



SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 04 JULY 2023

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| Dr. the Hon. Mohammad Anwar Husnood | 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 |
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| Deputy Speaker | Hon. Mohammad Zahid Nazurally |
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MAURITIUS

Seventh National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 20 of 2023

Sitting of Tuesday 04 July 2023

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

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

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

- **Prime Minister's Office**

- Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications**

- Ministry for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity**

- Certificate of Urgency in respect of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill (No. X of 2023). (In Original)
 - The Information and Communication Technologies (Registration of SIM) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 93 of 2023)

- **Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology**

- The Annual Report & Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the University of Mauritius for the year ended 30 June 2022.
 - The Annual Report & Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Open University of Mauritius for the year ended 30 June 2021.
 - The Annual Report & Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Quality Assurance Authority for the year ended 30 June 2021.

- **Ministry of Land Transport and Light Rail**

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade**

The Annual Report & Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Bus Industry Employees Welfare Fund for year ended 30 June 2022.

- **Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities**

The Central Water Authority (Dry Season) (Amendment No. 4) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 96 of 2023)

- **Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training**

- Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection**

- The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 19) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 92 of 2023)
- The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 20) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 94 of 2023)
- The Consumer Protection (Importation and Sale of Second-hand Motor Vehicles) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 95 of 2023)
- **Ministry of Health and Wellness**

The Annual Report & Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Mauritius Institute of Health for the year ended 30 June 2022

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

EXERCISE OF SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO – NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN MAURITIUS & UK

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval) (*by Private Notice*) 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 Chagos Archipelago, he will state where matters stand as to the negotiations initiated with the United Kingdom on the exercise of the sovereignty thereon by Mauritius, indicating the names of the persons representing the Government of Mauritius and that of the United Kingdom, respectively.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall reply to this Private Notice Question together with Parliamentary Questions B/909 and B/918 as they relate to the same subject matter.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me start my reply by paying tribute to the struggle led by late Sir Anerood Jugnauth, former Prime Minister, which paved the way for the historic progress we have achieved so far as a nation, for the exercise of our sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago. The House will recall his very passionate and emotional opening statement at the International Court of Justice in September 2018, which will remain a landmark in our fight for the complete decolonisation of our territory.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House and the nation are aware, prior to our independence, the United Kingdom excised the Chagos Archipelago from the territory of Mauritius, in violation of international law and United Nations General Assembly resolutions, including Resolution 1514(XV) of 14 December 1960.

In its efforts to complete the decolonisation of Mauritius and given the active role played by the United Nations General Assembly in the process of decolonisation, Mauritius requested on 14 July 2016, the inclusion in the provisional agenda of the 71st Session of the General Assembly of an item entitled “Request for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965.” This item was subsequently included in the agenda of the 71st Session of the United Nations General Assembly which was adopted on 16 September 2016. Subsequently, on 22 June

2017, the General Assembly adopted, by a majority of 94 votes to 15, Resolution 71/292 to request an Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on 25 February 2019, the International Court of Justice delivered an Advisory Opinion in which it determined that the process of decolonisation of Mauritius was not lawfully completed upon its accession to independence in view of the illegal excision of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius, and that the United Kingdom is under an obligation to bring to an end its administration of the Chagos Archipelago as rapidly as possible. The Court also determined that the United Kingdom's continued administration of the Chagos Archipelago constitutes an unlawful act of a continuing character entailing the international responsibility of that State.

On 22 May 2019, the United Nations General Assembly adopted, by an overwhelming majority of 116 votes to 6, Resolution 73/295 which fully endorsed the determinations of the ICJ. In this resolution, the General Assembly, *inter alia*, affirmed that the Chagos Archipelago forms an integral part of Mauritius and that the continued administration of the Chagos Archipelago by the United Kingdom constitutes a wrongful act entailing the international responsibility of that State. The General Assembly accordingly demanded the United Kingdom to withdraw its colonial administration from the Chagos Archipelago unconditionally within a period of no more than six months, that is, by 22 November 2019. The United Kingdom has failed to meet that deadline.

The General Assembly also called upon the United Nations and its specialised agencies as well as all other international, regional and intergovernmental organisations, including those established by treaty, to recognise that the Chagos Archipelago forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius, to support the decolonisation of Mauritius as rapidly as possible, and to refrain from impeding that process by recognising, or giving effect to any measure taken by or on behalf of, the so-called "British Indian Ocean Territory."

Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 73/295, the United Nations amended its official map in February 2020 to clearly depict the Chagos Archipelago as part of the territory of Mauritius.

In the judgment which it delivered on 28 January 2021 in the maritime delimitation case brought by Mauritius against Maldives under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the

Sea, the Special Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea held that the authoritative determinations made by the International Court of Justice in its Advisory Opinion of 25 February 2019 have legal effect and clear implications for the legal status of the Chagos Archipelago.

It also ruled that Mauritius has undisputed sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago and that the United Kingdom's continued claim to sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago is contrary to the determinations made by the International Court of Justice, that the detachment of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius was unlawful and that the United Kingdom's continued administration of the Chagos Archipelago constitutes an unlawful act of a continuing character.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on 24 August 2021, the Universal Postal Union, which is a specialised agency of the United Nations, adopted by a majority of 77 votes to...

Mr X. L. Duval: Does the Prime Minister think that I will ask a PNQ so that he would just read what he has read ten times already in this Parliament? Does the Prime Minister think that this is the point of the PNQ, that he would read what he has read to us ten times before?

The Prime Minister: May I continue to reply, Mr Speaker, Sir? So, I was saying that on 24 August 2021, the Universal Postal Union, which is a specialised agency of the United Nations, adopted by a majority of 77 votes to 6, a resolution which formally acknowledges that, for the purposes of its activities, the Chagos Archipelago forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius.

The resolution also instructs the International Bureau of the Universal Postal Union to cease the registration, distribution and forwarding of any and all postage stamps issued by the so-called "British Indian Ocean Territory".

It is clear that, as a matter of international law, as authoritatively determined by international courts and tribunals, the Chagos Archipelago forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when I met the Rt Hon. Elizabeth Truss in her capacity as the UK Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs in November 2021 in Glasgow in the margins of the 26th Session of the United Nations Climate Change Conference, I

lengthily discussed with her the issue of Chagos Archipelago. She undertook to look into the matter and the way forward.

Subsequently, when the Rt Hon. Elizabeth Truss became Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, I met her on 21 September 2022 in New York in the margins of the UN General Assembly. During that meeting, I again discussed with her on how Mauritius and the United Kingdom could engage in discussions for the completion of the decolonisation process of Mauritius.

After further discussions and following the agreement of the United Kingdom that any agreement should be based on international law, Mauritius and the United Kingdom decided to begin negotiations on the exercise of sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, as I had announced to the House on 03 November 2022.

Through negotiations, taking into account relevant legal proceedings, it is the intention of Mauritius and the United Kingdom to secure an agreement on the basis of international law to resolve all outstanding issues, including those relating to the former inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago.

Mauritius and the United Kingdom have reiterated that any agreement between the two countries will ensure the continued effective operation of the joint UK/US military base in Diego Garcia.

Since my statement of 03 November 2022 to the House, Mauritius and the United Kingdom have held four rounds of negotiations on 23 and 24 November 2022, 11 and 12 January 2023, 23 and 24 February 2023, and 02 and 03 June 2023, alternately in the UK and in Mauritius.

These discussions have led to better understanding between the two sides, and covered issues relating to the exercise of sovereignty by Mauritius over the Chagos Archipelago whilst ensuring the continued effective operation of the joint UK/US military base on Diego Garcia; resettlement of the former inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago; strengthening our cooperation on a range of issues such as environmental and marine protection, improving security and tackling illegal activities in the region, amongst others.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on 14 February 2023, I spoke to the Rt Hon. Rishi Sunak, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. We welcomed the progress to date and agreed to pursue the negotiations, with a view to arriving at an agreement in the coming months. The dates of the next round of negotiations are about to be finalised.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the wake of the unlawful excision of the Chagos Archipelago from the territory of Mauritius, all the former inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago were forcibly removed by the United Kingdom in blatant violation of their basic human rights. Most of them were moved to Mauritius. Government is fully sensitive to their plight and supports their legitimate aspiration, as Mauritian citizens, to return and resettle in their place of birth. The ongoing struggle of Mauritius to complete its decolonisation and the resettlement of Mauritian citizens, including those of Chagossian origin, are indissociable.

Government is strongly committed to implementing a resettlement programme in the Chagos Archipelago. This commitment is enunciated in the Government Programme 2020-2024 and has been reiterated by Government on several occasions, including in this House and in international fora such as the United Nations.

In this regard, the special provision of Rs50 m. made in the Budget for Financial Year 2019/2020 has been maintained in the Budget for subsequent financial years, including for 2023/2024, for meeting, *inter alia*, expenses relating to preparations for eventual resettlement in the Chagos Archipelago.

However, Government is conscious of practical impediments to such resettlement such as access to the islands of the Chagos Archipelago, lack of basic infrastructure and services.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in preparation of an eventual resettlement in the Chagos Archipelago, Ministries/Departments concerned have already started the appropriate and necessary background work. Several Ministries and Departments have highlighted the need for onsite surveys to be carried out in the Chagos Archipelago.

For this reason, Government proposes to organise another trip to the Chagos Archipelago so that an assessment mission can be carried out on the requirements for a proper resettlement.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Government of Mauritius has ensured the active involvement of the Chagossians in its efforts to facilitate their return to the Chagos Archipelago and continues to do

so. In this regard, Government has been having regular consultations with the Chagossians based in Mauritius. Although the negotiations are between the Governments of Mauritius and the United Kingdom, Government will continue to hold consultations with the Chagossians and ensure that their rights are safeguarded.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the injustice suffered by members of the Chagossian community, some countries have expressed a willingness to support their resettlement. We expect the United Kingdom to cooperate with Mauritius in implementing a programme for resettlement in the Chagos Archipelago. This would not only be fair and just, but also provide an opportunity for the United Kingdom to make amends for the historic wrong that occurred.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Mauritius delegation to the negotiations is led by the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service. The other members of the delegation are as follows –

- Ambassador J. D. Koonjul, GCSK, Permanent Representative of Mauritius to the UN, New York;
- Mr N. K. Ballah, GOSK, Special Adviser, Prime Minister's Office;
- Mr D. K. Dabee, GOSK, SC, Legal Adviser/Consultant, Attorney General's Office;
- Ms S. C. Young Kim Fat, Minister Counsellor, Prime Minister's Office;
- Professor Philippe Sands, GCSK, KC, Legal Adviser, and
- Mr Paul Reichler, GCSK, Legal Adviser.

However, should the topics being discussed so require, the composition of the Mauritius delegation may change.

As for the UK delegation, it is currently made up of seven senior officials duly mandated by the UK Government. The number of members of the UK delegation can fluctuate, depending on the topics covered.

Mr Speaker, Sir, late Sir Anerood Jugnauth solemnly affirmed that he considered the struggle for Mauritius to exercise its full rights over the entirety of its territory as a sacred duty towards the nation.

I fully subscribe to that statement and, as Prime Minister, I am pursuing that mission with utmost zeal and determination. I can state, at this stage, that we are making headway in the negotiations with the United Kingdom with a view to successfully fulfilling that sacred mission we have engaged into since 2014.

Thank you.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me also pay homage to all the deportees, their descendants, and remind the hon. Prime Minister that the legal process with the appointment of Philippe Sands, in fact, started in 2010 by the then Government.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I noticed that since January of this year, the hon. Prime Minister has not mentioned that the negotiations are going satisfactorily. This is why I would like to ask him firstly, whether he is satisfied with the way the negotiations are going and when does he expect to conclude the matter being given that in November 2022, he and Mr Cleverly both said that they expected negotiations would be over and concluded by early of this year?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think everyone will realise that the issues that have to be discussed are not simple and straightforward. Some of them are quite complex and, therefore, require time. In fact, when we started, we had to agree on the basis on which negotiations will start. I don't want to go into details. I just mentioned that during my meeting in the margins of the United Nations General Assembly with the Rt Hon. Elizabeth Truss, at that time Prime Minister, we had lengthy discussions on that issue and we finally came to an agreement on the basis on which we shall start negotiations.

Negotiations have started, a number of issues are on the table, and I must say we are making progress. Now, the hon. Leader of the Opposition is asking me when the negotiations will be completed. I think the same question has also been put in the House of Commons by Jeremy Corbyn and he asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Commonwealth and Development Affairs, James Cleverly, when will negotiations be completed and the answer was 'I am not able to give a date or a projected date of when we will conclude these negotiations'. I have to repeat the same because there are a lot of issues that have to be discussed and come to fruition. So, it will take the time that it has to take, provided that we are making progress. So, we will see. There is a next round of negotiations. We have first of all to agree on the dates because you can imagine that those people from our side anyway, we have to try to see when we can get

common dates because we have our Legal Counsels who have other professional obligations as well and then we have to get common dates from the UK side also. So, let negotiations proceed and, of course, as and when there are any matters that I have to report to the House, I will do so.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister has taken 23 minutes so far of PNQ. I hope you will be indulgent in respect of this very national issue. I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister this question: sovereignty has been granted to Mauritius unconditionally by the International Court of Justice. Therefore, can the hon. Prime Minister be clear that we are also talking about sovereignty on the whole of the Chagos, including Diego Garcia?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have always been clear about this issue and I am a bit surprised that the hon. Leader of the Opposition is having some doubts. I have repeatedly said in international fora and even in public functions. Not later than a few days ago when we were commemorating the last deportation of the Chagossians to Mauritius, I publicly stated in my speech that there are certain fundamental issues for Mauritius. One of them, of course, is the issue of sovereignty. We have a judgment from the International Court of Justice and a judgment from the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea endorsing the judgment of the International Court of Justice, which clearly states that the only country having sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, and Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, is Mauritius. So, I hope it is as clear as that.

Mr X. L. Duval: No, it is good to be clear. Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister; given that we have sovereignty on the whole of the Chagos, including Diego Garcia, therefore, the base will be leased by the US, and I wish to remind the hon. Prime Minister that the US Government is paying Rs3 billion a year for a smaller, lesser base in Djibouti. Therefore, what is the quantum of compensation, rent, compensation to the Chagossians, resettlement fees that is presently on the table being asked by the Government of Mauritius? From my calculation, it should be above Rs50 billion.

The Prime Minister: Okay, so, I take note of the proposal of the hon. Leader of the Opposition. I heard Rs50 billion. Well, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are not yet there. When we are there, we will, of course, inform the House and Mauritius.

Mr X. L. Duval: Concerning resettlement of the Chagossians, the hon. Prime Minister has much spoken about the KPMG Report, which is a full report and that KPMG Report, at 2014

prices, was giving something like Rs15 billion for the proper settlement of the Chagossians. The Rs50 billion is not *un chiffre farfelu*; it is a national figure calculated carefully. Therefore, is the hon. Prime Minister confirming that there is an amount for resettlement, for compensation, for rent, for back rent that is being asked of the UK Government? Just the fact at the moment!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the KPMG Report has proposed three options, but the options are based on a number of different indicators. I don't want to go into the details of that report, but one of them being the number of people who are going to resettle there. Now, in one option, it is 150; the other is 500 approximately, and the other is 1,500. And it is also based on whether there is going to be an airport; airport meaning at least a landing strip, or there is going to be a harbour; harbour meaning again some breakwater or harbour facility, like a jetty. So, there are different variables and I don't want to mention any amount that has been earmarked at that time. But this is 2014 anyway. So, this has to be...

Mr X. L. Duval: Much more than that ...

The Prime Minister: The hon. Leader of the Opposition is saying 'much more'; much more based on what? We need to know what kind of infrastructure we want to build there. We need to know how many people eventually we will cater for resettlement. We need to know what are the facilities that have to be provided there.

That is why we have started preliminary works in order to see eventually what kind of facility we want to be developed there. As I have stated in my answer, we need to field a mission for those technical people to carry out a survey, and eventually to tell us what can be done. I also said that we will most probably need the support of other countries.

Some countries have already expressed their collaboration and contribution to help us in this démarche for resettlement. I have said that we will be discussing with the UK also to see how they can collaborate for facilitating this resettlement.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, obviously I do not think we are talking about resettling 150 people. That would be quite ridiculous! We are talking about resettling 1,500 people. Otherwise, what's the point? I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware that the report talks of the only feasible way of doing that is to put them on the eastern side of Diego Garcia itself. Has that point been raised at the moment in the resettlement discussions that

Mauritius having sovereignty would only lease western side and keep the eastern side for the Chagossians? That is also in the report.

The Prime Minister: The Leader of the Opposition is not talking about the resettlement of 150 people; that is ridiculous. But he mentions about the KPMG Report. The KPMG report talks about one option of resettling 150 people. So, which is which? You should know what you want to refer as a document.

Now, you are talking about resettlement on the island of Diego Garcia itself. All this is a matter for discussion. At this juncture, I am not able to give details about these discussions. I have said earlier that we have agreed that it is only when we will come to a conclusion, when there is an agreement that the details of those discussions will be communicated. So, we will see. It is a bit premature, at this stage, when discussions are not over, to start talking about what has been said, what has been discussed, where we have reached.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he realises that the Mauritian population does not want to be left with a *fait accompli*? They want to know what is being discussed and what is going to be agreed in their name. I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister this question of double nationality of the Chagossians. Many of them are attached to this. What is on the table for discussion concerning the double nationality of Chagossians? Will they be able to retain obviously not only their Mauritian citizenship but also their UK citizenship? Is that something that the Government of Mauritius is discussing?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think the Leader of the Opposition should be the last one to talk about *fait accompli*.

An hon. Member: *Exactement.*

The Prime Minister: Look at all the progress that we have made, all the victories that have been achieved by Government since 2014! For me, it is such an important issue that concerns the whole of the Republic of Mauritius. I do not want to mention what Philippe Sands, KC, said in an interview to *l'Express* on the former Prime Minister, because he made a remark and Philippe Sands had to correct him. So, let us not go into that debate and let us not make politics out of this. For me, what is important is that we are moving forward.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are making tremendous progress on this issue; tremendous progress with victories at the International Court of Justice, the United Nations General Assembly, the resolutions that have been voted with *une majorité écrasante* and the judgment of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea where it has demarcated the maritime boundary between Mauritius and Maldives based on the fact that Mauritius has full sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago. This judgment has to be respected by all countries. It is binding on all countries, and that is a final judgment. No one can question that again. So, look at the headway we are making; the progress that we have made so far.

With regard to resettlement, I have said earlier and I repeat again that all Chagossians who want to resettle will be able to resettle according, of course, to the laws of Mauritius.

Mr X. L. Duval: The question that I asked specifically was on double nationality, not on resettlement. We have canvassed that before.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, ...

Mr X. L. Duval: Let me ask the question this time. What is the position of the Government of Mauritius with regard to asking the UK Government to maintain the double nationality facilities that the Chagossians presently have? I have just repeated the question before. Since the Prime Minister is saying that we are making fantastic progress and we will note that in the negotiations, tell us whether he has a resettlement plan in the coming weeks or months so that we can start thinking of how the Chagossians will be resettled?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Leader of the Opposition should not try to confuse people. What I said is fantastic progress about our fight to get sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago. This is what I have said. Do I need to recall to you the ICJ judgment, the UN resolution, the ITLOS?

Mr X. L. Duval: And the ITLOS also...

The Prime Minister: This is what I said!

Mr X. L. Duval: Yes.

The Prime Minister: Fantastic progress. If you do not call that fantastic progress, Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not know what is the progress that we are making then! Anyway, let us not waste time. Let me come back to the question. Anyone having Mauritian nationality - and for

that matter, it is not only Chagossians - will be able to travel to Chagos. Those who want to resettle will be able to resettle. What is the problem? Now, do I know who has double nationality, triple nationality or how many nationalities? Of course, anyone having Mauritian nationality would be able to resettle.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think, the worst possible outcome would be for the whole of the Chagossians settled in UK to be somehow shipped back to Mauritius or to Chagos. If he has at heart the interest of the Chagossians, he would also see that the people who have left this country and gone to the UK are allowed and have a freedom of choice, and that they are not reshipped back forcibly this time. Double jeopardy! This is why the question was asked.

The Prime Minister: No, there is no issue. What double jeopardy? I said anyone who has a Mauritian nationality would be able to go back. So, what is the issue?

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, Sir. Will the hon. Prime Minister state whether, prior to Britain entering into preliminary negotiations with Mauritius, Britain has agreed in principle to relinquish sovereignty over Chagos Archipelago?

The Prime Minister: Prior to negotiations; I do not understand. I do not know where...

Dr. Boolell: But are you...

The Prime Minister: Let me answer. You have put a question. Did I interrupt you?

(Interruptions)

Ki ah? You are sitting on what? Ants?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: I have not seen anywhere any statement from either the former Prime Ministers or the actual Prime Minister of the UK where they have stated that they are going to relinquish sovereignty. I have not seen that. Maybe the hon. Member should tell me where it has been publicised that the UK, even before negotiations, will relinquish sovereignty.

In fact, sovereignty is a fundamental issue to us, Mauritius, as I have said earlier to the hon. Leader of the Opposition. We already have had a judgment and the judgment is crystal clear. Therefore, sovereignty to us is a fundamental issue.

Dr. Boolell: *Sa mem pli important pou la nation.*

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Merci. Le Premier ministre s'est posé plusieurs questions sur le *resettlement*, compensation, accès à l'archipel, etc. Ne pense-t-il pas que la seule à pouvoir répondre à ces interrogations est la communauté chagossienne ? Parce que le Premier ministre avait affirmé au début de sa réponse que la composition des délégations pourrait changer de temps à autre. Le Premier ministre peut-il donner la garantie que la communauté fera partie de toutes délégations concernant toutes les négociations ?

The Prime Minister: M. le président, contrairement à ce qui se passait auparavant sous le gouvernement Travilliste où il n'y avait jamais eu non seulement de consultations mais les Chagossiens ne formaient pas partie des délégations qui ont été ailleurs.

Dr. Boolell: Shame on you!

The Prime Minister: *Eta, rest trankil!*

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: Lying! He is misleading the House!

The Prime Minister: *Iznogoud !*

(Interruptions)

Iznogoud !

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: I was Minister of Foreign Affairs! He is misleading the House!

The Prime Minister: *Iznogoud !*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You do not have the right to talk!

Dr. Boolell: But he is misleading the House!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: En 1982...

Mr Speaker: You do not have the right to talk!

Dr. Boolell: But he cannot mislead the House!

Mr Speaker: Let the hon. Member put the question!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

If you want to stay in the House, order!

(Interruptions)

You are going too far.

Dr. Boolell: Your threat will not last forever!

Mr Speaker: You continue with your reply!

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order. I heard the hon. Member of the Opposition saying that the Prime Minister is lying and then he said he is misleading the House.

Dr. Boolell: I said 'misleading'.

Mr Ganoo: No, you said 'misleading' afterwards.

Mr Speaker: Even 'misleading'...

Mr Ganoo: He said 'lying'. Please, he must withdraw that.

Mr Speaker: You see? So, apologise! Apologise to the House!

Dr. Boolell: I apologise in the name of all our Chagossian friends.

Mr Speaker: Okay. Whatever! You apologise to the House without any conditions.

Ms J. Bérenger: *Chatwa!*

Dr. Boolell: I apologise in the name of all our Chagossian friends.

The Prime Minister: Good! *So, Mr Speaker, Sir, I was saying*, par contre, nous, lorsqu'on a été aux Nations Unies, les Chagossiens ont fait partie de la délégation et d'ailleurs on a fait une exhibition aux Nations Unies pour conscientiser davantage tous les pays membres. Lorsqu'on a fait le *survey* pour qu'on puisse faire un rapport technique concernant notre cas de délimitation de territoire maritime entre Maurice et Maldives, les Chagossiens formaient partie de cette délégation. Ils sont allés sur Peros Banhos, Salomon et Blenheim Reef librement, sans être escortés par les Britanniques et jamais il n'y avait eu ça auparavant.

(Interruptions)

Jamais il n'y a eu auparavant !

Mais, par contre aussi, M. le président, comme moi maintenant, auparavant Sir Anerood Jugnauth comme Premier ministre, et moi je le fais régulièrement, on a des consultations. Bien sûr, on est en train de *brief* les Chagossiens et on est en consultation permanent justement surtout concernant la question de *resettlement*.

Mr Speaker: Time over by 14 minutes!

Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/952 will be replied by the hon. Prime Minister, time permitting.

MP Aumeer!

SPECIAL STRIKING TEAM - SEIZURE OF DRUGS, MONEY & ARTICLES

(No. B/904) 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 seizure of drugs, money and articles by the Special Striking Team since its coming into operation to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the –

- amount thereof seized during specific field operations, and
- sum of money and articles returned to their respective owners for non-prosecution.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the House would recall that, on Monday 12 June 2023, in my reply to the Private Notice Question, I informed the House that, pursuant to the powers vested in him under Section 71 of the Constitution, the Commissioner of Police had set up the Special Striking Team (SST) in August 2022 to enable the Police to maintain its thrust in the combat against major crimes such as drug trafficking, money laundering and other organised crimes.

In fact, the SST complements other adjuncts of the Force in the fight against crimes. Similar to other Units, the goal of the SST is to advance intelligence-driven operations and improve the Police Force's reactive capabilities. Such actions are intended to enhance the efficacy of Police operations and live up to the expectations of the nation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the SST is based at the Police Headquarters and is directly responsible and accountable to the Commissioner of Police. 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, Police Headquarters who is of the rank of Superintendent of Police.

The role and responsibilities of SST, laid down in CP's Order No. 1 of 2022 dated 03 August 2022, are, *inter alia*, to –

- conduct targeted intelligence-led crackdown joint operations around the island with a view to dismantling drug nexus/drug networks and criminal activities involving association of malefactors;
- assist the Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit, the National Coast Guard, the Police Helicopter Squadron, the Asset Recovery Investigation Division and the Customs Anti-Narcotics Section of the Mauritius Revenue Authority and the Independent Commission Against Corruption 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;
- support local Police, Divisional and Central Criminal Investigation Departments in the arrest of habitual criminals and persons wanted in serious offences or other offences likely to cause disaffection/hostility among the population, and
- perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Commissioner of Police.

Based on intensive intelligence gathering and credible information, the SST carries out field operations across the island. As at Thursday 29 June 2023, drugs or money or other articles or a combination thereof have been secured in relation to 47 cases. So far, 60 arrests have been effected in connection with these cases.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that out of the 47 cases referred to earlier, exhibits have been secured in respect of 30 cases related to drugs with a total estimated street value of Rs606,849,714. The drugs seized comprise –

- Heroin weighing 12131.23g with estimated street value of Rs181,968,450;
- Subutex in the form of 675 pills with estimated street value of Rs1,620,000;
- Tramadol in the form of 175 pills with estimated street value of Rs17,500;
- iv. Teranobilone in the form of 47 pills with estimated street value of Rs4,700;
- v. Synthetic Cannabinoids weighing 7995.61g with estimated street value of Rs119,934,150;
- vi. Cannabis weighing 58082.47g with estimated street value of Rs69,698,964;
- vii. Cannabis Resin weighing 46276.69g with estimated street value of Rs231,383,450;
- viii. 53 Cannabis plants with estimated street value of Rs159,000;
- ix. 177 Cannabis seeds with estimated street value of Rs17,700, and
- x. MDMA in the form of 1,022 pills and its particles weighing 0.9g with estimated street value of Rs2,045,800.

Out of the 30 drug cases mentioned earlier, in 4 cases, the SST has also secured money in local currency amounting to Rs411,650.

Furthermore, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that 10 cases relate to money laundering. Both local and foreign currencies were secured amounting to approximately Rs10,639,843.

Out of the 10 cases, the SST has also secured jewellery worth Rs5,399,000 in one case. In two other cases, roll your own cigarette papers estimated at Rs301,500 were also secured.

The remaining 7 cases relate to other articles secured, namely –

- i. 238 strips of cable cover, 23,364kg of copper ingots, 24 moulds and 56 bags of copper wire of an estimated value of Rs18,000,000;
- ii. 4 solar panels, 13 metal poles, 18 exercise mats, 113 plastic pipes, 13 rolls of synthetic grass, 170 tons of rubble stones, 200 bricks amounting to approximately Rs7,000,000, and
- iii. 670 boxes of roll your own cigarette paper amounting to Rs246,988,000.

Other articles secured which are still being evaluated include, *inter alia*, weapons, live rounds, laptops, mobile phones, and vehicles.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the cases handled by SST involving money and articles are still under enquiry. Hence, the exhibits have not been returned.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed by the Commissioner of Police that all exhibits are secured and kept in accordance with the Police Standing Order 138 “Safe Custody of Exhibits”. More specifically, pursuant to Section 58 of the Dangerous Drugs Act, drug exhibits are kept at the Exhibit room of ADSU Headquarters, Line Barracks. The Exhibit room is under a 24/7 CCTV surveillance.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister, following averments in an affidavit by one V. S., whether he has been briefed or given any further information by the Commissioner of Police with regard to partial disclosure of articles seized in relation particularly to the one that happened at Beaux Songes in January 2021 and the one seized at Roche Bois in 2020 with regard to firearms?

The Prime Minister: Well, how would I know what firearms the hon. Member is referring to at Beaux Songes and which firearms he is referring to in an affidavit which has been sworn by Mr S.? The hon. Member has to come with a specific question.

Dr. Aumeer: I am of the opinion that there has been an averment; that is why I asked the question. Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether he has been given any further information by the Commissioner of Police with regard to seizures of drugs or other items as he mentioned today and whether the exhibit officers that were present particularly, once again, at

Beaux Songes and the one at Roche Bois, were the same ones under the command of the ASP of the team?

The Prime Minister: Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, if the hon. Member wants to have an answer to his question, he should have put a specific question in relation to Beaux Songes and I don't know where else. He asks a general question about seizures of drugs, money, articles. Does he think that I am like a store, I have all the records of all the files with me and that I will just open the file like a computer and then give an answer?

Come with a specific question. I think you must ...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bodha!

Mr Bodha: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister who is the Superintendent of Police who is supervising the SST and how many enquiries have been completed and sent to the DPP's Office for prosecution?

The Prime Minister: The Special Striking Team is under the charge of Mr Ashik Jagai, Assistant Superintendent of Police and is being supervised by Mr Dunraz Gangadin, Superintendent of Police, staff officer, Police Headquarters.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. With the exception of drug cases, can the hon. Prime Minister provide information on the nature of other cases dealt by the Special Striking Team?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, there have been seven cases on money laundering, two cases of conspiracy to money laundering, one case of an alleged money-laundering, one case of importation of prohibited articles, two cases of possession of Government property, two cases of possession of illegal weapons, one case of suspected proceed of larceny, and one case of larceny.

Mr Speaker: Yes, please!

Dr. Aumeer: I was waiting for the mic, thank you.

Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether he holds information from the Commissioner of Police as to the number of complaints that have been made to his Office insofar as items that have been missing during Police SST operations?

The Prime Minister: Well, I am not aware because the question was not about whether there has been any complaint, but if the hon. Member has information about complaints, let me have this information and I will check with the Commissioner of Police.

Dr. Aumeer: I will give it.

Mr Uteem: The question is about the Striking Team and the seizure of exhibit. Has the attention of the hon. Prime Minister been drawn to a letter that has been sent by an officer of the Post Office based at the airport about how he interacted with the Striking Team and if the content of that letter is true, it would amount to a conspiracy by the members of the Striking Force?

The Prime Minister: No, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware of any letter. If the hon. Member can provide me with this letter, I will certainly ask the...

(Interruptions)

It seems he knows about the letter. That is why I am asking. I am not aware!

Ms J. Bérenger: It is in the newspapers.

The Prime Minister: Where is it?

Ms J. Bérenger: *Tou dimounn kone sa!*

The Prime Minister: Where is it?

(Interruptions)

Everywhere? Where? I am not everywhere!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Let me go back to hon. Bodha!

The Prime Minister: I am not a busybody. I do not go and look everywhere. If it is everywhere, hand over a copy to me! You seem to know also. Let me have a copy, hon. Leader of the Opposition!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Ms J. Bérenger: *Maintenant il est informé !*

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bodha!

Mr Bodha: Yes, I had asked the question earlier, Mr Speaker, Sir, in how many cases the enquiry has been completed and 47 cases were mentioned. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister in how many cases the inquiry has been completed and sent to the DPP's Office for prosecution since the setting up of this Special Striking Team?

The Prime Minister: I think I said that the inquiries are ongoing. I do not have details about whether one case has been sent to the DPP. But, of course, I can provide this information. So, I undertake to circulate this information.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

ITLOS JUDGMENT –

MAURITIUS & MALDIVES – MARITIME BOUNDARY

(No. B/905) **Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Judgment delivered by the Special Chamber of the International Tribunal of the Law of the Sea on 28 April 2023, establishing a binding international maritime boundary between Mauritius and Maldives, he will state the actions Government proposes to initiate as a result thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Mrs Diolle: Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order. Since the PNQ, I am trying to make a point of order. I heard hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger trying to intimidate hon. Alan Ganoo while he was making his...

(Interruptions)

...while he was making his point of order, by uttering the words ‘*chatwa Ganoo*’ to prevent him from making his point of order.

(Interruptions)

I think that she should tender her apologies.

Hon. Members: Shame!

Mrs Diolle: She should tender her apologies to the House and to this Senior Member of Parliament who has been in politics and in Parliament for 40 years!

Hon. Members: Shame!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Shame! Apologise!

An hon. Member: *Quel langage!*

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member, if you said something wrong, please apologise to the House.

Ms J. Bérenger: I will apologise, but ...

Mr Speaker: No condition!

Ms J. Bérenger: ...I still think the same.

Mr Speaker: We are not interested in condition! You apologise in the House, to the House!

Ms J. Bérenger: *C'est la vérité! C'est la vérité!*

Mr Speaker: Please!

Mr Juman: *Dir merci Tania!*

Ms J. Bérenger: *Merci Tania de relever la vérité !*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: What is happening there?

An hon. Member: *Chatwa lalians! Twa ki chatwa Ramgoolam!*

Mr Speaker: This is Parliament, this is not a supermarket! Members are paid to sit in Parliament!

(Interruptions)

Mr Balgobin: *Vin devan Ramgoolam to gete!*

Mr Assirvaden: *Ramgoolam la dan zot rev tou le soir!*

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: *Atan to pou gete!*

Mr Balgobin: *La honte!*

The Prime Minister: *To mem to pou arret rev li la. Gagn pasians!*

Mr Speaker: Let us go back to Parliament!

The Prime Minister: Yes.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Are you ready? You are paid!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in my Statement of 09 May 2023, I had informed the House that the Special Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) delivered on 28 April 2023 a judgment establishing a binding international maritime boundary between Mauritius and Maldives. This boundary delimits the exclusive economic zones and the continental shelves of the two States within 200 nautical miles in the region of the Chagos Archipelago.

The Special Chamber also ruled that it had jurisdiction to delimit the extended continental shelf between Mauritius and Maldives beyond 200 nautical miles. It further rejected the objection raised by Maldives to the admissibility of Mauritius' claim to the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles on the grounds that Mauritius had not filed in a timely manner its submission with the Commission on the limits of the continental shelf.

However, the Special Chamber found that it was not in a position to determine the entitlement of Mauritius to a continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles in the Northern Chagos Archipelago region, given the disagreement between Mauritius and Maldives and the significant uncertainty as to Mauritius' entitlement. The Special Chamber, therefore, decided that it would not proceed to delimit the continental shelf between Mauritius and Maldives beyond 200 nautical

miles. Nonetheless, the Special Chamber encouraged Mauritius and Maldives to consider giving their consent to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf to consider each other's respective submissions which are currently frozen because of objections levelled by each one against the other.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is pertinent to underline that following the preliminary objections raised by Maldives in its jurisdiction, the Special Chamber of ITLOS had given on 28 January 2021 a judgment in which it rejected all those preliminary objections. At the core of Maldives' preliminary objections was the claim that there was an unresolved sovereignty dispute between Mauritius and the United Kingdom over the Chagos Archipelago. Maldives argued that the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice of 25 February 2019 did not resolve the sovereignty dispute over the Chagos Archipelago and is, in any case, not binding.

In rejecting the preliminary objections of Maldives, the Special Chamber of ITLOS confirmed that Mauritius has undisputed sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago. It ruled that the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice resolved the question of sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago when the Court determined, without a single dissenting vote on the merits, that the Chagos Archipelago is and has always been an integral part of Mauritius.

The Special Chamber of ITLOS also ruled that the United Kingdom's continued claim to sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago is contrary to the determinations made by the International Court of Justice to the effect that the detachment of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius was unlawful, and that the United Kingdom's continued administration of the Chagos Archipelago constitutes an unlawful act of a continuing character entailing the international responsibility of that State. It further held that the United Kingdom has no claim, but only, I quote -

“a mere assertion,”

and that such assertion does not prove the existence of a dispute.

With regard to Maldives' contention that the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice is not binding the Special Chamber of ITLOS ruled that, and I quote –

“An advisory opinion entails an authoritative statement of international law on the questions with which it deals.”

In that regard, the Special Chamber of ITLOS held that, and I quote –

“Judicial determinations made in advisory opinions carry no less weight and authority than those in judgments because they are made with the same rigour and scrutiny by the “principal judicial organ” of the United Nations with competence in matters of international law.”

The Special Chamber of ITLOS underscored that, and I quote –

“...determinations made by the International Court of Justice in an advisory opinion cannot be disregarded simply because the advisory opinion is not binding. This is true of the International Court of Justice’s determinations in the Chagos advisory opinion, *inter alia*, that the process of decolonization of Mauritius was not lawfully completed when that country acceded to independence in 1968, following the separation of the Chagos Archipelago, and that the United Kingdom is under an obligation to bring to an end its administration of the Chagos Archipelago as rapidly as possible. The Special Chamber considers that those determinations do have legal effect.”

It is, therefore, crystal clear that under international law, the Chagos Archipelago forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius.

It is deeply regrettable that certain countries which claim to be champions of the rule of law continue to show blatant disregard for the authoritative determinations of the International Court of Justice and of the rulings of ITLOS. I urge them to stop being in denial of the legal reality and to bring themselves into compliance with international law by recognising the sovereignty of Mauritius over Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia.

Mr Speaker, Sir, pursuant to Articles 16(2) and 47(9) of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, Mauritius had deposited in July 2006 with the Secretary-General of the United Nations the list of geographical coordinates of points representing the baselines, closing lines and archipelagic baselines from which the maritime zones of Mauritius shall be measured, as contained in Regulations made under Sections 4, 5, 14 and 27 of the Maritime Zones Act. Mauritius had also deposited charts showing the basepoints and archipelagic baselines.

In view of the binding international maritime boundary which has been established between Mauritius and Maldives in the Chagos Archipelago region, Mauritius will have to amend the following Regulations which were made under the Maritime Zones Act –

- Maritime Zones (Baselines and Delineating Lines) Regulations 2005;
- Maritime Zones (EEZ Outer Limit Lines) Regulations 2008, and
- Maritime Zones (Territorial Sea Outer Limit Lines) Regulations 2021.

Amendments are required to these Regulations in order to take into account the new baselines from which the maritime zones of Mauritius around the Chagos Archipelago have to be determined and the extent of the exclusive economic zone which has been allocated to Mauritius as a result of the delimitation exercise carried out by the Special Chamber of ITLOS. The services of International Mapping, a cartographic consulting firm based in the United States and which was retained for the case against Maldives, have been enlisted to assist the Department for Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones Administration and Exploration of my Office in reviewing the baselines and the EEZ outer limits to amend these Regulations.

Once the Regulations are amended, the list of amended geographical coordinates of points will have to be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Mauritius has also deposited charts and the list of geographical coordinates of points of its extended continental shelf with the Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority pursuant to Article 84(2) of UNCLOS. Following the Judgment of the Special Chamber of ITLOS, modified charts and a list of amended geographical coordinates of points will have to be submitted to the International Seabed Authority.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since Mauritius is the sole State lawfully entitled to exercise sovereignty and sovereign rights over the Chagos Archipelago and its maritime zones, it falls exclusively to the Government of Mauritius to establish a Marine Protected Area in the waters of the Chagos Archipelago, in accordance with national policies and through the promulgation of regulations under the Fisheries and Marine Resources Act.

At the UN Ocean Conference held last year in Lisbon, Portugal, Mauritius announced its intention to create a Marine Protected Area around the Chagos Archipelago.

Following the delivery of the Judgment of the Special Chamber of ITLOS, Mauritius will proceed to finalise its proposal for the creation of that Marine Protected Area, taking into account the maritime boundary which the Special Chamber has established between Mauritius and Maldives.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Judgment of the Special Chamber of ITLOS has settled the dispute between Mauritius and Maldives on their overlapping claims to an exclusive economic zone and a continental shelf within 200 nautical miles. Mauritius now intends to explore avenues for enhanced cooperation with Maldives, including as regards the protection of the marine environment.

Mauritius also proposes to organise visits to the Chagos Archipelago from Maldives with their agreement since it would be less expensive to do so as compared to Rodrigues and Seychelles.

As announced in the Budget 2023-2024, Government will undertake another trip to the Chagos Archipelago to carry out an assessment mission on the requirements for a proper resettlement in the Chagos Archipelago.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since new coordinates of the basepoints of Mauritius have been established by the Special Chamber of ITLOS, the submission which we have already made to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf in respect of the Northern Chagos Archipelago region has to be revised. Necessary action is being taken by the Department for Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones Administration and Exploration of my Office in that regard.

On 22 May 2023, our Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York has informed the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf that Mauritius proposes to make a revised submission in due course.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Prime Minister, in his answer, mentioned about the proposition of the creation of a Marine Protected Area around the Chagos Archipelago. Can the hon. Prime Minister give further information on actions that are being envisaged and whether there are any specific guidelines that would be followed for the proposal of the creation of a Marine Protected Area around the Chagos Archipelago? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me, first of all, say that section 4 (1) of the Fisheries and Marine Resources Act does provide that the Minister responsible for fisheries and marine resources may, by regulations, declare any area of the maritime zones of the Republic of Mauritius, including the seabed underlying such zones, any land associated with the maritime zones or any wetland to be a Maritime Protected Area.

In establishing this Marine Protected Area around Chagos Archipelago, Government, of course, will be guided by a series of key principles. There is a list of those principles and a Committee also comprising various Ministries and Departments was set up in August 2019. The Committee has set up a Technical Sub-Committee that is chaired by the Department for Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones Administration and Exploration to work on the preliminary legal and technical framework. I can provide to the House the latest proposal of the Technical Sub-Committee. I will circulate all those information so as not to take the time of the House.

Mr Speaker: Last question!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. In his answer, the hon. Prime Minister mentioned about the different zones that would be created within the proposed Marine Protected Area. Can the hon. Prime Minister shed light and provide further details on those zones specifically? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me just mention what are the zones that are going to be set up. There is the strict Conservation Zone, the Conservation Zone also; then there is the Habitat Protection Zone, the Resettlement Buffer Zone and the Sustainable Use Zone. Again I will circulate all the information with regard to each of those zones.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ B/906, B/910, B/911, B/913, B/914, B/915, B/916, B/920 have been withdrawn.

CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO – RESETTLEMENT - REPORT

(No. B/909) Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) 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 resettlement of the Mauritians of Chagossian origins in the Chagos Archipelago, he will state if Government has commissioned a report thereon and, if so, indicate if a task force has been set up therefor.

(Vide Reply to PNQ)

**CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO – RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME -
IMPLEMENTATION**

(No. B/918) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the implementation of a programme for resettlement in the Chagos Archipelago as announced in the 2022-2023 Budget Speech, he will state where matters stand.

(Vide Reply to PNQ)

Mr Speaker: Question to Ministers! Hon. Bodha!

NSLD CO. LTD – 8000 HOUSING UNITS – GEOTECHNICAL INVESTIGATION

(No. B/922) 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 construction of 8000 social housing units by the New Social Living Development Co. Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the company information as to if consideration will be given for the geotechnical investigation report for the sites earmarked therefor to be tabled in the Assembly.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that a geotechnical investigation is the process of investigating a proposed construction site for the purposes of determining the layer of natural soil deposits that will underlie a proposed structure and their physical properties.

I am accordingly given to understand that a geotechnical investigation report, is in brief, a summary of compiled data establishing soil characteristics for developing ground model, defining ground engineering properties and resettlement characteristics, pavement design and foundation design in construction projects.

I stand informed that in the past, geotechnical investigations were commissioned by the National Housing Development Co Ltd. (NHDC) as and when deemed necessary. Further to an incident at New Grove in or about the year 2005 when an NHDC construction collapsed due to

underlying lava tunnels, a geotechnical investigation is now commissioned in relation to each and every social housing project.

Now, in my reply to Parliamentary Question B/28 of 28 March of this year, I informed the House that 39 sites are required by the New Social Living Development Ltd. (NSLD) across the island of Mauritius for the construction of 8,000 housing units in all the 20 constituencies.

I wish to point out that since the beginning of the exercise, 113 sites have been identified and assessed by relevant authorities. I am informed that of these 113 sites, 46, many of which although ideally located were subsequently deemed unsuitable for construction of social housing. Thereafter geotechnical investigations were undertaken on the remaining 67 sites of which only 44 sites were found to be buildable. 39 of these 44 sites have been earmarked for phase 1 of the project.

I am tabling the list of 38 sites earmarked for the construction of 8,000 housing units in relation to which geotechnical investigations have already been carried out.

I am further informed that these geotechnical investigations have been completed, 38 sites. I am further informed by the NSLD that such investigations have been undertaken by reputable and dedicated service providers in this highly specialised technical field, namely –

- the Geocross Co. Ltd;
- Labolink Ltd, and
- Water Research Co. Ltd.

The NSLD has confirmed that these 38 sites have, based on the reports of the geotechnical investigations, been found to be suitable for the construction of housing units.

I am further informed the geotechnical investigation in regard to the 39th site which is located at Surinam has not yet been carried out as the site has only just been identified.

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, geotechnical investigation reports are obviously of highly technical nature and I am informed by the NSLD that the report for each site is voluminous and consists on average of 200 pages. It would appear that since the creation of the NHDC in 1991, 16,643 housing units have been so far constructed on 145 sites. According to information available at the Ministry of Housing, never in the past has a Minister of Housing tabled copies of

geotechnical investigation reports. Accordingly, I do not propose to table the geotechnical reports relating to 38 sites in the National Assembly. However, should the hon. Second Member for Vacoas/Floréal require any specific information, having regard to geotechnical investigations of NSDL sites, I shall endeavour to provide same.

Mr Bodha: In view of the importance of this geotechnical investigation because of the flooding and the fact that we have to build drains which cost a lot, my first question is whether the Suez Consulting Report about flooding in all areas in Mauritius has been used in this geotechnical investigations?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, again I am not an expert in those matters and cannot provide relevant information in respect of different reports. All I can say is that as the House is aware, there is now in existence, a Land Drainage Authority. From the time that a site is identified, there are preliminary visits by all relevant authorities including the Land Drainage Authority. It is only with the clearance of all these authorities that the NSLD goes ahead for the commissioning of a geotechnical investigation after which in any event, the whole process of obtaining a Building and Land Use Permit is embarked upon which will require once again formal clearance from all relevant authorities including the Land Drainage Authority, including the Central Water Authority and only then, will we embark upon construction, considering the safety of all eventual inhabitants of NSLD social housing and the tremendous, the very significant investment of public funds involved.

Mr Bodha: Can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister what has been the cost of these investigations by the specialised teams?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Again, I do not know whether there is a standard cost or depending on the site, the costs vary but this is information I can certainly provide if the hon. gentleman would specify if he wants the costs for a specific site or he wants an average cost for all the geotechnical investigations carried out, I think I mentioned 67 sites which have been surveyed so far.

Mr Bodha: My question relates to the total cost...

The Deputy Prime Minister: The total cost, yes I shall be happy to lay such information in the Library of the Assembly.

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

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

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

Mr Speaker: Please be seated! Hon. R. Duval!

MAHEBOURG MARKET – RENOVATION

(No. B/923) **Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & PlaineMagnien)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the project for the renovation of the Mahebourg Market, he will state where matters stand.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the District Council of Grand Port that it is planning to undertake the following renovation works at the Mahebourg market –

- (i) Upgrading of the drains and the slabs for which bid has been invited on 24 May 2023. Only one bid has been received at the closing date of 05 June 2023. The bid is at evaluation stage.
- (ii) Upgrading of the firefighting system for which bid has been invited on 11 May 2023 and two offers have been received at closing date of 29 May 2023. The bids have been evaluated, but both of these bids have been found to be non-responsive as they are on the high side. The bid will be re-launched in two weeks' time.

Mr R. Duval: May I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, is it not high time to revamp and renovate the Mahebourg market so as to meet the growing demands for Mahebourg to be looked upon as a high end tourist village and destination?

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, this has been discussed with me by hon. Minister Bobby Hurreeram, hon. Minister Stephan Toussaint and hon. Kavi Doolub. This has been discussed and I agree that we have to look at it. A new market is coming in Mahebourg, so, we have to think what we are going to do with the present market. So, we are thinking about what we are going to do with this particular one in the future.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

HEALTH CARE ASSISTANTS – RECRUITMENT – 2019 TO JULY 2023

(No. B/924) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to Health Care Assistants in Public Hospitals, he will state the –

- (a) eligibility criteria for the recruitment thereof indicating the modalities thereof, and
- (b) number thereof recruited since 2019 to date in each Regional Hospital.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that recruitment of Health Care Assistants is made by selection from candidates who possess a –

- i. Cambridge School Certificate (SC); or
- ii. Passes obtained on one Certificate at the General Certificate of Education (GCE) Ordinary Level either –
 - (a) in five subjects including English Language with at least Grade C in any two subjects; or
 - (b) in 6 subjects including English Language with at least Grade C in any one subject, or
- iii. an equivalent qualification acceptable to the Public Service Commission.

The selected candidates are appointed in a temporary capacity in the first instance, and are required to undergo an in-service training course at the hospitals and the Mauritius Institute of Health for a period of at least one year. On successful completion of the training, they are appointed as Health Care Assistants in a substantive capacity.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as the modalities are concerned, the procedure for filling of vacancies in the grade is as follows, either –

- (a) by promotion within the Ministry; or
- (b) after advertisement of the vacancy limited to public officers; or
- (c) after open advertisement to the general public; or
- (d) by re-deployment of qualified retrenched Government employees; or

- (e) by recruitment from outside the Public Service through the Employment Service of the Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training.

Mr Speaker Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that Health Care Assistants are recruited based on the number of vacancies and thereafter posted to Regional Hospitals and other health institutions.

Since 2019 to date, 160 Health Care Assistants, 64 male and 104 female, have been recruited by my Ministry. Out of these, 43 have been posted at Dr. Jeetoo Hospital; 33 at the SSRN Hospital; 22 at the Dr. Bruno Cheong Hospital; 32 at the Nehru Hospital, and 38 at Victoria Hospital based on the requirements of the hospitals.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you. Can I ask the hon. Minister as to whether the Health Care Assistants have a scheme of duties as per his Ministry and the labour law so that the issues of burnout or overwork can be clarified following the regrettable death of one HCA two weeks ago?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, all officers who are selected by the Public Service Commission have well-defined duties. It is not that Healthcare Officers have no defined duties. Now, in regard to the burnout of one Healthcare Officer, there is another question, B/927 on the same subject. The death of the officer is being attributed to burnout; the Ministry has no complaints on that and I do not know how this is being attributed to burnout. I do not think it is proper, especially for the family members of the officer who has passed away. In fact, we have to express our sympathy and it is not proper to give details of what the officer was suffering from and attribute this to burnout.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

PESTICIDES – CATEGORIES IMPORTED – 2018 TO JULY 2023

(No. B/926) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) 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.

Mr Gobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the import of pesticides is controlled by the Dangerous Chemicals Control Board under the aegis of the Ministry of Health and Wellness. A Technical Committee of the Board reviews all requests for import of pesticides for agricultural use. Pesticides for use in agricultural sector include insecticides (excluding bio pesticides), fungicides, herbicides and acaricides used to control pests and diseases on crops. Based on views of the FAREI and the MCIA, the Technical Committee makes recommendations to the Dangerous Chemicals Control Board in respect of imports.

Regarding part (a) (i) of the question, I am informed that some 300 tons of pesticides, namely insecticides and fungicides, are imported annually since 2018 for use in vegetable and fruit plantations. I wish to highlight that all pesticide formulations contain a mixture of active ingredients and other inert ingredients.

Pesticides consist of about only 30% of active ingredients on average, which are responsible for the control of pests and diseases. I am tabling data provided by the Customs Department of the Mauritius Revenue Authority on the types and quantity of pesticides imported from 2018 up to June 2023.

I am further informed that highly toxic pesticides are already prohibited in Mauritius in line with the Dangerous Chemicals Control Act 2004 and no such pesticides are in use. I am therefore also, tabling a list of prohibited agricultural chemicals as per the Eighteenth Schedule, Section 27 (Part II) of the Dangerous Chemicals Control Act.

I wish to additionally inform the House that some 880 tons of herbicides are also imported annually, mainly for use in sugar-cane plantations.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with respect to part (a)(ii) of the question, I am informed that since the entry into force of the Use of Pesticides Act in September 2018, the Pesticides Regulatory Office has collected 3,177 samples, out of which 110 samples were found to contain pesticides that exceeded the Maximum Residue Levels (MRL) based on Codex Alimentarius Standards of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the World Health Organisation (WHO). In

addition, 515 samples were found to contain authorised pesticides used in food crop production but which are not recommended on those specific crops.

In line with the Use of Pesticides Act 2018, a total of 315 Improvement Notices have been issued to growers regarding samples that did not comply with the provisions of the Act, following which the latter are being advised by Officers of the Pesticides Regulatory Office as well as the Extension Offices of FAREI on the effective use of pesticides in terms of type, specificity, dosage, among others. With the enforcement of the Act, it has been observed that growers are using pesticides in a more efficient and safe manner, that is, applying pesticides only when required and using the proper dosage and respecting pre-harvest intervals.

I would also like to inform the House that in order to reduce the use of agrochemicals including pesticides, the FAREI is promoting a number of schemes, namely –

- (a) Good agricultural practices among growers;
- (b) Sustainable production through –
 - (i) Smart agriculture under the DESIRA project;
 - (ii) Production using organic standards and agro-ecology;
 - (iii) Development of Integrated Pest and Disease Management packages, and
- (c) Sensitisation and training on judicious use of pesticides.

I also wish to inform the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, of the Mauri GAP Certification Scheme under the Mauritius Standards Bureau which undertakes yearly certification exercise against the standard MS 184-1:2019 Specifications for Good Agricultural Practices for Crop Production for agricultural operators known as the Mauri GAP.

For the period July 2022 to February 2023, I am informed that 58 agricultural operators have been successfully certified and 16 additional agricultural operators are expected to be certified by the end of this month.

Coming to part (b) of the question, the Pesticides Regulatory Office of my Ministry is operational since September 2018 and one of its main tasks is to ensure that pesticides are being used as per recommendations in view of protecting the public.

I am informed that five officers, namely one Principal Scientific Officer, who is responsible for the overall management of the office and four Agricultural Support Officers, who carry out pesticide residue monitoring by collection of samples for analysis and sensitization of growers, are currently posted at the Pesticides Regulatory Office. Samples of fruits and vegetables are collected at farm gates, markets, auction markets and supermarkets for analysis of pesticide residues.

The Pesticides Regulatory Office is supported by four additional officers from the Agricultural Chemistry Division for pesticide residue analysis at the Food Technology Laboratory. For coordination, there is one Acting Senior Scientific Officer, for the coordination of activities in the laboratory and the development of standards, one Scientific Officer, responsible for testing of residues, and two Agricultural Support Officers to assist the Scientific Officer for testing.

Ms J. Bérenger: Thank you. I was asking for the list of chemical trade names of the pesticides, but I cannot see the data. Can I have the data please? With regard to the Pesticide Regulatory Office, without a Pesticide Regulatory Office that is well staffed, the law, the use of pesticide Act is useless and cannot be enforced. So, can the Minister state to the House who is the Office-in-Charge of this office, please?

Mr Gobin: I have mentioned, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the Responsible Officer is a Principal Scientific Officer by the rank. I do not propose to give the name of a Civil Servant. He has the rank of a Principal Scientific Officer. I understand the concern of the hon. Member that the office should be sufficiently staffed. We totally agree but there was no Pesticide Regulatory Office prior 2018. I have to thank my distinguished colleague, hon. Seeruttun who brought this legislation in Parliament when he was Minister of Agriculture and we have since 2018 the existence of the Pesticide Regulatory Office. It is ongoing work. Of course, we have asked for additional funding. We will fill posts. Well, the hon. Member knows the process of staffing in the Civil Service. It is an ongoing work and we are satisfied that it is going in the right direction.

Ms J. Bérenger: With regard to the legislation, *peut-on savoir où en est le Organic Agricultural Bill?*

Mr Speaker: No, this is I think another topic.

Ms J. Bérenger: Maybe he wants to answer.

Mr Speaker: *Non, non, non!* It does not matter whether the Minister wants to reply or not. The Minister has to follow my guidance also, not only you. You, it is okay, but the Minister has to follow my guidance.

Next question!

PUBLIC HEALTHCARE SERVICES – COMPLAINT PROTOCOLS

(No. B/927) 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.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are different established complaint protocols which are applicable to both in-patients and out-patients attending public healthcare services. The modes of complaints are as follows –

- i. Any patient, whether in-patient or out-patient, can make a verbal or written complaint to the Regional Health Director, Medical Superintendent or Duty Manager of the respective health institution.
- ii. Complaints from patients are also dealt with at the Information Desk of the Hospital where an Officer responsible for Complaints provides all necessary assistance to complainants.
- iii. In addition, patients may also submit their complaints via the Citizen Support Portal where written complaints are directed to my Ministry on an online platform. At the level of my Ministry, a Complaints Coordinator is responsible for receiving all the complaints. The complaints are resolved in a timely manner and certain cases are referred to the Regional Health Director, Medical Superintendent or Duty Manager of the respective health institution for necessary action.
- iv. Patients may also choose to complain through any media platforms whereby complaints are referred to the Complaints Coordinator of my Ministry either in writing or by phone. Similarly, the Complaint Coordinator, upon receipt of the complaint, would as far as possible, find a timely solution to resolve same.

Alternately, in more complex cases, the complaint is referred to the Regional Health Director, Medical Superintendent or Duty Manager of the respective health institution for necessary action.

- v. In other cases, patients may opt to write directly to the Senior Chief Executive of my Ministry to make an official complaint. The same procedure applies and a report in the matter is sought from the Regional Health Director, Medical Superintendent or Duty Manager of the respective health institution.
- vi. Another mode by which patients chose to submit complaints is through suggestion boxes which are provided for in all hospitals. The suggestion boxes are regularly checked and all complaints are treated in a comparable manner by the Director or the Medical Superintendent.

Mr Speaker, Sir, irrespective of the mode of complaint, the Regional Health Director, Medical Superintendent or Duty Manager of the respective health institution conducts an enquiry with concerned head of departments to look into the matter. A meeting is then set up with the Complainant and concerned staff so as to resolve the complaint.

For more serious complaints or complaints of medical negligence or in cases where the Complainant is not satisfied with the explanations provided, the Director forwards the complaint along with a report from all treating personnel on the case to my Ministry.

Mr Speaker, Sir, upon receipt of the complaint as well as the report from the Regional Health Director, Medical Superintendent or Duty Manager, same are scrutinised at the level of the Ministry by the Director Health Services, the Director General, Health Services and officers of the Administrative cadre. In case where the complaint is substantiated, my Ministry recommends an in-depth investigation into the case.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the case is then referred to the Medical Negligence Standing Committee which carries out investigations into all cases of complaints of alleged Medical Negligence at the level of public health institutions. Upon completion of the enquiry by the Medical Negligence Standing Committee, the Enquiry Report is submitted to my Ministry. Irrespective of the findings of the Enquiry Report, the Medical Negligence Standing Committee communicates same to the complainant. In cases where there is any evidence of medical negligence against a

health practitioner, the case is referred to the relevant statutory body for an in-depth investigation and disciplinary action as warranted.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Par rapport aux plaintes qui ont été référées au *Medical Negligence Standing Committee* au courant de cette dernière année et conclues avec négligence médicale, l'honorable ministre peut-il nous dire si des mesures disciplinaires ont été prises envers le personnel concerné dans ces cas de négligence médicale comme prévues sous la section 46(a) du *Public Service Commissions Regulations* ?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. In fact, whenever there are complaints, the Medical Negligence Standing Committee submits its report on the case and on case to case basis, whenever the officer who has not done his work properly has been identified, sanctions have been taken. I do not have the figures right now with me, but I can provide this information to the hon. Member, especially those concerning serious cases.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Can the hon. Minister table the numbers from last year?

Dr. Jagutpal: Definitely, I will table all information for the last three years – number of cases treated and number of cases where there is medical negligence and sanctions taken against officers.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

NEW ROSE HILL MARKET CONSTRUCTION – FEASIBILITY STUDY & COST

(No. B/928) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the construction of the new Rose-Hill Market, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin and Rose Hill, information as to if a feasibility study has been conducted therefor and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) cost, giving a breakdown thereof, and
- (b) expected starting date thereof.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, Government has, on 05 May 2023, approved the construction of a new market fair in Rose Hill comprising a building of around four floors to

house a new market fair and also to accommodate the activities of the Da Patten as the new Arab Town Fairs.

In this respect, a first meeting was held on 11 May 2023 at the level of my Ministry with the representatives of the relevant ministries and departments together with the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill in order to initiate the project preparations. During the meeting, it was agreed to set up a Technical Committee which will be chaired by the representatives of the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning and comprising officers of the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill, Road Development Authority, Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit to look into the proposed layout of the different components of the project including traffic issues in the surrounding areas.

Hence, no feasibility study is being envisaged as the Technical Committee has been set up to look into the different components of the project. The Technical Committee has so far met on two occasions and a third meeting will be held by next week. The report is expected from the technical team by mid-July 2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the project has been earmarked as 'project under preparation' in the Budget 2023/24 given that there are a few plots of land still under acquisition process. A preliminary cost estimate of the project has been prepared by the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill and the financial clearance of the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development has been sought on 26 June 2023 with respect to the procurement of consultancy services in the first instance.

Once the financial clearance is obtained and all the identified plots of land are vested in my Ministry, request for proposal will be initiated by the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill for the hiring of the service of a Consultant.

Mr Nagalingum: Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister inform the House whether all stakeholders, that is, especially the market traders, vegetable and meat traders, and others are being consulted before the decision has been taken and whether traders of the actual Rose Hill Market will be allocated the ground floor of the new planned market and, if not, why not?

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I mentioned, there is a Technical Committee which is meeting all the relevant stakeholders. I think it is a bit premature now to decide who is going to get the ground floor or where in the market.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

NATIONAL HERITAGE TITLE – CRITERIA FOR ELIGIBILITY

(No. B/929) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to the National Heritage, he will state the eligibility criteria for historical buildings, monuments, sites and old buildings to be designated in the list thereof.

Mr Teeluck: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the National Heritage Fund that in accordance with section 12 of the National Heritage Fund Act 2003, the Board may recommend the following to my Ministry for designation as national heritage –

- (a) any monument;
- (b) any object or site of cultural significance;
- (c) any intangible heritage;
- (d) any natural feature consisting of physical and biological formation or a group of such formations which are of outstanding value, and
- (e) any geological and physiographical formation or precisely delineated area which consist the habitat of animals and plants of outstanding value.

Mr Speaker, Sir, however, prior to the designation of national heritage, the following criteria are taken into consideration –

- (a) Age of the building or structure;
- (b) Historical value;
- (c) Architectural value;
- (d) State of the building/need for preservation;
- (e) Memorial value;
- (f) Uniqueness, and

- (g) Group value, that is, a combination of criteria listed above.

Once of these criteria are ascertained by the NHF, in case the proposed designated heritage site is a private property, the consent of the owner has to be sought and obtained. Moreover, consultations are held with the relevant stakeholders by the NHF to secure their consent.

Mr Speaker, Sir, once it is established that the proposed heritage site can be designated as a national heritage, a statement of cultural significance comprising, *inter alia*, of location of the site, description of the site and significance of the site is submitted to my Ministry. Once all the documents are received, approval of the Cabinet is sought for the designation and thereafter, the regulations for the designation of national heritage are published in the Government Gazette.

Mrs Mayotte: Can the hon. Minister confirm that there is actually a list of buildings, monuments, sites and old buildings which are waiting for designation as national heritage? If so, when will his Ministry proceed to designation?

Mr Teeluck: Mr Speaker, Sir, the listed sites are, as I said, gazetted and they are listed in the Annex to the main regulation and the Act. Usually, when it comes to listing, we either receive requests from stakeholders or from the public in general to assess whether any building or monument or any other site is likely to be qualified as national heritage. So, this is an ongoing process where the NHF carries out assessments and sends its recommendation to the Ministry, but it might help the hon. Member to note that recent sites designated as national heritage include

—

- (i) *Bassin des Esclaves* at Pamplemousses listed on the 18 April 2023;
- (ii) *Marché des Esclaves* at Pamplemousses listed on that same day;
- (iii) Sitaram Satron Building located in the compound of Arulmigu Sockalingum Meenatchee Ammen Temple at Ste Croix also listed on 18 April 2023;
- (iv) the Samadhi of Sir Anerood Jugnauth at SSR Botanical Garden, Pamplemousses, and the Samadhi of Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam at SSR Botanical Garden both on the 29 March 2023;
- (v) Old stone building at Krishnanand Seva Ashram, Calebasses on 06 May 2022, and lastly

- (vi) First flag hosting site for the independence of Mauritius in 1968 at Champ de Mars on 06 May 2022.

Mrs Mayotte: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The Minister of Arts stated in his speech during the Budget debates that he will coming forward with a new NHF Bill. Can the hon. Minister state where matters stand?

Mr Teeluck: Mr Speaker, Sir, consultations...

Mr Speaker: No, I do not think this is proper. Do not venture, hon. Minister, do not venture. I think that this question has been sufficiently canvassed. Let us move on to the next question. Hon. Léopold!

IOIG – ACTIVITIES

(No. B/930) **Mr J. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the forthcoming Indian Ocean Island Games, he will state if his Ministry proposes to organise activities with a view to promoting the interest of the youth of the Republic of Mauritius, other than sportsmen, therein and, if so, give details thereof.

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission before replying to the question, I would like to extend my heartfelt condolences to the family of Mr Anthony Rosalba who passed away yesterday. He was a former football player of ASPL 2000.

I would also like to express our concern for Mr Gordy Prosper, a football player of Joachim Football Club and of the National Football Selection, who sustained serious injuries in the same accident. We sincerely hope for his swift recovery and those who have been injured.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the forthcoming Indian Ocean Island Games (IOIG) are expected to be held in Madagascar from 25 August to 03 September 2023. Apart from promoting the sports sector, the Indian Ocean Island Games also promotes the interest of youth of the Indian Ocean through '*Volet Jeunesse*.'

The '*Volet Jeunesse*' comprises of the '*Assemblée des Jeunes*', '*Theâtre*' et '*Chants et Danses Traditionels*.' Young people aged 14 to 25 years were invited to register for participation in the '*Volet Jeunesse*' through Google Form posted on the Facebook page of the

Ministry. 260 entries were received. Eligible candidates were called for selection exercise. Two have been retained for '*Assemblée des Jeunes*' and six have been retained for '*Theâtre*.'

With regards to '*Chants et Danses Traditionels*,' this component has been reserved for our young Rodriguans, thus ensuring participation from the youth of the Republic of Mauritius. The Youth Department of the Commission for Youth and Sports, Arts and Culture, Library Services carried out a selection exercise. Three boys and three girls have been selected and rehearsals are ongoing. Thank you.

Mr Léopold: Thank you, hon. Minister. Can the hon. Minister inform the House where those young people come from in the different regions in Rodrigues?

Mr Toussaint: I do not have the answer for all those who were called for selection, but I have for the three girls and three boys selected. The three girls come from Pavé Labonté, Montagne Malgache, Lataniers and the three boys come from Pompee, Grande Montagne and Thammes.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

CANAL ANGLAIS, PORT LOUIS –RECONSTRUCTION/REPAIRS

(No. B/931) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the proposed reconstruction/repairs of the Canal Anglais, in Port Louis, he will state where matters stand, indicating the –

- (a) the cost thereof;
- (b) name of the selected contractor therefor, and
- (c) expected completion date thereof.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to parts (a) and (b) of the question, I am informed that a contract for the upgrading of Canal Anglais in Port Louis was awarded to Super Builders Co. Ltd on 30 October 2020 for an amount of Rs114,757,925, inclusive of VAT, by the National Development Unit. The initial contractual completion date was 30 November 2021.

I am further informed that there has been a delay in the completion of the project for various reasons, including –

- (i) the national lockdown in view of COVID-19 pandemic;
- (ii) the undertaking of geotechnical investigations prior to the construction works and the unsuitable ground conditions identified;
- (iii) clearance for felling of trees;
- (iv) additional works requested by “*Forces Vives*” of the region, particularly for raising of walls;
- (v) additional work for new footbridge for Qurtuba Mosque of Paul Taureau and Masjid Madinatul Munawwarah at Cité Martial, and
- (vi) additional works for structural repairs to Islamic School for Disabled Children at Cité Martial.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the additional works relating to the geotechnical investigations and new footbridges will entail additional expenditure to the tune of Rs20.2 m., bringing the total cost of the project around Rs134 m., inclusive of VAT. As at date, Rs103 m. has already been disbursed.

As regards part (c) of the question, I am advised that the works will now be completed by end of August 2023 after the remaining outstanding works have been attended to, namely –

- (a) remaining 15% non-structural reinforced concrete slabs at Islamic School for Disabled Children;
- (b) fencing works before the handing over of the project to the Municipal City Council of Port Louis, given that the previous fencing which were installed was stolen, and
- (c) provision of a steel pedestrian bridge at the Masjid Madinatul Munawwarah at Cité Martial where works have already been completed at 50% as of now.

Thank you.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have two supplementary questions. The objective of the works was to repair and reconstruct the Canal Anglais so as to prevent rain water from flowing into nearby houses. Can I ask the hon. Minister if he is aware that despite the work that has been performed, that has been carried out as he mentioned in his reply, that water is still

flowing in the house of people living nearby, which means that it could be that the work has not been properly?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do understand the concern of my hon. colleague. In fact, it is true, there has been seepage of water through the canal because we have realised during the geotechnical investigation that there were cavities under base of the canal and it has been mapped using ground penetration radar technology. This is one of the reasons for the delay of the project. A special cement based on grout has been injected under the canal using a special pump without needing the demolition of the canal. So, now it is only during the next rainfall that we will be able to test the efficacy of the treatment. Well, as there are extensive cavities, lava tunnels that go up to harbour and we might have missed a few, I hope not, but to the extent that the work has been done, the experts are confirming that it should be alright now. So, let us hope that it works better for the next rainy season.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the situation, can I ask the hon. Minister if his Ministry could delegate engineers or officers of his Ministry to carry out a site visit and not to wait for the next rainy season to carry out a site visit, so that people living nearby know exactly where the water is coming, where there is a seepage which is coming to their house, so that he can ask his officers to remedy to the situation?

Mr Hurreeram: Like I have said, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have already remedied to the situation. We have done extensive mapping of the cavities using what is called a Penetration Radar Technology. So, that has been done already. The visit has been done already. I must thank my colleagues hon. Dr. Anwar Husnoo and hon. Abbas Mamode for their help during the site visit and for their request.

In fact, all those additional works regarding most of Paul Toureau, it was to their request that these additional works have been added to this project. So, next time, we will make sure that we invite you too for a site visit.

Mr Ameer Meea: *Kot to mem, to nimer 4!*

Mr Speaker: Next question!

MACAQUES EXPORTATION – EXPORTING COMPANIES

(No. B/932) **Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the exportation of Macaques to the United States of America in the state of Michigan, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) the number thereof, indicating the names of companies exporting same, and
- (b) if he has taken cognizance of a report of cases of Macaques infected with tuberculosis.

Mr Gobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that there are six companies actively involved in the trade and export of macaques –

- (i) Bioculture (Mauritius) Ltd;
- (ii) Noveprim Ltd;
- (iii) Le Tamarinier Ltd;
- (iv) Les Campêches Ltd;
- (v) Cynologics Ltd, and
- (vi) Biosphere Trading Ltd.

With regard to the export of Macaques to the United States of America, I am informed that six companies have, during the year 2019, exported a total of 3,492 macaques and in the year 2020, 7,234. However, I am informed that no macaques have been exported from Mauritius directly to the State of Michigan.

It may happen that after arrival in the United States of America, macaques may have been subsequently transferred to Michigan or other states. Such transfer is not communicated to Mauritius as it falls under the jurisdiction of the competent authorities of the United States.

I am aware, Mr Speaker, Sir, of recent articles in the local press, alleging that in the year 2021, tuberculosis was detected in macaques apparently exported from Mauritius in a research laboratory in Michigan. However, the Livestock and Veterinary Division of my Ministry is not in presence of any report from the Veterinary Authority of the USA so far on cases of tuberculosis in macaques exported from Mauritius to the USA.

I am also informed that following enquiry made by the National Parks and Conservation Service with all the six exporting companies, all six exporting companies have confirmed that they are not in presence of any report or correspondence on cases of tuberculosis in macaques exported from Mauritius.

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I ask the hon. Minister, with regard to the permits that are given for the exportation of those long-tailed macaques, is there a permit given to capture wild long-tailed macaques or there is a specific permit for breeding of those long-tailed macaques, and then you export them?

Mr Gobin: Yes, it is for breeding and then export. It is very strictly regulated, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is regulated under the Native Terrestrial Biodiversity and National Parks Act 2015. All the rules are in line with the guidelines of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, International Primatological Society (IPS) and the Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care International.

Mr Lobine: Can the hon. Minister inform this House whether there is a defined protocol with regard to the breeding of those primates? Because there are several reports in the international press that long-tailed macaques from Mauritius are being exported from the wild, they are captured from the wild. Can the hon. Minister disseminate information and also communicate that, in Mauritius, we do not export long-tailed macaques captured from the wild?

Mr Gobin: My hon. colleague is sufficiently experienced enough to know that we should take the articles in the press with a pinch of salt. I say it again, it is heavily regulated. It pleases some people just to throw articles in the press to tarnish the reputation of this country. The Ministry and I are satisfied that everything is being done in strict compliance with the applicable regulations, Mr Speaker, Sir. If we do not apply the regulations, those international laboratories will not even trade with us. This is the baseline.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

NSLD LTD – SOCIAL HOUSING UNITS – CONTRACT AWARD

(No. B/933) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the construction of social housing units by the New Social Living

Development Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom information as to if a contract therefor has also been awarded to N. G. & Co. Ltd., and, if so, when, giving details thereof.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. gentleman to my previous replies in respect of the National Social Living Development Ltd. Construction Project and to my intervention during debates on the Supplementary Appropriation Bill in the course of which I informed the House that the NSLD proceeded with two Open Bidding exercises for the construction of 12,000 housing units in August 2022 and November 2022 respectively, both of which bidding exercises proved to be inconclusive.

As a result, Government in February 2023 opted for a new procurement strategy based on the design and build concept to ensure cost certainty and affordability of the housing units.

In line with the relevant provisions of the Public Procurement Act, the NSLD proceeded with selective tendering targeting all 19 locally incorporated large contractors, building and civil works, registered with the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB).

On 06 February 2023, an Expression of Interest was thus sent to all 19 large CIDB registered contractors inviting them to express their interest for the construction of a minimum of 200 housing units up to 1,000 housing units approximately at a predetermined price of Rs2.7 m. per housing unit inclusive of on-site infrastructural works.

Of the 19 CIDB registered large contractors, only 16 responded, out of which 14 were found to be compliant with the requirements of the Expression of Interest. Letters of Intent were on 03 March 2023, I am informed, issued to these 14 compliant contractors –

- 1) Beijing Construction Engineering Company Ltd;
- 2) DLB Construction Company Ltd;
- 3) Gamma Construction Ltd;
- 4) General Construction Company Limited;
- 5) Hyvec Partners Ltd;
- 6) Kuros Construction Solutions Ltd;
- 7) NG & Co. Limited;

- 8) Ramasawmy & Ramasawmy Co. Ltd;
- 9) RBRB Construction Ltd;
- 10) REHM Grinaker Co. Ltd;
- 11) Square Deal Multi-Purpose Cooperative Society Limited;
- 12) Super Construction Co. Ltd;
- 13) Tayelamay & Sons Enterprise Ltd, and
- 14) Transinvest Construction Limited.

After assessment of preliminary and thereafter of final designs, the NSLD, I am informed, proceeded to enter into contractual agreements with all the above-mentioned contractors.

I am further informed by the NSLD that a Letter of Award was accordingly on 22 May 2023 issued to NG & Co. Limited for the construction of a total of 800 housing units over three sites.

I am further informed by the NSLD that NG & Co. Limited has, however, not accepted the Letter of Award within the prescribed time period and that the NSLD has issued a termination letter to the said contractor. Accordingly, as of today, NG & Co. Limited is not a contractor of the NSLD for Phase 1 of the 12,000 Social Housing Units Project.

Mr Juman: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can we know from the hon. Minister, now that NG & Co. Limited will not go ahead with the contract, what will happen for the project of Constituencies No. 4 and No. 8?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I understand that three sites were earmarked for NG & Co Ltd. Now NSLD, in accordance, I am informed, with the legal advice it has sought and according to relevant provisions of legislation relating to procurement, will proceed to select three other contractors from the same list of CIDB registered large contractors to be entrusted with these three sites.

Mr Juman: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Hon. Deputy Prime Minister, can we know the reason addressed to the NSLD why NG Gopee is not going ahead with the project?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I am afraid the hon. gentleman might need to contact NG & Co Ltd. I am not aware of any particular reason.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

**MAURITIUS WEIGHTLIFTING FEDERATION – FOREIGN NATIONAL
DIRECTOR/COACH – CONTRACT**

(No. B/934) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the Mauritius Weightlifting Federation, he will –

- (a) state if the services of a foreign national technical director/coach have been retained therefor and, if so, indicate the –
 - (i) name and nationality thereof;
 - (ii) salaries drawn, and
 - (iii) duration of contract and terms and conditions of contract thereof, and
- (b) table copy of the qualifications thereof.

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to inform the House that Mr Urdas Constantin, a Romanian national was offered a one-year employment contract as the National Technical Director for weightlifting on 13 February 2023. He assumed his duties on 27 April 2023. Mr Constantin is currently receiving a monthly salary of Rs95,000 along with a monthly allowance of Rs45,000 for additional duties. As per the terms and conditions of his contract, Mr Constantin is entitled to 21 days of sick leave, 21 days of annual leave, an allowance to cover the maximum cost of 25 kgs of excess luggage by air, a transfer grant equivalent to 2% of his annual allowance to cover incidental charges, loan facilities upon the expiry of the final contract and a gratuity at the rate of one-month allowance upon completing 12 months of satisfactory service.

My Ministry reserves the right to terminate Mr Constantin's employment at any time by providing a one-month written notice or by paying him a one month salary. The duties and responsibilities of Mr Constantin are –

1. Advise on the development and promotion of weightlifting in Mauritius, prepare development programmes and provide technical assistance for the training of

weightlifters for international competitions such as the Indian Ocean Islands Games 2023, all Africa Games, Francophone Games, African Weightlifting Championships and the 2024 Olympic Games in line with the requirements of my Ministry and the Mauritius Weightlifting Federation;

2. Advise and coach the junior/senior elite weightlifting team for major competitions;
3. Assist the Mauritius Weightlifting Federation in establishing a technical commission with the appropriate structure responsible for coaching related matters such as coaches responsibilities, talent identification and training;
4. Assist in the selection of weightlifters for national and international competitions;
5. Conduct training for animators, coaches in weightlifting skills and techniques;
6. Assist in the setting up of weightlifting training structures across the island; and
7. Perform any other duties directly related to the main responsibilities listed above and any tasks associated with delivering the expected outputs and results ascribed to the National Technical Director.

Regarding part (b) of the question, with your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am tabling a copy of the qualifications of Mr Constantin.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, avec votre permission, je voudrais m'associer à l'honorable ministre de la Jeunesse et des Sports pour présenter mes plus vives sympathies à la famille et aux proches du footballeur Anthony Rosalba qui a trouvé la mort dans un accident de la route hier soir, et je présente aussi mes souhaits de bon rétablissement à un autre jeune footballeur Gordy Prosper, qui lui, est en soins intensifs. Ceci dit, M. le président, selon les informations qui me sont parvenues, le président de la fédération d'haltérophilie a émis des réserves par rapport au recrutement de Monsieur Urdas Constantin. De ce fait, le ministre peut-il nous dire si son ministère ne prend pas le risque de plonger l'haltérophilie mauricienne dans le spectre du dopage, surtout quand on sait qu'il y a eu plusieurs de nos athlètes qui ont été contrôlés positifs aux produits prohibés alors qu'ils étaient sous la supervision de ce même DTN, Monsieur Urdas Constantin en 2015 et 2016 ?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, nous ne prenons aucune décision sans l'approbation d'une fédération ; de n'importe quelle fédération, et en ce qu'il s'agit ici-là, nous parlons de

l'haltérophilie. Donc, plusieurs réunions ont été faites et à l'heure que je vous parle, personnellement ou le ministère, nous n'avons reçu aucune contestation de la part du président de la fédération et nous sommes en train de travailler de concert pour préparer nos athlètes pour les Jeux des îles qui arrivent. En ce qu'il s'agit de probable cas de dopage, puisqu'il n'y a aucune enquête qui a prouvé que Monsieur Constantin est coupable de dopage, au niveau de la fédération, il n'y a pas ce genre de document.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, l'honorable ministre est certainement informé qu'une haltérophile de haut niveau a été suspendue par *l'International Testing Agency* pour un test positif qui date de 2016 lors d'un contrôle hors compétition fait en Roumanie. De ce fait, le ministre peut-il nous dire si cet athlète qui était sous la supervision de Monsieur Urdas Constantin à cette période ?

Mr Toussaint: Bon, c'est très difficile pour moi de retrouver tout ça dans le nombre. Non, je n'ai pas cette information avec moi.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

ALPHAMIX LTD – JUDICIAL COMMITTEE OF THE PRIVY COUNCIL – LEGAL FEES

(No. B/935) 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 in the case of Alphamix Ltd., against the District Council of Rivière du Rempart, he will state the amount payable as legal fees to the legal representatives of Alphamix Ltd., giving a breakdown thereof.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the District Council of Rivière du Rempart that a claim amounting to Rs6,156,547 representing professional fees and other expenses incurred by Alphamix Ltd in respect of the appeal case made before the Privy Council has now been received.

As far as the information requested regarding the breakdown of the legal fees, same cannot be disclosed as they are confidential to Alphamix and its legal representatives.

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Will the hon. Vice-Prime Minister inform the House what happened to the ICAC inquiry following the anonymous letter received on 10 February 2014 pertaining to allegations against both the arbitrator and the counsel of Alphamix Ltd as he mentioned in his answer to my PQ B/755 on 20 June 2023?

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is not included in this question. I am sorry.

Mr Speaker: Yes, I thought you changed your technique of putting question. This is the full question.

Dr. Gungapersad: Okay.

Mr Speaker: Full-fledged question you are asking a Minister without giving notice?

Dr. Gungapersad: It relates to the same issue.

Mr Speaker: Everything relates to everything. In Politics, in Parliament, everything relates to everything.

Dr. Gungapersad: I am talking of Alphamix Ltd. Will the hon. the Vice-Prime Minister...

Mr Speaker: You should have the faculty...

An hon. Member: Bon voyage!

Dr. Gungapersad: Will the hon. the Vice-Prime Minister inform the House whether the advice of the SLO was formally thought on whether such information as they said should be kept confidential and not divulged in this House?

Dr. Husnoo: But Mr Speaker, Sir, I think it's a bit unfair to release the legal fees of...

Mr Ameer Meea: Public fund is unfair?

Dr. Husnoo: If you want to protest, you can protest.

An hon. Member:*Ena ene probleme.*

Dr. Husnoo: *Pena problem....tomem topa p koner ki pou kozer.*

(Interruptions)

That does not make sense!

Mr Speaker: Let me announce PQs B/944, B/951, B/955, B/965, B/970, B/971, B/974, B/977, B/980 and B/985 have been withdrawn.

So, next question!

MAHEBOURG – NEW MARKET FAIR

(No. B/936) Mr R. Doolub (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the construction of a new market fair in Mahebourg, he will state where matters stand.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the District Council of Grand Port that the contract for the Design and Build Turnkey Project “Construction of New Mahebourg Market Fair” was awarded on 17 August 2019 for an amount of Rs83,726,181.25 inclusive of VAT to EDCC Ltd following approval of the Central Procurement Board.

The contract agreement was signed on 12 September 2019. The start date of the project was 19 September 2019 and the initial completion date was 18 December 2021.

However, due to amendments made in the design of the building such as an increase in height of the main building, the relocation of the toilet blocks, provision of rainwater harvesting, and construction of parking space, the cost was reviewed to Rs104 m.

The project was delayed due to confinement as a result of COVID-19 outbreak and also due to the construction of a boundary wall opposite the site which was being undertaken by the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation. Unfortunately, the construction of the boundary wall prevented the timely relocation of CEB poles which formed part of the project. The revised completion date was extended twice –

- (i) to April 2022, and subsequently
- (ii) to June 2022.

However, the contractor has requested for extension of time up to November 2022. The contractor has submitted a claim on 21 February 2022 for the sum of Rs6,328,818.36 which included extension of time with cost, to which, the Council was not agreeable as per Directive

No. 55 issued by the Procurement Policy Office under the Public Procurement Act 2006, that is, extension of time shall be granted without any additional cost.

On 09 June 2022, the contractor informed the Council that it had suspended all the work on site as from 02 June 2022. On 24 June 2022, a cheque of Rs1,965,130.32 m. representing part payment for claim number 11 was issued by the Council to the contractor, but the latter refused to collect same.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on 17 August 2022, the contractor informed the Council that it shall terminate the contract as from 22 August 2022 ceasing all obligation to provide lighting, watchmanship service on site as from 23 August 2022. A meeting was scheduled with the contractor at the seat of the Council on 07 August 2022, but the latter did not attend despite several reminders and telephone calls.

On the other hand, a Cost Controller was appointed by the District Council of Grand Port to look in to the contractual issues. The latter submitted its report on 14 September 2022.

Several discrepancies were noted by the Cost Controller, during the submission of the original design, submission of amended design during the execution of the works, and excess amount claimed by the latter for work not completed on site.

A Performance Review Committee was set up at the level of the Council as per Directive No. 35 issued by the PPO and met on the 18 November 2022. The contractor was informed accordingly, but he did not reply to the Council. Therefore, the Council decided to terminate the contract with EDCC Ltd on 10 January 2023 and debarment procedures are being followed by the Council. It is to be noted that the performance security amounting to Rs8,372,618.13 submitted by the contractor has been forfeited by the District Council in December 2022.

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Considering that the contractor evacuated the site, can we know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister what would be the way forward for the construction of the new market fair? Thank you.

Dr. Husnoo: Actually, we had a meeting with MNI and we have discussed how we are going to proceed with the project. A team has been set up under the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development and they are going to work on the project. This is how we are going to proceed with the project.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

COTE D'OR – SMART CITY PROJECT

(No. B/937) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Côte d'Or Integrated Smart City Project, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Landscape (Mauritius) Ltd., information as to the –

- (a) total estimated costs thereof, indicating the mode of financing therefor, and
- (b) scheduled completion date thereof.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, je remercie l'honorable membre pour cette question. Le gouvernement mauricien développe, par l'intermédiaire de *Landscape (Mauritius) Ltd*, le projet de la Côte d'Or *Integrated Smart City* sur une superficie totale d'environ 920 hectares, soit 2,179 arpents. La ville est développée sur un vaste terrain stratégiquement situé au centre du pays, à Côte d'Or, à proximité d'importants développements existants et de futurs développements substantiels planifiés.

L'émergence de cette nouvelle ville, levier de croissance et d'emplois, s'accompagnera d'investissements publics dans les infrastructures physiques à vocation communautaires, éducatives et de santé y compris des universités, des établissements de santé, des équipements collectifs, des liaisons de transport public et l'aménagement des rues, ainsi que des améliorations connexes, y compris des infrastructures modernes de transport et des services.

Le plan directeur de la *Smart City* de Côte d'Or comprend différents projets qui sont et seront développés grâce à des investissements publics et privés sur le terrain appartenant à *Landscape (Mauritius) Ltd* à Côte d'Or.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne la partie (a) de la question, j'ai été informé que *Landscape* ne construira que les travaux d'infrastructure de la *Smart City* dont le coût total est estimé à environ 2,3 milliards de roupies. Plus précisément, le gouvernement financera les travaux d'infrastructure hors site à hauteur d'environ 1,7 milliards de roupies et *Landscape* financera les travaux d'infrastructure sur site, dont le coût est estimé à environ 600 millions de roupies.

Tous les projets du *Data Technology Park* et de l'*Education and Health Hub* donc le coût total est estimé à plus de 34 milliards de roupies, seront financés par le secteur privé, à l'exception de l'*Open University* qui financera son propre projet.

M. le président, pour ce qui est de la partie (b) de la question, la réalisation complète du Côte d'Or *Smart City* se déroulera sur plusieurs années. Les travaux ont débuté et certains ont d'ores et déjà été complétés. Concernant les travaux d'infrastructure financés par le gouvernement mauricien et *Landscape* que je viens de mentionner, ces derniers seront réalisés sous 24 mois.

Pour ce qui est des autres éléments de cette *Smart City*, j'ai été informé que le calendrier de réalisation est soumis à plusieurs variables en raison de la nature et de l'envergure du projet, mais aussi des différentes parties-prenantes publiques et privées impliquées dans le financement et l'implémentation du projet dans son ensemble. Merci.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister mentioned that the bulk of the project will be financed by the private sector. So, may I ask the hon. Minister whether any Request for Proposal or Expression of Interest has been issued to the private sector and whether there has been any feedback from the private sector to finance this project?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, je vais prendre par exemple le parc technologique de Côte d'Or. Le *Data Park* est en cours de développement sur environ 150 arpents de terrain et nous avons mis à la disposition du secteur privé 15 lots dont la taille varie de trois à 13 arpents. A la suite de l'exercice d'expression d'intérêt, nous avons reçu des offres pour 12 lots de la part de neuf promoteurs. Je peux les citer et donner quelque noms –

- Innodis Property Ltd
- Maeva TSC Ltd
- KDA-Geosystems Ltd
- Verdant Garden Ltd
- Nexera Ltd
- VivaCity Ltd
- Green Technopark Ltd

- Bagatech Innovation Ltd
- Ava Technopark Ltd

Tous ces opérateurs du secteur privé sont en grande partie dans le secteur médical, intelligence et ICT, et aussi biotechnologie. Donc, sur tous ces projets, il y en a deux qui sont déjà en cours et qui vont terminer très bientôt leur projet de construction.

Mr Uteem: According to the Public Sector Investment Programme, four buildings will be constructed to accommodate more than 5,000 public officers in the Smart City of Côte d’Or.

May we know from the hon. Minister whether these buildings are meant to relocate the Public Officers from Emmanuel Anquetil Building to Côte d’Or?

Dr. Padayachy: Sur cette question, ce sera par la suite qu’on va déterminer si ceux qui sont au Emmanuel Anquetil Building vont être relogés à Côte d’Or - pour les bâtiments qu’on va construire à Côte d’Or. Pour le moment, les ministères qui sont concernés, qui sont dans le bâtiment, sont à la recherche de nouveaux locaux pour leurs employés.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

BON ACCUEIL, BELVÉDÈRE & LAVENTURE – LAYING OF PIPES PROJECTS

(No. B/938) Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the projects for the laying of pipes in the regions of Bon Accueil, Belvédère and Laventure, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to where matters stand as to the implementation thereof.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Central Water Authority that with regard to the implementation of the water supply and distribution project for the region of Laventure, the outstanding hydraulic works have been completed. As for the permanent reinstatement works, the Central Water Authority has awarded the contract to Gamma Construction Ltd in May 2023 for the building and full width resurfacing of roads in Laventure. Works have started on 28 June 2023 and are expected to be completed by the end of August 2023.

For the region of Bon Accueil and Belvédère, the hydraulic works are being undertaken in-house by the Central Water Authority. Works started in January 2023 and are expected to be completed by July 2023.

The permanent road reinstatement for the region will be carried out in two phases. The Central Water Authority has awarded the contract for phase 1 to Gamma Construction Ltd in May 2023 for the milling and full width resurfacing of part of the Port Louis-Central Flacq Road A2 and works are expected to start soon. The duration of the works will be for a period of three months. Procurement process for the phrase 2 of the permanent road reinstatement works, that is, from Pont Bon Dieu Road to Junction Belvédère will be initiated thereafter. The duration of works is estimated for three months.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Nuckcheddy: Mr Speaker, Sir, so the network of Laventure goes up to the Village of Pont Blanc. So, can the hon. Minister inform the House if the resurfacing - when he mentioned Laventure - the contract of which has been awarded to Gamma Construction Ltd, as he stated in his reply, will that be extended up to Pont Blanc? Can he please inform the house? Thank you.

Mr Lesjongard: Let me check, Mr Speaker, Sir, whether I have that information with me. No, Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't have the information to be able to confirm what I have just said, but, anyway, I will be able to provide the information requested for by the hon. Member at a later stage, if you don't mind.

Mr Nuckcheddy: Can the hon. Minister inform the House if there is any specific reason why the work of Belvédère has been split into two phases?

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, like I have stated in my reply, because the works have been carried out in-house and it has taken some time for the CWA to complete the works. So to be able to move forward at a good pace, they have split the reinstatement works into two phases.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

**Mr J. H. C. - FINANCIAL INTELLIGENCE UNIT – ALLEGED SUSPICIOUS
BUSINESS**

(No. B/939) Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance whether, in regard to Mr J. H. C., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Financial Intelligence Unit, information as to if an inquiry has been initiated into the alleged suspicious business thereof and, if not, why not.

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) that following a referral, an application for Restraining Order was made and was obtained on 17 September 2021, whereby a sum of Rs326,300 was restrained.

I am also informed by the FIU that further to investigation carried out and intelligence received in December 2022, it was revealed that Mr J. H. C. owns several moveable and immoveable properties. In this respect, the FIU applied for and obtained another Restraining Order in January 2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, investigation is currently ongoing on the bank accounts of Mr J. H. C. as well as on eight of his family members who are suspected to be *prête-noms*. Thank you.

Dr. Boolell: Will the hon. Minister state if it has been established that he is in business partnership with a senior officer of the Special Striking Team (SST)?

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Speaker, Sir, like I said, the enquiry is still going on and at this stage, I can't reveal more than what I have said in my reply.

Dr. Boolell: Am I to understand from the Minister that these are proceeds from the sale of drugs? And we have been told that he is a big funder of the MSM. Am I right to say so?

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Ms Anquetil: B/940.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: But I reserve the right to ask you to withdraw this.

An hon. Member: Yes! Yes!

An hon. Member: Withdraw! Withdraw!

Mr Speaker: Can you please withdraw that?

Dr. Boolell: Which part of the question to withdraw?

Mr Speaker: You know!

An hon. Member: The funding of the MSM.

Mr Speaker: You are a gentleman. You know better than me.

Dr. Boolell: Okay. I withdraw that.

SADALLY, VACOAS – COMMUNITY CENTRE – REOPENING

(No. B/940) **Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal)** asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Community Centre 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.

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund that in view of increasing demand from the inhabitants of the locality, necessary actions have already been initiated to rent an appropriate space with all the required facilities and amenities in order to be able to house a Community Centre in the vicinity of the region of Sadally.

In this context, the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund invited bids through open advertisement on 15 February this year in the local press and as at the closing date of 15 March of this year for submission of bids, only two bids were received. I am also informed that SILWF is in the process of examining those bids. The contract will be awarded following the approval of the SILWF Committee.

In the meantime, Mr Speaker, Sir, the inhabitants of that locality are being redirected to the municipal hall at Vacoas and the multipurpose complex at Reunion to benefit from activities being carried out thereat.

Ms Anquetil: La ministre peut-elle indiquer à la Chambre pourquoi ce centre communautaire à Sadally est resté inactif, c'est-à-dire sans aucune activité pendant deux ans malgré l'embauche de cinq personnes, ce qui semble être un gaspillage évident de fonds publics ?

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not correct to say it is a wastage of public funds. The Centre has not had any activities for the past two years and probably longer than that,

because all the centres across the island were shut during the pandemic. Since it has reopened, there is an ongoing process to allocate anew premises to house the Community Centre of Sadally. So, there have not been activities in most of the centres during the lockdown period and a little bit after that as well.

Ms Anquetil: La ministre pourrait-elle informer à la Chambre si une pétition a circulé parmi les habitants de la région réclamant la fermeture de ce centre communautaire en raison de l'influence disproportionnée qu'exerce un agent politique proche du MSM ?

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, it looks like my party is very popular and very influential, by the way, if they are managing to influence that kind of behaviour.

Mr Speaker, Sir, again, the hon. Member is not correct in what she is stating. Yes, there has been a petition, but not for the reason that she is presuming. There has been a petition by the inhabitants of that locality to not even have a community centre in that region. So, the very definition of a Community Centre is *pour être à l'écoute et au service des habitants*. So, if there is a petition from inhabitants of that locality not wanting to have a Community Centre in this specific region, hence the reason why there have been bids, there have been expressions of interest, advertisements to find other appropriate premises where the services of such Community Centres are going to be welcomed by the inhabitants.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

STREET CHILDREN' PROTECTION – LEGISLATION

(No. B/941) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the street children, she will state if she proposes to bring amendments to existing legislation for the protection therefor and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I refer the hon. Member and the House to the reply I made at the Sitting of 16 May 2023 for PQ B/525 in which I stated that yet, the definition of street children is indeed very ambiguous and is subject to several interpretations worldwide.

However, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to specify sections 11 to 19 and section 31 of the Children's Act 2020 which refer to, and I quote: "offences against children" and "children in need of assistance, care and protection", respectively. Those sections provide for an umbrella

protection where interventions, when necessary, are geared towards all children whether or not in street situation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is also worth noting that the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child itself calls upon Member States to adopt a child's right approach. That being said, I am convinced that the Children's Act 2020 is making sufficient provision for protection and care for all Mauritian children irrespective of them being street children or not.

Moreover, Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to highlight that one of the functions of the Ombudsperson for Children as per section 6(g) of the Ombudsperson for Children Act of 2003 is to, and I quote –

“Investigate cases relating to the situation of children in the family, in schools and in all other institutions, including private or public bodies, as well as cases of abandoned children or street children;”

So, there is a legal reference of street children in our legal landscape, but there is no definition as yet.

Nevertheless, I would welcome any proposal from the hon. Member who put forward the PQ and I reassure her that my Ministry will give her proposals due consideration. Thank you.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: M. le président, je rappelle à la ministre qu'elle avait répondu à une question posée par la deuxième députée de Beau Bassin-Petite Rivière, qu'elle allait prendre en considération le fait de présenter un projet de loi sur les enfants de rue à l'Assemblée nationale. Et il y avait même eu une question supplémentaire pour demander quand est-ce que cela allait être fait. La Ministre avait dit: '*soon*'.

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Soon is not tomorrow!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: La ministre peut-elle nous dire si, en attendant, son ministère compte procéder au recrutement de *street workers*, des travailleurs de rue, pour encadrer ces enfants, comme ce fut le cas entre 2000 et 2005 ?

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, yes, I did make reference to my PQ which I answered about a month and a half ago in the House, on 16 May, and I did indeed say that we will be working on the legal framework that will capture, but then having gone and seen that the provisions are already in the Children's Act and that of the Ombudsperson for Children Act of

2003. I have just replied in my main reply that there are sufficient provisions in those two pieces of legislation to cater for care and protection of all the children.

And as to the question of whether we are going to be putting into effect the street workers to cater for these children, Mr Speaker, Sir, when we bring legislation into play, we make sufficient provision for the implementation thereof. Therefore, I am of the belief that we have sufficient workforce and personnel to be able to cater for such cases and such events of children we have found *dans les conditions de rue*.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

**MAURITIUS TURF CLUB SPORTS & LEISURE COMPANY LTD – PRIVATE
PENSION FUND**

(No. B/942) **Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance whether, in regard to the Mauritius Turf Club Sports and Leisure Company Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Financial Services Commission, information as to if the employees thereof were contributing to a private pension fund duly approved by the Commission, indicating the account in which same was credited by their employer and, if not, if the Commission proposes to carry out an investigation into any breach thereof.

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Financial Services Commission (FSC) that it has on its records three private pension schemes for the sponsoring employer of the Mauritius Turf Club. There is no record of any pension scheme registered under the name of the Mauritius Turf Club Sports and Leisure Company Ltd. (MTCSL) as the sponsoring employer.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed that the MTC has two Defined Benefit (DB) schemes and one Defined Contribution (DC) scheme with 144 active members and 72 active members respectively. These schemes are administered by a pension scheme administrator duly licensed by the FSC.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with respect to the DC scheme, I am informed by the FSC that contribution deductions of 2% were made from the salaries of the employees from October 2022 to March 2023, amounting to a total of Rs146,995, but were not remitted to the pension scheme administrator. Instead, the contributions were held into the accounts of the employer. The

administrator committed a breach of Rule 9(6) of the Private Pension Schemes (Administration) Rules 2014 for failing to inform the FSC that the employer had stopped contributing to the DC Scheme for at least two consecutive months.

Upon a follow-up made by the FSC on 01 June 2023 with the pension scheme administrator, the latter informed that the total amount of contributions deducted from the employees has been fully remitted by the MTC on 06 June 2023 to the pension scheme. On 26 June 2023, the FSC was notified by the administrator that the MTC was working on options to settle the Employer's Contribution, worth a total of Rs710,007, which had not yet been remitted to the scheme for the period from October 2022 to March 2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the FSC has further informed that there was a proposal from MTC since 2016 to convert the two DB Schemes into a new DC Scheme. An essential condition for the conversion of a DB Scheme into a DC Scheme is that the DB Scheme should be fully funded. As the employer could not fund the DB Scheme fully, no application was made to the FSC in that respect despite the fact that the employer had requested employees to contribute 3% from their salaries for remittance into the new DC Scheme. As such, the deductions were not remitted into the new DC Scheme and were subsequently refunded to the concerned employees with interests. In this respect, 154 beneficiaries were called upon to collect their cheque payments since 05 May 2023 and the total amount refunded (including interests) was Rs6,308,244. As at 22 June 2023, 20 beneficiaries have not yet collected their cheques worth a total of Rs693,489.

Mr Speaker, Sir, according to the schemes' actuary, the deficit accruing due to non-contributions by the employer into the DB Schemes, have accumulated to around Rs100 m., as at December 2022 as compared to Rs68 m. as at December 2018.

Given that there was no contingency plan to fund the deficits in a specific time frame, the two DB Schemes were deemed to be in breach of section 21 of the Private Pension Schemes Act. Several meetings were held between the FSC and the MTC to come up with a solution for the funding of the DB Schemes. However, the MTC could not generate the necessary resources to fund the DB Schemes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the FSC is presently liaising with the pension scheme administrator to have the MTC submit an appropriate contingency plan in order to remedy the underfunding status of the schemes. The FSC is closely monitoring the situation and appropriate

actions would be taken in the event that the contingency plan is not submitted within one month.
Thank you.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, hon. Minister. Mr Speaker, Sir, I have two supplementary questions. Since the MTC has transferred those employees to the MTCL without transferring its assets, as mentioned, to the company, is the MTC still liable to honour the pension rights to those employees?

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Speaker, Sir, accrued pension benefits are in the personal member accounts of members in the DC Scheme and are held by the administrator, that is, the company which is administering the pension funds and is, therefore, ring-fenced from the employer.

So, with respect to the DB members, the value of assets accumulated so far in the DB Schemes will be proportionately available on retirement to the members. As at December 2022, the amount of assets available is Rs9,675,000 and the deficit is approximately like I said, Rs100 m. Therefore, the DB assets are also ring-fenced in the scheme and are available to the members on retirement. As the MTCSL is 100% owned by the MTC and the MTC is the sponsoring employer of the three pension schemes, therefore it remains liable to those members. They have to honour the rights of the members of the pension funds.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. In case the company goes into liquidation, as already decided by its Board of Directors, can the hon. Minister state to the House whether the employees of MTCSL could end up losing all their pension rights in case it goes into liquidation? In that scenario, what action could be initiated to protect the rights of those employees?

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Speaker, Sir, like I said, whatever contribution which has been made into that pension scheme is ring-fenced, that is, they are in the personal name of those members of that fund, that is, the employees. So, whatever amount is already in the scheme is for the benefit of the employees. As in this particular case there is a deficit, which the employer has not yet made up for that deficit, in case it goes into liquidation, the employees will only benefit whatever amount is at date in those pension schemes.

So, they will probably lose out on any amount that is not made up as the deficit that is actually comprised of in the scheme. So, of course, it is going to lose out part of it because so far

the deficit has not been made up, but I am informed by the FSC that the MTC has made a commitment to sell part of their assets to be able to make up for that deficit. But it is still yet to be made.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs B/947, B/948, B/962, B/963, B/973 and B/986 have been withdrawn.

Next question!

NON-OLYMPIC FEDERATIONS – ATHLETES REGISTRATION

(No. B/943) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the non-Olympic federations, he will state the number thereof registered with his Ministry, indicating in each case the –

- (a) number of athletes licensed thereto, and
- (b) the budgetary entitlement therefor, further indicating if consideration will be given for the increase thereof.

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like first of all to inform the House that the Sports Act (2016) does not include any provision for the registration of National Sports Federations with my Ministry. Instead, they are required to register with the Registrar of Associations.

However, it is important to note that Section 10 of the Sports Act (2016) outlines the specific requirements that National Sports Federations must fulfil in order to be eligible for financial assistance from my Ministry. Currently, a total of 21 non-Olympic federations are receiving various forms of assistance both financially and otherwise from my Ministry.

With your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am tabling the list of non-Olympic National Sports Federations along with number of athletes licensed to each federation.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I would like to inform the hon. Member and the House that the National Sports Federations have been requested to submit their development plans outlining their proposed activities for the upcoming financial year. These plans will serve as the basis for determining the budget allocation to each National Sports Federation. This

process ensures that the financial support provided by my Ministry aligns with the planned activities and objectives of each National Sports Federation for the Financial Year 2023-2024. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Ramful: Thank you, hon. Minister. I have one question with regard to *La Fédération française de boxe* which as the hon. Minister is well aware keeps our flag flying during various international competitions by winning a lot of medals. Now, is the hon. Minister aware that the financial requirement for that sport federation is about Rs2.3 m. yearly, but, unfortunately, that federation gets only a meagre Rs200,000 out of a budget of Rs50 m. which has been earmarked for sports federations? Now, will the Minister consider an increase in the budget for that particular federation?

Mr Toussaint: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. First of all, *La Fédération mauricienne de boxe française savate dans le dernier budget*, last Financial Year 2022-2023, has been allocated a budget of Rs300,000. *Non, il y a une différence de R 100 000. Et, comme je l'ai dit dans ma réponse initiale, nous attendons le plan de chaque fédération, be it Olympic or non-Olympic et cet exercice est en train d'être fait en ce moment.*

Donc, de par le plan que la Fédération mauricienne de boxe française savate va nous soumettre, dépendant de leurs différentes compétitions internationales, nous allons éventuellement voir la somme que nous allons allouer. Il est aussi bon de noter que la Fédération mauricienne de boxe française a pu mettre un peu d'ordre dans leurs affaires récemment, parce qu'il y avait beaucoup de problèmes internes dans cette fédération. Allons dire qu'ils sont neufs maintenant, et vivants et dynamiques, et c'est récent, ça date, je crois, de 2021. Donc, ils sont assez récents avec la nouvelle direction et la présidente. On a pas mal de réunions souvent ensemble et bien sûr, évidemment, autant que possible, nous allons essayer d'aider.

Mr Ramful: With regard to allowances for the coaches of non-Olympic disciplines, is he aware that these coaches do not get any allowance although they help tremendously in shaping up those athletes and they do not even get a pension? Now, does the Minister intend to do anything about this?

Mr Toussaint: Non, il y a deux choses, soit *allowance*, soit pension. *Mo pa kav donn tou le de mwa.* Non, M. le président, j'ai compris la question. Deux choses –

- (i) le ministère ne donne pas de pension aux coachs, etc. *We have the athlete recognition that we have for athletes* qui ont brillé au minimum au niveau africain, etc. Il faut que ce soit dit clairement, parce que tout cela est rapporté au *Hansard*, la presse, etc.
- (ii) En ce qu'il s'agit des *coachs*, il faut que les fédérations fassent leur demande.

L'honorable membre a parlé de la Fédération mauricienne de boxe française savate. Je vais vérifier s'ils ont fait une demande pour que leur coach reçoive une allocation, parce que dans d'autres disciplines, c'est le cas. Mais la demande doit venir de la fédération.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

SUSPICIOUS POSTAL LETTERS/PACKAGES – MAURITIUS POST LTD – ESTABLISHED PROTOCOL

(No. B/944) **Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to suspicious postal letters/packages, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Mauritius Post Ltd., information as to the –

- (a) number thereof received from abroad since January 2023 to date;
- (b) established protocol in cases thereof, and
- (c) number of cases thereof reported to the Police.

(Withdrawn)

NORTHERN PLAIN IRRIGATION SYSTEM – PIVOTS

(No. B/945) **Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the Northern Plain Irrigation System, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Irrigation Authority, information as to the –

- (a) types of irrigation system available, indicating the extent and frequency thereof, and
- (b) number of pivots installed, indicating the number –

- (i) thereof in working condition, and
- (ii) of complaints received in respect thereof regarding defective pipes, pivots and other equipment and actions taken, if any.

Mr Gobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Northern Plain Irrigation Project (NPIP) consists of three types of irrigation systems, namely the Centre Pivot Irrigation system, the High-Pressure Sprinkler system and the Drip Irrigation System.

The normal frequency of water supply is 25 mm of water weekly for Centre Pivot, 25 mm every 10 days for the High-Pressure Sprinkler and 5 mm daily over 6 days a week for the Drip Irrigation Project. I wish to add, Mr Speaker, Sir, that 5 mm is roughly equivalent to 50 m³ per hectare while 25 mm would be roughly equivalent to 250 m³ per hectare.

However, due to water restriction imposed by the Water Resources Unit since September 2022, that is, for the dry season, the frequency of water supply for High Pressure Sprinkler has been reduced to every 20 days, and for Drip Irrigation, the frequency has been reduced to 24 hours for 3 days per week for the region of Triolet and 5 hours for 6 days per week for the region of Solitude.

Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding part (b) of the question, I am informed that out of the 26 Centre Pivots installed at the Northern Plain Irrigation Project, only 13 Centre Pivots are operational.

I wish to inform the House that there have been recurrent thefts of various parts of the other 13 pivots resulting in their non-operation and for which some 30 complaints have been received.

I wish to inform the House that my Ministry and the Irrigation Authority have left no stone unturned in addressing the root causes of the problems with the assistance of the Commissioner of Police.

Concurrently, the Irrigation Authority is replacing the stolen parts of the Centre Pivots and installing security measures such as fencing, including electric fencing and motion-sensitive alarm systems around the control panels of the Centre Pivots. The services of private security companies are also being contracted out.

The option for separate metered water abstraction is being proposed to interested planters as same is more flexible and user friendly.

In addition, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Irrigation Authority is also taking appropriate measures to replace its fleet of vehicles for patrol and recruiting manual labour to improve the irrigation service offered to planters.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bhagwan: I have two supplementary questions. Can the Minister inform the House whether there has been any deadline given to the Irrigation Authority by his Ministry as to when these new pivots will be received or repaired, and also for the delivery of the vehicles?

Mr Gobin: Unfortunately, I do not have that information. I will need notice of those specific questions, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bhagwan: I have one more supplementary. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he has received requests to meet the planters, small planters of Triolet and Solitude who are facing a lot of difficulties, apart from those mentioned in my parliamentary questions, as a gesture towards these hard-working planters, a lot of time in their work?

Mr Gobin: Yes, I do regularly meet the planters of the region, especially in the sub-office of the Irrigation Authority which is situated in Plaine des Papayes. I am aware of the problems faced by the planters. In fact, I am also pleased to inform the House that on next Wednesday 12th of this month, we are inaugurating a new treatment plant and pump at Solitude. I will invite personally the hon. Member to attend.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

BASIC RETIREMENT PENSION – BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/946) Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the Basic Retirement Pension, she will state the –

- (a) number of beneficiaries thereof, giving a breakdown by age;
- (b) amount disbursed for the payment thereof in financial year 2022-2023, and

- (c) additional funds to be disbursed for financial year 2023-2024 following the increase in the rate thereof.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that there are 252,354 beneficiaries in receipt of the Basic Retirement Pension as follows –

- persons aged 60 to 64 – 78,609;
- persons aged 65 to 89 – 169,455;
- persons aged 90 to 99 – 4,128, and
- persons aged 100 and above – 162.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am further informed that an amount of Rs33.2 billion has been disbursed for payment of Basic Retirement Pension in Financial Year 2022-2023.

With a view to upgrading the standard of living of our elderly and vulnerable groups, the Government has increased the Basic Retirement Pension by Rs1,000 as announced in the Budget Speech 2023-2024. Funds to the tune of Rs37.6 billion have been provided in the Budget Estimates 2023-2024 for Basic Retirement Pension as compared to Rs33.2 billion provided in Financial Year 2022-2023, representing an increase of 13% in the Budget.

Ms Tour: May I know from the hon. Minister how many persons above the age of 60 are currently benefiting from the Carer's Allowance and monthly domiciliary visits by doctors of the Ministry?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: There are some well-established criteria for persons deriving their Carer's Allowance. A bedridden or severely disabled person is eligible for a Carer's Allowance when he needs the constant care and attention of another person in his daily life. All beneficiaries of Carer's Allowance also benefit from monthly domiciliary visits.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to add also that elderly persons above the age of 90 are automatically eligible for monthly domiciliary visit even if they do not get the Carer's Allowance. As far as I remember, around 16,000 persons aged 60 to 89 are benefiting from the domiciliary visits. With regard to persons aged 90 and above, I do not have the figures.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

CENTRAL WATER AUTHORITY - BOARD COMPOSITION & ALLOWANCES

(No. B/947) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Central Water Authority, he will state the names and composition of the current Board thereof, indicating the allowances and other fringe benefits drawn.

(Withdrawn)

CAP MALHEUREUX RELAY SHELTER – 6-YEAR OLD BOY - ALLEGATION OF ABUSE

(No. B/948) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Cap Malheureux Relay Shelter, also known as *L'Oiseau du Paradis*, she will state if she has been made aware of an allegation of abuse on a six-year-old boy on Saturday 06 May 2023 and, if so, indicate the date the –

- (a) child was taken to the hospital, and
- (b) matter was reported to the Police.

(Withdrawn)

PUBLIC HOSPITALS – PAIN RELIEF IN LABOUR – MEDICAL OPTIONS

(No. B/949) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to pain relief in labour, he will state the medical options available for patients in the public Hospitals.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the medical options available to patients for pain relief in labour in public hospitals are as follows –

i. Pethidine Injection

Pethidine is a strong pain killer of the opioid family of drugs. It is an injection given in the muscle in the active phase of labour. It takes around 20 minutes to be effective and lasts for 2 to 4 hours. It is given on an “as per the patient” requirements in labour basis. It is usually given after all parameters are assessed, in terms of fetal and maternal wellbeing.

ii. Epidural Anaesthesia

On the patient's request, an anaesthetist will give an epidural anaesthesia in the patient's spine through a very thin catheter after counselling of patient. The medication used is Marcaine. It takes around 10 minutes to be effective and it can be topped up by the midwife through an infusion pump.

iii. Pudendal Block A local anaesthetic can be given in the pudendal nerve in the second stage of labour to relieve pain.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you. Can I just ask the hon. Minister whether the epidural anaesthesia is being extended to all hospitals or only to specific hospitals?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, so far, from my information, it is being extended to all the hospitals. I have a global figure; around 50 women in labour are receiving epidural anaesthesia on a weekly basis.

I don't have the information about whether this is available in all the hospitals, but I believe it is being made available in all the hospitals.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you. It is noted with satisfaction in the public hospitals that epidural anaesthesia is now a mode of pain relief. The only concern that has been brought up is the continuity of care because sometimes this process can take more than 12 hours, before babies are delivered. What does the Ministry do to reassure the healthcare staff and the patient with regard to same?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sorry. I am not a gynaecologist. It is very difficult to answer these technical questions. I will try to seek out the reply from a gynaecologist and I will convey it to you.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

**SOCIAL REGISTER – EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM SCHEMES –
BENEFICIARY HOUSEHOLDS**

(No. B/950) Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in

regard to the Social Register of Mauritius, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Empowerment Foundation, information as to the –

- (a) number of households currently benefitting from the various assistance schemes provided by the Foundation, and
- (b) additional number of families expected to be found eligible thereunder following the revision of the income threshold in the Budget 2023-2024.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: With your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that in order to benefit from support under the different empowerment schemes of the Ministry and the National Empowerment Foundation, a household has to be registered and found eligible under the Social Registrar of Mauritius and thereafter sign a social contract.

With regards to part (a) of the question, I am informed that as at date, there are 5,862 eligible households under the Social Register of Mauritius which are currently benefitting from the various empowerment program schemes provided by the Ministry and the National Empowerment Foundation.

As regards part (b) of the same question, it is expected that an additional 3,000 households would be found eligible following the review of the poverty threshold from Rs10,500 to Rs14,650 as announced in the Budget Speech 2023-2024. Thank you.

Ms Tour: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House of the number of children on the SRM who benefited from the Child Allowance in the previous financial year?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: It is a dynamic figure. Mr Speaker, Sir, it does change from month to month but presently we have an average of 5,400 children in Mauritius, including Rodrigues who benefit from the Child Allowance Scheme for the Financial Year 2022-2023.

Ms Tour: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister list out the various empowerment schemes for the SRM households?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are a list of programs and schemes that are there for the persons who are on the Social Register of Mauritius following the signing of the social contract with NEF. I can list some of them, so first of all –

- Payment of the Subsistence Allowance to the beneficiary, as I mentioned earlier.
- Payment of Child Allowance.
- Free Examination Scheme.
- School Premium Scheme.
- Crèche Allowance Scheme.
- We do provide training facilities to SRM Beneficiaries so that they become self-employed and can start their own business and we also provide on a regular basis, medical screening facilities.

These are some of the programmes and schemes that are there for beneficiaries on the Social Register of Mauritius.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs B/958, B/975, B/981, B/983 have been withdrawn.

Time over!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

(4.25 p.m.)

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

PQ B/834 – SITTING OF 27 JUNE 2023 – VACOAS MULTIPURPOSE MUNICIPAL COMPLEX

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnood): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall make a statement.

At the last sitting of the National Assembly during my reply to Parliamentary Question B/834, an additional question was put by the hon. Second Member for La Caverne and Phoenix regarding the rent due by one, Mrs D. R. in respect of space occupied at the Vacoas Multipurpose Municipal Complex opposite the vegetable market currently housing the Civil Status Office. The information requested was not available at my end, at that particular time.

I am now informed by the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix that Mrs D. R. does not occupy any space in the Vacoas Multipurpose Municipal Complex where there is the Civil Status Office.

In fact, Mrs D. R. is a tenant of a commercial unit at another building, near the Municipal Complex, that is, at the Vacoas Market. Moreover, Mrs D. R. has settled her arrears amounting to Rs143,600 in two instalments on 22 and 27 of June 2023 respectively.

Thank you.

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill (No. X of 2023) was read a first time.

Second Reading

THE CENTRAL MEDICAL PROCUREMENT AUTHORITY BILL

(NO. IV OF 2023)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Central Medical Procurement Authority Bill (No. IV of 2023).

Question again proposed.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Padayachy!

(4.27 p.m.)

The Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development (Dr. R. Padayachy):

M. le président, j'ai l'honneur de m'exprimer aujourd'hui dans cette auguste Assemblée pour apporter mon soutien plein et entier au *Central Medical Procurement Authority Bill*. A cet égard, permettez-moi de féliciter mon collègue et camarade Dr. l'honorable ministre de la Santé et du Bien-être pour avoir apporté au travers de ce projet de loi, clarté et exhaustivité dans la réglementation de l'ensemble de la chaîne d'approvisionnement des achats publics de produits médicaux.

M. le président, conformément à la philosophie centrée sur l'humain portée par notre honorable Premier ministre, ce gouvernement a continuellement investi dans la modernisation du secteur de la santé. Nous continuerons à le faire pour le bénéfice des mauriciens, de tous les Mauriciens. Parmi les différents projets ayant trait au secteur de la santé que nous avons pu annoncer dans les derniers discours du budget, je me permets de citer –

- le nouveau centre de cancérologie ;
- le nouvel hôpital universitaire de Flacq ;
- le nouvel hôpital pour les yeux de Moka ;
- la nouvelle entité unité de transplantation rénale ;
- les six nouvelles cliniques médicales ;
- les cinq centres de santé régionaux ;
- les six centres de santé communautaire, et
- le nouveau bureau de la santé.

En outre, un nouveau centre de cardiologie ultramoderne et un nouvel entrepôt pour les produits pharmaceutiques à Côte d'Or sont en cours de finalisation. Cet entrepôt sera d'ailleurs géré par la nouvelle autorité.

M. le président, alors que nous avons traversé la pire crise de notre histoire, nous savons que les chaînes d'approvisionnement en biens de santé jouent un rôle essentiel pour assurer le bon fonctionnement du système sanitaire et par extension de notre société et de notre économie dans son ensemble. Nous ne devons pas lésiner sur les marges de manœuvre à dégager pour assurer un système de santé résilient et efficient. C'est en ce sens que le budget accordé à la santé

a été rehaussé de R 2,2 milliards pour l'exercice financier de 2022-2023 s'établissant donc à R 15,2 milliards et à R 15,7 milliards pour l'année fiscale 2023-2024.

Sur ce premier montant, quelque R 2,8 milliards ont été consacrés à l'achat de produits pharmaceutiques, de produits non-pharmaceutiques, de nutraceutiques, de vaccins et d'anti sérum thérapeutiques, de dispositifs médicaux, d'équipements médicaux, d'appareils médicaux, de matériel médical, de matériel dentaire, de technologies médicales, de fournitures et de réactifs, de laboratoires et de consommables hospitaliers entre autre. Le déploiement de ces importants fonds nécessite des structures systémiques et fonctionnelles clairement définies pour garantir une utilisation optimale des ressources. C'est justement le sens de ce projet de loi. Il s'établit d'ailleurs sur la base d'une étude financée par l'union européenne sur la gestion des marchés publics et la distribution des médicaments et des fournitures médicales à Maurice.

M. le président, l'une des recommandations de cette étude était de placer sous une gestion unique, l'ensemble du cycle de gestion des achats et de l'approvisionnement en produits pharmaceutiques et en fournitures médicales. Et cela plutôt que d'avoir plusieurs bureaux impliqués en parallèle sans une intégration et une coordination appropriées.

Le projet de loi que nous débattons aujourd'hui est effectivement conçu pour assurer l'intégration de l'ensemble de la chaîne d'approvisionnement. C'est-à-dire depuis la planification des achats jusqu'à la gestion de la distribution, en passant par la gestion des contrats et l'évaluation des performances des fournisseurs.

Cette nouvelle entité proposée, la *Central Medical Procurement Authority*, sera légalement tenue de finaliser tous les besoins et spécifications des fournitures médicales avant le 31 mars de chaque année financière pour l'achat et l'utilisation au cours de l'année financière suivante.

Cela garantira des achats planifiés, adéquats et opportuns et évitera, tant que possible, le recours à des achats directs ou à des achats d'urgence de fournitures médicales à des coûts souvent plus élevés.

Je note avec satisfaction que ce projet de loi prévoit également la mise en place d'un 'stock de sécurité' pour atténuer le risque de pénurie de fournitures médicales.

M. le président, selon une étude conduite par l'*Asian Development Bank*, la chaîne d'approvisionnement représente près de 25 % des coûts pharmaceutiques et plus de 40 % des coûts des dispositifs médicaux.

L'Organisation mondiale de la santé a estimé qu'en réduisant les dépenses inutiles liées à la chaîne d'approvisionnement des médicaments, les pays pourraient économiser jusqu'à 5 % de leurs dépenses totales de santé.

Par conséquent, l'optimisation des stratégies et des processus de la chaîne d'approvisionnement peut permettre de réaliser des économies substantielles.

En tant que ministre des Finances, je ne peux qu'encourager et soutenir ce projet de loi qui permettra d'améliorer encore davantage l'efficacité des dépenses publiques. Cela sera notamment possible par le biais d'accords-cadres, d'accords de gouvernement à gouvernement, d'achats groupés régionaux ou internationaux, de stocks gérés par les fournisseurs et d'accords de partenariat public-privé.

Je me réjouis également que le projet de loi rende juridiquement obligatoire l'utilisation d'un système de gestion électronique des stocks. L'utilisation d'un tel système informatique favorisera la prise de décisions fondées sur des données et réduira les risques de rupture de stock et de péremption des fournitures médicales.

Plusieurs études ont en effet montré une nette diminution des ruptures de stock et des péremptions grâce à l'utilisation d'un système de gestion des stocks en ligne. Par exemple, en Zambie, une réduction de 90 % des ruptures de stock et une réduction de 47 % du surstockage ont été observées.

M. le président, sous la direction de notre Premier ministre, l'honorable Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, le développement de l'industrie biopharmaceutique locale est une priorité pour ce gouvernement.

Nous avons mis en place une pléthore de mesures incitatives pour attirer les investisseurs potentiels dans le secteur et les encourager à établir des usines de fabrication à Maurice, telles que –

- l'octroi d'un congé fiscal de 8 ans ;
- l'exemption du paiement des droits d'enregistrement,

- l'exemption de la TVA sur la construction, les usines et les équipements médicaux.

L'incitation la plus importante pour un fabricant local de produits pharmaceutiques serait peut-être un marché pour ces produits. Le gouvernement explore les marchés régionaux et internationaux potentiels afin de faciliter l'exportation des produits pharmaceutiques fabriqués localement par le biais d'accords commerciaux appropriés.

Il convient de souligner que le projet de loi prévoit que l'autorité conclura un accord de fourniture avec un fabricant local après avoir mené des négociations concurrentielles portant notamment sur les conditions de fourniture, le prix ou le mode de détermination du prix et le respect des normes de qualité requises. Ces mesures incitatives devraient donner l'impulsion nécessaire au développement du secteur biopharmaceutique à Maurice, porteur de croissance et d'emplois.

M. le président, la méthode d'évaluation des systèmes de passation des marchés, réalisée conjointement par la Banque africaine de développement et la Banque mondiale en 2022, exige qu'une fonction normative et réglementaire soit associée à une entité publique opérationnelle. Le projet de loi prévoit donc une telle fonction.

Il est ainsi important de noter que, conformément à l'article 4 du projet, le *Procurement Policy Office* de mon ministère sera l'organe normatif et réglementaire de l'autorité centrale des achats médicaux.

En tant que tel, le *Procurement Policy Office*, en consultation avec l'autorité, formulera des politiques relatives à l'approvisionnement en fournitures médicales, y compris des directives, des procédures, des instructions, des notes techniques et des manuels. Il garantira également l'assurance qualité pour veiller à ce que l'autorité s'acquitte de ses fonctions de manière efficace et efficiente.

M. le président, la nouvelle autorité apportera une réponse à un certain nombre de questions qui ont été mises en évidence par le directeur de l'audit. Il s'agit notamment de –

- la planification améliorée des achats conduisant à des achats locaux excessifs à des coûts élevés ;
- la gestion des contrats d'achat ;
- le respect assuré des bonnes procédures de passation de marchés ;

- l'utilisation appropriée du système électronique de gestion des stocks ;
- une meilleure assurance qualité pour les produits médicaux, et
- le suivi d'un protocole d'entretien approprié entraînant des pannes fréquentes de l'équipement médical.

M. le président, il convient de noter que le projet de loi prévoit des dispositions précises pour consolider l'implémentation des principes de bonne gouvernance comme suit –

- Tout membre nommé au conseil d'administration de l'autorité ne doit pas avoir été, ou ne doit pas être, activement engagé dans une activité politique ;
- Chaque membre et dirigeant doit faire une déclaration de patrimoine auprès de l'ICAC dans les 30 jours qui suivent au début de son mandat et à la fin de celui-ci ;
- L'auditeur de l'autorité est le directeur de l'audit ;
- Conformément à la *Statutory Bodies Act*, l'autorité doit présenter un rapport annuel accompagné d'un état des comptes vérifiés pour chaque exercice financier, qui doit être déposé devant l'Assemblée ; et
- Tout contrevenant sera passible d'une amende n'excédant pas un million de roupies et d'une peine d'emprisonnement n'excédant pas 10 ans.

M. le président, trop souvent, nous n'accordons de valeur à notre santé que lorsque nous la perdons. Notre mission en tant que gouvernement responsable et bienveillant est d'assurer à tous les Mauriciens un accès à des soins de santé de qualité. Par la mise en place de cette nouvelle autorité, nous nous rapprocherons de cet objectif.

M. le président, je vous remercie de votre attention.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Callicurn!

(4.38 p.m.)

The Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection (Mr S. Callicurn): Mr Speaker, Sir, first of all, thank you for giving me the opportunity to intervene on this very important Bill. I will start by saying

that public procurement is a crucial pillar of services delivery for Governments as it refers to the purchase by governments and state-owned enterprises of goods, services and works.

As public procurement accounts for a substantial proportion of the taxpayers' money, any responsible government is expected to carry it out efficiently and with high standards of conduct in order to ensure high quality of service delivery and safeguard the public interest. We should recall that one of the main and innovative features of the procurement reform process in Mauritius was the establishment of the Procurement Policy Office.

Established pursuant to section 4 of the Public Procurement Act 2006, the Policy Office has as main purpose to provide a mechanism for conducting oversight and monitoring of the performance and progress of the procurement system in Mauritius, and to guide and promote its continuing development and improvement.

Its mission is to promote the development of a modern and efficient public procurement system for Mauritius based on international best practices through close monitoring, regular audits, review, capacity building and research.

Mr Speaker Sir, I chose to highlight the characteristics and mission of Procurement Policy Office because 17 years after its establishment, here we are today debating on another Bill, which has as prime target to curtail any abuse and corruptive intentions during procurement exercises of medical supplies for the Ministry of Health and Wellness.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this legislation has, of course the ultimate goal of better serving the population while also guaranteeing that our procedures are transparent and fair.

Hence, the establishment of a Central Medical Procurement Authority is a crucial step towards ensuring that the health needs of the country are met with the highest level of efficiency and transparency since the current fragmented procurement system has resulted in wastage, perceived corruption, and delays in the delivery of essential medicines and medical supplies to our health facilities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the establishment of the Central Medical Procurement Authority also aims to improve the efficiency and transparency of the procurement process for medical supplies and equipment in the country's public healthcare system.

Prior to the establishment of CMPA, medical procurement in Mauritius was managed by various agencies and departments, which often resulted in duplication of efforts, inefficiencies, and inconsistencies in the procurement process. The CMPA will centralise the procurement process, streamline procedures, and ensure that medical equipment and supplies are procured at competitive prices and in a timely manner.

Let me highlight some of the key benefits of setting up the CMPA, namely –

1. It will improve efficiency, that is, the CMPA will be responsible for the centralisation of the procurement process for all medical supplies and equipment, will eliminate duplication of efforts and ensure that procurement is done in a timely manner like I have mentioned earlier.
2. It will also provide for transparency in as much the CMPA will ensure that the procurement process is transparent and that all procurement activities are carried out in accordance with the rules and regulations set out by the Ministry and the Government.
3. Cost savings – The centralised procurement system will allow for bulk purchase of medical supplies, which can result in cost savings for the Government.
4. Quality Assurance – The CMPA will also be responsible for ensuring that all medical equipment and supplies procured meet the required quality standards and are fit for purpose.

Overall, the establishment of the CMPA in Mauritius is a positive step towards improving the efficiency and transparency of the procurement process for the medical equipment and supplies in the country's public healthcare system.

The Procurement Policy Office will work in close collaboration with the authority to formulate, after consultation with the latter, policies relating to procurement of medical supplies. It will also act as a focal point to guide the Board with a view to ensuring consistency in the application of this Act and any regulations made under this Act. Furthermore, it will recommend and facilitate the implementation of measures to improve the functioning of the procurement system and most importantly, it will conduct quality assurance to ensure that the Authority is discharging its functions effectively and efficiently.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a fact that safeguards have always been there, whether in terms of legislation or in terms of protocols but in the end, corruptive actions and tampering of bid documents specifications are only possible when human beings intervene in the process.

One example of such shrewd intervention that comes to my mind, Mr Speaker, Sir, and I am sure Members in this House do remember how one minister under the Labour Party Government of 1995 to 2000 was found guilty of soliciting a commission of Rs10 on each duffle (*molton*) ordered by his Ministry to provide comfort and warmth to our senior citizens during winter periods. Rs10, Mr Speaker, Sir, on 105,000 *moltons* of that order was pocketed roughly over one million rupees on the back of our senior citizens! That famous case typifies what I call “human intervention” because he had insisted that the Ministry request, by way of an official letter, to have the list of all the bidders. He insisted although the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry tried to deter him as it was contrary to prescribed procedures.

Mr Speaker, Sir, much have been said in this House about the emergency procedures that were adopted by the Government during the COVID-19. Let me come to the elements of emergency procurement exercise. During the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, the Government had to face a situation which no other governments of this country ever encountered.

In view of the extreme urgency the country faced, the Government had no alternative than to have recourse to emergency procurement as provided for under section 21 of the Public Procurement Act and further borne out by Directive 44 from the Procurement Policy Office (PPO). The first objective of the Emergency Procurement Process was to save lives, protect our population, shield our only resource, that is, our workforce.

I refer to a PNQ answered by the Prime Minister on emergency procurement in July 2020. The Prime Minister highlighted that an assessment by the World Health Organisation of the risks for Mauritius was that for a population of 1.2 million inhabitants, the risk of exposure was 0.461 with mild infections of 87,000 persons, slightly over 1000 with severe infection and over 22,000 hospital admissions and 837 deaths.

It was this kind of unprecedented catastrophe that was looming on us. Hon. Prime Minister added –

“In the face of such a projected, unprecedented and alarming situation, we could not remain inactive but, we had to be expediently pro-active.”

And that is why other Ministries, like the Ministry of Commerce were roped in to assist and help fight against the pandemic that had put the world to a halt.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Members on the other side of the House often criticise the way things were done at that time. But we are all aware that the Independent Commission Against Corruption has initiated an inquiry into the issue of procurement of medicines and equipment during the COVID-19 and with due respect to our institutions I would humbly make an appeal to these Members to wait for the conclusion of the inquiry before making any comment on the procedure adopted.

Mr Speaker, Sir, some may argue that when human's life is at stake, procurement rules and lengthy procedures cannot stand in the way as always. Nevertheless, according to me, there are pertinent issues raised pertaining emergency procurement. While doing some research work, I came by some interesting views shared in a booklet compiled by Transparency Mauritius, entitled “Best practises for Emergency Public Procurement”. One of the contributors was Mr Navin Beekarry, the Director of ICAC, and he says in that booklet, I quote –

“All corruption acts in the context of procurement feed into money laundering practices, which in turn strengthen existing corrupt systems and institutions. It's a circle (...) In order to address the problem, we need to adopt a holistic approach. We need to look at not only investigation, but also education and prevention side. It's not only a question of strengthening systems, but also people's integrity.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Health & Wellness is often the object of criticisms when it comes to procurement, storage and costs of medicines but let us not forget, this has not been the case now. It has always been the case in the past under any government.

Allow me some time to go through some examples as outlined by the Audit bureau in its yearly reports. For example, Mr Speaker, Sir, in the report for year 2007-2008, that is, when the Labour Party was at the helm of the country, I quote –

“access to the stores, adequate storage space, proper stacking were unsatisfactory features”.

With regard to that feature, we do welcome the inclusion of an Electronic Inventory Management System, for the management of the procurement and supply chain to be used by the Authority in respect of medical supplies, in the present Bill.

Let me now come to the Audit Report for year 2009 – again under the Labour Party regime – concerning procurement of pharmaceutical products, namely, two batches of Cyclophosphamide 50mg tablets. Mr Speaker, Sir, the first consignment of 18,000 tablets was purchased at Rs1.26 per unit. Then another batch of 19,000 tablets was purchased from a different source. For the second consignment, the unit price rose to Rs83.95, that is, costing more than 55 times compared to the first order.

Even worse for these tablets I have mentioned, the report says that since the expiry dates were October and November 2010, it was expected that more than 30,000 tablets, costing more than Rs1.2 million would have expired before use. *Quel gaspillage!* And you know what the reply of the Ministry was at that time when queried by the Audit Office? They said that the tablets had been inadvertently repeated in two tender documents and escaped the different levels of control.

Why is it that every time members of the Labour Party when intervening on a Bill, suddenly fail to recall how the country was being run by their colleagues of their party? And they dare to criticise us.

That same year, Mr Speaker, Sir, in 2009, two other items, namely, Cyclophosphamide 500mg Injection and Ifosphamide 1g Injection were also ordered and it was found that the actual costs were about Rs3 million and Rs2 million respectively, more than the estimated costs based on previous purchases.

Moreover, the same report states that 10,000 Beclomethasone Dipropionate Inhaler had been procured in November 2009 for Rs790,000, thus costing Rs79 per unit. Then another quotation was launched for several items, including for the said inhaler. The contract for 4000 inhalers was awarded to a bidder and the unit price paid was Rs322 in November 2009 – the same month. So, from Rs79 to Rs322 for the same item in the same month, in fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, they had been defying the principles of Economics at that time. *Mem Molnupiravir fail avek sa.*

An hon. Member: *Dir zot! Dir zot!*

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, yet another blatant example of questionable urgency for procurement was outlined in Audit Report Year 2012. This time, it concerned the purchase of 16 vehicles to be used as ambulances. *Rapel? L'episode lanbilans!*

In February 2012, decision was taken by the Ministry of Health to replace 16 old ambulances at regional hospitals using the provision of emergency procurement. The procurement for these vehicles was done in two phases. The first phase for the purchase of vehicles without passenger seats, then their conversion works afterwards. Although the first phase was completed in November 2012, the second phase was still on as at July 2013, that is, some 19 months after decision was taken at the Ministry's level using the emergency provision for the procurement of these ambulances.

In fact, the conversion works took longer than expected while the vehicles had already been issued to hospitals. You know what? One of them was even refused access on the tarmac of Plaisance airport as the vehicle was not recognised as an ambulance. What a shame!

Mr Callichurn: Worse, Mr Speaker, Sir, almost eight months after reception of the vehicles by the Ministry of Health, only four out of sixteen were fully converted into ambulances. Yes, 4 out of 16!

An hon. Member: *Lanbilans maron!*

Mr Callichurn: Hence, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Director of Audit concluded that the way the procurement had been conducted did not reflect the reasons originally put forward, namely, "on a priority basis" and "because of the acute shortages of ambulances in the hospitals". *Sanla pli pir ki Pack and Blister sanla.*

Mr Juman: *Gras a Pack and Blister to minis Commerce!*

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, another example of the *largesses tolérées sous le régime Parti travailliste-PMSD* is the upgrading of Dr. A.G. Jeetoo Hospital. The National Audit Report of 2007-2008 states that the estimated cost of the project originally to be financed jointly by the Government of Mauritius and a loan from the African Development Bank (ADB) was to the tune of Rs654 million. The loan agreement with ADB was signed in 2002. However, the loan was cancelled in 2007 and as of September 2008, the Ministry of Finance had already given its

approval for the funding of the project. The revised costs for the upgrading of Dr. Jeetoo Hospital, including building and equipment, were estimated at Rs1.8 billion, Mr Speaker, Sir, instead of Rs654 m. and there was no war in Ukraine or whatsoever then.

These examples are blatant facts that *ceux qui prêchent la bonne gouvernance et l'anti-corruption devraient d'abord faire un examen de conscience*. Is this the kind of governance we should expect from the supposed future alliance, Mr Speaker, Sir?

Mr Speaker, Sir, whenever we talk of procurement, we should not forget the Betamax saga. It is important to remind the population how such a manoeuvre was made possible. At that time, they did not hesitate to manipulate the procurement procedures. Actually, the Public Procurement Regulation was even amended ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Juman: *Linn met own goal la!*

An hon. Member: *Ecoute!*

Mr Callichurn: ... to do away, in order... Yes the procurement procedure was amended in 2009 to do away with...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Callichurn: ...tender exercise which was considered as...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Callichurn: ...a major hindrance for the allocation of the big and juicy contract to one of theirs.

Let me put it bluntly, Mr Speaker, Sir. This allowed the '*deal du siècle*,' with STC binded to respect terms of an outrageous contract and as you all know, the population is still paying a hefty price for that deal. In an article published on 07 July 2011 in L'Express newspaper, Professor Swaley Kasenally – an ex-MMM Minister, I think that he is still member of the MMM – mentioned that the terms of the contract between STC and Betamax, I quote –

“The contract between STC and Betamax for the transportation of petroleum products contains clauses inimical to the interest of the country. For example, Clause 6.2 of the COA deals with ‘Hire of Freight Capacity’ whereby during each contract year, STC undertakes to hire and pay 100% of the freight capacity. Clause 6.5.8 refers to the Aggregate Freight Amount of 17.6 million USD per contract year. This rate is subject to escalation clause over 15 years period. [I am still quoting.] How could STC agree to guarantee an annual payment of 17.6 million USD for a tanker costing 58 million USD according to a report made by BDO-DCDM?”

He goes further to say, I am still quoting –

“Such an arrangement is tantamount to a project financing of tanker by STC (...)”

Furthermore, Professor Kasenally adds that, I quote –

“The more scurrilous aspect of this arrangement appears when daily freight charges of the Betamax tanker, an LR1 type, is calculated to be 48,000 USD.”

So, daily charges are calculated to be 48.

“This is grossly indecent when the ongoing rate (...)”

So, the ongoing rate prevailing at that time on the international market was only 16,500 USD, Mr Speaker, Sir! Practically three times the amount! For reference, I will not go further on what was quoted again.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I think every member in this House knows quite well about the practices at the time when the parties of the Members from the other side of the House were at the helm of our country. Today, I ask the population through you, Mr Speaker, Sir: ‘is this the kind of governance they should expect from the supposed future alliance if they are called to govern the country again’, although I don’t believe it will happen?

Mr Speaker, Sir, we, as a responsible Government, are coming up with a legislation to guarantee every single tax-payer’s rupee is well accounted for and spent wisely. We are waging a war against waste to have an optimum use of our resources and means. I can only congratulate my colleague, the hon. Dr. Kailesh Jagutpal, for this Bill which has the intention of curbing all discrepancies and loopholes which may exist in the current system. This Government not only means business, but also wants to go in history for introducing an entity which will be the beacon

of transparency and efficiency that will help revitalise our public health services and meet the demand of a modern country.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

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

At 5.05 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.44 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please be seated!

Hon. Minister!

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal): Mr Speaker, Sir, I will proceed with the summing up of the Central Medical Procurement Authority Bill (No. IV of 2023).

I would like to thank Members of Parliament from both sides of the House for having brought their insights and comments on this Bill. This new legislation aims to establish the Central Medical Procurement Authority for the procurement, warehousing, supply, and distribution of medical supplies.

At the very outset, Mr Speaker, Sir, I will come back to the comments made during the debates. For ease of understanding, I have classified the comments; the Opposition Members have focused extensively on six aspects, mainly –

- 1) The prerogatives of the Prime Minister;
- 2) The emergency procurement during COVID-19 pandemic;
- 3) The expiry of drugs;
- 4) Why introducing the CMPA Bill instead of amending the present Public Procurement Act?
- 5) The public officers, particularly the procurement officers, and
- 6) Obviously, some comments made directly towards me.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to the first argument of the Opposition Members having to do with the prerogatives of the Prime Minister according to Sub-Part B section 10 (4) of the Bill, the hon. Member Dr. Boolell stated that –

“... the President will name the members of the Board but Prime Minister so decides.”

Hon. Juman also stated in the same line that –

« Au lieu de tirer des leçons de ce qui s'est passé, ils vont maintenant aller encore plus loin. »

And hon. Dr. Aumeer further stated that –

“...in the minds of the laypeople and others, this is another body under the absolute control of Prime Minister’s Office.”

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, during my Second Reading on this legislation, I informed the House about how different countries, developed countries have centralised medical procurement bodies to cater specifically the public health sector. My question, Mr Speaker, Sir, is: are the Opposition Members aware of how these agencies are being constituted? I will start with the USA. In USA, the Director of the Medical Procurement Agency is appointed by the President of the United States of America. In the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and India, the Chairperson and Director of the Medical Procurement Body are appointed by the Prime Minister or President of the Republic. In France, the Director of *l’Agence nationale de l’approvisionnement hospitalier* is appointed by the Minister of Health. It is the case for Sweden and South Africa as well.

But, unfortunately, over here, Members of the Opposition kept on saying why the Prime Minister, through the President, will appoint this Board? Hon. Dr. Boolell stated that the Prime Minister is the authority and that –

“The Prime Minister first amongst equals has absolute power.”

Just to remind him that we are a Westminster democracy and based on Westminster democracy, it is the Prime Minister who nominates board, different boards like the MRA; there are so many boards, and lately, the National Environment Cleaning Authority (NECA). Again, the same argument was there: why the Prime Minister has to appoint the Board?

Mr Speaker, Sir, on this side of the House, we are proud of our Prime Minister. On their side, if they are not proud, it is their problem. Mr Speaker, Sir, the Prime Minister decides for us, for this side of the House.

The hon. Member also talks about excessive power. I have to remind him what excessive power is. If we all remember clearly, in 2014 when they made their alliance and what excessive power meant when the then Prime Minister was supposed to have a mandate of 7 years and the Prime Minister having another mandate of 5 years, that was excessive power given to the presidency at that time, Mr Speaker, Sir.

And here, I just want to add on that this Authority is not a private company and that we will be accountable. The National Audit Office will have its report and it will be available to all Members of the Parliament, as already pointed out by the Minister of Finance. And they are free to ask questions, they are free to ask PNQs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, from the speech of hon. Reza Uteem, it is clear that he does not agree that the Prime Minister makes appointment. From the comments of different Members of the Opposition, the Prime Minister should not make these appointments because according to them, they are political nominees. So, Mr Speaker, Sir, if this is the case, we will be having an election in the future and they are negotiating their alliance, it is good that they come and tell us they do not want the Prime Minister to make nominations.

They should come and tell us what they are proposing in their Electoral Manifesto. They have to come and tell us in their Electoral Manifesto that they are against this principle, that Prime Ministers will not do nomination, who will do the nomination and they have to get it agreed because there are some problems that I have heard among you to negotiate your alliance and you come and tell it. You tell it in the House; if not outside the House that Prime Ministers will not do nominations and that others will do the nomination because you keep on criticising nominations done by the Prime Minister.

Mr Speaker, Sir, these are the comments made. So again, I will come back to what hon. Dr. Boolell stated. He stated that the Minister is acting as a bellboy and doing the bidding of the Prime Minister. Let me remind him – so on 01 May 2015, hon. Dr. Boolell said that the Leader of his Party was tarnishing the image of *Parti travailliste* and he asked his Leader to step down because he made reference to the bellboy and the bidding of the Prime Minister. And, if he has

forgotten, I will remind him that in the same month that is, on the 12 May 2015, during a *comité exécutif du Parti travailliste*, the Leader of the *Parti travailliste*, who was at that time freed on bail, *a expulsé l'honorable Boolell de ce comité exécutif avec l'aide des bodyguards and bouncers*.

8 years later, of course, *après deux cinglantes défaites aux élections générales*, now hon. Dr. Arvin Boolell, *toujours sous les ordres de son leader* and I wonder if he is still dreaming of becoming a Leader or the Prime Minister, I don't know. So, the question arises about the bellboy, the word 'bell boy', does it not suit hon. Dr. Boolell? So, this is the question to you because you said that I am bidding on the Prime Minister, so this I will leave it to you and the population to think about it.

Now I will come on the emergency procurement because during the COVID-19, there has been a lot of speech and comments on this topic. And at one point in time, emergency procurement was the favourite topic of the Opposition. I am not referring to what I said earlier about the grade of anger but this time, I will say the grade of happiness because they keep on talking about this – they get a lot of heightened pleasure, and for heightened pleasure, the specific word is 'ecstasy'. And they get that ecstasy by talking a lot on procurement but I will have to remind them what happened during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr Speaker, Sir, COVID-19 came in the beginning of January 2020 and at that time, the Director of the Public Health was someone who is very close to them I believe. He knows everything that was happening during COVID-19. Even at the time when Mauritius did not have the first cases, a lot of meetings had started regarding entry of flights from countries where there were already COVID-19 and it was a very difficult situation. I am not talking about the time when the country was under lockdown. I am talking of that time – January to March, how difficult it was at that time to procure masks because that was the only sanitary measure we had to adopt to protect the population – masks, gowns, aprons, PCR tests, nasal swabs. Those were what we required to know whether passengers coming to Mauritius were COVID positive or not.

And, at that time, it was so difficult to procure all these items even when the suppliers were there, doing their work. You can confirm it with the ex-director of Public Health whether it was an easy task to procure material and then during that time, the lockdown came around 18 of March. Lockdown meant that everyone was at home. The Ministry of Health was operating with

only few officers, the SCE and few officers and the then Director of Public Health and hardly a few officers were working at that time. And we had that huge task of protecting the lives of the population. You kept on saying public officers and during lockdown, the Government advised people to stay at home. Lockdown does not mean lockdown only for offices but it was for bank, shipping companies; the lockdown was for everybody. You forgot when there was total lockdown, not even a shop was opened and then gradually, after two weeks, some strategies had been developed about how we can allow people to move, to have their food items and gradually we came forward with the alphabetical order. It took a lot of time and during that time, when everybody was at home, what the Members of the Opposition doing?

An hon. Member: *TikTok!*

Dr. Jagutpal: Exactly! That was the TikTok time and TikTok time was another kind of pleasure to see whether Mauritius will have more cases and they kept on criticising. They never imagined the urgency during that time; it was not only in Mauritius. It was around the world. How could the country resurge if we had not procured the equipment? How would we have done so? The suppliers were not responding; none of the suppliers were there to say that they could provide the Ministry of Health with gowns, PCR Tests, masks and so on. The offices, the banks, everything else was closed, but, yet, the Government tried all the means to procure those items and that was done only with those few officers who were working. I am not defending anyone who has done any *maldonne* done at that time, I am not protecting them. If they have done any *maldonne* for their deeds, they have to reply for that but the principle of the Government was to procure those items by all means – hon. Bodha was there during that time and he knew how difficult it was to procure those items.

The first thing that came to our mind was to explore the diplomatic channel to see which countries could help us and at that time, none of the countries could do so because all countries were having the same issues of where to get materials. And all those who have *profiter*, we have no problem. They have to take their responsibilities but at that time, the aim of the Government was to protect the population and today, we get long speeches about procurement and they tell us that if ever tomorrow we face the same situation god forbid we land in another pandemic in the next few years, what are you going to tell us? That we haven't learnt anything. No lessons learnt from COVID-19 and so we have to do the same thing to see who is going to provide us with any

materials. Is that what we were expecting? It is good you criticise. Come and propose what you want to change, how you are going to change. I will tell you how we have to do that.

And Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Nando Bodha was talking about so many officers in the procurement section 141 which I myself stated. He has to ask the ex-Director of the Public Health, how many procurement officers came to work?

I understand their problem because these public officers, at that time, during the COVID time, when there was lockdown, they will tell you: 'I have got elders at my place. So, I want to protect them. I am sorry. I do not want to come.' What should we do? They will tell you: 'I have children. I cannot come to work.' What do we do? COVID-19 was something that we did not have any experience. Even for a plane crash, we do simulation exercise.

I just want to state that today, during lunch time, I received one of the Directors of Condor. We had the incidence of Condor a few months back, and the Director came and congratulated us because we managed well. We had been able to attend to all those casualties at that time, three months back. Hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha will say that *le ministère a fait couler beaucoup d'encre!* I will come to you, hon. Member! I will come to you! I will tell you how that was done.

(Interruptions)

Mr Ameer Meea: *Li gagn drwa poz kestion! Li gagn drwa kritiker! Ki 'come to you'?*

Dr. Jagutpal: So, Mr Speaker, Sir, it was COVID time.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: I am waiting for you!

An hon. Member: *Ki so problem?*

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: *Li p menase!*

An hon. Member: *Reponn li!*

Dr. Jagutpal: Today, you pinpoint, Mr Speaker, Sir, ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: What is happening? What is happening?

Mr Ameer Meea: *Li gagn drwa kritik bill la! li gagn drwa koze! So travay sa!*

An hon. Member: *Tou ti trankil la!*

An hon. Member: *Li gagne drwa...*

Dr. Jagutpal: Come on! The Speaker has to travel, isn't it?

(Interruptions)

Mr Toussaint: *Sanz fraz la ! Sanz fraz la !*

(Interruptions)

Dr. Jagutpal: You were telling us, hon. Speaker has to travel. Let us finish it before he misses his flight.

Ms J. Bérenger: Stop talking nonsense!

Mr Speaker: Silence everywhere, on both sides! Hon. Minister, continue!

Mr Nuckcheddy: He is not talking nonsense!

Dr. Jagutpal: So, the Opposition Members from time to time came to do the *procès* of the Emergency Procurement.

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: He is talking nonsense.

(Interruptions)

Dr. Jagutpal: But they never understood the core of the problem and how it was difficult.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: What is this? Question time? What is this?

Ms Tour: On a point of order!

An hon. Member: She has a point of order!

Mr Speaker: But you should say 'a point of order'!

Ms Tour: I need to have the mic.

Mr Speaker: No! Listen! A point of order is not like this! A point of order is: 'Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order.'

Mr Dhunoo: But she did not have the mic!

Mr Speaker: Please, go ahead!

Mr Ameer Meea: *Kot to kwrar to ete? To lor gradin la?*

Ms Tour: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order. I heard hon. Ms J. Bérenger utter that hon. Dr. Jagutpal is speaking ‘nonsense.’

Mrs Mayotte: Là, c’est bon là ! Là, c’est bon!

Mr Speaker: Okay.

Dr. Boolell: This is not a point of order!

Ms J. Bérenger: *Inn zis dir...*

(Interruptions)

Mr Dhunoo: She has to withdraw! Withdraw!

Mr Nuckcheddy: Withdraw!

(Interruptions)

Mr Ameer Meea: *P perdi letan!*

Hon. Members: Withdraw!

An hon. Member: *Depi tonn vini, ena dezord !*

(Interruptions)

Mr Dhunoo: You are not the Chair! You are not the Chair!

Mr Ameer Meea: *P perdi letan!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Ameer Meea: I ‘heard’, I ‘heard’ ...

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! Both sides!

Mr Nuckcheddy: *Ena profeser Angle la!*

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms J. Bérenger, if you have said so, please, be kind enough!

Mrs Navarre Marie: This is not unparliamentary!

Mr Speaker: Let Parliament continue! Be kind enough! Think of your future. Do it !
Withdraw!

Ms J. Bérenger: L'honorable Dr. Jagutpal doit retirer également ce qu'il a dit à l'encontre de ma collègue.

Mr Speaker: But that should be ...

Ms J. Bérenger: He is wasting the time of the House! And she is wasting the time of the House as well!

(Interruptions)

Mrs Luchmun Roy: You were not there!

Mr Speaker: That would be on a point of order.

An hon. Member: Withdraw!

Mr Speaker: But for now, I am ruling!

Ms J. Bérenger: Okay! I have a point of order then!

Mr Speaker: No, no! First of all, you do not disregard my authority! I have asked you to withdraw the word.

Ms J. Bérenger: Okay, I withdraw.

Mr Ameer Meea: *Ey, 'nonsense' pa kapav servi aster?*

Ms J. Bérenger: I withdraw, but I have a point of order.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: *Inn menase mwa...*

Ms J. Bérenger: L'honorable Dr. Jagutpal a été menaçant envers ma collègue, Mme Foo Kune-Bacha.

Hon. Members: Menaçant?

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Parfaitement!

Ms J. Bérenger : Et je souhaiterais qu'il retire ses mots, s'il vous plait. Merci.

(Interruptions)

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: *B mo p senti mwa menase!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! I have listened quite well. Hon. Mrs Foo Kune- Bacha should understand one thing.

Ms J. Bérenger: I am hon. Ms J. Bérenger; I am not Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha!

Mr Ameer Meea: But she made the point of order!

Mr Speaker: I am talking to hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha, not to you!

Ms J. Bérenger: But I made a point of order...

Mr Speaker: This is my ruling! You do not disregard my authority!

Ms J. Bérenger: I made the point of order!

Mr Speaker: Quiet! Or else, you move out from this Chamber!

Mr Nuckcheddy: *Deor!*

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: *Calmez-vous !* You are also being ...

Mr Speaker: You wait! I am talking! You wait!

Ms J. Bérenger: You can't say ...

Mr Speaker: I am on my feet!

Ms J. Bérenger: You can't say to me 'quiet'!

Mr Speaker: I asked you to withdraw from the Chamber! Withdraw! This is the time!

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Il ne faut pas menacer !

Mr Speaker: You are waiting for that time!

Mr Nuckcheddy: *Deor!*

Ms J. Bérenger: *Pa kapav vin dir dimunn al deor ...*

Mr Speaker: You are waiting for that time! Withdraw from the Chamber!

(Interruptions)

Mr Nuckcheddy: *Deor!*

Ms J. Bérenger: *Pa kapav vin dir dimunn al deor ...*

An hon. Member: *Deor!*

Ms J. Bérenger: *Kapav vin ...*

Hon. Members: *Deor!*

Mr Speaker: And you know, if you continue with that attitude, you will be named!

Ms J. Bérenger: And what about the point of order then?

Mr Balgobin: *To p ale deor.*

Mr Speaker: I have asked you to withdraw! What point of order?

(Interruptions)

Ms J. Bérenger: I have raised a point of order!

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Fer li deor! Fer li deor!*

Mr Speaker: My ruling is for you to withdraw!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: She was not even in the Chamber!

Ms J. Bérenger: You are protecting the Minister!

Mr Speaker: So, I am naming you!

An hon. Member: Well done! *Sa mem li ti p rode la!*

Ms J. Bérenger: He should withdraw what he said as well!

(Interruptions)

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: This is not fair! He was also *menaçant* against me!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Shame! *Laont! Malelve!*

Mr Speaker: I am asking you to withdraw from the Chamber!

Ms J. Bérenger: I am withdrawing!

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: I have a point of order!

Mr Speaker: If you have a point of order...

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Yes!

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha, wait a second!

An hon. Member: *Pa riye! Ki zot riye?*

Mr Quirin: *Profite bien! Pa pou la enkor demin !*

Mr Nuckcheddy: *Al lager dans zot buro politik!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: So, what is your point of order?

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: On a point of order, I think that the hon. Minister should remove the *menaçant* words he said to me just before.

Hon. Members: Which words?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! Can you ...

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: That he will 'come to me.' I think it is not parliamentary to say those threats; that he 'will come to me'!

Mr Speaker: I understand, I understand your feeling.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Yes.

Mr Speaker: But this is what I wanted to say before hon. Ms J. Bérenger made all those gimmicks.

Dr. Boolell: Minister,...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha, you should understand one thing. In Parliament, when you make your speech, you should understand that the hon. Minister could take part of it and rebut.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Of course!

Mr Speaker: Rebut is not unparliamentary, okay?

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: It is threatening...

Mr Speaker: This has been the tradition in this august Assembly and the Standing Orders do not condemn it. Please, continue!

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Threatening is different from rebutting!

Mr Ameer Meea: He was threatening!

Mr Juman: *Pas vin kot li.*

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Opposition Members never missed the opportunity *de faire le procès de l'Emergency Procurement*. Fair enough! But can you imagine, give a thought if during that time, we did not avail to nasal swabs, tests, gloves, masks, PCR test kits, what would have been the number of deaths? Mr Speaker, Sir, karma will decide. From this side of the House, *nous avons la conscience claire*. Keep on doing politics on the pandemic and on deaths of the people, karma will decide!

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will come back to what hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha said, I will quote –

« *Ce ministère a fait couler beaucoup d'encre et pas pour les bonnes raisons.* »

So, that was said. I quoted it as it was said.

Now, is the hon. Member aware that –

- The WHO and IMF congratulated Mauritius for its management of COVID?
- Is hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha aware that Mauritius was one of the first countries in this part of the hemisphere to offer booster dose and second doses to its population?
- Is hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha aware that Mauritius is one of the rare countries to have successfully quarantined people who were infected with COVID-19 during the second surge of pandemic?

So, this is what hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha said that '*ce ministère a fait couler beaucoup d'encre!*'

Mr Speaker, Sir, the initiative to quarantine COVID patients in hospitals has been lauded internationally and this has saved many lives. Can you imagine, Mauritius with an elderly population of more than 240,000 people, what would have been the consequences if we would not have made avail of all these equipment during that emergency time when the country was badly taken up with COVID? Unless you have the *la mémoire courte!* Just think about what was happening in Spain, in Italy, as well in France and so many other countries, how it was difficult for us to manage COVID.

I will again come on Pack & Blister, Molnupiravir, Ronapreve. Hon. Dr. Aumeer, hon. Uteem, and hon. Dr. Boolell, they all made, some kind of comments, at that time what has been done for these procurement of ventilators, be it whoever.

We all remember how it was difficult to procure equipment, not only at that time, but even today. It is so taxing for the officers to procure equipment.

I will just tell you what happened today morning. The Ministry of Health has three MRI machines. At Victoria Hospital one is broken for quite some time, it's more than six months I believe, and patients who have to do the test, have to be transferred to Jeetoo Hospital. Procuring this MRI machine is not an easy task because the building at Victoria Hospital has some size and you cannot procure the new equipment; it won't fit into that building. So, the procurement procedures have been followed and till today, we haven't been able to give the contract to any of the suppliers because that building at Victoria Hospital, it has some size and you have got to fit the MRI machine there. Is it not challenging today to procure that MRI machine? We have two MRI machines for the whole population. And imagine – the lifespan of one of the MRI machines is already more than 10 years! So at any time we may have some issues with that, as one MRI machine is for five years' time.

Do you think it is easy today to procure one MRI machine? And today we are speaking when there is no COVID-19. How difficult is it for these officers unless somebody understands what is happening, how many waiting lists we need? Because for MRI, if ever somebody is suffering from cancer, you have to do the staging of the cancer and how do you do that staging? You need that MRI equipment and do you know how difficult it is today to procure that MRI machine so that we can fit it in the building for MRI?

Do you think blindly we purchased the Pack and Blisters ventilators? I agree that the ventilators were defective. I agree that we had issues with the ventilators. For that, we are following the procedures to get our money, which takes time. We have got to go through the procedures because at a point of time, that will be in a court and if we don't follow all the procedures and take all the steps, we will lose the case. So, that has been followed. Do you have any information that for all the procurements of ventilators, there were *maldonne*? Please, go and give it to the press! Go and put it on TikTok! I would be very much happy to get this information because that will be our learning curve on how to do procurement of ventilators or any equipment that we need for the diagnosis or what we need in our hospitals.

Now, the same for the Ronapreve, which hon. Aumeer pointed out. Let me tell you that this Ronapreve injection at the time of COVID-19 was the drug of choice to treat patients suffering from COVID-19. And it came with the variants and so on, that we can't use this medication to treat COVID-19 patients. So, during that time, that Committee of Needs estimated that we will need some 1,000 injections, which are quite expensive. We had a first consignment of 500 packs which came to Mauritius and we have been able to use it because this injection can be used for other diseases as well. And the other 500 packs that we needed, the foreign manufacturer provided an amended Purchase Agreement for the termination of the supply of Ronapreve and the replacement of same by two pharmaceutical products. One is Hemlibra, used for some blood disorders and Transtuzumab.

So, come up and put questions to me instead of only coming and trying to get the population believe that there is *maldonne*. I am here to answer to you. Now, I will also quote what hon. Juman said –

« Il faut se débarrasser des magouilleurs. Il faut se débarrasser des antipatriotes. »

I listened to him carefully and at that time, the only reaction I had, somebody who was *lui-même condamné for corruption...*

Dr. Boolell: *Ein?*

Dr. Jagutpal: *... par une cour de justice, Mr Speaker, Sir...*

Mr Toussaint: *Pa vin donn leson!*

Dr. Jagutpal: It is known to everybody!

Dr. Boolell: That is uncalled for.

An hon. Member: *Li pa gagn drwa koz sa koze la!*

Dr. Jagutpal: ... Mr Speaker, Sir, and coming and saying so. I know I have been saying that many times and I will keep on saying so.

Mr Speaker, Sir, now I will come to expiry of drugs. Again, hon. Juman insinuated that while this Minister is here, there has been a quantity of drugs being expired. Mr Speaker, Sir, has estimate been done for drugs, for the procurement of medicines for the next financial year or for the future? Is it an exact mathematics? Anybody can tell us how, what should be the quantity of drugs to be procured and drugs have a lifetime. Drugs are not something that we can keep for years and years. All drugs have a lifetime and do you think there is an exact mathematics to do so? There is no exact mathematics! It is just like the weather forecast. There is no exact mathematics, but what principle guides us? Even with CMPA, there will be to some percentage, wastage of medication. It is just the principle that should guide us. Usually, the principle is as such: the quantity of needs being done at the user end; it is not whoever does the quantity of needs and always, whoever will be the user, he will have a little bit more. He will always order a little bit more.

Now, the first question is when we procure drugs, that is, the quantity of drugs, whether these drugs have been used by the user. So if ever, if you procure diabetic drugs, all these drugs have been expired, so how the users said now: no, I am not going to use these drugs. Did so happen? Even if during your time, even if it was 20 years back, but you don't have the statistics because I don't know, I can't tell you what happened before 2014, but we are here to answer to the House what has been happening. So User Department will give an estimate and that estimate, we cannot forecast what would be the quantity that we are going to use.

Secondly, whatever drugs you have procured, it is better that we have a surplus than a shortage. It is better; even at home, even if you go and visit a private practitioner, you will be given a list of drugs and you will see in everyone's house, you always get a surplus. And you think it is easy to calculate the exact quantity of drugs? Tell me! Tell me which mathematics, which formula you have to use to calculate it. It won't happen.

Thirdly, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is also the question that, if I prefer these drugs that haven't been used, does that mean that the population is better? I prefer that the population is in good health. They understand how to look after their health instead of taking these medications. It matters more to be in good health without taking the medication than to start suffering from any disease and to use the medication. This is somewhere what I wish to point out. The expiry of drugs, especially during COVID-19 time when patients did not attend hospitals, these drugs were kept for these patients. Do you think it is the Minister who decides what is the quantity of drugs to be procured or the Government? It is the technicians who have to procure these drugs and this Authority, Mr Speaker, Sir, is going to have the overall picture, that is, from procurement to the user-end and especially to the expiry of drugs.

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, let us come up to this Bill itself. The hon. Dr. Boolell said that this is a master key to fraudulent practices; it is a license to breach civil code and to intimidate and bully civil servants. I don't understand one thing. At one point of time, you were saying that we should not do anything about this. We should not have come up with this Bill but at the other point of time, you are criticising everything that has been done. A little bit of psychology as usual, Mr Speaker, Sir.

So, the psychology here is ambivalent – at one point in time, you say everything is okay and at the other point in time, you say nothing is okay. Ambivalence, that is, you don't know what you want to say and this is a psychology term. It is a psychology term to demonstrate some pathological state of the mind. And this ambivalence, saying that: 'we should not do anything', 'everything is fine, everything and everybody is working perfectly', 'the PPA makes provision for everything' and at the same time you also say: 'oh, look at what is happening!', 'this is scandalous' – that is the ambivalence nature and that is what you want to project in this House. I have got so much to say about this ambivalent nature and what has been your ambivalent speech and why hon. Dr. Aumeer said: 'the question that comes to mind is why such a Bill is being presented when the Public Procurement Act has stood the test of time?'

So, we should not be having any of this as you kept on saying and everything is perfect? But because there are issues and problems that we know and we want to protect the public officers from, that is why this Bill has come to this House.

Now, let's come up to the other issues. At one time in time, you said *lizie dou* with the public officers and then at another time, you say you have to sanction the public officers. Now, I will address this through you, Mr Speaker, Sir, to hon. Uteem, the Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee. Have you imagined that procurement officers may get transferred? For example, at any time, a procurement officer who is well versed with the procurement and different specificities of the Ministry of Health, and he/she is promoted and he/she has to replace somebody else in another ministry, that will happen and that, you cannot change. What will happen to the other officers who have never been posted in the Ministry of Health? Procurement officers are not under the Ministry of Health, they are under the Ministry of Finance. And that procurement officer just comes in an office where hundreds of files are laying and he/she has to be given time to understand all the procedures.

Do you know how procurement officers have got to go through an examination? They are in the public service in one post and then through an examination, they become an Assistant Procurement and Supply Officer (APSO) and then PSO, then to Manager Procurement and Supply. So, it is all a learning curve. And in that learning curve, the officer may be transferred; even the PS and the SCE may be rotated. Anyone who comes has to be understood; they need time to understand. Do you think we can afford time? Do you think the Ministry of Health can afford time for somebody to learn and then get versed with all these procedures? And you tell me that you want to defend the public officers. And we need those requirements; is it easy? And you are saying something about someone acting in bad faith.

Until you don't have an agency where procurement officers are well versed with all the procurement issues, they don't know all the steps and keep on rotating staff of the procurement, we will keep on having problems and we cannot blame them because they do have issues. You have to address that in your Committee - why is it happening so and understand the core of the problem.

Now, the public officers of my Ministry from the top management level, should they be engaged in procurement or should they be engaged in improving the efficiency of the service to promote the quality of life, to promote the services, to see what is happening like medical negligence – on which I got PQs earlier? We should give our time to these. The elderly population is coming; shouldn't we have more time to do all these? Isn't this what these officers

should be doing or should the officers be spending hours and hours with hundreds of files working on the Bid Evaluation Committee; who should be the members? Do you think these officers who do not know the technicalities of medicines and equipment, how are they going to do that? And at the same time you will tell us that we are wasting public funds because we have such attendance at the hospitals. It is good that we give all our energy to resolve medical negligence so that this does not repeat itself; to work out on efficiency, to work out on overtime of officers and to implement the Health Sector Strategic Plan. That is what we need to do. Or do we spend our hours only to verify documents and whether specifications have been correctly written, whether there has been no favour of this and that company? Do you think we should be spending our time on these or these should have been kept to one body? You have to see how to do that. And those officers will be there to take that responsibility. It is not, like you said, that we have deprived public officers of their rights. It is making these public officers to be effective in the healthcare delivery to the population.

This is what I wished to say, Mr Speaker, Sir. I believe I have gone through more or less everything – on the public servants as well; the debates have also given way for public officers. So, it is not a question of having this Authority; the Authority will do the Procurement but the public officers will still be responsible for what you want, what the Ministry has. They have to give it to this Authority so that they can do all the procurement and the other officers will have to get other things done.

I will just give you another example. Do you know that in our public hospitals, every month, we have nearly 10 new-borns passing away? Have you asked any question about why these new-borns are passing away? No one cares.

Isn't it important for us to see why these pregnant women are having difficulties having their babies? Is it not the job of the Ministry of Health to see how to improve the health of these patients or should we engage ourselves in procurement? So, you have to identify the causes; it is a long way to go. It is not going to happen tomorrow. There is a list of things that we need to do and if we keep on doing procurement, then every month and every year, we will be losing some 120 new-born babies. Let's give ourselves the opportunity to work things out for these mothers.

Now, you have also said that there were some comments in the Press on Cardisio. I have the whole document on Cardisio – just to inform hon. Dr. Aumeer who made the reference. I

myself am neither a cardiologist nor a gynaecologist but this Artificial Intelligence Electrography known as Cardisiography is an advanced state-of-the-art 3-Dimensional ECG for the detection of cardiovascular diseases. Before I give you this information, let me tell you that we have an elderly population and as for diabetes, hypertension and obesity, we know very well what is our status; what is our consumption on sugar and salt as well as cigarettes and alcohol – these are the risk factors.

With this, what is expected in the next 10 to 15 years is that we have to be able to detect as early as possible the newly diagnosed heart diseases and that will improve their lives and decrease morbidity. How are we going to do so? You know very well the different tests available. Firstly, obviously you have to promote health but the different tests available are ECG, Stress Test, Angiography.

For a population of 1.2 million, you have, including the private and the public sector, some 10 angiography machines. This is an invasive test. Even while doing this test, you may have a complication. I am not a cardiologist. As a layman, I am just giving the information that I have. But strategically, how do you want to proceed? Do you want to have more angiography machines in our hospitals? One costs nearly Rs50,000 and the maintenance of these equipment with the consumables cost three to four times more, and you have to train people. Do you think that in the next 10 years, we can double the number of cardiologists who will perform angiography? Just think about it. Or should we keep on doing ECG, stress test and then, obviously, what is happening? Or do we want to see people coming only in emergency and provide the services? I do not know! Again, I am not cardiologist.

So, there has been a meeting at the Ministry of Health where cardiologists have signed that ‘yes, this is a probably one step.’ And that’s what we did. It is not the Ministry; it is the cardiologist. I may share the whole information about it and they will give it.

Dr. Aumeer: I have got it.

Dr. Jagutpal: You have got the information! It is good that you got leaked documents and such documents. It is good that you know who were present, how that decision was taken. I am fine with that. I will share these documents with you. So, that was the step. And what has the Ministry decided? ‘Okay, let us have a pilot study. Then you come after the pilot study, you tell us whether this test should be introduced or not.

I will just share with you what I have with me –

- It has been approved in 27 countries, including United Kingdom, Switzerland, Australia, Caribbean islands, Brazil.
- Compared to current ECG, which gives you a sensitivity of only 40%, this test has a sensitivity of level 90%. (It does not come from me).
- It detects electrical activity and so on.
- 16 cardiologists from the Trust Fund for Specialised Medical Care have signed a letter to warrant the use of this equipment.

So, that is what we are doing, hon. Member! If I have the information that there is corruption while doing that, obviously, we will not go ahead! If we know that this equipment will be used to save the lives of people, then why not? If you feel that there is some element corruption, tell us! We will take action! But do not come and make people afraid of these tests.

Now, I will probably come onto what hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha said on the personnel. I will quote, Mr Speaker, Sir –

« Le ministre [Me] trouve tout à fait normal que demain il aille chez son coiffeur pour acheter sa baguette de pain. »

So, I tried to understand it. It is clear that I should not go to a coiffeur! Are we all agreeable on this?

(Interruptions)

If you are all agreeable, so why did hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha say that I have a coiffeur? So, I tried to understand what it could be. There are two reasons –

- (1) whether you have a vision problem, or
- (2) whether your vision is good, but the interpretation of your mind is not good.

(Interruptions)

I do not know! But I personally believe that hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha has a good vision and has a good interpretation of the mind.

Now, what could be the other reason to believe that I have to go *chez un coiffeur*? Then, there is another thing. I am not Salman Khan who has to open his shirt and expose it. I am very much reserved with hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha who is a respected Member of this House. So, why did she say that I have to go to a coiffeur? Unless she knows what is happening to other parts of my body! I will be very much reserved to say so! But, anyway, it happened that she mentioned that...

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: What is the underlying meaning?

(Interruptions)

Dr. Jagutpal: So, this was what she said. Anyway! I saw about the coiffeur becoming the supplier. So, Mr Speaker, Sir, in Mauritius, from the *secteur sucrier* to a diversified economy, even the suppliers of the Ministry of Health, you have suppliers who supply oxygen, but they are engaged in construction or steel or metal. You have got so many. I have a long list of how one supplier can be doing another thing. There are suppliers in the tourism industry yet supplying medication.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: *Bijouterie, quincaillerie!*

Dr. Jagutpal: *Bijouterie*, exactly! You rightly pointed out *bijouterie* and *quincaillerie*!

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: *Al dir sa directer l'audit! Directer l'audit !*

An hon. Member: *Laiss li koze! Tonn fini koze!*

(Interruptions)

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: *Pa mwa! Pa mwa!* I am quoting the Director of Audit!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Jagutpal: So, does that mean, Mr Speaker, Sir, that *un descendant de coolie* should remain a coolie?

(Interruptions)

Does that mean that *un descendant d'esclave* should stay like *un esclave*?

An hon. Member: *Ene minis sa !*

Mr Quirin: *Tou zafer kapav kominal ?*

An hon. Member: *Ki kominal ladan? Ki kominal?*

Mr Speaker: Order, both sides!

An hon. Member: *Enn mot li pane dir!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Both sides of the House!

An hon. Member: *Twa ki fer kominal!*

Mr Quirin: *Zot p fini sa pays la !*

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Twa ki kominal!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! I am on my feet! Order!

Mr Ameer Meea: *To pan tande ki linn dir!*

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Jagutpal: Okay, Mr Speaker, Sir. I will now give a reply to hon. Dr. Aumeer. Again, I will quote what he said. He said that ‘the Minister of Health will be remembered for all the issues that happened with the procurement.’ Fair enough! I will be remembered for scandals related to procurement of Pack & Blister and Molnupiravir. Fair enough!

But, Mr Speaker, Sir, do you know what hon. Dr. Aumeer is remembered for? I will tell you. This is factual. It has been 15 years now; 2007. Hon. Dr. Aumeer, at that time, was a public officer who had taken sick leave from the public service and...

Dr. Aumeer: I mentioned the Ministry will be remembered, not you as the Minister!
(Objectionable words expunged following a resolution of the House at the Sitting of Friday 21.07.23).

(Interruptions)

(Objectionable words expunged following a resolution of the House at the Sitting of Friday 21.07.23).

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Inn dekouyone !*

Dr. Aumeer: *(Objectionable words expunged following a resolution of the House at the Sitting of Friday 21.07.23).*

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Dr. Aumeer! This is gross misconduct! If you want to stay in the House, keep quiet! The Minister is rebutting what you said; he has the right. This is parliamentary democracy!

Dr. Boolell: No, but he cannot cast aspersions.

Mr Uteem: It is a personal attack!

Mr Speaker: This is not a market place!

(Interruptions)

Do not turn this Parliament into a market place, the way you are behaving!

Hon. Minister, continue!

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will again repeat exactly, quoting from Hansard –

“Molnupiravir, Pack & Blister, Ronapreve, Fact Finding Committee are no feathers in the cap of the Ministry of Health.[Word for word.] They are something that the Minister will have to accept for a lifetime as they were scandals that have marked public opinions. The MOH will unfortunately be remembered for these.”

(Interruptions)

Mr Toussaint: Who is the liar? Who is the liar?

(Interruptions)

Mr Balgobin: *Ler la pa ti attak personel!*

Dr. Jagutpal: Here it is clearly mentioned ‘the Minister.’

Ms Tour: Shame!

Dr. Jagutpal: Now, let me rebut! So, that rebutting came in 2008. The hon. Member, a public officer at that time, was on sick leave and went to a private clinic and did a cesarean section. The patient, due to complications, attended a hospital - or else, no one would have known about that! Let us put it clear! It happened that there was an inquiry and we came to know what happened: that this doctor, while being on sick leave – and if I will give you the details, then that would be... I agree, I will not give more details than this.

It happened that the doctor had to leave the job and resign. And you are defending public officers, accusing public officers? And you are telling me that you have not mentioned the Minister? Mr Speaker, Sir, I will leave to the population...

Dr. Aumeer: *Mo pas fer lavortement dans le sud !*

Dr. Jagutpal: ...and to the Members of the Opposition to just think about it. If you need more information, I will give you personally.

Now, I will finish with what hon. Uteem said, that ‘this is the most scandalous Bill.’ So, it means that all Bills being presented in this House are scandalous and that this one is the most scandalous one.

Hon. Dr. Boolell also said that ‘the Central Medical Procurement is a master key to fraudulent practices.’

Hon. Dr. Aumeer said that there is no need to introduce the CMPA. However, Mr Speaker, Sir – now listen to me carefully – what has the World Bank said? So, this proposal, the CMPA, was shared with a team from the World Bank during a mission conducted to Mauritius in May last. So, two months back. In a letter dated 27 June addressed to the Minister of Finance,

Economic Planning and Development, that is, hardly a few days back, the Acting Country Representative has, among others, informed that the World Bank –

“stands ready to support the setting up of the Medical Authority”.

This is what the World Bank said. There is no politics here. It comes from the World Bank. As such, the World Bank has also offered to facilitate a visit to the Medical Supply Corporation in Chennai in this regard. This is what has been done. What hon. Uteem said is scandalous; this is what the World Bank has said.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if such an institution like the World Bank, which is firmly imbued with deep-rooted principles of transparency, integrity, accountability and fairness is prepared to support the country in this bold reform, I am even more convinced that the CMPA will achieve its objectives and functions under the Act in the responsible and efficient manner.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the establishment of a Central Medical Procurement Authority is a critical step towards ensuring that the health needs of our citizens are met with the highest level of efficiency and transparency.

During the previous readings, some of our colleagues raised concerns about the potential for corruption and the need for transparency in the operations of the Authority. Let me assure you that these concerns have been taken into account, and measures have been put in place to address them. The Authority will be subject to strict oversight, and all procurement processes will be subject to review by an independent auditor.

The establishment of the Central Medical Procurement Authority will bring about significant benefits to our healthcare system. It will ensure that essential medicines and medical supplies are procured at a competitive price, resulting in significant savings to the Government. It will also streamline the procurement process and ensure that medical supplies are delivered to health facilities on time.

To conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the Prime Minister for his vision of having the Central Medical Procurement Authority to ensure timely delivery of lifesaving medication, high-end equipment and medical disposables for the Health Sector.

I thank the Attorney General's Office and the staff of my Ministry for the elaboration of this Bill.

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

I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

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

At 6.43 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 6.50 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

ANNOUNCEMENT

HON. MS J. BÉRENGER – NAMING

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I named the hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger earlier for disregarding the authority of the Chair.

MOTIONS – S.O. 17(3) & S.O. 29(1)

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of your decision to name the hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger, I beg under Standing Order 17(3) to take the time of the House for urgent business.

Mr Toussaint seconded.

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, having obtained your permission, I beg to move, under Standing Order 29(1), to present a motion without notice.

Mr Toussaint seconded.

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of your decision to name the hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger, I beg to move that the hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger be suspended from the service of the Assembly for today's Sitting and the next two Sittings.

Mr Toussaint seconded.

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Shame!

An hon. Member: What shame!

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Unfair!

COMMITTEE STAGE

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

The Central Medical Procurement Authority Bill (No. IV of 2023) was considered and agreed to.

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

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Central Medical Procurement Authority Bill (No. IV of 2023) was read a third time and passed.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I will suspend the Sitting for a few minutes. The hon. Deputy Speaker will take over.

At this stage, the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Please be seated!

Mr Balgobin: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, go ahead hon. Balgobin!

Mr Balgobin: I have a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The hon. Dr. Aumeer addressed the words *(Objectionable words expunged following a resolution of the House at the Sitting of Friday 21.07.23)* towards the hon. Minister of Health...

An hon. Member: He has to withdraw!

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Balgobin: And I think this is unparliamentary; he has to withdraw. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, I was not in the Chair at that time. So, I will have to check it. Thank you very much.

Hon. Minister, please!

Second Reading

THE STATUS OF THE ARTIST BILL

(NO. VII OF 2023)

Order for Second Reading read.

(6.58 p.m.)

The Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage (Mr A. Teeluck): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that the Status of the Artist Bill (No. VII of 2023) be read a second time.

M. le président, les industries culturelles et créatives sont des moteurs de développement socio-économique important. Le secteur créatif contribue grandement à l'économie mondiale. Le développement et le maintien des talents créatifs sont des axes primordiaux du secteur créatif et à cet effet, nécessite des politiques et des cadres réglementaires qui assurent des conditions de travail décentes, une rémunération satisfaisante ainsi que l'accès à la formation pour les artistes et les professionnels de la culture.

La recommandation de 1980 relative à la condition de l'artiste exige que les États membres de l'UNESCO adoptent les mesures en vue d'améliorer les conditions professionnelles, sociales et économiques des artistes en mettant en œuvre des politiques et des mesures ayant trait à la formation, à la sécurité sociale, à l'emploi, au revenu, à la fiscalité, à la mobilité et à la liberté d'expression. Il faut souligner, M. le président, que la république de Maurice est un État membre de l'UNESCO et les États membres de l'UNESCO ont toujours été invités à prendre des mesures, qu'elles soient législative ou autres pour mettre en œuvre les principes de la recommandation de 1980 sur leurs territoires respectifs, conformément à la pratique constitutionnelle de chaque État.

Cette recommandation de 1980 devrait influencer le développement des lois et pratiques nationales concernant les artistes à la fois directement et indirectement.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, unlike many other sectors in Mauritius, the creative sector is maybe one of the very few unregulated sectors not falling under the purview of any specific legislative framework, despite being a sector which has an inherent contribution in our economy.

Though some artists are duly employed and enjoy benefits on the same basis as other employed workers such as healthcare, insurance, income and pensions, the vast majority of artists are not employees.

Most work on an independent, contractual freelance basis. Consequently, being deprived of some many benefits even those benefits which might have been available to self-employed or atypical workers, under the Workers' Rights Act 2019. This Status of the Artist Bill will address and amend these inequalities and discriminative approach.

M. le président, à la lumière des données obtenues de la *MASA*, il y aurait, à ce jour, environ 6,000 artistes enregistrés auprès de la *MASA*, en tant qu'auteurs, compositeurs, interprètes, arrangeurs, producteurs, éditeurs et artistes, créateurs, entre autres. Ce projet de loi s'adresse principalement à cette communauté de 6,000 artistes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, countries which have so far created a legislative framework for the Status of the Artist are Canada and several of its provinces, such as Québec. We also have Burkina Faso, Lithuania, Morocco, France, Belgium, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Finland and Sweden.

Many other countries have rules governing the recognition of artists, namely Croatia, Slovenia and Togo where provisions exist whereby self-employed artists who register with the Ministry of Culture can apply for social security contributions from the state. The Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina have a law on the independent artist status which operates in conjunction with laws governing health insurance, pensions, disability and unemployment.

In September 2014, Venezuela passed a law that enabled national artists to access social security benefits, regardless of whether they are freelance or employed by public agencies.

Accordingly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Bill provides for the establishment of the Professional in the Arts Council which will regulate the categorisation and registration of professionals in the arts, promote their status, improve their social and economic status through the introduction of a State Recognition Allowance Scheme and Pension Scheme, and thus enhance their access to training and skills development. The Status of the Artist Bill attempts to place artists on an equal footing with other professionals in the labour market and to earn a more equitable share from contribution of their work within the economy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am proud to introduce today in this Assembly the much-awaited Status of the Artist Bill. Despite being invited by the UNESCO to work on the appropriate legislation, nothing had been undertaken, prior to 2016. For several years, the artist community, through various fora, did make representations to have a legislation which would not only protect them but also enhance their professional and economic status. However, it was only as from 2016 that things started moving. In 2016, approval was given to my Ministry to seek technical assistance of UNESCO for the preparation of a legislation relating to the status of the artist.

Consequently, from 2017 to 2018, experts were designated by UNESCO to work on this legal framework. During the visits of these experts, several discussions and workshops were organised whereby the artists' community and relevant stakeholders had the opportunity to submit their views and recommend practical solutions in terms of measures.

The draft report on a series of provisions and measures submitted by the UNESCO experts were received in 2018 which were uploaded on my Ministry's website for public consultations. Following this consultation, interesting proposals were received and these were communicated to UNESCO for approval and validation. The provisions and measures for the drafting of the Bill were amended and validated by UNESCO in 2019, and these have been used for the preparation of this current Bill.

I personally made a presentation of these provisions and measures to the artist community during a workshop on 30 June 2022 and this was highly appreciated by the community. Since then, my Ministry and the Attorney General's Office have worked to finalise this Bill.

Fundamentally, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to highlight that this Bill is in line with the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions to which Mauritius has adhered to. This Convention, which was adopted by UNESCO in 2005, aims to safeguard and promote cultural diversity worldwide and recognises the importance of supporting artists, protecting their rights and enhancing their socio-economic status.

This Bill is aligned with the principles and objectives of this UNESCO Convention as it will provide legal protection, recognition and support for artists and will consequently contribute to the diversity of cultural expressions within Mauritius. Undoubtedly, with this piece of legislation, we will foster cultural participation, creativity and the preservation of cultural

heritage, all of which are the core principles of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

Besides, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Bill emphasises the importance of training, skills and development and the marketing of artistic activities which as per the Convention focuses on capacity development, promotion of cultural industries and facilitating the international circulation of cultural goods and services.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, pending the finalisation of the Bill, we did not remain insensitive to the representations made by the artists, nor did we ignore their sufferings, more particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is an undisputed fact that with the outbreak of COVID-19, the creative and cultural sector was one of the sectors which was directly hit. The pandemic and the associated lockdowns, social distancing measures and events' cancellation impacted profoundly on the sector worldwide. Many artists rely on live performances, exhibitions and cultural events for their income. With the cancellation and postponement of these events, artists suffered a significant loss of income, leading to financial struggles and insecurity.

Moreover, the closure of venues, galleries and cultural institutions resulted in artists having no opportunities to showcase their work and connect with audiences. This lack of exposure and engagement impacted on their ability to reach new audiences, sell their artworks and secure future projects, and the situation worsened for artists working in the freelance or gig economy as they had to face particular challenges. They often lacked the stability and safety nets provided by traditional employment, thus making it difficult for them to access financial assistance during periods of reduced or no work.

In addition, the pandemic triggered social isolation, uncertainty and financial stress and these took a toll on the mental and emotional well-being of artists. Many had had to deal with bouts of anxiety, depression and feelings of isolation, thus affecting their creative output and overall productivity.

While some artists were able to shift their work to online platforms and digital formats, this transition posed challenges for many, including the inability to connect with peers, mentors and

potential collaborators. All these affected the creative process, innovation and professional development.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in face of these challenges, the Government took several bold measures to assist artists in these trying times to enable them to live a decent life. I will briefly, enumerate some of these measures –

- (i) The introduction of the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme by the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whereby self-employed individuals in business and tradespersons operating in the informal sector such as artists were given a financial support of Rs5,100. This measure was meant to assist self-employed persons who suffered a loss of revenue as a consequence of the lockdown and artists were able to benefit from this assistance scheme.
- (ii) Introduction of the Post Covid-19 Action Plan 2020 by my Ministry in May 2020 for the creative and heritage sector to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic and stimulate artistic and creative activities. Under this Action Plan, ten schemes were put in place, namely the Virtual Concert Scheme, the Virtual Theatre Scheme, and Other Performances. A sum of around Rs14.6 m. was dished out by my Ministry to around 800 artists in Financial Year 2020/2021.
- (iii) During the second lockdown, the introduction of the Covid-19 Artists Support Plan 2021 for the creative and the cultural sector; still implemented by my Ministry in collaboration with the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority to further mitigate the effects of the lockdown following the resurgence of the COVID-19 Pandemic in February 2021. Under the Support Plan, artists and groups were financially assisted due to loss of income in several artistic fields such as music, literature, production of short stories, paintings, sculpture, film making and other forms of arts. A sum of Rs9 m. was provided for the implementation of these schemes and Rs5.8 m. were disbursed by my Ministry to some 257 beneficiaries.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in addition to these one-off schemes extended to artists to mitigate the effects of the pandemic, my Ministry implemented several other schemes to alleviate the hardships faced by the community of artists, more particularly for those who depend on their creative activities to earn a living. Some of these schemes are the “Scheme for International

Travel Grant”, scheme for the participation in international concerts, scheme for the purchase of books from local authors, artist incubator scheme and scheme for production of CDs and DVDs which are ongoing. Actually, these schemes help to promote the artistic activities.

In addition, whenever my Ministry organises national festivals, artists are given a platform to perform against payment of a cachet.

Besides, artistic infrastructures, namely the Serge Constantin Theatre and the Pointe Canon Open Air Theatre are regularly made available to artists for organisation of concerts on demand. These theatres are currently under renovation as my Ministry intends to offer a better service to the artist community.

In line with the above, a new National Arts Centre will shortly be constructed at Reunion Maurel, Petit Raffray as there is no public infrastructure in the North for artists to perform. A first tender exercise was unresponsive. A second tender exercise for this construction project has now been floated. This Arts Centre will provide a decent state-of-the-art infrastructure for artistic performances. Likewise, this facility will be put at the disposal of artists as a training facility in various fields of performing arts.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, all these actions show our strong commitment to promote our artists in all fields even during difficult times. We know that the creative and cultural sector is a promising sector which if properly developed, can become yet another pillar of the economy. This is why, pending the finalisation and introduction of the Status of the Artist Bill, the above measures had been marshalled. However, we have not limited our actions to solely extending financial assistance to artists.

In fact, to better protect intellectual property rights of artists, several amendments were brought to the Copyright Act 2014 and these are, *inter alia*, to make better provisions for phonograms, increasing the duration of copyright from 50 to 70 years, payment of equitable remuneration and levy with regard to collection and distribution of royalties, and replacement of Rights Management Society by the Mauritius Society of Authors (MASA).

With these amendments, MASA is now empowered to administer the economic rights and apply equitable remuneration as well as negotiate on behalf of its members in Mauritius with users of a work on the condition that the fees and charges are payable.

The introduction of the Copyright (Fees) Regulations 2022, a regulation on the first hand revising the copyright fees payable by the user of works in the interest of artists, fees which remain unrevised since 2008. In certain cases, this revision upscaled the copyright fees to up to more than 100% of the then applicable fees. Also these regulations enlarge *l'assiette de collection* extending to new sectors not previously captured in relation to payment of copyright fees. On the other hand, these regulations bring certainty to the legal obligation for users of work to pay copyright fees.

All these measures are proof as I mentioned of our commitment to have an inclusive society where every citizen of this country is taken on board and their rights are duly respected. We are now taking even bolder measures to further protect our artists indiscriminately.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, artists with their diversity of creativity and talents have shaped our cultural landscape and fabric of our society. Without creativity and arts, life would be dull. We, therefore, have the duty to acknowledge their invaluable contributions to the society and establish a legal framework to recognize and safeguard their contributions.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, today, we are creating history. The Status of the Artist Bill is a ground breaking legislation that seeks to empower our artists, recognise their invaluable contribution and raise the economic and social status. It addresses the pressing challenges faced by artists such as lack of financial stability and lack of recognition. This Bill shows our commitment to support and foster their efforts.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the art sector encompasses a wide plethora of disciplines such as visual arts, performing arts, literature, music, and film amongst others. Each of these disciplines, comprise a multitude of specialised roles and professions such as painters, actors, writers, directors, entertainers, and technicians. Each of these professions requires distinct skills, expertise and training. It is thus imperative that we now recognise and categorise these professionals to enable us to better grasp their needs and support them in the best way we can.

We have therefore strived for the present Bill to address the long outstanding issue of categorisation as professional artists, specialised professionals in the Arts, technical professionals, and occasional professionals in the Arts and register them under one same hat as professionals in the Arts. This aims at better understanding and recognising the diverse talents and skills of our professionals in the Arts as well as their needs and challenges. This information

is crucial for the designing of tailor-made schemes, capacity building programs and assistance to address their needs.

Another important provision of this legislation is to improve the social and economic status of the professionals in the Arts. Financial stability is one of the pressing concerns of artists. This Bill aims at ensuring that the professionals in the Arts receive fair compensation and conditions of work such as contractual safeguards. In addition to further enhance their economic status, the Bill focuses on the implementation of a State Recognition Allowance Scheme and Pension Scheme. This in itself is a significant and historic measure which vividly addresses the serious shortcomings in the lives of the artists while they were nearing old age. Obviously, these measures do contribute to the socio-economic enhancement of professionals in the Arts and ultimately secure a sustainable future. Once the Bill is passed and proclaimed, both schemes will be worked out by the professionals in the Arts Council which is being set up under the Bill for the purpose of implementing the objectives of the law.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in addition to the above provisions, the Bill provides for the empowerment of the professionals in the Arts through training and skills development. These capacity programmes will safeguard and enhance their creativity whilst extending the necessary tools for success.

The Bill also makes provision for the development and marketing of artistic products both nationally and internationally for artists to earn a sustainable income. This is a crucial aspect as artists do not often have any platform to market their artistic products or to gain national or international recognition.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish now to highlight and elaborate on the salient provisions of the Status of the Artist Bill. I wish to start with Clause 3 of the Bill which allows for the establishment of a professional in the Arts Council while Clause 4 determines the objects of the Council which are to, *inter alia* –

- (i) categorise persons engaged as professional artists, specialised professionals in the Arts, technical professionals and occasional professionals in the Arts and register them as professionals in the Arts;
- (ii) enhance the social and economic status of professionals in the Arts;

- (iii) implement the State Recognition Allowance scheme and pension scheme for professionals in the Arts, and
- (iv) enhance access to training and skills development for professionals in the Arts;

Clause 5 of the Bill establishes the functions and powers of the Council which are, *inter alia*, to –

- (i) develop and maintain a directory of professional in the Arts;
- (ii) publish an annual list of those registered in the Act.
- (iii) gather and disseminate information on funding sources, opportunities for creative and professional collaboration and education programmes, and
- (iv) put in place, measures and actions aimed at nurturing and supporting professionals in the Arts, artistic creations and the affirmation of artistic vocations.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Clause 6 lays down the ambit for the administration and management of the Council by a Board comprising a Chairperson and six persons having a wide experience in the field of visual arts, literature, music, audio-visual, dance and performing arts. Besides, the Board will be composed of ex-officio members from my Ministry, the Ministries responsible for the subject of finance, labour, education, social security and the Prime Minister's Office.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at Clause 9, there is the provision for the setting up of six Sectoral Expert Committees for the assessment of the applications for the registration of Professional in the Arts by the Council. The six Sectoral Expert Committees will be in the field of visual arts, literature, music, audio-visual and digital media, dance and performing arts.

Section 14 sets out the *modus operandi* for the registration of professionals in the Arts by the Professional in the Arts Council. Any person who intends to be registered shall apply to the Council against payment of a fee. The application will thereafter be referred to the appropriate Sectoral Expert Committee for assessment and recommendation, following which, a professional card will be issued to the applicant which will be valid for a period of 5 years from the date of issue and renewable for further periods of 5 years subject to the approval of the Council.

Clause 15 allows for the upkeep of a register of professionals in the Arts whereby the particulars of the professional in the Arts and the category under which he is registered will, *inter alia*, be recorded.

Clause 16 provides for the Council to deregister a professional in the Arts whereby or where any information provided by him in his application for registration or renewal is false or misleading or he no longer meets any of the condition for registration.

Clause 17 makes provision for a person aggrieved by the decision of the Board to appeal to the Minister, thus setting up an appeal mechanism for those who wish to challenge any decision of the Council.

At Clause 21, provision is made for any person who retains the services of a professional in the Arts to enter into a written contract between him and the Professional in the Arts. The contract for services should specify the terms of payment and the duration during which the services are to be delivered. The terms of payment for a contract for services other than in respect of an atypical worker shall be made not later than 15 days after the services are provided.

Clause 28 provides for consequential amendments, including amendments to the Local Government Act and to the Worker's Rights Act 2019. Amendment to the Local Government Act will allow a registered Professional in the Arts to be recognised as a self-employed and be issued with a business registration card. An amendment to the Worker's Rights Act 2019 will allow registered professional in the Arts, who work on a freelance basis to qualify as an atypical worker and benefit from existing provisions under the law protecting atypical workers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that, following the first reading of this Bill, I have had the opportunity to meet various artists who have shown their appreciation to the coming of this Bill but I have also received proposals which I will submit to the Professional Body for consideration in due course. I would also wish to inform the House that various proposals canvassed with respect to emerging and new talents and new artists are already being taken care of by my Ministry through a panoply of Schemes which I have mentioned. Others received will be considered as appropriate.

Nevertheless, one of the proposals I have received, is to empower the Sectoral Expert Committee to also have an Advisory role to the Board on issues pertaining to their respective sectors.

Therefore, I will, during Committee Stage, propose an amendment to Clause 9 to empower each Sectoral Committee to advise and formulate recommendations to the Board on matters relating to their respective artistic discipline.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have received representations to the effect that the categorisation of artists adopted is not appropriate particularly that the word ‘entertainer’ should have been replaced by the word ‘interpretative artists’ which refers to actors, dancers, musicians and so on. On this note, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to point out that the drafting of the Status of the Artist Bill is based on the provisions and measures as submitted by UNESCO after extensive consultations undertaken during two missions led by UNESCO in February 2017 and October 2017. Appellations that have been used for categorisation of professional artists namely ‘entertainer or Professional in the Arts’ have been thoroughly discussed and decided upon by participants including artists and stakeholders during the 19 working sessions and 17 workshops which were conducted during the two field missions in 2017 as per UNESCO guidelines.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, furthermore, I received another representation that the Bill does not cover Intangible Cultural Heritage. In respect of the above, I wish to inform the House that the Bill covers a broad spectrum of arts forms and is not limited to issues of Intangible Cultural Heritage specifically related to any one island. Instead, arts and culture is a vibrant sector and spans over a wide variety of disciplines and the Bill as it is, encourages such diversity.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my attention has also been flagged that Rodrigues is not represented at the Council nor is there any committee set up by the Professional in the Arts Council at the level of Rodrigues or Rodrigues Regional Assembly. In reference to this point, I have to stress that the UNESCO Experts visited Rodrigues to conduct one-to-one meetings with eight prominent artists. Likewise, workshops were facilitated by the Commission for Arts and Culture for the purpose of the Status of the Artist Bill. I must reassure the House that the specificities of professionals in the arts including that of Rodrigues have been taken into account whilst drafting the Bill.

The more so, that the Board, with the approval of the Minister, may co-opt any person who may be of assistance in relation to any matter before the Board. Besides, for issues specific to Rodrigues to be discussed on the Board, members with the required expertise may be co-opted.

Further to that, depending on the number of applications received, if the need arises, after the establishment of the Professional in the Arts Council, an administrative branch of the Professional in the Arts Council may be set up in Rodrigues.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there has also been a request to expand the definition of "professional artist" to include all artists who work in the arts, regardless of their income and financial status to ensure that they are protected.

As mentioned earlier, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a professional artist or specialised professional in the arts, are all considered as professionals in the arts. The distinction is not based on income and financial status, but on their particular technical specificities. Though there may be some slight overlapping in the categories, I am confident that the Council will allow for the specific attention to be given to each category. I am sure that the hon. Members of the House will agree that it will not be fair to compare an artist who has dedicated his whole life to his art and earns his living exclusively from it, and another artist who has a full time job and practices his art on a part-time basis.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, concerns have also been raised that the Bill should include specific provisions for copyright protection and fair pay for artists that would help to ensure that artists are compensated fairly for their work and that their creative works are protected from unauthorised use. Allow me to reassure the House that issues related to copyright are already addressed under the Copyright Act 2014 and as far as practically possible we will avoid duplication.

It has also been reported that no section under this Bill provides for specific measures to be addressed for the interest of the artists. However, I wish to add that the Council is empowered under Clause 5, under 'Functions of the Council' to come up with specific schemes to protect the interest of artists and equally provide training.

This Bill, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will play a pivotal role in empowering the professionals in the arts and protecting their rights. It will address the challenges faced by them such as financial instability and non-access to essential benefits. By addressing these issues, we will create a conducive environment that will encourage creativity for the professionals in the arts. This Bill will pave the way for a prosperous future for our artists. Moreover, with this legislation, we firmly believe that there will definitely be artistic growth and development in the creative and cultural sector. This Bill is an ode to those artists who have dedicated their lives to culture and art, an ode to those artists who have left us over the years, and most recently, legends like Serge Lebrasse, Vaco Baissac, Aniff Hossanee, Jayan Sadasing and Lin.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am proud today of the work we have achieved with this piece of legislation as it is not only an acknowledgement of the importance of professionals in the arts in shaping our cultural identity, but it demonstrates our commitment to support and enhance their creativity. This Bill can be considered a momentous landmark in the empowerment of artists. Besides, it will establish a national database of all professionals in the sector.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I take this opportunity to thank all the artists, the relevant stakeholders, the staffs of my Ministry, the hon. Attorney General and his staff for the preparation of this Bill. With these words, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I now commend the Bill to the House.

Thank you.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo) seconded.

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

(7.35 p.m.)

Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have listened intently to the speech delivered by the Minister. There is a rallying call throughout the country to empower and to raise the profile and status of artists.

I agree with the Minister that this Bill has some merits, but the demerits, unfortunately, far outweigh some of the merits. I do not think that this is a ground-breaking legislation, but let us say that there is plenty of room for improvement. I have had the opportunity over the weekend

and over the week to interact and to interface with many artists. The overall feelings are that this Bill deserved to be introduced, but as the Minister has said, there was room for improvement.

Now, the Minister, unfortunately, does not live up to the expectations of the artists. He cannot be the be-all and the end-all, and artists are left stranded as bystanders. I will explain as I go along, because what are the feelings when you talk to the artists? They have the feeling that Government wants them to put up or shut up, and this attitude does not bring hope with glimpses of a more possible future for the artist. This Bill, unfortunately, is inappropriate for empowerment, equity and empathy of employment of artists. Despite what the Minister has said, I do grant you that some effort was made during the pandemic to help those who were left stranded.

Now, what is it that they want? They want to be heard and to be part of the decision making process. It is a far cry from the recommendation or future actions by the International Labour Organisation. You are right, hon. Minister, to say that they have legitimate rights; the reason as to why we are putting our best endeavour to empower them. They need to have decent pay for decent work, irrespective of whether they hold or do not hold a professional card, whether they are registered or deregistered. They cannot be debarred if they want to stand on their own. Freedom is creativity; the artist does not like to be cloistered, but loves to have recognition.

The hon. Minister was right to point out that there were interactive sessions and the advice of UNESCO was sought, and that advice was dispensed and the expertise proposals were taken onboard. But I was informed by representatives of the *Union des Artistes* that the template prepared by UNESCO was not tailor made to suit the needs of our artists. I am sure that the Minister recalls that there was a memorandum which was submitted jointly by the *Fédération Internationale des Musiciens* and the Union of Artists on 18 April 2023 to the Ministry, but the proposals, unfortunately, were not given due consideration.

Now, this memorandum should have been the subject of wide discussions at the bar of public opinion with all categories of artists. There has been no follow-up to assess the scale, scope and depth of the art industry. It is an industry which is from here to eternity. The regime - let me remind the Minister - promised to deliver a *maison des artistes*, key in hand to our friends. A false promise from a false regime is a false dawn! But it is good to also recall that there was a

letter which was forwarded to the hon. Prime Minister by the *Fédération Internationale des Musiciens* with a copy to the Minister of Labour on 23 May 2023. It is explicit, and I quote –

“Finally, we are concerned that funding New Arts Council would divert resources that could be invested in artistic and cultural projects supporting job creation in the sector.”

And I go on and refer to excerpt from the letter, and it goes on to say –

“While we support the principle of a status for artists, we believe that implementing such an ambitious principle requires in-depth consideration amongst all interested parties and the adoption of a realistic and consensual approach”.

This is, unfortunately, badly lacking and therefore the partnership, in spite of what the hon. Minister has said, is weak.

The Federation was even willing to provide expertise and knowledge in this respect as regards the music sector. But there is one thing that the Minister did take on board and that’s most welcoming. The legislation gives attention to various categories of artists and it was, as I have said, one of the several recommendations made by the *Fédération Internationale des Musiciens*. But many of the proposals were not entertained, as a consequence of which, several issues remain to be addressed forcefully. And the Minister has stated very clearly that there is plenty of room for improvement and proposals made are yet to be taken on board.

But there was a last-minute appeal also made to the Minister. There was a preliminary talk which was held last year in July with the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage and, of course, it was only a lip service that was paid with no interest. I was apprised of a last-minute appeal by our friend from the Live & Direk and Lespas Kiltirel to impress upon the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage to be flexible. Unfortunately, that proposal was set aside. The appeal was not music to the ears of the Minister.

Let us look at the very bone of contention. The bone of contention remains the composition of the Council and there is no provision for fair representation at the level of the National Arts Council. Now. What is it? They want a Council akin to the one in South Africa, India and Jamaica, notwithstanding what the Minister has said in relation to councils which exist in many different parts of the world. But what have they ended up with? They have ended up with a department of the Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage which is not relevant to the main

object of the Bill. Slowly but surely, it kills innovation, creativity as uncertainty and insecurity prevail.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, constant brief in digital media and the amazing world of AI is a major opportunity knock for enhancement of artistic and creative work. Skills development and lifelong learning need to be adapted to the different subsectors of arts and entertainment. Stronger partnership and knowledge transfer between and within region; a stronger integration of cultural policies; educational investment in technical and vocational skills and apprenticeship as well as recognition of prior learning, including formal and non-formal learning are crucial. In other words, level up to be pyrotechnics! The Minister has failed to make the difference, largely due to indifference to sound advice standard by experts and stakeholders.

Now, let us look at the outcome of this legislation. The outcome is an ambiguous piece of legislation. *La montagne a accouché d'une souris*. And to add insult to injury, the chosen few professionals from the rank and file of artists as council members will be picked by the Minister and is tantamount to a colourable device and a council without fair representation is a tyranny. No fair representation, as we say, is like taxation without representation. But it is the same untold story in relation to MASA, a body corporate under copyrights, where *mainmise* is absolute. Yes! As a result of the creative and artistic mind, they provide financial resources over collect of copyright fees and charges from users of work for fair sharing. That is the spirit of mutual support. But the regime is inconsiderate and has opted to slash the annual budget of MASA - would you believe it - by Rs2 m. and it's tantamount to a stab in the back by the regime. Unfortunately, lessons have not been learnt and drawn in relation to fair representation on the board of the Council. I called it the tyranny of number.

When it comes to pension, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the main object of the Council is to establish Professional in the Arts Council. And I say it is not an end to itself, there will be no level up if the Ministry has a total *mainmise*. This goes against wide ownership and democratisation. But before I come to the sustainable pension, what is the outcome? An artist card and recognition by MRA! I agree this is fair. But I am glad that section 21 makes provision for contract for services; it fulfils the rights and obligations. And the message has to be conveyed loud and clear, no exploitation by events manager and contracts drawn after a mutual agreement has to be explicit and well-balanced to serve the interest of artists.

A dissemination campaign has to be waged on workers' rights and the Minister has to spell out - which he has not done - the source of funding for pension. Will it largely come from Lottery Fund, *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* or Consolidated Fund? What would be the contribution from artists? The scheme has to be sustainable. It will be prescribed when and how? I do not know whether it is going to be a magic wand.

Why are we expressing our deep-seated concern? Mind you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, pensions of CEB, CWA and other relevant parastatals have been depleted, running dry. An interview in the Business Magazine by the Director of AON sends shivers down the spine over mismanagement of *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* by the regime. The card is not a passport for security of tenure, for now or in the future. For any flimsy reason, it can be withdrawn.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the reach out for a greater outreach is pivotal and it is never too late to pay heed to the voice of the artists. The functions, the objects and powers of the Council should not be a paper tiger or déjà vu, *déjà entendu* phenomenon, it has to deliver consensually.

Section 17 refers to review of decision of Council in relation to aggrieved artists, appeal is made to the Minister and he will set up an appeal committee and within 21 days of request for the appeal, it is determined and the committee sends its recommendation to the Minister. It is a fair section but marred because of absolute *mainmise* of the Minister on appointment of members of the Council.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, art has no boundary. Many of the artists are atypical. They do not have security of their artistic skills be it on or off stage, in studio or busking. Artists do not like to be pigeonholed and categorised into tier. Music is self-taught. Rags to riches can happen overnight, but the majority, as the Minister has said, has to desperately fight to survive, let alone to live. Let us work out a package of incentives to enable them to unleash their potential and make the most of the creative skill. A database to collect relevant information is fair to enhance visibility. The card should be a passport to level up! Tax exemption on musical instruments is a step forward but duty-free vehicle is a utility.

I know there are quite a few MPs with artistic flair in this House, but I will single out one MP. Our good friend whose popular song '*Kayambo, kayambo*' has been a big hit.

Mr Toussaint: *Bien kontan sa kayambo la !*

Dr. Boolell: I would not be surprised if her ascent in politics is due to her artistic skills. Unfortunately, she is in the wrong political party.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wonder whether the Minister talked to the lady MP, who rose like a sphinx with her melodious “*Kayambo, kayambo, la mare monte*”. But for the tide to rise...

Mrs Mayotte: *Mare la pe monte !*

Dr. Boolell: ...to lift the boat of potential artists, the system needs to have the flair to catch the young with potential artistic acumen and that has to be done early. If we want a music industry, we need a pipeline of talent. Unfortunately, on lip service is paid to the deeds of existing talents.

Music education should be given an exclusive greater priority at schools. In UK budgetary constraints, the demands of the curriculum and shortage of music teachers are putting at risk the music industry.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, be it classical or modern, music should not be the preserve of those who hail from the upper class or the well-to-do. The circle of opportunities has to be widened and they need to have access and learn the instruments. I look forward to the setting up of a Mauritius Philharmonic Orchestra with talents from back and main streets. Disadvantaged children should not miss out the better off peers. Since independence, we have leveraged on diplomacy to set up the MGI, the Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre, the Chinese Cultural Centre, François Mitterrand, with footprints like ‘Atelier Mo’Zar’ to level up our artistic literary circle but the circle, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is never full. That’s the joy of art, fulfilling but never full. Music, paintings, fashion and designs, writing, reading poetry museums should be as important and relevant as for art, reading, writing arithmetic and deep breath. Minister, before I conclude, hear this.

You know why the Labour Party Alliance will crush the MSM regime at the next general election?

An hon. Member: *Dire li, dire li.*

Dr. Boolell: You know why? Because we will campaign in poetry and govern in prose. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much, hon. Dr. Boolell. Hon. Sandra Mayotte and just for the correction its *marée la monte, pa la mare*. Correct? No if you corrected it so.

Mrs Mayotte: Excuse me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it's *mare la p monte*.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much for bringing in the original version.

(7.53 p.m.)

Mrs Mayotte: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move for the adjournment of the debate.

Mr Toussaint seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 11 July 2023 at 11.30 a.m.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo) seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned! Hon. Ms Joanne Tour, you are the first one who caught my eyes!

MATTERS RAISED

(7.53 p.m.)

ANDRE CAPEYRON STREET, VALLEE DES PRETRES – ROAD WORKS

Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête s'adresse à l'honorable Dr. Husnoo, concernant la rue André Capeyron à Vallée des Prêtres qui a été endommagée, le goudron complètement lavé lors des dernières grosses pluies. Je demanderai donc au ministre des Collectivités locales de bien vouloir voir auprès de la municipalité de Port Louis de reconstruire ce chemin et possiblement prévoir l'aménagement d'un drain afin de canaliser les trombes d'eau venant de la montagne lors des grosses pluies. Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. VPM, please!

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will get the Municipality of Port Louis to look into it.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell, I see you early today!

(7.54 p.m.)

PALMA, QUATRE BORNES – SEWERAGE HOUSE CONNECTION WORKS

Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes): Thank you very much. I would like to raise a matter in relation to sewerage house connection works in the region of Palma, Quatre Bornes. Now, there was a project which was ongoing but, unfortunately, has remained unfinished. When there is heavy rainfall, there is overflow and these effluents literally are more than a nuisance. I hope the Minister will be able to tell us where matters stand in relation to this sewerage house connection work project.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister, please!

The Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr G. Lesjongard): Yes, thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The hon. Member did inform me that he would raise this issue at adjournment time and in the meantime, I have been able to gather some information.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I understand from the Wastewater Management Authority that due to some contractual issues under the Plaines Wilhems Sewerage Project Construction of reticulation network and house connections for lot 1A, some parts of the sewerage works, namely in the regions of Palma, La Source, La Seringue, Rughooputh Lane and Bassin Avenue were omitted under the contract in 2015.

However, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in order to attend to the sanitation issue in the region, the WMA has taken action to complete the remaining wastewater works in the concerned regions in phases thus works relating to a sewerage project in Route Bassin regions started in February 2021 and has been recently completed with 225 houses connected to the public sewer. Another contract concerning a sewerage project in the region of La Source has been awarded for an amount of Rs339.8 m. including VAT in May 2022. The objective is to connect some 450 households to the Wastewater systems and I understand that works are ongoing.

Similarly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, future wastewater projects with respect to the other parts of the regions of Bassin and Palma which are yet to be connected to the Wastewater Network are under consideration by the Wastewater Management Authority and would be implemented, as I stated earlier, in a phased manner subject to technical feasibility and availability of funds. I thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

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

(7.56 p.m.)

TRANQUEBAR – SERGE BARDOTIER STADIUM – CHANGING ROOM & FACILITIES

Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête concerne le stade Serge Bardotier à Tranquebar et est adressée à l'honorable ministre des Sports. Ce stade sert, entre autres, comme centre d'entraînement pour *Tranquebar Dalton Football Club* qui vient d'être sacré champion interrégional. Mais contrairement à ce qui a déjà été dit dans cette Chambre, il n'y a toujours pas de vestiaire ni même des toilettes dans ce stade, et les spots lumineux sont défectueux. Donc, je fais un appel à l'honorable ministre pour faire le nécessaire pour la construction des vestiaires et des gradins dans ce stade au plus tôt possible.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister, please!

The Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation (Mr S. Toussaint): M. le président, malheureusement, l'honorable membre ne m'a pas informé qu'il allait soulever cette question. Ce stade ne tombe pas sous la responsabilité de mon ministère. Probablement ça doit être sous la municipalité de Port Louis et *hopefully the Vice-Prime Minister has taken note*.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Nuckcheddy!

(7.57 p.m.)

CENTRAL FLACQ - TRAFFIC CENTRE - STREET LIGHTING

Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Tonight I am going to raise an issue concerning the traffic centre of Central Flacq which not only concerns the inhabitants of No. 9 but also from your Constituency No. 10 and it

is addressed to hon. Dr. Husnoo, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management. In fact, we have noticed that there is a lighting problem in the traffic centre, especially in this winter period where it's still dark at 6 o'clock. So, I will request hon. Dr. Husnoo if he could see with the District Council of Flacq to add some street lighting at the traffic centre of Central Flacq. Thank you.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): I will ask the District Council to have a look at the lightings.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ittoo!

(7.58 p.m.)

HOTEL DE VILLE DE CUREPIPE – EVENTS' CELEBRATIONS

Mr A. Ittoo (Third Member for Vacoas & Floréal): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête s'adresse au ministre des Arts et du Patrimoine culturel et cela concerne précisément un de nos patrimoines qui est l'hôtel de Ville de Curepipe qui vient d'être récemment rénové au plus grand bonheur des Curepiens et des Mauriciens en général.

M. le président, l'hôtel de Ville de Curepipe qui est listé sous le *National Heritage Fund* tombe sous son ministère. Donc, il y a des conditions strictes par rapport à sa gestion et nous savons tous que traditionnellement, l'hôtel de Ville a été utilisé pour des célébrations de mariage, des anniversaires, et je demanderai à l'honorable ministre d'intervenir auprès du *National Heritage Fund* pour trouver – nous savons tous qu'il y a des conditions strictes qui sont imposées avec le nouveau bâtiment qui, bien sûr, est en bois pour sauvegarder ce patrimoine - ensemble avec le *Local Government* et la municipalité de Curepipe comment pouvoir continuer de célébrer ces mariages et anniversaires et en même temps, sauvegarder ce patrimoine le plus longtemps possible. Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Who is going to take the request?

The Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare (Mrs K. Koonjoo-Shah): I will make sure to pass on the request of the hon. Member.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Ms Anquetil!

(8.00 p.m.)

GLENPARK MULTIPURPOSE COMPLEX CLOSURE – RENOVATION WORKS

Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal): Je vous remercie, M. le président. Ma requête s'adresse au vice-Premier ministre et ministre des Collectivités locales. Depuis décembre 2022, le terrain de football synthétique du Glenpark Multipurpose Complex est fermé pour rénovation pour la deuxième fois. Bientôt sept mois pour fixer un gazon synthétique.

Cette très longue rénovation affecte des milliers de jeunes des régions avoisinantes qui ne peuvent pas pratiquer sport favori. Je fais un appel pressant au vice-Premier ministre afin que cette rénovation soit complétée dans les meilleurs délais. Je vous remercie, M. le président.

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

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will discuss with the Mayor of Vacoas-Phoenix to see that the work is done.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

(8.00 p.m.)

LA VALETTE BASKET BALL GROUND - LIGHTING

Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête, ce soir, s'adresse au ministre du *Local Government* et concerne le village intégré de La Valette. M. le président, cela fait plusieurs mois déjà que les luminaires qui éclairent le boulodrome ainsi que le terrain de basket-ball sont brûlés, malgré les nombreuses sollicitations des habitants auprès du conseil de district de Rivière Noire. Donc, merci à l'honorable ministre de s'assurer que le nécessaire soit fait dans un délai raisonnable.

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

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): I will talk to Black River District Council as well to sort it out.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

(8.01 p.m.)

CRÈVE COEUR - BUS SHELTER & LAYBY

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

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My address goes to the hon. Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, hon. Alan Ganoo. It is a request on behalf of the inhabitants of Crève Coeur, precisely at Robinson Lane. They have requested for the setting up of a bus shelter as well as a layby for the setting up of a new bus stop *direksion lagar* Crève Coeur as there are quite some curves at the entrance of Crève Coeur. So, if the TMRSU can do the needful to make sure that the road is properly enlightened as well as providing the right bus shelters so that there is enough visibility for the bus drivers and the *automobilistes* as we say. Thank you very much.

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

The Deputy Prime Minister: I undertake to convey the request to my hon. colleague.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Aadil Ameer Meea!

(8.02 p.m.)

METRO EXPRESS – STUDENT’S MECARDS

Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Yes, thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Tonight, I am raising an issue which is addressed to the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail. It is a very important issue which is affecting the lives of thousands of students. On 26 June 2023, Metro Express issued a communiqué informing passengers, especially students, that the use of Metro Express Cards (MECards) will be compulsory while travelling onboard the Metro Express as from 03 July this year, that is, yesterday. To benefit from free travel, a student must have the MECard and their Educational Institution Card. Their student identity card is no longer valid to travel in Metro Express.

The problem is when schools are applying to Metro Express, this is taking two months for the school to get the Metro Express Card and this is penalising all the students who are travelling in Metro. For example, someone travelling from Port Louis to Curepipe to attend his college, it is costing Rs110 per day. If you time it by five for a month, it is Rs2,400. If in a family there are two students, it is Rs5,000 per month.

Therefore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I make an appeal to the hon. Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail if they can allow students to use their student card until Metro Express

has issued the Metro Express Card to all students? Because to my information, there is a huge backlog to issue the Metro Express Card. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: It is okay. You see, I do not find any difficulty in recognising you when you stick to the request. Hon. Deputy Prime Minister, please!

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the representations are well noted and will be conveyed to my hon. colleague.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Kenny Dhunoo, please!

(8.04 p.m.)

MIDLANDS - OVERHEAD FOOTPATH - LIGHTING

Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My adjournment matter is addressed to hon. Mahendranuth Hurreeram, Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development. It concerns the overhead footpath situated at Midlands on M1. Let me, on behalf of the inhabitants of Midlands, thank the hon. Minister for all the good work he is doing for the village. I would be grateful if the hon. Minister, as a caring and efficient Minister, could use his good office to ask the RDA for upgrading of the overhead footpath for the benefit of the inhabitants with regard to lights, like he has done at Trianon. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister, please!

The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Mr M. Hurreeram): Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for his good words. Of course, it is team work, the hon. DPM, and himself, hon. Dhunoo, I thank you for the support. I have already checked with the RDA. In fact, there is a site visit that will be done in the days to come and they will recommend what are the measures to be taken. But because of a lack of fund in this budget, I am afraid may be we will have to do a short-term and a long-term measure. So, let us agree to make it decent in the first instance. Then as soon as the funds are available, we will have a proper one. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: I have only two left. So, we are going to look at the Opposition and then the Government. We will look after you. Go on!

(8.06 p.m.)

VACOAS MARKET FAIR – UNHYGIENE & UNCLEAN ENVIRONMENT

Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My request tonight, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is addressed to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management, hon. Dr. Husnoo. It concerns, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the level of uncleanness, lack of hygiene and degrading working environment at the Vacoas Market Fair, more specifically around the stalls where foods and drinks are sold. I am thus requesting the hon. Vice Prime Minister to use his good office to liaise with the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix for them to rectify the situation. With your permission, may I just to illustrate same, tender this to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister for his perusal.

The Deputy Speaker: You can do it in private.

Mr Lobine: Okay, thank you.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will talk to the Mayor of Vacoas-Phoenix to sort out the problem.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. gentleman, Mr Doolub!

(8.07 p.m.)

MAHEBOURG WATERFRONT - LIGHTING

Mr R. Doolub (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for your kind words. My request is also addressed to the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management, hon. Dr. Husnoo. It has to do with repeating and recurring lighting issues in my constituency. I would appeal to the Minister if he could press upon the local authorities, the Grand Port District Council, especially for lighting issues at the Mahebourg Waterfront. We have so many inhabitants, especially in this chilly winter period, who practice sports at the Mahebourg Waterfront. If he could please intervene to fix the lighting issues. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Vice-Prime Minister, please!

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I know there is a problem with lighting at Grand Port. I will talk to the Chief Executive to sort out these lighting problems.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. I think you can all have an early evening today.

At 8.07 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 11 July 2023 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

ROAD ACCIDENTS – PERIOD 2021-2022 & 2022-2023 – REPORTED CASES

(No. B/906) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to road accidents for the periods July 2021 to June 2022 and July 2022 to June 2023, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the –

- number of reported cases thereof, indicating the number thereof involving motorbikes;
- number of fatal ones, and
- preventive measures being envisaged to address same.

(Withdrawn)

AIR MAURITIUS LTD - AIRBUS AIRCRAFT'S ACQUISITION – FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

(No. B/907) 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 proposed acquisition of three additional Airbus aircrafts by Air Mauritius Ltd., he will state if Government has received any request from Air Mauritius for financial assistance therefor and, if so, indicate the type and amount thereof.

Reply: The House will appreciate that, except for any specific matter falling under the purview of Government, information relating to the internal affairs of a company cannot, as a matter of principle, be disclosed in the National Assembly, as all such internal operational matters fall under the responsibility of the Board of Directors and Management of the Company.

With regard to Air Mauritius Ltd., Government has not received any request from Air Mauritius Ltd for financial assistance in connection with the acquisition of three additional Airbus aircraft.

For the information of the House and the hon. Member, I would like to point out that Air Mauritius Ltd. has, by way of a public communiqué issued on 19 June 2023, confirmed that it has placed an order for the acquisition of three additional Airbus A350-900 aircraft, giving the reason therefor. The communiqué also provides details about the characteristics of the A350 and the expected delivery period.

MBC – ADVERTISING COMPANIES – AMOUNT DUE

(No. B/908) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to the amount of fees owed by the advertising companies as at to date, giving a breakdown thereof and indicating the names thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Director General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation that, advertising is one among the main sources of revenue for the Corporation and that several strategies are devised for sales of airtime on radio and television, including the following –

- spot-by-spot or normal advertising;
- bundle packages;
- sponsorship packages, and
- tailor-made packages.

The Director General of the MBC has further informed that there are two distinct categories of advertising companies, namely, commissioned advertising companies and non-commissioned advertising companies.

The commissioned advertising companies are those which have a valid bank guarantee to benefit from credit facilities with MBC. The value of the bank guarantee provided by the advertising companies is determined by the average monthly commercial bookings. There are at present 14 such commissioned advertising companies. On the other hand, the non-commissioned advertising companies are those which do not require a valid bank guarantee and have to effect payment prior to start of campaign.

I am informed by the Director-General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation that, as at 03 July 2023, out of the 14 commissioned advertising companies, 10 owed a total amount of Rs3.1 million as advertising fee to the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation.

In regard to these 10 commissioned advertising companies, I would like to stress on the fact that the full amount owed by these companies can be recovered through their respective bank guarantees.

There are two non-commissioned advertising companies which are indebted to the MBC to the amount of Rs474,991 and Rs13,036, respectively.

I am informed by the Director General of the MBC that legal actions have already been initiated against the two companies to recover the amount due.

I am placing a copy of the information requested by the hon. Member in respect of both the commissioned and non-commissioned advertising companies in the Library of the National Assembly.

I would like to point out that the total amount owed by advertising companies, which presently stands at around Rs3.6 million, represents only 2% of the total yearly advertising revenue of the MBC.

NEW BIOMETRIC IDENTITY CARD PROJECT – CONTRACT & IMPLEMENTATION DATE

(No. B/910) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for

Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the New Biometric Identity Card project, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- the name of the company to which the contract has been awarded, and
- when same will be implemented.

(Withdrawn)

FORMER CONSTITUENCY CLERK - ALLEGED FICTITIOUS EMPLOYMENT - INQUIRY

(No. B/911) 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)

CARGO HANDLING CORPORATION LTD - SPARE PARTS PURCHASED

(No. B/912) 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 spare parts purchased by the Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd., since July 2018 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the number thereof, indicating in each case the –

- type;
- amount, and
- date of replacement thereof.

Reply: I am informed that since July 2018 to 28 June 2023, an amount of Rs575,676,068 has been spent by the Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd. on the procurement of 8,777 item codes of spare parts for its equipment as follows –

| Financial Year | | Amount (Rs) |
|---------------------------|--|--------------------|
| July 2018 to 30 June 2019 | | 87,009,851 |
| July 2019 to 30 June 2020 | | 163,323,628 |
| July 2020 to 30 June 2021 | | 121,719,435 |
| July 2021 to 30 June 2022 | | 109,113,433 |
| July 2022 to 28 June 2023 | | 94,509,721 |
| TOTAL | | 575,676,068 |

The use and replacement of these spare parts are governed by the manufacturer maintenance schedule of each equipment and the established internal procedures of the Corporation on breakdown of equipment. The dates of replacement are dynamic and are dependent on hours of operations.

BRIGADE POUR LA PROTECTION DE LA FAMILLE – INTERVENTIONS

(No. B/913) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) 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 *Brigade Pour la Protection de la Famille*, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information since 2020 to date as to the number of interventions carried out, indicating in each case –

- the number of arrests effected, and
- actions taken in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

ALLEGED FAKE DRIVING LICENCES – INQUIRY

(No. B/914) Mr R. Doolub (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the recent cases of alleged fake driving licences, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- where matters stand as to the inquiries initiated therein, and
- if the introduction of an e-driving licence is being envisaged.

(Withdrawn)

HON. M. E. J. – INQUIRY – PORT AREA RESTRICTED ZONE

(No. B/915) Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the inquiry initiated into the presence of Honourable M. E. J. in a restricted zone in the port area on or about 05 January 2021, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

AIR MAURITIUS LTD. – AIRCRAFTS – SALE & ACQUISITION

(No. B/916) 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 Air Mauritius Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) the amount of money received from the recent sale of its old aircrafts, indicating the cost incurred for the refurbishment prior to the sale thereof, and
- (b) the source of funds for the acquisition of new aircrafts.

(Withdrawn)

MR M.B. – TOP FM – ALLEGED THREATS – INQUIRY

(No. B/917) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Police complaints made by Mr M. B. and his wife following alleged threats received after a Radio programme on Top FM held on 14 June 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, where matters stand.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that Mr M.B. entered a Precautionary Measure at the Central Criminal Investigations Department on Friday 16 June 2023 following the incident that occurred during the radio programme entitled '*Radar Lepep*', which he hosted on Wednesday 14 June 2023.

I am further informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 24 June 2023, Mrs N.B., the wife of Mr M.B., reported a case of Breach of ICT Act at Floréal Police Station whereby she stated that since Wednesday 21 June 2023, she had started receiving messages of insulting, degrading and threatening nature through Facebook Messenger Application. The case has been referred to the Central Criminal Investigations Department for enquiry. Enquiry into the case is proceeding.

ATOL – VACANCY & PERSONNEL EMPLOYED

(No. B/919) 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 Airport Terminal Operations Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number of –

- personnel employed by the company, indicating their designation, and
- vacancies advertised in each category.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that Airport Terminal Operations Ltd. is 100% owned by Airports of Mauritius Co. Ltd. which is a subsidiary of Airport Holdings Ltd., a private limited company governed by the Companies Act 2001. This being the case, it would not be in order for me to give any information which relates to and concerns the company.

However, for the sake of transparency, I can inform the House that the objective of Airport Terminal Operations Ltd. is to operate the passenger terminal and its related facilities at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport. The company has a total of 186 personnel of different job positions, out of whom eight are employed on contract and the remaining 178 employees are on secondment from Airports of Mauritius Co. Ltd.

With regard to parts (a) and (b) of the question, the information relating to the eight employees on contract recruited by Airport Terminal Operations Ltd. is as follows –

| SN | Designation of personnel employed | Number | Recruitment Process |
|----|---------------------------------------|--------|---|
| 1. | Senior Store Officer | 1 | Advertised through recruitment agency |
| 2. | Architect | 1 | Advertised |
| 3. | Chief Officer (HR and Administration) | 1 | Head Hunting |
| 4. | Trainee Accounts Officer | 2 | University of Mauritius |
| 5. | Trainee HR | 1 | |
| 6. | Trainee Engineer | 1 | |
| 7. | Maintenance Technician | 1 | On secondment to Airport Terminal Operations Ltd who proceeded on retirement in February 2023 on grounds of age. His services have been |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| | | | retained on contract, pending the recruitment of a Maintenance Technician. |
|--|--|--|--|

MR B. N. – MOLNUPIRAVIR PURCHASE – INQUIRY

(No. B/920) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, following the striking out of the provisional charge of public official using his office for gratification against Mr B. N. in the case of the purchase of Molnupiravir for the COVID-19 pandemic, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police and the Independent Commission against Corruption, information as to if the inquiry initiated thereinto is still ongoing and, if so, where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

POLICE FORCE –PROMOTION EXERCISE (2022)

(No. B/921) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Police Force, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) when the list of the last promotion exercise which took effect on 01 June 2022 will be published in the routine orders and, if not, why not;
- (b) the number of the promoted officers attached to the VIPSU, and
- (c) the number of Police Officers awaiting promotion this year, if any.

Reply: The Commissioner of Police informed that publication of a promotion exercise in the Routine Orders of the Police Force is not a mandatory requirement.

Senior management and officers of the Police Force have, during the Daily Monitoring Meetings held at the Force and Divisional levels and members of the Force, taken cognisance of the promotion exercise held on 01 June 2023.

As regards to part (b) of the question, out of the 700 Police Officers having been promoted on 01 June 2022, 73 were from the VIPSU.

Regarding part (c) of the question, as at 23 June 2023, there were 1,495 vacancies to be filled by way of promotion for different ranks. These funded vacancies are expected to be filled during Financial Year 2023/2024.

SEMI-INDUSTRIAL VESSEL – ACQUISITION GRANT – APPLICATIONS

(No. B/925) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the grant for the acquisition of semi-industrial vessel for period 2022-2023, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) the number of applications received and processed;
- (b) the amount of fund disbursed, and
- (c) if the said grant will be extended for the period 2023-2024.

Reply: In reply to part (a) of the question, no application was received and processed at the level of my Ministry since no Expression of Interest was launched to invite Fishermen Cooperatives to apply for the grant for the acquisition of semi-industrial vessel.

With regard to part (b) of the question, no fund was disbursed as no application was entertained in Financial Year 2022/2023.

The House may wish to note that the Scheme was being implemented by my Ministry jointly with the MauBank Ltd. since the Financial Year 2016/2017. As at date, five beneficiaries have obtained grants. Three vessels have been acquired and two are still under construction.

Several lacunas have been observed in the implementation of the Scheme since the inception of the project, namely, inability to provide own contribution of 10% by beneficiaries,

difficulty to monitor the construction of the boat by foreign ship yards and lack of necessary fishing business management skills.

The Scheme has thus been under review by my Ministry through the drafting of agreements between my Ministry and the MauBank Ltd. and also between my Ministry and the beneficiaries since 2019 when the last Expression of Interest was advertised.

Taking into account the constraints faced by my Ministry to implement the Scheme, the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development recommended that my Ministry implements the Scheme with the IFCM Ltd. which was providing better opportunities.

However, the Scheme could not be finalised as the IFCM Ltd. does not provide loans. Instead, leasing facilities are provided after the construction and delivery of the boat. It is to be noted that financial instalments need to be disbursed since the start of construction and at several completion stages until the boat is delivered. As such, the leasing component of the IFCM was not compatible with the financing mechanism required for the Scheme.

As for part (c) of the question, funds to the tune of Rs12 m. have been provided in my Ministry's budget and an additional Rs36 m. under the National Resilience Fund in Financial Year 2023/2024 for the implementation of the Scheme. Cooperative Societies will continue to benefit from a grant representing 50% of the cost of construction up to a maximum of Rs6 m.

The House may wish to note that in the quest for a suitable financing mechanism to secure the loan facility, my Ministry, the Ministry of Finance and IFCM engaged in discussions to find a solution to meet the 40% of the cost of construction of the boats, as provided in the Scheme.

The agreement has thus been finalised between IFCM and my Ministry. The IFCM shall provide credit finance and/or leasing facilities up to a maximum of 40% of the cost of the boat at an interest rate of 2.5% per annum.

The EOI will be launched in July/August 2023, and if all is going well, all applications will be entertained in two months' time, that is, a minimum of six Cooperatives will avail of this Scheme.

I am pleased to inform that provision has also been made for a one-off grant of Rs1 m. to private companies/individuals whose sole line of activity is fishing. My Ministry will shortly effect release of the grant to eligible promoters upon production of their receipt of purchase of semi-industrial vessels.

**SOCIAL REGISTER – NATIONAL EMPOWERMENT FOUNDATION –
BENEFICIARY HOUSEHOLDS**

(No. B/951) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the Social Register of Mauritius, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Empowerment Foundation, information as to –

- (a) the number of households registered thereunder for the year 2022 and since January 2023 to date, indicating the number of beneficiaries thereof, and
- (b) when the new category of households' income threshold will be included in the database thereof.

(Withdrawn)

ONLINE HARASSMENT CASES – 2021 TO JULY 2023

(No. B/952) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to online harassment, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as the number of reported cases thereof since 2021 to date, indicating the number of –

- arrests effected, and
- convictions secured.

Reply (The Prime Minister): I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that 'online harassment' as such is not defined in our domestic law. However, there are offences which are committed online which fall within three main legislations which are as follows –

- The Information and Communication Technology Act;
- Computer Misuse and Cybercrime Act, and
- Cybersecurity and Cybercrime Act.

I am further informed that the number of cases of breach of the ICT Act, the Computer Misuse and Cybercrime Act and the Cybersecurity and Cybercrime Act for period 2021 to 30 June 2023 reported to the Police is as follows –

| SN. | Offences | No. of cases reported | No.of persons arrested | No. of persons convicted |
|--------------|----------------|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. | Breach of ICTA | 2,249 | 55 | 37 |
| 2. | Breach of CMCA | 308 | 41 | 07 |
| 3. | Breach of CSCA | 203 | 9 | 32 |
| Total | | 2,760 | 105 | 76 |

PUBLIC SITES – CLEANING & EMBELLISHMENT

(No. B/953) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the cleaning and embellishment of 120 public sites, under the National Environment and Climate Change Fund since July 2022 to date, he will state where matters stand, indicating in each case the –

- (a) location thereof;
- (b) quantum of funds allocated therefor, and
- (c) name of the contractors selected therefor.

Reply: Reference is made to the reply to PQ B/905, whereby a list of 67 public sites, including the location, contract sum, the names of the contractors and the status for each project, for undertaking cleaning and embellishment works for the estimated amount of some Rs89.7 m. as well as an additional list of 53 sites, including the location, estimated costs and status for each project, for which financial clearance was being sought at that time, were tabled.

Regarding the initial list of 67 public sites, works at 66 sites have been completed as at 04 July 2023 while tenders would have to be re-launched for the remaining one site. As regards the additional list of 53 sites, works have been completed at 11 sites while construction works are ongoing at the remaining 42 sites.

The list of the 67 sites and that of the 53 sites respectively, indicating the location thereof, the respective quantum of funds allocated, the names of the contractors selected for each site further to a tender exercise and the updated status of each project, at Annex I and Annex II, respectively, are being placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

BAZA, PIRTHEE & AL MADINA LANES, CAMP FOUQUEREAUX – DRAINS CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/954) 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 rehabilitation and construction of drains at the Baza and Pirthee lanes and Al Madina Road at Camp Fouquereaux, respectively, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Vacoas Phoenix, information as to the list of the contractors selected therefor, indicating in each case the total costs disbursed for the works undertaken thereat as at date.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix that it had awarded the contract for construction of Reinforced Concrete Covered Drain within its township to Innov Jobs Enterprise Ltd under a rate contract amounting to Rs199,120.29, excluding VAT, per linear metre on 14 January 2022.

The works order was issued on 17 February 2022 for six sites for a total amount of Rs24,818,000, including the sites at Al Madina, Baza and Pirthee Lanes. The initial completion date was 21 June 2022. However, in view of slow progress of the works, the contractor was referred to a Performance Review Committee set up at level of the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix itself.

The Performance Review Committee had, in August 2022, recommended the termination of the contract given that the contractor had completed works at only two sites out of the six sites allocated to it, namely at Baza and Pirthee Lanes.

The contractor was therefore given two weeks ending 09 September 2022 to complete the works and demobilise accordingly. The cost incurred for the construction of drain at Baza Lane is Rs1,161,443 and that for Pirthee Lane is Rs2,460,885. Liquidated damages will be applied on this amount after assessing its claim.

Subsequently, the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix invited bids on a site basis for the remaining four sites, including construction of drain at Al Madina Lane, Camp Fouquereaux.

Bids were launched on 28 February 2022 and closing date fixed for 11 October 2022 through Request for Sealed Quotation using the e-Procurement portal, where 28 companies were invited. Only two bidders responded, namely Onix Co. Ltd which quoted an amount of Rs2,831,875 and Monesh Enterprise Ltd for Rs3,133,750.

After evaluation of the bids, the contract was allocated to the lowest evaluated substantially responsive bidder, namely Onix Co. Ltd on 30 November 2022.

The works started on 14 December 2022 and have been completed on 29 January 2023.

NEW LINK ROAD UPGRADE – LA VIGIE-LA MARIE-BEAU SONGES

(No. B/955) Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the ongoing construction of the new road linking La Vigie to La Marie and Beau Songes, he will state if consideration will also be given for the upgrading of the road from La Marie to Petrin towards Ganga Talao.

(Withdrawn)

SAINT FRANCOIS XAVIER STREET, PORT LOUIS – TRAFFIC CONGESTIONS – DOUBLE YELLOW LINES

(No. B/956) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs,

Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the bus stop situated at Saint François Xavier Street, Port Louis, he will state if he has been made aware of traffic congestions thereat and, if so, indicate if consideration will be given for the placing of double yellow lines on the road opposite the bus stop and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

Reply: Saint Francois Xavier Street is a classified one-way road, from its junction with B 32 to its junction with B 140 and A2, as per updated list of classified roads of the Road Development Authority.

The maintenance of classified roads including the Double Yellow Lines falls under the responsibility of the Road Development Authority.

The TMRSU will do needful, to repaint and reinstate the original yellow lines at Saint Francois Xavier Street.

The Road Development Authority will thereafter be requested to carry out periodic maintenance works to avoid fading of the Yellow Lines.

SHELTERED FARMS CONSTRUCTION – GRANTS RECEIVED

(No. B/957) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Agro-Industry & Food Security whether, in regard to the grants for the construction of sheltered farms, he will state, since July 2022 to date, the number of applications–

- received, and
- approved.

Reply: The Sheltered Farming Scheme encourages farmers to shift from traditional open-field cultivation to sheltered farming so as to help them to adapt to the effects of adverse climatic conditions as well as to improve their production capacity and quality of farm produce. This scheme is being implemented by my Ministry through the Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (FAREI).

I am informed that presently there are 1,898 units of protected farming structures comprising 1,723 hydroponic farms and 175 net houses, covering a total area of 94 hectares. The estimated production under sheltered farms is 15,000 tonnes.

The Sheltered Farming Scheme has contributed to a large extent in ensuring adequate supply of fresh vegetables such as cooking tomatoes, sweet pepper, English cucumber, etc. The production of cooking tomatoes for the period January to May 2023 has been exclusively from hydroponic units.

As regards part (a) of the question, a provision of Rs50 million was made in Financial Year 2022/2023, under the National Resilience Fund, for the Sheltered Farming Scheme. I am informed by the Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute that a total of 154 applications have been received since July 2022 till date.

As concerns part (b) of the question, I am informed that 149 complete applications have been processed out of which 117 have been approved and an amount of Rs23,329,616.20 has already been disbursed to beneficiaries who have successfully completed their greenhouses and are operational.

The House may wish to note that in addition to the grant of Rs500,000 for the construction of greenhouses, necessary training and capacity building are being imparted along with technical assistance in respect of specifications and measurements for the setting up of the sheltered farms.

In line with the strategic direction towards raising the national food security level and reaching 100% self-sufficiency in fresh vegetables in this Financial Year, a grant of 50% has been extended up to a maximum of Rs500,000 per unit and up to two sheltered farms under the Sheltered Farming Scheme, under the provision of Rs50 million made under the National Resilience Fund.

I wish to inform the House that an implementation framework has been approved in respect of all schemes and this is being followed in order to ensure that the objectives are met and disbursement is carried out in line with principles of sound financial management and good governance

(No. B/958) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to out-of-competition anti-doping tests, he will state the –

- number thereof to be carried out by his Ministry prior to the participation of Mauritian athletes in the Indian Ocean Island Games (IOIG) 2023, indicating the disciplines concerned, gender wise;
- number thereof already effected to date, if any, giving the results thereof, and
- budget allocated therefor.

(Withdrawn)

BAMBOUS – MORCELLEMENT VRS GEOFFREY – CONSTRUCTION PERMIT

(No. B/959) Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to Morcellement VRS Geoffrey in Bambous, he will state as to if a construction permit therefor has been issued to the beneficiaries thereof and, if not, why not.

(Reply not available)

MEDICINAL CANNABIS – LOCAL PRODUCTION LICENSE – PREPARATION PROCESS

(No. B/960) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the implementation of the use of medicinal cannabis, he will state where matters stand, indicating the –

- (a) company licensed for the production of industrial cannabis locally, and
- (b) process devised for the preparation thereof, if any and, if not, why not.

Reply: My Ministry is responsible only for the project of provision of medicinal cannabis for medical purposes to patients as prescribed by specialists from the private and public sector.

Following the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry on Drug Trafficking, a Technical Committee on Medicinal Cannabis was set up at the level of my Ministry. The Report of the Technical Committee was finalised and approved in November 2021.

In this respect, a Steering Committee was set up under the chair of the Senior Chief Executive of my Ministry, to look into the implementation of the recommendations contained therein.

The main decisions were as follows –

- (a) Therapeutic Committee on Medicinal Cannabis will be set up at regional level under the chair of the Regional Health Director;
- (b) all prescriptions containing medicinal cannabis from both public and private specialists will have to be approved by the Therapeutic Committee on Medicinal Cannabis;
- (c) both public and private medical specialists will have to be trained for prescribing medicinal cannabis;
- (d) medicinal cannabis will be provided free of charge to all patients attending public hospitals and all private patients will be required to pay for their medication, as is actually the case for other drugs dispensed at hospital level, and
- (e) the use of medicinal cannabis will be started on a pilot basis at Victoria Hospital.

In parallel, the Dangerous Drugs Act, 2000 was amended to include medicinal cannabis to be used therapeutically for specified medical conditions by “authorised” Medical Specialists.

Four conditions requiring treatment with medicinal cannabis have also been finalised, namely –

- spasticity associated with multiple sclerosis resistant to all conventional treatment;
- ii. severe refractory epilepsy that has failed to respond to conventional anti-convulsant treatment;
- iii. intractable nausea and vomiting associated with chemotherapy, that has failed to respond to conventional anti-emetic treatment, and

- iv. severe intractable pain unresponsive to conventional treatment.

A Therapeutic Committee on Medicinal Cannabis will be set up at Victoria Hospital in the first instance, to be chaired by the Regional Health Director. Its main function is to look into requests for treatment by medicinal cannabis from both public and private specialists and approve the requests if all criteria are met.

With a view to being more conversant with the subject matter and more competent to determine the formulations in the prescription of the drugs for the treatment by medicinal cannabis, specialist doctors and pharmacists (private and public) have followed an approved online training course on cannabis following a Communiqué issued by my Ministry.

The amendments made to the Dangerous Drug Act 2000 have already been proclaimed on 10 March 2023 to allow for the import of medicinal cannabis. It is worth highlighting that only plant-derived Cannabidiol, Tetrahydrocannabidiol and a combination of Cannabidiol and Tetrahydrocannabidiol will be used for medical purposes in Mauritius.

Bids have already been launched for the procurement of the medicinal cannabis. Once the medicinal cannabis procured, the Therapeutic Committee on Medicinal Cannabis chaired by the Regional Health Director will be set up and specialists from both the private and public sector will have the opportunity to refer their requests for medicinal cannabis for the patients for approval by the Committee.

It is expected that within a few weeks, the Therapeutic Committee on Medicinal Cannabis will start looking into the requests for the use of medicinal cannabis.

B103 ROAD, CHAMAREL – SLOPE STABILISATION WORK

(No. B/961) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the proposed slope stabilisation work along B103 Road Chamarel, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to where matters stand.

Reply: The Plaine Champagne Road (B103) starts at the junction with La Marie-Le Petrin-Chamouny Road (B102) at Les Mares and ends at the junction with Chamarel Road (B104) at Chamarel. The road is of a length of 13.2 km and an average width of 5.5 metres. It is

characterised by several dangerous bends and steep mountain cuttings on one side and deep ravines on the other side. In addition, the area experiences frequent precipitation and the condition of the road pavement structure and underlying geotechnical support of the B103 Road has deteriorated over several stretches, representing a serious road safety hazard to road users.

To address the issue, the Road Development Authority (RDA) is implementing a project for the Slope Stabilisation Work along B103 Road Chamarel, more specifically between the Chamarel Rhumerie and Varangue sur Morne restaurant where signs of distress and road edge failures have been observed.

The procurement exercise in respect of the project is ongoing at the level of the Central Procurement Board. I am informed that the project is expected to start around September 2023 and scheduled to be completed by November 2024, with a project duration period of 15 months.

The scope of works comprises the following –

- (i) construction/widening of existing road over a length of 800 metres, that is, the new proposed road shall consist of 7.0 metres wide carriageway and 1.5metres wide shoulder on both sides with roadside drains;
- (ii) excavation in mountain slopes using specialised blasting techniques;
- (iii) construction of gabion retaining structures;
- (iv) installation of rock-nets and soil/rock nailing;
- (v) hydroseeding;
- (vi) construction of drainage structures;
- (vii) provision of miscellaneous road equipment such as carriageway, markings, traffic signs, handrails, safety fences and street lighting poles, and
- (viii) geotechnical investigation and monitoring along a stretch of 450 metres.

In view of the complexity of the works on one hand and safety issues on the other hand, the road will have to be closed from the junction of B103/ Chamarel Road (B104) at Chamarel, up to the Varangue Sur Morne to junction of B103/La Marie-Le Petrin-Chamouny Road (B102) for a duration of eight months. The access to B104 Road and the western part from the junction with B102 at Les Mares will be closed. Accordingly, there will be a proposed diversion route starting from the junction B103 Road/B104 Road at Chamarel along B104 Road to junction B104 Road/ Black River Savanne Coast Road (B9) at Baie du Cap; then along B9 Road through

Bel Ombre to junction B9 Road/B102 Road at Rivière des Galets, then along B102 Road through Chemin Grenier, Chamouny to Junction B102 at Les Mares.

We understand that the road closure and ensuing traffic diversion will cause some inconveniences to the commuters, inhabitants and especially the business operators in the region. However, the signs of distress and edge failures along the B 103 Road warrant urgent action. I would request all stakeholders to collaborate fully with the RDA to ensure a smooth and expedient implementation of the project.

In fact, discussions have already been initiated with representatives of business operators namely, Rhumerie de Chamarel and Varangue sur Morne on the proposed road closure. More dedicated PR exercises with the inhabitants, stakeholders and commuters will be carried out prior to the closure of the road.

METRO EXPRESS – FREE TRANSPORT FOR STUDENTS

(No. B/962) Mr R. Doolub (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to free transport for students, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Metro Express Ltd., information as to the –

- number thereof having travelled onboard the metro during the last 6 months, and
- changes being brought thereto with the introduction of ME Cards system.

(Withdrawn)

MINISTRY OF ENERGY & PUBLIC UTILITIES – ADVISERS – SALARY & BENEFITS

(No. B/963) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Advisers attached to his Ministry, he will state the number thereof, indicating in each case –

- their names, and
- salaries and other fringe benefits drawn.

(Withdrawn)

RODRIGUES – CLINICAL POINT-OF-CARE INTRODUCTION

(No. B/964) Mr J. B. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the clinical point-of-care, he will state if the approval of the Ministry has been sought and obtained for the introduction thereof in Rodrigues and, if so, give details thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Commission for Health & Others in Rodrigues that eight Point-of-Care equipment were purchased to enable Haemoglobin, Albumin, Cholesterol and urea tests to be performed at the level of Area Health Centres in Rodrigues. The purchase of these Point-of-Care equipment has been done at the level of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly from the budget allocation. The introduction of these Point-of-Care is being done on a pilot basis and will be replicated to other Health Centres upon availability of funds.

I wish to remind the House that there already exists a Medical Laboratory Facility in Rodrigues at Queen Elizabeth Hospital which performs several tests, including Polymerase Chain Reaction tests. Increasing the number of equipment to in turn increase the number of tests being carried out does not warrant the approval of my Ministry as these tests are already being performed in Rodrigues. As per Schedule 4 (20) of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act 2001, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly is responsible for the administration of health services in Rodrigues while the policy rests with the parent Ministry, that is, the Ministry of Health and Wellness.

I am further informed that the purchase and implementation of Point-of-Care testing has significantly reduced unnecessary bed occupancy at Queen Elizabeth Hospital thereby increasing bed availability. This measure has also reduced the availability of blood test results from days to minutes which directly impacts on the quality of care being delivered to patients.

SUBRAMANIA BHARATI EYE HOSPITAL –HEALTH CARE ASSISTANT DEATH – INQUIRY

(No. B/965) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the death of a Health Care Assistant on 21 June 2023, posted at the Subramania Bharati Eye Hospital in Moka, he will state if an inquiry has been initiated to ascertain the circumstances thereof and, if so, give details thereof.

(Withdrawn)

VICTORIA URBAN SQUARE TERMINAL – STALL OCCUPIERS – RENT

(No. B/966) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to rent payable to the landlord of the Victoria Urban Square Terminal, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal City Council of Port Louis, information as to the aggregate monthly amount –

- (a) payable thereto, and
- (b) collected from occupiers of stalls thereof, indicating the aggregate amount currently owed by the occupiers of stalls thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal City Council of Port Louis that the aggregate amount payable monthly as rent from occupiers of stalls at the Victoria Urban Terminal is around Rs45.5 million, for the period June 2022 up to June 2023.

As regards part (b) of the question, the aggregate monthly amount collected from occupiers of stalls for the period June 2022 to June 2023 amounts to Rs20.3 million. An aggregate amount of around Rs10 million is currently owed by the occupiers of stalls at the Victoria Urban Terminal.

RIVIÈRE DU REMPART – NEW SECONDARY SCHOOL – CONSTRUCTION & PROGRESS

(No. B/967) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the proposed construction of a new Secondary School at Rivière du Rempart as announced in the 2021-2022 Budget Speech, she will state where matters stand.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that the contract for the construction of a new Secondary School at Rivière du Rempart to replace the existing Ramsoondar Prayag SSS was awarded to Super Construction Co. Ltd on 11 March 2020. The Contractor took possession of the site on 19 October 2020 and construction works started on 02 November 2020.

However, in May 2022, the Contractor submitted a Notice for Termination of the contract with immediate effect to my Ministry.

Given that the Contractor has wrongfully terminated the contract without valid grounds and that works had stopped for more than 28 days and as at June 2022, only 40% of the works were completed, consultations were held between my Ministry, the MNICD and the Attorney General's Office (AGO) on the course of action. The AGO advised that my Ministry may terminate the contract using General Conditions of Contract 57.1 and 57.2(a). Accordingly, the contract was terminated on 11 January 2023 and my Ministry has requested the AGO to initiate actions to sue the Contractor for damages.

As regards the outstanding works to be carried out, the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development has made an assessment and is preparing the tender documents to enable my Ministry to launch bids.

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS – MENTORING PROGRAMME & STIPEND

(No. B/968) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to women entrepreneurs at the grassroot level, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number thereof provided with the 3 months mentoring and the payment of a monthly stipend of Rs11,500 as announced in the 2022-2023 Budget Speech.

Reply: The National Women Entrepreneur Council (NWECC), a parastatal body which operates under the aegis of my Ministry, contributes towards Women Entrepreneurship Development in view to provide entrepreneurial traits and skills to women entrepreneurs to face the global challenges and also to be competent enough to sustain and strive for excellence in the entrepreneurial arena.

I am informed that as at date, around 900 women entrepreneurs are registered with the NWECC and are operating in various sectors such as Agri-Business, Handicraft, Textile and Services.

I am further informed that the NWECC had developed a number of training programmes on Business Planning, Digital Marketing, Costing, Human Resources, Garment Manufacturing and Agro-Processing, targeting some 500 registered women entrepreneurs.

Subsequently, a selection exercise will be carried out to identify 50 registered women entrepreneurs who will be part of the mentoring programme.

I am apprised that training for registered women entrepreneurs is ongoing and is a regular feature in the entrepreneurship development process of the NWECC.

The NWECC is currently working on designing a training of three months for 50 women entrepreneurs to be incubated in the agri-food value chain.

STATE TRADING CORPORATION – LEGAL ADVISORS

(No. B/969) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the State Trading Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom a list of the present Legal Advisors whose services have been retained thereof, indicating in each case the –

- (a) date of appointment, and
- (b) terms and conditions, giving details as to the fees paid thereto since appointment to date.

Reply: I am informed that the State Trading Corporation (STC) has recourse for legal advice to the services of the Solicitor General's Office and Me. S. Ravi Rutnah.

The Solicitor General's Office has been providing legal assistance to the STC since its coming into operations whereas the services of Me. S. Ravi Rutnah have been retained since October 2020 with payment of a retainer fee and case to case basis.

As regards to fees paid, I am further informed that the Solicitor General's Office is retained against a payment of Rs100,000 annually and Me. S. Ravi Rutnah has been paid a total amount of Rs3,639,400 for his services.

FET LAMIZIK CONCERT – 25 JUNE 2023 – COPYRIGHT LICENSE

(No. B/970) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to "Fet Lamizik" concert held on 25 June 2023 at Petite Rivière Noire, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Society of Authors, information as to if copyright license was sought and obtained therefor.

(Withdrawn)

HAIJ 2023 – MISSION OFFICERS

(No. B/971) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to the Hajj Missions, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Islamic Cultural Centre, information as to the number of accompanying mission officers for the year 2023, indicating the number of times they formed part thereof.

(Withdrawn)

ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREAS – MAPPING & VALIDATION

(No. B/972) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the Environmentally Sensitive Areas, he will state if the draft Environmentally Sensitive Areas Mapping produced under the Management of Coastal Zones in Mauritius Project has now been validated by the relevant authorities.

Reply: The “Mainstreaming Biodiversity into the Management of Coastal Zone in the Republic of Mauritius” is a Global Environment Facility grant-funded project supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The project had three components and was being spearheaded by the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping.

My Ministry was the Executing Agency for the component relating to the mainstreaming of biodiversity into local level physical development planning and tourism management which comprised the updating of data, maps and policy on Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs). In this respect, the services of FCG ANZDEC Ltd, a consulting firm, were hired by the UNDP Country Office.

The Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning, the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping, the Water Resources Unit of the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities and the National Parks and Conservation Service were requested to verify the first draft ESA GIS datasets submitted by the Consultant in June 2020. In view of discrepancies and inaccuracies identified, a review of the datasets was requested by my Ministry.

Despite multiple reviews of the datasets and several rounds of consultations, the last revised datasets received from FCG ANZDEC Ltd in October 2022 and recirculated to stakeholders could still not be validated due to persistent discrepancies. These include the

inaccurate delimitation of wetlands and mangrove areas, the wrong classification of several natural and man-made features as wetlands and 75 wetlands missing from the datasets. Furthermore, no ground truthing exercise was conducted by the consulting firm to enable the validation of the datasets and maps.

In view that the project was operationally closed at the level of the UNDP Country Office in December 2022, technical meetings were held with key stakeholders over the period January to June 2023. The possibility of engaging an appropriate Consultant to conduct the ground truthing exercise and amending of the ESA GIS datasets is being explored.

PUBLIC HEALTH SECTOR - MEDICAL & NURSING OFFICERS

(No. B/973) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the medical and nursing officers in the public health sector, he will state the number thereof –

- (a) presently in post, and
- (b) to be recruited for financial year 2023 - 2024.

(Withdrawn)

E-HEALTH PROJECT– COST & IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/974) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the introduction of the E-Health in regional public hospitals and other public health care centers, he will state where matters stand, indicating the –

- (a) total cost of the project and the sum disbursed as at date;
- (b) company implementing same, and
- (c) expected date of introduction thereof.

(Withdrawn)

ATHLETES - HIGH LEVEL ASSISTANCE

(No. B/975) Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to high

level assistance to athletes, he will table a list of the names benefitting therefrom and the quantum thereof.

(Withdrawn)

HIGHLANDS GOVERNMENT SCHOOL – INCIDENT

(No. B/976) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, she will state if she has been made aware of an incident whereby an individual armed with an offensive object accessed the premises of the Highlands Government School and threatened the staff thereof on or about Tuesday 13 June 2023 and, if so, give details thereof, indicating the measures taken to avert such recurrence.

Reply: I am informed that on Tuesday 13 June 2023, an incident occurred at Highlands Government School, at around 11.00 hours, where one Mr D.B. entered the school premises with a weapon (*sabre*). He was seeking permission to talk to the Grade 4 Educator, Mr T.B. He was informed by the Deputy Head Master of the school that the teacher was not present. As Mr D.B. was using threatening and foul language, the Deputy Head Master reported the matter to the Phoenix Police Station.

Further, on the same day, at around 15.15 hours, the same Mr D.B. called anew at the school with the same weapon (*sabre*), along with Mrs L.V., who is the mother of the pupil K.D. in Grade 4. A policeman who was in the vicinity asked explanations for their presence at school. As they were both showing aggressive behaviour, additional police assistance was sought and both were arrested by the Police and the weapon was secured. During the arrest, one Police Constable was injured by Mrs L.V.

Mr D.B. was charged for offences of ‘Rogue and Vagabond’ and ‘Bearing Offensive Weapon’, whereas Mrs L.V. was charged for offences of ‘Rogue and Vagabond’ and ‘Assaulting an Agent of the Civil Authority causing effusion of blood’.

Mrs L.V. was released from jail after having furnished the required sureties and Mr D.B. is still under police custody. Police enquiry is ongoing.

Arrangements have been made for the posting of an ancillary staff at the gate of the school to control access to the school premises during working hours and for regular police patrol in the vicinity of the school.

I wish to inform the House that in accordance with the standing instructions issued by Ministry in regard to access to primary school premises, with a view to ensuring the security of pupils and the staff, access to the school compound is controlled and the main gate of the school yard opens only at the time that school starts and ends and during the lunch break.

PARCEL POST - ILLICIT PRODUCTS - MEASURES

(No. B/977) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to parcel post, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Post Ltd., information as the measures taken for a better control of illicit products conveyed by post in Mauritius.

(Withdrawn)

TOWN PLANNERS' COUNCIL – SETTING-UP

(No. B/978) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the Town Planners Council, he will state where matters stand as to the setting up thereof.

Reply: I am informed that relevant consultations are underway to ensure that the Town Planners' Council is fully constituted as soon as possible.

RODRIGUAN PATIENTS – REFERRAL CASES – MAURITIAN HOSPITALS

(No. B/979) Mr J. B. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to patients from Rodrigues referred by specialists for treatment in Mauritius, he will state –

- (a) the number thereof, since February 2022 to date, indicating if they are referred to the specialist on call in Mauritius followed by immediate admission to respective ward and, if not, why not, and
- (b) if there is an increase in the number thereof and, if so, the reasons therefor.

Reply: I am informed that as per official records from the Social Workers Unit and Records Office, Queen Elizabeth Hospital, a total of 1168 patients have been referred by specialists for treatment in Mauritius since February 2022 to date.

In all cases of referral from Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Rodrigues, ambulances are provided for pickup of patients and transfer to the respective hospital depending on the treatment and care required. Patients are immediately admitted to respective wards and are reviewed by the Medical and Health Officer/ Senior Medical and Health Officer as well as the concerned specialist.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am further informed that relevant entries from the Social Worker Unit and Records Office, Queen Elizabeth Hospital, suggest no significant change in the number of patients referred by specialists for treatment in Mauritius since February 2022 to date.

NEONATOLOGY - ONE-YEAR TRAINING IN UK - REGISTERED MEDICAL OFFICERS

(No. B/980) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the one-year training in Neonatology at the Royal College of Pediatrics and Child Health in the United Kingdom, he will state the number of registered Medical Officers who showed interest to pursue same, indicating the criteria used for the selection of the eligible Medical Officers therefor.

(Withdrawn)

IOIG 2023 – SUPPORT TO COJI MADAGASCAR

(No. B/981) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to Indian Ocean Island Games (IOIG) 2023, he will state if Government proposes to support the representation made by the Republic of Seychelles to COJI Madagascar for the reinstatement of sailing on the Programme des Jeux and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

VACOAS SSS – STAFF SHORTAGE – REASONS

(No. B/982) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the Vacoas State Secondary School, she will state if there is a shortage of teaching and non-teaching staff thereat and, if so, indicate the reasons therefor.

Reply: I am informed that there is no shortage as such of teaching staff at Vacoas State Secondary School.

However, the Ministry's attention was recently drawn to a time-tabling issue at the school and the rector was accordingly instructed to resolve same.

The Ministry has advised the School Management to carry out a reallocation of teaching periods so as to ensure that all classes are carried out as per the set timetable.

With regard to non-teaching staff, I am informed that some officers were promoted to higher grades and some retired. Arrangements have already been made for their replacement.

L'OISEAU DU PARADIS SHELTER - ALLEGATIONS

(No. B/983) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to allegation of mistreatment and sexual assault on a six-year-old boy at the Shelter L'Oiseau du Paradis on or about 05 May 2023, she will state –

- if an inquiry has been initiated thereinto and, if so, the outcome thereof, and
- the actions taken to ensure that the carers are adequately trained to take care of the children living there at.

(Withdrawn)

AIR MAURITIUS LTD – FUNDS INJECTED – SHAREHOLDING

(No. B/984) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to Air Mauritius Ltd., he will state the –

- (a) quantum of funds injected therein, in terms of loan and/or share capital, since June 2021 to date, giving a breakdown thereof, and

- (b) percentage of direct/indirect shareholding held therein by Government.

Reply: En ce qui concerne la partie (a) de la question, j'ai été informé qu'en septembre 2021, le Gouvernement a fourni une avance de 12 milliards de roupies à *Airport Holdings Limited (AHL)*.

Par la suite, en octobre 2021, *AHL* a accordé un prêt de 9,5 milliards de roupies à *Air Mauritius Limited* pour faire face à toutes les demandes admissibles en vertu du *Deed of Company Arrangement (DOCA)*, afin que cette dernière sorte de l'administration volontaire.

Le solde de 2,5 milliards de roupies a été utilisé pour acheter des actions détenues par des tiers dans *Air Mauritius Limited* et pour couvrir d'autres dépenses opérationnelles.

En ce qui concerne la partie (b) de la question, le Gouvernement détient une participation indirecte de 99,88 % dans *Air Mauritius Limited*, par l'intermédiaire d'*AHL*.

HORSE RACING & EQUESTRIAN INDUSTRY - TAX HOLIDAY INCENTIVES

(No. B/985) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Horse Racing and Equestrian Industry, he will state if tax holiday incentives have been granted to investors and/or companies thereinto, if any and, if so, indicating in each case the

—

- (a) names thereof;
- (b) date of applications and approval therefor, and
- (c) duration thereof.

(Withdrawn)

TOURISM SECTOR - GREEN HOUSE GAS EMISSIONS LEVEL & OTHERS

(No. B/986) 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)

ALBION – FOOTBRIDGE – RENOVATION WORKS

(No. B/987) 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 renovation works to be carried out at the Albion footbridge, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the District Council of Black River, information as to where matters stand.

(Reply not available)

RÉSIDENCE SIR GAËTAN DUVAL, GRNW – DRAIN PROJECT

(No. A/3) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the construction of drains at Residence Sir Gaëtan Duval at Grand River North West, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Land Drainage Authority, information as to where matters stand.

Reply: In my reply to Parliamentary Question B/1264 on 30 November 2021, the House was informed that the National Development Unit (NDU) was in the process to appoint a Consultant to carry out a holistic study of the region at Résidence Sir Gaëtan Duval at Grand River North West with a view to proposing long term solutions to address the issue of flooding due to lack of drainage infrastructure.

Following a bidding exercise, the NDU appointed Benchmark Consulting Engineers Ltd as Consultant on 17 May 2022 for an amount of Rs3,622,500 (excl. VAT) for the design, supervision and contract management of the project.

The Consultant submitted a Preliminary Design Report in the first instance in July 2022. Extensive discussions were held thereon following which a Detailed Design Report was obtained

in May 2023, showing the complexity of the project, as pointed out in the reply to PQ B/1264. The Detailed Design Report is currently being examined at the level of the Land Drainage Authority.

Taking into consideration that the project would entail land acquisition, on one hand and given its complexity on the other hand, it is expected that bids for the appointment of a Contractor would be invited by the end of the current financial year or early next financial year.

RESIDENCE BORSTAL, GRNW – DRAIN PROJECT

(No. A/4) **Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the construction of drains at Résidence Borstal at Grand River North West, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Land Drainage Authority, information as to where matters stand.

Reply: The Land Drainage Authority informed that no drain project is envisaged for implementation under the National Flood Management Programme at Résidence Borstal, Grand River North West. However, if the hon. Member has in particular specific zones requiring construction of drains, he may wish to consult the Parliamentary Private Secretary of the Constituency or the National Development Unit or the Land Drainage Authority.

