



SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 20 JUNE 2023

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THE CABINET

(Formed by Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth)

Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth	Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications,
	Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity
Hon. Louis Steven Obeegadoo	Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism
Hon. Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun, GCSK	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology
Dr. the Hon. Mohammad Anwar Husnoo	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management
Hon. Alan Ganoo, GCSK	Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
Dr. the Hon. Renganaden Padayachy	Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development
Hon. Mrs Fazila Jeewa-Daureeawoo, GCSK	Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity
Hon. Soomilduth Bholah	Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives
Hon. Kavydass Ramano	Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change

Hon. Mahen Kumar Seeruttun	Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance
Hon. Georges Pierre Lesjongard	Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
Hon. Maneesh Gobin	Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security
Hon. Jean Christophe Stephan Toussaint	Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation
Hon. Mahendranuth Sharma Hurreeram	Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development
Hon. Darsanand Balgobin	Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation
Hon. Soodesh Satkam Callichurn	Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection
Dr. the Hon. Kailesh Kumar Singh Jagutpal	Minister of Health and Wellness
Hon. Sudheer Maudhoo	Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping
Hon. Mrs Kalpana Devi Koonjoo-Shah	Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare
Hon. Avinash Teeluck	Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage
Hon. Teeruthraj Hurdoyal	Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

Mr Speaker	Hon. Sooroojdev Phokeer, GCSK, GOSK
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Deputy Chairperson of Committees	Hon. Sanjit Kumar Nuckcheddy
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MAURITIUS

Seventh National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 18 of 2023

Sitting of Tuesday 20 June 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

The Financial Statements and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Media Trust for the year ended 30 June 2022.

B. Ministry of Land Transport and Light Rail

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade

The Moka-Camp de Masque-Flacq Road (End of Public Use) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 83 of 2023)

C. Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development

- (a) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Employees' Welfare Fund for the year ended 30 June 2022.
- (b) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Economic Development Board for the year ended 30 June 2022.
- (c) The Income Tax (Common Reporting Standard) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 84 of 2023)

D. Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities

The Radiation Safety and Nuclear Security (Personal Radiation Monitoring Service) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 85 of 2023)

E. Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training

Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection

The National Employment (Labour Market Information Database) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 86 of 2023)

F. Ministry of Health and Wellness

The Public Health (Restrictions on Tobacco Products) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 87 of 2023)

G. Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare

The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Women Entrepreneur Council for the year ended 30 June 2022.

H. Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage

The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Ramayana Centre for the year ended 30 June 2022.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

MAURITIUS AFRICA FUND LTD. – REMUNERATION & MISSION EXPENSES

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, whether, in regard to the Mauritius Africa Fund Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information –

- (a) since the incorporation thereof to 31 May 2023, as to the –
 - (i) amount paid to the company by Government by way of share capital and annual grants, respectively;
 - (ii) total amount paid by the company as remuneration to its Board of Directors and staff, and
 - (iii) total amount incurred as mission expenses, and
- (b) as to the amount paid initially as franchise to the World Trade Centre Association in 2021 and amount paid thereto annually since 2021 to date.

The Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives (Mr S. Bholah): Mr Speaker, Sir, in 2013, when the hon. Member of the Opposition was Minister of Finance, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development created the Mauritius Africa Fund Ltd.

Initially, the aim was for the Mauritius Africa Fund Ltd. (MAF) to help finance Mauritian companies wishing to invest in Africa by participating in the share capital of Mauritian companies up to a maximum of 10% of their equity. This model turned out to be ineffective since no company applied for financing from MAF.

In 2015, and in view of the new African strategy developed by this Government, the MAF's mandate was reviewed as follows –

1. entering into G-to-G cooperation framework, through agreements signed with African Governments to promote projects for our mutual benefits;
2. developing business infrastructure such as Special Economic Zones, Business and Technology Parks in selected countries to facilitate investments in Africa;
3. adopting innovative approaches to mobilize funds, from institutional and private sources, for investment into Africa, and

4. positioning Mauritius as a safe platform with a strong value proposition to channel investments into Africa, especially through the Mauritian International Financial Centre (IFC) and our Global Business Sector.

Through this redesigned mandate, Mauritius Africa Fund Ltd. now offers businesses the opportunity to access the Special Economic Zones (SEZs), created and managed by Mauritius Africa Fund Ltd. These SEZs provide state-of-the-art infrastructure in investment centers in Ghana and Ashanti Kingdom, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Madagascar and Kenya.

Currently, the area of land available in these countries for Mauritian projects amounts to about 348 hectares. Furthermore, the Mauritius Africa Fund Ltd. is also in discussions with the *République centrafricaine* for a potential of 27,000 hectares for two Business Parks, one for Agro-Industry and the other one for Industrial Park.

The Fund also provides businesses with strategic advice on investment into Africa, and oversees the process of applying for financial assistance at development banks in Africa.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to recall that the figures published by the Bank of Mauritius on the pre-pandemic Gross Direct Investment flows indicate that 43 percent of the total Mauritian investments abroad, that is, Rs3.9 billion, have been directed to African countries, including neighboring islands such as Madagascar and the Seychelles.

As at end of 2022, several companies from Mauritius have invested in other African countries under the Mauritius Africa Fund umbrella for projects worth some USD 250 m.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have just mentioned, five SEZ projects are under development within a G2G framework by the Mauritius Africa Fund in joint venture with institutions of the host countries.

I have been informed by the Mauritius Africa Fund that technical project development missions to African countries where SEZs are being established were put on hold since March 2020 due to strict international travel bans, restrictions and serious health risks arising from the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in Senegal, the Mauritius Africa Fund holds 51% of the shares of *Société des Infrastructures d'Affaires Atlantic S.A.* (SIAA), incorporated in Senegal as a joint venture with the Sovereign Fund for Strategic Investments (FONSIS, the sovereign wealth fund of Senegal). SIAA will develop 40 hectares of land through public-private

partnerships (PPP) and will eventually manage the 53 hectares of the Diamadio industrial park, near Dakar.

In Côte d'Ivoire, the Mauritius Africa Fund successfully negotiated preferential treatment for Mauritian companies to invest in the construction of a cyber-tower, two administrative towers, a business hotel and a water park within the Technology Park of Grand Bassam.

In Ghana, the Mauritius Africa Fund will hold 60% of the share capital of Ghana Smart City Ltd., a joint venture with the Ghanaian Government. The project will consist of the construction of a Technology and Research Hub within the University of Ghana in Central Accra during a first phase, followed by the development of a Technology and Business Park in Dawa during a second phase.

In Madagascar, the Malagasy Government has identified 80 hectares of land for the Mauritius-Africa Fund to jointly develop a Textile City in Moramanga, located along the main economic corridor linking the capital, Antananarivo, to the port of Toamasina. In addition, negotiations are underway between the Government of Mauritius and that of Kenya for the development of an industrial centre in Navaisha.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in August 2022, the two project partners, namely Mauritius-Africa Fund and SONAPAR, were informed that –

- the land would be leased by the Malagasy Government through the Ministry of Territorial Development and Land Services to the SPV of the joint project, and
- a preliminary Business Plan would be submitted as part of the application to local authorities to complete the lease contract process.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a)(i) of the question, I am informed that Government contributed Rs184 m. as share capital. The total of the annual grants provided to MAF up to 31 May 2023 amounted to Rs88.6 m.

Mr X. L. Duval: 80?

Mr Bholah: Rs88.6 m.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a)(ii) of the question, I am informed that Rs43 m. was paid as remuneration to its Directors and staff.

Regarding part (a)(iii) of the question, Rs3.5 m. have been spent as mission expenses.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that as part of the Mauritius-Africa strategy, Mauritius needs to offer modern and adequate infrastructures to host local and international companies wishing to expand into Africa. To this end, the ambition to attract the World Trade Centre brand to Mauritius and the Iconic Tower project in Côte d'Or are steps in the right direction.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the World Trade Centre complex in Côte d'Or will aim at –

- projecting Mauritius' dynamism as a trade and financial hub for Africa, supported by efficient connectivity, a strong IFC, a dynamic free port and harbor;
- providing a prestigious address and integrated services to attract and retain international companies having as common objective to trade and invest in Africa, and
- contributing to the promotion of Mauritius at both regional and international levels.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in 2021, the Ministry of Finance was informed by the Mauritius-Africa Fund of the intention to adopt a 'Design-Build-Finance-Operate-Maintain' model to execute this project. It was shared that the estimated cost of the project will depend on the architectural plan presented by the potential investor-developer. It was also envisaged that full ownership of the building will revert to the Mauritius-Africa Fund within a maximum of 30 years, in line with standard practice for this type of financing.

I have been informed that this model enables a private sector operator to design, build and finance the project, and then ultimately delegate the operation and maintenance of the facilities to the public structure under a long-term agreement. This execution project model-type will enable the Mauritius-Africa Fund to enter into a joint venture with a partner possessing the required expertise and the necessary financing for the successful completion of same.

The MAF's contribution to the joint venture will comprise the land on which the building will be erected, which has been obtained from Landscope (Mauritius) Ltd. for a renewable 30-year lease period and the World Trade Centre Licence.

Mr Speaker, Sir, following approval by the Mauritius-Africa Fund Board of Directors on 10 March 2023, I have been informed of the following –

- The tender (open exercise) for the selection of an investor-developer for the development of the World Trade Centre complex was launched on 20 March 2023 with a closing date of 24 July 2023. To date, 35 local and international companies have contacted the Mauritius-Africa Fund to obtain the relevant tender documents.

- The Restricted Bidding Exercise for the appointment of a qualified project management consultant to assist the Mauritius-Africa Fund in managing the project was launched on 10 March 2023 with a closing date of 14 April 2023. Bids have already been evaluated by the Tender Evaluation Committee.
- The highest scoring bidder has offered a fee of Rs14.9 m. for its services.
- The Bidding Exercise for the appointment of a Consultant to carry out geotechnical studies to ensure the constructability of the plot was launched on 27 March 2023, with a closing date of 28 April 2023.

In fact, the Mauritius-Africa Fund paid USD 250,000 as a one-off fee upon application for the World Trade Centre franchise and, thereafter, an annual membership fee of USD 12,500 since 2021.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I had not known that the substantive Minister was not there but I am sure that as a qualified accountant, our friend here will be more than able to reply to the questions that I am going to ask.

The first thing to note, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that the Mauritius-Africa Fund was in fact incorporated in 2014 and I left the Government a few months later – it is good to precise on that. I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether, with regard to this famous World Trade Centre of 50 storeys, he is aware that the Ministry of Finance has not even commissioned a feasibility study to see whether this huge building was feasible in Mauritius and not even a geotechnical survey on the site or the sites that had been identified? Is the hon. Minister aware that it was announced in such a frivolous way?

Mr Bholah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I just mentioned that the bidding exercise for the appointment of a Consultant to carry out geotechnical studies to ensure the constructability of the plot was launched on 27 March 2023. I just mentioned that. Regarding the feasibility study, the hon. Leader of the Opposition will appreciate that it is a very long-term project given that we have paid a one-off fee with regard to the World Trade Centre franchise.

Mr X. L. Duval: I think you are a bit *l'avocat du diable*. Anyway, let me tell you, as you know – you told us yourself – that Rs270 m. *ont été englouties dans le* Mauritius-Africa Fund. Rs43 m. has been paid to its Board of Directors and to staff. Therefore, I am going to ask you whether it is normal for such a prestigious project to be launched without a feasibility study and without a geotechnical study. And, this is the question: is the Minister aware that since the launch of the Request for Proposal in March, the site that

was allocated to the Mauritius-Africa Fund has been changed and there is a new site and that there is no official letter yet from Landscape as to where the new site is?

Mr Speaker: What is your question?

Mr X. L. Duval: Are you aware that since the launch of the RFP – and you said 35 people have taken it – isn't it a shame for Mauritius that such a project is handled in such a frivolous way that even the site now has been changed and it is the fourth change?

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

Mr X. L. Duval: Yes, I did.

Mr Bholah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't think that it is a shame for Mauritius. In fact, Mauritius is investing into infrastructure, as I said, of the calibre of the World Trade Centre. And also, regarding the amount that we have paid as franchise speaks for itself.

With regard to the feasibility studies, I am being informed that it is the responsibility of the investor/developer.

Mr X. L. Duval: You spend the money, it is their responsibility. You are spending our money. Tell us please about the site. What is now the new site? I am sure these 35 people would love to know from you what is the new site that has been allocated. I understand it is in the so-called Admin City. Nobody knows about the Administrative City but it is in the so-called Administrative City now in Côte d'Or. Where is the new site? Do you know where it is?

Mr Bholah: It is near the Administrative City.

Mr X. L. Duval: Where? Tell us. Can you table?

Mr Bholah: In Côte d'Or.

Mr X. L. Duval: Can you table a site plan of the new site for the World Trade Centre, 50 storeys high, is? Can you table that for us, please?

Mr Bholah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot table. I do not have it at hand.

Mr X. L. Duval: No, but you can table it in a minute, not right now.

Mr Speaker: Move on! Move on to your question!

Mr X. L. Duval: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether this famous statement that it was going to be 50-storeys high that has now been abandoned? In the new Request for Proposal, there is not even a request for one storey; there is only the size (50,000 m²) - which was a pie in the sky - the 50-storey building has now been abandoned. You are not aware of that?

Mr Bholah: I am not aware of that.

Mr X. L. Duval: Okay. It has been abandoned. Can I come now, Mr Speaker, Sir, to this idea that it will be a Public-Private Partnership, you said yourself under the BOT. Are you aware that the new company, the Mauritius Africa Fund is completely outside the Public Partnership Act? Therefore, it does not come under the Public Partnership Act for BOT projects although it is a company totally funded by Government and on Government-owned land via Landscope. Why has the Mauritius Africa Fund been kept completely outside of the Public Partnership Act? You will not know?

Mr Bholah: I need ...

Mr X. L. Duval: No. Okay, let us move on. I would like to ask the hon. Minister about the Special Economic Zones. Beautiful announcements, less than zero realisation, not one single Special Economic Zone has been activated with Mauritian help. The Senegal one was meant to be managed...

Mr Speaker: Put your question! Put your question! You are making a statement!

Mr X. L. Duval: He is new. How can he understand my question if I do not explain it?

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr X. L. Duval: How can he understand it? He is new!

Mr Speaker: Put your question! Let him answer!

Mr X. L. Duval: I am trying to put the question so that he understands it. Now, the Special Economic Zone in Senegal was meant to be managed by Mauritius, zero! Nothing happened in Ghana! Zero! Nothing happened in Côte d'Ivoire, zero!

Mr Speaker: No, you are making statements!

Mr X. L. Duval: Therefore, I would like to ask the Minister how can it be that Rs270 m. are spent over nine years with zero *résultat*?

Mr Bholah: Mr Speaker, Sir, with the passage of time, we should not forget that we have had two or three years of hard times and I said in my main answer that many projects were put on hold, especially when we are talking about Africa where the risk of the pandemic was more severe than anywhere. The hon. Leader of the Opposition must understand this.

Mr X. L. Duval: I would like to ask the hon. Minister, I will give you seven projects which were announced here in this House –

- (i) The Senegal Diamniadio SEZ, nothing happened;
- (ii) Côte d'Ivoire Cybertower, Twin Towers, nothing happened;
- (iii) Ghana Smart City, nothing happened;
- (iv) Madagascar Textile City, nothing happened, we now know that something may happen;
- (v) Kenya Naivasha Industrial Park, nothing happened.

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr X. L. Duval: ...

- (vi) Africa Infrastructure Investment Holdings, nothing happened;
- (vii) Strategic Partnership with Africa Finance Corporation, nothing happened.

I am going to ask the Minister now, whether it is not time to stop spending taxpayers' money in such a frivolous way that you are clearly wasting our money and throwing hundreds of millions of rupees out into the river as it were.

Mr Bholah: Mr Speaker, Sir, all these projects again have been put on hold because of COVID-19 and I have been informed that these projects will kick-start very soon.

Mr X. L. Duval: So, it is COVID-19?

Mr Bholah: Of course!

Mr X. L. Duval: Is that COVID-19?

Mr Bholah: Of course!

Mr X. L. Duval: Well, the hon. Minister may know that, in fact, after COVID-19 in October 2021, that was when the first Expression of Interest was launched for the World Trade Centre. Can he tell us what happened to the first Expression of Interest?

Mr Bholah: I need to be informed.

Mr X. L. Duval: I will tell you nothing happened.

There was another RFP issued in March 2022. Are you aware that it was aborted because on the eve, the site for the WTC was changed a second time?

Mr Bholah: In fact, what happened is that, it is true that the first site has been moved to a more appropriate site in Côte d'Or near the Administrative City because the

initial one was near the Côte d'Or Data Technology Park and because of restrictions we have had to move elsewhere.

Mr X. L. Duval: Are you aware that this project of about Rs8 billion and all these are being handled by management and the CEO of the Mauritius Africa Fund; his contract was not renewed and he is on a day-to-day contract? Do you think a project of this size, of this importance, is possible with a CEO who is on a day-to-day contract?

Mr Bholah: I am not aware if the CEO is on a day-to-day contract.

Mr X. L. Duval: Not aware, okay. I am going to ask you something else. You will not be aware either but what can I do? Can you imagine this project which according to the website of the Mauritius Africa Fund is going to generate – would you believe – 13% of GPD, Rs94 billion was never included in any Budget Speech? Never! And it was supposed to employ 8,500 people. Can you say why – you are a senior Minister – was it never included in any Budget Speech or in your speech ever?

Mr Bholah: I do not know whether I am senior Minister, Mr Speaker, Sir, but anyway, the Leader of the Opposition will appreciate that I am not the substantive Minister. I do not know the ins and outs of the running and the terms and conditions of the staff, even of the CEO.

Mr X. L. Duval: Okay. I will tell you this one. You are an accountant, this you will know. You will know this 100%. You know that companies, especially Government owned companies should file their accounts regularly. You are aware of that. Now, is it a surprise to know that the Mauritius Africa Fund has never filed accounts for 2018-2019, never filed accounts for 2020-2021 and never filed accounts for 2021-2022? How do we know what is happening at the Mauritius Africa Fund which is using Rs270 m. of taxpayers' money when they are not even bothered to file accounts at the Registrar of Companies? This you can answer as an accountant.

Mr Bholah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware if they have filed or not.

Mr Speaker: He is not the substantive Minister. So, you should be aware.

Mr X. L. Duval: Well, the substantive Minister should tell us when he goes. I cannot follow him to the airport. *Enfin*, anyway!

Now, what more can I ask you? Instead of looking for a lease, why was a complicated Design-build-finance-operate-maintain system used? Why was that? You will not know?

Mr Bholah: I do not know why it was that model.

Mr X. L. Duval: Well, Mr Speaker, Sir, I think that in face of so much ‘don’t know’, I do not know if my colleagues have other questions but I will have to save my questions for the substantive Minister.

Mr Bholah: Of course!

Mr X. L. Duval: I do not know if anybody has any question.

Mr Bholah: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Leader of the Opposition or any Opposition Member can come with PQs addressed to the substantive Minister when he is back from mission.

Mr X. L. Duval: In fact, I will ask you this question. Coming back to the site, for the new site which you are going table, I think you told us that you are going to table the new site.

Mr Bholah: I will table.

Mr X. L. Duval: Now, the pre-bid meeting which was meant to be held on 26 May, already one month ago, has been cancelled. When is the pre-bid meeting going to be held now? If you do not know, I am sure that you will get some help. When will the pre-bid meeting be held with the 35 people who have taken the trouble to get the papers for the Request for Proposal.

Mr Bholah: We look for the information?

Mr X. L. Duval: Yes, when will the pre-bid meeting be held?

Mr Bholah: Is it about the future meeting?

Mr X. L. Duval: Yes, future meeting.

Mr Speaker: Meanwhile, I will allow a question. Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you. The hon. Minister, who is not the substantive Minister, has talked about this landmark project, the World Trade Centre Building. So, may I know from the hon. Minister, before we inject money into that building, if Mauritius-Africa Fund has done a survey and has received interest from potential tenants who would be interested to rent the premises before embarking into such a huge project?

Mr Bholah: No, I do not have information regarding tenants of this prospective building. At this point, we do not have it.

Mr X. L. Duval: Can we now have the information about the pre-bid meeting? It has been five minutes.

Mr Bholah: Pre-bid meeting?

Mr X. L. Duval: Yes. We can wait a bit; we have time.

Mr Bholah: I wonder if we have meeting.

Mr X. L. Duval: Yes, pre-bid meeting, when will it be held? It was meant to be held on 26 May. This is a prestigious project – 13% of GDP, 8,500 jobs. No idea when the pre-bid meeting will be done. This is a very frivolous Government. Very, very frivolous!

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Will the Minister be kind enough to inform the House the number of times there have been public-private partnership meetings in respect of projects identified and which are ongoing?

Mr Bholah: Regarding the pre-bid meeting, I have just been informed that it will be held in July 2023, that is, next month.

Mr X. L. Duval: Any date?

Mr Bholah: No, no specific date, but in July.

Mr X. L. Duval: No date. No idea. Just in July this year.

One last question, Mr Speaker, Sir. I would like to ask the hon. Minister, he talked about Rs250 m. of investment, I think, into Africa, which supposedly facilitated by MAF, can he circulate? In his reply, he did say that, Rs250 m.

Mr Bholah: 250,000 dollars, I mentioned regarding the World Trade Centre.

Mr X. L. Duval: That is for the licence.

Mr Bholah: Yes, for the licence.

Mr X. L. Duval: We are talking about the investment to Africa, facilitated supposedly by MAF. You used Rs250 m. Anyway, can you table that list?

Mr Bholah: Yes, we will look for that and table it later.

Mr X. L. Duval: Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Time over! Prime Minister's Question Time!

Hon. Members the Table has been advised that PQs B/745, B/749, B/752, and B/753 have been withdrawn. I now call hon. Uteem.

MR S.T. – CHAIRPERSON FIU – APPOINTMENT – TERMINATION

(No. B/742) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the compensation payable to Mr S. T. in connection with the termination of his appointment as Chairperson of the Financial Intelligence Unit, he will state the –

- (a) quantum thereof, and
- (b) the funds which will be used for the payment thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr S.T. had been appointed as Chairperson of the Board of the Financial Intelligence Unit on 22 April 2015 by the then Acting President of the Republic, for a period of three years with effect from the date of his assumption of duty. The appointment had been made pursuant to section 12(2) of the Financial Intelligence and Anti-Money Laundering Act. Mr S.T. assumed duty on 29 April 2015.

Subsequently, the appointment of Mr S.T. as Chairperson of the Financial Intelligence Unit was terminated on 27 August 2016 with immediate effect, pursuant to section 28 of the Interpretation and General Clauses Act. That section in fact provides, *inter alia*, that the power conferred upon a person to make an appointment or to constitute or establish any Board includes the power to remove, suspend, dismiss or revoke the appointment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me quote section 28(1) of the Interpretation and General Clauses Act which reads as follows, and I quote –

“(1) Where an enactment confers a power or imposes a duty to make an appointment or to constitute or establish any board, tribunal, commission, committee or similar body, the person having the power or duty may also –

- (a) remove, suspend, dismiss or revoke the appointment of, and re-appoint or reinstate, any person appointed in exercise of the power of duty;
- (b) revoke the appointment, constitution or establishment of, or dissolve, any board, tribunal, commission, committee or similar body appointed, constituted or established, in exercise of the power or duty, and reappoint, reconstitute, or re-establish the board, tribunal, commission, committee or similar body;

- (c) specify the period for which a person appointed in exercise of the power or duty shall hold the appointment.” Unquote.

Mr Speaker, Sir, following the termination of his appointment as Chairperson of the Board of the Financial Intelligence Unit, Mr S.T. entered an action at the Intermediate Court against the State and the Prime Minister on 21 August 2018, praying for a judgement ordering the Defendants to pay to him a sum of Rs1,092,000, representing payment for the unfinished term of his office, as compensation for breach of contract, together with interest at the legal rate with effect from the date of the lodging of his Plaintiff and with costs.

On 16 February 2022, judgement was delivered by the Intermediate Court, whereby the Magistrate concluded that Mr S.T. had established his case on a balance of probabilities and accordingly ordered the Defendants to pay jointly to the Plaintiff a sum of Rs1,092,000, with costs. No order was made in the judgement regarding the interest claimed by Mr S.T.

Being dissatisfied with the judgement of the Intermediate Court, the Defendants appealed against the judgement to the Supreme Court.

However, in a judgement delivered on 31 May 2023, the Supreme Court set aside the appeal but made no order as to costs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, the quantum of compensation payable would be Rs1,092,000, as ordered by the Court. However, in so far as the costs and interest elements are concerned, it would be up to the legal advisers of Mr S.T. to seek to enforce the judgement. Once the legal advisers of Mr S.T. take the necessary steps to enforce the judgement, the final quantum will be known to the Defendants, that is the State & Anor. At this stage, it is premature to state the exact figures.

The hon. Member would surely be aware that costs are also subject to taxation and may be disputed by the Defendants.

Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding part (b) of the question, I am informed that payment will be made from Vote 23-1 of the Accountant General under item 28217002 - “Compensation Arising out of Government Liability”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is to be noted that the Court has not called into question the power of the appointing authority to terminate the appointment of Mr S.T. Both Courts have agreed that the termination was done lawfully. As a matter of fact, in its judgement, the Supreme Court made the following observations, and I quote –

“The learned Magistrate rightly found that section 28 of the IGCA applies to any appointment made under a specific enactment and, in addition, this right to appoint includes the right to revoke. We fully agree with his reasoning. As such, the President, who had appointed the respondent, had, by virtue of Section 28 of the IGCA, the power to remove, suspend, dismiss or revoke his appointment at any time during the term of the contract.”

The hon. Judges have further observed that, and I quote –

“It is clear to us that, by virtue of Section 28 of the IGCA, it was always open to the President to put an end to the chairmanship of the respondent as Chairperson of the FIU. The Court in Juwaheer T.D. v Dr V. Jogoo [2017 SCJ 71] adopted a similar view and the learned Judges held that since the applicant had been appointed by the Council, then by virtue of Section 28(1)(a) of the IGCA, the power to remove, dismiss or revoke the appointment of the applicant devolves on the Council.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, the implications of the judgment of both the Intermediate Court and the Supreme Court will be examined and appropriate corrective measures, if warranted, will be taken. Thank you.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the judgment of the Intermediate Court, the learned Magistrate mentioned that the President of the Republic terminated the appointment before its expiration on the recommendation of the Prime Minister without giving any reasons. So, it was the Prime Minister effectively who terminated the appointment. So, being given that the Prime Minister is the one who terminated the appointment, doesn’t the hon. Prime Minister agree that instead of taxpayers having to pay for the consequences of his decision, he should be paying for the damages claimed as a result of his absolute decision to terminate the employment.

The Prime Minister: If you read the law properly, you will see. I have quoted from the judgment of the Supreme Court. I am not referring to the Intermediate Court, but the Supreme Court because the case went on appeal. If you read properly, carefully and take time, you will see that the Judges say that it was perfectly lawful for the President of the Republic to terminate the contract of the Chairperson. So, take time, hon. Member, read carefully and you will see.

Secondly, if you read and interpret the law properly, you will see that no reason is necessarily given when such termination occurs. This is by law.

Mr Uteem: I have read this and I am a lawyer of much more standing at the Bar, practising at the Bar. So, I don't take any lessons from the hon. Prime Minister.

Mr Speaker: No, put your question! Don't comment!

The Prime Minister: I am not asking you to take lesson.

Mr Uteem: The issue is very simple. The Supreme Court said that - whereas the Prime Minister was entitled to ask the President to terminate the appointment because he did so without giving any cause before the expiration of the term, he has to pay damages, jointly and *in solido*, which means the Prime Minister personally has, together with the State, to pay those Rs1 m. So, I am asking the Prime Minister, as a man of honour to take a commitment before this House that he is going to use his personal funds ...

Mr Speaker: But there is no question! You have no question! This is a request!

Mr Uteem: So, I am asking him whether he is going to use his personal funds to pay.

Mr Speaker: You are requesting the Prime Minister to take his responsibility?

Mr Uteem: The judgment...

Mr Speaker: Where is the question?

Mr Uteem: The judgment says that the Prime Minister is jointly reliable...

Mr Speaker: No, hon. Member, bear with me! You are entitled for a question. Put the question and let the Prime Minister reply. If you have no question, maybe prepare a question, I will give the turn...

Mr Uteem: I have one.

Mr Speaker: You have one, put it!

Mr Uteem: The judgment of the Magistrate which has been upheld on appeal states that the defendants, including the Prime Minister, shall jointly and *in solido* pay the plaintiff the amount of Rs1,092,000. So, the Prime Minister has been ordered by the Court to pay jointly and *in solido* with the State of Mauritius this money. So, I am asking the Prime Minister whether he will pay that money or he will get taxpayers to pay for his mistake.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, first of all, I am not giving any lesson to this supposedly hon. Member who claims to have....

Mr Bérenger: *Ki sa sa?*

The Prime Minister: *Ki sa sa, twa? Twa, ki sa sa ?*

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: What are you? *Ki sa sa!*

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: *Ki to ete?*

(*Interruptions*)

An hon. Member: *Requin!*

Mr Speaker: Wait! Order!

(*Interruptions*)

Order!

(*Interruptions*)

Order!

(*Interruptions*)

Order! If there is anything wrong, you are entitled for a point of order.

An hon. Member: *Ki MSM kav perdi.*

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, he started by saying I am giving him lesson and he has been a longer standing member of the Bar. So, I am replying to this. Don't be a shark!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: Don't jump like a shark!

Mr Speaker: The Prime Minister has the right to reply!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not giving any lesson. The hon. Member has asked a question referring to the law and to the judgment, I am asking him to read the law and he will see that I have quoted. Do I have to waste the time of the National Assembly again to quote what section 28(1) of the Interpretation and General Clauses Act says? It says that the one who has appointed has the right to terminate that appointment. Both the Intermediate Court and the Supreme Court have confirmed this interpretation, that is, it is lawful for the President to terminate the appointment. Let me

refer the hon. Member to what was contended by the Plaintiff before the Court, and I quote from the judgment –

“The Plaintiff contended that in terminating his contract with immediate effect, without giving any valid reason, the Defendants committed a breach of contract.”

Now, the Judges have said and let me refer the Assembly to part of what was said by the Judges, the statement. I refer to a paragraph where the Judges found that the statement of the respondent before the lower Court to the effect that the termination of his appointment was lawful is perfectly correct and this could have only meant that the President was fully entitled to revoke his appointment by virtue of section 28 of the IGCA. Why is he saying that the Prime Minister has revoked this appointment?

Mr Uteem: The damages!

The Prime Minister: This is what I am quoting and I understand English.

“That the President was fully entitled to revoke his appointment by virtue of section 28 of the IGCA.”

However the Judges carried on to say that we do not agree that the respondent meant that since the revocation of his appointment was done in accordance with the law, this breach of contract could not entail legal consequences. What are the legal consequences? The legal consequence is that the Plaintiff is entitled to be paid compensation for the rest of the term of his contract. This is what I understand from the judgment of the Supreme Court.

The Prime Minister: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister confirm to the House that the same gentleman that we are referring to, Mr S. T. had several claims among which a whooping amount of Rs19 m. to the ICTA as legal fees and whether the gentleman is actually related to any hon. Member? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I can confirm that Mr S. T. is the same person who had claimed and been paid in 2016 a total amount of Rs19,198,436 as legal fees in the Supreme Court case of Emtel vs the Information and Communication Technologies Authority, Mauritius Telecom and others. Mr S. T. was also paid a sum of Rs3,314,895 by ICTA representing fees for legal services and retainer fees. Mr Speaker, Sir, it is publicly known that Mr S. T. is the brother-in-law of hon. Nandcoomar Bodha.

Dr. Boolell: *Be twa ton nom li.*

An hon. Member: *Ton nom li la apre to vine dire sa.*

Mr Speaker: Hon. Nuckcheddy!

Mr Nuckcheddy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister state the terms and conditions of the appointment of Mr S. T. as Chairperson of the Financial Intelligence Unit?

The Prime Minister: I am informed that Mr. S. T. was appointed as Chairperson of the Board of the Financial Intelligence Unit for a period of three years with effect from 29 April 2015 with an all-inclusive monthly fee of Rs54,600. From the date of his appointment until the termination of his contract, Mr S. T. was paid an amount of Rs873,600 representing his fees as Chairperson of the Board of the Financial Intelligence Unit. He was also paid an amount of Rs232,461 representing subsistence and entertainment allowance. The appointment of Mr S. T. was made pursuant to section 12(2) of the Financial Intelligence and Anti-Money Laundering Act.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ittoo!

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Since we are talking about termination of appointment, can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether there are similar cases of this kind where there is claim for compensation?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that there is only one such case of termination under section 28 of the Interpretation and General Clauses Act where the plaintiff, a former Chairperson of the Central Water Authority, is claiming compensation and damages for early termination of appointment.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

SPECIAL STRIKING TEAM – COMPOSITION&ALLOWANCE

(No. B/743) Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Police Headquarters Special Striking Team, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the composition thereof, and
- (b) if any special allowance is paid to the members thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the Mauritius Police Force has several units/branches set up internally to offer the highest quality of service to the community whilst ensuring peace, law and order in the country. The main units are, *inter alia* –

1. The Special Mobile Force;
2. The Anti-Drug and Smuggling unit;
3. The National Coast Guard;
4. The Central Crime Investigation unit;
5. The *Brigade pour la protection de la famille*;
6. The Special Support Unit, and
7. The Traffic Branch.

Bent on adapting to an ever changing environment, the Mauritius Police Force has, over the years, adopted strategies to enhance the quality of its service to the nation. It has had recourse to foreign expertise to build capacity of the Police Officers and has developed media and communication strategies, acquired modern assets, and developed customer friendly infrastructure. The Police has also developed its Strategic Plan 2022-2025 which was launched on Wednesday 19 January 2022. The Plan had identified nine strategic priority areas to enhance the Police Force, namely –

- (i) improving service delivery;
- (ii) reinforcing community safety and partnership;
- (iii) tackling serious, organized and transnational crime;
- (iv) enhancing investigative and operational capabilities;
- (v) exploiting technology in policing;
- (vi) strengthening human resource management;
- (vii) managing disasters;
- (viii) building sustainability and resilience, and
- (ix) enhancing morale and motivation of Police Officers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed by the Commissioner of Police that, as part of the Police Strategic Plan 2022-2025, and in order to maintain the momentum in the fight against crimes, including drug trafficking, the Special Striking Team was set up at the level of the Police Headquarters on Wednesday 03 August 2022. The setting up of the Units in the Mauritius Police Force is a prerogative of the Commissioner of Police pursuant to the power vested in him under section 71 (4) of the Constitution which reads as follows, and I quote –

“(4) Nothing in this section shall be construed as precluding the assignment to a Minister of responsibility under section 62 of the organisation, maintenance and administration of the Police Force, but the Commissioner of Police shall be responsible for determining the use and controlling the operations of the force and, except as provided in subsection (3), the Commissioner shall not, in the exercise of

his responsibilities and powers with respect to the use and operational control of the force, be subject to the direction or control of any person or authority.”

It is pertinent to mention that the Commissioner of Police, by the nature of his Office, is a repository of classified and sensitive information, which, on occasions arising, requires immediate attention. In the past, former Commissioners of Police had also set up similar Units such as the Flying Squad and the Special Anti-Robbery Squad, to which classified and sensitive information was relayed for prompt actions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as stated in the reply to a Private Notice Question of Monday 12 June 2023, the Special Striking Team is not meant to replace or to substitute any other Unit, but instead, it complements the other adjuncts of the Force in the fight against crimes. The main reason for the setting up of the Team is to combat major crimes such as drug trafficking, money laundering and other organised crimes. Similar to the objectives of other Units, the goal of the Special Striking Team is to improve the reactive capability of Police through prompt responses to crime situations, thereby meeting the justified expectations of the community and providing a high level of service delivery. The main role and responsibilities of the Special Striking Team are as follows –

- (i) To conduct targeted intelligence-led crackdown joint operations with other Unit or office as well other station around the island with a view to dismantling drug nexus/drug networks and criminal activities involving association of malefactors;
- (ii) to assist the Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit, National Coast Guard, Police Helicopter Squadron, Asset Recovery Investigation Division and Officers of MRA and ICAC in the prevention and detection of important drugs and drug related cases, such as drug dealing/trafficking, smuggling of goods and Money Laundering, amongst others;
- (iii) to support local Police, Divisional CIDs, Central Criminal Investigation Department in the arrest of habitual criminals and persons wanted in serious offences or other offences likely to cause disaffection/hostility among the population, and
- (iv) to perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Commissioner of Police.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the Special Striking Team is currently staffed with thirty-three Police Officers. The Team is under the charge of an Officer of the rank of Assistant

Superintendent of Police and is being supervised by the Staff Officer at the Police Headquarters, who is a Superintendent of Police. The Team has been provided with seven vehicles as well as with such arms and ammunition as are required, for the discharge of their duties.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I am also informed by the Commissioner of Police that Officers who are posted to the Special Striking Team are paid on a monthly basis the following allowances, which are in accordance with the approved rates prescribed in the PRB Report 2021—

- (i) Risk Allowance Rs1,890/-;
- (ii) Detective Allowance Rs450/-;
- (iii) Clothing Allowance Rs505/-, and
- (iv) A Driving Allowance (for Police officers in the rank of Police Constable and Police Corporal only).

Members of the personnel of the Special Striking Team, irrespective of ranks, are also paid an *ad hoc* allowance of Rs2000 per month on the same ground as that of their counterparts posted to the Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit.

Mr Bodha: In view of the fact that the SST has created a climate of fear because everybody feels that it can strike; we do not know when it can strike and whom it will strike, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister, whether a special treatment is being given to that Unit and whether that Unit is above the law, taken into consideration the complaints, the allegations, that have been levelled against that Unit?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, first of all, I don't see any climate of fear. Do you know who are fearing the Striking Team? The criminals! Only those who are going against the law and especially those drug traffickers, those who are involved in money laundering and in very serious crimes. They are the ones who are fearing this Unit!

There is no special treatment. I think the hon. Member should have listened carefully to what I have said. They are being given allowances according to the approved rates that are prescribed by the PRB Report 2021 and they have not been given any special privilege.

The hon. Member is saying that they are going above the law. Now, if anyone, I am not talking only about this Striking Team, I am talking about all Police Officers and for that matter anyone who goes against the law, has to eventually answer before a Court of law.

Nous sommes dans un état de droit et quiconque se sent lésé parce que quelqu'un a violé la loi ou n'a pas respecté ses droits, évidemment il y a des autorités, il peut faire ses plaintes et puis éventuellement, il y aura - si jamais le besoin se fait sentir - une affaire devant une cour de justice, et c'est la cour de justice qui va déterminer si effectivement, quelqu'un n'a pas respecté la loi.

The Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House of the grades, that is, how many Sergeants and Inspectors are affected and constitute the Special Striking Team?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Special Striking Team is under the charge of an officer of the rank of an Assistant Superintendent of Police and is supervised also by a staff officer of Police Headquarters who is of the rank of a Superintendent of Police. The SST is also composed of 2 Inspectors of Police, 5 Police Sergeants, 1 Police Corporal, 19 Police Constables and 5 Women Police Constables.

Mr Speaker: Time over! Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/757 will be replied by the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, PQ B/774 will be replied by the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management. Also, PQ B/750 has been withdrawn.

Hon. Members, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology has made a request for Parliamentary Questions addressed to her be taken out of turn since she has to leave the Assembly earlier today to enable her to leave Mauritius early this afternoon to proceed to India to attend the G20 Education Ministers' Meeting. I have acceded to the request. I'll call hon. Dr. Gungapersad to put his question, B/785.

PRE-PRIMARY & PRIMARY PUBLIC SCHOOLS – LEARNING DISABILITIES & DIFFICULTIES

(No. B/785) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to students having learning disabilities and difficulties in pre-primary and primary public schools, she will state the number thereof detected to date, indicating the measures taken in relation thereto.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that

55 pupils in 35 pre-primary schools and 2,581 pupils in all primary schools have been identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities.

As at date, there are 71 learners with special education needs attending mainstream primary schools. Furthermore, 11 integrated units set up in primary schools and Special Education Needs Resource Centres are presently accommodating 117 learners with disabilities.

My Ministry has taken significant measures to support children with special needs in pre-primary and primary schools. Our approach is multifaceted and encompasses various aspects, including identification, intervention, early support programme, and teacher training. Allow me to outline some of the key measures that have been implemented –

1. A comprehensive system has been implemented for the early identification of learning difficulties and disabilities at the level of the school. We have the Developmental Learners' Profile at the pre-primary level and the Primary School Readiness at primary level, which are administered to determine the learning gaps in numeracy and literacy.
2. A multidisciplinary team consisting of speech therapists, educational psychologists, occupational therapists and physiotherapist conduct a screening to determine the best educational placement and accommodation required for each learner.
3. For each student identified with learning difficulties, an Individualized Education Plan or a Personalised Education Plan is developed. The IEP and PEP serve as a roadmap to outline specific goals, accommodations, and modifications tailored to meet the student's unique needs. It ensures that appropriate interventions and support are provided in a personalised manner.
4. Public schools have trained support teachers, teaching assistants and carers who provide targeted support to pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. The early support teachers and teacher assistants work closely with classroom teachers to implement strategies and interventions outlined in the IEPs and PEPs to facilitate and improve the performance of the pupils.

Additionally, a number of measures have been implemented at the level of my Ministry for the provision of pedagogical facilities for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities as follows –

- Adapted textbooks are provided;
- Provision of braille displays for visually impaired learners;
- Assistance of a reader/writer during examinations;
- Assistance of sign language interpreters;
- Large prints for examinations, and
- Provision of extra time as well, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Dr. Gungapersad: Mr, Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether in line with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice and the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, Fourth Edition, which are applied in countries like UK, South Africa and India, to identify learning disabilities and learning difficulties, respectively, she will inform the House how many educators, carers, support teachers in pre-primary and primary schools have been duly trained in Psychometric and Neuropsychology to evaluate our children?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the medical personnel of my Ministry, the Health and Wellness Directorate, has got doctors and we work in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health for that particular purpose. But I must also say that as far as training is concerned, we have been training 464 SEN educators during the past month and the training is still on. We are still having recourse to resource persons from abroad for that.

Dr. Gungapersad: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister inform the House what measures, if any, are being taken to ensure that Psychometrists and Neuropsychologists have proper and adequate assessment tools to support the system and the concerned children by providing them appropriate and effective evaluation tools and facilitative educational interventions?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Special Education Needs authority and the SEN Unit of my Ministry are working with the children, their parents and also, as I have stated earlier, with professionals of the health sector to help them do that.

Furthermore, we do have some resource persons who come from Ireland for the neuroscientific development of our children.

Mr Speaker: MP Bodha!

FOREIGN STUDENTS – PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS – ENROLMENT CONDITIONS

(No. B/788) Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to foreign students, she will state the –

- (a) conditions applicable to enrol in private institutions in Mauritius, indicating the documents requested therefor, and
- (b) number thereof enrolled since January 2022 to date.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, in the context of the internationalisation of the Mauritian Higher Education Sector, institutions are encouraged to enrol foreign students.

The academic requirements applicable to foreign students for enrolment in HEIs in Mauritius for a university programme leading to a degree are as follows –

- (i) They should have either 3 subjects at A-level and 1 subject at subsidiary level at Higher School Certificate Examination, or
- (ii) 2 subjects at A-level and 2 subjects at subsidiary level at the Higher School Certificate Examination, or
- (iii) 3 passes at A-level;
- (iv) Some of them may also have relevant Diploma/Higher National Diploma from a recognised institution.

These are the requirements for their admission.

Foreign students may enrol on full-time undergraduate programmes. For postgraduate programmes, foreign students possessing a degree may enrol for both full-time and part-time courses. They should also be holders of a Student Visa. I am informed by the Passport and Immigration Office that application for Student Visa should be made by the institutions having enrolled the students.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that a total of 1,666 foreign students have enrolled in public and private institutions since January 2022 to date.

Mr Bodha: May I ask the Vice-Prime Minister whether there has been a fall in the number of students enrolling since January 2023?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: No, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is not the case because we have students getting enrolled at different points in time during the year. So, some institutions have admissions in March, others a bit later, so, a fall has not been noted.

Mr Bodha: May I ask another question, Mr Speaker, Sir? Whether the Vice-Prime Minister is aware that there is a change in the entry visa policy which has become more stringent so that we have less and less students coming to Mauritius?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: This is not the case, Mr Speaker, Sir. However, the PIO has noted that there are certain candidates who had submitted certain fake documents and they are investigating on that issue and that is why they had to be more careful while providing the permits.

Mr Speaker: Mr Osman Mahomed!

**RENGANADEN SEENEEVASSEN SSS – BUG INFESTATION – STUDENT
PROTEST – MEASURES**

(No. B/799) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether she will state the measures being undertaken by her Ministry following the protest of students at the Renganaden Seeneevassen State Secondary School on Tuesday 06 June 2023 as a result of the bug infestation thereat.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that on 06 June 2023, the presence of bugs at the Renganaden Seeneevassen State Secondary School was reported to the Port Louis Health Office. Following a survey conducted by the Vector Biologist Control Division of the Ministry of Health and Wellness on 07 June 2023, a spraying exercise was carried out the next day, in the whole school.

Upon advice of the Health authorities, the school was closed on 08 and 09 June 2023 and a general cleaning of the school was effected on Friday, 09 June 2023 and Saturday, 10 June 2023.

On Monday, 12 June 2023, bugs were again detected in four classrooms. Accordingly, arrangements were made for disinfection of these four classrooms.

I am informed that another exercise of spraying of insecticides will be carried out for the whole school by the third week of June 2023 and a third session of spraying has been scheduled on 07 July 2023.

My Ministry is also planning to extend the insecticides spraying exercise to all schools especially those in areas which are more prone to infestation due to climate conditions.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have read the analysis made by Mr Arvind Bhojun, President UPSEE, in the light of the problem that happened at Renganaden Seeneevassen State Secondary School. He says that the problem will persist because the desks and the chairs are very old and they harbour bugs. Can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether mere spraying can be a solution or the whole furniture must be changed in the course of time?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have to depend on the advice provided by the health sector and by the people over there. In case the furniture is really bad, we will need to replace but as at now, all advice we have received has been for the spraying and constant spraying and monitoring of the situation in the school.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Similar problems were found island wide, again, the request made by Mr Arvind Bhojun. Can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether it can be envisaged during each school holidays, just prior to commencement of classes, to have this disinfection exercise conducted routinely under the supervision of the headmaster or the rector?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is what we do normally. Before school re-entry, we have a school readiness programme and Heads of schools are supposed to do all that. But as I have just stated in my reply, we are planning to carry out an extensive spraying exercise in all our schools during the holidays.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, who is also proceeding on mission abroad, has requested his questions to be taken out of turn. So, I am acceding. I will now ask hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha to put her question!

TOURISM SECTOR – FOREIGN LABOUR – VACANCIES

(No. B/757) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the tourism industry, he will state the –

- (a) number of employees working directly therein in 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and since January 2023 to date, respectively, indicating the number of –
 - (i) foreign nationals, and

- (ii) vacancies therein as at date, and
- (b) short-term and long-term remedial measures being envisaged to address shortages of staff therein.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism (Mr S. Obeegadoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, it is estimated that some 100,000 households derive income directly or indirectly from the travel and tourism sector in Mauritius.

As for direct employment, I am informed by statistics Mauritius that the survey of employment and earnings is carried out on a yearly basis among large establishments employing 10 or more persons in the tourism industry. These establishments are operating the food service, hotel and travel sectors as well as other services including air transport, tour operators, travel agencies and car rental companies.

According to the results of the said survey, total direct establishment and large establishments of the sector was as follows –

- (i) 2019 – 31,550 employees of which 440 were non-Mauritians;
- (ii) 2020 – 32,253 employees of which 744 were non-Mauritians;
- (iii) 2021 – 27,858 employees of which 569 were non-Mauritians, and
- (iv) 2022 – 27,626 employees of which 1,046 were non-Mauritians.

Corresponding figures for the period January 2023 to date are not as yet available.

As regards to vacancies in the tourism industry, I am informed by the Human Resource Development Council that as at date, the estimated vacancies in the tourism and hospitality sector range between 3,590 and 3,890.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that a Joint Working Group comprising representatives from both the public and private sectors has been set up under my chairmanship to formulate recommendations to ensure the sustainable, inclusive and resilient growth of the tourism and hospitality industries.

The presently applicable policy relating to employment of foreign labour in scarcity areas dates back to 2015. New policy proposals are under discussion at the level of my Ministry in consultation with the Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training and the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development.

Moreover, the Joint Working Group bringing together relevant stakeholders of the public and private sectors has set up a sub-committee on talent management which will formulate recommendations pertaining to attractiveness, recruitment, training, retention and career development within the tourism and hospitality sectors.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: L'honorable ministre peut-il nous dire combien d'employés de l'industrie du tourisme ont été licenciés pendant la pandémie de la Covid-19, et combien de ces employés ont été rembauchés par cette même industrie par la suite ?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would have been delighted to provide such information had the question been put. I think Standing Orders are very clear, the relevant Standing Order: Standing Order 26 that the purpose of supplementary question is to elucidate information requested. So, if the hon. Lady would put a specific question on the next occasion, I should be happy to try and find the required information and provide it to the House.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Je suis certaine que l'honorable ministre sait pertinemment que la force même de notre industrie touristique est la particularité de notre personnel mauricien. Comment l'honorable ministre a l'intention de retenir et d'attirer les mauriciens et les mauriciennes pour travailler dans cette industrie, surtout que beaucoup de pays étrangers recrutent la main d'œuvre mauricienne de cette industrie ?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I just explained and maybe I should repeat yet again that right now there is a joint public-private working group with a specific sub-committee set up to formulate recommendations concerning attractiveness, recruitment, training, retention and career development for employees within the sector. In parallel, my Ministry is consulting the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Finance to review the present quota policy pertaining to foreign employees.

Mr Speaker: MP Osman Mahomed!

NSLD LTD. – OFFICERS RECRUITMENT

(No. B/758) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the New Social Living Development Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the company, information as to the officers to be recruited thereat for the monitoring of the construction of the 8,000 housing units.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the NSLD that 24 officers are to be recruited, of which 16 will be directly involved in the monitoring of

the construction of the 8,000 housing units which represent the first phase, of course, of the project.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. This is a huge project and they are very complex because it is a design and build contract, meaning the contractor is the pay master to the consultant. Can I ask the hon. Minister, being given that the CEO and COO of the NSLD are not from the construction industry, who is in charge of conducting the interviews of these new recruits in such a way that we have competent people who are *assez costaud* to supervise this huge construction project, 8,000 housing units?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not run the NSLD. If the question is put next time, I will provide the information. What information I have at hand and I will provide it, is that the 16 officers comprise Project Officers, Project Assistants, Technical Officers, Project Administrative Assistants, and I will agree with the honourable gentleman that we face a huge challenge because with the design and build mode, it will be up to the NSLD to provide monitoring of compliance with time, quality of construction and a host of other issues. So, yes, it is a complex exercise, but unfortunately, I do not have the composition of the interviewing panel and I am sure the honourable gentleman will understand that.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Can I suggest to the hon. Minister to get the technical Ministry, which is the Infrastructure Division of the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development to at least assist in the interviews being conducted so that we get the best competent people to supervise because this project...

The Deputy Prime Minister: I thank the honourable ...

Mr Osman Mahomed: ... this project is...

The Deputy Prime Minister: I thank the honourable gentleman for the suggestion.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bodha!

CONSTITUENCY NO. 16 – NEW SOCIAL HOUSING UNITS – PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/759) Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the projects for the construction of new social housing units in Constituency No. 16, Vacoas and Floréal, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain

information as to the number thereof being implemented thereat, indicating the time frame therefor.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Yes. Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the NSLD that 400 housing units will be constructed in Constituency No. 16 Vacoas and Floréal as part of Phase 1 of the project for the construction of 8,000 housing units over a period of 18 months as from date of award of contracts.

Now, in addition to these 400, I stand informed that 64 housing units will be constructed by the NHDC in the same constituency and the construction of these units is expected to be completed by mid-2024.

Mr Bodha: Can I ask the Deputy Prime Minister where these new estates are going to be implemented?

The Deputy Prime Minister: As regards the NSLD, I understand that all 400 will be located at Camp Mapou, albeit on two distinct sites whereas the NHDC housing units are to be built at Henrietta and Glen Park, respectively.

Mr Bodha: In view of the fact that we already have two estates of about 400 units which have been constructed in that region in the last recent years, the fact that we are adding another 500 more units, can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister consider what are going to be the accompanying amenities, because that is going to be about 3000 more people coming to that area in Henrietta? Whether accompanying amenities are going to be considered and if they are going to be considered, what are they going to be?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Certainly, Mr Speaker, Sir! I wish to assure the honourable gentleman that Government shares his concern. Land is scarce; state land is even more scarce and he knows fully well that within that constituency, there aren't that many locations where State land is available.

Now, for the NSLD project, the only appropriate site is in the region of Camp Mapou. As the honourable gentleman in the House is aware, for all new projects now, both of the NHDC and NSLD, various community facilities are being provided from children's playground to jogging tracks, community halls, specific areas buildings for a shop or two shops to be set up, a dedicated taxi stand. We have requested that there be one of the families of the complex, one person from the residence holding a taxi permit, we are looking at bus stands, reviewing bus routes, considering accessibility to schools for school going children, to healthcare facilities, area health centres, for instance, or hospitals, the social security offices for seniors in the communities.

So, yes, we are looking into a host of accompanying measures because it is indeed a challenge and I have never concealed the fact that this whole project is historically unprecedented and will require even more attention to make sure that proper community living is provided for. And again, any suggestions from the honourable gentleman would be most welcomed.

As regards the NHDC, I understand that a number of apartments will be built just behind the existing NHDC Complex at Camp Mapou. For the NHDC, 47 units close to Résidence Iris at Henrietta, and then, 17 other apartments at Glen Park. So, there again, we will be making sure by adding more families, more households to that same area, the opportunities are taken to upgrade as and where necessary facilities for the community.

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

At 12.59 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.35 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please be seated! Hon. Nagalingum!

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD – NEW PREMISES – SELECTED BIDDER & RENT

(No. B/754) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the new premises of the Economic Development Board in Ebène, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if tender was floated for the selection thereof and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) name of the selected bidder, and
- (b) monthly rent payable.

The Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives (Mr S. Bholah): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Economic Development Board (EDB) that an expression of interest was launched in the local press on 09 October 2018. During this initial stage, interested parties were invited to submit relevant documentation to assess their eligibility and capability to meet the requirements outlined in the expression of interest document.

As at the closing date of 22 October 2018, the following seven companies had shown their interest –

1. PSH Investment Ltd;
2. Haiyang Development Co. Ltd;
3. Nexteracom Group;
4. Know House Co. Ltd;
5. ENL Property Ltd;
6. Hermes Property Limited, and
7. Burford Investment Limited.

Out of the 7 applicants, only three companies complied with EDB's requirements. These companies were –

1. PSH Investment Ltd;
2. Hermes Property Limited, and
3. Burford Investment Limited

Subsequently, Standard Bidding Documents were sent to these three shortlisted companies on 11 December 2018.

All the three companies submitted their bids by the closing date of 15 January 2019. Thereafter, the bids were evaluated by a Bid Evaluation Committee at the level of the EDB.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by EDB that only one bid, namely that of PSH Investment Ltd, was found to be technically responsive. Subsequently, the company was awarded the contract for the rental of premises in Ebène. EDB and PSH Investment Ltd entered into a lease agreement on 09 August 2019.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by EDB that the monthly rental payable is Rs3.59 million, VAT inclusive. The monthly rental amount includes 5,000 m² of fully fitted office space, 130 parking slots and syndic fees.

Mr Nagalingum: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister to state whether the Valuation Department was instructed to increase an initial rate they proposed for the rent per month and to table a copy of the valuation report?

Mr Bholah: I am not aware of any instruction given to the Valuation Committee and therefore I cannot table any document in that respect.

Mr Nagalingum: Will the hon. Minister confirm that the owner of the property leased is one Mr A. J., and will he agree to conduct an independent enquiry in the whole

process of award, of the selection of the new offices of the EDB in Ebène? Can the hon. Minister also inform the House, if the Financial Services Commission is also one of the tenants of this building owned by Mr N. Gopee?

Mr Bholah: For the later part of the question, I am not aware of that but anyway, PSH Investment Ltd. is a private domestic company incorporated on 22 September 2017 with registered office at level 9, NG Tower, Wall Street Ebène, and Directors of PSH Investment Limited are Mr V. G. and Mrs K. L. G.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

**ALPHAMIX LTD. V/S THE DISTRICT COUNCIL OF RIVIÈRE DU REMPART –
PRIVY COUNCIL JUDGMENT**

(No. B/755) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the judgment given by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council on 05 June 2023 in the case of Alphamix Ltd., v/s the District Council of Rivière du Rempart, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Council information as to the means by which the Council intends finance the payment of the Rs 437 million claimed.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to Parliamentary Questions B/755 and B/794 simultaneously as they relate to the same matter.

I am informed by the District Council of Rivière du Rempart that, in February 2003, following a procurement exercise conducted by the then Pamplemousses-Rivière du Rempart District Council for the construction of a market fair at Rivière du Rempart, the contract was awarded to Alphamix Ltd. for a total sum of Rs51,049,711 inclusive of VAT. The Council had disbursed an amount of Rs36,997,116 to Alphamix Ltd as at 27 September 2006 and had retained an amount of Rs14,052,595 due to various unresolved issues such as unattended snags, uncertified extension of time, unjustified claims and liquidated damages.

Feeling aggrieved of the decision of the Council, Alphamix Ltd lodged a case at the Supreme Court in the year 2008 with an initial claim of Rs183,848,589. On 13 May 2009, the Supreme Court, in consultation with both parties, appointed an Arbitrator, namely Me D. H. Vellien to adjudicate and resolve the dispute.

The Arbitrator, Me D. H. Vellien made the following awards which were eventually paid by the Council –

- (i) on 26 January 2012, an amount of Rs2,026,065.60 representing retention money due less 10% for snag list;
- (ii) on 07 June 2012, an amount of Rs303,909.80 representing 15% VAT on the retention sum of Rs2,026,065.60, and
- (iii) on 24 July 2013, an amount of Rs8,022,380 representing a claim of Rs781,409.40 plus interest accrued as from year 2005.

On the 10 February 2014, following an anonymous letter addressed to ICAC pertaining to allegations against both the Arbitrator and the Counsel of Alphamix Ltd, the Arbitrator withdrew himself from the arbitration. On 18 March 2015, the Supreme Court appointed Justice Marie Benjamin Joseph as Arbitrator.

Justice Marie Benjamin Joseph, Arbitrator made the following awards which were paid by the Council –

- (i) on 29 August 2015, an amount of Rs3,536,250 representing the refund of Liquidated and Ascertained Damages inclusive of VAT, and
- (ii) on 30 July 2016, an amount of Rs11,181,928.12 representing compound interest at the rate of 15.33% accrued on the sum of Rs3,536,250 due from 22 September 2005 to 04 September 2015.

On 23 September 2016, Justice Benjamin Joseph, the Arbitrator granted an interim award of Rs72,921,570.40 plus VAT in full and final settlement of the Capital claimed. On 05 May 2018, an amount of Rs83,859,805.96 was released by the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development and the only live issue was the payment of interest at that time.

On 31 December 2018, the Arbitrator made an award for the payment of the amount of Rs438,634,098 representing interests at the rate of 15.33% per annum compounded daily on the capital amount of Rs72,921,570 over the period from 10 October 2005 to 03 May 2018 amounting to Rs427,324,630 and simple interest accruing on the amount of Rs427,324,630 at the legal rate of 3.5% per annum over the period starting 04 May 2018 until the date of payment.

On 14 January 2022, in a judgment delivered by Justice V. Kwok Yin Siong Yen, the award was declared null and void.

Subsequently, on 27 January 2022, Alphamix Ltd applied for leave before the Supreme Court for an appeal before the Privy Council.

The case was heard before 5 Law Lords of the Privy Council on 26 April 2023. On 05 June 2023, the Law Lords delivered their judgment and have concluded that the signed award delivered on 03 January 2019 is still valid and enforceable in accordance with Article 1029-9 of the Civil Procedure Code.

Mr Speaker, Sir, following advice of the Attorney-General's Office and the legal advisers of the Council, the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development was requested to make necessary arrangement for the payment of the claim. Subsequently, on 15 June 2023, the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development has provided an advance of Rs503,703,271 to my Ministry to enable the District Council of Rivière du Rempart to pay the interest to Alphamix Ltd. On 16 June 2023, action has been taken for payment of Rs503,703,271 as interest by the Council.

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. We are talking about a little more than half a billion rupees. May I ask the hon. Minister to inform the House as to how much was paid in terms of fees to the legal team of the Rivière du Rempart District Council for this legal case we started since 2003?

Dr. Husnoo: Actually, I don't have information about the exact money paid by the legal team because you have different team at different time.

Dr. Gungapersad: You can table it afterwards, Sir.

Dr. Husnoo: I can circulate it afterwards because we have different team at different time.

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I ask the hon. Minister how far is the President of the District Council who was in office in 2003 when the Council refused to pay because you mentioned it, the Rs8.2 million, retention money to Alphamix, responsible for this long judicial battle leading to this unprecedented loss of nearly half a billion taxpayers' money?

Dr. Husnoo: Sorry, Mr Speaker, Sir, I did not quite understand the initial question.

Dr. Gungapersad: I repeat it?

Dr. Husnoo: Please.

Dr. Gungapersad: Hon. Vice Prime Minister, I am asking how far is the present president of the District Council, who was in office in 2003 when all this judicial battles

started, is responsible for this unprecedented loss of nearly half a billion rupees of tax payers' money?

Dr. Husnoo: Well actually, as you see, I have given all the details, how it started, why the money was not paid at that time because as I mentioned there was a lot of unresolved issues, unattended snag, uncertified extension of time. So, there was a lot of problem. It went into two arbitrations, one Mr Vellien and the second one, Justice, Benjamin Marie Joseph; they awarded these sums. It is not the President of the Council or Chairman of the Council, no. It is these arbitrators who gave this. I know it is a very big sum but this was given by the arbitrators not by the Council.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

MFDC LTD. – SHOOTING WITH WHALES – AUTHORISED ORGANISATIONS

(No. B/756) Ms J. Berénger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to film shooting with whales in Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Film Development Corporation Ltd., information as to –

- (a) the number of authorization granted therefor for the years 2021, 2022 and 2023 to date, indicating the –
 - (i) names of the companies/ organizations, and
 - (ii) actions taken to ensure the compliance of the conditions attached thereto, and
- (b) if any non-compliance of the conditions thereof has been reported and, if so, the actions taken in relation thereto.

Mr Teeluck: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) and part (a) (i) of the question, with your permission, I am tabling the requested information and the number of authorisations granted to organisations by the MFDC, a parastatal operating under the aegis of my Ministry for film shooting with whales in Mauritius for the years 2021, 2022 and 2023 to date.

Mr Speaker, Sir, every film producer who intends to shoot a film or part of a film in Mauritius, shall apply to the MFDC for authorisation as per the Regulations II of the Mauritius Film Development Corporation Regulations 2001. Moreover, with regard to film shooting with whales in Mauritius, the MFDC acts as a facilitator and a one-stop shop for applicants. Since August 2022, the MFDC forwards clearances received from the

relevant authorities and any condition attached thereto to applicants for film shooting with whales. The MFDC seeks clearances from the following –

- 1) Prime Minister's Office, Department of Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones Administration & Exploration;
- 2) Ministry of Tourism;
- 3) Tourism Authority;
- 4) Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping, and lastly
- 5) The Commissioner of Police.

I am further informed that these clearances are issued by the Institutions subject to specific conditions which are communicated by the MFDC to the applicants. Some of the conditions include –

- (i) submission of schedule of activities before the shooting and information of any change in the schedule prior to the shooting;
- (ii) presence of officers of the Fisheries Division and the Fisheries Protection Service as observers during the shooting;
- (iii) submission of work plan and GPS coordinates of location of shooting at sea and list of members for the shooting to the nearest Fisheries Post, and lastly
- (iv) submission of documentary shooting exercise and documentary report after the shooting.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) (ii) of the question, I am informed by the MFDC that to ensure compliance with the conditions attached to the authorisation, officers of the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping and the Department of Continental Shelf, Maritime Zone Administration & Exploration of the Prime Minister's Office, undertake random surprise visits during the shooting with whales. In addition, officers of the Fisheries Division and Fisheries Protection Service are present during each trip at sea for shooting with whales as observers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regards to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the MFDC that on 09 August 2022, a complaint was received from the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping regarding authorisation given to one Mr R. H. who represents the ODV Production Ltd. for shooting with whales where marine mammals were allegedly stressed and harassed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, following this complaint, I am further informed by the Ministry of Tourism that the Tourism Authority has signed an agreement in December 2022 with ODV Production Ltd. represented by Mr R. H. after the company had obtained all the necessary clearances for enforcement, the Tourism Authority's patrol craft TAO1 and crew ensure that all the film shooting sessions unfold without any kind of interferences with pleasure crafts licensees skippers at sea. This service is actually built to the company.

On top of that, the patrol craft TAO1 patrols the identified zones on a regular basis keeping well clear of the pleasure craft leased by the said company whenever the shooting sessions are in progress. Moreover, they verify that the company operates as per the terms and conditions set out in the authorisation letters; besides the Tourism Authority ascertains that other pleasure crafts licensees skippers also comply with the Tourism Authority (Dolphin and Whale Watching) Regulations 2012.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Ministry of Tourism that as at date, there has been no incident at sea whereby the abovementioned company failed to comply with the terms and conditions imposed by the Ministries and Departments which authorised the shooting sessions with whales.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in case there are any further non-compliance issue, the attention of the relevant authority will be flagged accordingly.

Ms J. Bérenger: Nous avons donc la confirmation qu'il existe bel et bien des baleines à l'ile Maurice contrairement à ce qu'un ministre avait pu dire dans le passé. Nous avons des baleines de passage mais également des baleines qui sont en permanence dans nos eaux, une trentaine. Maintenant, le ministre peut-il nous dire s'il est au courant que le détenteur de permis qu'il a mentionné et dont la marraine est l'épouse du Premier ministre, est-ce qu'il est au courant que ce détenteur de permis utilise en réalité la production de film pour faire, je cite –

« Du tourisme d'aventure »

et je cite le contrat qu'il fait signer à ses clients où il propose d'ailleurs des forfaits à des prix exorbitants ; ce qui viole les conditions imposées dans le permis délivré par son ministère et notamment la section G et je cite –

« The film shooting exercise shall not include any eco-tourism or commercial activities”.

et il va même plus loin en demandant à ses clients de payer ...

Mr Speaker: You put your question.

Ms J. Bérenger: Oui, je suis en train de demander.

Mr Speaker: You are making a statement. Supplementary questions !

Ms J. Bérenger: Le ministre est-il au courant de cela et qu'il va encore plus loin en demandant...

Mr Speaker: Can you stop there? Can you stop there? Put your question straight forward.

Ms J. Bérenger: Je sais que vous êtes impatient, j'arrive. Il demande aux clients de payer pour les frais de ce bateau de la Tourism Authority dont le ministre a fait mention, ce qui viole encore une fois les conditions du permis. Donc, le ministre peut-il nous dire s'il est au courant de ces pratiques et de ce tourisme illégal en plus de la plainte qu'a été faite et qu'il vient de mentionner et s'il ne pense pas qu'il faudrait ...

Mr Speaker: No, too much, too much. I stop you with your question. You are dragging too much on this question. If you have another question put it or I will change.

An hon. Member: *Ale, ale, reposz kestion la.*

Mr Speaker: The next question would be to hon. Assirvaden.

Ms J. Bérenger: Okay, est-ce que l'honorable ministre peut ...

(Interruptions)

Mais, Mr Speaker, Sir, ...

An hon. Member: *Li bon, li bon, bien bon.*

Mr Speaker: You still have a question?

An hon. Member: Mais oui!

Ms J. Bérenger: Yes, of course!

Mr Speaker: Okay, let me hear the question.

Ms J. Bérenger: Est-ce que le ministre ne pense pas au vu de toute ces raisons, il ne faudrait pas une bonne fois pour toute enlever le permis de ce soi-disant producteur qui est en train de clairement abuser et mettre une pression constante sur ces mammifères marins à travers des tournages qui durent des mois?

Mr Teeluck: Mr Speaker, Sir, first of all, yes, we do have whales in our seas as well as sharks; that goes for the comment of the hon. Member.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have said it loud and clear in my reply; we ensure at all times that all the conditions set out in all the clearances because as mentioned clearances are

issued by different institutions. We try to ensure to the best of our abilities that those conditions are strictly followed and complied with but, of course, if there are certain conditions not being adhered to with, I, myself, I am not privy to any non-compliance but, of course, if we have information and if the hon. Member does have information, we will be happy to act upon but, until then, it's impossible for me to reply or to make a statement on what has been said.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Assirvaden!

Ms J. Bérenger: Pour moi une deuxième question supplémentaire, s'il vous plaît.

Mr Speaker: Sufficiently canvassed! Half page question. You have a half page question and you are dragging on your next supplementary question.

CAMP FOUQUEREAUX - SYNTHETIC FOOTBALL GROUND

(No. B/760) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the synthetic football ground at Camp Fouquereaux, he will state when same will be renovated.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix that the mini soccer pitch at Camp Fouquereaux was constructed in 2013 by the NDU and handed over to the Council on 17 October 2013 for use by public.

However, due to normal wear and tear, the Council undertook upgrading work on the pitch in June 2021, for an amount of Rs891,000 and the work was completed in August 2021.

With regard to maintenance of the synthetic turf, an annual exercise is carried out by the Council to maintain its synthetic pitch. The company who had been awarded the contract for the maintenance informed the Council on 02 May 2023 that the state of the turf at Camp Fouquereaux is beyond repair and has recommended full replacement of the turf.

A survey has been carried out by officers of the Council at Camp Fouquereaux mini soccer pitch and it has been observed that the pitch needs complete renovation including ancillary works which is estimated at Rs7 m. Funding avenues are being explored at present in the forthcoming budget.

Mr Assirvaden: Ce *mini soccer pitch* de Camp Fouquereaux a été créé en 2013, comme-la si bien dit le ministre et inauguré en 2019. Donc, neuf ans, ce Camp

Fouquereaux *mini soccer pitch* a tenu. L'année dernière, le 27 mars 2022, le maire et l'honorable Monsieur Bablee ont inauguré ce *mini soccer pitch* et 15 mois après, M. le ministre, après avoir dépensé près d'un million de roupies, ce *mini soccer pitch* est abimé et demande une rénovation.

Est-ce que vous avez demandez aux responsables de la municipalité concernant la qualité de travail, la qualité des matériaux utilisés parce que 15 mois, le *mini soccer pitch* est déjà hors de service ?

Dr. Husnoo: I tried to get the information about why it happened again and I was told that the synthetic grass has been uprooted due to negligence of some users and players. That is why it got spoilt so soon.

Mr Assirvaden: Donc, cela est mis sur le dos des joueurs parce que ce sont les jeunes de Highlands, Camp Fouquereaux, Castel et Hermitage et autres qui jouent sur ce *mini soccer pitch*. J'ai des photos en ma possession et j'en ai parlé à l'honorable Bablee samedi. Ce *mini soccer pitch* étant dans un état complètement abimé et les structures métalliques sont rouillées et cassées, présentant des dangers pour les jeunes qui jouent sur ce terrain. Est-ce que la municipalité a pris la disposition de faire fermer ce *mini soccer pitch* le temps que la réparation se fasse parce que c'est un danger public ?

Dr. Husnoo: Okay, I don't know at present time whether it is close or not but I can check with the Council. But that's what I told you, a lot of work need to be done there. They have estimated, it is going to cost about Rs7 m., and we are going to try to get it in the forthcoming budget.

Mr Speaker: MP Uteem!

MAURITIUS MEAT AUTHORITY - IMPORTATION OF LIVE CATTLE - EID-UL-ADHA FESTIVAL

(No. B/761) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the importation of live cattle for the Eid-ul-Adha festival by the Mauritius Meat Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to the reasons why the Authority was unable to proceed therewith this year, indicating if any fees and expenses were incurred in connection thereto.

Mr Gobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will reply to Parliamentary Questions B/761 and B/771 together as they relate to the same subject matter.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the import of live cattle for the Eid Ul-Adha festival to be celebrated this month, the Inter-Ministerial Committee set up to look into the sale and fixing of the price of live cattle decided on 02 March of this year that the Mauritius Meat Authority (MMA) would import 600 cattle from South Africa prior to the festival.

Mr Speaker Sir, I wish to point out that out of the nine provinces in South Africa, livestock are not allowed to be imported from six provinces, namely Mpumalanga, Gauteng, Limpopo, North West, Kwa Zulu Natal, and Free State, due to prevalence of Foot and Mouth Disease.

The Board of the MMA, on 21 March 2023, approved the import of the cattle from South Africa. The Board also approved that a delegation comprising the General Manager of the MMA and Veterinary Officers from the Livestock and Veterinary Division of the Ministry would proceed to South Africa in connection with the import of the live cattle.

On 12 April 2023, the General Manager proceeded to South Africa and visited livestock farms and quarantine stations, as well as looked into the necessary logistics for the smooth transportation and delivery of livestock in Mauritius. I hasten to add that there was no delegation which proceeded to South Africa. The General Manager proceeded on 12 April 2023 alone.

Subsequently, amendments were brought to the Public Procurement Regulations for the MMA to be exempted for the purchase of livestock for resale. Amendments were brought on 14 April 2023 for resale and/or slaughter of livestock. Nevertheless, despite the amendments to the PPA regulations, the MMA established a comprehensive procurement process which was approved by the MMA Board on 27 April 2023.

Following financial clearance to the tune of Rs57 m. obtained on 26 April 2023 for the purchase and shipment of the 600 live cattle to Mauritius, as well as provision for the quarantine facilities for the cattle prior to the festival, the Board of the Mauritius Meat Authority, at its meeting of 27 April 2023, approved the launching of four bidding exercises namely for purchase, shipment, insurance and quarantine of the live cattle.

Accordingly, bid for purchase of the live cattle was launched on 27 April 2023, with closing date of 02 May 2023. Bid for shipment of the live cattle was launched on 28 April 2023, with closing date of 03 May 2023. Bid for insurance cover was launched on 04 May 2023, with closing date 10 May 2023. For quarantine of the cattle in Mauritius, the bid was launched on 03 May 2023, with closing date on 05 May 2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that following the evaluation of those bids received, the Board of the Mauritius Meat Authority issued letters of Award on 08 May 2023. The letter of award for purchase of cattle was issued to Elliott Trust, South Africa, for the supply of 320,000 kg weight of live cattle.

However, on 22 May 2023, the Company, namely Elliott Trust of South Africa, which was awarded the contract for the purchase of live cattle, informed the Mauritius Meat Authority that it was unable to proceed with the acceptance of the award due to its Bank, namely Standard Bank, which had declined to offer pre-shipment financing.

On 25 May 2023, the Mauritius Meat Authority informed that the awarding Company could not monetize the Letter of Credit, and hence, the MMA would not be able to proceed further with the procurement.

In the circumstances, Mr Speaker, Sir, following approval of the Board of the Mauritius Meat Authority, a new bidding exercise was launched on 25 May 2023 for the procurement of live cattle.

In that new bidding exercise, the Meat Authority received 2 bids. However, at the Board meeting of the Mauritius Meat Authority held on 30 May 2023, it was reported that the new bidding exercise which had received 2 bids were not responsive due to absence of mandatory documents. Therefore, the Mauritius Meat Authority was not in a position to meet the deadline for the import of live cattle for the Eid Ul-Adha festival.

Now, concerning the delegation which would proceed to South Africa, it is to be recalled that on 27 April 2023, the Board had approved that a delegation would proceed to South Africa, comprising of *inter alia* General Manager, officer of the Livestock and Veterinary Division, one officer from the FAREI.

However, in view of the circumstances as I have just described, the delegation did not proceed to South Africa.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in so far as the expenses are concerned, I am informed that expenses incurred so far in respect of the above include fees paid to the Chairperson and Members of the Bid Evaluation Committees held at the Mauritius Meat Authority for the evaluation of bids.

Expenses will also include the trip of the General Manager as I have described earlier but these have not been paid yet to the General Manager.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Uteem: May I know from the hon. Minister whether a contract was signed between the MMA and the cattle carrier RTSS and if so, whether any claim has been made by RTSS for the hiring of that cattle vessel?

Mr Gobin: As I have stated earlier, Mr Speaker, Sir, there were four bidding exercises: one for purchase, one for shipment, third one for insurance and fourth one for the quarantine. Therefore, concerning the question of shipment, yes, there was a letter of award for shipment which was issued on 08 May for shipment of cattle. It was issued to RTSS Maritime Services LLC Dubai.

Now, whether, there is a claim from that company, I have to check, Mr Speaker, Sir. Since there was no import, of course, there was no shipment.

Mr Speaker: MP Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, importation of live cattle is a specialised business and not every Tom, Dick and Harry can do so. So, my question to the hon. Minister, since the last attempt has been a *fiasco* – a total *fiasco* – can I ask him what guarantee he can give to the House for next year's festival if the idea of importing live cattle is still on the cards or has it been abandoned?

Mr Gobin: Well, I take objection to the qualification of 'total *fiasco*'. That is a question of appreciation. I have given a lengthy reply to explain what has been done and we are talking of the combined efforts of the officers of the Mauritius Meat Authority and other officers – I am not talking of any Tom, Dick and Harry.

I agree that it is a specialised line of business and we need to proceed with caution but the importation happened in the past, so, we can replicate. It can happen; it is still on the cards. For the reasons I have stated in my reply, it did not materialise this time, I am confident that we can make it happen in the future.

Mr Speaker: Next question! Hon. Ms Tour!

Mr Ameer Meea: You have two PQs!

Mr Speaker: Yes, but it doesn't matter, we have...

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: What, it doesn't matter?

Mr Ameer Meea: We should have at least 4 supplementary questions!

Mr Speaker: Continue!

Mr Uteem: 11.5 million!

An hon. Member: *La nou pou pran 5 minit la!*

CONSTITUENCY NO. 4 – WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT ISSUES – MEASURES

(No. B/762) Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to wastewater management in Constituency No. 4, Port Louis North and Montagne Longue, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Wastewater Management Authority, information as to the measures being envisaged to remedy the problems encountered in relation thereto.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Wastewater Management Authority that in order to abate the wastewater problems being encountered in Constituency No.4, Port Louis North and Montagne Longue, the Wastewater Management Authority has embarked on the implementation of several sewerage projects. A number of projects have been completed between 2016 and to date, namely –

- (a) The design and construction of sewer reticulation and house connections at Cipaye Brûlé, Vallée des Prêtres in 2016 where 155 houses have been completed;
- (b) Sewerage infrastructure at Résidence La Cure, Port Louis, CHA phase 4 in 2017, where 84 houses have been connected.
- (c) Sewerage project at Bangladesh, Tranquebar, Ste Marie in 2019 where 33 houses have been connected.
- (d) Upgrading of sewers at Allée Père Laval, Ste Croix in 2020.
- (e) Sewer extension works and sewer deviation works at Nicolay, Port Louis.

The main sewerage projects that are ongoing currently include the following –

- (i) The sewerage project at Morcellement Goolamally, le Hochet, Terre Rouge.

Following numerous complaints from residents of the Morcellement Goolamally region made to the Wastewater Management Authority regarding nuisances caused by overflows of existing cesspits, the sewerage project at Morcellement Goolamally, le Hochet-Terre Rouge was started and is currently being carried out in two phases. The Phase 1 of the project is presently being invented to cater for some 225 house connections in the regions of Avenue Lyer, Avenue Bluet, Morcellement Goolamally and Sainte Marie Street. The project was awarded on 13 May 2021 to Joint Venture Square Deal/Serveng

for a contract amount of Rs140.2 m. including VAT and is expected to be completed by June 2023.

Phase 2 of the project being implemented in the regions of Morcellement Goolamally involved the construction of street sewers and all related ancillaries, house connection works, water pipe replacement and road reinstatement. The project was awarded on 30 December 2022 to H. Padiacy Co. Ltd for a contract amount of Rs88 m. and is presently ongoing. The duration of the project is 18 months and is expected to be completed by June 2024. At the end of the project some 120 houses will be connected to the public sewer system.

(ii) The Sewerage project at Résidence Vallée des Prêtres and Bernadin de St Pierre.

The Sewerage project at Residence Vallée des Prêtres and Bernadin de Saint Pierre Street is an extension of the six prioritised sites rehabilitation programme under CHA Phase 4 due to frequent wastewater overflow particularly after heavy rainfalls, residents, there, frequently deal with annoyances and health hazards.

The Vallée des Prêtres Government School is surrounded by 242 housing flats that make up the Vallée des Prêtres CHA Estate.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to outline that Résidence Vallée des Prêtres comprises some 336 apartments and were constructed by NHDC in 1993. These problems have been encountered by the residents for the past 30 years. The wastewater project by WMA comprises the replacement of the existing main sewer along Bernadin de Saint Pierre Street overstretch of around 650 m from its junction with School Lane to that of Kenda Lane. This will help to relieve the existing sewer along Kenda Lane which is prone to frequent overflows during rainfall. At the end of the project in December 2023, some 260 houses within Résidence Vallée des Prêtres and Bernadin de Saint Pierre will be connected.

(iii) The Sewerage project at Cité Roma.

The Wastewater Management Authority is also carrying out the Sewerage project at Cité Roma, Riche Terre under a framework agreement for sewer extension works to lessen the environmental nuisances brought on by frequent wastewater overflows.

Again, here, this is a recurring problem for the past 30 years. The works are being undertaken by Serveng Ltd. for a contract amount of Rs83, 987, 880 excluding VAT and is presently on-going. The duration of the project is 15 months. By mid-July 2023 the project will be completed and 74 homes will be connected to the sewer system.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in addition, to the above, the Wastewater Management Authority is planning the implementation of sewerage project at Caro Lalo, Vallée des Prêtres as well as along part of Bernadin de St Pierre Street in the forthcoming financial year. It is expected that some 173 houses will be connected to the public sewer system. The implementation of the project will help to abate the recurrent sewerage problems in these areas.

In this context, the consultant Luxconsult (Mtius) Ltd. has been appointed on 03 June 2022. The scope of works consists of detailed topographical surveys, detailed design, preparation of the bid documents, assistance to the Wastewater Management Authority during the bidding stage, supervision of works and contract administration.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Tour: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Can the hon. Minister advise whether these projects will solve the recurrent problem of overflow of existing cesspits in the regions of Morcellement Goolamally, Le Hochet and La Cure?

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have stated in my reply that the following projects which I have mentioned will solve the problems of the inhabitants with regard to overflowing of their cesspits.

Mr Speaker: The Table is advised that PQ B/764, B/782, B/786, B/791, B/795, B/797, B/804 have been withdrawn.

Next question!

PUBLIC HOSPITALS – CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASES – HEART SURGERIES

(No. B/763) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the public hospitals, he will state the number of –

- (a) patients presently being treated for cardiovascular diseases, and
- (b) heart surgeries carried out thereat over the past five years.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, every year, some 130,000 visits are registered as outpatients in the Cardiology Units in public hospitals. On average, 40,000 patients are treated annually for cardiovascular diseases including cerebral, heart, kidney and peripheral vascular damage. Out of the 160,000 admissions in all the public hospitals, about 10% are admitted for cardiac problems.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that heart surgeries in public health institutions are performed only at the Cardiac Centre, Trust Fund for Specialised Medical Care.

The number of heart surgeries performed at the Cardiac Centre over the last five years is as follows –

- 735 heart surgeries for 2018;
- 807 heart surgeries for 2019;
- 818 heart surgeries for 2020;
- 874 heart surgeries for 2021, and
- 974 heart surgeries for 2022.

Mrs Mayotte: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Besides heart surgeries, can the hon. Minister provide information pertaining to other treatments provided to cardiac patients in different hospitals?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, in different hospitals other treatments being provided in different hospitals are –

- (i) follow up of patients;
- (ii) angiography being done at Victoria Hospital and Jeetoo Hospital as well as at SSR Hospital, and then
- (iii) primary coronary intervention which means that whenever a patient is being admitted for cardiac problems, if need be, angiography and angioplasty are performed at the same time. These services are also provided at Victoria and Jeetoo Hospitals as well as the Cardiac Centre.

Mrs Mayotte: Can the hon. Minister provide details on the waiting list for heart surgeries as at April 2023?

Dr. Jagutpal: As at April, 158 patients are on the waiting list for heart surgeries. So, it is important to look at the waiting time. The waiting time is between 4-6 weeks, provided these patients are fit to undergo major surgery.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

PUBLIC BUILDINGS & OFFICES – ASBESTOS – MINISTRIES/DEPARTMENT CONCERNED

(No. B/764) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development

whether, in regard to public buildings and offices with asbestos, he will state the number thereof, indicating the –

- (a) Ministries/Department concerned;
- (b) civil servants working thereat, and
- (c) average number of public acceding to these buildings on a daily basis.

(Withdrawn)

11TH INDIAN OCEAN ISLAND GAMES

(No. B/765) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the 11th Indian Ocean Island Games, he will state the –

- (a) sports disciplines in which Team Mauritius is engaged, indicating in each case the names of the –
 - (i) pre-selected/selected athletes, gender wise, and
 - (ii) respective national coach/DTN, and
- (b) budget allocated to each sport federation for their preparation therefor, giving a breakdown thereof.

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like first of all to inform the House that the preparation of our athletes is an ongoing exercise. These preparations are carried out with specific objectives set by the respective National Sports Federations focusing on participation in major events such as the world championships, continental and regional competitions including the upcoming 2023 Indian Ocean Island Games.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I would like to inform the House that the list of preselected athletes is subject to performance finalisation and is continually evolving. The list of the sports disciplines in which team Mauritius will be participating in the 2023 Indian Ocean Island Games together with the names of the pre-selected athletes gender-wise as well as the names of the respective national coaches is being sought from the National Sport Federations and compiled. Same will be tabled as soon as possible.

I would like to inform the House that our athletes are actively preparing for the games and the performance they have achieved so far in various competitions are quite encouraging. I wish to highlight here the recent victory by Club M against Kenya during the Mauritius Four Nations Football Series international friendly match held at the Côte

d'Or National Sports Complex which received enthusiastic support from the local community.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, the concerned National Sports Federations submitted a preparation plan which is currently being implemented with the support of my Ministry. For that purpose, there is a provision of a sum of Rs25 m. in this financial year.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am tabling a detailed breakdown of the budget allocated to the National Sports Federations. Thank you.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, l'exclusion de certains de nos meilleurs sportifs affecte la préparation au sein de certaines disciplines. De ce fait, l'honorable ministre peut-il nous dire quelles sont les actions et décisions prises concernant les judokas Pascal Laurent, Emmanuel Mounawah, Anne-Laure Larcher et Annabelle Laprovidence entre autres qui n'ont pas été présélectionnés parce que la demande d'affiliation de leur club respectif avec la Fédération de judo est toujours en attente et aussi sans oublier le nageur Bradley Vincent qui est toujours suspendu par le Comité olympique mauricien.

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, il est difficile pour moi de répondre à cela. De toute les façons, la fédération a la responsabilité de la présélection ou sélection des athlètes, et je l'ai archi dit ici dans cette Assemblée et à l'extérieur depuis 2017 maintenant que tout athlète qui se sent lésé, il y a différentes instances où ils peuvent faire appel. Il y a évidemment le *Ombudsperson for Sports* et plus loin il y a aussi le *Sports Arbitration Tribunal*. Les athlètes cités par l'honorable membre pourraient éventuellement faire appel à ces instances.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, R 53 millions ont été identifiés dans le budget 2023-2024 sous l'item 'Jeux des îles', et de ce fait, l'honorable ministre peut-il nous donner les noms des athlètes présélectionnés ou sélectionnés pour ces jeux et qui sont actuellement en préparation à l'étranger justement avec le soutien financier du ministère des Sports ?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, il ne faut pas que l'honorable membre fasse l'amalgame avec les R 53 millions cités dans le budget. Ces R 53 millions *are meant for the participation of our athletes* de toute la délégation de la République de Maurice pour participer aux Jeux des îles. Les athlètes qui sont à l'étranger, qui sont préparés, qui suivent des *training camps*, et bien évidemment il faudra vérifier dans la liste que les fédérations concernées sont en train de préparer et ce n'est que comme ça que j'aurais ces renseignements.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

CONSTITUENCY NO. 1 – APPLICANT FISHERS – FISHERS GENERAL
COURSE – JANUARY 2023 TO JUNE 2023

(No. B/766) **Mr F. David** (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to applicant fishers residing in Constituency No. 1, Grand River North West and Port Louis West, he will state the –

- (a) number thereof who followed the General Course for Fishers since January 2023 to date, and
- (b) quantum of stipend paid thereto during the course.

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to point out that in two financial years 2021-2022 and 2022-2023, Government approved the issue of 1,000 fisherman cards where consideration was given to active fishermen whose application dated over three years in the first instance.

Moreover, the Retirement Scheme allowed us to provide additional 300+ cards, thus enabling us to allocate more than 1,300 fisherman cards. Subsequently, 380 fisherman registration cards have been issued today and 17 are from Constituency No. 1. The walk in application exercise was carried out in March 2023 following which we received 1,363 new applications. The application for new fishermen cards is an ongoing exercise and as at today, about 1,500 applications have been received by my Ministry.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with respect to part (a) of the question, the Fisheries Training and Extension Centre has dispensed the General Course for Fishermen to 57 applicant fishers during the month of April 2023. 51 male and 6 female applicant fishers have benefited of the training course. Among the 57 applicant fishers, 8 are from Constituency No. 1.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have to point out that during the working application exercise, 70 applications were received from the Constituency No. 1.

With respect to part (b) of the question, regarding stipend to trainees, I wish to inform the House that training is free of charge. The trainees are however provided with a daily stipend of Rs300 for attending the course and to meet their travelling expenses. The daily stipend of Rs300 of course is paid subject to their attendance to the training course, and I am pleased to inform the House that the daily stipend paid for training will be increased from Rs300 to Rs650 as from July 2023.

Mr David: M. le président, les conditions du *Training Course* prévoient donc, une allocation journalière de R 300, comme l'a mentionné le ministre. Puis-je demander au

ministre combien de temps les *applicant fishers* doivent normalement attendre pour percevoir le montant de leur allocation ? Car, j'ai rencontré pas plus tard qu'avant-hier des pêcheurs de ma circonscription qui ont terminé leur formation le 20 avril 2023 et qui n'ont toujours pas reçu leur *stipend* alors que nous sommes aujourd'hui le 20 juin, soit précisément deux mois après la formation.

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the Member for this information. I will look into it. Of course, I am not aware of this issue.

Mr David: M. le président, le ministre de la pêche a déposé à la Chambre le 18 avril 2023 les critères d'éligibilité pour l'enregistrement des pêcheurs artisanaux, et le neuvième et dernier critère concerne précisément cette formation, et se lit comme suit –

“The eligible applicant fisher shall successfully complete a six-week general fisher course conducted by the Ministry responsible for fisheries to be registered as an artisanal fisher”

Aussi, puis-je demander au ministre d'expliquer à la Chambre dans quel cas la formation annoncée par son ministère d'une durée de six semaines est réduite à 8 jours ? Alors, j'imagine qu'il va nous dire qu'il s'agit des pêcheurs d'une certaine expérience mais, précisément, j'aimerais que le ministre vienne nous expliquer sur quel critère son ministère juge une certaine expérience de certains pour une formation raccourcie. Et je demanderai au ministre de bien vouloir dissiper les doutes que je peux avoir sur le fait qu'il y aurait une formation *fast track* pour les proches du pouvoir.

Mr Maudhoo: No, Mr Speaker, Sir. Again, this is the second time – I think, during his intervention on the Budget Speech, the hon. Member made some allegations on me with regard to the procurement of equipment for fishers, that the first procurement was cancelled for obvious reason. In fact, both procurements were non-responsive so, we have to relaunch. There is nothing about protecting anybody.

With regard to the General Course for Fishermen, as I just pointed out, we are giving priorities to those fishermen who have been waiting for more than three years now. Everybody knows when the Labour Party and PMSD were in power, not a single card was issued, Mr Speaker, Sir. Come on.

The General Course for Fishermen is dispensed indeed on a six-weeks' training but given that priority was given to applicant fishers with over 3 years of experience, who are active, the course was shortened to 8 days, with emphasis on the security aspects at sea.

Another component is that the recommendation letter from registered fishers attesting that these applicant fishers have fishing experience with them was submitted to the Ministry for eligibility for the 8-days' training.

The shortened course comprised the following components –

- The mechanic aspect where emphasis is put on outboard engines, the general description about the types, rating, operation of boats is given, safe operation procedures are explained. Applicant fishers are also taught about maintenance, servicing and minor repairs, troubleshooting and repairs, electrical wiring and other auxiliary equipment.
- The security aspect, obviously safety at sea. The applicant fishers are explained about the usage of life-saving equipment, lifejacket, life board, GPS and also about the potential dangers such as lost at sea.
- Another aspect is the phytosanitary aspect. Of course, to better preserve their fish and fish products.

So, it has nothing to do with preference for anybody. All applicants are treated the same and it will be a continuous exercise until we realise, hopefully, by April 2024, the allocation of the balance of 1,000 cards, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

AIR MAURITIUS – CABIN CREW ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT –

COMPLAINT&ACTIONS

(No. B/767) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to Mrs Y. B. R., President of the Air Mauritius Cabin Crew Association, he will state if his Ministry is in presence of any formal complaint from the said Association regarding accusations levelled by Air Mauritius Ltd., against her and, if so, indicate the actions taken in relation thereto.

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that on 12 May 2023, the Air Mauritius Cabin Crew Association, commonly known as AMCCA, made representation to the Conciliation and Mediation Section of my Ministry to the effect that, through a letter dated 03 May 2023, Air Mauritius Ltd. had reproached Mrs Y.B.R. and requested her for explanation on comments and remarks made against the management of Air Mauritius Ltd. during a live private radio and social media programme on 25 April 2023. AMCCA had therefore solicited the Conciliation Service of my Ministry in accordance with section 68 of the Employment Relations Act.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Conciliation and Mediation Section of my Ministry had a conciliation meeting with the representatives of the management of Air Mauritius Ltd. and AMCCA on Monday, 22 May 2023. Following discussions with both parties, that is, with the management of Air Mauritius Ltd. and Mrs Y.B.R. who was accompanied by the negotiator of AMCCA, Mr R.K.S., the latter agreed to submit a written reply to the management of Air Mauritius Ltd. by 26 May 2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed that through a letter dated 25 May 2023, the negotiator of AMCCA informed my Ministry that a reply was sent to Air Mauritius Ltd. on 25 May 2023. I am also informed that Air Mauritius Ltd. is still investigating into the matter.

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, M. le président. Le ministre pourrait-il indiquer à la Chambre si son ministère compte statuer sur le litige actuel entre Air Mauritius et la présidente de l'AMCCA qui vise à museler la syndicaliste, ainsi que de modifier la section 64 2 (a) (ii) *Protection against termination of agreement* de la *Workers' Rights Act* afin d'exempter tous les employés syndicalistes lorsqu'ils exercent leur fonction pour le syndicat ? Merci.

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, as regard the first part of the question, I have answered extensively in my main reply. I need to inform the hon. Member that there is a procedural agreement between the management of Air Mauritius Ltd. and AMCCA and the articles clearly define the role of each party.

As regard the communication part, I refer the hon. Member to article 5. I can table it if she wants.

Ms Anquetil: Merci, M. le président. Le ministre peut-il indiquer à la Chambre si son ministère compte exiger de la direction d'Air Mauritius le retrait de la lettre qui est une pure persécution contre la présidente de l'AMCCA faisant suite à sa participation à une émission radio alors qu'elle était mandatée par le syndicat pour exprimer le point de vue de ces membres ? Merci.

Mr Callichurn: Well, Mr Speaker, Sir, Mrs Y.B.R. was only requested to furnish explanation following the comments made on a radio programme. So, obviously there is status quo at present since the conciliation meeting that was held at my Ministry.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

(No. B/768) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the construction and rehabilitation of drains along the road at Solferino No. 3 in Vacoas, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix, information as to the date the contract was awarded, indicating the –

- (a) name of the contractor, and
- (b) total project value thereof.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix that it had launched a first bidding exercise for the cleaning and upgrading of the existing drains covers within the township of Vacoas-Phoenix, including one site at Solferino No. 3, Vacoas. The contract was awarded to J & J Company Ltd. on the 29 of April 2022 for the rate of Rs34,000 per metre excluding VAT for a total estimated cost of Rs2.6 m. for the whole project.

However, due to a poor performance and breach of contractual obligation, the Council terminated the contract. It is to be noted that no payment had been effected to that contractor. A new bidding exercise was launched for the remaining work on 19 September 2022. The new contract was awarded to Prakash Foolchund Contractor Ltd. on 15 November 2022 at a quoted rate of Rs37,200 per metre, excluding VAT, for a total estimate cost of Rs2,643,468 which included the cleaning and upgrading of the existing drain covers at Solferino No. 3 over a length of 135 metres, also comprising 34 metres of heavy duty metal grading and 10 metres of covered slabs. Work has been completed on 31 January 2023 to the satisfaction of the Council in compliance to the Works Order.

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

May I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether he is in presence of a report from the Council that they have expressed satisfaction as to the work carried out at Solferino No. 3 because as it stands the situation is worse than before – many complaints from the inhabitants?

Dr. Husnoo: Anyway as I said, from the information I got from the Council, that's what they have said, the work has been completed to their satisfaction, that's what I have just said. But I can check on with them again if you have any problem – I will check with them again.

Mr Lobine: So, may I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether you will take this matter seriously with the Municipal Council because as it stands, the inhabitants are very, very angry as to the poor workmanship of the works that have been carried out there?

Dr. Husnoo: I will check on that, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Richard Duval!

COVID-19 –VACCINATON – DEATHS - MEASURES

(No. B/769) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to COVID-19, he will state –

- (a) the number of deaths recorded as a result thereof from January 2022 to date, indicating in each case the –
 - (i) age;
 - (ii) gender, and
 - (iii) type thereof;
- (b) if the deceased persons had been vaccinated, and, if not, why not, and
- (c) the measures being envisaged, if any, in relation thereto.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to part (a) of the question, I am informed that since 01 January 2022 till 15 June 2023, 258 persons have passed away due to COVID-19.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with your kind permission, I will be tabling the information in respect of part (a) (i) and (a) (ii) of the question, age and gender-wise.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to part (b) of the question, I am further informed that of the persons who have passed away due to COVID-19, 68 were vaccinated and 73 were not vaccinated. And as for the remaining deceased patients, their vaccination status was not specified. It is to be noted that amongst those vaccinated, only a small percentage have recently had their booster dose.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to part (c) of the question, in Mauritius 81.3% of the population have already received their first dose while 78.4% have received their second dose. 51.8% have already received their first booster dose while 1.9% of the population have been administered a second booster dose of COVID-19 vaccine.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on 05 April 2023, the WHO Local Office submitted a copy of the WHO Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (SAGE) Roadmap on uses of COVID-19 vaccines in the context of Omicron and substantial population immunity.

With the recommendations of the SAGE Roadmap, following its 20-23 March meeting, WHO's Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization revised the roadmap for prioritising the use of COVID-19 vaccines to reflect the impact of Omicron and high population-level immunity due to infection and vaccination. The roadmap also includes revised recommendations on additional booster doses and the spacing of boosters. The current COVID-19 vaccines' reduction of post-COVID conditions is also considered but the evidence on the extent of their impact is inconsistent.

The revised roadmap outlines three priority-use groups for COVID-19 vaccination that is the high, medium, and low. For the high priority group, WHO reemphasises the importance of vaccinating those at risk of severe disease, mostly older adults and those with underlying conditions: younger adults with significant comorbidities, that is diabetes and heart disease, people with immunocompromising conditions, that is, people living with HIV and transplant recipients, including children aged 6 months and older, pregnant persons, and frontline health workers.

SAGE recommends an additional booster dose of either 6 or 12 months after the last dose, while the timeframe depending on factors such as age and immunocompromising conditions.

The medium priority group includes healthy adults – usually under the age of 50-60 – without comorbidities, children and adolescents with comorbidities. SAGE also recommends primary series of first booster doses for the medium priority group. Although additional boosters are safe for this group, SAGE does not recommend routine administration of vaccination comparatively due to a low public health returns.

The low priority group includes healthy children and adolescents aged 6 months to 17 years. So, primary and booster doses are safe and effective in children and adolescents.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ministry has already acted upon the recommendations of the WHO in order to avail of the bivalent Pfizer vaccines to be administered to the high priority group of the society.

In fact, we will be receiving as donation from the US Government through the COVAX Facility, some 50,000 doses of bivalent COVID vaccines very soon. We are liaising with our mission in Geneva and the US Embassy in Mauritius in order to formalise the donation procedures.

Mr R. Duval: Thank you, hon. Minister. *Le ministre peut-il nous dire ce qu'il a prévu des vaccins spécifiques pour les nouvelles souches qui font leurs apparitions récemment ?* Whether you are planning to have vaccines specific to the new strains?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, so that's what the Government will go for. The high priority group, that is, those who are above 60 or the below 60, those with comorbidities and immunocompromising patients will be vaccinated with the vaccines that we will receive as donation from the US Government.

Mr R. Duval: Can the hon. Minister tell the House if the vaccination programme against COVID-19 is still going on and if he can indicate the names and the types of vaccines which are inoculated and indicate the Health Centre where the public should attend?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't have the updated information but so far, the vaccine that we are administering is the J & J Vaccine. So up to now, I think these vaccines will expire by August this year and so, till August, we will be able to use these vaccines and they are being administered in the Regional Hospitals.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

ROCHE BOIS - COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/770) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the construction of a Community Health Centre at Roche Bois, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister!

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the construction progress for the New Community Health Centre at Roche Bois currently stands at 14% completion. The contract for these works was awarded to Ganessen Constructions Ltd. and HSCC (India) Ltd. was appointed as the project management Consultant.

The site was handed over on 24 August 2021, and the works started on 07 September 2021, in accordance with the contractual agreements. The original completion date specified in the contract was 04 July 2022 but it was subsequently revised to 31 December 2022. However, the progress of works on site was slow in general. The consultant has frequently communicated concerns to the Contractor regarding the unsatisfactory pace of construction activities.

After a meeting held on 14 December 2022, involving representatives from the Attorney General's Office, Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development and Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, a

recommendation was put forth to terminate the contract. In line with the recommendation, HSCC (India) Ltd. submitted the necessary documents.

In light of these developments, subsequent meetings were held by the Performance Review Committee of my Ministry and the Public Procurement Office was duly notified of the situation. Consequently, on 22 May 2023, my Ministry agreed to terminate the contract with Ganessen Construction Ltd. for the construction of the Community Health Centre at Roche Bois.

Mr Abbas Mamode: What are the steps being taken by the Ministry of Health and Wellness and can we have a tentative date as to when things will materialise at Roche Bois?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, after that the Consultant carried out an evaluation of the completed works, alongside preparing specifications for the re-launching of the tender. The gross value of works completed before stoppage of work amounted to Rs2,659,641.38. The value of works as per the initial contract is around Rs33 m. The amount of pending works as per current market rate calculated to be Rs56 m. So, for the procurement process, it will take another four months again to do all the steps to re-launch the tender. So, it is expected that by end of this year, this project will start again with a new contractor.

OVERSEAS MISSIONS' COST - VETERINARY OFFICERS - LIVE CATTLE IMPORTATION

(No. B/771) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the overseas missions undertaken by the Veterinary Officers of his Ministry to South Africa, in the context of the importation of live cattle by the Mauritius Meat Authority, he will state the –

- (a) composition of the delegation thereof;
- (b) cost incurred in terms of air tickets and allowances, and
- (c) outcome thereof.

(Vide Reply to PQ B/761)

Mr Speaker: Next question!

TRADE FAIR, SVICC – OUTCOME

(No. B/772) Mr M. Yeung Sik Yuen (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives

whether, in regard to the Trade Fair organized by his Ministry in December 2022 at the Swami Vivekananda International Convention Centre, in Pailles, he will state the outcome thereof.

Mr Bholah: Mr Speaker, Sir, the *Salon de l'industrie locale* or trade fair as mentioned by the hon. Member is a measure announced in the Budget Speech 2022-2023. It was in fact an exhibition cum sales event which was organised by the Industrial Division of my Ministry and was held at the Swami Vivekananda International Convention Centre, Pailles from 02 to 04 December last year. The objectives of the *Salon de l'industrie locale* were mainly to –

- (i) Display the savoir faire of Mauritian Enterprises and increase the visibility of locally manufactured products;
- (ii) Boost the image of the manufacturing sector, and
- (iii) Enable the public to buy high quality, locally manufactured products at affordable prices.

79 manufacturing enterprises participated in this *Salon* by displaying and putting on sale a wide variety of quality products such as –

- (a) garments;
- (b) foodstuffs;
- (c) tea;
- (d) spices;
- (e) biscuits;
- (f) fish preparations;
- (g) jewellery;
- (h) furniture;
- (i) paints;
- (j) detergents;
- (k) cosmetics;
- (l) perfumes;
- (m) wellness products;
- (n) metal and aluminium works;

- (o) lighting works;
- (p) paper products;
- (q) leather items;
- (r) retreaded tyres;
- (s) jute bags;
- (t) home textiles;
- (u) mattresses;
- (v) recycled products, and
- (w) decoration items.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I can say with confidence that the objectives of the *Salon* have been fully met at the number of visitors who were present during these 3-days' event, had the opportunity to purchase any item of their choice from a range of locally manufactured products which were available under one roof and which is in line with the import substitution strategy of Government.

The event has enabled the exhibitors to not only enhance the visibility of their products but also conclude business deals and negotiate future orders. Positive feedbacks have been received from different quarters including the business community and the majority of them have expressed their wish to participate in similar events in future.

The hon. Member will no doubt agree that the holding of such an event constitutes a strategic marketing tool which has long term outcomes.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Mr Speaker, Sir, the trade fair was in fact a total *fiasco*, in December. Can I ask the Minister whether his Ministry has the know-how to organise trade fairs?

Mr Bholah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I object to the word pronounced by the hon. Member that it was a *fiasco*. In fact, the number of visitors and the interest that it gained, the number of exhibitors as well and their subsequent satisfaction demonstrated that it was a success. In fact, we have had to hold this fair in 2020 to celebrate the 50 years of the industry. In fact, because of COVID-19, we could not hold that in that year and this is why we have had to hold it last year in December.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact there were exhibitors but there were no potential buyers or visitors. Can I ask the Minister which marketing strategies were used to attract potential visitors or buyers to the trade fair?

Mr Bholah: The marketing strategy that we have had –

- (i) Digital billboards on metro;
- (ii) Information on MBC;
- (iii) Newspapers, for the newspapers I can say on *Le Mauricien, le Défi Quotidien*;
- (iv) On radio – Radio Plus, Wazaa, Radio One, Best FM.

An hon. Member: Top FM?

Mr Bholah: Unfortunately, I do not see Top FM.

- (v) Lottotech Digital Screens across retailers in Mauritius;
- (vi) Booths in Lottotech Facebook page.

Mr Speaker: Next question! Hon. Ms Tour!

TOBACCO CONTROL 2022-2026 – NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

(No. B/773) Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the National Action Plan for Tobacco Control 2022-2026, he will state where matters stand as to the implementation thereof.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the National Action Plan for Tobacco Control 2022-2026 has been approved by Government in February 2022 and it is in line with Goal 3 of the United Nations' resolution entitled “Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development”, which targets a 30% reduction in prevalence of current tobacco use in persons aged 15 years and above by 2025.

The National Action Plan for Tobacco Control 2022-2026 has been devised to enumerate the various strategies that could enhance the actual position which Mauritius holds as an anti-tobacco lobbying country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to monitor the progress achieved in the implementation of the Action Plan, a Steering Committee has been set up under the Chair of the Senior Chief Executive of my Ministry with the participation of other Ministries. Three sub-committees namely, on legislation, capacity building and sensitisation have been constituted in order to accomplish the various objectives of the action plan.

As part of the action plan, regular meetings are scheduled with different stakeholders and requests for a focal point from Ministries and Departments have already been initiated in order to facilitate communication and sharing of information between stakeholders.

Mr Speaker Sir, one of the objectives of the action plan is to amend the Public Health (Restrictions on Tobacco Products) Regulations 2008.

Consequently, the Public Health (Restrictions on Tobacco Products) Regulations 2022 has been gazetted on 10 June 2022 and has come into force on 31 May 2023.

With the current regulations, the concept of plain packaging for cigarettes is now a reality. I wish to inform the House that Mauritius is among the few countries to have successfully achieved the implementation of plain packaging, the introduction of a new set of eight pictorial health warning and the 100% display of pictorial health warning at the back of packets of cigarettes.

Along with plain packaging, strong emphasis is being laid out over the sale of single stick cigarettes, sale of cigarettes to minors, smoking in public places and indoor spaces, bans on a category of tobacco products such as e-cigarettes, e-liquids, chewing tobacco, roll-your-own tobacco, accessories such as pouches, paper and filters.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to capacity building, three training sessions have been conducted last year and one training session has been carried out in 2023 for Non-Communicable Disease Coordinators, Community Physicians and paramedical staff of my Ministry. A total number of 80 staff have benefited from the training programmes.

In addition, another training session was also organised to train staff prior to the opening of the new Tobacco Cessation Clinic in Long Mountain Community Hospital, which was inaugurated on 12 April 2023. The objective of this new facility is to decentralise the services provided in Tobacco Cessation Clinics and to increase its accessibility to the population willing to quit smoking.

I wish to inform the House that a 3-day training workshop from 17 to 20 April 2023 was also conducted in the island of Rodrigues to empower medical professionals and paramedical staff to deliver the tobacco cessation services in Rodrigues. A total number of 60 staff has successfully been trained.

In the same vein, in July 2023, a training programme in collaboration with the State Law Office will be organised for Public Health Inspectors of my Ministry on the implementation and enforcement of the Public Health (Restrictions on Tobacco Products) Regulations 2022.

Mr Speaker, Sir, another activity has been organised by my Ministry to encourage teenagers not to start smoking and raise awareness about the ill effect of tobacco products.

Ms Tour: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister advise of the action taken by his Ministry to curb down smoking amongst teenagers and young adults?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the curbing down of smoking among young adults, health talks on the risk associated with tobacco consumption are organised in the community, at worksites, in secondary schools, during NCD screening program. So just in terms of figures, between July 2022 and May 2023, a total of 93,806 people have participated in sensitisation and awareness programs including in schools, among school children. So, this is the process that is being done.

We are also organising another activity by my Ministry to encourage teenagers not to start smoking and raise awareness about the ill-effects of alcohol and that was called the National *Fresque Murale* Inter-College Competition that was held recently. So, there are different activities targeting the young not to start smoking.

Ms Tour: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. In his reply the Minister mentioned Long Mountain Hospital. Can the hon. Minister give us details of the services offered at Long Mountain District Hospital including the Tobacco Cessation Clinic?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. It was inaugurated in May this year and in line with WHO Guidelines, the clinic offers psychotherapy and counselling to first time attendees complemented by pharmacotherapy, that is, medication being given like nicotine replacement therapy through nicotine patches and that is being given according to the number of cigarettes and the dependence you have on nicotine. And there are so many other drugs that are also being used for that. The different services offered at Long Mountain District Hospital are –

- the Nenuphar Rehabilitation Centre with 10 beds, that is, for the adolescents;
- Hemodialysis Centre for 110 patients doing free sessions every day;
- the NCD Clinic;
- Family Planning;
- the Emergency Department;
- the Well-Baby Clinic;
- the vaccination, and
- the specialised services.

Now specialists are attending the Long Mountain Hospital like Cardiology, the medicals ops and Gynaecologic, Paediatrics and Orthopaedics.

So there are a number of services being offered at this hospital.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that the following PQs have been withdrawn – B/775, B/778, B/783, B/784, B/790, B/792, B/798, B/802, B/803 and B/805.

Next question!

**LE MORNE MOUNTAIN - CLOSURE OF ROAD – LANDSLIDE -
CONSTRUCTION OF ALTERNATIVE ROAD**

(No. B/774) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the closure of the road leading to the site of Le Morne Mountain, due to landslide following the heavy rainfalls thereat, he will state if consideration is being given for the construction of an alternative road and, if so, indicate where matters stand.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission I am going to answer this question.

I am informed by the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre that on 08 February 2023, a case of suspected landslide at the Le Morne Brabant Mountain was reported by the Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage, which had blocked the passage of the existing Visitor Trail. The suspected case of landslide was due to the heavy rainfall of 26 and 27 January 2023, which had affected the whole island.

On 10 February 2023, a joint site visit was undertaken, comprising representatives of the Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage, Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Geotechnical Unit), National Disaster and Risk Reduction Management Centre, Special Mobile Force, District Council of Black River, Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund and the local Police.

Based on further investigation, the Geotechnical Unit concluded that it was a case of landslide and recommended that the access to the site be closed.

Consequently, on 10 February 2023, Government decided to temporarily close the access to the Visitor Trail of the Le Morne Brabant Mountain for safety and security reasons until further notice.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that a high-level meeting was held on 14 February 2023 by the Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage comprising relevant Ministries and Departments, wherein it was agreed that a detailed investigation would be carried out regarding the potential hazards of the prevailing landslide that had occurred, with a view to finding an alternate trail.

On 24 March 2023, the Police Helicopter Squadron undertook an aerial survey of the casualty site and several countermeasures were proposed, namely –

- (i) creation of alternative routes as a short-term measure to enable the re-opening of access to the mountain;
- (ii) slope stabilisation using wooden pile and beams;
- (iii) improvement of the drainage facilities, and
- (iv) improvement of the vegetation management.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a third survey was undertaken at the casualty area on 12 May 2023 to investigate the possibility of an alternate trekking track and prepare the scope of works for the necessary countermeasure works, amongst others.

An alternative trail was identified further down some 200 metres from the affected trail. The Geotechnical Unit made some recommendations in its report and two main recommendations were made in order to re-open access to the mountain, which are as follows –

- (i) clearing of the identified alternative trail, which was approved by the Board of the Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund, and
- (ii) restrict access to the casualty site, obviously, until countermeasure works have been completed.

The Geotechnical Unit also highlighted the importance of a Guide to accompany visitors to the Mountain Viewpoint. Furthermore, the latter Department is also in the process of finalising the bidding document for the proposed countermeasure works.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage that the Tourism Authority has started clearing the alternative trail yesterday and same is expected to last one week depending on the weather and site conditions, obviously.

The removal of the small rocks and boulders, clearing of wild vegetation, mowing of grass and pruning of tree branches and dry fallen trees along the alternative trail will be undertaken by the relevant authorities while protecting the endemic and indigenous plant species found on site.

The re-opening of Le Morne Brabant Mountain is scheduled for the beginning of July 2023. Appropriate signage, such as directional, informative/awareness and warning, will be placed at both entry points of the alternative trail. Furthermore, chain barriers with bollards will be placed to restrict access to the casualty area affected by the landslide.

Mrs Mayotte: It is okay, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ B/777 has been withdrawn. Time over!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

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

Mr Seeruttun seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

PNQ – 06 JUNE 2023 – FOLLOW-UP REPLY

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to make a statement as a follow-up to my reply to the Private Notice Question at our sitting of Tuesday 06 June 2023 relating to the World Bank Report - “The Container Port Performance Index 2022: A comparable assessment of performance based on Vessel Time in Port”.

In a supplementary question, the hon. Leader of the Opposition requested that the qualifications of Mr E. P. M. P., Managing Director of the Cargo Handling Corporation Limited, be tabled. I would like to seize this opportunity to thank the Leader of the Opposition for having raised the matter. In fact, Mr E. P. M. P. was requested to produce the originals of his Degree/Diploma that he claimed to possess from Charles Telfair Institute. A preliminary enquiry has revealed that there is reasonable suspicion that he does not possess such qualifications.

On Thursday 15 June 2023, the attention of the Managing Director of the Cargo Handling Corporation Limited was drawn to this suspicion. He confided that he had never attended that Institute and did not possess those qualifications. Consequently, on that very day and of his own free will and for personal reasons, he tendered his resignation as Managing Director of the Cargo Handling Corporation Limited with immediate effect. As this appeared to be an alleged case of making use of false documents and forgery, the matter was referred by the Human Resource Manager of the Cargo Handling Corporation Limited to the Police on Friday 16 June 2023. Police has initiated an inquiry into the matter.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on that same date of Friday 16 June 2023, the Board of the Cargo Handling Corporation Limited held a special meeting to take cognizance of the resignation of the Managing Director, and designated Mr S. P., Finance Manager, as the Officer-in-Charge of the Company pending the appointment of a new Managing Director. Mr S. P. had, in fact, performed in the past the duty of Officer-in-Charge of the Company.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

PUBLIC BILLS

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Appropriation (2023-2024) Bill (No. IX of 2023) was read a third time and passed.

Second Reading

THE CENTRAL MEDICAL PROCUREMENT AUTHORITY BILL

(NO. IV OF 2023)

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr Speaker: Minister Jagutpal!

(4.13 p.m.)

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal): Mr Speaker, Sir, I move that the Central Medical Procurement Authority Bill (No. IV of 2023) be read a second time.

Mr Speaker, Sir, before elaborating on this new legislation, it is essential to give an overview of the Procurement Unit of my Ministry. The Procurement Unit, staffed by 141 procurement and administrative officers is an essential component in the continuum of care. It has to ensure timely supply of medicines, equipment and medical disposables to be able provide health services. The annual cost of procurement for medical disposables and pharmaceuticals amounts to more than Rs2 billion every year.

The Ministry procures more than 1,000 medical items and more than 850 medications each year. Medical items are medical disposables such as gloves, syringes, needles, sutures, test strips, overshoes, caps, masks, plastic aprons, all types and sizes of dressings, bandages, implants and so on. For each and every item, the procurement procedure is undertaken separately although some may be pooled. As for pharmaceutical products, it has the same complexity.

Just to illustrate, my Ministry purchases –

- 80 million Paracetamol tablets for about Rs28 m.;
- 60 million Metformin tablets for diabetes for Rs17 m.;
- 1.8 million tablets of Diltiazem, a cardiac drug for more than Rs1.2 m.;
- 3600 cardiac stents for more than Rs25 m.;

There are hundreds of these drugs that have to be made available every time. Each year, my Ministry procures consumables for the –

- (i) Central Health Laboratory for Rs447 m.;
- (ii) Cath Labs for Rs300 m.;
- (iii) Dialysis consumables for Rs275 m.;
- (iv) Ophthalmology consumables items for Rs70 m.;
- (v) Neo-natal consumables for Rs65 m., and
- (vi) Dental amongst others for more than Rs50 m.

The administrative procedure is tremendous.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it will take me more than a Parliamentary Sitting to only enumerate the thousands of items being procured. The present procurement legislation under the Public Procurement Act of 2006 provides for different procurement methods to cater for goods, works and services in general, that is, for all Government entities. In the present legislation, there are different methods of procurement, namely, Open Advertised Bidding, Restricted bidding, Request for Sealed Quotation, Direct Procurement and Emergency Procurement. The existing procurement process at the level of my Ministry under PPA involves several stages.

For each item, be it consumables, equipment or medication, a Committee of Needs has to decide all items to be procured with justification for the coming financial year including an estimated quantity. The identification of needs is done at hospital level and depending on the specificity of the item. The Committee of Needs consists of the Regional Health Director and in charge of various units. The Committee of Needs prioritises the items to be procured. Following the recommendations of the Committee of Needs at the level of regional hospitals, the Procurement Section at the Ministry makes a procurement plan over the year determining what procurement exercise to start for each month of the coming financial year.

The request for procurement goes through technical officers for drafting of specifications. To note that the staff of the procurement section is under the supervision of the Director of the Procurement Department which falls under the Ministry of Finance. At the same time while drafting the specifications, quantity and estimated budget are worked out by the Procurement Section. The request then goes to the Finance Section for earmarking of funds and back to the secretariat of the Departmental Bid Committee of the Procurement Section.

Each Departmental Bid Committee (DBC) is chaired by a Permanent Secretary or a Deputy Permanent Secretary and has one Manager Procurement and Supply and one Manager Finance Operations as members as well as a Secretary. There are 3 DBCs within the Ministry since there are thousands of procurement files transiting through the DBC.

The functions of the DBC are among others –

- to vet bidding documents;
- request for amendments to the bidding documents;
- recommend the composition of the Bid Evaluation Committees to the Accounting Officer;
- examine the Bid Evaluation Reports submitted by the Bid Evaluation Committees (BEC) and recommend its approval to the Accounting Officer.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this daunting task is a challenging one for the procurement section of my Ministry.

First and foremost, the time-factor is of paramount importance. Lifesaving medicines have to be procured in time, without delay and in sufficient amount as well as equipment and medical disposables. For example, during the present Financial Year 2022-2023, the Central Procurement Board requested for amendments in the bidding documents for the procurement of a list of 8 different vaccines against Hepatitis, Human Papillomavirus, Rotavirus and Pneumococcal Polysaccharides amounting to a total of around Rs130 m. The CPB asked for corrections to be made to the document. The document was thus returned to the Ministry for necessary adjustments. This process took around one month. Hence, it impacted our different vaccination programmes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, during the Committee of Supply, the issue of BCG vaccines was raised, BCG Vaccines which are administered to neonates to prevent severe forms of Tuberculosis. A first procurement exercise was carried out on 11 October 2022 for 20,000 doses of BCG. No quote was received when the tender was closed on 20 October. The item was relaunched with closing date on 04 November 2022. Again, no bid was received.

Action was taken for the procurement of 8,000 doses of BCG Vaccine on a fast-track basis on 18 November 2022. On 18 January 2023, 8,000 doses of BCG vaccines were received at the Central Supplies Division. A request was made for the bridging purchase of 6,000 doses on 01 March. Only one supplier quoted. But instead of 6,000 doses the supplier quoted for 6,000 vials of 20 doses that is a total of 120,000 doses. The bid was rejected. On 15 May 2023, a proforma invoice for 6,000 doses was sought. Proforma was received 4 days later and a letter of award was issued on 24 May 2023. Delivery of 6,000 doses of BCG Vaccine is now expected next week. So, meanwhile there is a relaunch of tenders for 20,000 doses of the BCG vaccine with closing date 22 June 2023.

The delivery of medicines or vaccines, as I just explained, does not depend only on the Procurement Section of the Ministry or on the Ministry itself but it depends on suppliers as well. Unfortunately, the Public Procurement Act does not cater the specificities for the procurement of health-related products and services.

The second challenge is the size of our market. Mauritius being a country of around 1.3 million inhabitants, overseas manufacturers of pharmaceutical and medical devices find our market relatively small compared to other countries. Hence, international bidders do not quote for medical items as such.

The third challenge is monitoring of stocks. My Ministry ensures the warehousing and distribution of medical supplies for all health institutions over the island. Medical supplies are centrally received at the Central Supplies Division (CSD) at Plaine-Lauzun. The CSD has had to lease many annexes to its warehouse, taking what is available within the premises. The CSD has since leased the DWC building at Les Guibees, the ex-Government Printing Building at La Tour Koenig, the ex-Tobacco Building at Plaine Lauzun, La Rosa and the NIC Building at Castel. Medical supplies are distributed to the island six days a week to the 5 regional hospitals, 2 district hospitals, 2 community hospitals, 6 specialised hospitals, 7 mediclinics, 19 Area Health Centres and 113 Community Health Centres.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Electronic Inventory Management System (e-IMS) has recently been introduced in the Government and my Ministry has already implemented it. The e-IMS is supposed to register and record all medicines delivered to the patients in real time. At present there is no real time electronic recording of stock from the moment the products reach the warehouse to the time the stock is being used. Therefore, the stock monitoring is not reflecting the real figures. Besides, the e-IMS required more than 50 enhancements to the system to cater for the specific needs of my Ministry. With the

current system, it is hence impossible to have a real picture of the stock available unless a proper warehousing and a law enforcement authority monitors the stock. All procurement forecast is based on these stock levels and without it; there will be no good planning for procurement.

Mr Speaker, Sir, expiry of drugs is a recurrent issue since many years. I should however point out that according to the World Health Organisation, a threshold of 10% of expired drugs is considered to be acceptable in all member states of the WHO.

The fourth challenge is the cumbersome existing procurement process. Let us take the example of the procurement of stents and related accessories for the Cardiac Centre and Cath Labs of the Ministry. A list of items was requested through the bidding exercise invited by the Ministry. The outcome was that some items from that list could not be made available because in some cases, the supplier submitted their samples beyond the prescribed timetable and in other cases the cost offered by the bidders were higher than the cost estimate provided by the Ministry at a percentage not acceptable to the Procurement Policy Office. This jeopardised the whole procurement process. Some items were delivered, while others were not, resulting in the purchase of these items on local market obviously at a very higher price.

The fifth challenge is supplier default. In some cases, suppliers inform the Ministry that they are not in a position to supply the items 6 months after they are awarded a contract to supply pharmaceutical products. There is no other means than to procure on local market. It was happening before COVID, during COVID, and as well as it is happening at present. We are facing similar cases every month. For instance, in the case of Atorvastatin, this is a medication for cholesterol and a request was made for 22 million tablets in two instalments of 11 million tablets. The letter of award was issued on 01 August 2022 worth Rs9.4 m. The first instalment of this medication, that is, Atorvastatin, was supposed to be delivered by the end of September 2022.

Several reminders were sent to the supplier in August and September. The supplier delivered 5 million tablets on 21 December 2022 and the second batch of 6 million tablets was expected on 28 March 2023. What happened? The supplier failed to reply to the numerous emails and phone calls made by the Ministry. The Departmental Bid Committee (DBC) cancelled the order on the 25 April. A relaunch of bid was made on 16 May 2023 for 13 million tablets. The bid was awarded on 05 June 2023 and the delivery is expected in the first week of July.

So, this is another example of how medication cannot be made available to the public because of the suppliers.

Another clear example of supplier default is the procurement of Heparin, an injection for Dialysis patients, in 2021. Request for the purchase of 65,000 Heparin units was made on 15 December 2020. Tender was launched and closed on 17 May 2021. The successful bidder agreed to supply the 65,000 units in 3 instalments of 21,666 units each in October 2021, February 2022 and May 2022. The unit price of Heparin was Rs124 and the total cost Rs8 m.

The supplier failed to supply the first instalment of Heparin on time and delivered 8,000 units in May 2022, that is, 6 months after the scheduled delivery date. The remaining balance of 13,666 units of Heparin was never delivered.

Being given that stock was almost exhausted and since Heparin is a critical injection for patients, the Government had to intervene. Contact was established with the High Commission of India via a Government-to-Government Procurement for the supply of 20,800 doses of Heparin and delivery was made on 24 May 2022, just in time to avoid a shortage.

The Ministry kept sending reminders to the original supplier of Heparin. Eventually, the delivery of the 2nd instalment of 21,666 units of Heparin was made on the 22 July 2022 that is with a delay of 5 months. The 3rd instalment was never delivered. The award was cancelled by the Ministry on 26 September 2022. Without the intervention of the Government, Heparin would have been out of stock and that would have had dramatic consequences for dialysis patients.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in 2021, a contract was awarded to a company to supply 60 million of Metformin tablets diabetic drug. The contract specified the time of delivery in a staggered manner. The supplier delivered only 7.6 million and could not deliver the remaining balance. We were in deficit of 52.4 million tablets of Metformin.

Similarly, 8 million tablets of Clopidogrel are procured each year. This medication is a blood thinner and it prevents clotting of blood. We were faced with supplier default in this case too.

Let us now look at the options to curb down this shortage. Based on the present Procurement Act, we have to launch tenders anew because the validity period of the offer has already lapsed. It has taken another 6 months to get the medication. Local purchase was done to palliate the shortage. The Ministry was blamed for the unavailability of this drug where in fact, it was the supplier who defaulted.

The sixth challenge is Local or Direct Purchase. Very often at the level of hospitals, the Regional Health Directors have to resort to local purchase, which means,

purchasing from the local market usually at a higher price than if the same products were procured using the relevant procurement methods as already stated.

Late flagging of shortages of medical drugs are the result of inadequate and poor procurement planning and execution, leading to recourse to emergencies or direct purchases as well as frequent need for undertaking overtime at high costs to Government.

Deviation in prices is another challenge faced by the Ministry. Since 2008, the Ministry of Health decided that a deviation of more than 25% in the prices quoted by bidders would no longer be accepted. This has caused many technically valid offers to be rejected outright and the exercise to be repeated for another round of at least six months causing delays amounting to stock outs of badly needed critical items.

Every year, the National Audit Report, the Public Accounts Committee, and the Media draw attention to the shortcomings of the system. It is clear that the present procurement process bears lots of shortcomings.

Let us take the example of the National Audit Report of 2004-2005. At section 16.2, it stipulates that Rs107.7 m. were disbursed for the procurement of bio-medical equipment, Rs63.6 m. for Vehicles and Equipment and Rs44.1 m. for the acquisition of Hi-Tech equipment.

In its findings, in the Report of 2004-2005, it concludes that –

1. The lack of planning in respect of infrastructure/pre-installation works has hampered the commissioning of equipment. This has resulted in additional cost to the Ministry and in delay in the provision of services.
2. Procurement procedures were lengthy, ranging from 14 months to two years.

The list is exhaustive, but let us take a look at the National Audit Report of 2003-2004.

Section 13.1 dealing with Pharmacy – The report highlights that –

- The Commission for Health at Rodrigues places orders of drugs with the Central Supplies Division of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life. These drugs are to be used for the next three months and thus issues should be effected with appropriate shelf life.
- Drugs nearing expiry dates and with even less than one month shelf life were being sent to Rodrigues.

The procurement system for bulk tenders and local purchase at regional hospitals is characterised by flaws that are leading to shortage of drugs.

A number of persistent issues and challenges have been encountered with regard to the procurement of such medical supplies and pharmaceuticals which have been consistent and compatible with all the evidence to date.

The main ones are –

- (i) Inadequate and poor procurement planning and execution, leading to recourse to emergencies or direct purchases as well as frequent need for undertaking overtime at high costs to Government;
- (ii) Delays in procurement exercises due to longer time taken in regard to drafting and vetting of bidding documents, evaluation of bids and approval and issue of letters of award;
- (iii) Poor and ineffective stock management leading to frequent over-purchase and wastages;
- (iv) Lack of effective contract management as well as poor monitoring and reporting system, and
- (v) Possible collusion and governance issues.

These result in near out of stock situations for critical and lifesaving items.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are left with two options. Business as usual or to do something to change it. This Government, led by the Prime Minister, is determined to address this issue and to deliver quality healthcare to the population. It is this Government which has the courage to address procurement issues of the Ministry of Health. When Opposition parties were in Government, none ever had the determination to address this issue though constantly being criticised through the National Audit Office.

The question of whether to amend the existing Public Procurement Act or to come up with a new legislation, the Central Medical Procurement Authority was widely brainstormed and debated.

Amending the Public Procurement Act of 2006 is not possible because my Ministry procures specialised items which are quite unique in its availability, time-constraint and challenges faced with stock monitoring.

The Central Medical Procurement Authority Bill aims to establish a specialised medical procurement body responsible for managing the procurement, warehousing, supply and distribution of medical supplies to all public health institutions in Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let us take a look at how developed countries like the United Kingdom procure medicines, medical disposables and medical equipment. The National Health Service, that is the NHS, is the primary healthcare provider in the UK. As part of its role, the NHS oversees the procurement of medical supplies on behalf of healthcare providers such as hospitals and laboratories across the country.

The NHS Supply Chain is the central procurement agency that manages the sourcing, purchasing and distribution of medical products. The NHS Supply Chain plays a vital role in centralised procurement. It acts as the central purchasing and distribution hub for medical supplies. The Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency regulates and monitors the safety, quality, efficacy of medicines and medical devices in the UK.

Suppliers and manufacturers are required to comply with stringent regulations and standards to ensure patient safety. The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 in UK provides the legal framework for public sector procurement, including healthcare supplies. These regulations require the Government to follow competitive tendering processes, inviting bids from suppliers and awarding contracts based on predefined criteria.

Several countries have established centralised procurement agencies or authorities for medicines, medical disposables and medical equipment. Some examples –

- In France, *L'Agence nationale de sécurité du médicament et des produits de Santé*, is responsible for centralised procurement for public healthcare institutions. It negotiates contracts and purchases medical supplies, pharmaceuticals and equipment on their behalf.
- Sweden, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) manages the procurement of medical supplies and equipment for healthcare providers in Sweden. It collaborates with regional and local authorities to ensure efficient procurement processes.
- South Africa, the National Department of Health in South Africa has established the Central Procurement Agency (CPA) to centralise the procurement of medicines, medical disposables and equipment for public healthcare facilities.

- In India, the Central Medical Services Society (CMSS) is responsible for centralised procurement and distribution of medicines and equipment for various national health programmes and government healthcare facilities in India.
- United States of America, the US Department of Veteran Affairs operates the Veteran Health Administration (VHA) which includes the VA National Acquisition Centre. It is responsible for centralising the procurement of medical supplies and equipment for medical facilities.
- Canada, Health Canada oversees the procurement of medical supplies and equipment for the Canadian healthcare system. Additionally, some provinces and territories have established centralised procurement agencies or authorities within their respective jurisdictions.
- Australia, the Australian Government's Department of Health manages the procurement of medicines, medical devices and supplies through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) and the Prostheses List.
- New Zealand, Pharmac, a New Zealand Government Agency centralises the procurement of pharmaceuticals on behalf of District Health Boards in the country. It negotiates with suppliers to ensure cost-effective access to medicines.
- Germany, the Federal Joint Committee in Germany oversees the centralised procurement of medicines, medical devices and equipment for the statutory health insurance system. It negotiates with manufacturers and establishes pricing agreements.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in 2016, the European Union Technical Assistance (EUTA) evaluation team launched a survey on the procurement of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies in the Ministry of Health in Mauritius. One of the main recommendations was to initiate the development process of an Independent Authority. A major reform was thus warranted and vital to enable the smooth functioning of this activity so as to overcome together those challenges for a secured nation.

Today, this Government, under the Prime Minister of hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, is making history once again by coming up with the Central Medical Procurement Authority, an independent Authority, as recommended by the EUTA in 2016.

This Government means business when it comes to reform and the Central Medical Procurement Authority Bill continues in a series of ongoing reform programmes that will deliver the essential building blocks of a modern and healthy nation. This Bill aims to establish the Central Medical Procurement Authority for the procurement, warehousing,

supply and distribution of medical supplies. The Central Medical Procurement Authority will be a specialised and distinct entity operating within a separate legal framework.

The Authority will be dedicated to the undertaking of the procurement of all medical supplies and pharmaceuticals for the Ministry with the following main functions –

- (i) to undertake a proper and effective procurement planning for medical supplies and pharmaceuticals in consultation with my Ministry after analysing, consolidating and standardising all its requirement;
- (ii) develop strategies for an efficient procurement system based on nature and types of medical supplies relying on market intelligence and requirements of my Ministry;
- (iii) arrange for, manage and oversee real-time inventory management of all medical supplies and pharmaceuticals points as well as its usage and consumption using appropriate and converging technologies and IT system;
- (iv) undertake procurement operations in a timely, cost-effective and efficient manner, in connection with the preparation of bid documents, launching and evaluation of bids, approval of award of contracts as well as ensuring adequate and proactive contract management and its proper monitoring and reporting to my Ministry, and
- (v) ensuring that the stock level of medical supplies, pharmaceutical products and vaccines are maintained and available at all times in our public health institutions by collecting and analysing real time as well as reliable data.

The CMPA will be responsible for the procurement operations for medical supplies and pharmaceuticals as compared to the Central Procurement Board (CPB) which is involved only in the conduct of the bidding process. It will ensure that identification of requirements and preparation of the procurement plan are completed within a set timeframe as compared to CPB which is not involved in this activity.

The Authority will be responsible for analysing, consolidating, standardising and approving all the requirements emanating from my Ministry. The CMPA will also oversee the management of the contract and evaluate and rate the performance of suppliers, which is not currently done by the CPB.

The CMPA would follow existing processes and procedures under the Public Procurement Act, as well as, the directives and guidelines issued or to be issued by the Public Procurement Office, except for part III of the Public Procurement Act which

concerns the Central Procurement Board. The Part IV of the Public Procurement Act, Procurement methods would apply to all procurements to be made by the CMPA.

The proposed CMPA Bill is different from the Public Procurement Act in the following ways –

- a) Specialised focus, the CMPA Bill is designed to cater specifically for medical procurement needs of public health institutions while the Public Procurement Act 2006 applies to a broader range of procurement across various sectors.
- (b) Specific Procurement Methods: The CMPA Bill provides a comprehensive list of procurement methods tailored to the technical nature of medical supplies, whereas the Public Procurement Act 2006 offers a more general framework without specific methods for medical procurement.
- c) Enhanced Efficiency: The CMPA Bill aims to streamline the procurement process for medical supplies, ensuring their availability and maintenance of stock levels at all times. This focus on efficiency and supply chain management may not be as explicitly emphasised in the Public Procurement Act 2006.

Hence, the proposed CMPA Bill introduces a specialised framework for medical procurement, designed to meet the unique needs of public health institutions in Mauritius. With specific procurement methods and flexibility in selection, the CMPA aims to enhance efficiency and ensure availability of medical supplies. The CMPA Bill, once implemented, will provide for a more targeted and efficient approach.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let us go through the various clauses of this new legislation –

- (a) Part I of the CMPA Bill deals with the applicability of the Public Procurement Act;
- (b) Part VII refers to the function of the Procurement Office;
- (c) Part VII of 2 Procurement Contract, and
- (d) Part VIII to procurement integrity, that is, Artificial Division, duties of public bodies and conduct public officials, bidders and suppliers;
- (e) Part II of the new CMPA Bill is about the establishment of the Authority;
- (f) Part II, Section 7 defines the objects of the Authority which shall be responsible for the procurement, warehousing, supply and ensuring stock level.

Among the powers vested to the Authority according to Part II, Section 9 are –

- To enter into lease or rental agreements for the warehousing of medical supplies;
- To enter into association with other such bodies or organisations within or outside Mauritius as it considers appropriate.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in accordance to Part II, Section B of the Bill having to do with the Administration and Management of the Authority, Section 10 of the Bill states that the CMPA will be managed by a Board comprising of –

- (a) a Chairperson;
- (b) 2 Vice-Chairpersons, and
- (c) 4 other members.

These members should have wide experience in procurement, financial, engineering or scientific areas in the medical field.

The Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and members will be appointed by the President of the Republic of Mauritius, on such terms and conditions as may be determined by the Prime Minister in consultations with the Leader of the Opposition. Every member shall hold Office for a period not exceeding 3 years and shall be eligible for re-appointment.

The CMPA will also have to adopt the electronic bidding system in line with the PPO guidelines. The CMPA will still be governed by Part VI, VII and VIII of the Public Procurement Act 2006 as amended which relate to challenges and appeals, payment conditions of contracts as well as procurement integrity for public officials, bidders and suppliers.

In this regard, the proposed Bill makes provision for every member and officer of the Authority to file with the ICAC a declaration of his assets and liabilities in such form and manner as may be prescribed, that is –

- (a) within 30 days of his appointment, and
- (b) on the termination of his appointment.

Moreover, any person who contravenes this Act shall commit an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding Rs1 m. and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the importance of integrity is a fundamental principle when it concerns the management of public funds. Those responsible with public sector

governance need to exercise leadership with the highest standards of professionalism. For the purpose of good governance, there is need for accountability and transparency.

Moreover, Mr Speaker, Sir, the auditor of the Authority shall be the Director of Audit and the latter shall state in his annual report whether provisions with respect to the procurement stages has been complied with.

Although the setting up of this Authority makes it a plausible mechanism of action, yet, the procurement integrity cannot be disregarded. This new Bill has a clear intent to bring out the Government's efforts in constantly improving the management of public funds. Availability and affordability of modern medicines have enabled us to live longer and healthier lives and we should endow ourselves with this deeper insight for the right and rational policy shift.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am confident that the Bill which will enable the setting up of the Central Medical Procurement Authority, will contribute significantly towards ensuring a constant and continuous supply of medical supplies by having a robust grip on its administration with an effective control of the Authority's response mechanism and streamlined systems to cut red tape. The Authority will be geared towards pro activeness and be life-sensitive than file sensitive when it comes to the culture of bureaucracy. It will definitely give another dimension to the health security of my Ministry.

I am confident that the Authority's peak performance will work like compound interest, consistently pushing itself to the edge of the challenge-skills sweet spot by having clearer goals that are aligned with high-hard goals that are further aligned with its mission-level goals.

Basically, it means taking appropriate risks, getting feedback, hunting for opportunities in pattern recognition so as to be in the flow triggers for action to ensuring that the stock level of medical supplies in all our public health institutions are maintained and are available at all times. We are expecting a huge efficiency exchange and gain with the setting up of this Authority.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I end with these words of George Bernard Shaw, I quote –

“Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything.”

I commend the Bill to the House. I thank you for your attention.

Mr Ramano seconded.

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

At 4.57 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.41 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please be seated. MP Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: I like that, MP Boolell.

Mr Speaker: To have the title Honourable, you should stand up.

Dr. Boolell: I like it. But I can do better.

An hon. Member: *Fer santaz ar twa la.*

Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, Sir.

I have listened intently to the speech delivered by the hon. Minister of Health and one does not need to be a good psychiatrist to understand the message that has been conveyed loud and clear. The Minister is simply doing the bidding of the Prime Minister and I tend to agree with him when he stated that Government means business and history is in the making. After all, this is the best Government that money can buy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Bill which has been moved by the good Minister, the Central Medical Procurement Authority is a master key to fraudulent practices. I will come to the foretaste of my speech. The Minister reminds me of a spent swimmer. He has whipped up emotions, instil fear to highlight the alleged merits of this Bill and as if without this Bill, acquisition of medical supplies will be cumbersome. And there is a make-believe that once this Bill goes through, manna will fall from heaven and every patient, attending outpatient or admitted to hospitals will have the medicines as and when required.

Mr Speaker, Sir, any decent Government would shudder with fear to introduce this highly controversial Bill. The wide powers of the Authority with hardly any check and balance say it all. The Ministry has surrendered lock, stock and barrel and it has been reduced to a naught without a figure and will be servile and submissive like second to none and this is not being done in the name of efficiency.

This Bill well packed with blisters and sores for taxpayers and it is indeed well packed with blisters, Mr Speaker, Sir. The Senior Chief Executive and officers of the Ministry will be like puppets on the string pulled by the Authority. Officers have to think twice before making up their minds to take up employment at the Authority. The Principal Pharmacist, I am sure, has many untold stories to share with his colleagues.

During emergency procurement, he became the scapegoat. Today, the directives will come from the Authority and I flag a note of great caution to those who dare to move to the Authority. The Authority has unfettered powers to sanction public health institutions or officer of the Ministry who does not comply with directives issued. I don't have to refer the Minister to paragraph 9(2) of the Bill.

The Bill is not only a travesty of accountability and transparency but is a license to breach Civil Code and to intimidate and bully civil servants. In the UK, the Deputy Prime Minister, Dominic Raab, had to resign after found guilty of bullying and intimidation of civil servants. The Head of the Civil Service and Secretary to Cabinet is too weak to provide effective leadership to the Civil Service and robust advices to the Prime Minister.

The Authority will take under its wings, functions that are carried out under the direction of the Senior Chief Executive of the Ministry of Health, that is, procurement, warehousing and distribution. It will behave like a Ministry within a Ministry and public officers accountable to the SCE as per their Scheme of Service and they are not supposed to work on parallel directives. They will have to bend backwards to directives from the Board.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the President will name the Members of the Board but Prime Minister so decides. The Prime Minister is the authority. Did you say that the Director would be appointed by the Prime Minister? The Prime Minister first amongst equals has absolute power. I quote –

“The President shall, on the advice of the Prime Minister and following a report from the Minister, at any time terminate the appointment of a member”.

So, the Prime Minister will call the shot and who appoints the Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson and the Members? Certainly not a triumvirate – a Committee comprising of President, Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition, far from it. Ask the Prime Minister what is the meaning of consultation with Leader of the Opposition. Past and present Leaders of the Opposition know it is a joke. Prime Minister picks the phone and informs, take it or leave it. This is why I say it's a joke.

The Director of the Authority is appointed by the Prime Minister so here we have political nominees giving directives to public officers and if the latter do not comply, they may be sued as provided under Section 55 Offences, I have said it earlier, let me reinforce it –

“Any person who contravenes this Act shall commit an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding one million rupees and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years.”

I can see the Principal Pharmacist saying, ‘Thank God, I am free and I can enjoy my freedom’. But, where would he be without the judiciary? He was framed. And I impress upon civil servants to err on principle of caution, to tread cautiously and certainly not to move to an authority which has lock, stock and barrel, and which can exercise undue pressure upon civil servants.

Do you know what absolute power does? I am sure you do know, Mr Speaker, Sir. Those who are on collusion or form part of the clan should know. It corrupts absolutely. Out there, the electorate has made up its mind to root out and boot out decadent, filthy regime. The Opposition needs not only to have its say but has a moral and legitimate obligation to put up a common front to honour its commitment to decency and legitimacy of a dignified nation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I here request the trade union to examine carefully whether such an authority can be given excessive power over health institutions and public officials of the Ministry of Health and Wellness as per provisions of this paragraph.

The nation had a foretaste of emergency procurement during COVID-19. Behind the façade and behind the veneer of this Bill, contract will be tailor-made and selective pre-qualified bidders will laugh all the way to the bank. Section 25 makes provisions for any such arrangement as prescribed to the joy and fulfilment of the Board. The contracts will be juicy and alternative methods of procurement open a floodgate for fraudulent and corrupt practices. Technical committees, committees of needs will whet the appetites of bidders and may give special treatment to selective bidders. The committee will leak and sensitive information will inadvertently fall into the laps of those who will grease the palms.

Yet, we are told the Authority responsible for procurement of medical supplies on behalf of the Ministry of Health and Wellness will, according to section 6 (4), act without fear or favour and will discharge its functions independently, judiciously and diligently. My eye! This is game for a laugh. Only the best government that money can buy would dare to move this Bill to be read a second time.

We are an over prescribed haven. Too many people are taking too many pills. At a time when we have to address the issue of overprescribing of drugs and draw lessons from the Drug Burden Index, the regime is setting up an authority, a quango-like body to

exercise full control over importation, storage, warehousing of drugs, and medical supplies.

Under clause 48, provision is made for the Director of Audit to audit the Central Medical Procurement Authority. It stands to reason that a malleable, a pliable Director of Audit, whose appointment was shrouded in controversy, would be a suitable boy indeed. This Bill will not protect consumers' interests, it will fleece taxpayers. Should I remind the House of the huge profit made by those who flagged the colour of MSM under the COVID-19 emergency? I call upon the Minister to err on the side of caution and not to be an errand boy or bellboy of the Prime Minister.

The former Director of Audit acted without fear and vigorously highlighted shortcomings over mismanagement, wastage and fraudulent practices in respect of acquisition of medical supplies. Purchase was approved well before vote was taken at Committee of Supply during debate on budget for Financial Year 2020-2021.

In many countries on the African continent, the object is to set up a public procurement office - fair enough - which is fiercely independent, with emphasis on the e-procurement. Okay, section 41 does make provision for this but they gave due consideration to the acquisition of generics from reputed pharmaceutical companies with good pharmacovigilance surveillance. It is taxpayers' money being used judiciously and diligently. But where is the alleged Pharmacovigilance Board of the Ministry of Health and Wellness? If it exists, it is ineffective.

In the meantime, it is a field day for like-minded cowboys' suppliers. Who could forget the cowboy supplier of Molcovir generics, who took advantage of COVID Emergency Procurement to fleece, to rip off the taxpayers with award of contract of more than Rs79,840,000 to CPN Distributors. Besides, the cowboys supplied capsules with shorter expiry date and of doubtful quality and safety profile. The statement of the Minister in the House to justify the purchase was incomprehensible. And this is an *avant-goût*, a foretaste of what the Central Medical Procurement Authority stands for. This is what it stands for. You would be surprised Mr Speaker, Sir, to learn there was a vast difference in the price of Molnupiravir per capsule offered by pharmaceutical company of repute like Mauritius pharmacy. Rs7.5 m. compared to almost Rs80 m., that is, the loss of more than Rs70 per capsule to be borne by the taxpayers. The regime chose to buy more than one million capsules for almost Rs80 m. It was a jackpot.

As I have said in my introductory remarks, Emergency Procurement during COVID-19 was an early harvest. The Central Medical Procurement Authority will produce the bumper crop. Above board certainly not! Here, the Board with its technical

committees in clause 13, committees of needs in clause 15, empower the Authority to rule the waves. Winner takes all. War chests and unexplained wealth matter to the regime.

Let me now come to the main thrust of the Bill. Why is the procurement exercise decoupled from the responsible Ministry, which operates under the purview the Central Procurement Board and Emergency Procurement of Public Procurement Act? Why? Elementary, Mr Speaker, Sir! It is tailor-made and the team likely to constitute the Board is bound to be a rubber stamp. It has to be servile. It has to be subservient. It has to be at the beck and call of the regime. Don't be surprised if I tell you that the members of the Board would be selected from the rank and file of the same controversial Emergency Procurement team, which was in the forefront during the time of COVID-19. There are indeed lessons to be drawn and learnt. Impartiality, integrity, proper selection of bidders has never, is never and will never be the forte of the regime! Money through allocation of contract, talks. It is the story of a legitimate hunter being hunted to make room for poachers to operate.

As of now, the Procurement Division of the Ministry of Health has to comply with the provisions of the Public Procurement Act. Doctors, nurses, technicians, pharmacies, health professionals are responsible for all the technical aspects of procurement. Don't come with the same excuse that efficiency will be undermined. Preparation of technical documents and evaluation, let the system operate. If there is any shortcoming, it is up to this Government to address these shortcomings and take measures to redress a situation which is probably acute and chronic.

But the regime, Mr Speaker, Sir, has deliberately chosen to bring in the three Cs – the clowns, the *chatwa* and the cronies. And they will bow to the *dictat* ...

Mr Speaker: Excuse me.

Dr. Boolell: Sorry.

Mr Speaker: I heard you say '*chatwa*'. So, withdraw that word.

Dr. Boolell: Okay, I withdraw '*chatwa*'.

Mr Speaker: If you don't want to be named one, then, withdraw.

Dr. Boolell: No, I don't like to be threatened.

Mr Speaker: Exactly!

Dr. Boolell: But alright, I withdraw.

Mr Speaker: Withdraw that word.

Dr. Boolell: Okay, I withdraw ‘*chatwa*’ but they know. Mr Speaker, Sir, they will bow to the *diktat* of the Authority whose strings would be pulled by the newly crowned of Sun Trust. A bidding exercise – newly crowned king of Sun Trust – is not conducted without a proper due diligence. Any tampering with technical or financial procedures or envelopes is a very serious offense. The administrative cadre, the Senior Chief Executive, the Permanent Secretary, the APS are responsible for supervising the procurement process in line the Central Procurement Act.

In fact, what the Minister has done today, what this Government has done; it has issued a certificate of incompetence to competent civil servants, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is a slur on our Civil Service which has delivered in difficult times, Mr Speaker, Sir. We have to value and put premium on the work that they do, Mr Speaker, Sir, and we should not take them for granted. Unfortunately, as I say, the powers are being whittled away; it is a dismemberment of a system which is transparent.

But, who are the real culprits? Today, the real culprits are those at the helm, enjoying arm chair comfort. While the principle pharmacist had to answer before a Court of Law, he was acquitted and the then CMO was never bothered by ICAC. As to the former Director of STC, who acted as pay agent under the instructions from COVID Emergency Committee, he had to pay. The then Senior Chief Executive of the Ministry was forced to take early retirement; she got compelling instructions from the lesser God: obey or bear the consequences. No wonder she was neither spared by the Public Accounts Committee nor the Director of Audit.

The Director of Audit in his report, year in, year out since 2020 stated that Prime Minister chaired emergency meetings for procurement without the notes made available. Why? This Bill is a false passport for impropriety.

Mr Speaker: Try to conclude.

Dr. Boolell: Time to conclude? I have so much to say!

Mr Speaker: You are still beginning.

Dr. Boolell: Yes, thank you.

Where is the freedom of information? I know it is clear why the regime is not keen to introduce the Freedom of Information Act. As I have said, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am about to conclude. This Bill is a passport to award contracts to the privileged few. The Emergency Procurement exercise during COVID was an early harvest, the bumper crop is there to be reaped and it is not the Director of Hyperpharm who will say otherwise.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me come on the decrepit warehousing. Are we going to use the decrepit warehouses? Since the last nine years, this regime has been guilty of storing medical supplies in a decrepit building with a consequence of heavy loss of taxpayers' money and poor quality drugs prescribed to patients. Where is the provision in the Bill for destruction of expired items, expired drugs? There is an urgent need for high temperature incinerator for the clean destruction of expired drugs. The Bill must provide for publication on its website of all decisions of the Board at each meeting within seven days.

The Act provides for outsourcing to the private sector, whose private sector? The political arm of the executives so decides, as they're in the habit of saying: 'Government is Government and Government so decides'. The procurement of medical supplies and pharmaceutical is a highly technical thing. The regime is appointing Members of the Board who will never be free of the political colour, will be servile and subservient to the master. This Bill is a travesty. It is fit for the incinerator.

Thank you very much.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Léopold!

(6.02 p.m.)

Mr J. B. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, every time when we talk about procurement there is that element, there is that existing pressure of corruption. We have had that impression on the onset of COVID-19 pandemic with the emergence of unprecedented and complex issues that our country and other countries had faced to counteract new challenges on to how to ensure the efficient and effective procurement of quality medical supplies.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with the COVID-19 pandemic, the public at large has recognised how important it is and the efforts on how successive Governments must deal with the urgency, the demand and shortages of medical supplies. We have all witnessed that during the pandemic of COVID-19, how the Government was trying to clamber out of the trench to secure emergency medicines, vaccines, PPE, ventilators and diagnostic tools. Countries with more robust health systems have had to face similar problems. As a result, Mr Speaker, Sir, of that new stress on global supply chains which led to disruption has influenced how to support access to essential medicines for the population.

In that time of crisis, Mr Speaker, Sir, we need to have good procurement pharmaceutical support access to medical goods for the population. There were inflated prices of medical goods worldwide as the health goal at that time, during the COVID-19 pandemic, was to maintain the supply of medical goods, especially essential medicines.

And the fact is, Mr Speaker, Sir, during the peak of COVID-19 pandemic the Republic of Mauritius was one amongst the first countries in the region to distribute and ease access to medical goods which were so important to the population and to contain the COVID-19 virus.

But, Mr Speaker, Sir, be it in time of crisis or non-crisis time, while efforts are made through the procurement process to ensure equitable access to essential medicines, unfortunately, procurement has always been associated with corruption. In fact, corruption in procurement is a challenge. Successive Governments of the Republic of Mauritius are fully aware of that, that corruption remains a challenge in public procurement and most particularly in the health sector because of the technical complexity and lucrative nature that we all know are associated with medical goods. And, this piece of legislation is an additional instrument to reduce the risk of corruption in public procurement, especially in pharmaceutical sector, thereby preventing wastage and enhance operational efficiencies.

This will not only reduce the risk of corruption in public procurement but most importantly, Mr Speaker, Sir, it will ensure a strategic organisation of medicine procurement, maintain supply, enhance medicine management policy and all the aspects of safety in term of maintaining high standard. From one reason to another, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused disruption in pharmaceutical supply chain. Now that the outbreak is under control, we are still having the rebound effects of disrupted pharmaceutical supply chain.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not know whether it is mismanagement but in Rodrigues we are experiencing an acute shortage of essential medicine to the point where the Ministry of Health needs to investigate that matter very seriously. I strongly recommend prompt application of this law with regards to the prevailing situation in Rodrigues. I welcome this law to ensure adequate supply of medication to Rodrigues as it is unacceptable due to poor management that elective surgery such as removal of prostate gland must be postponed due to lack of appropriate medications. It is unacceptable that some essential medicines are frequently not available.

Therefore, the National Government, through this law, must be able to make sure, by monitoring for an adequate pharmaceutical supply across the Republic of Mauritius, to maintain health outcomes. There must be provision in this law for such monitoring. The Authority that this law will allow to set up must make sure that an e-platform be implemented across all the existing public pharmacies in the Republic to contribute on the improvement of health results of the whole population, in providing a safe and integrated pharmaceutical care.

It is high time for pharmacists to stop acting as dispenser in our hospitals. They must communicate on providing continuous pharmaceutical care to patients that will prevent repetitive prescriptions of medication causing wastage. This situation occurs quite often in our public health care setting to patients who attend to different health care facilities. Mr Speaker, Sir, this wastage need to be stopped by developing an electronic platform communication between pharmacists and healthcare areas.

This law will also need to ensure that medicines and other medical products be properly stored. Storage and security of medical tools, especially pharmaceutical products must be an area of great concern to the Authority to allow patients to obtain the best possible outcomes from medicines.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Authority will have a huge role ahead for a better, safer and more convenient care. While this law will help to reduce corruption in public procurement, it is very important to point out that this change in the procurement of medical tools and the setting of an authority will enhance medicines optimisation. This is the best approach to safe and effective medicines use and the improvement of the efficacy of medicines onto people.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have said, the Authority has a big task ahead. It must be composed of experts, such as pharmacists of different specialities to make sure that medicines and other medical products are controlled under the appropriate Act. The Authority will need to make sure all the time that there are continuous supply, proper storage, make sure that only licensed medical equipment and medicines are procured, work with other regulatory authorities to make sure that the formulary of medicines is proper and to the set standards; also, that there is an adverse drug reaction reporting system and an effective compliance system, amongst so many.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I hope that this law brings a revolution to the way pharmaceutical products are being managed in our public health services. This Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, is about safety and improvement of health outcomes. This Bill will bring changes on the way we maintain continuous supply of medical goods to safer delivery of care. I think I am done, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister Balgobin!

(6.13 p.m.)

The Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation
(Mr D. Balgobin): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Three years ago, the COVID-19 pandemic brought Governments around the world to rethink their healthcare infrastructure and ecosystem to better deliver healthcare to its people.

As a caring government, we always thrive to bring about a more efficient and effective healthcare system in our country, ranging from free and universal medical care at the doorstep of our citizens to the procurement of medical supplies in a more responsive manner.

This is, more so, because of –

- the frequent disruption in the supply chain;
- our relatively small demands, and
- our distance from the main manufacturers and suppliers.

The setting up of the Central Medical Procurement Authority will go a long way in addressing this challenge.

Such an authority will have the responsibility of procuring essential medical supplies for the entire country in a more timely, cost-effective manner and ensuring value for money at all times.

And by centralising the procurement process, we can ensure that there is a steady supply of medical equipment, medicines and vaccines, not only in normal times but also in times of unusual local epidemics as well as international health challenges.

I therefore wish to congratulate my very good friend, hon. Kailesh Jagutpal, Minister of Health and Wellness for presenting the Central Medical Procurement Authority Bill to the House and more specifically for the set of objectives and functions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the core objective of this Government, led by the hon. Prime Minister, is to create an environment where all our citizens not only have access to the basic necessity of life, such as food, shelter, education, and health care but also enjoy a better quality of life. Our focus is to ensure that everyone has access to resources and opportunities to live life to its fullest. The objective of the Government is centred around creating a just and equitable society where every citizen is valued and their well-being is catered for.

With the creation of a Central Medical Procurement Authority, it is one of the objectives we will surely attain. First and foremost, it will lead to a reduction in the cost of medical supply. By purchasing in bulk, the Ministry of Health and Wellness can leverage

on better prices with manufacturers and suppliers. In turn, this will result in the saving that can be passed on to enhance further our healthcare system.

Secondly, the Authority will be able to ensure that we have an adequate supply of medical supplies during emergencies as the Authority will have the flexibility to act with promptitude within the defined legal framework.

Thirdly, the Authority will lead to a more efficient and transparent procurement process. By centralising this process, Mr Speaker, Sir, we can ensure that medical supplies reach those who need them most. This will also help to eliminate the problem of counterfeit and substandard medical supplies.

Mr Speaker, Sir, today, this Government led by the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, is presenting a piece of legislation which will make history. And, for good reasons, it is known that procurement of medicines, vaccines, medical equipment disposals have been a recurrent issue under all regimes. It is not the first time in this Government that we are facing all those problems such as medical supplies.

Each and every year, the National Audit Report, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Public Accounts Committee, at least during the past two decades – not past two years, not this Government, the past two decades – have been pointing loopholes and weaknesses in the procurement system and yet no Government ever reacted.

My good friend, the hon. Dr. Boolell in his speech mentioned nothing is good. The whole speech, his 20 minutes of debate, nothing is good but what do you propose? What have you suggested to the hon. Minister of Health in your speech that could be done? It takes, Mr Speaker, Sir, a strong government, it takes a strong political will to change things and this is what exactly is being done today with the introduction of the Central Medical Procurement Authority Bill.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my colleague in his intervention explained the complexity of procurement of medical products. I am not going to details in that. But let me enlighten the House, the procurement process, I take one example, the procurement process for procurements of dialysis consumables which cost the Government Rs240 m. and we know how important those consumables are for our friends who suffer from this disease. The request has to go for approximately, Mr Speaker, Sir, 20 different administrative steps to be able to procure dialysis consumables. I am taking one example, and marking of funds, first of all, then it goes for approval at the Ministry of Health. The SCE of the Ministry approves then it goes, because of certain threshold of amount, to the Central Procurement

Board for processing. Then they agree on the specifications; they agree on the closing date. Tenders being launched, then evaluation committee is set up, then there is the selection of bidders. By chance the budget allocation for this item does not exceed the amount that the supplier has bid and then you have, eventually, maybe IRP, a challenge if a supplier feels that his bid was correct and was not selected. So, we can imagine the long process of buying a medicine in this particular situation. I have taken an example of a dialysis consumable.

Now when you award the contract, Mr Speaker, Sir, it takes three to four months for that consumable to reach the country. One can imagine the consequences of non-availability of such essential items for dialysis patients.

So, we cannot let this perpetuate on and on since so many years, Mr Speaker, Sir. This process has been here for decades. It is not this Government, as Dr. Boolell is trying to say. Is it only during this Government we have problem with medical supplies? It has been there for decades, yet when hon. Dr. Boolell was in power for 10 years, my good friend Dr. Boolell never came up with any solutions...

Mr Hurreeram: *Non li ti le li, Ramgoolam ki pan le!*

Mr Balgobin: To be able to bring more fluidity in this process for the citizens to benefit. And, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have heard hon. Dr. Boolell saying nothing has been done. I ask again what is your proposal? Come and give proposals to the Minister! Say what can be done instead of sitting in the Opposition and saying nothing is done. Because you have short memory, hon. Member, go and have a look at the Audit Reports when you were in power. In terms of medical supplies, what were being said at that time? Audit Reports, I have taken just a couple of them. If I go one by one, maybe I should take more time than the Minister. Mr Speaker, Sir, Audit Report 2009, what it mentions, supply of Pharmaceuticals –

“(...) The whole order of 990 thousand”

close to a million of a medicine called, I hope I spell it well.

“Prochlorperazine Maleate 5mg tablets was outstanding,”

which mean that it never came.

“14 months after the award of the contract.”

It’s not me who said that, hon. Dr. Boolell. It is the Audit Report. You were in power. What did you do?

In the same report, supply of Paracetamol 500 mg tablets, two orders were placed of a total of 44 million tablets. Do you know what happened, Mr Speaker, Sir? The tablets were found unfit for consumption, 44 million tablets. It is not me who said that, it is the Audit Report. Where were you then, hon. Dr. Boolell?

Ms Anquetil: Elle est bonne celle-là !

Mr Balgobin: No it's good, we are talking about today. Today is, Dr. Boolell, it is very good to say talk about today. Today is what our Government is doing. Today is what hon. Dr. Jagutpal is doing. And it is good to remind you about the past a little bit. We have to remind you about the past.

An hon. Member: *Ki ti ena pou to gagn sa la!*

Mr Balgobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I go on, other pharmaceutical products were found expired on the shelf –

- 4 m. tablets of Famotidine 20mg, – I don't know what it is, Doctors would understand;
- nearly Rs3 m. of Acetate Solution for Haemodialysis expired on the shelf;
- nearly Rs1 m. worth of Heparin Sodium used for Dialysis expired on the shelf.

And you can go on, Mr Speaker, Sir, year by year by year in Audit Reports about medical supplies. You can just name it.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is why today as I said there is a strong will from this Government, from our Minister, from the Prime Minister to be able to have an Authority that can control and have a proper process with regards to medical supplies.

The establishment of the Central Medical Procurement Authority is an urgent need for this country and above all, a sign of transparency and that of a Government with bold moves.

Dr. Boolell said that the hon. Prime Minister chaired the procurement committee during the COVID-19 pandemic; it is not true at all. It is not true at all; the hon. Prime Minister chaired the High Level Committee.

The High Level Committee was chaired and decisions were being taken to save lives of people. The High Level Committee met more than 300 times, on Sundays, on Public Holidays – whenever there was a need to meet, to take decisions, to save lives of people. The hon. Prime Minister never chaired any procurement committee as you mentioned. Not as your Prime Minister when decisions were to be taken to save lives of people in 1999; he was hiding *anba lili*. No!

Mr Speaker, Sir, the setting up of this Authority will lead to a more efficient and cost-effective procurement process and I am also happy to note that eventually, in the E-Health Project and lots have been said on E-Health by Members of the Opposition, by certain Press that this project is since long time. Yes, because the E-Health Project, Mr Speaker, Sir, is not like hon. Dr. Boolell is pressing on his tablet. It is a project worth nearly a billion of rupees. It is going to digitalise all the five regional hospitals in the country. It is going to digitalise all the medicclinics on a second phase of the country and it is going to digitalise all the dispensaries in all small villages around this country. It is not a simple, straight forward project.

Today, procurement has been launched already by the UNDP to select the successful bidder and eventually the Central Medical Procurement Authority will be linked with the E-Health system whereby our doctors, our practitioners, our health staff would be able to automatically digitalise this system and use it more effectively.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, let me end here. I am sure that all the Members of this Assembly will agree that beyond politics, Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill comes at a very right time to be able to set up an authority that would control, that would make sure that the medical supplies are being procured in a correct manner as per the law. Also, they are being used as per the stock management, the inventory management so that we put some order here and we set the legacy for the generation to come.

So, I urge the Members of this August Assembly to support this initiative of my very good friend, the Minister of Health and Wellness, which go, as I said, a long way in improving the healthcare infrastructure of our country.

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

Mr Speaker: MP Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha!

(6.32 p.m.)

Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière):
 M. le président, le ministère de la Santé a, à maintes reprises, était sous les feux des projecteurs durant les dernières années. Ce ministère a fait couler beaucoup d'encre mais pas pour les bonnes raisons. Ce ministère a été mêlé à plusieurs scandales surtout durant la pandémie de la Covid-19 quand cette pandémie a été l'occasion en or pour des proches du pouvoir de se remplir les poches. Se remplir les poches, pas juste sur le dos des contribuables ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Be careful ! Be careful! From very start, I am very severe with that kind of language. Be careful!

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Mais aussi sur le dos des malades et le dos de ceux qui ont perdu la vie. M. le président, d'après l'article 7 (a) du projet de loi, ce ministère est en train de créer une autorité pour l'approvisionnement de l'entièreté des matériaux médicaux et je rappelle que le coût de ces matériaux ne se chiffre pas en millions mais en milliards. Mais quelle a été le bilan de ce ministère particulièrement par rapport à l'approvisionnement ?

Faisons le bilan de ces dernières années ; en 2020 une avalanche de scandales a déferlé. Durant le premier confinement, un montant démesuré de R 1,7 milliards a été déboursés sous les procédures d'*Emergency Procurement* et à peine un an plus tard, en 2021, la situation se répète. Le directeur de l'Audit, dans ses deux rapports consécutifs, dit qu'à plusieurs occasions le ministère de la Santé a transgressé les règles d'approvisionnement et que ce ministère a enfreint les lois relatives à l'*Emergency Procurement*.

C'est grave, M. le président. On a là un ministère qui fait fi des lois de notre République. Dans son rapport, le directeur de l'Audit a critiqué que le ministère de la Santé avait fait l'acquisition de produits médicaux valant des centaines de millions de roupies à des fournisseurs qui n'avaient absolument aucune expérience en la matière. C'est comme cela que bijouterie et quincaillerie ont bénéficié de contrats très rémunérateurs pour la fourniture de produits médicaux. Peut-on appeler cela de bonne pratique d'approvisionnement ?

Je m'oppose, M. le président, à l'opinion du ministre de la Santé qui a dit lors d'une de ses interventions, le 28 mars de cette année, qu'il trouve tout à fait logique et normal que du jour au lendemain, des bijouteries et des quincailleries puissent fournir des produits médicaux et que c'est cela, d'après lui, le concept de diversification. Le ministre trouve tout à fait normal que demain, il aille chez son coiffeur pour s'acheter sa baguette de pain.

I beg to differ, M. le président.

En 2020 toujours, l'affaire des respirateurs artificiels de Pack & Blister, un achat d'une valeur de R 90 millions et contrat alloué en l'espace de trois heures seulement. Une commande jugée urgente mais ce n'est que neuf mois plus tard que ces respirateurs arrivent au pays et pire, les respirateurs étaient défectueux et ont été retournés au fournisseur.

M. le président, qu'est-ce que serait-il passé si cela avait coïncidé avec le pic de la pandémie dans nos hôpitaux ? Comment aurait-on justifié les drames humains qui se seraient ensuivis ? Et l'ironie qu'à ce jour il n'y a ni respirateurs ni remboursement des R 90 millions et l'année suivante, M. le président, en 2021 l'affaire Molnupiravir où le ministère achète un comprimé à R 9.30 et le lendemain à R 79.92 en l'espace d'une journée, payé presque 10 fois plus cher.

Avec ces abus des procédures d'*Emergency Procurement*, certains produits ont même été achetés jusqu'à 3,300 % plus cher. Voilà le bilan du ministère de la Santé sur l'approvisionnement, M. le président, et sous l'article 7 (b) (c) et (d) du projet de loi, cette autorité sera responsable du stockage du matériel médical et elle devra assurer sa gestion et assurer que le niveau des stocks des établissements de santé soit maintenu.

Quel est donc cette fois-ci le bilan du ministère de la Santé sur la gestion des matériaux médicaux ? Pas plus loin que l'année dernière, M. le président, de nombreux sacs remplis de produits pharmaceutiques ont été découverts dans la poubelle d'une Médi-Clinique valant des milliers de roupies. Ils avaient été jetés parce que ces produits pharmaceutiques étaient tous périmés. De 2013 à 2020, 89 tonnes de produits pharmaceutiques d'une valeur de R 40 millions étaient périmés. Quel énorme gaspillage des fonds publics !

Ajouté à cela, les entrepôts de stockage sont des fois dans des conditions non conformes, ce qui entraîne la dégradation et le gaspillage de ces médicaments qui y sont stockés. Comme cela a été le cas en 2019 quand les climatiseurs de l'entrepôt de Plaine Lauzun étaient en panne des mois durant et sans aucun doute qu'après une telle situation que tous les médicaments ont été jetés et gaspillés.

M. le président, le Directeur de l'audit a émis plusieurs critiques sur les pratiques du ministère de la Santé par rapport à la gestion des matériaux médicaux. Les médicaments sont commandés de nouveau malgré que le stock de ceci est encore abondant et conséquence : un trop grand stock de ces médicaments qui vont par la suite périmer et être gaspiller.

Suite aux mauvaises planifications, des médicaments se retrouvent au seuil de la rupture et pour palier à cela, les matériaux médicaux sont importés par avion au lieu du bateau qui réduit de façon notable le temps de transport mais qui également augmente les couts de façon considérable. A se demander si les fréquentes pénuries de médicaments ne sont en fait pas artificielles.

M. le président, des fois les commandes sont passés tardivement qui provoque une situation d'urgence et le *value for money* n'est pas obtenu. Plus grave, quand les produits sont achetés en urgence, ils peuvent être achetés au détriment de la qualité et cela signifie que non seulement ces médicaments peuvent être moins efficaces mais peuvent aussi mettre à risque la santé des patients.

Pour résumer, M. le président, soit le stock est en excès et doit être jeter soit le stock est insuffisant, ce qui entraîne des pénuries et des ruptures. Ce ministère est vraiment le champion de la gestion, M. le président.

Par contre, M. le président, je souhaite quand même faire quelques suggestions concernant la gestion des appareils médicaux. Des appareils médicaux sont des éléments fondamentaux dans un système de santé car ils sont essentiel pour la prévention, le diagnostic, le traitement et la réhabilitation des maladies et des pathologies et cela d'une manière sûre et efficace. Un système de santé performant doit pouvoir fournir tous les soins et pour cela, on doit avoir à sa disposition une vaste gamme d'appareils médicaux.

Ajouter à cela, il faut évidemment que ces appareils soient en service et non hors d'usage, chose qui arrive couramment dans nos établissement de santé publiques et pour des périodes considérables ce qui entraîne de longue listes d'attente pour les diagnostiques et pour les traitements, des mois d'attente, même des années parfois. M. le président, ces longues et importants retards ne sont pas sans conséquences sur la santé de notre population. Qui dit diagnostique ou traitement tardive, dit une possible détérioration de la maladie. Retarder un diagnostic ou retarder un traitement peut porter de graves préjudices aux malades pouvant même leur couter la vie, M. le président.

Et la raison principale de ces longues listes d'attente est le manque d'appareils. Soi les appareils n'ont pas été acheté à temps, soit ils sont en nombre insuffisant par rapport à la grande demande, soit ils ont hors service en raison de panne ou en raison d'un manque de personnel qualifié pour les réparer.

M. le président, vue le rôle capital des appareils médicaux dans notre système de santé, je propose la mise sur pied d'un *Medical Equipment Management Committee* qui sera composé de personnels dans différent domaines tels que technique, clinique, financier, administrative entre autres, avec une unité de professionnels spécifiquement formée dans la bonne gestion des appareils médicaux et d'une équipe d'ingénieurs biomédicaux et cliniques qualifiées.

Ce Comité aura pour responsabilité d'assurer que les appareils médicaux des hôpitaux soit utilisés de manière sûre, effective, efficace et entretenue, conformément aux

instructions du fabricant et disposés de manière convenable à leur fin de vie. Et par la suite le comité devra préparer le rapport à être soumis chaque année au *Committee of Needs* qui à son tour, comme indiquer sous l'article 15, paragraphe (1) du projet de loi a le rôle de *diligently and judiciously prepare the needs and specifications of medical supplies for the public health institutions.*

M. le président, la question reste : en créant une nouvelle autorité pour les achats des matériaux médicaux et en enlevant leurs approvisionnements des fonctions du *Central Procurement Board*, est-ce que cela amènera plus de transparence contrairement à toute l'opacité donc la population a témoigné ces dernières années ? Est-ce que cela rendra ceux qui ont des comptes à rendre plus transparents et responsables ? Ou en fait est-ce juste un écran de fumée ?

Dans l'article 11 (1) et (2), il est dit que –

“There shall be a Director who shall be responsible for the execution of the policy of the Board and for the control and management of the day to day business of the Authority.”

Et que –

“The Director shall be appointed by the Prime Minister on such terms and conditions as the Prime Minister may determine.”

Durant la pandémie de la Covid-19, les décisions notamment sur l'approvisionnement des produits médicaux étaient prises par le *High-Level Committee* présidé par nul autre que le Premier ministre lui-même et dans ce projet de loi, c'est le Premier ministre qui a le pouvoir de nommer le directeur ou la directrice et a le pouvoir de le ou la renvoyer. En d'autres mots, c'est le Premier ministre qui donnera les instructions à être obéies.

M. le président, on aura beau passer les meilleurs au monde mais cela ne servira à rien si les gouvernants persistent à nommer des personnes asservies à la tête des autorités. Ce projet de loi est un autre mécanisme pour permettre d'abuser à nouveau l'argent des contribuables et de favoriser les copains et les copines. M. le président, ajouté à cela, ajouté à la pandémie de Covid-19, la population a connu la grippe Pack and Blister et la fièvre Molnupiravir.

Pour conclure, M. le président, ce projet de loi est en fait un vaccin développé par les laboratoires du ministère de la Santé en collaboration avec les chercheurs du *COVID-19 High-Level Committee*, pendant que le Premier Ministre jouera le rôle du *Chief Government Pharmacist* avec pour bût de pérenniser ce même *High-Level Committee* qui

avait fonctionné avec une opacité totale durant la pandémie ou les fonctionnaires recevront à nouveau des instructions verbales de leurs ministres afin de favoriser certaines compagnies pour les achats de produits médicaux.

M. le président, à l'heure où les défis sont nombreux au sein du ministère de la Santé, ce dernier n'a trouvé rien de mieux que de venir avec un projet de loi centralisateur et dépourvu de bon sens à moins que ce soit le sens des affaires.

J'en ai fini, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

(6.47 p.m.)

Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

I am obliged to rebut. On ne cesse de dire que le Covid-19 a un bon dos. C'est un moyen de couvrir tous les problèmes auxquels font face ce gouvernement. Je le répète et je le dis haut et fort : le Covid-19 n'est pas un monstre à 2 ou 3 têtes mais plusieurs têtes et nous portons encore les séquelles. Que n'a-t-on pas dit à présent pour nous faire oublier ?

Même aujourd'hui durant la *PNQ*, M. le président, il y a eu rire lorsqu'on évoque le Covid-19. On a tous souffert, le pays et plus encore le monde était au ralenti. Comme la politique de ce perpétuel slogan : « *nanye pa bon* », on avait fait de même pour le Metro et j'en passe. Avec quel acharnement notre ministre de la Santé a travaillé !

He has burnt the midnight oil, pour ne pas dire trouver des solutions à cette ennemie, je vous le rappelle, invisible. Aujourd'hui c'est la politique de bas étage ; en force je dirais. Oui je le répète, le monde était à genoux. On l'a traité de tous les noms, de tous les mots, de tous les péchés reliant à cette pandémie, des jurons sur le net, des caricatures de mauvaises goûts mais, M. le président, il a résisté. Bravo pour ce ministre qui entre dans l'histoire car il a été le premier ministre de la Santé à faire face à une pandémie à Maurice. Il a su trouver les solutions.

The hon. Dr. Kailesh Jagutpal – today I will say his name in full – Kailesh Kumar Singh Jagutpal; you know Kumar, somebody else is also called Kumar in this august Assembly and it is none other than the hon. Prime Minister. I congratulate the Minister of Health and Wellness for coming up and introducing this Bill to the House.

Mr Speaker, Sir, procurement of medical supply during and after the COVID-19 period has been and continued to be a subject of much concern by both the Government and the Opposition. This Bill is a blessing to all of us. By its implementation and

rigorously following each clause of it, we will save so much time and energy – of some needless to say who – in speculating whether bidders are legitimate or not and would therefore focus on what is more important in critical and less critical time.

The new Authority, Mr Speaker, Sir, will focus on warehousing, supply and distribution of medical supplies to public health institution and in doing so, Mr Speaker, Sir, the process will be easier to get information.

The Central Medical Procurement Authority Policy Office regarding Section 4 of the Bill attributed all the powers to ensure transparency and accountability in the procurement of medical supply in the Public Health Institution. Transparency, Mr Speaker, Sir, is a word Members on the other side of the House always play on. The introduction of this Bill is a clear indication that our Government has no problem with transparency. We often hear that Opposition Members should be involved in the nomination of Officials at so many occasions and in the Bill, the appointment of Board Members will be discussed with the Leader of the Opposition. Once again, this clearly indicates the good intention of the Ministry of Health, the Minister himself and the Government as a whole.

Section 8 of the Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, provides the Authority the function needed to be responsible for the operation and management services for the warehousing inventory control of medical supplies and their distribution to public health institution, arrange for real time inventory management of all medical supply points as well as their usage and consumption. Ensure at all-time safety stock level of medical supply in public health institution by carrying out regular physical inspection of the stock of the medical supplies and maintain real time record of the medical supplies.

By doing so, Mr Speaker, Sir, the need and stock management of medical supply of our public health institution at Central Medical Procurement Authority level will allow easier fine tune procedure for transfer of stock between public health institution and thus, will uphold the quality of service offered to the public by our health institutions. Caring for the health of our population does not involve only having doctors, it also goes by giving those doctors the appropriate tools and clearer *aperçu* on the availability of medicine. They are prescribing as there will be real time inventories. Having a centralised stock management and the ability to communicate about same between the several public hospitals is also providing all the caregivers a certain assurance while giving treatments to the patients.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now talk about the Electronic Inventory Management System which is a software base solution designed to efficiently track, manage and control inventory within an organisation. It utilises electronic tools and database to automate

inventory related processes, provides real time visibility and control over inventory level, stock movement and associated data.

Mr Speaker, Sir, some key advantage and features of implementing an Electronic Inventory Management System are accurate, inventory tracking, EIMS, enable real time tracking of inventory level ensuring accurate and up to date information on stock quantities, location and movement. This helps to prevent stock-out, overstocking like hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha just stated. So, because there was overstocking, that is right, we brought this law today in Parliament. We agree that there have been problem in stock during the period labour party was in power, during the period we were in power. So, that is why today we are bringing such a law in Parliament. Inventory Optimisation, EIMS provide insight into demand pattern, sales trend and historical data, allowing businesses to optimise their inventory levels by identifying slow moving or obsolete stock. Businesses can reduce carrying cost, minimise waste and improve overall inventory turnover.

Streamline procurement and purchasing automate the procurement process, streamlining purchase, order creation, vendor management and order fulfilment. It helps maintain optimal stock level, ensure timely reordering and reduce manual paper work and errors associated with traditional procurement method. Enhance order fulfilment EIMS enable efficient order processing and fulfilment by providing real time visibility into available stock. It help businesses accurately pick back and ship orders reducing order processing time improving accuracy and enhancing customer satisfaction.

Demand forecasting and planning EIMS utilised historical data and advanced forecasting technic to project future demand. This helps businesses plan inventory level, adjust procurement strategies and ensure adequate stock availability during peak demand period.

Cost control and financial management, e-IMS also provides insight into inventory cost including carrying cost, holding cost and order cost. This enables businesses to analyse and optimise their inventory related expenses, reduce excess inventory and improve cash flow. Integration of the system e-IMS can integrate with other business systems such as e-Health, Enterprise Resource Planning and Customer Relationship Management System. This allows for seamless data flow, improved synchronisation and better overall business process management. Implementing an electronic inventory management system offers organisations greater control, accuracy and efficiency in managing their inventory. It optimises inventory level, stimulates processes, reduces cost and enhances customer satisfaction. So, it is with great satisfaction that I have seen that

section 41 of this Bill provides for the CMPA to issue guidelines and directives for the use of such efficient tools in our health system.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government cares for our people and no stone is left unturned in this endeavour to offer the best quality of service in our healthcare system. Medical supply is a key component in the process of ensuring that our citizens are in good health.

*Mr Speaker, Sir, ce gouvernement sous le leadership de l'honorable Premier ministre, l'honorable Pravind Kumar Jugnauth vient une nouvelle fois avec un projet de loi historique. Quand l'opposition était au pouvoir, elle n'est jamais venue de l'avant avec des amendements au *PPA*. Une partie de l'opposition était bien sûr au gouvernement tandis que l'autre partie est toujours dans l'opposition. Ils ne sont jamais venus de l'avant avec le *Public Procurement Act* de 2006 ou avec un nouveau projet de loi. Le Covid-19 nous a apporté son lot de problèmes avec une crise économique et sanitaire au niveau mondial. Ce gouvernement a su tirer des leçons et vient avec ce projet de loi qui fera de la CMPA une autorité aux normes internationales, et je tiens à remercier mon collègue et ami le ministre de la Santé et du bien-être pour ces projets de loi dans l'intérêt de la population mauricienne.*

I am done, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Juman!

(7.02 p.m.)

Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East):
Mon ami, l'honorable Salim Abbas Mamode avait une mémoire courte, on était ensemble en 2020 et il n'arrêtait pas de critiquer à ce moment-là, la gestion du Covid de la part du ministre l'honorable Dr. Kailesh Kumar Jagutpal.

M. le président, je voulais dire un petit mot à l'honorable Balgobin qui a cité beaucoup de chiffres, se référant au rapport de l'Audit. Mais laissez-moi lui donner une réponse de la part de l'honorable ministre Dr. Jagutpal à l'Assemblée National à une question du député mon collègue, l'honorable Dr. Gungapersad, le 26 avril 2022 *with regard to expired medical items, quantity and cost –*

“The estimated value for the items expired from 2013 to 2020 amounts to Rs40 m.”

For seven years. In a reply to a PQ by myself: B/607 in May 2023, for the year –

- (i) 2021 it amounts to Rs17,299,000;
- (ii) 2021-2022: Rs65.9 m.;

(iii) 2022-2023: Rs88.1 m.

L'honorable Balgobin, here are the figures. It is ten times more in the mandate of the hon. Minister. I am giving you his reply.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are debating a Bill with regard to the medical procurement, more precisely the Central Medical Procurement Bill. When we talk about procurement, as rightly said by hon. Léopold, it immediately brings to mind the unfortunate and scandalous purchases made through Emergency Procurement during COVID-19. Denunciations were made by the Opposition and by myself in the Press and elsewhere through PNQs and PQs. PQs and PNQs have been asked in this House itself. We must not forget that the former General Manager of the STC and even the former Minister of Commerce were forced to step down during this process. Many arrests followed but things seemed to have fallen into oblivion because since then we have not heard anything regarding the inquiry except what we heard recently from the Magistrate about the Molnupiravir case. *Même pour les respirateurs de Pack & Blister, on vient d'entendre l'honorable Foo Kune-Bacha parler de cela, on attend toujours. Trois ans après, M. le président, ni l'argent, ni les respirateurs n'ont été récupérés.*

The Public Accounts Committee Report has brought to light many important findings. Let me quote an extract of the 2022 Report –

“The representative of the Ministry of Health and Wellness also confirmed that “*when the Minister comes from the Committee* [the said High Level Committee], *the Minister received instructions and we execute as executors of decisions, of policy decision*”.”

Another paragraph in the same report –

“The representative of the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection told Your Committee that “*the instructions I received for the award of the contract for the nasal swabs and for the other two equipment were verbal instructions that I received from my Minister*”.”

M. le président, est-ce que c'est la faute du CPB ? Est-ce que c'est la faute des fonctionnaires ? On vient d'entendre l'honorable ministre faire le procès du CPB. C'était très grave cela. C'est un carton rouge au ministre des Finances. Est-ce que les fonctionnaires sont fautifs quand le ministre lui-même vient de donner ces instructions verbales ? Et là, je dois saluer les membres du PAC, surtout les honorables membres du gouvernement, l'honorable *Chief Whip*, l'honorable François, l'honorable Dr. Rawoo en apposant leur signatures sur le rapport. Il faut le saluer.

Hon. Members: Bravo ! Bravo !

Mr Juman: M. le président, on est en train d'attribuer tous les maux au CPB et aux fonctionnaires. On vient d'entendre qu'on a donné trois heures aux conseillers du Premier ministre. Trois heures sur son *mail* personnel pour décider et négocier pour R 440 millions avec Pack & Blister, et la commande a été confirmée ?

Est-ce qu'on va attribuer cela aux fonctionnaires ? Est-ce la faute du CPB ? Est-ce qu'on a besoin d'une nouvelle entité, d'une nouvelle autorité, d'une institution ? Non, M. le président. Ce n'est pas d'une nouvelle loi dont on en a besoin. Il faut se débarrasser des magouilleurs. Il faut se débarrasser des antipatriotes. Il faut se débarrasser des gens qui, sur le nom de l'argent...

An hon. Member: Navin Ramgoolam !

Mr Juman: ...peuvent risquer la vie des gens.

An hon. Member: Tu aurais aimé, toi !

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: Tu aurais aimé !

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Juman: And today, Mr Speaker, Sir, the same Government through the same Minister, through this Bill, wants to take full control of the procurement process – full control.

Regardez leurs audaces, M. le président. Au lieu de tirer des leçons de ce qui s'est passé, ils vont maintenant aller encore plus loin. Oser et protéger – oser et protéger leurs proches.

Under this Bill in section 11 (2), it is clearly said that –

“(2) The Director shall be appointed by the Prime Minister on such terms and conditions as the Prime Minister may determine.”

Vous réalisez, un nominé politique nommé par le Premier ministre qui va gérer des milliards de roupies au détriment des fonctionnaires. Alors contrairement au *Central Procurement Act*, section 9 (1) –

“(1) There shall be a Chief Executive who shall be a public officer...”

Là, c'est un nominé politique.

Des achats d'équipements et des médicaments à la hauteur des milliards je vous ai dit – des milliards. Alors que le pouvoir est maintenant concentré entre les mains du *Chairman, Deputy Chairman, Director*, tous des nominés politiques au lieu des fonctionnaires. Est-ce parce que les fonctionnaires ont osé venir dire devant le *Public Accounts Committee* que ce sont des ministres qui leur donnent des instructions ? Est-ce pour cela ? Ou est-ce pour encore mieux nous déplumer à travers l'allocation de juteux contrats ?

Selon la section 10 concernant la constitution du *Board*, il y aura encore des nominations politiques : *Chairperson* ; 2 *Vice-chairpersons* et 3 des 4 membres, M. le président. Quand on parle de *Chairperson*, on parle d'allocations, on parle des priviléges, *allowances* encore.

Et section 10 (5) –

“Every member shall hold office for a period not exceeding 3 years and shall be eligible for reappointment.”

Contrairement au *Public Procurement Act*, là-bas, à la section 8 (2) –

“(2) Every member shall hold office for a period not exceeding 3 years and shall be eligible for reappointment for one additional term.”

Et là-bas, au *Public Procurement Office*, ils sont en train de regarder tous les *procurements* de tous les ministères, de toutes les institutions et, ici, c'est que pour le ministère de la Santé. Illimité! Voyez la différence. Pourquoi accorder un nombre de mandats illimités pour les membres, M. le président ?

The new Authority shall have the right to cancel the framework agreement, section 24, 5 (a) and (b), or even a contract. Therefore, this means that the Authority will have its political hands involved in the procurement operation of the Ministry of Health and have the unfortunate privilege to dictate their own terms and conditions.

Et là, juste avant, j'ai écouté l'honorable ministre qui vient de nous parler d'Atorvastatine et d'autres médicaments. Mais à qui la faute ? Aux fournisseurs. Ce n'est pas des fonctionnaires. Ce n'est pas le CPB. Mais comment cela va changer ?

This is different from today, as authorities such as Procurement Policy Office and Central Procurement Board, an Independent Review Panel does not interfere on the daily operations of the public bodies, whereas here they will interfere. Very dangerous, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is specified in section 6 (1) (b) of the Public Procurement Act.

The concern expressed is that this Authority will have the privilege of dictating their own terms and conditions which could potentially create a situation where contracts are awarded or modified to favour certain parties or interests. This could undermine fair and transparent procurement practices and introduce bias or favouritism and corruption into the process.

Sommes-nous à travers cette section 24, 5 (a) et (b) en train de légaliser ce qui s'est passé dans le cas de Pack & Blister ? Est-ce qu'on est en train de légaliser ce qui s'est passé dans le cas de Molnupiravir ? Livraison avant et *purchase order* après. Livraison avant et commander après. On est en train de venir dire qu'on va légaliser cela maintenant à travers cette loi qu'on est en train de passer.

Should a new Act be enacted to allow the Ministry of Health and Wellness to have a decent warehousing? Should there be a new Act for the supply and distribution of medical supplies? Is a new act necessary to ensure that stock level of medical supplies in public health institutions are maintained and are available at all times?

J'ai entendu l'honorable membre parler sur ce que le Parti travailliste a fait. Vous savez il y a un rapport de 350 pages, M. le président, commandité en 2016 par ce gouvernement MSM. Et dans ce rapport, on parle de *high level temperature, high temperature in the warehouse storing medical products. Can you imagine that the products are kept in 30-35 degrees, lack of equipment, lack of personnel, call chain not respected? All this was in the report, 350 pages. What did the Minister do? And now he wants to bring a new authority.*

In the Budget Speech 2017, paragraph 234 –

“construction of a modern Warehouse Facility for pharmaceutical drugs and medical consumables;”

Ramgoolam mem sa? Ramgoolam mem fautif ?

These issues along with many other were highlighted in the report. Many suggestions were made therein such as procurement of a new Inventory Management System – hon. Abbas Mamode was talking about it – installation of air conditioning in the warehouse to ensure good temperature. The Government does not need to come up with a new Bill to sort these issues. Is the Minister of Health aware that the National Productivity and Competitiveness Council has a department – Business Development and Consultancy, which provides private, large and SMEs services to review their warehouse and come up with new process? The Department was set during the Labour Government. They even helped implementing Kaizen Solution. NPCC has been able to implement such solution in

many warehouses and in several private companies. Why can't the Minister Balgobin – he was Chairman of the NPCC, he is now Minister of ICT – talk to his colleague, hon. Dr. Jagutpal to set up a same system there?

Should we need a new authority to come with such measures? Government should use its resources to sort out important issues. Instead of working months on a bill, they could have used the same time to fix the issues in terms of warehousing and transportation of medical supplies.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a-t-on besoin d'une nouvelle entité pour l'achat des médicaments et des équipements pour les institutions de la santé publique ? Non ! A-t-on besoin d'une nouvelle entité pour la construction ou l'allocation des entrepôts à la norme ? Non ! A-t-on besoin d'une nouvelle entité pour assurer une distribution saine et contrôlée des médicaments et les équipements achetés de nos institutions ? Non ! A-t-on besoin d'une nouvelle législation pour assurer que le stock soit maintenu et que les médicaments soient disponibles à tout moment ? Non, M. le président !

Il suffit d'amender le *Public Procurement Act*, ça suffit. Mais là, c'est une loi pour protéger les petits copains, pour *bypass* les fonctionnaires et travailler directement comme bon vous semble.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Nuckcheddy !

(7.20 p.m.)

Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Again, it is with the same usual tremendous pleasure that I am this time bringing my contribution in the Central Medical Procurement Authority Bill in this august Assembly and thank you for giving me this opportunity.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since some time the world is witnessing global crisis and the COVID-19 is something that the world is not going to forget so soon. However, we should take lessons from crisis and take steps that will help us to not face same issues in the next crisis if ever it occurs again.

There is a famous quote by Mr Ken Poirot which says, I quote –

“We cannot change the past. We can only take action in the present and, therefore, change the future.”

This Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, is exactly about taking an action in the present to change the future. As a caring Government, we are taking actions to improve our systems.

Nothing happens when nothing is done and we are doing everything to bring relief to our fellow citizens and I will come on that later on.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I listened to three hon. Members from the other side of the House, one senior Member who is a Doctor and two first mandate Members like me and already, we can see that they have not grasp the importance and the rationality behind.

Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha explained some issues on the procurement and it was during the pandemic. She mentioned that herself but before saying things that are not relevant, she could have consulted her colleague hon. Assirvaden, who I see, is not on the list of orators. It would have been interesting to listen from him how international procurement even in normal time does create some issues. She could have contacted her colleague hon. Bhagwan who has taken a day off today. He would have explained her the story of *lanpoul brile*. Some people tends to forget how the country was being governed by the Labour Party and it was a normal time, there was no COVID-19 but still we could not find *l'ampoule convenable, appropriée*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, because I see that our hon. Members have not understand the rationale behind as I said, I will concentrate my intervention on this Bill but before that, let me tell hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha, I heard her saying that il y avait des médicaments périmés qui ont été retrouvés aux poubelles mais vaut mieux qu'on les retrouve aux poubelles, M. le président, au lieu de l'utiliser comme ça a été le cas en 2014 lorsqu'on avait utilisé, je crois que c'était Avastin pour les yeux à des patients qui souffraient. Je ne suis pas médecin, je ne connais pas pour quelle maladie qu'on l'utilise mais ce que je veux faire ressortir c'est qu'à l'époque il n'y avait pas de Covid, on était dans un temps normal mais on avait donné des médicaments périmés à nos patients et ces patients-là, M. le président, c'est ça l'engagement de ce gouvernement de les protéger.

So, while moving the Bill, the hon. Minister explained on the actual situation where we intend to go and the reasons of the intention. When you go through the provisions of the Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, you will see that it is without any doubt, another historic step in the construction of not only an inclusive society but a law which will foster the transparency and allow on time delivery of public service.

The main objective of this Bill is the setting up of an Authority which will be responsible for medical supplies on behalf of the Ministry of Health and Wellness. We were also explained by the hon. Minister that countries like France, Sweden... *Juste avant moi, l'honorable Juman posait la question si on avait besoin des autorités pareilles, semblables, moi lui expliquer que le ministre a dû expliquer lui-même* that such authorities already exist in countries like France, Sweden, South Africa, India, U.S., Canada and the

list is long. The Ministry of Health and Wellness procures medical items worth billions of rupees every year and this amount increases yearly.

While moving the Bill, the hon. Minister mentioned the figure of 2 billion, I think. However, as the name suggests and also the function of the Authority as described in the Bill, this Authority will be responsible only for procurement relating to medical supplies. This is very much clear in the different provisions of the Bill as it makes it clear that in this Bill, we are talking of medical supplies especially when it comes to section 3, that is, the applicability of the Public Procurement Act which states at section 3 (1) that the Authority shall, with respect to the procurement of medical supplies, be exempt from the application of the Public Procurement Act.

Mr Speaker, Sir, very often in this House, we hear the hon. Members from the other side of the House citing examples of other countries. During the debates on budget, on several occasions we heard Seychelles, Maldives. So as to better understand the Bill, let me explain what happened in UK. Let me state, Mr Speaker, Sir, what was reported by The Guardian in its edition of Wednesday 04 January 2023. They say that –

“A shortage of cough and cold medicines in the UK is a result of ministers’ “lack of planning”, according to pharmacy leaders.”

The UK Government was accused of being in denial as supply chain problems worsen, with pharmacists reporting shortages of once-common cold and flu medicines. It was further reported that the shortage was not just about branded medicines but it also concerned simple things. With the increased cold and flu cases during the last UK winter and the shortage of medicine, officials urged people to keep children with fever off school. This was the situation in UK, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is not only the case in UK, Mr Speaker, Sir, but even in India, the situation is the same. India supplies UK one third of its generic medicine as per the Pharmaceutical Journal of November 2022. Even US is having such issues, disruption in China has brought a sudden supply drop across Asia as well.

This is a global issue, Mr Speaker, Sir, and during COVID-19, we have seen that during the global crisis, globalisation has failed. We saw how those big nations who chant the world is a global village considered the village as a globe and there was no world outside their own village. The situation during the pre-Covid era was that leaders were more concerned about the GDP, the economic growth. Their mantra was where to sell and what to sell, but when the pandemic hit us, the mantra changed to how to manage the supply chain.

The Harvard Business Review recommends that based on the latest data and forecast, leaders should plan for and shape a world where both globalisation and anti-globalisation pressures remain enduring features of the business environment. The crisis and the necessary public health response cause the largest and fastest decline in international flows of our modern history; we all saw that.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, we, being a small insular island, we have to take measures today for our tomorrow. We are a small country but we emerge as a big nation when it comes to taking decisions. We are vulnerable, Mr Speaker, Sir, but we are not powerless as stated by the Maldives Foreign Minister, Mr Abdulla Shahid, and our ambition should not be in proportion to our size. We should be able to have big dreams; we should dare to prepare a bright future for our children. We should do all to stand tall.

We are today talking of providing medical items to our population. Mr Speaker, Sir, we are duty bound to help our citizens. We have the moral obligations to stand on a moral platform to not only look tall but act tall. I say so, Mr Speaker, Sir, because our small island, we are the first to bear the consequences: be it climate change, be it COVID-19 pandemic and any other global issues. We do not want to act like other countries where they had to wait for crisis caused by the shortage of medicines for the Health Minister to meet the pharmacy community and then engage with suppliers to ensure medicines remain available over the counter.

So, this Bill provides for the establishment of an authority which will have among its other functions to ensure that the stock level of medicines supplies in public health institutions are maintained and are available at all times and I would like to lay stress on this aspect of the Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, that is the function of the authority which will ensure the stock level. In this world where the IT and new technology keeps impressing us day after day, we just cannot imagine operation without the help of information system.

Part IV of the Bill which is about inventory and distribution management and I will also like to express my appreciation of the Section 41 which provides for the Electronic Inventory Management System. By the way, one of the objectives of the Bill is to bring reforms in the medical and E-Health System of the Ministry of Health and Wellness.

Section 41 (1) of the Bill, that I have just mentioned states that –

“There shall be an electronic inventory management system for the management of the procurement and supply chain to be used by the Authority with regard to medical supplies.”

In July 2020, the United States Pharmacopeia published a report entitled “Increasing transparency in the medicines supply chain” which wrote that real time data from pharmacies and hospital system would provide a better understanding of the demand of medical products.

The same report also recommended, Mr Speaker, Sir, that improved access to critical data could also unlock opportunities with artificial intelligence machine learning to transform supply chain efficiency. The Section 8 describes the functions of the Authority where 18 such functions are listed.

These functions, Mr Speaker, Sir, are very complex and time consuming procedures like when you talk of –

- Ensuring efficiency and integrity;
- Devising innovative procurement method;
- Identification of need and requirements;
- Preparation of bidding documents and the evaluation;
- Real time inventory;
- Conduct market research;
- Rating of suppliers, etc.

And I also understand that provisions for reverse logistics have been made in this Bill not under the Section 8 but elsewhere I think in Part IV. So, when you look at these functions, Mr Speaker, Sir, you then realise that this is where the electronic side will be crucial in bringing the efficiency.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when we are talking of efficiency, when we are talking of improving the system, the delivery, warehousing, distribution, inventories, we are all dealing with the whole process of procurement and supply chain. Procurement is the process of acquiring supplies and where supply chain is about delivering the supplies to the users, we need proper data management and e-system.

By the way, Mr Speaker, Sir, earlier I mentioned the US Pharmacopeia, that is, the USP, which is a reputed regulatory body in US. Do you know what it says in one of the Reports?

They say that only MSM can help to improve pharma supply chain resilience. Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, MSM – Medicines Supply Map and when you read the Bill, you will see that this is what the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness is proposing; an MSM to relieve Mauritians as MSM is the only appropriate saviour of the population and this is what is reported in the USP.

Let me come back to the Electronic Inventory Management System. Section 42 provides that the Authority will issue guidelines and directives which will ensure the stock level. The Inventory Management System, Mr Speaker, Sir, will provide real time inventory levels, orders, sales and deliveries. They can also be used to create work orders, receipts, bill of materials and other documents critical to the smooth and efficient running of this essential service.

Modern Day Inventory Management System can be used to track goods and resources throughout the life cycle as they are duo-tagged and tracked remotely. This will allow the Ministry through the authority to get in view of the moving parts of the supply chain process, identify bottle necks and fix issues before they begin to accumulate. Incorporating the latest technology such as AI big data and the internet of things can allow inventory management system to automatically reorder goods, ensuring that stocks are kept at optimum levels thus achieving the objective of an efficient procurement.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me conclude by saying that procurement is an important part of health care as it helps to ensure that the right medical supplies and equipment are available when they are needed most. It also helps to ensure that the health of a nation is maintained by ensuring that the right medications are being purchased and used. We, on this side of the House, have shown in the past that we are committed to the wellbeing of our population. We have always advised our people to follow the right path; we have always been by the side of our people. We have always acted for their wellbeing.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have never and we will never ever be by the side of anti-patriots who walk on the streets of Port Louis for political gains.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I move for the adjournment of the debate.

Mr Toussaint seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I move for the adjournment of the House to Tuesday 27 June 2023 at 11.30 a.m.

Mr Toussaint seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

Adjournment matters! I will ask the hon. Deputy Speaker to take the Chair.

At this stage, the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much, please be seated!

Hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha!

MATTERS RAISED

(7.37 p.m.)

BALFOUR GARDEN – PARKING ZONES

Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière):

Merci. Je m'adresse au Vice-Premier ministre, ministre des Collectivités locales, l'honorable Dr. Husnoo, concernant un problème de circulation au niveau de la Rue Balfour à Beau Bassin. Depuis la construction du trottoir qui longe le jardin Balfour, le trottoir en question a réduit la largeur de cette rue et de ce fait quand les automobilistes se garent tout au long de la rue, surtout les weekends pour aller au jardin Balfour, cela crée beaucoup de désagréments aux habitants qui peinent à rentrer leur véhicule dans leur propre cour. Je demande humblement que des zones de stationnement spécifique soient créées sur cette rue et apporter les solutions nécessaires aux habitants. Merci.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Hon. Vice-Prime Minister!

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I will have a word with the Mayor of Beau Basin-Rose Hill to look into the problem.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Dr. Farhad Aumeer!

(7.38 p.m.)

MFA FOOTBALL PLAYGROUND, TRIANON – BLEACHERS

Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central):

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Ma question est adressée au ministre des Sports, l'honorable Toussaint. Hier, j'ai été assisté à un match de foot au terrain de foot de MFA à Trianon. J'étais là-bas parce que c'était une équipe de ma circonscription qui jouait et là, j'ai remarqué qu'il n'y a aucune

barrière de sécurité sur les gradins, surtout à la dernière marche qui est environ 13 à 15 mètres de haut. Je lui demanderais s'il pourrait voir avec les autorités concernés si les barrières de sécurité puissent être érigées car pendant ces matches, il y a toujours certains qui ont pris un verre de trop et pourraient se trouver en danger. Merci.

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

The Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation (Mr S. Toussaint): M. le président, le *compound* de la MFA est géré par la fédération. Je vais passer l'information à la fédération et c'est à eux de prendre les mesures nécessaires.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy, please!

(7.39 p.m.)

CONSTITUENCY NO. 4 – FOOTBALL PITCH – LIGHTING PROBLEM

Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My address goes to the Vice-Prime Minister, hon. Dr. Anwar Husnoo, *également* Minister of Local Government. I would appeal to the hon. Minister to look into the matter with regard to all the football pitches in the Constituency no. 4, mainly Père Laval Football Pitch and La Cure Football Pitch as well, where there is no adequate lighting; as well if we can extend the timing for the football pitch of Congomah whereby the youngsters go to play football and taking into consideration that we are into winter time, so if instead of 9 p.m., the lights be on till 10 p.m.

Thank you.

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

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will have a word with the Municipal City Council of Port Louis to see the lighting problem.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Uteem!

(7.40 p.m.)

CARDIAC CENTRES – STENTS SHORTAGE

Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The issue I would like to raise concerns the hon. Dr. Minister of Health and Wellness. It is a matter on which we have spoken to him previously and it relates to the

acute shortage of special stents at the hospitals, especially the one in Cardiac Centre, and as a result, there are long waiting lists of patients waiting to have *angioplastie*. And if this shortage is not addressed urgently, there is a risk of fatal casualty. So, I request the hon. Minister to urgently look into the matter so that we can procure the special stents.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Minister please!

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal): Thank you hon. Member. You have, in fact, last week notified me about this issue and I raised it with the Cardiac Trust and I am told that there is no issue of the stents but there are two dimensions of the stent that is not available there. So, they made arrangement with the Cardiac Centre of Victoria Hospital to get these specific stents, because of the size and the dimensions, and they have received these stents for these two patients. Otherwise, stents for all other patients in terms of dimensions and size are there and for the waiting list for the stents also, there is no issue about that. Probably there is one specific case, you can convey it to me and I will look into that.

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

(7.42 p.m.)

ROYAL ROAD, LES MARIANNES – ROAD LIGHTING

Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête s'adresse au ministre des Infrastructures publiques concernant Route Royale, Les Mariannes, le tronçon qui commence à partir du Pont La Reine jusqu'à la jonction qui mène vers Belvédère. Il y a un manque de lumière, il n'y a pas de lumière et je demanderais au ministre de bien vouloir voir auprès de la RDA pour faire le nécessaire pour plus de lumière pour la sécurité de ceux qui utilisent cette route. Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Minister please!

The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Mr M. Hurreeram): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I do take note of the request of the hon. Member. I will convey it to the RDA. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Joanna Bérenger!

(7.42 p.m.)

LA CROISEE TAMARIN, VACOAS – PEDESTRIAN CROSSING

Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal): Je vous remercie. Ma requête s'adresse au ministre du Transport terrestre. J'espère que la requête pourra lui être transmise et concerne le passage pour piéton qui se situe auparavant à la croisée qu'on appelle La Croisée Tamarin à Vacoas et qui a disparu depuis que la route a été ré-asphalté il y quatre semaines. Donc, les piétons ont beaucoup de difficulté à pouvoir traverser le chemin et je lui demanderais de bien vouloir faire le nécessaire pour que ce passage pour piéton soit remis au plus vite.

Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Minister please!

The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Mr M. Hurreeram): Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but it is for the Engineer of the TMRSU to decide whether there is need of a pavement or not. So, I will convey to them and it is for them to decide and advise accordingly.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Mayotte!

(7.43 p.m.)

RAMA LANE, CHOISY, BAIE DU CAP – BUS STOP SHELTER

Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête s'adresse également au ministre des Transport par intérim et cela concerne les habitants de Choisy, Bain du Cap qui font une demande pressante pour la construction d'un abri de bus juste à côté de Rama Lane, à Choisy, Baie du Cap pour les usagers qui vont en direction de Curepipe, plus particulièrement les étudiants et les élèves qui souvent souffrent de ce manquement, en abris de bus en période de mauvais temps dans cette région de l'île. Merci.

The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Mr M. Hurreeram): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We thank the hon. Member for her concern and we will surely convey to the TMRSU and try to remedy as soon as possible. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Aadil Ameer Meea!

(7.44 p.m.)

FOREIGN CURRENCIES – SCARCITY – RETAIL BANKS

Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The issue I am raising tonight is addressed to

the Minister of Finance and though he is not here, I think his colleague will take on the matter. It is in relation to the acute problem of scarcity of foreign currencies.

Again, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my attention has been drawn to the fact that due to actual market conditions, banks are asking their customers to postpone their purchase of foreign currency and I am not talking about huge sum, I am talking about small quantity of dollars being purchased to retail banks. In fact, the banks are informing their customers that requests are being assessed on daily basis. So, you can imagine the situation outside, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. So, I will request the Minister of Finance to do the needful vis-à-vis the Bank of Mauritius and to retail banks so as to ease the situation.

The Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives (Mr S. Bholah): I have taken good note and I will pass on the message to the relevant authorities.

The Deputy Speaker: I think the hon. Boolell is last; he is always last from the Opposition to stay.

(7.45 p.m.)

HIGH RISE BUILDINGS & UNDERGROUND CAR PARK – SAFETY & SECURITY

Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes): Thank you very much. Very nice of you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir!

The Deputy Speaker: The young ones are gone. That's why I waited for you.

Dr. Boolell: Last of the Mohicans! I want to raise a matter in relation to high rise buildings and safety and security in underground car park. I am sure the matter is addressed to the Minister of Public Transport; if this matter could be looked into and it deserves this seriousness of purpose and I hope it will be addressed as fast as possible.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Minister!

The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Mr M. Hurreeram): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. So, we take note of the concern of the hon. Dr. Boolell. We will look into it.

The Deputy Speaker: On these last words, I wish you a safe trip back home.

At 7.46 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 27 June 2023 at 11.30 a.m.

PONT BLANC – ROAD ACCIDENT – ENQUIRY

(No. B/744) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the fatal road accident which occurred along Royal Road in Pont Blanc on 30 April 2023, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if an inquiry has been initiated thereinto and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

Reply: As regards the fatal road accident which occurred at Pont Blanc, the Commissioner of Police has informed that on Sunday 30 April 2023 at 19:45 hours, officers of Flacq Police Station attended to a case of fatal road accident along Royal Road, Pont Blanc, Flacq, involving the following two vehicles –

- (i) a contract van, driven by one Mrs R.R., aged 30, and
- (ii) a private van (2 x 4), driven by one Mr R.C., aged 60 and having on board ten passengers.

The Commissioner of Police has further informed that upon being brought to the Accident and Emergency Department of the hospital, the death of Mr R. C., the driver of the private van (2 x 4) was declared by a Medical and Health Officer.

Mrs R.R., driver of contract van, who was alone at the time of the accident, was admitted to the hospital. Alcotest performed upon her was found to be negative. She had sustained fracture in her left foot and was subsequently discharged from the hospital after appropriate treatment.

The Commissioner of Police has additionally informed that on Monday 01 May 2023, an autopsy was carried out upon deceased Mr R.C. at the Dr. Jeetoo Mortuary House. The cause of death was attributed to 'shock due to injury to the chest'. Sample of blood was collected and sent to the Forensic Science Laboratory for examination regarding presence of alcohol, toxicology analysis and DNA. Thereafter, the body of deceased Mr R.C. was handed over to the relatives for burial.

The Commissioner of Police has further informed that on Tuesday 09 May 2023, a provisional charge for "Involuntary Homicide" was lodged before the District Court of Flacq, against Mrs R.R., driver of the contract van. She was released on bail after furnishing a surety of Rs5,000 + Rs1,150 costs and signed a recognisance of Rs25,000.

According to the Commissioner of Police, the preliminary enquiry indicates that the private van (2 x 4), which was motoring from the direction of Flacq and proceeding towards Brisée Verdière, knocked head on against the contract van which was coming from the opposite direction.

The Commissioner of Police has informed that enquiry into the case is proceeding.

**MRS S. K. & MR Y.S. – ALLEGED FICTITIOUS EMPLOYMENT –
CONSTITUENCY CLERK – INQUIRY**

(No. B/745) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the inquiry initiated into the statement made by Mrs S. K. against Mr Y.S., for the alleged fictitious employment of the former as Constituency Clerk of the latter, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand, indicating when Mr Y.S. was last interviewed by the Police.

(Withdrawn)

**CORNER LOUIS PASTEUR & ROYAL ST., PORT LOUIS – ALLEGED
SST ASSAULT CASE**

(No. B/746) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the alleged case of assault which occurred on or about Saturday 03 June 2023 at Corner Royal Road and Louis Pasteur Street in Port Louis and involving officers of the Police Headquarters Special Striking Team, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if an inquiry has been initiated thereinto and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

Reply: PQ B/746 and PQ B/751 relate to the same subject matter.

On Saturday 03 June 2023, at around 04:25 hours, during the course of a hot pursuit in an attempt to intercept a suspicious motorcyclist, a car of the Police Headquarters Special Striking Team (SST) with five officers on board, met with a road accident at Corner Louis Pasteur and Royal Streets, Port Louis involving a contract bus driven by Mr M.Y.A., aged 45 and residing at Lenepveu Street, Plaine Verte.

The personnel of Fanfaron Police Station, the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service and the SAMU attended to the road accident.

All the five officers, as well as driver of the contract bus, Mr M.Y.A., were injured and conveyed to Dr. A.G. Jeetoo Hospital for treatment.

Three Police officers, who were seriously injured, were admitted to hospital, while the other two officers, as well as the driver of the contract bus, left after treatment.

Breath tests were performed on both drivers and the results were negative. The Police car and the contract bus were heavily damaged. A hardware shop, situated at corner Louis Pasteur and Royal Streets sustained some damages as well.

Following the road accident, three cases of complaint against Police have been reported at Fanfaron Police Station on the same day of the accident wherein each declarant has alleged to have been assaulted by SST officers, on the spot of the road accident.

Pursuant to Section 10(2)(c) of the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) Act, the three cases of complaint against Police have been referred to the IPCC for investigation.

Enquiry into the complaints is proceeding.

MV WAKASHIO – COURT OF INVESTIGATION REPORT – ACTION PLAN

(No. B/747) Ms J. Berénger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Report of the Court of Investigation set up to look into the grounding of the MV Wakashio, he will –

- (a) state –
 - (i) the findings of the Inter-Ministerial Committee set up to examine the recommendations contained therein, and
 - (ii) where matters stand as to the implementation of the recommendations contained therein, and
- (b) table copy thereof and, if not, why not.

Reply: I chaired an Inter-Ministerial Committee which focused on the following recommendations made in the Report –

- (i) re-enforcement of manpower and training for tracking and monitoring of vessel by navigational means;
- (ii) the use of modern equipment for tracking and monitoring of vessel;
- (iii) provision of a dedicated Vessel Tracking Monitoring Information System;
- (iv) availability of tugs in case of emergency;
- (v) establishment of a solid regional response and preparedness related to pollution prevention of marine pollution;
- (vi) appropriate regulatory framework for coordination of unified activities;
- (vii) possibility of setting up of a Regional Oil Spill Contingency Plan;
- (viii) review of the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan, and
- (ix) legal framework for coordinating oil spill.

In this respect, the Inter-Ministerial Committee also took note of the progress made by the Technical Committee and, among others, decided that the Technical Committee pursues the actions undertaken so far and also takes on board the findings and recommendations contained in the Report of the Court of Investigation and come up with proposals for implementation in the short, medium and long term, respectively. The Technical Committee is currently pursuing its assignment with regard to actions and measures to be taken and it will be submitting its report to the Inter-Ministerial Committee in due course.

With regard to part (b) of the question, Government has decided not to make the Report public. In the Report, it has been recommended that some of matters be referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions for any action deemed necessary. Action has already been taken accordingly. In addition, Government has made claims for reimbursement of expenditures incurred and is in the process of preparing claims for compensation. Therefore, it would not be appropriate to table a copy of the Report at this stage as it may cause prejudice to the initiatives taken so far.

SPECIAL STRIKING TEAM – COMPLAINTS

(No. B/748) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Police Headquarters Special Striking Team, he will, for the benefit of the

House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of complaints, if any, received against the Unit since the coming of operation thereof to date and, if so, indicate in each case the nature thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since the setting up of the Special Striking Team on 03 August 2022 to date, three complaints have been reported against them. Two cases were related to alleged assault and one was a premeasure.

**AIRPORTS OF MAURITIUS LTD. & AIRPORT TERMINAL
OPERATIONS LTD**

(No. B/749) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, following the merger of Airports of Mauritius Ltd., and Airport Terminal Operations Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if a Chief Executive Officer of the new entity has been appointed and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) name thereof, and
- (b) terms and conditions of contract of employment thereof.

(Withdrawn)

**CARGO HANDLING CORPORATION LTD. – REACH STACKERS –
BIDDING EXERCISE**

(No. B/750) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the bidding exercise launched in September 2021 for the supply, testing and commissioning of reach stackers at the Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the name of the selected bidder, indicating the

—

- (a) contract value, and
- (b) expected date for the commissioning.

(Withdrawn)

**LOUIS PASTEUR ST., PORT LOUIS – ALLEGED POLICE BRUTALITY –
03 JUNE 2023**

(No. B/751) Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the alleged case of Police brutality on the members of a family, on 03 June 2023, at Louis Pasteur Street in Port Louis, involving Police Officers of the Police Headquarters Special Striking Team, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if an inquiry has been initiated thereinto and, if so, the outcome thereof.

(Vide reply to PQ B/746)

**SIR GAËTAN TUG WRECK – INVOLUNTARY HOMICIDE BY
NEGLIGENCE – ENQUIRY**

(No. B/752) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the alleged case of Involuntary Homicide by Negligence against the Deputy Port Master following the casualty at sea of the Sir Gaëtan tug, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand as to the enquiry initiated thereinto.

(Withdrawn)

**CHAMP DE MARS – MAIDEN CUP DAY 2022 – RACING TRACK –
SABOTAGE**

(No. B/753) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the inquiry initiated into the alleged sabotage of the racing track of the Champ de Mars on the eve of the Maiden Cup Day last year, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

TAXI OPERATORS WELFARE FUND – BOARD COMPOSITION

(No. B/775) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs,

Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the Taxi Operators Welfare Fund, he will state –

- (a) the date of its coming into operation, and
- (b) the composition of the board thereof indicating the name of the Chairperson, further indicating the salary and other benefits drawn.

(Withdrawn)

MAHEBOURG & SOUILLAC LAGOONS – DREDGING WORKS

(No. B/776) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the dredging works to be conducted in the lagoons of Mahebourg and Souillac, as proposed in the Budget Speech 2022-23, he will state if works have already started and, if so, indicate in each case the –

- (a) name of the contractor;
- (b) starting and expected completion dates, and
- (c) total budget allocated therefor.

Reply: I am informed that a contract to carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment for dredging work at three boat passages at Mahebourg, namely Remy Ollier, Mare Chicose fish landing boat passage and the Fisheries Post of Mahebourg boat passage, was awarded to Mega Design Ltd on 04 May 2018.

An EIA study was initiated in January 2019 to assess the significance of the impact of this project on the environment. The project had required extensive surveys as there are many ecological issues.

Prior to the finalisation of the EIA report, my Ministry had to meet certain conditions such as –

- a. identification of site;
- b. site preparation for dredging, actual dredging;
- c. stockpiling of dredged materials within a secured area;
- d. proper disposal of dredged materials and provision of proper navigational aids.

Because of COVID-19, the finalised EIA report was delayed and submitted to my Ministry only in September 2022. After receipt of the EIA licence from the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change, the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development was requested to prepare the scope of works, bill of quantities, drawings and other related documents for the floating of bids.

Additional information was requested by the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development: a survey to assess the marine ecosystem because, as per the EIA report, all corals in the channel should be relocated and mangroves transplanted to provide access for disposal of dredging materials. The report was submitted to the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development on 04 May 2023.

The House may note that for Financial Year 2022/2023, an amount of Rs5 m. was budgeted and amount paid to Consultant for EIA was Rs458,850. For Financial Year 2023/2024, my Ministry has received estimates to the tune of Rs4 m. Additional funds would be requested from the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development if needed.

I am informed that the bid documents are being finalised by the MNICD and are expected to be completed by end of June 2023 and submitted to my Ministry for floating of bids by July 2023. The expected time frame for completion of the project would be around 8 months after the award of the contract for the implementation of these works.

All going well, the project should start in October 2023 and should end in May/June 2024.

With respect to dredging of Boat Passage at Souillac, the House may wish to note that we were informed by the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change that an Environmental Impact Assessment is not required as this project concerns desilting of a river.

However, the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change has requested for additional information to convey their clearance.

In that context, a bathymetric survey is being carried out by the Mauritius Oceanography Institute and a finalised report will be submitted to my Ministry by end of June 2023. Same shall thereafter be transmitted to the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change for clearance.

The House may note that for Financial Year 2023/24, this project is included in “Projects under Preparation” and it is centrally managed for disbursement of funds.

All going well, both projects are intended to be completed within the Financial Year 2023/2024.

NATIVE TERRESTRIAL BIODIVERSITY AND NATIONAL PARKS ADVISORY COUNCIL – MEETINGS

(No. B/777) Ms J. Berénger (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the Native Terrestrial Biodiversity and National Parks Advisory Council, he will state –

- (a) the composition thereof, indicating the –
 - (i) number of meetings held since January 2023 to date, and
 - (ii) respective dates thereof, and
- (b) the recommendations, if any, made by the Council to the Minister.

(Withdrawn)

COMMUNITY CENTER, SADALLY VACOAS – REOPENING

(No. B/778) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Community Center at Sadally in Vacoas, she will state if consideration will be given for the reopening thereof and, if so, give details thereof and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

NATIONAL SOCIAL INCLUSION FOUNDATION – CSR – FUNDS

(No. B/779) 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 Corporate Social Responsibility, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Social Inclusion Foundation, information as to the quantum of funds received and disbursed, respectively as at 30 June 2022, giving a breakdown of disbursements made.

Reply: As at 30 June 2022, the National Social Inclusion Foundation had received contributions amounting to a total of Rs4,078,714,109, out of which an amount of Rs2,237,147,504 has already been disbursed to NGOs and the remaining amount is committed for ongoing Programmes.

The breakdown of disbursements for the respective financial years was as follows

Since December 2016 to 30 June 2018	Rs133,582,544
Financial Year 2018/2019	Rs317,159,900
Financial Year 2019/2020	Rs438,886,188
Financial Year 2020/2021	Rs670,797,325
Financial Year 2021/2022	Rs676,883,637

FOREIGN CAPITAL FLOWS – MAURITIUS-INDIA – ASSETS UNDER CUSTODY

(No. B/780) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance whether, in regard to foreign capital flows from Mauritius to the Indian markets, he will –

- (a) provide figures and statistics thereof for the fiscal year 2022-2023, and
- (b) state the amount of Assets under Custody (AUC) from Mauritius as at to date.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Financial Services Commission (FSC) that the Foreign Portfolio Investment flows between Mauritius and India through Global Business Companies year 2022 was USD 30.050 billion for acquisition and USD 40.296 billion for disposal.

With respect to part (b) of the question, which relates to Assets under Custody (AUC), I am informed by the FSC that, according to the National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL) of India, AUC from Mauritius as at end of March 2023 was INR 3.25 trillion.

PAILLES-GUIBIES SEWERAGE PROJECT PHASE 2 - HEALTH & SAFETY SURVEILLANCE – COMPLAINTS

(No. B/781) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Pailles-Guibies Sewerage Project – Phase 2, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Wastewater Management Authority, information as to –

- (a) if the contractor has appointed a Health and Safety Officer for the project, and
- (b) the number of complaints received as at to date pertaining to –
 - (i) road accidents;
 - (ii) human injuries, and
 - (iii) damaged properties, indicating the quantum of compensation disbursed by the contractor as a result thereof, if any.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the WMA that since the beginning of the contract, Sinohydro Corporation Limited has assigned a Health and Safety Officer whose duties include weekly inspections of the health and safety procedures put in place by the contractor.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the WMA that the number of complaints received as at date during project implementation is 114. Complaints concerned mainly dust, reinstatement of roads, damage to property and damage to CWA pipe. As for road accidents, I am informed that for the period of August 2019 until now, eight such cases were reported. The WMA has informed that no case of human injuries has been reported neither to their office nor to the contractor as at date. According to information obtained from the WMA, 15 cases of damaged property have been reported as at date.

I am further informed that in two cases, the occupants have received a compensation of Rs35,000 and Rs30,000, respectively from the contractor due to damaged boundary wall during sewer works.

PUBLIC HEALTHCARE SERVICES - IN-PATIENTS & OUT-PATIENTS - COMPLAINT PROTOCOLS

(No. B/782) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to public healthcare services, he will state the established complaint protocols available to in-patients and out-patients.

(Withdrawn)

OVERSEAS TREATMENT - MEDICAL SPECIALTIES

(No. B/783) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to overseas treatment funded by his Ministry, he will state the –

- (a) medical specialties concerned therewith, and
- (b) number of patients who benefitted therefrom since December 2019 to date, indicating the number thereof who passed away –
 - (i) overseas during treatment, and
 - (ii) within six months of their return to Mauritius.

(Withdrawn)

NEW SOCIAL LIVING DEVELOPMENT LTD – STAFF & REMUNERATION

(No. B/784) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the New Social Living Development

Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the company, information as to the number of staff thereof, indicating their respective –

- (a) designations, and
- (b) pay packages.

(Withdrawn)

CEB GREEN ENERGY CO. LTD. - OFFICER-IN-CHARGE

(No. B/786) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the CEB Green Energy Co. Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the name of the current Officer-in-Charge thereof.

(Withdrawn)

MULTIPURPOSE COMPLEX PROJECT – CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/787) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the project for the construction of a multipurpose complex adjacent to the building formerly housing the Anti-Drug Smuggling Unit Office and the Lower Plaine Verte Taxi Stand, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal City Council of Port Louis that the project for construction of a Multipurpose Complex adjacent to the building formerly housing the Anti-Drug Smuggling Office and the Lower Plaine Verte Taxi Stand would be implemented under the Indian Grant Assistance and is estimated at Rs19 m.

The Bidding documents are being prepared and would be launched soon through open national advertised bidding on e-Procurement.

Upon successful award of the contract, the contractor will be allocated 240 days to complete the project after mobilisation on site.

GENERAL MANAGER, NSLD LTD – SALARY BENEFITS – TERMS & CONDITIONS

(No. B/789) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the General Manager of the New Social Living Development Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the company,

information as to the name, qualifications, salary packages and other terms and conditions of appointment thereof.

(Reply not available)

QUARANTINE (COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS) REGULATIONS 2022 (GN 155 OF 2022) - AIR MAURITIUS CABIN CREW STAFF

(No. B/790) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Quarantine (COVID-19 Restrictions) Regulations 2022 (GN 155 of 2022), he will state if consideration will be given for the reviewing thereof to allow the staff of the Air Mauritius Cabin Crew who have not been vaccinated to resume duty.

(Withdrawn)

NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES - MORTALITY RATE - STRATEGIES

(No. B/791) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to Non-Communicable Diseases, he will state the –

- (a) mortality rate attributed thereto per 100,000 population in 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022, respectively;
- (b) awareness and sensitization campaigns undertaken therefor, if any, since 2019 to date, and
- (c) strategies and policies, if any, being envisaged to address the lifestyle risk factors associated therewith.

(Withdrawn)

BCG VACCINE – NEONATES

(No. B/792) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to vaccination of neonates in public health institutions, he will state if the BCG vaccine is out of stock over the last couple of weeks and, if so, indicate when the doses thereof will be available therefor.

(Withdrawn)

AVENUE DES LIMITES – BAMBOUS – FAMILIES – ELECTRICITY & WATER FACILITIES

(No. B/793) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the families at Avenue des Limites in Bambous, he will state where matters stand as to the provision of electricity and water facilities thereto.

Reply: I am informed that the families at Avenue des Limites, Bambous have been issued with a Letter of Intent from the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning.

I am further informed that at the time of relocation, no request for water nor electricity supply was made. However, as at date the Central Water Authority has received 14 applications for new water connections and the Central Electricity Board has received one application for electricity supply.

Infrastructural works are required to be carried out to extend the water and electricity networks in order to attend to the requests.

My Ministry proposes to look into the matter in the context of the project for the rehabilitation of upgrading at La Ferme.

ALPHAMIX LTD., V/S THE DISTRICT COUNCIL OF RIVIÈRE DU REMPART – PAYMENT OF CLAIMS

(No. B/794) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether he will state if he has taken cognizance of the judgment given by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council on 05 June 2023 in the case of Alphamix Ltd., v/s the District Council of Rivière du Rempart and, if so, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the means by which the Council proposes to finance the payment of the claims of Alphamix Ltd.

(Vide Reply to PQ B/755)

PROJECT OF REPLACEMENT OF PIPES - CAMP FOUQUEREAUX – HIGHLANDS - PHOENIX

(No. B/795) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the project for the replacement of water pipes in the regions of Camp Fouquereaux, Highlands and Phoenix,

he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

RÉSIDENCE LA CURE YOUTH CENTRE – UPGRADING WORKS

(No. B/796) 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 proposed upgrading of Résidence La Cure Youth Centre, he will state where matters stand, indicating the –

- (a) cost thereof, and
- (b) amenities to be added thereto.

Reply: I am informed that the upgrading works of Résidence La Cure Youth Centre started on 15 November 2022 and were completed on 17 May 2023.

With regard to part (a) of the question, the contract cost of the project is for an amount of Rs3,767,550, inclusive of a provisional sum of Rs300,000 and a contingency sum of Rs400,000, exclusive of VAT.

As regards part (b) of the question, the new amenities which were added to the existing Youth Centre and which were included in the Contract Value comprise the construction of a watchman post, a toilet block and a mini soccer synthetic pitch.

A procurement exercise has already been initiated for the purchase of equipment and furniture.

The facility would be opened and would become operational once the equipment and furniture are delivered and installed.

PESTICIDES REGULATORY OFFICE

(No. B/797) Ms J Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to pesticides, he will state the –

- (a) types thereof imported since 2018 to date indicating –
 - (i) the corresponding quantities thereof, and
 - (ii) number of samples with residues thereof detected within samples collected, and
- (b) number of officers currently working at the Pesticides Regulatory Office.

(Withdrawn)

LA VALETTE - CONSTRUCTION OF COMMUNITY CENTER AND SYNTHETIC FOOTBALL GROUND

(No. B/798) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the construction of a community center and a synthetic football ground at the Integrated Village of La Valette in Bambous, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

HRDC - TRAINING GRANT INCENTIVES SCHEME – ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS

(No. B/800) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the Communiqué issued on 30 May 2023 by the Human Resources Development Council, pertaining to the Training Grant Incentives Scheme, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Council, information as to the reasons for the request of additional documents to be submitted by Employers/Registered Training Institutions for the processing of grant applications under the said scheme.

Reply: As part of its mandate, the Human Resource Development Council (HRDC) provides a number of Training Grant Incentive Schemes with a view to promoting both in-house and institutional training of employees in the private sector.

In this respect, all companies contributing in the National Training Fund are granted a refund ranging between 70%-75% of the training cost for their employees.

I am informed that so far, 1,085,642 employees from the private sector have been trained under the schemes partly financed by the HRDC, such as –

- Local Training Scheme;
- Structured Online Training Scheme;
- In-House Training Scheme (training delivered solely for one employer);
- Overseas Training Scheme;
- E-Learning License Scheme;
- Foreign Expertise Scheme;

- Training Needs Analysis Scheme, and
- Multi-Media Facilities Scheme.

To benefit from these incentives, employers are currently required to submit grant applications together with the following documents –

- invoice and receipt of course fees paid or bank transfer for course fees paid in foreign currency for overseas training;
- invoice and receipt of air ticket for overseas training;
- copy of attendance sheet;
- certified breakdown of cost incurred for in-house training, and
- letter of attestation or a copy of Certificate of Attendance for each participant who attended the training.

However, following the recommendations of the National Audit Office and the review exercise carried out by the ICAC to the effect that there are several risks areas in the management of the Levy Grant Incentive Schemes, the HRDC is developing a risk management framework to curb several risks identified such as –

- (i) the participant following the training could not be the same one as per grant application submitted by employer;
- (ii) a third party could sign on behalf of a participant who did not attend the course, and
- (iii) receipts could be issued without cheque being encashed (Risk of money laundering offence).

In order to mitigate these risks, necessary strategies, measures and actions have been put into place by the HRDC such as participants' signature on the attendance sheet should correspond to the signature on their National Identity Card.

Moreover, to reinforce the risk control mechanism, the HRDC has issued a Communiqué in May 2023, to request all applicants to submit additional documents such as a copy of National Identity Card of participants, list of all employees who will follow the course, attendance sheet, letter of attestation, evidence of payment of course fee, amongst others.

In light of the above, the HRDC has circulated the Communiqué to all employers registered on the HRDC Online Training Grant Platform and Registered Training

Institutions registered with the Mauritius Qualifications Authority. The Communiqué is also hosted on the HRDC's website.

The additional documents requested by the HRDC are essential to address all risks identified and also to allow it to be in compliance with good governance practices as highlighted by National Audit Office and the ICAC.

**HAJJ PILGRIMAGE – COMPOSITION OF MEMBERS – COST
INCURRED**

(No. B/801) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) ask the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to the forthcoming Hajj pilgrimage, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Islamic Cultural Centre, information as to the actual composition of the members of the Hajj mission, indicating in each case the –

- (a) experience in hajj organization;
- (b) knowledge of Arabic language, and
- (c) expenses incurred in relation thereto.

(Reply not available)

**NATIONAL CHILDREN COUNCIL - CAP MALHEUREUX RELAY
SHELTER - L'OISEAU DU PARADIS - MONITORING AND EVALUATION
REPORT**

(No. B/802) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Cap Malheureux Relay Shelter, also known as L'Oiseau du Paradis, she will state, if any monitoring and evaluation report has been submitted by the National Children Council to her Ministry in respect thereof during the last six months and, if so, give the details thereof and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS JUDO FEDERATION - 15 CLUBS AFFILIATION

(No. B/803) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to Judo, he will state where matters stand as to the request for the affiliation of 15 clubs with the Mauritius Judo Federation, indicating –

- (a) the actions, if any, taken by his Ministry to ensure compliance with the provision of section 5(a) and (b) of the Sports Act by the Federation, and
- (b) if athletes of these clubs have access to national training facilities and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

TOURISM SECTOR – GHC EMISSIONS

(No. B/804) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the tourism sector, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –
 - (i) level of Green House Gas emissions generated;
 - (ii) quantity of waste produced, and
 - (iii) quantity of water and electricity consumed, respectively, over the past two years, and
- (b) state if his Ministry proposes to issue guidelines to tourist enterprises/ accommodation with a view to promoting the sustainability thereof.

(Withdrawn)

METRO EXPRESS EXTENSION - CUREPIPE TO LA VIGIE

(No. B/805) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the proposed extension of the Metro Express project from Curepipe to La Vigie, he will state –

- (a) if a feasibility study has been undertaken thereinto, and
- (b) the estimated cost involved therefor, indicating the source of financing thereof.

(Withdrawn)