2022**

Clause 61 amends the Occupational Safety and Health (Amendment) Act 2022 to reinforce the safety and health standards at the workplace.

**Pensions Act**

Clause 63 amends the Pensions Act to clarify that the death benefit, for an officer who joined service on or after 01 January 2013 be deducted from total pension contributions paid.

**Public Debt Management Act**

Clause 67 amends the Public Debt Management Act to introduce a public sector debt ceiling of 80% related to the fiscal anchor fixed by the IMF.

**Public Procurement Act**

Clause 69 amends the Public Procurement Act to, *inter alia,* –

(a) introduce low value procurement for goods, works, consultancy services or other services not exceeding Rs500,000, and

(b) cater for planning, pre-bidding and post award activities in the e-Procurement system.

**Registration Duty Act**

Clause 70 amends the Registration Duty Act to, *inter alia,* -
(a) allow for the levying of an additional registration duty of 10% on the acquisition by a non-citizen of an immovable property of at least USD 500,000;

(b) increase from 15 days to 28 days the time given to an aggrieved person to object to an assessment of the Registrar-General following a transfer of a movable property, and

(c) extend the Home Ownership and Home Loan Schemes up to 30 June 2024.

**Registration of Associations Act**

Clause 71 amends the Registration of Associations Act to provide for the election of officers to be conducted at least once every five years.

**Sale of Immovable Property Act**

Clause 73 amends the Sale of Immovable Property Act to, *inter alia*, specify that where the seized property is the sole residence of the debtor, the *mise à prix* shall not be less than 90% of the open market value and 80% for a property other than the sole residence.

**Social Contribution and Social Benefits Act 2021**

Clause 77 amends the Social Contribution and Social Benefits Act 2021 to, amongst others, -

(a) extend the payment of the CSG Income Allowance until June 2024 including end of year bonus. The amount of allowance payable is being –

(i) increased to Rs2,000 for individuals deriving income not exceeding Rs25,000, and

(ii) maintained at Rs1,000 for individuals deriving income above Rs25,000 but not exceeding Rs50,000;

(b) introduce the monthly CSG Child allowance of Rs2,000 for children up to the age of 3 years, and

(c) introduce the Independence Allowance of Rs20,000 to an individual having attained the age of 18 years as from 01 January 2023.

**Social Integration and Empowerment Act**

Clause 78 amends the Social Integration and Empowerment Act to provide for the increase in the household income threshold to qualify for eligibility under the Social Register of Mauritius.
Statutory Bodies Pension Funds Act

Clause 81 amends the Statutory Bodies Pension Funds Act to, *inter alia*, provide that an officer appointed before 01 January 2013 and reckoning not less than ten years’ pensionable service in statutory bodies, be eligible to a portable benefit equivalent to at least one-year pensionable salary.

Value Added Tax Act

Clause 86 amends the Value Added Tax Act to, amongst others, –

(a) clarify that a VAT assessment should not be made in respect of a period beyond 4 years immediately following the last day of the taxable period;

(b) provide for zero-rating for VAT purposes of 15 key items of everyday consumption, musical instruments, apparatus used in medical, surgical, dental or veterinary sciences, medical grade silicone and glass-ceramic blocks for dental use;

(c) extend the VAT exemption on the construction of a building for primary and secondary education, and

(d) exempt from the payment of VAT any contractor engaged in the construction of social housing units by the New Social Living Development Ltd.

Workers’ Rights Act

Clause 90 amends the Workers’ Rights Act to, amongst others, -

(a) provide for more flexible working arrangements by authorizing a worker to complete his normal working hours in a week on 4 days;

(b) provide for payment of the special allowance to public officers to guarantee them a monthly income of Rs15,000 as from 01 July 2023;

(c) provide that a worker may opt that his untaken annual leave be accumulated instead of being refunded;

(d) provide that a worker may avail of his entire leaves entitlement to care for his child and 10 days of his leave entitlement to care for his parents and grandparents;

(e) provide that in addition to the 3 weeks’ leave, a female worker who suffers a miscarriage be granted another 5 days’ leave on full pay;
(f) provide that an employer having more than 250 workers shall provide free of charge, childcare facilities to a worker having a child aged up to 3 years, and

(g) provide that the 10% increase in petrol allowance, shall, as from 01 July 2023, be between 1,000 rupees and 2,000 rupees.

Workers' Rights (Payment of Special Allowance 2023) Regulations 2023

Clause 91 amends the Workers' Rights (Payment of Special Allowance 2023) Regulations 2023 to provide for a “Revenu Minimum Garanti” of Rs15,000 monthly as from 01 July 2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am proposing amendments at Committee Stage to the Bank of Mauritius Act, Economic Development Board Act, Employment Relations (Amendment) Act 2019, Income Tax Act and Local Government Act. These amendments are being circulated in the House.

I now commend the Bill to the House.

The Deputy Prime Minister seconded.