



SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 11 JULY 2023

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(Formed by Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth)

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

	and Cooperatives
Hon. Kavydass Ramano	Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change
Hon. Mahen Kumar Seeruttun	Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance
Hon. Georges Pierre Lesjongard	Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
Hon. Maneesh Gobin	Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security
Hon. Jean Christophe Stephan Toussaint	Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation
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Hon. Darsanand Balgobin	Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation
Hon. Soodesh Satkam Callichurn	Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection
Dr. the Hon. Kailesh Kumar Singh Jagutpal	Minister of Health and Wellness
Hon. Sudheer Maudhoo	Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping

Hon. Mrs Kalpana Devi Koonjoo-Shah

Minister of Gender Equality and Family
Welfare

Hon. Avinash Teeluck

Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage

Hon. Teeruthraj Hurdoyal

Minister of Public Service, Administrative
and Institutional Reforms

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

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Deputy Chairperson of Committees	Hon. Sanjit Kumar Nuckcheddy
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MAURITIUS

Seventh National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 21 of 2023

Sitting of Tuesday 11 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)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

OBITUARY

DR. ROODRASEN NEEWOOR, GOSK

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is with deep regret that we have learnt of the demise, on Thursday 02 July 2023, of Dr. Roodrasen Neewoor, former Member of Parliament at the age of 89.

Dr. Neewoor was born in *Morcellement* Saint André on 18 June 1934. After completing his secondary education at the Bhujoharry College, he joined the Pre-Medical Delhi University in India. In 1964, he obtained his M.B.B.S. from the S. N. Medical College in Agra.

Dr. Neewoor joined the Civil Service in 1965 as Resident Medical Officer at the then Civil Hospital. He made his way up the hierarchy and was promoted, in 1977, to the position of Regional Health Superintendent at the S.S.R. National Hospital.

From 1980 to 1991, Dr. Neewoor held the post of Consultant in Occupational Medicine at the Ministry of Health. During the same period he acted as President of the Mauritius Medical Association.

In September 1991, Dr. Neewoor joined the MSM and, in the same year, stood as candidate for the General Election under the banner of the MSM/MMM Alliance in Constituency No. 9, Flacq/Bon Accueil. He was elected as Third Member. In 1993, he was appointed Parliamentary Private Secretary for Constituencies No. 6, 10 and 18, a post which he held until 1995.

In 1995, Dr. Neewoor was conferred the status of Honorary Citizen by the Moka/Flacq District Council.

On 12 March 2004, Dr. Neewoor was elevated to the rank of Grand Officer of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean for his distinguished services to the community.

Dr. Neewoor was a dedicated social worker and served the Arya Sabha Mauritius, the Hindu Council and the Sangram Sewa Sadan, amongst others.

Mr Speaker, Sir, may I request you to kindly direct the Acting Clerk to convey the deep condolences of the Assembly to the spouse and the two children of Dr. Neewoor and to the close members of his family.

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, I associate myself fully to the tribute made by the hon. Prime Minister to late Dr. Neewoor. He had a distinguished career in the medical profession and was also a prominent politician. He was, of course, an active member and past President of the Arya Samaj, amongst others. I also request the Acting Clerk to convey our condolences to his wife and children.

Mr Speaker: So, you request the Acting Clerk through the Chair.

Mr X. L. Duval: Yes.

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

SITTING OF 04 JULY 2023 - HON. DR. AUMEER - OBJECTIONABLE WORDS

Hon. Members, I have another announcement to make.

At the Sitting of Tuesday 04 July 2023, the hon. Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation, raised a point of order to the effect that Dr. the hon. Aumeer uttered the words (*Objectionable words expunged following a resolution of the House at the Sitting of Friday 21.07.23*) to the address of the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

The hon. Deputy Speaker who had just taken the Chair stated that he would have to check the Hansard before giving a ruling.

I have now gone through the Hansard which, in fact, reveals that Dr. the hon. Aumeer did utter the words (*Objectionable words expunged following a resolution of the House at the Sitting of Friday 21.07.23*) to the address of the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

I, therefore, invite Dr. the hon. Aumeer to withdraw without any conditions these objectionable words and tender apologies to the House.

Dr. Aumeer: I am sorry; I maintain what I have said.

Mr Speaker: So, you have to withdraw from the House.

Hon. Members: *La honte!* Shame!

(Interruptions)

Mrs Luchmun Roy: *Pran lapey ale lakaz!*

An hon. Member: *Li pa onte pou pran lapey!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

PAPERS LAID

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

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

Certificate of Urgency in respect of the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (No. XI of 2023). (In Original)

B. Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development

(a) The Financial Statements and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National COVID-19 Vaccination Programme Fund for the year ended 30 June 2022. (In Original)

(b) The Income Tax (Amendment) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 98 of 2023)

C. Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity

The Annual Report and Report of Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Solidarity Fund for the year ended June 2022.

D. Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance

The Financial Reporting (Amendment of Schedules) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 97 of 2023)

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

The Financial Statements and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Parks and Conservation Fund for the years / periods:

(i) 01 January 2012 – 31 December 2012;

- (ii) 01 January 2013 – 31 December 2013;
- (iii) 01 January 2014 – 31 December 2014;
- (iv) 01 January 2015 – 31 October 2015;
- (v) 01 November 2015 – 30 June 2016;
- (vi) 01 July 2016 – 30 June 2017;
- (vii) 01 July 2017 – 30 June 2018;
- (viii) 01 July 2018 – 30 June 2019; and
- (ix) 01 July 2019 – 30 June 2020.

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

The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Wage Consultative Council for the year ended June 2022.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

METRO EXPRESS – FATAL ACCIDENTS

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the three fatal accidents involving the Metro Express, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information from –

- (a) the Metro Express Ltd., as to –
 - (i) when fencing will be installed on both sides of the track along all residential and urban areas;
 - (ii) when train crossing barriers will be installed at level crossings, and
 - (iii) the additional safety measures that have been put in place to date, and
- (b) the National Land Transport Authority, as to the action that has been taken, if any, as provided for under section 11 of the Light Rail Act 2019 as a result thereof.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, at the very outset, please allow me to convey my heartfelt and deepest sympathy to the bereaved family, following the accident that occurred on the light rail track on 07 July 2023 at Belle Rose.

Indeed, this is a very tragic and unfortunate accident, which led to the demise of one of our citizens.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Metro Express Ltd, that several audits have been undertaken, prior to the launching and operationalisation of each phase of the Metro Express Project.

To that end, the Singapore Mass Rapid Transit (SMRT), which is a world class company in terms of railway operation and safety, has carried out a rigorous Independent Safety Audit on the Mauritian Light Rail System.

The aim of which, Mr Speaker, Sir, is to make sure that all security measures are already in place and embedded in the Light Rail Transit System prior to start of commercial operations. This was done in order not to compromise with the security of passengers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I also wish to point out that the Metro Express project was developed based on international best practices and standards. In this respect, safety aspects have been

catered at each stage of the Project Life Cycle from concept to construction and operationalisation of the infrastructures.

Mr Speaker, Sir, MEL has been operational since January 2020 and currently has a ridership of over 19 million passengers. The Metro Express is today spread over a stretch of nearly 30 km, from Curepipe to Port Louis and Rose Hill to Réduit through Ebène. Metro Express is now the mode of transport of choice of the population and the rapid adoption of this means of transport by the public demonstrates the popularity and the acceptance of this public transport service facility in our country. The Metro Express Ltd aims at providing a safe, innovative and sustainable mode of mass transit system.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Metro Express Project is a new and massive undertaking of prime national importance. Significant improvements have been made since the start of operations to improve service delivery and adapt to the local context. Metro Express Ltd has continually engaged in stakeholder consultations and has had several interactions with the public to, *inter alia*, inform the public of safety measures and any change in operation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, three cases of fatal accidents have been reported involving light rail vehicles as follows –

- On 23 February 2020 in the region of Beau Bassin/Barkly;
- On 06 May 2023 at Curepipe North Station, and
- On 07 July 2023, near Belle Rose Metro Station.

With regard to the last accident, according to preliminary information conveyed to me, the accident occurred on Friday 07 July 2023 at around 19 10 hours and at a distance of some approximately 200 metres from the Junction Victoria and Belle Rose Avenues.

According to information provided to me, the victim trespassed on the Metro alignment and was walking on the track in the direction towards Quatre Bornes Central Station. It would also appear that the victim was not paying due attention to the approaching Light Rail Vehicle.

I am informed, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the Train Captain applied the maximum service brake in order to avoid the accident, but, unfortunately, as the person was still on the track, the train collided with that person. Upon impact, the victim was projected on the adjacent Victoria Avenue.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in accordance with established protocols, immediately after the accident, the Police, the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Services, SAMU and MEL staff proceeded to the locus of accident to provide assistance to the victim. Regretfully, it was found that he had already passed away.

As a result of the accident, light rail services were temporarily interrupted and a bus bridging service was immediately provided in order for passengers LRV 101 not to be stranded.

Mr Speaker, Sir, these accidents are indeed very unfortunate ones and act as a stark reminder that everyone should make it a point to strictly comply with all the rules which have been set for their own safety.

I need to stress that it is strictly forbidden to walk along the light rail track in order not only to avoid putting at risk one's own life but also to avoid endangering the lives of the 300 passengers conveyed in the Light Rail Vehicle inasmuch as that sudden and sharp braking of the train can cause injury to persons inside the train.

In fact, Section 22 of the Light Rail Act 2019 stipulates that –

“ (1) (a) Subject to paragraph (b), no person shall drive, park or stop a vehicle, or walk on or across, a railway line unless directed to do so by a police officer or permitted to do so by the light rail operator.”

The law further provides that –

“ (2) Any person who contravenes subsection (1)(a) shall commit an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine of not less than 25,000 rupees but not exceeding 100,000 rupees and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, section 41 of the same Act also provides that –

“Any person who wilfully does or omits to do anything in relation to any light rail as a result of which the safety of any person travelling in a light rail vehicle is endangered, or is likely to be endangered, shall commit an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine of not less than 100,000 rupees and not exceeding 500,000 and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a)(i) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the Metro Express project is an integrated Light Rail infrastructure within urban environment incorporating many safety measures such as, a Traffic Signal Priority System (TSPS), road markings, signages, dedicated footpaths, lighting, guardrails, bollards, fencing placed at required locations. The LRT alignment is the product of planning and engineering design that has considered various options and satisfies various criteria such as safety, risk, operational efficiency, engineering, space, affordability and urban integration. The intent of this alignment is to maximise the opportunity and capability of LRT technology to integrate with the urban environment while ensuring the sustainability of the LRT system.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that fencing along the Metro corridor at specific locations has been installed to demarcate the Metro tracks. For example, along St. Jean Road, fencing has been installed along the middle of the rail alignment to prevent commuters from crossing the tracks. Dedicated pedestrian crossings are available at all Metro Stations as well as at road-rail intersections.

From the stretch from Quatre Bornes Central up to Belle Rose along Victoria Avenue, fencing is fully provided on the right-hand side along the dedicated pedestrian footpath, allowing pedestrians to walk safely all along the metro corridor. This facility has been installed since the beginning of the operations of the Metro Express as from 20 June 2021 in Quatre Bornes and the residents and pedestrians are well accustomed to using this safe footpath, which is also fully lit at night.

On the left-hand side, the metro corridor is located along Victoria Avenue and guardrails/handrails have been placed at specific locations to protect from any potential upcoming of vehicles from lateral roads onto the Metro corridor.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed that the existing footpaths have been upgraded as well as modern lightings have been installed, which have enhanced the overall pedestrian network and provided a safe and appealing environment for the pedestrians when commuting along St Jean Road. The whole urban feel of Quatre Bornes, especially along St Jean Road, has been revamped and upgraded similar to what we have in European Cities, creating a modern feel in the town centre of Quatre Bornes.

For each section of the project, including for the Metro Alignment, a road safety audit was carried out, reviewed by TMRSU and complied with by the contractor. All prescribed safety measures pertaining to the Metro corridor have been duly implemented with installation of pedestrian fencing where recommended.

Mr Speaker, Sir, safety is paramount and MEL's internal policy is to foster a pro-active safety culture through collaborative process, engagement, and continuous improvement. Safety management is an ongoing process. MEL is constantly conducting regular audits and assessment together with the relevant authorities such as the TMRSU, the Police and my Ministry to coordinate actions and during which, additional potential safety improvement measures can be proposed wherever found appropriate and useful depending on the site conditions and potential evolution in usage.

This constant improvement process has already resulted in the implementation of several additional measures at different locations along the corridor since the start of the project. MEL will pursue its efforts to ensure that we continue to achieve the highest level of safety for its passengers and personnel.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the LRT alignment is the product of planning and engineering design that has considered various options and satisfies various criteria such as safety, risk, operational efficiency, engineering, space, affordability and urban integration.

The intent of this alignment is to maximise the opportunity and capability of LRT technology to integrate with the urban environment while ensuring the sustainability of the LRT system. Detailed analysis has determined that the introduction of level crossings was deemed to be necessary in line with the principle of LRT efficient and safe operations with a view to better integrate with other modes of transport.

The safety aspects of level crossings are to be managed through effective European standards traffic signalised system design, safety management procedures, along with progressive sensitisation exercise and strict enforcement of rules. The traffic signalling is designed based on the Traffic Signalling Priority System giving priority to the train movement.

The design of the level crossings considers two key aspects: safety and capacity of the traffic. The design of the level crossings has incorporated various design inputs which require

early involvement, effective cooperation and communication of all stakeholders (TMRSU, Police, RDA, Local authorities) to identify safety hazards and related risks.

These hazards and risks are then analysed to allow mitigation via engineering control. The hazards and risks mitigation process has been iterated through the whole life of the project –

- concept stage;
- design stage;
- project execution;
- implementation stage;
- post-implementation stage to ensure that the safety of the system across the asset lifecycle is properly monitored and managed.

Taking the above into consideration, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Engineering requirements for traffic and safety is part of the project implementation. The road engineering geometric design was done according to international standards and to the local requirements of the Road Development Authority and the TMRSU.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have very specific questions and we are already noon. At which point does he intend to reply to my questions? At which point? Because all these are *bla-bla-bla*! People have died and all you are telling me is *bla-bla-bla*. At which point will you tell me when crossings will be installed, if they will, and when will there be additional safety measures? When are you going to answer that?

Mr Ganoo: I am laying the groundwork for the particular answers, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Leader of the Opposition should be patient. He has asked a question which, as he himself said, concerns the lives of people. So, be patient!

Mr X. L. Duval: You are wasting my time! Out of respect for the dead! Out of respect for the dead!

Mr Ganoo: I am sure, Mr Speaker will give you some more time.

Mr Speaker: Now, it is sufficient. Please!

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Contractor, L & T, as part of the contract, ensured that the Road Safety Audit (RSA) was conducted to the full extent of the works by an independent qualified road safety audit team as part of the preliminary design and detailed design and also in advance of opening any part of the works to traffic. The corrective actions highlighted in the Road Safety Audit report have also been implemented before operation such as –

- improvement of signages;
- channelling of pedestrians;
- installation of speed breakers, and
- additional warning signs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, based on their assessment and observations, the Independent Safety Audit (ISA) team recommended that the system is safe for normal operations and revenue passenger service. Since last year, many meetings have been held specifically on stakeholder meeting, safety and security along Metro Express Railway Corridor where sensitisation on safety at intersections are discussed and agreed collaboratively with TMRSU, Police and stakeholder concerned.

Metro Express Ltd (MEL), Mr Speaker, Sir, started also its education, sensitisation and awareness campaigns since early 2019 through radio, TV, print and digital media. 50,000 leaflets, posters have been distributed to road users. Multiple videos have been realised with the help of MBC under the metro news item.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is to be noted also that at all junctions, LRVs run at reduced speed at less than 20 km/h and the Train Captains strictly follow established safety protocols. Such was the case before the accident took place.

MEL ensures that all Train Captains undergo intensive theoretical and practical training as devised by the SMRT Singapore, before being licensed by the National Land Transport Authority. Furthermore, regular refresher programmes are provided by MEL Training Department to the Train Captains.

I need to point out, Mr Speaker, Sir, that in other jurisdictions such as Spain, Australia, Prague, amongst others, the Light Rail system is open and there are no barriers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a)(ii) of the question, I am informed that there are multiple levels of warning signs at approaches of a level crossing such as application of bell and horns by the Train Captains to warn the incoming traffic and pedestrians, there are signs, including level crossing ahead, traffic signal warnings and on spot signs at the level crossing.

Moreover, there are CCTV cameras connected to the OCC which monitors the traffic at road-rail crossings. MEL works collaboratively with the Police and other concerned authorities to manage and ensure safety at intersections especially during peak hours and ensure permanent presence at major road-rail level crossings.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Light Rail Systems are designed to integrate with other modes of transport. Adaptability to the new road, rail configuration and discipline of road users are key to the efficient integration between the light rail and the other road users. I wish to inform the House that an assessment has been carried out by respective authorities and MEL with regard to additional safety measures to be implemented at the junctions, including the installation of barriers.

MEL held a multi-stakeholder workshop on the matter and all the stakeholders, including technicians, experts and other professionals recommended that additional measures could be implemented. All stakeholders viewed that the preferred option of geometric improvements such as –

- combination of raised kerbs;
- improved road markings;
- extension of yellow boxes;
- removal of pedestrian crossing

Mr X. L. Duval: *Bla-bla-bla!*

Mr Ganoo: ... together with the introduction of flashing red light warning signals was found to be the most optimal solution in order to mitigate the safety risk identified thereof.

The installation of train crossing barriers in the context of our local light rail system, whose safety measures I have abundantly elaborated, has been the subject of extensive consultations,

brainstorming and discussions amongst relevant stakeholders and authorities and these consultations have led to a consensus not to implement the barriers at the road-rail intersections.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a)(iii), I am informed by the Metro Express Ltd, that with a view to reinforcing safety practices, the Metro Express Limited is continuously conducting regular audits and assessments, together with the relevant authorities such as the TMRSU, NLTA, RDA, Local Authorities, the Police and my Ministry.

A collaborative approach is being favoured to tackle light rail safety and to coordinate actions for the purpose of identifying and implementing safety improvement measures, wherever found appropriate and useful depending on the site conditions and potential evolution in usage.

With a view to instilling safe practices among the population, especially, following the introduction of the Light Rail Transit System, my Ministry, with relevant stakeholders, namely the Metro Express Ltd, has been regularly carrying out intensive communication and sensitisation campaigns thereon. The aim is for the public to be more cautious as to their safety especially around the railway corridor, the level crossings and for them not to venture near the railway tracks.

To that end, the TMRSU, in collaboration with the Metro Express Ltd, conducted a targeted and well-articulated sensitisation campaign on the precautions to be adopted at level crossings. Media such as the national broadcasting channel and radios, billboards were relied upon. We also favoured social media such as Google ads, YouTube and Facebook were used extensively for wide dissemination. The Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit has carried out various repeater campaigns on Road Safety, including that of Light Rail Vehicle (LRV) Level Crossing.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, communication and sensitisation campaigns are also ongoing at the level of the Metro Express Ltd. The general public is continuously being informed on the metro alignment, its traffic signs, interface with the road traffic regulations and so on.

Furthermore, with regard to physical safety measures, all road-rail intersections are equipped with signalised pedestrian crossings. Additional independent signalised pedestrian

crossings are also provided at specific locations between the junctions depending on the distance between the two junctions and the overall urban configuration.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry in consultation with the Metro Express Ltd is implementing additional safety measures, including reviewing the setup of pedestrian maze at stations, fencing, other measures also being studied such as installation of flashing lights and systems of red-light cameras at pedestrian crossings and stations.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I need to inform the House that a draft Code of Practice has been worked out by the Light Rail Division of the NLTA in order to, *inter alia*, provide for –

- the operation and maintenance of the light rail;
- security and safety of persons who use or are engaged in any work in relation to the light rail, and
- bus bridging services for conveyance of passengers during disruption in service.

Several meetings have been held at the level of my Ministry to finalise the Code of Practice and once same is finalised, arrangements would be made to have it vetted by the Attorney General's Office.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Code of Practice aims at reinforcing the security aspect of light rails. Section 11 of the Light Rail Act provides for the NLTA to order defects to be remedied. This Section may be triggered only if NLTA has valid reason to believe that the condition of any part of the Light Rail Transit System or the manner in which it is being operated is likely to cause a risk of injury to a person.

The Light Rail Division is regularly interacting with Metro Express Ltd in terms of performance meetings so as to assess the level of operation and safety aspects. In this connection, my Ministry has engaged in consultations with MEL on several aspects of the light rail systems in terms of permanent way, viaducts and power system.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in addition to the above, draft regulations have been worked out by the NLTA in order to cater for the operation of the light rail, including enhancing the safety aspects

to amend existing provisions. Consultations are ongoing in order to finalise regulations and arrangements would be made for the promulgation thereof in due course.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry and the Government remain committed to reducing casualties and to make our transport system safer. However, this would be achieved only with the cooperation of all stakeholders.

To conclude, I wish to make an earnest appeal, once again for all road and rail users as well as the public to exercise more caution and to strictly abide to safety signs and instructions given by the Police so that their safety is not compromised.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has taken 22 minutes. Out of respect for the three persons dead – two in the last two months –, I hope you will give additional time and I hope that the Minister will address the questions precisely. It is a question of respect for people who have died.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to remind him firstly that the road safety audit that he promised in 2020 to be tabled in this House has still not been tabled. Now, concerning – and perhaps he can tell us why – the fencing where the accident happened on Friday, this is in my constituency along Victoria road, there is fencing on one side of the road only, not on the other side. To say that it is fully fenced is a misnomer. So, will...

Mr Ganoo: I did not say that.

Mr X. L. Duval: You said ‘fully fenced on one side’, but you used the word ‘fully’.

Mr Ganoo: On one side.

Mr X. L. Duval: ‘Fully’ is not...

Mr Ganoo: Fully on one side.

Mr X. L. Duval: Fully on one side...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister!

Mr X. L. Duval: ... and not on the other side. So, will the Minister commit today, now, to ask Metro Express to fence the other side not only in Victoria Street but everywhere in residential and urban areas? Surely that will cost you peanuts and it will save lives.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I also said that the...

Mr X. L. Duval: May I table, Mr Speaker, Sir? Go on!

Mr Ganoo: ... fencing has been fully placed on the right...

(Interruptions)

Let me finish please! Do not be stressed!

... side of the road when going towards Belle Rose. I also said, if you listened to me, on the left side of the road, there are handrails and guardrails...

Mr X. L. Duval: No, no, no.

Mr Ganoo: Let me finish!

Mr Speaker: Let the Minister answer!

Mr Ganoo: ... to prevent traffic from coming on the track. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, fencing has been installed where safety audits have recommended same. The hon. Leader of the Opposition must know that we are Ministers, we are politicians; we go by what our experts and technicians tell us.

Now, as I said, fencing has been installed where safety audits have recommended same and after consultation with all relevant stakeholders. Mr Speaker, Sir, I just expanded abundantly on all the safety aspects over and above fencing...

(Interruptions)

...and train...

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Ganoo: ...crossing sketches. We have placed fencing, for example...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Ganoo: ...at Vacoas. Fencing has been placed at certain locations, but this has been done as a result of the advice that we have received from the relevant stakeholders and technicians.

Mr X. L. Duval: He received advice and he has not published the road safety audit; he received advice some years ago. Now, a few days ago, a person has died, walking on the track. It seems simple enough to understand that you need to put fencing to stop people walking on the track. What is the problem with Metro Express and yourself understanding that there is no fencing, no handrail, nothing, except on the *la gare limem*? But, apart from that, there is no fencing, no handrail, nothing! What is difficult understanding that you need fencing? What is difficult?

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Wait!

Mr Ganoo: The cause of this accident, as I said, was that this gentleman, the deceased, was walking on the road at one time where he was not supposed to and then, he switched over to the track. He was walking on the track and the train came and collided with him frontally. There is another footpath on the other side of the road when going towards Belle Rose which all pedestrians use normally. I must inform the hon. Leader of the Opposition that the safety audit conducted by the TMRSU recommended on one side only...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Wait!

Mr Ganoo: ...at Victoria Avenue...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Wait!

Mr Ganoo: ...and...

Mr X. L. Duval: You wait!

Mr Speaker: You wait!

Mr Ganoo: ...the RSA...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Do not start the game again!

(Interruptions)

Mr Ganoo: Please, please! The road safety also conducted, has assessed the infrastructure as being safe. So, Mr Speaker, Sir, if we go by the logic of the hon. Leader of the Opposition, therefore, we should put fencing on all the roads in this country, on the motorway, because people walk along the motorway.

(Interruptions)

Isn't it? So, if we go by your logic, all the motorways in this country should be fenced. Is that your logic? We go by the advice of our experts.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a shame that the hon. Minister does not understand the danger with light rail. It is more dangerous than the train, it is more dangerous than underground because it interacts.

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr X. L. Duval: Wait just a minute! It interacts...

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr X. L. Duval: ...with people.

Mr Speaker: You put your question!

Mr X. L. Duval: And, secondly, the light rail takes much longer than a car to stop. This is why you need additional safety measures because it takes much longer. Are you aware...

Mr Speaker: No, no, no.

Mr X. L. Duval: Are you aware ...

Mr Speaker: Now you are talking!

Mr X. L. Duval: Are you aware that ...

Mr Speaker: Leader of the Opposition...

Mr X. L. Duval: What is the matter?

Mr Speaker: Leader of the Opposition, I am on my feet!

Mr X. L. Duval: You are, yes! What can I do?

Mr Speaker: You listen to me!

Mr X. L. Duval: Yes.

Mr Speaker: And you follow my guidance!

Mr X. L. Duval: No, what can you do?

Mr Speaker: Put direct questions!

Mr X. L. Duval: Are you aware; is that a direct question? Can you ask him to answer directly also?

Mr Speaker: Yes.

Mr X. L. Duval: Is it possible for you to ask him to answer directly?

Mr Speaker: Don't you worry for the reply!

Mr X. L. Duval: Or just myself, my question?

Mr Speaker: I have control over the questions.

Mr X. L. Duval: Okay.

Mr Speaker: I do not have control over the replies!

Mr X. L. Duval: Okay.

Mr Speaker: You have been a Deputy Prime Minister...

Mr X. L. Duval: Well, try to exercise some control!

Mr Speaker: You know better than me!

Mr X. L. Duval: Try to exercise some control on yourself.

Mr Speaker: No, you withdraw that remark!

Mr X. L. Duval: Okay, I withdraw it. Now, given that the light railway is so dangerous, this is why additional measures need to be taken. Is the Minister aware that in the accident that

happened a few days ago – you said so yourself; the emergency brake was not applied by the train driver, it is the service brake that was applied.

Mr Speaker: So, where is your question?

Mr X. L. Duval: The question is this: given that it takes so long to brake and given that the emergency brake cannot be applied because of the danger to passengers inside the cab, that is why, if you think about it, you need additional measures more than on a road.

Mr Ganoo: No, no, no. The hon. Leader of the Opposition is distorting what I said. Maximum brake was applied in this case.

Mr X. L. Duval: No, no.

Mr Ganoo: Why do you say no? We have the information; we have the footage...

Mr X. L. Duval: I know.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister!

Mr Ganoo: I am not...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister, I am talking to you! Address the Chair!

Mr Ganoo: Yes, okay.

Mr Speaker: Don't address the Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Ganoo: Yes. No, but I was addressing you to tell you...

Mr Speaker: Look at me!

Mr Ganoo: ... that the hon. Leader of the Opposition is misleading the House. Maximum brake was applied in this case, Mr Speaker, Sir, and through you, I am informing the Leader of the Opposition that his information is wrong because we have all the information here and what I am telling the House is the complete truth. I am not misleading the House. So, maximum brake was applied in this case. But, in this case also, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a footpath on the right side of the road going towards Quatre Bornes, but the deceased party, in fact, had no right to walk along Victoria Avenue on the left side of the road when facing Quatre Bornes. He should have been using the pavement on the other side of the road.

Mr X. L. Duval: The hon. Minister mentioned that there will be fines. Is he planning to fine the dead also?

(Interruptions)

There will be fines. These people died!

(Interruptions)

These people died! Now, I am going to ask the hon. Minister – unless that is what he is planning to do...

Mr Ganoo: Please!

Mr X. L. Duval: ... because they disobeyed his instructions. Now, I am going to ask the hon. Minister concerning the accident in Curepipe two months ago ...

Mr Ganoo: You are trying to find...

Mr Speaker: Wait! Wait!

Mr X. L. Duval: Two months ago, there was an accident in Curepipe. Now, the train is supposed to arrive at the station at 15 km/h. It is almost running speed of a man; a bit more. How is it that if really the train was approaching the station at 15 km/h, the driver actually overran a lady and killed her? Isn't there a case here that the train was speeding into the station?

Mr Ganoo: Firstly, Mr Speaker, Sir, this matter is being enquired into by the Police. I think that it will be very dangerous for all the parties concerned, for us to debate the causes of the accident in this House by way of a Parliamentary Question. But what I can say in this case also is that any train when reaching a station should travel at the maximum limit 20 km/h. The Train Captain rang the alarm bell and also applied the brakes, but, unfortunately, the accident took place because this lady was crossing, again over the tracks, Mr Speaker, Sir.

I cannot say more. Let the Police enquire. There will be an enquiry because it was a fatal accident. A Magistrate will surely hold a Judicial Enquiry, Mr Speaker, Sir, after the DPP would have referred the matter to the Magistrate. So, let us wait, but what I can inform the House, as far as I am concerned, is that the train was going at the authorised speed, and the lady, unfortunately, entered the corridor abruptly without paying attention.

Unfortunately, all the Members of this House, including you, Mr Speaker, Sir, have not viewed the footage, but if one looks at the footage, we will see how the lady, in fact, abruptly crossed over the railway track in front of the metro which had already cruising at the speed of 20km. The bell was rung three times and the Train Captain, I can assure the hon. Leader of the Opposition, followed all safety driving practices. And I find it a bit hard, Mr Speaker, Sir, that these Train Captains had to undergo an alcohol test. They had applied brakes, rang the alarm bell, and did everything that should have been done. And then, you know what happened! They have to go to court and be released on bail!

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister, given that the project was reduced from the Rs25 billion under Labour-PMSD to Rs19 billion, and, of course, the money was then wasted on Côte d'Or, on Betamax and on BAI...

An hon. Member: Ahhh...

Mr X. L. Duval: Now, isn't it a fact; at the reduction ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Toussaint: Bravo!

The Prime Minister: *Ramgoolam ! Dan coffre sa!*

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr X. L. Duval: Can't you hear any interruptions?

Mr Speaker: I said 'order'!

Mr X. L. Duval: Good.

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr X. L. Duval: Order! Now, isn't it a fact that in giving a specific budget to the contractors, a number of safety features was actually done away with, in particular elevated sections and fencing? Now, this is why I am going to ask the Minister again. Obviously, elevated sections will be too late, but there are things that you can do. There are fencings, sensors in the cabs, sensors on the rails, many things that can be done to stop...

Mr Speaker: Question!

Mr X. L. Duval: ...further accidents, including in Vacoas, in Curepipe...

Mr Speaker: Question!

Mr X. L. Duval: ...in Quatre Bornes, in Beau Bassin. There have been 3 fatal accidents and 10 other accidents...

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr X. L. Duval: ...involving the track.

Mr Speaker: Leader of the Opposition, I am waiting for your question!

Mr X. L. Duval: Done. No need, it is already asked.

Mr Speaker: I am not waiting for a statement or debate!

Mr X. L. Duval: I have asked the question.

Mr Ganoo: Okay, if you want to come to all the 3 accidents, I just told you, for the last two ones, the deceased were, in fact, trespassing on the track. The first case, Mr Speaker, Sir, we remember, it was in August 2020; the motorcyclist had, in fact, gone through the red lights. There were Police Officers near the traffic signs, and this is why an enquiry has been conducted and there has been no case. The hearing was completed and we remember in which circumstances that serious accident took place.

Now, have we not done what should have been done, Mr Speaker, Sir? What the hon. Leader of the Opposition is trying to say, to impute to us is that we have sacrificed on safety. Not at all, Mr Speaker, Sir! The project which was being proposed by the Labour Party would have cost Rs37 billion, whereas this one cost us only Rs18 billion. We have not sacrificed on safety at all. I have abundantly elaborated on all the measures that have been taken, are still being taken, and improving safety is a recurrent feature, Mr Speaker, Sir, from MEL.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Ganoo: I mean reviewing safety measures. I do not have to go more on this aspect. I think MEL and all the other stakeholders are doing everything that should have been done in terms of safety to protect our citizens.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, the difference is Rs5 billion when you compare like with like. Don't do any voodoo accounting here, Minister!

I am going to ask the Minister this: he is responsible for the National Land Transport Authority. The Light Rail, we all know, is something new to Mauritius. Nobody understands it; neither the Police nor you or anyone. So, where is the famous Light Rail Commissioner that was going to be appointed? It is now three years gone. We have a draft code of practice; we have draft regulations, not in force yet, and no Light Rail Commissioner.

Mr Ganoo: With regard to the Light Rail Commissioner, Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has done whatever had to be done in order to recruit this Light Rail Commissioner. The understanding was that the Light Rail Commissioner should have been recruited from India. Exercises were carried out for many months and even years, Mr Speaker, Sir. Then, a Light Rail Commissioner was chosen and at the last minute, he shied away because he was not agreeable on the salary that was being proposed to him. We have recruited an Indian Deputy Light Rail Commissioner who is now in Mauritius, Mr Speaker, Sir. He has been appointed several months ago. Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, I repeat what I said. My Ministry is in consultation with MEL and with the NLTA and we keep on reviewing the level of safety that is required. It is a recurrent feature, Mr Speaker, Sir. Additional safety measures are being implemented and will be implemented because it is a constant priority for Government and for the Ministry.

Mr X. L. Duval: I would like to ask the Minister this question. Another point of safety is the fluidity of traffic. A few days ago, on Friday itself, in Quatre Bornes, traffic was completely at a standstill, including for the emergency services, for three hours because a water tanker broke down on St. Jean Road. Now, how is he going to address this issue?

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, although this is not part of the substantive question, I will answer it. As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, this issue was raised in different committees before the light rail became operational in Quatre Bornes. Necessary measures have been taken in case a vehicle has a breakdown on the road and we know it is only a one-way strip. The TMRSU, MEL and also my Ministry, Mr Speaker, Sir, have already reflected on situations where a car might have a breakdown and that would cause, of course, a lot of traffic congestion.

Mr X. L. Duval: One last question, Mr Speaker, Sir, if I may. Your drivers, Mauritian drivers are now complaining of the inadequate lighting. The accident in Quatre Bornes happened

at night. Now, it seems quite simple to install proper lighting all around residential and urban areas. Why are your drivers today still complaining about inadequate lighting on the track?

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to this particular locality, as I just said, we are satisfied with regard to lighting. I do not want to repeat what I said, Mr Speaker, Sir. All the stakeholders, including the Municipality, TMRSU, MEL and the Ministry were satisfied that this area which was formerly a jogging area endowed with all the amenities and the necessary infrastructures. We are satisfied that it was properly lit, Mr Speaker, Sir.

So, as I just said, we conducted an audit and we were satisfied that the area where this accident took place, Mr Speaker, Sir, all the necessary precautionary measures have been taken. There is a footpath on the right-hand side, near the residences, near *les résidences* and a footpath on the left-hand side. In fact, the hon. Member should know because he is an MP for this area, Mr Speaker, Sir, many habitants use this footpath as a jogging track. It is well lit. And according to us, Mr Speaker, Sir, had this poor man not trespassed on this light rail track, no accident would have taken place.

Mr Speaker: That's the end. So, now we move to Prime Minister's Question Time. Hon. Dhunoo!

MAURITIUS POLICE FORCE – DEATHS & INJURIES ON DUTY

(No. B/988) Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) 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 Police Force, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information, since 2015 to date, as to the number of Police Officers who –

- lost their lives, and
- suffered serious injuries whilst on duty.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Mauritius Police Force plays a multifaceted role in our society and has been at the forefront in fostering a climate of peace and security, conducive to the country's socio-economic development. In fact, the Police, as guardian of law and order have at all times, ensured the safety of the population, the social stability and harmony in the country.

As a law enforcement body, the Mauritius Police Force effectively maintains public order and safety and detects, prevents and investigates into criminal activities. As per section 9(1) of the Police Act 1974, the main responsibilities of the Police are to, and I quote –

- “(i) preserving the public peace;
- (ii) preventing and detecting offences;
- (iii) apprehending persons who have committed or who are reasonably suspected of having committed offences;
- (iv) regulating processions and gatherings on public roads and in public places or places of public resort;
- regulating traffic and preventing or removing obstructions from public roads;
- preserving order in public places and places of public resort, at public gatherings and assemblies for public amusement;
- assisting in implementing health, quarantine, customs and excise laws;
- assisting in preserving order in ports, harbours and airports;
- executing process issued by a Court, and
- swearing information and conducting prosecutions.”

Besides these policing duties, the Mauritius Police Force has been instrumental in the protection and welfare of the public at large as well as the most vulnerable, including our senior citizens and our children. In addition, these policing functions also encompass disaster management and search and rescue operations, amongst others.

Policing being by its very nature, dynamic and complex, particularly in an ever changing environment, is also confronted to a myriad of challenges associated with increased public expectations and exigencies, demands for enhanced accountability, the sophistication of crimes, and the emergence of new threats emanating from an ever changing community life.

We all recall that, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Police provided an immediate response especially in our overall national resilience strategy to cope with an unprecedented situation, often putting their own lives at risk. Their response was proactive,

immediate and effective at all levels. They played a prominent role in ensuring orderly movement of people to get access to basic necessities, transportation of COVID-19 patients to hospitals, securing quarantine centres and issuance of access passes to people in order to keep the essential services running during the curfew periods. Additionally, they assisted in delivering food to the most vulnerable citizens.

Mr Speaker, Sir, apart from their normal policing duties, they have also partnered with the community to help in alleviating the difficulties of the population during those improving times. They have been instrumental at implementing the recommendations of the COVID-19 High-Level Committee insofar as to matters relating to law, order and security. We have to pay tribute to the 5 Police Officers who have, unfortunately, lost their lives due to the pandemic during their selfless service to the nation.

With technological advancement, sophisticated communication devices and rapid and easy transportation, new types of crimes are emerging as well as criminal networking. For instance, today, drugs are sourced in one continent, processed and trafficked across another one and marketed in a third one. As a response to such evolving situation, the Police have to regularly revisit its strategies and capabilities in terms of equipment modernisation coupled with continuous training, capacity building, human resource development, skill and competence enhancement.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Police Officers have to face numerous and daunting challenges in fulfilling their mission to, amongst others, countering the illegal activities and arresting the drug traffickers and other criminals. Conversely, they are also subject to deliberate acts of violence and malicious accusations whilst attempting to restore public order or arresting suspected criminals. They are constantly in danger during search and rescue missions and also being run over by careless motorists and when quelling disorders, amongst others.

The relentless fight against drug traffickers is not limited to Police action inland but also covers the maritime environment which by its very nature is prone to risk and hazards. This fight which primarily rests on prompt action by the Police, particularly the ADSU, has inherent risks endangering lives of not only the Police Officers but that of their families who are often subject to threats.

Police Officers often put their life at risk in order to protect the citizens and a number of them have made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty. There have indeed been instances where they have become casualties or even lost their lives in the performance of their duties.

As such, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since 2015 to date, five Police Officers have, unfortunately, lost their lives whilst on duty as follows –

- In 2015, whilst on patrol, Police Sergeant R. G., was rundown along the motorway at Pailles. He lost his life in the accident;
- In 2018, Police Constable L. S. J. A. lost his life in a fatal road accident whilst on duty;
- In November 2020, late Woman Police Officer D. R. lost her life during a covert operation at Bo'Valon Mall, Mahebourg while attempting to stop a car that was suspected to be involved in drug transactions;
- In the year 2020, late Police Constable H. N. posted at the National Coast Guard who was on afloat patrol onboard NCG boat at St James Port, Agaléga, lost his life when the boat capsized, and
- In the year 2021, late Woman Police Constable R. G. met with a fatal road accident whilst returning home after her tour of duty.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am further informed by the Commissioner of Police that for the same period, 69 Police Officers have been seriously injured whilst on duty. The injuries sustained by the Police Officers are, *inter alia*, due to –

- road accidents;
- assault of Police Officers whilst performing duty;
- gunshot, and
- whilst regulating unlawful assemblies.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as stated in the Police Act, every Police Officer is deemed to be on duty when required to act as such, whether or not he is wearing the prescribed uniform, and has to perform the duties and exercise the powers conferred on him while he is on duty.

In fact, Police Officers are often called upon to operate in situations which take a toll on their morale and their well-being, but despite these hardships, they continue to perform their duties diligently.

Mr Speaker, Sir, all too often, it has been observed that the Police are subject to unfair criticism rather than being valued for the good work performed by them. More recently, there have been allegations of drug planting against some Police Officers in an attempt to discredit the Police Force. Fortunately, law-abiding citizens often praise the Police for their work and I am convinced, they will stand united to prevent some ill-minded people from spreading anarchy in our country.

However, let me reassure the House and the population at large that my Government has continuously been providing all the necessary support to the Police to ensure that Police Officers are equipped and trained with the required resources and facilities to perform their duties safely and securely. The more so, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, the Mauritius Police Force is implementing its Police Strategic Plan 2022-2025, which has a strong component on the enhancement of the morale and motivation of Police Officers. The Plan gives prominence to the improvement of the working environment, morale, welfare and wellness of Police Officers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I seize this opportunity to once again extend my full support to all those Police Officers who are doing their work as per established rules and in compliance with the laws of the land. I salute all those Police Officers who have either lost their lives or sustained injuries whilst on duty. They are unsung heroes and we need to pay tribute to them. Thank you.

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. With your permission, let me join the hon. Prime Minister to thank all the Police Officers for the good work they are doing.

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr Dhunoo: Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House as to the number of Police Officers who have been attacked, injured or died during drug raids since 2015 to date?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that since 2015 to date, 23 ADSU Officers were injured and one lost her life - we all know the late WPC D. R. - during raids and other operations carried out in connection with drug cases.

Mrs Mayotte: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister state the amount of compensation paid or is due to the heirs of those Police Officers who lost their lives in the exercise of their duty since 2015?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that compensation is paid to the heirs of such deceased Officers as per the recommendation of the PRB Report. In four of the five cases I mentioned in my reply, compensation to the tune of Rs6.1 m. has been paid.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Tour!

Ms Tour: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House as to the status of the enquiry in the case of late Woman Police Officer, D. R., who lost her life during a current operation of ADSU at Bo'Valon Mall in November 2022?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the case file regarding late Woman Police Officer, D. R., has been sent to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions on 31 May 2023 for advice.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. In his reply, the hon. Prime Minister stated that the Mauritius Police Force is being provided with necessary resources in terms of personnel and equipment to fulfill its mission. Can he provide information on the evolution with regard to the budget allocated to the Police Force over the years?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the budget allocated to the Mauritius Police Force has increased from Rs8.73 billion in Financial Year 2014 to reach Rs11.8 billion in Financial Year 2023-2024. In fact, the amount that has been allocated to ADSU has increased from Rs198.2 m. in Financial Year 2014 to reach Rs329.2 m. in Financial Year 2023-2024.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have a very specific question with a specific date; I don't know if the hon. Prime Minister has the answer. It is with regard to the night of 22 April 2022. Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House as to the number of Police Officers who were injured on that specific evening of 22 April 2022 where there were some politically instigated riots at different places and there was one also in front of the Police

Headquarters of Port Louis? If ever the hon. Prime Minister has the information, could he please provide it to the House? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that during the riots mentioned...

(Interruptions)

Can you have respect for the dead, please?

(Interruptions)

Ils doivent avoir un peu de respect pour ceux qui, au cours de leur travail, ont perdu leur vie.

Mr Speaker: This is very bad manner! Please, continue!

Dr. Boolell: He is speaking of whom?

Mr Speaker: Please continue!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: *Oui be si ou bisin ale, ale ...*

Mr Speaker: Members of Parliament are paid and so they should do their duty properly; not interrupt people from talking.

Dr. Boolell: Don't cast aspersions also!

Mr Speaker: Please, continue!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that during the riots mentioned by the hon. Member, 21 Police Officers were injured, including three Police Officers who were seriously injured. Moreover, there are 28 vehicles, 34 Safe City cameras and two Police buildings that were damaged.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister state whether there is any process that is followed in case a Police Officer sustained an injury whilst on duty?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that in all cases of injury sustained by Police Officers in the exercise of their duties, the concerned Divisional Commander and the

Branch Officer convene, as early as possible, a Departmental Board to be chaired by an Officer not below the rank of Inspector. The Departmental Board is called upon –

- to record the exact circumstances of the accident;
- to obtain statements from the injured person and witnesses;
- to express an opinion as to whether the accident occurred while the Officer was on duty, and the accident was due to the fault of the Officer.

I am also informed that following the report of the Departmental Board, eight duly filled copies of Police Form 8 together with the statements of the injured Officer and witnesses and copies of medical certificates are submitted to the Chief Police Medical Officer for the necessary follow-up.

Mr Ramful: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. As rightly pointed out by the hon. Prime Minister, those Police Officers face real risk of injuries given the nature of their work. In 2021, the PRB has recommended for the setting up of a Risk Insurance Scheme for Police Officers. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister where matters stand with regard to the setting up of that Scheme?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I know that I have given instructions for my officers to look into the matter. That issue is being investigated. Of course, it is a complex one because we are talking about only one category of officers in the service. So, I can assure the hon. Member that this matter is being looked into and I hope that we will be able to come to a proposal ultimately.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

NEW BIOMETRIC IDENTITY CARD PROJECT – IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/989) 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 –

- (a) the name of the company to which the contract has been awarded, and
- (b) when same will be implemented.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will reply to both Parliamentary Questions B/989 and B/1001 together as they relate to the same subject.

The Mauritius National Identity Card Scheme was introduced and implemented in Mauritius in 2013 under a Government to Government Agreement between the Republic of Singapore and the Republic of Mauritius. The project was entrusted to a consortium comprising the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise, Nippon Electric Company and Crimson Logic Private Ltd, at a total cost of Singapore Dollars 44,326,139, that is, approximately Rs1.1 billion. The scheme comprises the following components –

- Central Population Database;
- Certification Authority;
- Mauritius National Identity Card System, and
- Shared infrastructure.

Following implementation of the scheme, the plastic laminated ID card was replaced by the current National Identity Card.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in March 2020, Government decided to revamp the existing Mauritius National Identity Card System, following advice received from the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation, to the effect that after almost 8 years of operation, the existing hardware and software of the whole system have reached their end-of-support and end-of-life in view of the following –

- (i) the hardware of the system is no longer supported by the vendor, and spare parts and security patches are no longer available;
- (ii) the software components also need to be replaced as they are no longer supported by their respective vendors;
- (iii) moreover, the manufacturer of the current blank cards, IDEMIA, has ceased to manufacture the current card version. The updated version of the card proposed by IDEMIA is not compatible with the current MNIC system, and

- (iv) it was viewed that emerging technologies had to be adopted to enhance the system and make it more secure, user-friendly, and to provide a wider range of features and services.

Mr Speaker, Sir, following several meetings that my Office had with the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation, consensus was reached that the revamping of the present MNIC system was unavoidable so as to eliminate the risks associated with the obsolescence of the current system. It was also decided to take this opportunity to have a state-of-the-art system which would provide a wider spectrum of customised services so as to be in line with international trends.

Hence, in February 2021, Government agreed to the revamping of the Mauritius National Identity Card System over a period of two years. Government has also agreed to the setting up of a Technical Committee chaired by the Secretary for Home Affairs and a Steering Committee chaired by the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation to follow up on the timely implementation of the project. In September 2021, following recommendations of the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation, it was decided to widen the scope and use of the new National Identity Card by including four new components, namely Card Reading, Storage of Digital Certificates, Digital ID and Mobile ID. The estimated cost of the project was Rs267 m.

Subsequently, on 24 September 2021, an invitation for Expression of Interest was launched through open international advertisement so as to shortlist potential bidders having the technical and financial capacity to implement the project. By the closing date of 25 October 2021, 16 applications were received and a Bid Evaluation Committee was set up, comprising representatives of my Office, the Civil Status Division, the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation represented by the Central Informatics Bureau and the IT Security Unit and the Forensic Science Laboratory, to evaluate the proposals.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that following the evaluation exercise, out of the 16 applications, two of them were found to be technically responsive by the Bid Evaluation Committee, namely that from IDEMIA/nVisionIT Consortium and Thales Group. Subsequently, following consultations held with the Attorney General's Office and the Procurement Policy

Office and taking into consideration several factors such as the time constraint for the completion of the project, the security of the system and the confidentiality of the information being processed, my Office was advised to proceed under section 3(1) (a) of the Public Procurement Act and to invite the two companies to submit their proposal for the implementation of the project.

The tender document provided, amongst others, for the following –

- Revamping of the existing MNIC system implemented in 2013 and related infrastructure, including software, hardware and network, amongst others, at all MNIC sites such as at Data Centre, Personalisation Centre and Registration and Issuance Centres.
- Implementation of card usage of the National Identity Card so that agencies can electronically read card data for efficiency gains.
- Leverage on the physical ID card for the massive take-up of MauPass, the Mauritian digital ID.
- Provide for a Smart Mobile ID App to further reinforce the identity ecosystem of Mauritius by building a trusted chain of identity.

On 11 April 2022, IDEMIA/nVisionIT Consortium and Thales Group were invited to submit their proposals for the procurement of a Turnkey Solution for the supply, implementation, operations and maintenance of a National Smart Card Based Identity System and a Smart App Based Mobile ID Solution. By the closing date of 30 June 2022, IDEMIA/nVisionIT Consortium and Consortium Thales/Harel Mallac Technologies Ltd submitted their proposals. It is to be noted that one of the requirements was for the international company to have a local partner.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed that following the evaluation exercise, the contract was awarded to the consortium Thales/Harel Mallac Technologies Ltd at a capital cost of USD 8,178,165.53 (i.e. approximately Rs374 m.), inclusive of Value Added Tax (VAT). This amount caters for the implementation of the system and its related hardware and software, a first batch of 200,000 blank cards, the Mobile App, Card Reading solution, amongst others. Maintenance of hardware and software will start after the one-year warranty period and provision for funds in this respect will be made in the budget on a yearly basis.

I wish to inform the House that there will be no mass conversion of cards and the existing National Identity Card will co-exist with the new one.

As regards the implementation of the project, I wish to inform the House that same has already started and is expected to be completed at latest by February 2024. To ensure the timely completion of the project, the Steering Committee and the Technical Committee are following closely the progress made at each stage of the project. To this effect, the Technical Committee has set up five sub-committees, namely –

- the Legal and Policy, the Human Resource and Logistics, and the Marketing sub-committees under the responsibility of the Prime Minister's Office;
- the Application and Card Usage sub-committee under the responsibility of the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation, and
- the Infrastructure sub-committee under the responsibility of the Central Informatics Bureau.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to new features, since the implementation of the Mauritius National Identity Card Scheme in 2013, the Identity Card has been used for identity purposes only while other countries like Estonia, Belgium and Germany have included in their ID system other applications like Card Reading, digital signature, storage of digital certificate, amongst others. Hence, our new MNIC system will allow alignment with international trends and will provide the following new features –

- storage of Digital Certificates in the chip of the National Identity Card which will enable the card holder to digitally sign electronic documents, and to prove his/her identity online;
- Card Reading which will allow agencies to electronically read the National Identity Card. It will be possible for agencies like the Passport and Immigration Office, Banks, Mauritius Post to use 2D barcode scanners or card readers to read civil data stored in the Barcode and the chip of the card. This will be a major gain in operational efficiency and productivity for all agencies reading the card;

- provision will be made to provide all citizens applying for an ID Card with a Maupass account which is a digital identity issued by Government which can be used by the citizen for online transactions;
- provision of mobile ID which is a mobile app that will allow citizens to use their mobile device as a form of secure electronic ID. In view of the prevalence of smart devices in Mauritius, citizens will be able to use their mobile ID in lieu of their physical ID as a proof of Identity, and
- inclusion of a digital wallet which is a secure storage for digital documents on a mobile device. In this respect, the wallet will contain a digital version of the ID Card, that is, the mobile ID which will also be used as identity proof. The relevant legislation is being amended accordingly for that purpose.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to additional security features that would be included in the new card, I am informed that the photograph on the card will be a colour one unlike the present greyscale one, a translucent window, embosses and other features which can be read under UV light only.

Mr Speaker, Sir, amendments are being brought to the National Identity Card Act through the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2023 to provide for the setting up of a National Identity Card Unit which will –

- ensure the implementation of adequate security measures for all aspects of and related to the MNIC System;
- keep under periodic review the organisational and security measures implemented in relation to all aspects of and related to the MNIC System;
- cause independent security audits of the MNIC System to be carried out by an independent body;
- implement the recommendations made by the independent body having carried out the independent security audit of the MNIC System, and
- have such functions and powers for the administrative and functional efficiency of the organisational framework relating to the MNIC System.

As regards possible future upgrading, I am informed that the digital wallet will be able to accommodate other digital documents such as birth certificate and marriage certificate. Discussions are ongoing between my Office, the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation, and other stakeholders to explore the possibility of storing other documents in the digital wallet.

Thank you.

Mr Nagalingum: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is clear, according to the reply given by the hon. Prime Minister. Can he state the reason for that increase? Because initially, in 2022-2023, it was announced that Rs230 m. was earmarked for the project. Can we know why there is this increase?

The Prime Minister: In fact, the capital cost of revamping the MNIC has been reviewed. Let me give details so that the hon. Member will understand. In the Budget Estimates 2021-2022, as rightly said, an initial estimate of Rs230 m., the Government agreed, therefore, to the revamping of that project. This initial capital cost estimates of Rs230 m. were thus earmarked in the Budget Estimates of 2021-2022.

In the Budget 2022-2023, the capital cost estimates were increased to Rs267 m. as it was proposed that four additional components be integrated into the system, which I mentioned in my reply, but just to mention it again, namely the Card Reading, the storage of digital certificates and the digital and mobile ID with a view to widening the range of services that would be offered by the MNIC.

However, the initial offer that we received from the successful company, that is, the Consortium Thales/Harel Mallac Technologies Ltd amounted to Rs388.5 m. following the procurement exercise, which I have mentioned also in my reply. As the procurement exercise was initiated, it was, therefore, agreed to increasing the capital cost to Rs388.5 m. Cabinet has approved, on 09 November 2022, for the increase of the project value and that the contract be awarded to the consortium Thales/Harel Mallac Technologies Ltd at a final negotiated price of USD 8,178,165.53, that is, approximately Rs374 m.

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. With regard to the present National Identity Card, can the hon. Prime Minister provide information as to the amount spent thereon from its implementation to date?

The Prime Minister: It is good to make Members recollect. In his reply to the Private Notice Question of the then Leader of the Opposition, that is, hon. Paul Bérenger, at the Sitting of 30 October 2012, the then Minister of Information and Communication Technology informed the House that in 2009, State Informatics Ltd launched a Request for Proposal exercise for the Mauritius National Identity Card Project to seven shortlisted suppliers in line with Section 3(1) of the Public Procurement Act. Initially itself, they started with Section 3(1) of the Public Procurement Act which provided that procurement is to be undertaken by the most competitive method of procurement available in all circumstances. Three out of the seven shortlisted bidders submitted proposals. The Bid Evaluation Committee set up for evaluating the proposals recommended that the award be made to SAGEM for a value of 7,281,337.35 euros, that is, equivalent to about Rs317 m., taking the exchange rate at that time being Rs43.53.

However, the then Government decided to stop that exercise. Thereafter, it was decided to consider the possibility of implementing the MNIC Project on a Government to Government basis with Singapore, which the then Prime Minister visited in September 2010. I don't know, during his visit, he suddenly saw the card there and he said yes, we have to implement it here.

Dr. Boolell: *Ah non!*

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Keep quiet *doh!*

Mr Toussaint: *Ecoute!*

The Prime Minister: *Rest trankil doh!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You are not Prime Minister; you are not former Prime Minister! Quiet!

The Prime Minister: *Res trankil! Ecoute!*

Mr Speaker: You are not yet a former Prime Minister!

An hon. Member: *Bravo kan Navin!*

The Prime Minister: *Li pa kapav dizere!*

Mr Speaker: You were a simple Minister, not former Prime Minister!

Mr Ramano: *Laonte!*

Mr Speaker: Not former Prime Minister!

Dr. Boolell: Is that an excuse? An exclusive group!

Mr Speaker: The Prime Minister is replying to a question. You have no rights. This is lack of manners!

Dr. Boolell: *Enfin!* Lack of manners!

The Prime Minister: *To pa kav dizere ein!*

Mr Toussaint: *Kan fane bizin dir!*

The Prime Minister: *Fane? Move fane enkor!*

In December 2010, after that famous visit, he went to Singapore again. For the benefit of hon. Dr. Boolell, let me say again, maybe he can't recall. The Prime Minister, when he visited Singapore, he saw the Identity Card there and said: 'Yes this is what we must implement.' And he came back; he gave instructions to the Minister: we cancel everything; we cancel the procurement process. Can you imagine, Mr Speaker, Sir? And then Government entered in December 2010 into an agreement with Singapore Cooperation Enterprise in partnership with Crimson Logic Pte Ltd for the provision of advisory services for the sum of Rs10,916,204.

Subsequently, an agreement was signed between the Government of Mauritius and Singapore Cooperation Enterprise on 17 October 2012 for the implementation of the project by a consortium comprising Singapore Cooperation Enterprise, Nippon Electric Company at a cost of Rs1,111,256,305. The then Government made that deal secret. And again, it is good for me to remind the Members of the Opposition that the then deal that was signed, a non-disclosure agreement with the parties concerned. They are talking about non-disclosure agreement?

With maintenance cost for the period October 2013 to September 2018 and cost for providing the cards, the total sum paid was Rs1,536,845,112. So, from September 2018 onwards, a contract was signed directly with Nippon Electric Company for third level maintenance of the

MNIC System and cards were purchased directly from the supplier IDEMIA at a total cost of Rs74 m.

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Bizin fer ene lanket!*

Mr Ganoo: *Mo ti dan l'opposition mwa! Mo pa ti dan gouvernement. Travailliste ti dan gouvernement.*

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Laonte! Laonte!*

Mr Speaker: So, I think the question has been sufficiently canvassed. 15 minutes over! So, I will suspend the Sitting for one and a half hour. Before suspending, let me announce that PQs B/990, B/991, B/992, B/993, B/994, B/995, B/996, B/997, B/999, and B/1003, have been withdrawn.

NEW BIOMETRIC IDENTITY CARD - ADDITIONAL FEATURES - UPGRADING

(No. B/1001) Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) 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, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the additional features to be included therein, if any, indicating if provision has been made for future upgrading thereof.

(Vide Reply to PQ B/989)

At 1.15 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 3.05 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

ANNOUNCEMENT

HON. DR. AUMEER – GROSS MISCONDUCT

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, be seated! Hon. Members before we proceed with the questions, I have an announcement to make.

Earlier today, after considering the point of order raised by the hon. Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation at the last Sitting to the effect that Dr. the hon. Aumeer had uttered the words (*Objectionable words expunged following a resolution of the House at the Sitting of Friday 21.07.23*) to the address of Dr. the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, I ruled that these words were objectionable and invited Dr. the hon. Aumeer to unconditionally withdraw the objectionable words and to tender his apologies to the House.

Dr. the hon. Aumeer declined to unconditionally withdraw the objectionable words and to tender his apologies to the House and instead, stated that he maintains the words he had uttered to the address of the hon. Minister. Notwithstanding my ruling, I consider that the decision of the hon. Member to maintain the words he had uttered constitutes a gross misconduct and I therefore leave the matter in the hands of the House for any action it deems appropriate. Thank you.

Hon. Juman!

HAJJ MISSION 2023 – ICC – MISSION OFFICERS

(No. B/1004) 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 Mission 2023, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Islamic Cultural Centre, information as to the number of accompanying mission officers thereof having performed Hajj for the first time.

Mr Teeluck: Mr Speaker, Sir, before proceeding further, allow me to offer my most sincere condolences to the families and close relatives of the six hajjis who passed away in Saudi Arabia during this holy pilgrimage of Hajj 2023.

From preliminary information communicated by the Hajj Mission in Saudi Arabia, four of the hajjis passed away due to natural death, one hajji passed away due to acute myocardial infarction and one hajji passed away due to heart failure.

With regard to the question, I am informed by the Islamic Cultural Centre that the following Hajj Mission Officers have performed hajj for the first time and they are as follows –

- Mr N...

Mr Speaker: Can you please not mention names?

Mr Teeluck: Okay.

Mr Speaker: Initials.

Mr Teeluck: Mr N. J., Mr A. R., Mr A. O., and Mr R. K.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to point out that Mission Officers in Hajj missions play an important role in assisting and facilitating the pilgrimage experience for hajj pilgrims.

Some general responsibilities of field officers are as follows –

- They provide guidance and support to the pilgrims throughout their spiritual journey.
- They ensure that pilgrims understand and follow the religious and safety guidelines and protocols.
- They handle the logistics of the pilgrims and pilgrimage including transport and accommodation.
- They manage the movement of pilgrims between various locations.
- They are responsible for the well-being of the pilgrims, particularly in terms of health and safety.
- They assist the medical services when needed.
- They may also act as mediators or facilitators in resolving any disputes or conflicts that may arise among the pilgrims themselves in a peaceful and fair manner.

Moreover some general responsibilities for other Inspectors forming part of the Hajj Mission are to conduct safety inspections of structures such as hotels, accommodation facilities and public buildings.

Mr Juman: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me join the hon. Minister to express my deepest sympathies to the six families which lost their hajjis. Hon. Minister, listening to your reply, nearly 60% of the field officers are performing hajj for the first time.

Among them, one Mr A. O. applied with three members of his family for hajj visas in March 2023 and granted immediately. Most of the other...

Mr Speaker: No!

Mr Juman: ...field officers are...

Mr Speaker: Excuse me, hon. Member...

Mr Juman: I am coming to the question.

Mr Speaker: Excuse me, hon. Member!

Mr Juman: I am coming...

Mr Speaker: I am on my feet!

Mr Juman: Yes.

Mr Speaker: This is a supplementary question that you intend to ask the Minister. You know the definition of supplementary question. It is to ask for clarification. So, ask your clarification directly. Do not make any statement or any debate. Can you do that? Try!

Mr Juman: I will try. Mr Speaker, Sir, most of the other field officers are staying with their family there. They are not assisting hajjis. Out of the six field officers, four of them are staying away with their families, not assisting hajjis. Can I know, hon. Minister, what are the criteria to appoint field officers and to form part of the hajj missions, and who approved the hajj missions?

Mr Teeluck: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are no strict conditions or criteria set in terms of selection of the hajj mission or its composition generally. It is customary that part of the hajj mission is comprised of board members, as it is in the present case, and other officers, for example, who are medical practitioners or interpreters that will help hajjis perform their pilgrimage. So, we have followed the same practice as has been the case for several years now.

Now, the concern of the hon. Member whether members of the hajj mission are staying with their family, I think this is very serious. If such is the case, Mr Speaker, Sir, I will definitely await a report from the head of the hajj mission once they are back to see if such practices were ongoing. I will, of course, not condone any hajj officer going to assist hajjis, and instead not performing his duties as has been set out in the terms of the hajj mission.

Mr Speaker: Direct question!

Mr Juman: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is clear that for the first time, four of them are on the mission to help and assist hajjis and one of them got their visas...

Mr Speaker: No! Put your question!

Mr Juman: Can I know, hon. Minister, whether you intend to initiate an independent enquiry to look into the flagrant cases of favouritism, *parce que, M. le président, le favoritisme...*

Mr Speaker: *Non, ça va!* It is okay. You asked him if he intends to initiate any action or enquiry. Let the Minister reply!

Mr Teeluck: I have just mentioned, Mr Speaker, Sir, that I will await a report, as is the case for previous hajj missions, from the head of the mission to apprise the Ministry and myself, as the Minister, how the hajj pilgrimage and the officers performed their duties, what were the hiccups, what were the challenges and difficulties. So, on that basis, of course, once we have something in hand, we have a report, we will be able to decide whether there needs to be an inquiry or not. I am all ears to what the hon. Member has stated in terms of practices or malpractices, but, again, I will need to wait for the hajj mission to be back, for the head of the hajj mission to produce the report, and on the basis of findings in the report, then we will decide what to do.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

SSR AIRPORT, FLIGHT BA2065 –16 JUNE 2023 – SUSPICIOUS POSTAL PACKAGES

(No. B/1005) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the suspicious postal packages that arrived at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport by flight BA2065 on or about 16 June 2023, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Mauritius Post Ltd., information as to if the Postal Officer posted at the airport has made any complaint against the members of the Special Striking Team during the reception thereof and, if so, indicate the actions taken, if any.

(Withdrawn)

HORSE RACING SEASON 2023 – CONTROL TESTS & SANCTIONS

(No. B/1006) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the horse racing season 2023, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Gambling Regulatory Authority, information as to –

- (a) the number of random control test carried out on horses participating therein, indicating the –
 - (i) results, and
 - (ii) costs thereof;
- (b) if the tests have been carried out by specialised persons and, if so, give details as to the –
 - (i) names;
 - (ii) qualifications; and
 - (iii) experiences thereof, and
- (c) the sanctions imposed, if any, on trainers found guilty of malpractices.

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

Mr Speaker, Sir, one of the objectives of the Horse Racing Division of the Gambling Regulatory Authority is to promote public confidence in the integrity of the horse racing industry in accordance with section 15A(1) of the Gambling Regulatory Authority Act.

Moreover, section 15C(1)(s)(iv) of the Gambling Regulatory Authority Act provides that the Horse Racing Committee shall procure laboratory services for testing equine blood, urine and other samples, that is, pre-race, post-race and out of competition testing.

I am informed that there are three types of tests done by the Horse Racing Division to ensure that horse racing is fair, clean and free from corruption or malpractice, namely –

- (i) pre-race sampling;
- (ii) post-race sampling, and
- (iii) out of competition testing also known as random control test.

Pre-race sampling involves testing all horses participating in a race meeting at least two days prior to that race meeting. Post-race sampling on the other hand, involves sampling of all winners and also random testing on the day following the race. Out of competition testing is any doping control not done on a race day or prior to a race day, but at any time during a race horse's

career from the time of registration as race horse or the commencement of training until the time of final retirement from racing.

With regard to part (a) of the question, the total random control tests effected so far for the Horse Racing Season 2023 stood at 575. In addition, the number of tests conducted by the Horse Racing Division in 2023 as at now is as follows –

- (a) 763 pre-race sampling tests from all runners;
- (b) 214 post-race sampling which includes 21 random control tests;
- (c) 564 out of competition testing, that is, random control test;
- (d) 177 blood tests, and
- (e) 377 hair tests.

Regarding part (a)(i) of the question, all samples sent for testing this year returned negative except for one hair test which returned positive with Clenbuterol, which is a prohibited substance.

Concerning part (a)(ii) of the question, the total number of tests conducted up to now for this racing season is 1,531 involving a total cost of Rs13.7 m., out which, Rs5.4 m. has been incurred on random control tests.

With respect to part (b)(i), all equine samples are analysed at QuantiLAB which is accredited following the requirements of ISO 17025, an International Laboratory Accreditation Corporation (ILAC G7) since 2008.

In relation to part (b) (ii) and (iii), the Chief Executive Officer of QuantiLAB, Mr Bertrand Baudot, AORC/FRSC, is a professional member of the Association of Official Racing Chemists (AORC) and ex-Executive Board Member of the Association. Mr B. Baudot serves on the International Federation of Horse Racing Authorities (IFHA), Advisory Committee as the AORC's delegate for doping control. He has also organised doping control conferences in Mauritius, Uruguay and Dubai and has been nominated to organise upcoming conferences in Hong Kong in 2023 and Melbourne. QuantiLAB analyses primary A samples for 17 equine racing jurisdictions worldwide.

Since 2009, QuantiLAB has served as a referee laboratory for France, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy and Oman for their analysis of referee B samples.

With regard to part (c), following the one test which was found positive for Clenbuterol, the concerned trainer was charged for contravening rule 65(1), the rules of racing. He was fined by the Board of Stipendiary Stewards to the sum of Rs250,000 and the concerned horse was suspended from competition for a period of six months.

Mr Bhagwan: Est-ce que le ministre - qui n'est pas le ministre responsable - s'il a des renseignements qu'il y a eu quelqu'un qui a été prouvé *guilty*? Et s'il récidive, quelle est l'amende?

Mr Bholah: No, I do not know because this one is the first case. We have had only one case, as I said earlier. It was Rs250,000.

In case there is recurrence of same nature, I do not have. Maybe the Horse Racing Division will decide how much.

Mr Bhagwan: I won't ask further question. You are not the Minister responsible. So, I will find another way to have it. Thank you.

Mr Bholah: It is closer.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

METRO EXPRESS LTD – MECARDS SYSTEM – STUDENTS FREE TRAVEL SCHEME

(No. B/1008) 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 –

- (a) number thereof having travelled onboard the metro during the last 6 months, and
- (b) changes being brought thereto with the introduction of MECards system.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, following the coming into operation of the Light Rail Transit System in 2020, the free travel scheme was extended to senior citizens, persons with

disabilities and students. The Light Rail Transit System is widely used by students to connect seamlessly between their residence and their educational institutions and vice versa.

With respect to part (a) of the question, I am informed that on a normal school day, an average of 4,000 students comprising students from primary schools, secondary schools and tertiary institutions travel onboard the Metro Express. Accordingly, during the last six months, around 400,000 trips were undertaken by students.

With regard to part (b) of the question, in accordance with Regulation 10 of the Light Rail Fares and Light Rail Tickets Regulations 2019, as subsequently amended, any student who wishes to benefit from the free travel or rebated concessions student fares on the Metro Express should use his/her Student MECard.

Accordingly, all students would henceforth be required to mandatorily be in possession of both their Student MECard and a student identity card, that is, the bus pass delivered by the NLTA in order to –

- (i) benefit from free travel between his/her residence and his/her educational institution on school days only, and
- (ii) benefit from a reduced concessionary fare if not travelling within his/her residence and his/her educational institution or on non-school days or during school holidays.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a well-articulated communication exercise by Metro Express Ltd in collaboration with the NLTA and the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology is ongoing to sensitise students in relation to the compulsory use of Student MECard. MEL is further carrying out on-site awareness campaigns in educational institutions found along the Metro corridor to inform students accordingly and in order to ensure that the necessary information is disseminated.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish also to respond to the matter raised by hon. Ameer Meea at adjournment time on 04 July this year on the subject matter. In fact, a well-established process has already been instituted among the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology, the educational institutions, the National Land Transport Authority and Metro Express Ltd in connection with a timely issue of Student MECard. There is to that effect no

excessive delay at the level of the NLTA or MEL in processing the applications for the MECards, provided that the requests are duly submitted in a prompt manner by the relevant educational institutions and that payment for same is made accordingly.

I am informed, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the delay in the processing of the MECards is due to the non-submission of applications at the level of the schools whereby some wait for all the students to submit their applications before submitting same to the NLTA.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I need to point out that an adaptation period was indeed provided to the students since the beginning of the school year for them to get accustomed to this new mode of transport and at the same time allow them to procure their Student MECards through their respective educational institutions.

I would therefore take the opportunity to make an appeal to educational institutions for them to promptly submit their applications of the students, including the relevant payment in connection thereto so that the MECards could be made available to the students at the earliest.

In the meantime, Mr Speaker, Sir, and in order to provide a stress-free experience to our students onboard the light rail, Metro Express Ltd has adopted a flexible approach until the end of July 2023 towards the students using the Metro Express to attend their educational institutions.

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I refer to the reply to part (a) of my question, the Minister replied that around 400,000 students benefited from free transport. May we know what is the cost involved, please?

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, what I said was that during the last six months, around 400,000 trips were undertaken by students. Evidently, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a cost to all this. In terms of computation of the free travel for the light rail, Metro Express Ltd is currently compensated on the same premise as the bus operators, that is, based on the number of light rail vehicles put in operation. MEL is accordingly being paid a compensation to the tune of Rs229,500 monthly per light rail vehicle in as much as a light rail vehicle has a carrying capacity equivalent to 300 passengers, which is roughly 4.5 higher than those of the bus.

Therefore, the payment of the free travel scheme to MEL does not account the number of students effectively being conveyed onboard the light rail but rather the number of light rail

vehicles put in operation in a particular month. The same mechanism has been put in place as in the bus system presently.

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I would like to come to the reply given to part (b) of my question, the introduction of the MECard system. The Minister mentioned in his reply that a well-established process has been established since it involves different institutions, NLTA, Ministries and other institutions. May we know what is that process for processing the application of the MECard?

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for this question. This question should enable clarifications to the students and their parents. In fact, the steps to obtain a Student MECard are as follows, Mr Speaker, Sir –

1. Any student who wishes to procure a Student MECard should approach his respective educational institution which will in turn send his details to the NLTA based on a template.
2. The information is then checked at the level of the NLTA and validated by the NLTA based on the database kept by the latter.
3. The NLTA after verification will submit the list to MEL.
4. Upon receipt of the list from NLTA, MEL will liaise with the schools for payment.
5. Once payment is effected, MEL initialises the cards with the details of the students, that is, his address, the name of the educational institution.
6. And then, the MECards may be collected by the educational institutions.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

24/7 SPECIALISED MEDICAL SERVICES – PEDIATRIC, GYNAECOLOGY & ANAESTHETIC DEPARTMENTS – REVIEW

(No. B/1009) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the 24/7 specialised medical services in the field of Paediatric, Gynaecology, and Anaesthetic, he will state if a review thereof is being envisaged.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, night duty coverage has been recommended since the publication of the PRB 2008 Report as well as in subsequent PRB Reports 2013, 2016 and 2021.

According to PRB Report 2021, the night duty is optional for Consultants-in-Charge, Specialists/Senior Specialists who were already in service as at 30 June 2008 either in a substantive capacity or have been in an acting capacity for at least a year and is mandatory for new entrants to the grade of Specialist/Senior Specialist as from 01 January 2013.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in Errors, Omissions and Clarifications 2008 PRB Report, mention was made that the objective of the implementation of night duty coverage in the Obstetrics & Gynaecology and Paediatrics Departments was to decrease maternal deaths, infant mortality and to improve the health services in general.

Hence, Consultant-in-Charge and Specialist/Senior Specialist in these fields had to be physically present to ensure coverage at night against payment of an appropriate Night Duty allowance and the night coverage would be optional for Consultant-in-Charge and Specialist/Senior Specialist in service and mandatory for new entrants as from 01 January 2013.

Recommendation was also made that the night duty coverage may be extended to other fields should the need arise. The above recommendation has been made in subsequent PRB Reports 2013, 2016 and 2021. In line with the above recommendations, same was announced in Budget Speech 2022-2023, the Ministry implemented the 24/7 hour service in the Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Anaesthesia and Paediatric Department with effect from 01 August 2022.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is this Government that has, after numerous recommendations and consultations, been able to successfully implement the 24-hour in-house specialist service to ensure better health care delivery to our patients after 4 hours in the afternoon.

Mr Abbas Mamode: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister state the number of Specialist doctors involved in the 24/7 Specialised Medical Services?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, to cover the whole 24-hour service in the different fields, the number of doctors involved are –

- 30 in the Obstetrics and Gynaecology;
- 31 in Paediatrics, and

- 37 in Anaesthesia.

Mr Abbas Mamode: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House how checks and balances are being done to ensure that the services are available in different hospitals?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, one of the indicators showing that these services are appropriate and efficient would be especially in terms of the number of alleged medical negligence. This service has been implemented since one year. I believe that we have to wait for a few more years before we can assess the efficacy of this service. I think it is with time that these services can be assessed and I am confident that we are in the right direction to make Specialists available on a 24 in-house services since last year.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs B/1013 B/1016, B/1021, B/1023, B/1024, B/1030, B/1034, B/1042, B/1055, B/1061, B/1066, B/1067, B/1072 have been withdrawn.

Next question!

SKILL RESOURCES – MISMATCH – MEASURES

(No. B/1010) Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to mismatch in skill resources, he will state the measures envisaged to address same.

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, the skill mismatch problem is a multi-sectoral issue which concerns a number of authorities. In view thereof, my Ministry, together with these stakeholders, including the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology, are taking a series of initiatives to address the problem of skills mismatch in our country. These include –

- (a) The labour market survey being carried out annually by the National Employment Department of my Ministry to above all collect information and determine the labour market needs and expectations of employers.

- (b) The development of a National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) by my Ministry for the period 2022–2026 to chart the pathway for skills development in line with the needs of our country and the vision of Government.

This Strategy, Mr Speaker, Sir, which consists of 65 actions, anchored around three main strategic clusters, namely –

- tackling skills imbalances;
- strengthening the Education and Training System to prepare and empower young people for the future, and
- improving skills system effectiveness.

These are already being implemented.

In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, a Steering Committee comprising Business Mauritius and high-level officials from both the private and public sectors has been set up to ensure the successful implementation of this Strategy. The committee has already met on a number of occasions.

- (c) Reinforcement of the career guidance and counselling services to students as from Grade 9 to enable them make right choice of subjects and thus be in line with the market demand. Such services are also provided to students of higher grades, jobseekers and the public at large with a view to guiding them in choosing the right career path.
- (d) Next is the development of university and other higher education institutions curricula in accordance with the requirements of the market.
- (e) A regular review of the curricula of courses offered by the MITD, which falls under the aegis of my Ministry, in collaboration with the industry experts so as to align them with the market needs and to incorporate latest technology. In addition, under the Apprenticeship Scheme, the MITD is providing on-job training, hands-on experience so as to bridge the gap between theory and practice. This enables jobseekers to acquire industry-specific skills and improve their employability. The MITD is also organising career fairs to help jobseekers and employers to find suitable matches based on skills, qualifications and experience.

- f) The introduction of a spectrum of training programmes, skilling, upskilling and reskilling schemes designed to specifically cater for the needs of the labour market. A few examples are –
- (i) The Dual Training Programme.
 - (ii) The National Skills Development Programme which is demand-driven and allows employers to co-mount training programmes with selected registered training centres to address their specific skills needs.
 - (iii) There is also the Graduate Training of Employment Scheme.
 - (iv) Financial initiatives are also being provided by the HRDC to employers to encourage them to invest in the training of their employees with a view to upgrading their skills or acquiring new skills.
 - (v) Then there is the National Training and Reskilling Scheme which was been introduced in 2021 to allow for the skilling and reskilling of some 6,000 individuals who lost their jobs due to COVID-19.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in addition to the above, my Ministry is currently working on the setting up of the Skills Development Authority which shall, *inter alia*, be mandated to regulate technical and vocational education and training sector. The legal framework thereof is already in force.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, Sir. If I understand the hon. Minister well, there is a multi-sectoral committee which has been set up with a Steering Committee to steer the process. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether as to now, this committee has submitted an interim report?

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, the committee has met on several occasions and they are doing their job. Ultimately, they will come up with a report, I presume.

Dr. Boolell: You cannot presume. They have to. Can I ask the hon. Minister, in relation to specific report, is there a minimum and maximum threshold in terms of number of foreign employees in each of the specific sectors identified?

Mr Callichurn: Unfortunately, I do not have this information at hand. I shall revert.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

POINTE AUX SABLES – COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

(No. B/1011) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the construction of a Community Health Centre at Pointe aux Sables, he will state where matters stand.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the new Pointe aux Sables Community Health Centre was already inaugurated on 23 February 2023.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: M. le président, est-ce que le ministre est au courant qu'à la moindre averse, l'eau est infiltrée à travers le plafond et que le personnel doit poser des seaux et autres récipients dans ces moments-là et que cela représente un vrai inconvénient pour les patients ?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, if these inconveniences had been reported to the responsible officer, obviously the Ministry would have taken remedial action on the water leakage in the building.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Est-ce que le ministre peut nous dire si ces inconvénients, ces problèmes lui ont été adressés ?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, if we haven't received the complaint yet, how do we address these issues?

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: M. le président,...

Mr Speaker: Next question! You already had two supplementary questions.

BAIE DU TOMBEAU CHILD DAY CARE CENTRE

(No. B/1012) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Baie du Tombeau Child Day Care Centre, she will state the number of babies currently enrolled thereat, indicating –

- (a) the number of staffs employed, and
- (b) when the last upgrading works was carried out thereat.

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the National Children's Council that there are currently 20 children from vulnerable families of the region who are enrolled at the

Baie du Tombeau Child Day Care Centre. The centre is manned by seven qualified and registered Caregivers.

As regards the second part of the question, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the last upgrading works concerning the children's bathroom and restrooms were carried out during the period of September last year to June this year.

Ms Anquetil: La ministre est-elle informée des multiples lacunes constatées dans cette garderie telles que l'absence de certificat d'incendie, l'absence de lits ?

Mr Speaker: No! Wait, wait! I did not hear your question. You said whether the Minister can confirm.

Ms Anquetil: Inform; inform.

Mr Speaker: No, you do not have the right to put this kind of question. You cannot ask a Minister to confirm this. This is not a court of law.

Ms Anquetil: No, I did not say 'confirm'. I said 'inform'.

Mr Speaker: This is not a court of law where you ask this kind of question.

Mr Ramful: She is not a lawyer!

Mr Speaker: Yes, she is not a lawyer! This is Parliament. Okay, rephrase your question.

Ms Anquetil: Alors, la ministre est-elle au courant des multiples lacunes constatées dans cette garderie telles que l'absence de certificat d'incendie, l'absence de lits, l'état déplorable de la petite cour, l'absence de jardin d'enfant ?

Mr Speaker: No! You are entitled for a supplementary question. Don't be tricky with your question; don't be demagogical! You put a question to ask clarification on one piece of answer that the Minister has given. Please, try to do it! There is no wrong.

Ms Anquetil: I continue, okay?

Mr Speaker: You will continue on what? What are you going to continue? A list? You cannot ask, first, confirm this list; now, second, you take the whole list, then the Minister could give you a reply like 'come with a substantive question.' What do you do? I am helping you!

Mr Juman: *Les li! Pa intimid li do!*

Mr Nuckcheddy: *Li ase gran!*

Ms Anquetil: M. le président, la ministre est-elle au courant des multiples lacunes constatées dans cette garderie dont la présence d'une balançoire et d'une glissade sur une surface en macadam ?

Mr Speaker: Okay.

Ms Anquetil: M. le président, je suis disposée à déposer des photos...

Mr Speaker: No, no, no, no! Keep all these papers! This is Question time! Keep all these papers there!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: *Pa menase!*

Mr Speaker: So, the Minister will reply...

Mrs Navarre-Marie: *Aret menase !*

Mr Speaker: ...for whatever lacuna or whatever *manquement qu'il y a là-bas*.

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard the hon. Member with her supplementary question, and I would like to inform the hon. Member and the House that there is a fire clearance certificate in place; there is a health certificate in place. When it comes to other shortcomings such as *balançoire*, swings and all that, whatever shortcomings that are identified during our numerous visits, are highlighted to the Manager and they will be addressed. So, Mr Speaker, Sir, I very humbly seek your assistance here to remind the hon. Member that she should not just come here with *supposition; monn tan sa, monn amen tel foto!*

(Interruptions)

Mwa osi mo ena foto certificat!

An hon. Member: *So certificat travay sa!*

Dr. Boolell: *Alor!*

Ms Anquetil: La ministre peut-elle indiquer à la Chambre pourquoi cette garderie n'a pas d'*Officer-in-Charge* ?

Mr Speaker: Very good question!

Ms Anquetil: Pardon?

Mr Speaker: This is a good question!

Ms Anquetil: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not have the information in front of me, but I would like to again ...

An hon. Member: *Ah là là!*

Ms Anquetil: A last one, please!

Mr Speaker: No, no! Next question!

Mr Assirvaden: *Gagn li selman! Fer dimal!*

NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES - MORTALITY RATE & OTHERS

(No. B/1013) Mrs K. Foo Kune Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to Non-Communicable Diseases, he will state the –

- (a) mortality rate attributed thereto per 100,000 populations in 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022, respectively;
- (b) awareness and sensitization campaigns undertaken therefor, if any, since 2019 to date, and
- (c) strategies and policies, if any, being envisaged to address the lifestyle risk factors associated therewith.

(Withdrawn)

16ÈME MILLE - NEW JOGGING TRACK

(No. B/1014) Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the construction of the new jogging track at 16ème Mille, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Development Unit, information as to where matters stand.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the National Development Unit has awarded a contract for the implementation of the construction of a jogging track near football

ground 16ème Mille project on 17 March 2022 to Sotravic Ltd under its framework agreement for amenities for an amount of Rs6.9 m.. The scope of works comprises –

- clearing of the site;
- cutting and filling for land levelling;
- construction of a jogging track of a width of 2.5 m of length of 140 m;
- provision of French drains;
- construction of a masonry retaining wall over a length of approximately 145 m;
- provision of a green space over an area of approximately 400 m²;
- provision of benches;
- provision of heavy duty galvanised chain-link fencing, and
- provision of one pedestrian gate.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed that the works were scheduled to start on 31 March 2022 and expected to be completed by 28 July 2022. However, delays were encountered due to several factors, including the topography of the land in that region and the unforeseen site conditions which became known only upon clearing of site, namely –

- the uneven ground level with considerable difference in level necessitating a large volume of cut and fill and the construction of retaining walls;
- the presence of earth canal along the boundary wall on the right-hand side of the football ground within the alignment of the proposed jogging track;
- the adverse weather condition in that region, and also
- the unavailability of some materials on the local market.

In fact, officers of the NDU had several meetings with all stakeholders concerned, including my hon. colleague, on these site conditions, following which the scope of work has had to be revised. I seize this opportunity to thank hon. Dhunoo for facilitating these meetings and coming up with an agreed scope of work which shall ultimately allow realising the project.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am now advised that as at date, around 75% of the works have been completed and the project is now expected to be completed by end of July 2023, that is, in a few days.

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister confirm if the design for the jogging track has remained the same?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the scope of work for the jogging track has been amended twice. Firstly, following a tender exercise carried out in August 2021, the bid amounts received were significantly higher than the cost estimates. In this respect, I am informed that after consultation with the stakeholders concerned, it was agreed that the embellishment work in front of the football ground be excluded from the scope of work for consideration as a second phase of the project.

Secondly, as I mentioned earlier in my substantive reply, the very difficult site condition for the implementation of the project were known after clearing of the site. In fact, while the revised scope of work included the construction of the jogging track with double lanes of 2.1 m on the three sites of the football ground, the scope of work has had to be amended further, as the LDA recommended the realignment of the natural path which was directly on the proposed alignment of the third site of the football ground.

I am further informed that the sloppy topography of the land which would have necessitated a large volume of cut and fill on one hand and the construction of a taller masonry retaining wall on the other hand, the cost of the project would have exceeded the approved cost estimate significantly notwithstanding the fact that the project would have been further delayed.

However, I wish to reassure the hon. Member that both the embellishment work and the construction of the jogging track on the third site of the football ground will be carried out at the second phase of the project to be implemented during the Financial Year 2023-2024, as proposed during the site meeting held on 06 September 2022 in the presence of the LDA.

I am informed that on the third side of the construction, the double lane for the jogging track could be envisaged.

Mr Dhunoo: In his reply, the hon. Minister mentioned about the embellishment and parking space and he has mentioned about the phase two. Can we know when the works will be started and be completed?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, once we finish the first phase that is coming to an end in July 2023, immediately after, we will launch the bidding exercise for the second phase.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

**EDB – OFFICES ABROAD – EXPENSES & FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT –
YEAR 2022**

(No. B/1015) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the offices of the Economic Development Board located abroad, he will for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Board, for the year 2022 information in each case as to the –

- (a) total expenses incurred for the operation thereof, including salaries and/or allowances drawn, giving a breakdown thereof, and
- (b) amount of foreign direct investment generated.

The Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives (Mr S. Bholah): Mr Speaker, Sir, the Economic Development Board has eight global offices which were established to implement a Comprehensive International Trade and Investment Attraction Programme in selected locations with measurable outcomes. The offices are based in France, India, China, South Africa, Kenya, Japan, Singapore and the United Arab Emirates.

These foreign offices actively promote Mauritius as an attractive investment destination by showcasing the country's business friendly environment, organising investment forums and road shows and facilitate investment projects by providing advisory services.

In addition, the foreign offices focus on identifying and expanding export opportunities for local enterprises, helping them access international markets and promoting 'Made in Mauritius' products globally.

Regarding trade promotion and export assistance through its international representations, EDB supports local businesses in their export endeavours through market access initiatives, trade fairs, buyer-seller meetings, trade missions and market intelligence and research.

In respect to providing a breakdown of total expenses incurred for the operation of the offices located abroad including the amount of foreign direct investment and exports of goods, I am tabling the details thereof.

Mr Ramful: Although the hon. Minister is not the substantive Minister, he is well versed in finance. Now, looking at the figures, I also have the figures of the Bank of Mauritius. Will he agree that those offices that are situated in Asia and in particular Japan and Singapore are underperforming given that for the year 2022, they have only brought in about Rs3 billion of FDI to the country? Will he agree with me that these offices are underperforming?

Mr Bholah: From the table that I have, it is revealing to note that the FDI for Japan and Singapore for year 2022, that is calendar year January to December for Japan and Singapore, is nil, whereas with the export of goods, it is Rs630 m. for Japan and Rs633 m. for Singapore.

Mr Ramful: This is even worse than what I thought. Again, looking at the figures from the Bank of Mauritius, will he agree that sector-wise the offices are underperforming given that out of Rs27 billion of FDI, Rs15 billion come from non-performing sector, namely the real estates?

Mr Bholah: Well, I will stick to the figures as revealed in the table. These are the figures that have been submitted to me. I will contain myself to replying to your question according to my table.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Bholah: I am not the...

Mr Ramful: Are you tabling?

Mr Bholah: Yes, I am tabling. I have tabled.

Mr Speaker: It is okay. Next question! No next question? Time over?

Mr Nuckcheddy: B/1017.

Mr Speaker: Is that hon. Nuckcheddy?

**PUBLIC OFFICERS – TRAINING & CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMMES – FY
2022-23**

(No. B/1016) Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms whether, in regard to the training and capacity building programmes for public officers, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the amount of money spent by Ministries and Departments therefor during the financial year 2022-2023, indicating the number having benefitted therefrom in Mauritius and abroad, respectively.

(Withdrawn)

NSLD LTD – SOCIAL HOUSES – DISABLED PERSONS – FACILITIES

(No. B/1017) Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the construction of 8000 social houses, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the New Social Living Development Ltd., information as to if facilities for the access of disabled persons will be catered for in the design thereof.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, if I may, the New Social Living Development Ltd has, in line with Government's vision for an inclusive Mauritius, ensured that all facilities to the extent possible be provided to cater for beneficiaries who suffer from a disability.

My colleague, the hon. Minister of Social Integration has regularly raised the issue of ensuring that the new social housing project takes full account of the number of disabled within our population.

Now, I am given to understand by the NSLD that in line with international norms, 4% of the total housing units within each planned NSLD housing estate will be specifically designed for persons with disabilities and located on the ground floor. These houses will be equipped with the following features to facilitate the day-to-day living of people with disabilities –

- (a) accessible entrances with ramps and handrails;
- (b) step free flooring;

- (c) adapted bathroom and toilets equipped with grab bars, and
- (d) light switches and electrical outlets throughout the dedicated units reachable for wheelchair users.

Moreover, over and above these 4%, I understand from the NSLD that all housing units will provide for –

- (a) ramps for access to ground floor units together with side handrails where relevant;
- (b) all internal doors and bathroom doors be of a minimum of 900 millimetres width in accordance with the Building Control, Accessibility and Gender Compliance in Buildings Regulations 2017;
- (c) step free flooring throughout the housing unit on the same floor, including bathrooms and toilets to facilitate wheelchair mobility, and
- (d) the option of converting the bathroom and toilet area to be more disabled-friendly by removing the light partition wall, the non-load bearing wall in between bathroom and toilet.

Furthermore, the housing estates will also provide for easy access by wheelchair users and persons with disabilities within the compound such as provision of ramps within public use areas as far as possible. Provision of reserved parking space is also being made for persons with disabilities.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. I welcome the arrangements being made for the disabled, but can I ask the hon. Minister whether the selling price for these units will be the same as the conventional ones?

The Deputy Prime Minister: They will be the same, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

PAILLES-GUIBIES SEWERAGE PROJECT – PHASE 2 – SINOHYDRO CORPORATION (MAURITIUS) LTD

(No. B/1018) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Pailles-Guibies Sewerage Project – Phase 2, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Wastewater Management

Authority, information as to if the contract awarded to Sinohydro Corporation (Mauritius) Ltd., therefor has been terminated and, if so, the reasons therefor.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to PQ B/523 and PQ B/604, I had informed the House, at our Sittings of 16 and 23 May 2023, of the delays encountered under the Pailles-Guibies Sewerage Project phase 2 that was awarded to Sinohydro Corporation Ltd by the Wastewater Management Authority.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the contract was awarded on 31 July 2019 prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. As I had already informed, the delays were mainly due to closure of borders in China and in Mauritius, difficulty faced to import labour, equipment and machinery, slow progress of work, a continuous decrease in resources on site and financial difficulties that the Contractor claims to face in order to honour the obligations under the contract.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that since August 2020, the Wastewater Management Authority had drawn the attention of the Contractor through numerous meetings and correspondences, to its failure to execute the works at a reasonable pace of advancement to meet its obligations under the contract. The Wastewater Management Authority issued more than 43 strong letters and 35 warnings to Sinohydro Corporation Ltd to express concern on –

- poor performance and lack of planning;
- slow progress of works;
- absence of remedial measures and appropriate methodology to catch up delays to expedite progress of works;
- failure to fulfil contractual obligations and duties under the contract;
- continuous decrease in the number of equipment as well as labour on site from 120 in April 2021 to around 25 in June 2023;
- demobilization of labour and equipment from site.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it should be noted that it is a contract requirement that the Contractor mobilises sufficient resources (equipment and manpower) for the completion of the works in order to meet the completion date. And the Wastewater Management Authority has been supervising the contract and strictly enforcing its conditions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am moreover informed that, a meeting conducted at the Wastewater Management Authority on May 15, 2023, the Contractor stated that it will not complete the works under the contract, even if the Wastewater Management Authority granted them another extension of time, with or without costs. The reasons put forward by the Contractor pertain to geological conditions, way leave issues, importation of foreign labour and supply of resources, amongst others. Sinohydro Corporation Ltd also requested for a review of costs and terms for completion of contract.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it must be highlighted that the contract for Pailles-Guibies Sewerage Project Phase 2 was awarded following an international bidding exercise conducted by the Central Procurement Board. The Wastewater Management Authority examined the request from Sinohydro Corporation Ltd to review rates in the context of prevailing Public Procurement Legislations, Directives and guidelines as well as the conditions of the contract and same was not approved.

It must be noted that despite the opening of borders, the contractor has intimated its intention not to recruit additional labour on the contract.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the matter was examined at the level of the Wastewater Management Authority Board together with all the occurrences in the Contractor's project execution and legal advice obtained. It was noted that the Wastewater Management Authority had taken all possible actions for Sinohydro Corporation Ltd to complete the works by the contractual completion date. However, there has been little change in the rate of development of the works and the Contractor has indicated that it does not intend to continue performing its responsibilities under the contract.

Mr Speaker, Sir, for all the above reasons and as a last resort, the Wastewater Management Authority issued a Notice of Termination to Sinohydro Corporation Ltd in line with Clause 15.2(b) of the conditions of the contract on 23 June 2023, with effect from 07 July 2023.

During the Notice of Termination period, the Contractor is required to secure and make safe the site.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr David: M. le président, l'annulation d'un contrat d'une telle envergure cause évidemment un préjudice contractuel, infrastructurel, technique et financier. Puis-je demander au

ministre si la WMA a réclamé des dommages et intérêts au contracteur en faisant notamment jouer le *performance bond* ou d'autres clauses de garanties bancaires, et si oui, quel sera le montant des pénalités qui sera versé à la WMA ?

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, all these issues are being looked into by the Wastewater Management Authority and due consideration will be given to these issues. With regard to the amount, I do not have the information with me, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr David: Au vu de l'annulation du contrat, de l'échec du projet et des nombreuses défaillances du contracteur, le ministre peut-il nous dire si la WMA envisage de disqualifier définitivement l'entreprise Sinohydro pour lui interdire de participer à d'autres appels d'offres et ainsi réduire le risque d'un nouveau gaspillage des fonds publics ?

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, all necessary actions have been taken and the Public Procurement Office has been informed, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

SPORTS ARBITRATION TRIBUNAL – BOARD COMPOSITION

(No. B/1019) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the Sports Arbitration Tribunal, he will state the –

- (a) composition thereof, indicating the –
 - (i) date of appointment of the members thereof, and
 - (ii) allowances paid thereto since their appointment to date, and
- (b) number of cases –
 - (i) heard from January 2022 to date, and
 - (ii) pending, if any, since, January 2019 to date, indicating the reasons therefor.

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I wish, first of all, to congratulate our National Football Team for its victory in yesterday's match against Angola in the context of the COSAFA Cup.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that procedures will be completed shortly to reconstitute the Sports Arbitration Tribunal.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) (ii) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the number of cases pending since January 2019 is 14.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, c'est un fait reconnu au sein du sport mauricien que ce tribunal d'arbitrage fonctionne au ralenti depuis plusieurs années faute d'assesseurs ou d'un président à plein temps. De ce fait, l'honorable ministre peut-il nous expliquer comment ce tribunal d'arbitrage du sport, qui vient de nommer un nouveau président à temps partiel, va cette fois-ci pouvoir fonctionner pleinement et efficacement pour pouvoir justement résoudre tous les problèmes qui existent ?

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Sports Arbitration Tribunal has been set up through the Sports Act and, unfortunately, I cannot answer to the hon. Member to say that the Tribunal will function normally and so on because it depends on the persons that eventually will form part of the Tribunal as we are waiting for the letter of acceptance. There are unforeseen circumstances that are beyond my control.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, puisque la liste des plaintes s'allonge, peut-on savoir de l'honorable ministre, puisque ni le *Sports Arbitration Tribunal* ni l'*Ombudsperson for Sports* n'arrive à régler les conflits au sein des fédérations sportives ou autres litiges au sein du monde sportif dans un délai raisonnable, s'il envisage d'amender le *Sports Act* afin d'apporter des solutions rapides pour régler ces litiges ?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, si l'honorable membre ou le monde sportif en général ont des propositions, *most welcome*.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

LA MARIE-PETRIN ROAD TOWARDS GANGA TALAO

(No. B/1020) 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 Beaux Songes, he will state if consideration will also be given for the upgrading of the road from La Marie to Petrin towards Ganga Talao.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, in my reply to Parliamentary Question B/237 on 18 April 2023, I informed the House that the RDA is currently undertaking the construction of the East-West Connector which comprises the following –

- La Vigie-La Brasserie-Beaux Songes Link Road (Phase 1), starting from Motorway M1 at La Vigie crossing Phoenix-Plaisance Road (A10) at 16ème Mille and ending at La Marie Road (B102).
- La Vigie-La Brasserie-Beaux Songes Link Road (Phase 2), project starting from La Marie (B102) passing through Henrietta, Holyrood and ending at Pierrefonds. The new road will link Palma Road (B2) and Phoenix-Beaux Songes Link Road (B130).
- The Flic-en-Flac Bypass starting from Pierrefonds roundabout to end at Flic-en-Flac as Phase 3.

I also informed the House that with the coming into operation of La Vigie-La Brasserie-Beaux Songes Link Road, there will be a major relief on the distribution of the traffic between the west, central and south of the region, including between Black River, the Motorway M1 and the SSR International Airport. This will improve the level of service, journey time and accessibility within the town of Curepipe where the main road network is currently fragmented and congested.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards the request of the hon. Member to consider the upgrading of the road from La Marie to Pétrin towards Ganga Talao, I would like to inform the House that this stretch is completely distinct from the La Vigie-La Brasserie-Beaux Songes-Flic-en-Flac Project and these are two different projects, we got nothing to do with one another.

Details that I have already given to the House. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, notwithstanding this fact, it has to be pointed out that the existing B102 road from La Marie to Pétrin as well as other areas near Ganga Talao are already being upgraded in phases, for example, upgrading works at several stretches in that region have been completed as follows –

1. Construction of a pedestrian lane along La Marie-Pétrin-Chamouny B102 to the tune of Rs25 m.;

2. Construction of laybys along La Marie-Pétrin-Chamouny Road B102 and Pandit Gossagne Road B88 for an amount of Rs15 m.;
3. Enlargement of the parking space at Grand Bassin to the tune of Rs25 m.;
4. Widening of the exit road at Grand Bassin, namely the Governor's Lane at the cost of Rs18 m.;
5. Construction of a third lane along the Pandit Jhummun Giri Gossagne Napal Road, from Gully to Bois Cheri for an amount of Rs65 m., and
6. the extension of the third lane along Pandit Gossagne Road again B88 near CWA Reservoir at Bois Cheri to the tune of Rs25 m.

In addition, the RDA has in Financial Year 2022-2023, implemented two additional projects along the road, namely re-profiling of the B102 Road near Ragavoodoo for the sum Rs5 m. by raising the road level to approximately 600 mm to prevent accumulation of water which was disrupting the service connectivity of the road during torrential rainfall, and secondly, resurfacing of the road from Plaine Sophie up to the entrance of Arnaud Dam for the sum of Rs10 m.

However, Mr Speaker, Sir, if the hon. Member is referring to the realignment of the road or its enlargement, I wish to inform that Government has embarked on a project to look into the development around Ganga Talao in a holistic manner, including the setting up of a spiritual park and the possibility of establishing a buffer zone around Ganga Talao. In this context, consideration is being given to design and construct a new road to enable road users to bypass the Ganga Talao. This bypass will provide a direct route from Pétrin to Bois Cheri, thus reducing travel time and enhancing the level of service along the Pandit Jhummun Giri Gossagne Napal Road, ex Grand Bassin Road B88.

On the same premise, the upgrading works and the types of upgrading where the realignment or enlargement which the roads around the vicinity of Ganga Talao may require will be looked into in the proposed holistic development. Thank you.

Mr Bodha: I have caught your eye! Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: You always catch my heart!

Mr Bodha: I thank the hon. Minister for the reply. We know how intense the traffic is between La Brasserie, La Marie and Ganga Talao during Maha Shivratri, and often when we have some events there. In view of the fact that there has been an upgrading in some segments, as the Minister himself mentioned, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he can consider the fact that we can have a proper four lane road between La Marie and Ganga Talao and that could be an extremely interesting solution for traffic coming from the west, coming from the central plateau, that is, Plaines Wilhems and coming from the south; whether he can consider this possibility? Because I personally believe that this could be a very interesting solution.

Mr Speaker: Before the hon. Minister answers, it looks like the hon. Member wants to come back to his former position with so many suggestions!

Mr Bodha: It was an idea I had.

Mr Speaker: Let the hon. Minister reply!

Mr Hurreeram: Unfortunately, *qui va chasser perd sa place!* Mr Speaker, Sir, as I mentioned earlier, there is a ministerial committee looking into that and will have a holistic approach. We are looking at different possibilities; the buffer zone and the bypass. We stand guided by the expert advice of the engineers of the RDA to look into the matter. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

(Interruptions)

Mr Quirin: *Ki arrive? To pou re pren to plas la?*

GRA - HORSE RACING - STAKES MONEY REDUCTION

(No. B/1021) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to stakes money for horse racing, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Gambling Regulatory Authority, information as to if the Horse Racing Division of the Authority has been made aware of the substantial reduction thereof and, if so, the actions, if any, being taken in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

LONG MOUNTAIN - INCINERATOR - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/1022) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the proposed construction of an incinerator in Long Mountain, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the District council of Pamplemousses, information as to 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 Pamplemousses that the proposed construction of an incinerator at Long Mountain consists of a reinforced concrete building, including supply, installation and commissioning of an LPG Fire Incinerator and gas network installation.

On 29 March 2022, a plot of land to the extent of 1,055 m² was acquired by private agreement. It is situated at Ilot Branch Road, Long Mountain and was vested into the District Council. Bids were invited through Open National Bidding on 16 February 2023 but had to be cancelled in accordance with section 31(2) (b) of the Public Procurement Regulation 2008 due to change in the location in the village of Long Mountain as it has been observed that during the recent torrential rainfall, the site was in a flood prone area. A meeting was held on 17 April 2023 by the District Council of Pamplemousses with the representatives of Terragri Ltd to discuss the issues.

Subsequently, in a letter dated 26 April 2023, Terragri Ltd proposed to swap the land acquired to an alternative site in the same locality bordering the Ilot Branch Road. The Council is agreeable to the swapping of the land proposed by Terragri Ltd and a request for the swapping has been submitted to the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning on 03 May 2023 and a reply is awaited.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the bidding documents are ready and bids would be invited as soon as the swapping of land would be finalised. The project would take around 12 months to be completed.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is a much awaited project in the region of Long Mountain. Can the hon. Minister provide further details, as he mentioned that it is

going to take 12 months and the bidding documents are ready, any tentative date of completion which can be provided to the House?

Dr. Husnoo: Sorry, I did not quite understand.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Can the hon. Minister provide any tentative date as to when the project would be completed?

Dr. Husnoo: They told me 12 months. I suppose it is 12 months from today.

Mr Speaker: Next question! Is it hon. Lobine?

Mr Lobine: No, I have already withdrawn, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: You have withdrawn? Who is next? So, Members should follow their questions!

E-HEALTH PROJECT– IMPLEMENTATION DETAILS

(No. B/1023) 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)

CWA – BEST PRACTICES & REFORM MEASURES

(No. B/1024) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the proposed reform of the Central Water Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to where matters stand, indicating the measures envisaged to improve good governance practices thereat.

(Withdrawn)

NEF - FULLY CONCRETE HOUSING SCHEME

(No. B/1025) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the 296 houses constructed under the Fully Concrete Housing Scheme of the National Empowerment Foundation, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) the number thereof already allocated, and
- (b) if there is a priority list for the selection of the beneficiaries thereof indicating the number on the waiting list.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Mr Speaker, I wish to inform the House that the Fully Concrete Housing Scheme, introduced in the year 2016 to replace the Corrugated Iron Sheets Scheme, makes provision for the construction of a fully concrete housing unit under the Social Registry of Mauritius for persons who are owners of a plot of land or lessee of a plot of state land and are in need of housing support. As at date, a total of 296 housing units have been constructed under this scheme and the construction of 37 housing units is ongoing.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the National Empowerment Foundation that the 296 completed housing units have already been delivered to beneficiaries.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that in order to benefit from housing support under the fully concrete housing scheme, the household should be eligible under the Social Registry of Mauritius, be owners of a plot of land or lessee of a plot of state land and have the repayment capacity.

I am further informed that the National Empowerment Foundation does not have a priority list. Applications are entertained as and when the foundation received the applications.

I am also informed that there are currently 22 SRM eligible households who have made a request for housing support. Out of the 22 households, the construction of 15 housing units has been considered under a new contract to be implemented over the current financial year. The closing date for submission of bids is 10 July 2023. The remaining applications are currently being processed at the level of the Foundation and will be considered in forthcoming tenders to be launched during the present financial year.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to add also that the demand for housing support under the FCH Scheme is on demand and is therefore dynamic. Thank you.

Mr Armance: Thank you, hon. Minister. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether there is a contributive amount of around Rs250,000 that the beneficiary should pay to be eligible for the house? If so, will the hon. Minister consider to be more flexible on this amount or even provide a flexible payment plan?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say that we are trying our level best to help the beneficiaries who are under the SRM register. As per information received, Government pays 80% of the cost of the house, so the beneficiary pays only 20% over a period of up to 35 years depending on the repayment capacity of the applicant. As you can see, we are doing our best to help the beneficiaries; they are paying only 20% of the cost of the housing. So, the house actually costs around Rs1.2 m. So, they pay very reasonable, I must say, only 20% over a period of 35 years.

If I may add, if a beneficiary has difficulty to repay the monthly instalment, I am sure the NEF does everything to help the beneficiary. *Ce n'est pas couteau à la gorge, forcer les bénéficiaires à payer s'ils n'ont pas les moyens.* We are very flexible.

Mr Speaker: So, next question!

Mr Armance: No, my second supplementary, Mr Speaker, Sir. Part (b) of my question, hon. Minister...

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Yes.

Mr Armance: I requested you to inform the House about the number of requests on the waiting list. Please provide the information. And you mentioned that you have 22 ...

Mr Speaker: No.

Mr Armance: It's the same question, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Please, hon. Member, listen to me. You are trying to put two questions in one. You already put a question. Let the Minister reply.

Mr Armance: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not ...

Mr Speaker: No, no, no. I don't want to listen to anything. I gave my ruling.

Mr Armance: This is not a question. It was...

Mr Speaker: I gave my ruling. You asked the Minister...

(Interruptions)

So, if you continue, you will have to withdraw.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: *Ki koumsa?*

Mr Speaker: The Minister will reply?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have said in my reply, there are currently 22 applications. We have received 22 applications and we are processing the 22 applications. It is on demand; we don't have people on the list who are waiting for the houses to be constructed.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

7-YEAR-OLD TORTURED GIRL – VIDEO CIRCULATION

(No. B/1026) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the video circulated on social media showing a 7-year-old girl being tortured by her mother, she will state the actions taken by her Ministry in relation thereto.

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that as soon as this video was released on social media...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Some silence please!

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: ... my Ministry has taken prompt action to intervene in order to provide the necessary protection and support to the minor.

I am informed by the Child Development Unit of my Ministry that on 03 July 2023, following the circulation of the said video on social media which displayed physical abuse of the minor M. S. by her mother, an enquiry was immediately initiated with the collaboration of *Brigade pour la Protection de la Famille (BPF)*.

The enquiry led to the identification of the minor, the mother and that of the residents which is at – I won't mention where it is. Following information received about the whereabouts of the mother, she was arrested by the *Brigade pour la Protection de la Famille* and brought at Bambous Police Station together with the minor for an assessment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, officers from my Ministry comprising of the Family Welfare and Protection Officer, a Child Care Worker and a Psychologist provided support and interviewed the minor. She revealed that on the material date and time because she was late getting up, her mother assaulted her with a stick, pushed her down and pulled her forcefully by her hair.

Subsequently, a statement was recorded from her by the *Brigade pour la Protection de la Famille* and a case was reported against the mother. I am also informed that a PF58 was issued to the minor who was conveyed to the Victoria Hospital for treatment where she was admitted for a complete medical examination.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on 04 July 2023, upon application, the Children's Court issued an Emergency Protection Order in favour of the minor. I am also informed by the Commissioner of Police that on Tuesday 04 July, the mother was provisionally charged for the offence of attempt at murder before the District Court of Black River and she has been remanded to Police cell until today, 11 July.

I am also informed that the minor has been examined by the Principal Police Medical Officer last week, Friday, in presence of officers of my Ministry. As at yesterday, the minor was discharged from hospital and in view of a present high risk of her being further abused, for her own protection and in her best interest, the minor has been admitted in a shelter of my Ministry.

Mr Speaker, Sir, enquiry is ongoing for possibilities of reintegration of the minor within an appropriate family set up. Thank you.

Mrs Mayotte: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister indicate to the House whether such cases are dealt with solely by officers of her Ministry?

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, in such cases where it is suspected or it has been detected or reported that there are cases of abuse or harm towards a child, there is a child protection team comprising not only of officers of my Ministry but, yes, obviously, with the Family Welfare and Protection Officer of my Ministry together with a Social Worker, a

Psychologist, a member of the Police Force, who in civilian clothes, move out of office both within and after office hours round-the-clock to attend to such cases. So, it is a multi-disciplinary team that react and attend to cases of child in distress, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Mayotte: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister stated earlier about the list of support provided to the minor. Is there any psychological support provided to the parents in such cases?

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will take the example of this case. At the moment, the parent has been remanded to Police cell with no bail, but we have at the level of the Ministry a Parental Empowerment Resource Centre which has been set up since December last year at the Child Protection Services outstation at Moka and it is being implemented in other Child Protection Services outstations.

It is a professionally based multi-disciplinary project where we look at empowering parents with the right skills, with the right knowledge that they need to become more effective at parenting or as caregivers. This project also encourages alternative ways of disciplining a child so that we can improve child and parent relationship as we have noticed in this most recent case. It is a project that is being implemented both where the parents and professionals at the level of the Child Development Unit outstations and this is done especially through focus group meetings, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

MAURITIUS POST LTD – POSTAL OFFICERS – PROMOTION EXERCISE

(No. B/1027) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to Postal Officers posted in Mauritius and Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Mauritius Post Ltd., information as to the date of the last promotion exercise carried out for the post of Postal Executive, indicating the –

- (a) number thereof, and
- (b) eligibility criteria therefor.

The Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage (Mr A. Teeluck): Mr Speaker, Sir, the Mauritius Post Ltd is a private company incorporated in March 2003 under the Companies Act

2001 following the enactment of Post Office Transfer of Undertaking Act. The company is governed by its constitution and managed by a Board of Directors and has its own HR procedure.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not the practice to disclose information with regard to Government-owned companies as such disclosure may cause prejudice to the company in its operation. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Nagalingum: Mr Speaker, Sir, one question!

Mr Speaker: No, it is not a practice to ask question. So, what question are you asking?

Mr Nagalingum: At least give me the chance to ask the question, if the Minister can answer.

Mr Speaker: No, it is not a question of chance or no chance. It is a question of Standing Orders; it is a question of rules and regulations. So, the Minister has said that it is not a practice. So, can I force the Minister now? Minister, what you said is wrong! Can I say that?

Mrs Navarre-Marie: But you do not know the question yet.

Mr Speaker: No, I have already ruled. Next question!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: You do not know the question yet.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Shame!

An hon. Member: *Ki shame?*

Mr Nagalingum: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: No, there is no point of order. You are making an abuse! Next question!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: You are making an abuse!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am asking you to withdraw these words and present apologies to the House or else you withdraw from the Chamber.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: I withdraw.

Mr Speaker: Thank you very much.

(Interruptions)

Mr Juman: *Content!*

Mr Speaker: Of course, I am happy.

**MINISTRY OF ENERGY AND PUBLIC UTILITIES - ADVISERS - SALARIES &
FRINGE BENEFITS**

(No. B/1028) 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 –

- (a) their names, and
- (b) salaries and other fringe benefits drawn.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are three advisers employed on contract in my Ministry, namely –

- (i) Mr Tirat Moossun, Senior Adviser;
- (ii) Mr Andy Kinsley Lai Kong Ling, Adviser on Information Matters, and
- (iii) Mr Moganaden Murthoo, Adviser on Public Relations Matters.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the salaries of Advisers is determined by the Pay Research Bureau. The terms and conditions of employment are approved by the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms. With your permission, I am tabling information with regards to their salaries and fringe benefits.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

**HUMAN PAPILLOMAVIRUS – VACCINATION PROGRAMME – CHILDREN 9-14
YEARS**

(No. B/1029) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the new programme for vaccination against Human Papillomavirus for boys aged between 9 to 14 years in addition to the on-going programme for girls, he will state where matters stand.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, targeted HPV vaccination has been introduced in Mauritius in 2016 as a primary prevention strategy against cervical cancer. Previously, only girls aged 9-15 years were being vaccinated with two doses of Cervarix. These vaccinations sessions are carried out in school premises during school days by the Public Health Nursing Officers under the supervision of a medical officer. Consent of parents is sought prior to vaccination.

Moreover, Public Health Nursing Officers in area health care centres routinely check health cards to assess the vaccination status of girls aged 9 years or above. In case the child had not been administered the vaccine, needful is done accordingly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as per the updated recommendations from the World Health Organisation in December 2022, it was noted that a single-dose schedule of Gardasil-9 can provide a comparable efficacy and durability of protection of a two-dose regimen of Cervarix for both boys and girls aged 9 and 15 years and a two-dose regimen is effective in adolescents aged above 15 years. These recommendations were endorsed by the National Immunisation Technical Advisory Group referred as MAUNITAG and it was decided –

- to administer one dose schedule of Gardasil-9 for children aged 9-14 years, and
- to administer a two-dose schedule of Gardasil-9 for adolescents aged 15 years.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in line with the WHO and MAUNITAG recommendations, funds to the tune of Rs160 m. have been earmarked in Budget 2023-2024 for the Human Papillomavirus Programme which would target both boys and girls aged 9-15 years. Accordingly, some 20,000 doses of Gardasil-9 vaccines are being procured for administration to the target groups this year.

Additionally, some 57,000 doses would be procured so as to pursue the vaccination campaign in 2024. So, the Gardasil vaccination is under the procurement process.

Mr Osman Mahomed: During the Committee of Supply, the Minister had stated 80,000 vaccines for Rs160 million. Now it is 77,000 vaccines, 20,000+57,000. Is it correct that there is a reduction?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, it is correct.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Can I ask the hon. Minister the procurement method being used for this? Is this a tender exercise or direct procurement?

Dr. Jagutpal: It is tender exercise, but so far, the information I have is that there is only one supplier, one manufacturer for this vaccine, but, yet, the Ministry will undertake a tender exercise for the procurement of these vaccines.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. Those who were 14 years old in 2016 when the vaccination programme had started and the more so there are two vaccines to be injected – now, can I ask the hon. Minister for those who are 23 years old today, nine years ago 2016+9, are 23 years old, have they all been vaccinated two doses or there are still some outstanding cases?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, because this is according to consent of parents to get vaccinated. So, obviously, if yearly we have been vaccinating nearly 10,000 girls, and I am sure that not all the girls have been vaccinated. So, this is where the information campaign to sensitise the public comes into play. It is important that this vaccination be carried out so that those even after 14 or 15 years old can be vaccinated under this programme. So, we want them to willingly come to us for vaccination. Again, we will need their consent to get these vaccines.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs B/1032, B/1039, B/1046, B/1047, B/1062, B/1063, B/1071 have been withdrawn.

Next question!

ELECTRIC VEHICLES – PUBLIC SENSITISATION

(No. B/1030) Mr A. Ittoo (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to electric vehicles, he will state the actions being envisaged by his Ministry to sensitise the public of the benefits thereof with a view to encouraging the acquisition thereof.

(Withdrawn)

RECREATION CENTRE, BELLE MARE – RE-OPENING

(No. B/1031) Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the re-opening of the Recreation Centre for senior citizens at Belle Mare, she will state where matters stand.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, at the very outset, I wish to highlight that all the recreation centres including the one at Belle Mare were handed over to the Ministry of Health and Wellness to be used as quarantine centres for COVID-19 patients.

In May 2022, the recreation centres were handed over back to the Ministry and since then, major renovations work are being carried out to the premises. I am informed that most repairs and the procurement and supply of different items have already been effected. Upgrading and maintenance work wherever warranted have been completed.

With regard to the remaining work like general painting and carpentry, works are in progress and are expected to be completed in some two months. I wish to inform the House that once all the works are completed, the recreation centres will be opened to our seniors.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

ST MARTIN – PIG BREEDERS – POLLUTION & WATER SHORTAGE

(No. B/1032) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the pig breeders at St Martin, he will state –

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

(Withdrawn)

M1 & CONTI STREET, PORT-LOUIS – STAGNANT WATER

(No. B/1033) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the stagnant water in the canal between M1 and Conti Street

in Port-Louis representing health hazards to families living thereat, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal City Council of Port Louis, information as to the remedial actions envisaged to address same.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Municipal Council of Port Louis that there is an existing storm drain over a distance of 100 metres and a width of between 1 to 1.2 metres which was constructed a long time ago.

Maintenance of the same drain is carried out by the Council. Following the investigation carried out by the Council, it was found that the stagnation of water was due to a topographical problem, namely the inadequate slope of the drain.

I am informed by the Council that the procurement exercise for the cleaning and desilting of the canal between M1 and Conti Street along with other sides has already been carried out and the contract will be awarded by next week. Works could start by the end of this month.

However, there is a need to find a long-term solution to the problem for which the Municipal Council of Port Louis is seeking the assistance of the Land Drainage Authority.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Merci, M. le président. En attendant que les travaux commencent, est-ce que le ministre peut *impress upon his colleague, the Minister of Health*, pour que des consultations régulières avec les familles soient faites sur place vu la prévalence de la fièvre dengue ?

Dr. Husnoo: I will discuss with my colleague and inform him about the problem.

Mr Speaker: Have you already replied?

Dr. Husnoo: Yes.

Mr Speaker: The reply normally should come from you to me.

Dr. Husnoo: Sorry.

Mr Speaker: Do you have another question? Next question!

MAURITIUS MEAT AUTHORITY – GENERAL MANAGER

(No. B/1034) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard the General Manager of the Mauritius Meat Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to the –

- (a) the name and qualifications thereof, and
- (b) terms and conditions of the employment thereof, including his salary package.

(Withdrawn)

REMPART RIVER, VACOAS – SEWAGE SPILL – REMEDIAL MEASURES

(No. B/1035) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether he will state if his Ministry has been made aware of sewage spill in rivière Rempart in Vacoas, affecting the inhabitants of the region of Morcellement Seetaram and Pousson, Pont Ventard, Royal Road Henrietta, Camp Roche and Holyrood and, if so, the remedial measures envisaged.

Mr Ramano: Mr Speaker, Sir, on 13 June 2023 at about 11.20 hours, a complaint was received at the level of the *Police de l'environnement* against discharge of filthy water into rivière Rempart at Henrietta. A joint inspection involving officers of the Pollution Prevention and Control Division and the National Environmental Laboratory of my Ministry along with the *Police de l'environnement* was conducted in the region, more precisely at School Road, Morcellement Seetaram and Morcellement Pousson at Henrietta on the same day at around 13.30 hours.

It was observed that the water of the river at School Road near the Residence of the complainant was slightly turbid. An investigation was also carried out upstream of the river at Morcellement Seetaram and Morcellement Pousson. The water was clear and had no abnormalities.

I am further informed that four water samples were collected by the NEL for analysis as follows –

- near the residence of complaint at School Road, Morcellement Seetaram, and three samples upstream of the river at Morcellement Pousson. The samples were tested for –
- pH;
- dissolved oxygen;
- conductivity;
- total dissolved solids;
- temperature;
- turbidity;
- total suspended solids;
- alkalinity;
- sulphate;
- chloride;
- total organic carbon, and
- aluminium.

Mr Speaker, Sir, according to the NEL, the results of analysis showed that all water samples complied with the guidelines for inland surface water quality except for the sample which was collected next to the complainant's house at School Road for one parameter, namely total suspended solids. This perimeter was 25.8 mg per litre at that location while the prescribed limit is 10 mg per litre.

Further monitoring was conducted by the NEL on 06 and 07 July 2023. A previous four sampling sites at School Road, Morcellement Seetaram and Morcellement Pousson were monitored and additional sampling sites, namely Pont Ventard, Royal Road Henrietta, Camp Roche, and Holyrood were also included. The results of the analysis showed that the river water samples collected at all sites were compliant to the guidelines for inland surface water quality for all parameters including total suspended solids. There is no indication of any sewage spill in *rivière Rempart*.

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, M. le président. À la requête de plusieurs habitants de la région, il semblerait que sur une intervalle de 2 à 3 semaines, un liquide des eaux usées est déversé dans cette rivière. Alors, le ministre serait-il favorable à l'organisation d'un *site visit* en présence de tous les députés de Vacoas-Floréal ? Merci.

Mr Toussaint: *Amenn li Kavy ! Amenn li !*

Mr Ramano: M. le président, comme je l'ai mentionné, les contrôles sont faits d'une façon régulière, et pas plus loin que le 6 et le 7 juillet 2023, des *samples* ont été prélevés par le *National Environmental Laboratory*. Donc, s'il y a des plaintes, des doléances des membres du public sur place, bien sûr, les officiers se feront un plaisir et s'assureront aussi que les *samples* soient collectés pour être analysés.

Ms Anquetil: Qu'en est-il du *site visit* ?

Mr Ramano: Les *site visits* seront effectués par les officiers. Si l'honorable membre souhaite être présente, je passerai le message au *National Environmental Laboratory*.

Ms Anquetil: Merci.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell! You have a question!

OBESITY & HEART DISEASES - ONLINE HEALTH QUESTIONNAIRE

(No. B/1036) **Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes)** asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the obesity and heart diseases, he will state if an online health questionnaire has been devised by his Ministry to assess the prevalence thereof and, if so, indicate when the middle health checks will start.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Jagutpal!

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that no online health questionnaires have been devised by my Ministry to assess the prevalence of obesity and heart diseases.

The Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD), Health Promotion and Research Unit has been entrusted to organise surveys, activities pertaining to health check-ups.

The Ministry will stand guided by the WHO and international experts on the recommendation, if ever online surveys on obesity and heart diseases have to be conducted in the future.

Dr. Boolell: Can I impress upon the Minister to give serious thought to the setting up of online health questionnaires? Because this is the common practice which is being carried out in other countries now.

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, hon. Member, I will take it up with the international experts when they will come to Mauritius, if we can start preparing for online surveys.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Lobine: B/1037, please.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ganoo is not here. Next question!

SME GRANTS - ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA – 2020 TO JULY 2023

(No. B/1039) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives whether, in regard to the Small and Medium Enterprises, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the SME Mauritius Ltd., information as to the amount of grants advanced thereto for the past three years, indicating the eligibility criteria to benefit therefrom.

(Withdrawn)

NEW PRIVATE HEALTH INSTITUTIONS – APPLICATIONS – 2019 TO JULY 2023

(No. B/1040) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the setting up of new Private Health Institutions, he will state –

- (a) the number of applications received therefor since November 2019 to date, indicating name of the applicants, and
- (b) the number of applications rejected, if any, indicating the reasons therefor.

(Withdrawn)

**PETITE RIVIERE NOIRE – *FET LAMIZIK* CONCERT –
COPYRIGHT LICENCE**

(No. B/1041) 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.

Mr Teeluck: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Mauritius Society of Authors (MASA) that on 25 June 2023, there was one event at Petite Rivière Noire. In connection with this event, I am also apprised by MASA that on 29 June 2023, the District Council of Black River informed that the Village Council of Case Noyale had organised a music day on Sunday, 25 June 2023 at Petite Rivière Noire football ground.

In line with Part IV of the Copyright (Fees) Regulations 2020, the District Council of Black River falls under the category of District Councils and the fees applicable to it for the organisation of public performance is Rs30,000 excluding VAT and processing costs per financial year.

I am also informed by MASA that the applicable fees for the District Council of Black River was paid on 29 June 2023, a licence bearing Reference Number MASA/LIC/MDC/006 was issued to the Council for period 01 July 2022 to 30 June 2023. However, no surcharge was claimed for late payment. I am informed by MASA that the surcharge of 10% was duly paid on 07 July 2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, furthermore, the MASA has indicated that no individual application needs to be submitted by the Council for each and every event as such licence covers all activities over the whole financial year, extending from the 01 July to 30 June of the ensuing year.

Mr David: Puis-je demander au ministre si cette procédure qu’un Conseil de district soit organisateur d’un événement musical sans passer par l’obtention d’un permis de la MASA est une pratique courante ?

Mr Teeluck: Mr Speaker, Sir, firstly, I thank the hon. Member for putting this question because that has allowed us to look into some administrative mishaps at the level of MASA.

Usually, for certain councils, certain institutions, the Copyrights Regulations today provides that they can pay a one-off fee that covers an unlimited number of events or concerts or musical activities being organised over that financial year. This is the case for the District Council of Black River.

So, applying the regulation, there is a Rs30,000 fee that is payable for a financial year and during that financial year, they are authorised to organise musical activities or other similar events. But what we have noticed is that they did not pay. They have to pay in advance. All the users of work have to pay in advance, which the District Council did not. In case of late payment, there is a 10% surcharge that is applicable.

So, what the District Council has done, they have paid the copyright fees at the very near end of the financial year. Thereafter, the 10% surcharge was applied to them for late payment. But, on our side, the Ministry is investigating on other potential lacunas that may have happened in terms of charging other institutions which are liable for payment for a financial year.

Mr David: M. le président, je n'ose imaginer que c'est suite à la question parlementaire que j'ai envoyée que le Conseil de district de Rivière Noire ait été courir pour régulariser la situation. Pour autant, puis-je demander au ministre la date à laquelle la police a été informée par écrit de la tenue de ce concert ?

Mr Teeluck: Mr Speaker, Sir, this information, unfortunately, would not be communicated to the Ministry. So, we will have to redirect the request to the concerned authorities.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

CASINOS DE MAURICE - PROPOSED PRIVATISATION

(No. B/1042) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the proposed privatisation of the Casinos de Maurice, he will for the benefit of the House obtain from the State Investment Corporation, information as to where matters stand, indicating in each case the –

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

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

(Withdrawn)

HIGH-LEVEL SPORTS ASSISTANCE SCHEME – BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/1043) 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.

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, Sir, the High-Level Sports Assistance Scheme is designed to provide support to elite athletes to achieve their full potential in their respective sports disciplines.

Government aims to create a conducive environment for elite athletes to thrive, enabling them to reach new heights of excellence and proudly represent the Republic of Mauritius on the world stage.

With your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am tabling the list of high-level athletes benefitting from the Scheme and the monthly quantum thereof.

Ms Tour: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister state if he is considering any action to increase the allowances given to athletes?

Mr Toussaint: Oui, M. le président, avec les deux dernières années de Covid et avec une réduction dans le budget du ministère, donc nous avons diminué l'allocation qu'on donnait aux athlètes, et je dois encore une fois remercier les athlètes qui ont compris et qui ont fait un sacrifice durant ces deux dernières années de Covid vu le budget qui avait été ramené à la baisse. Dans le budget 2023-2024, *yes, it has been announced that we are reinstating the monthly allowance to some 110 high-level athletes to pre-pandemic levels* et il y aura aussi *additionally a 15% increase on their allowances.*

Ms Tour: Can the hon. Minister advise whether he can consider the allocation to be awarded to people practicing the sports in team? Because at the moment, the allowances are only going towards those practicing sports *en individuel.*

Mr Toussaint: *Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. C'est un fait que pour le moment le High-Level Sports Scheme s'applique seulement au sport en individuel. Très bonne suggestion de la part de l'honorable membre. Je demanderai à mes techniciens de trouver une formule pour pouvoir essayer d'inclure les athlètes qui pratiquent un sport d'équipe tel que le foot, le handball, etc.*

Mr Speaker: MP Lobine, I call your question?

Mr Lobine: Yes.

PALESTINE – ATTACKS – MAURITIUS' STAND

(No. B/1037) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the recent and continued attacks by Israeli forces on the region of Jenin on the Palestinian territory, and repeated attacks on other regions of Palestine, he will state the stand of Mauritius in relation thereto.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I tender my deepest apologies to you, to the hon. Member and to the House. These days I walk at a slower pace, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Members of the House would recall that on 03 July 2023, Israel unleashed a major raid on Jenin Refugee Camp in the Israeli Occupied West Bank. The Israeli Air Strikes on the densely populated Camp caused the destruction of homes, roads, water and electricity networks. These attacks were the fiercest in the West Bank since the destruction of the Jenin Camp in 2002. They have reportedly led to the death of 12 Palestinians, including 3 children and at least 120 were wounded. One Israeli soldier was also killed in the military operation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Government of Mauritius unreservedly condemns such acts of violence. Mauritius has consistently reiterated its support to the two-State solutions with Israel and Palestine existing side by side and has called for renewed international efforts in accordance with all the relevant United Nations Resolutions.

In line with the NAM position, Mauritius encourages both parties to find a two state solution to the conflict based on relevant UN Resolutions and International Laws which envisage the establishment of an independent, viable and prosperous Palestinian State within secured and recognized borders living in peace alongside to the State of Israel.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius sincerely hopes that the realisation by the Palestinian people of their right to self-determination and to the independence of the State of Palestine will allow for the stability, prosperity and development of the country and in the wider Middle-East.

It is to be recalled that on 07 April 2023, the Government of Mauritius issued a communiqué reinstating our long standing position on the Israeli-Palestine conflict. Thank you.

Mr Lobine: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister, in view of the continued attacks on civilians in Palestine, is it not high time for the Government of Mauritius to take a strong stand and to consider freezing diplomatic ties with Israel as it has been the case in the past in 1976 and 2009? It was the case whereby the Mauritian Government went on to sever all diplomatic ties with Israel. Is it not high time to send a strong message to the State of Israel?

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, since 2015, there have been around 137 resolutions adopted by the entire UN System, that is, the General Assembly and other specialised agency of the UN in relation to the question of Palestine and condemning Israel for its action against the Palestinian people, their property and their ancestral territory.

Mauritius has consistently voted in favour of all the set Resolutions in all the UN gatherings, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is the testimony if there was need of one of our consistent foreign policy on the question of Palestine. We have always supported all the efforts of a just solution to be found on the Middle-East issue.

Furthermore, Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member, I am sure, is aware following the adoption of a United Nation General Assembly Resolution December last year, the ICJ has been seized of a request for an Advisory Opinion on the Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory including East Jerusalem.

I must inform the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, that Mauritius together with 86 other UN Member States voted in favour of the Resolution requesting the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice. The Resolution was passed by the UN General Assembly by a recorded vote of 87 in favour, 26 against and 53 abstentions.

To add, furthermore, Mr Speaker, Sir, recently that is a few weeks ago, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which has a long standing position supportive of the legitimate cause of

Palestine and the Palestine people, met and the NAM has consistently reaffirmed its support for the just cause of Palestine.

A NAM Palestine Committee was established as one of the working groups in this organisation. It was formed to strengthen the NAM Support for Palestinian independence and the last meeting took place in Azerbaijan during the meeting of the coordinating bureau from the 05 to 06 July and our country was proudly represented, Mr Speaker, Sir, at the meeting by our Ambassador, His Excellency Ambassador Koonjul, permanent representative of Mauritius to the United Nations in New York.

All these, Mr Speaker, Sir, point to the direction that we have been coherent and consistent in our positions toward the defence of Palestine. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs B/1052 and B/1060 have been withdrawn. Next turn!

OUT-OF-COMPETITION ANTI-DOPING TESTS

(No. B/1044) 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 –

- (a) 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;
- (b) number thereof already effected to date, if any, giving the results thereof, and
- (c) budget allocated therefor.

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to inform the House that 12 out-of-competition anti-doping tests have been scheduled, starting from now, prior to the participation of Mauritian athletes to the Indian Ocean Islands Games in Madagascar. There is no indication yet regarding the list of sports disciplines and the athletes concerned gender-wise.

I must point out, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the list of athletes selected for testing is confidential in accordance with the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) Code 2015. This measure is implemented to safeguard the integrity of the athletes.

Regarding part (b) of the question, I would like to inform the House that a total of 83 anti-doping tests were conducted from June 2022 to June 2023. Among these, 30 tests were conducted out-of-competition, while 53 tests were carried out during competitions. All results are negative.

As for part (c) of the question, the budget allocated for anti-doping matters for the current financial year, that is, 2023/2024, amounts to Rs700,000. Thank you.

Mr Quirin: Donc. M. le président, la section 7(1) du *Sports Act* 2016 stipule que –

“A National Sports Federation shall arrange for appropriate regular doping control on its licensees...”

Après avoir écouté la réponse du ministre, on peut déduire que la liste des disciplines et leurs athlètes engagés dans les prochains Jeux des Iles à Madagascar et qui devront effectuer des contrôles antidopage n’a pas été effectuée à ce jour, et d’après mes informations, il y a eu un contrôle sur les haltérophiles qui a eu lieu ...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member!

Mr Quirin: Yes.

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr Quirin: Yes, I am coming to my question.

Mr Speaker: Your foundation is a bit too long.

Mr Quirin: Est-ce que l’honorable ministre est au courant que lors d’un contrôle antidopage hors compétition qui a eu lieu vendredi dernier en ce qui concerne les haltérophiles, un des haltérophiles sélectionnés a quitté les lieux, c’est-à-dire le camp d’entraînement avant même de se faire tester? L’honorable ministre est-il au courant de cet état de choses ?

Mr Speaker: So, that’s it.

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, de deux choses, la liste des disciplines et des athlètes ne peut pas être publiée. Justement, sinon l’athlète va se sauver ou il va prendre des précautions. C’est pour cela que lorsque j’ai dit *“There is no indication yet regarding the list of sports disciplines and the athletes concerned.”*, cela ne veut pas dire qu’il n’y a pas de liste. Cela veut dire que la liste ne peut pas être rendue publique. C’est une stratégie.

Deuxièmement, je demanderai à l'honorable membre de bien vouloir vérifier ses informations puisque ce qu'il est en train de dire n'est pas correct. J'ai reçu la même lettre anonyme cher ami, et je peux vous dire qu'il n'en est pas question. Il n'y a jamais eu de tests prévus pour vendredi et donc s'il n'y a pas eu de tests pour vendredi, il n'y a pas eu d'athlète qui s'est sauvé.

Mr Speaker: Next question! Is that hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy? So, you are not following your question?

Mrs Luchmun Roy: I have already withdrawn. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: You have withdrawn?

MAURITIUS ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ASSISTANCE SERVICE – LAUNCHING DETAILS

(No. B/1046) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the launching of the Mauritius Artificial Intelligence Assistance Service under the Artificial Intelligence Generative chat bots, he will state –

- (a) the cost incurred therefor;
- (b) the safeguards provided to the users thereof for the protection of their personal data, and
- (c) where the Service is hosted.

(Withdrawn)

CEB FIBERNET CO. LTD – BOARD

(No. B/1047) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to CEB Fibernet Co Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the names of the –

- (a) General Manager, and
- (b) members of the Board of Directors thereof.

(Withdrawn)

SOCIÉTÉ VALLÉE DE STE CROIX – RESIDENTIAL MORCELLEMENT

(No. B/1048) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the project for the residential morcellement at Société Vallée de Ste Croix, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to where matters stand, indicating –

- (a) if there was any tampering of natural drainage path thereat, and
- (b) the number of Building and Land Use Permits granted therefor.

(Withdrawn)

Mr Speaker: So, let me suspend the Sitting for 30 minutes.

Mr Juman: *B enkor ena letan la.*

At 5.02 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.47 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please be seated! Hon. Members, we have a few minutes left. So, I call the question of MP Juman!

8,000 HOUSING UNITS – SITES & CONTRACT VALUE

(No. B/1049) 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 8000 housing units, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the New Social Living Development Ltd., information as to the number of sites where contracts have already been allocated therefor, indicating in each case –

- (a) the contract value, and
- (b) the terms and conditions thereof.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the New Social Living Development, NSLD Ltd, that as at date contracts have been awarded in respect of 32 sites.

In regard to part (a) requesting the contract value for each and every site, the information has, of course, to be compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

As regards part (b), I am given to understand by the NSLD that the terms and conditions of the contracts are based on the general conditions as laid in the conditions of contract for plant and design built by the FIDIC, *Fédération Internationale des Ingénieurs-Conseils*.

I am, with your permission, tabling the general conditions of contract as spelt out by FIDIC. However, should the hon. Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East require any specific information having regard to the terms and conditions of the contract attached to any particular NSLD site over and above the FIDIC contract, I shall endeavour to provide same.

Mr Juman: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Hon. Deputy Prime Minister, can I know the number of contracts not awarded but signed by both parties?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I would not know what the difference is. I understand that 32 contracts have been awarded and, therefore, there are 32 valid contracts.

Mr Juman: How many sites?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I have explained time and time again, both in this House and in public, repeatedly, to the very many questions asked by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, by the experts of NHDC, NSLD, batters of the Opposition and others that there are 39 sites selected for the first phase, that is, 8,000 houses and we have contracts awarded in respect of 32, and I hope very soon for all 39.

Mr Juman: Yes, thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Hon. Deputy Prime Minister, for the remaining seven sites, can we know the reason why it has not been signed yet?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, it does not arise from the question, but I will try to answer. Again, this has been explained many times. Last week, the hon. Member referred to one contract where we backed out. Now, that accounts for three sites. So, obviously for those three sites, we have to start afresh, going through the procurement procedures as quickly as possible to award these three sites to new contractors.

I know there are two sites in the Flacq region where there were some delays for whatever reason, Quatre Cocos and another site; that would add up to five. In the South West, we had no site until recently. We have just identified a site at Surinam and as requested by hon. Bodha on the last occasion, before a site is finally decided upon, we need to carry out geotechnical

investigations. That brings us to six and there are two other sites of which I cannot remember right now for which there are some delays, and as soon as possible, we are trying our utmost to have all these contracts awarded so we can move forward.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bodha!

Mr Bodha: Same question. May I ask the Deputy Prime Minister whether there is one company, which wanted to subcontract the project with an Indian company, has just backed out?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I am not aware. The only one of the – I believe it was 14 – contractors that were enlisted for the project, as far as I know, only one has backed out as yet.

Mr Speaker: Is it okay? So, 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.)

MOTIONS – S.O. 17(3) & S.O. 29(1)

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the decision of hon. Dr. Aumeer to maintain the words which he had uttered to the address of hon. Dr. the Minister of Health and Wellness, which you had ruled to be objectionable, and his refusal to withdraw the said words and to tender apologies to the House, and thereafter your decision to leave the matter in the hands House for any action you deemed appropriate, I now beg under Standing Order 17(3) to take the time of the House for urgent business.

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

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

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of your ruling earlier today, I beg to move that the Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East, hon. Dr. Aumeer be suspended from the service of the Assembly for today's Sitting and the next three Sittings unless unreserved apologies are tendered to the House.

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

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (No. XI of 2023) was read a first time.

Second Reading

THE STATUS OF THE ARTIST BILL

(NO. VII OF 2023)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Status of the Artist Bill (No. VII of 2023).

Question again proposed.

(5.55 p.m.)

Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River): Merci, M. le président. Avec votre permission, M. le président, permettez-moi de répondre à mon cher collègue, l'honorable Dr. Boolell, qui a donné le coup d'envoi au débats sur le *Status of the Artist Bill* lors de la dernière séance parlementaire où il a cité d'ailleurs, je l'en remercie, la fameuse

chanson qu'il considère comme *a big hit*, *Kayambo Kayambo*. Merci, honorable Dr. Boolell d'avoir fait mention de cela, ce qui me permet de faire un clin d'œil à l'auteur même de cette chanson, M. Marcel Poinen. L'honorable Dr. Boolell, un petit plus loin dans son intervention, cite ceci –

“I would not be surprised if her ascent in politics is due to her artistic skills. Unfortunately, she is in the wrong political party (...)”

M. le président, pour l'honorable Dr. Boolell, être dans le *wrong political party*, ce même *political party* qui a fait passer la pension de vieillesse de R 3,625 en 2010 à R 11 000 et R 12 000 actuellement aux personnes de 60-65 ans ! C'est cela que l'honorable Dr. Boolell appelle un *wrong political party* ? Le salaire des femmes qui occupaient le poste de *cleaners* à l'époque où à leur temps de gloire était de R 1500. Aujourd'hui, ces mêmes techniciennes de service touchent un salaire R 15,000, c'est cela *the wrong political party* ? L'éducation gratuite du préprimaire à l'université, est-ce cela même que notre cher collègue l'honorable Dr. Boolell appelle *the wrong political party* ?

Dr. Boolell: Where is the status of the artists?

Mrs Mayotte: M. le président, nous ne partageons peut-être pas les mêmes valeurs.

M. le président, de ce côté de la Chambre, notre Premier ministre s'enquiert de l'état de santé du leader du Parti travailliste, et tout récemment, du leader du MMM en envoyant même un message de souhait, de vœux de prompt rétablissement. Et de l'autre côté de la Chambre, M. le président, on accueille l'honorable Alan Ganoo après une longue période de convalescence de maladie de '*chatwa MSM*.' On insulte le ministre de la Santé, à qui d'ailleurs je présente mes plus sincères condoléances, de (*Objectionable words expunged following a resolution of the House at the Sitting of Friday 21.07.23*). Voilà pourquoi, M. le président, je suis de ce côté de la Chambre ! Pendant que *Kayambo Kayambo mare la pe monte* de ce côté de la Chambre, M. le président, de l'autre côté *lamer pe sek* !

M. le président, permettez-moi de revenir à mon discours et de féliciter notre Premier ministre, l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth, car c'est sous son mandat que le *Status of the Artist Bill* voit enfin le jour. Aujourd'hui, je suis une parlementaire, mais je suis aussi une artiste et je le serai toute ma vie. Une artiste élue de ce gouvernement, qui compte plus de vingt ans de carrière

dans le monde musical. Ayant été témoin de la souffrance des artistes, c'est en tant que telle, M. le président, que je vais intervenir aujourd'hui dans le cadre des débats sur ce projet de loi tant attendu par la communauté des artistes.

M. le président, j'ai toujours été fière, dans l'exercice de mes fonctions, de promouvoir les artistes, de faire partie de leur univers, de connaître leur réalité. J'ai été témoin de leur cri de détresse, j'ai pris part à ce combat qui était le nôtre contre le piratage, ayant moi-même été victime de piratage. J'ai participé aux fréquentes manifestations pacifiques, aux multiples conférences de presse, et nombreuses ont été nos expressions artistiques pour lancer des signaux d'alerte sur notre vécu, sur ce manque de considération de la part des autorités au pouvoir pendant toutes ces années. Je me souviens de ce chant de ralliement intitulé "*Pa Pietinn Nou Talan*" que nous avons enregistré en studio et qui a été diffusé en boucle sur toutes les radios afin de conscientiser et l'opinion publique et les autorités d'alors sur les conditions dans lesquelles nous évoluons pour divertir le public.

Aujourd'hui, M. le président, l'occasion m'est également donné pour souligner - d'ailleurs, je reconnais que je ne le fais pas souvent, je ne le fais pas assez - à quel point le Premier ministre a à cœur le développement et l'épanouissement de l'art à Maurice. Et c'est non sans fierté aussi que je rappelle qu'il a fait appel à moi, une artiste, pour faire partie de son gouvernement. Rien que pour cela, je remercie le Premier ministre.

Je me dois aussi de remercier mon collègue, le ministre des Arts et du Patrimoine culturel, l'honorable Avinash Teeluck, dont le nom entrera dans l'histoire comme ayant été celui qui a introduit ce projet de loi, qui vise à professionnaliser le domaine de l'art au sein de la République de Maurice.

D'emblée, je dirais qu'un tel encadrement professionnel était « *long overdue* ». Et tout le mérite revient au ministre des Arts et du Patrimoine culturel, qui a compris que les artistes méritaient d'être mieux considérés. M. le président, comme dit l'adage - « la critique est aisée mais l'art est difficile ». Je pense là, que les membres de l'opposition devraient avoir un peu de retenue au cours de ce débat, car ils ne sont pas ceux qui ont pensé, à leur temps de gloire, à soulager nos artistes et à leur donner un semblant de dignité. Venir critiquer aujourd'hui serait certes indécent de leur part, car ce qu'ils ont fait pour les artistes, et pour reprendre l'expression fétiche du leader de l'opposition, « c'est trop peu et c'est trop tard ».

Comment oublier ce temps où les artistes travaillaient dans le circuit hôtelier, devaient se déshabiller dans les toilettes, parce que rien n'avait été prévu pour qu'ils puissent se changer en toute intimité ? Ce temps n'est heureusement plus, mais il est malheureux que les artistes aient toujours été traités comme des « moins que rien », voire carrément comme des produits récréatifs.

M. le président, la culture nourrit les capacités et les valeurs humaines et est donc un ressort fondamental du développement durable des communautés, des peuples et des nations. Pour plusieurs pays, la culture est considérée comme le quatrième pilier du développement durable aux côtés de l'économie, du social et de l'environnement. La culture est porteuse de sens, d'identité et d'ouverture pour les citoyens. La culture joue aussi un rôle capital dans le développement local. C'est une source de revenus liés au tourisme, ainsi qu'un levier de créativité pour la production de biens et des services. Imaginez, M. le président, un hôtel sans animation musicale, sans exposition d'œuvres d'art, sans expo-vente de produits artisanaux, sans l'art culinaire; nous l'appellerions un dortoir.

Dans beaucoup de pays, surtout les pays développés ou en voie de développement, la contribution de l'art et la culture à l'emploi peut aller jusqu'à 15%. C'est donc un puissant levier d'intégration sociale pour des communautés ou des régions en difficulté, contribuant, à ce titre, à rendre durable le développement.

M. le président, dans l'activité de l'artiste, la valorisation économique prend une importance croissante aujourd'hui. L'artiste en lui-même doit gérer des compétences variées, passer des contrats, protéger ses droits, animer des relations et des réseaux afin d'atteindre ses objectifs artistiques.

Les artistes sont aussi confrontés aux conditions du marché mondialisé et numérisé, avec ce qu'il représente en termes d'opportunités (médiatisation, accès aux marchés) et aussi aux menaces telles que le piratage et les copies, et ils sont souvent plongés dans un environnement hyperconcurrentiel en perpétuel mouvement.

Prenons par exemple ce que nous dit l'Union européenne sur l'art et la culture : Dans l'opinion publique, l'Union européenne est considérée comme une entité politique et économique, mais le sentiment qu'une société commune a été créée semble se perdre. Nous sommes convaincus que les arts et la culture peuvent combler cette lacune; c'est ce que dit

l'Union européenne. Ils sont au cœur même du développement de toute civilisation. Ils sont d'une importance capitale pour notre identité et donnent un sens à l'existence humaine et sont le reflet de notre histoire commune.

Malheureusement, M. le président, dans notre petite île Maurice post indépendante, l'art n'a jamais eu la place qu'il méritait. Pourquoi? Pour de nombreuses raisons. À cause peut être d'une certaine mentalité.

Prenons par exemple Alphonse Ravaton, Ti Frer qui animait les soirées dans les chassées et qui était récompensé par un morceau de viande et une bouteille de vin. Pourquoi? Pourquoi est-ce qu'il n'était pas rémunéré? Personne n'y a jamais pensé peut être. En effet, il est un effet courant, M. le président, qu'on fasse appel à un artiste, pour des prestations publiques et privées et qu'il ne soit payé que « *dipin diber* », pour reprendre une expression créole.

Et qui ne sait pas aussi combien d'artistes sont morts dans la misère, faute de soutien. Je ne citerai pas de noms, pour ne pas remuer le couteau dans la plaie. Mais il y a eu des artistes, M. le président, qui nous ont quittés dans la misère malgré leur contribution énorme dans la promotion touristique, dans la promotion artistique et folklorique de Maurice. Leur enterrement a été fait grâce à l'assistance publique, grâce à l'aide de leurs collègues ou de leur producteur. Nous devons apprendre de ce triste précédent, M. le président. Et faire en sorte que l'artiste soit reconnu pour ce qu'il crée, pour sa contribution, pour son dur labeur. Car il n'est pas donné à tout le monde de créer, de composer.

Tout cela pour dire, M. le président, que l'heure du *bat bate* et de l'à-peu-près est dépassée. Dans ce monde connecté technologiquement, l'artiste se doit de vivre avec son temps. Mais sans le soutien des autorités et sans un cadre professionnel, il lui serait difficile de survivre.

M. le président, la cote des artistes est l'indice qui mesure leur renommée et permet d'estimer la valeur de leurs œuvres. Elle est déterminée par les résultats officiels des ventes des œuvres de l'artiste. La cote d'un artiste est liée à l'appétence du public pour son œuvre. C'est incontournable dans le monde de l'art: un bon artiste est un artiste coté. Un bon artiste se doit ensuite d'avoir une bonne cote, deuxième commandement. La cote est le summum de la reconnaissance artistique. Et, pour être coté, il faut être connu et reconnu. Par la force des choses, la notoriété d'un artiste devient souvent le seul critère permettant de reconnaître la

qualité de son œuvre. Autrefois, par exemple, les artistes musicaux avaient comme repère le *Festival Kreol*. C'était le seul gros événement annuel où ils pouvaient se produire.

Pour un artiste, il faut donc se trouver au bon endroit, au bon moment, avec la bonne personnalité, et une œuvre qui réponde au goût du public. Beaucoup d'appelés, peu d'élus : bien des artistes n'ont pas l'opportunité de croiser le chemin de ceux qui arbitrent le marché de l'art ou d'être remarqués par eux. Par exemple, les artistes précurseurs, M. le président, ils représentent souvent des risques importants pour les investisseurs. Prenons par exemple, Cézanne ou Van Gogh, en avance sur leur temps, ils ont ainsi vu leur travail incompris et même dénigré. Ce n'est qu'à la fin de leur vie ou bien après leur mort que leurs œuvres ont attiré l'œil des amateurs d'art et que leur cote s'est envolée.

M. le président, la culture évolue au rythme des changements de la société qui la voit fleurir. Or, au cours des dernières années, la culture s'est internationalisée sur le plan des influences aussi bien que des marchés, qui s'est répercutée sur les activités culturelles d'ici et d'ailleurs.

Dans le secteur de la musique, l'ouverture du marché international a contribué à une explosion des genres musicaux et à de nouveaux métissages qui repoussent les limites de la créativité. La musique d'ici trouve ainsi, plus souvent qu'avant, sa place au-delà de nos frontières. Prenons par exemple, Denis Azor et son tube de l'été '*Ala Li La*' en France en 1990 ou encore Alain Ramanisum et son fameux '*Li Tourner*' Disque d'or sur NRJ France et qui est diffusé fréquemment dans des émissions de télé-réalité française.

M. le président, j'ai là une liste exhaustive d'artistes mauriciens qui ont brillé sur les scènes internationales et qui se sont produits régulièrement à l'étranger.

Pour ne citer que quelques-uns, à commencer par Cassiya, dans les années 90-2000. Ce groupe composé alors de Desiré François, Gérard Louis, Alain Ramanisum, Alain Lafleur et Bruno François avait le même accueil que Beyoncé ou Céline Dion à l'Olympia où au Zénith et partout en Europe et dans l'océan Indien, créant l'hystérie de leurs fans. L'exemple aussi de Stephen Bongarçon, grand vainqueur des Jeux de la Francophonie, Anna Patten et Sanedhip Bhimjee, Jean Renat Anamah, Patrick Atow, Véronique Zuel, Claudio Veeraragoo, les Otentik Street Brothers, Blakkayo, Jean Claude Gaspard, Roger Clency, Marie Josée Clency, et j'en passe ; la liste est beaucoup plus longue que cela, M. le président.

Mais M. le président, quelle considération ont-ils eu des gouvernements en place? Rien! Savez-vous, M. le président, que quand un artiste étranger vient se produire à Maurice, son manager négocie le prix de son cachet, l'hôtel qui doit être au moins un 3 à 5 étoiles, l'heure de sa rencontre avec la presse, ce qu'il va manger, ce qu'il va boire, le nombre d'interviews qu'il va donner et *last but not least*, son billet d'avion en première ou en business aller-retour déjà confirmé ? Tout cela écrit noir sur blanc sur le contrat qui le lie à l'organisateur de ces concerts. Un tel encadrement n'a jamais eu cours pour la plupart des artistes mauriciens, M. le président, sauf exception bien sûr. Je ne vous apprends rien en vous rappelant le cas de deux artistes mauriciens, arrêtés à leur descente d'avion à l'aéroport d'Heathrow, parce que l'organisateur qui les fit venir en Angleterre ne s'était même pas assuré qu'ils aient un permis de travail en bonne et due forme.

M. le président, avec le *Status of the Artist Bill*, le gouvernement veut démontrer sa volonté de changer la donne, de faire en sorte que les artistes ne soient plus considérés seulement comme des produits de consommation, de récréation et de loisirs. L'heure est enfin arrivée de donner le statut qu'il mérite aux artistes – le statut de professionnel. Et au travers du *Professional in the Arts Council*, nous entrons plus que jamais dans l'ère de la professionnalisation de l'art à Maurice. Chaque artiste sera catégorisé en fonction de son art. Il est aussi prévu une allocation et une pension de la part de l'État, sur le modèle de ce que reçoivent des intermittents du spectacle, comme en France d'ailleurs. Toutes ces mesures montrent que le gouvernement se soucie du sort des artistes.

M. le président, l'objectif principal de ce projet de loi est de se pencher sur la création d'un Conseil des professionnels des arts dont les fonctions seront –

- (a) de catégoriser les personnes engagées en tant qu'artistes professionnels. Il concernera également les professionnels techniques et professionnels intermittents dans les arts, et tous ces acteurs professionnels de l'industrie des arts seront reconnus officiellement en tant que professionnels des arts;

Pourquoi un tel projet de loi, M. le président ? Pour –

- (b) promouvoir le statut des professionnels des arts;
- (c) rehausser le statut social et économique des professionnels des arts;

- (d) mettre en œuvre le régime d'allocation de reconnaissance de l'État et le régime de retraite des professionnels des arts;

Déjà dans ce projet de loi, appeler les artistes 'professionnels des arts' veut tout dire. Nous les avons déjà professionnalisés. Nous n'allons plus les appeler *artistes, santere sega, misicien* ; non, ce sont des professionnels des arts.

- (e) améliorer l'accès à la profession et au perfectionnement des compétences des professionnels des arts, et
- (f) développer et promouvoir la commercialisation des produits et services artistiques à l'échelle nationale et internationale.

Cependant, s'il faut féliciter le ministre de la Culture, M. le président, permettez-moi de porter dans cette auguste Assemblée la voix de certains artistes. J'ai rencontré quelques-uns et aujourd'hui, il est de mon devoir de faire part de ces craintes partagées dans le milieu artistique et je suis persuadée - d'ailleurs, je l'ai entendu l'autre jour, au cours de son discours, le ministre des Arts et du Patrimoine culturel rassurer la communauté des artistes sur ce projet de loi. Je sais que le ministre saura rassurer la communauté des artistes avec quelques amendements qu'il va apporter, bien sûr.

D'abord, M. le président, sachez que la plupart des artistes mauriciens saluent la volonté du gouvernement de relever ces défis par le biais d'une législation sur le statut de l'artiste. Par contre, s'ils souhaiteraient avoir plus de précision sur les conditions dans lesquelles un artiste serait qualifié de 'professionnel de l'art', travailleur atypique ou de prestataire de services.

Le paragraphe 21 sur les contrats de services rend obligatoire les contrats écrits mentionnant explicitement la durée et les modalités de paiement. Pour certains artistes, M. le président, c'est un progress, mais pour d'autres, ils souhaitent comprendre quelles seront les mesures mises en place pour assurer une protection adéquate, comme par exemple la négociation collective, que ce soit au niveau de l'entreprise ou au niveau sectoriel.

Je demanderai donc humblement au ministre de tenir compte des craintes, des doutes et des questionnements de la communauté des artistes et de leur montrer que ce projet de loi ne vise pas à les étouffer, mais au contraire, à leur donner encore plus d'ailes pour prendre leur essor artistique.

Des questions aussi sur le terme ‘artistes’ qui vivent de leur art, M. le président. Or, comme nous le savons, la majorité de nos artistes mauriciens ne vivent malheureusement pas de leur art. Il est dommage de voir certains artistes briller sur la scène le soir sous le feu des projecteurs dans tout ce strass et paillettes, mais malheureusement retomber dans la dure réalité le lendemain en enfilant leur *overall* pour aller travailler dans les champs ou bien sur le terrain, car du temps où moi j’étais artiste, M. le président, je travaillais aussi dans un milieu professionnel comme animatrice de radio et télévision pour pouvoir joindre les deux bouts. S’il est vrai, M. le président, qu’il y a des musiciens qui vivent de leur métier, même ceux travaillant à l’hôtel ont un autre emploi à plein temps, par manque d’un contrat en bonne et due forme. C’est ce qu’ils attendent, ceux qui travaillent à l’hôtel, pas de sécurité d’emploi du moins pour le moment.

Et si on pense aux artistes peintres, là encore, très peu d’entre eux arrivent à vivre de leur art, car il faut aussi vendre des tableaux. Je n’oublie pas nos écrivains locaux, où là également beaucoup d’entre eux doivent faire un autre travail pour subvenir à leurs besoins car le Mauricien a tendance à boudier les créations locales ; un préjugé qui a longtemps handicapé le secteur de l’art malheureusement à Maurice.

Je demanderai donc au ministre des Arts et du Patrimoine culturel de se pencher sur ce terme ‘artistes’ qui vivent de leur art, afin que personne ne soit pénalisé. Ce serait aller à l’encontre de tout ce qui est positif dans ce projet de loi. De même, il faudrait souhaiter que ceux qui dirigeront ce *Professional in the Art Council* aient des notions culturelles et artistiques aiguës, voire que le nommé et les membres du conseil d’administration connaissent ce milieu et ses enjeux. Déjà, avant même que le *Status of Artist Bill* soit voté au Parlement, il y a eu beaucoup de spéculations et malheureusement un manque de solidarité de la part de certains artistes et politiciens. Vous savez, M. le président, le ministre a la lourde tâche aujourd’hui de choisir qui va représenter les artistes au sein de ce Conseil, et nous savons très bien qu’au sein de la communauté des artistes, soyons francs, souvent sonnent des notes de désaccord. Alors, si le ministre lui-même va choisir X, Y ou Z pour siéger sur ce Conseil, nous avons tous qu’il y aura aussi d’autres artistes qui vont dire *kifer li, kifer pa mwa ; kifer sanelala, kifer pa lotla* ? Alors, il faut que les artistes aussi soient solidaires, il faut qu’ils tombent d’accord sur cette partie du projet de loi.

Je ne doute pas que le ministre des Arts et du Patrimoine culturel tiendra compte de ces craintes et il fera la part des choses. L'art est le moteur de toute société et ce sont les artistes qui donnent son âme à un pays. Que ce projet de loi soit la preuve que ce gouvernement reconnaît le talent de nos artistes.

N'oublions jamais que leur contribution pour placer l'île Maurice sur la carte mondiale est énorme, que grâce à leur sacrifice, ils ont participé à la construction de notre industrie touristique, musicale, et au folklore national. La sueur de leur front, leurs coups de pinceau, de plume ou autre ont jeté les jalons pour une île Maurice pluriculturelle et tellement riche et belle.

Je conclurai mon intervention en rendant aujourd'hui hommage à Vaco Baissac, Gerard Bacorilal, Carino, Sylvio Ravina, Tristan Breville, Feeroz Ganthy, Meera Mohun, Serge Lebrasse, Roger Clency, Joseph Reginald Topiz, Berger Agathe, Michel Ballet, Gassen Singaron, Sona Noyan, Ras Mayul, Marclen Antoine, Georgie Joe, Sanedhip Bhimjee, Norbert Plannel, Ino Nakeed, Alain Permal, Roger Charroux et à tous les artistes qui ont peint, chanté et embelli le paysage artistique de notre belle île Maurice et qui brillent aujourd'hui au firmament des artistes.

Comme le dit si bien Victor Hugo, M. le président, que je cite –

“L'art, c'est la création propre à l'homme. L'art est le produit nécessaire et fatal [d'une intelligence] limitée, comme la nature est le produit nécessaire et fatal d'une intelligence finie. L'art est à l'homme ce que la nature est à Dieu.”

J'en ai terminé. Merci, M. le président.

(6.19 p.m.)

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval): M. le président, j'ai écouté avec intérêt ce qu'a dit l'honorable Mayotte avant moi. Elle paraît extrêmement satisfaite de ce projet de loi. Elle n'a pas été capable de nous expliquer ce dont relevait le *State Recognition Allowance* ni le *Pension Allowance*. Pourtant elle est très contente.

Je vais expliquer tout à l'heure. Peut-être qu'elle n'a pas bien vu et n'a pas bien compris le problème qu'il y a dans ces deux schémas proposés par le ministre. Avant de commencer, M. le président, je voudrais dire que la présentation de ce projet de loi a un contexte très incongru. Un projet de loi présenté par le ministre des Arts et du Patrimoine culturel dans le même moment

que quatre centres culturels mauriciens se voient priver de leurs terrains qu'ils ont eus pendant 13 ans, qu'on les met dehors à cause de leurs projets galimatias, et qu'on leur dit de débarrasser le plancher dans les 48 heures ! Dans les 48 heures ! *Vit vit koumadir squatter ! Pir ki squatter !*

Ce sont des communautés vénérables, M. le président, des centres culturels vénérables. Ce ne sont pas des voyous ! C'est quoi ? Des centres culturels tamouls, *l'Indo Mauritian Catholic Association*, le *Hindi Cultural Centre*, *Hindi Speaking Union*, *Muslim Cultural Centre*, quelque chose comme ça. Ce sont des centres vénérables qui voient leurs projets traités de galimatias. Et voilà, ici au Parlement, on vient promouvoir supposément la culture et en même temps, on déloge des centres culturels.

Je viens maintenant au projet de loi. Bon, félicitations au ministre ! Cela fait quatre ans que l'on a attendu un projet de loi ! Depuis quatre ans, on n'a pas eu de projet de loi ! C'est le premier projet de loi que M. le ministre nous présente depuis quatre ans ! C'est triste, parce que je vais rejoindre ce que mon prédécesseur a parlé et a dit : l'art, c'est très important. La culture est extrêmement importante. Comment va-t-on définir la culture ? En anglais, ce que l'on peut dire - j'ai vérifié dans le dictionnaire – *culture*, c'est quoi ?

“The art and other manifestations of human intellectual development regarded collectively.”

En français, M. le président, la culture, c'est l'ensemble des connaissances, des savoir-faire, des traditions, des coutumes propres à un groupe humain. Voilà de quoi l'on parle aujourd'hui, et je suis triste de voir qu'il y a une apathie générale. J'ai parlé à plusieurs artistes et ils ne savent même pas que cette loi sera présentée et est discutée en ce moment au Parlement.

Ce que l'on peut dire, c'est que le corps humain, si l'on veut, c'est le *hardware* et le *software*, c'est la culture. Très, très important. Voilà de quoi l'on en parle aujourd'hui. Pourquoi j'ai voulu parler aussi dessus, quoique je ne sois pas un grand expert dans le sujet, mais l'importance des artistes, M. le président, ne peut pas être sous-estimé. Les artistes, je veux dire dans le plus grand sens du terme, importants pour le développement de la société mauricienne elle-même. Comment vit-on ? Notre qualité de vie, le social, les loisirs. Comment on inter-change avec nos voisins, avec nos proches ? Mais aussi, comme l'a souligné la dame avant moi, l'honorable membre, à l'économie. Tout à l'heure, on a parlé de la culture comme un moteur de développement. Pour les Seychelles, cela a été une réussite. Quand on parle de réussite, allons

parler de la Corée du Sud. C'est le modèle à suivre ! La Corée du Sud pour le développement de la culture comme moteur économique.

Donc, M. le président, la culture, c'est tout ce qui touche à notre qualité de vie. J'ai l'habitude de parler de l'exode des Mauriciens vers d'autres cieux. C'est un peu comme une épidémie de nos jours, de toutes les communautés, de tous les âges, pas que pour des raisons économiques. On se trompe si l'on parle que ce n'est que pour des raisons économiques, mais aussi des raisons de qualité de la vie. C'est ça. Pas juste le coût de la vie, mais la qualité de la vie ! Pas juste la discrimination, pas juste les passe-droits, mais aussi, M. le président, parce que nous avons un genre de paralysie culturelle à Maurice. Un genre de paralysie culturelle ! Quatre ans, pas de projet de loi ! Et voilà, on vient avec un projet de loi, mal défini, que personne ne peut expliquer. C'est la vérité !

Venons-en, M. le président, avec ce projet de loi. M. le président, nous avons besoin d'une politique active et engagée du gouvernement pour débrider des manifestations culturelles, pour libéraliser et donner toute son ampleur, sa ferveur aux manifestations culturelles. C'est pour cela que moi, pour ma part, je suis complètement contre ce *Bill*, parce qu'il y a un aspect de ce *Bill* que je trouve totalement inacceptable. C'est la mainmise du ministre sur l'enregistrement des artistes. Je trouve cela totalement inacceptable parce que pour moi, la créativité est synonyme de liberté. Nous ne voulons pas créer des nations de '*chatwa*' ! Maintenant, '*artiste chatwa*' !

Hon. Members: Eyy !

Mr Speaker: Non !

Mr X. L. Duval : Qu'est-ce qui passe ? Ce n'est pas bon ?

Mr Speaker: Non ! Vous avez dit quelque chose qui n'est pas correct !

Mr X. L. Duval : Ce n'est pas bon ? '*Chatwa*' n'est pas bon ?

Mr Speaker: Vous avez dit quelque chose qu'il faut retirer.

Mr X. L. Duval : Okay, je retire '*chatwa*.' Une nation de.... Voilà, on laisse --- (*blank-blank-blank*), cherchant constamment à faire plaisir au prince du jour. Ça va ça ? Cherchant constamment à faire plaisir au prince du jour ! C'est ce que l'on est en train de créer aujourd'hui ! Parce que, M. le président, peut-être que vous n'avez pas réalisé, ce *board* qui va décider de tout, complètement nommé par le ministre lui-même, 13 sur 13 ! Pire, sept de ces 13-

là, ce ne sont pas des artistes ! Peut-être que madame n'a pas réalisé, ce sont des représentants des ministères ! Des représentants des ministères qui vont être aux ordres de leur ministre ! Voilà !

Ils ont la majorité absolue pour faire ce qu'ils veulent sur ce *board* ! Et quand il y a un appel contre la décision d'enregistrer, il y a supposément un comité d'expert qui va décider si oui ou non quelqu'un peut être nommé un artiste d'après les critères de faire plaisir au prince du jour ! Si c'est refusé, mais l'appel est fait où ? L'appel est fait chez le ministre lui-même ! C'est lui-même qui va décider après. C'est totalement inacceptable ! Totalement inacceptable ! Tout le monde aura peur de représailles ! Tout le monde aura peur des sanctions !

On ne pourra pas être libre, on ne pourra pas inventer, on ne pourra pas créer quand on a peur de ce que l'on va dire. La politique, M. le président, la culture et les arts ne se mélangent pas. C'est comme de l'huile et de l'eau ! C'est pour cela que je regrette, je ne pourrais pas voter cette loi. J'aurais pu, j'aurais pu facilement voter cette loi. À ce moment-là, on change le nom de cette loi. On l'appelle *l'Independent Council for Support to Artists* avec le mot '*independent*,' avec l'idée de *self-regulation*. Un organisme totalement indépendant qui n'a rien à voir avec le ministère des Arts et du Patrimoine culturel, qui n'a rien à voir avec les pouvoirs du ministre, qui va décider dans son bureau –

- Qui c'est qui doit être un artiste ?
- Qui c'est qui est temporaire ?
- Qui c'est qui est permanent ?
- Qui c'est qui doit être retiré ?
- Qui c'est qui aura sa pension ?
- Qui c'est qui n'aura pas de pension ?

C'est inacceptable ! Et, c'est la vérité !

M. le président, maintenant, il y a une insatisfaction complète, paraît-il sur l'ensemble de la Chambre - le *Bill* est là, la raison principale, on voit que c'est pour donner un *State Recognition Allowance*, un genre de pension. Mais combien d'argent notre cher ministre des Finances a mis pour payer ces artistes ? Combien d'artistes il y en a premièrement ? Le ministre

des Finances a dit qu'il y a 2,000 artistes dans son discours du budget. Le ministre des Arts et du Patrimoine culturel parle de 6,000 artistes. La MASA parle de 6,000 artistes. On présume que le ministre des Arts et du Patrimoine culturel connaît au moins le nombre des artistes ! 6,000 artistes ! R 20 millions pour 6,000 artistes par an. Calculez un petit coup et regardez combien cela vous fait ! Combien ? R 100 par mois ? Combien ça fait ? Rien du tout ! Rien du tout !

Donc, il y a là une somme modique ! J'ai fait quelques calculs, M. le président. Si dans ces 6,000, on retire 1,000, on dit, on va donner un *allowance*, combien cela leur fait par an ? Cela fait R 18,000 par an. Bravo ! R 18,000 par an pour chaque artiste si l'on donne à 1,000 artistes. Si l'on à 500 artistes, mais c'est le double. Ils auront R 36,000.

Vous savez, si l'on veut donner R 15,000 par mois à un artiste, combien vont nourrir ces 20 millions comme artistes ? 100 ! Comme vous le savez, ceux qui font plaisir au prince - le mot que j'ai retiré - 6,000, et 100 personnes qui vont avoir R 15,000 par mois. C'est la vérité des chiffres !

C'est dommage que tout à l'heure, peut-être qu'on va me répondre, on va me dire que R 15,000 c'est trop. Moi, je connais un haut fonctionnaire qui pendant le confinement a touché R 17.8 millions. Un fonctionnaire ! Et là, on vient et on dit maintenant qu'on va donner combien ? Ça va varier entre R 18,000 par an si c'est 1,000 personnes, R 36,000 si 500 personnes, 100 personnes bien sûr, là ils auront un petit peu plus. C'est clair, M. le président, que cette somme est ridicule, et cette somme-là ce n'est pas voté que pour cette année-ci ; c'est voté pour l'année prochaine aussi pareil – R 30 millions. On retire R 10 millions pour les autres trucs qu'il y a, il reste R 20 millions pour tout le monde. C'est cela la vérité des chiffres, M. le président.

M. le président, la pire vérité c'est que la très grande majorité de nos artistes vivent dans la misère. C'est la pire vérité ça. J'ai parlé à deux de nos plus grands artistes, je ne vais pas les nommer bien sûr. Ils me disent que de la MASA ils reçoivent R 30,000 à R 40,000 par an comme redevance. R 30,000 à R 40,000 par an ! C'est clair qu'il y a une réforme de la MASA à faire, et en plus, M. le président, ils disent maintenant que les *CDs* ne se vendent plus. Ça ne se vend plus maintenant et que le seul moyen de gagner leur vie, c'est à travers des concerts à Maurice ou à l'étranger et des mariages principalement. Voilà comment nos artistes gagnent de l'argent et ce n'est certainement pas les quelques milliers de roupies qui vont être offertes aux 100 artistes qui vont changer la vie des artistes à l'île Maurice. Et donc, M. le président, les problèmes sont vrais,

sont réels. Comment faire un concert quand on doit louer une salle à R 1.5 millions - R 2 millions pour l'événement ? Et puis on vient ajouter, cela inclut la sonorisation, mais il faut ajouter les frais de promotion, etc. Donc, c'est un vrai problème.

Quand on vient maintenant parler des artistes des hôtels, M. le président - je reviendrai après sur les concerts - ce sont des gens vraiment à plaindre. Il ne faut pas croire qu'ils ont la belle vie; pas du tout. Ils peuvent paraître gentils, heureux sur la plateforme à l'hôtel quand ils chantent, mais ça ne l'est pas. Ils touchent quoi ? R 1,500 à R 2,500 par soirée. Il y en a – et je ne sais pas s'ils ne se déshabillent plus dans les toilettes, je ne suis pas allé vérifier –, mais je peux dire à l'honorable membre qui a parlé avant moi, que souvent les hôtels ne leur donnent pas à manger. Voilà, elle est d'accord ! Les toilettes sont une chose, à manger c'est autre chose. Il faut réaliser cela ; les hôtels ne donnent pas toujours à manger. M. le président, quand les hôtels sont fermés pour rénovation, ces artistes-là ne touchent pas un sou. Est-ce que vous savez, M. le président, que ces artistes-là qui ont des statuts de *self-employed*, si elles tombent enceintes, il n'y a pas de congé de maternité pour elles ? Mais, comment est-ce que madame n'a pas réalisé tout cela ? Il n'y a pas de congé de maternité, pas de *clothing allowance* comme on a dit tout à l'heure; ce n'est pas toujours qu'il y a à manger, alors qu'ils sont dans un endroit où il n'y a qu'à manger. Il y a à manger et à boire partout, et eux ils n'ont pas. Et voilà le statut des hôtels, pas d'assurance. Leurs instruments qu'ils doivent transporter avec eux se cassent en route, l'hôtel ne connaît rien dedans.

Donc, M. le président, c'est très bien tout ça de venir parler, mais voyons la réalité comme elle l'est. C'est triste de voir le statut des artistes dans les hôtels. Oui, le PMSD a créé des hôtels, on est d'accord...

An hon. Member: *Ah bon?*

Mr X. L. Duval: On ne peut pas tout faire. Maintenant, il faut laisser un peu, le reste aux autres. Laisser un peu aux autres.

Mr Maudhoo: *Pann fer naryen.*

Mr X. L. Duval: *Ayo Maudhoo kinn fer lotel, ayo papao.*

(Interruptions)

Ha, ha, ha, fer mwa riye !

Maintenant, M. le président...

Mr Speaker: You continue with your speech!

Mr X. L. Duval: Donc, il faut qu'on voie sérieusement le statut des artistes d'hôtels.

M. le président, pour une vraie politique culturelle, qu'est-ce qu'on doit faire? Ce n'est pas ce qui proposé là. La première chose à faire : la découverte de talents. C'est la première chose à faire ! Il y a 1.3 millions d'habitants à Maurice. Tous ces habitants-là sans exception, le bon Dieu leurs a donné un talent quelconque. Certains sont chanteurs, certains sont avocats, certains sont comptables, etc. Ils ont tous un talent, mais souvent dans les familles pauvres, il y a beaucoup de talents. Pas que des artistes, il y a des sportifs, etc. On ne les reconnaît pas ; ça ne se développe pas, et c'est un gâchis après. C'est un gâchis ! Et c'est ça, M. le président. J'étais très content d'être à l'époque ministre de l'Intégration sociale. C'était peut-être mon meilleur ministère que j'ai mieux aimé. On avait démarré, M. le président, à travers la *National Empowerment Foundation* – qui était autre chose à l'époque – la découverte systématique des talents chez les jeunes et les enfants. Et, c'est cela qu'il faut. Il n'y a pas de politique culturelle si on ne développe pas les talents dans les familles, surtout les familles à faibles revenus.

Maintenant, M. le président, on est d'accord que les *CDs* ne se vendent plus, la *MASA* donne R 30,000 - R 40,000 par an. Comment vont vivre les artistes ? La pension est ridicule. Comment vont donc survivre les artistes ? Les manifestations culturelles, M. le président, et là je vais venir à un point très important que j'avais soulevé pendant le discours sur le *Local Government Bill* je crois ou le budget. La création des auditoriums dans chaque *Municipal Council* et dans chaque *District Council* est importante; que nous mettions des facilités à la disposition des artistes pour des concerts, des pièces de théâtre et autres manifestations culturelles. Vous allez à l'étranger ou dans n'importe quelle ville, à la Réunion à côté, chaque municipalité, chaque mairie aura un auditorium pour les manifestations culturelles. Pourquoi? Parce que le coût de la salle est prohibitif, R 200,000 par jour, peut-être un petit peu moins, peut-être un petit peu plus, la sonorisation très chère, et bien sûr, le coût de la publicité et la promotion.

Donc, M. le président, ce que le gouvernement doit faire pour améliorer l'offre culturelle à Maurice, c'est de mettre à disposition dans chaque chef-lieu de district, dans chaque ville, une salle de 400 à 500 personnes, 1,000 personnes, tout dépend ; la sono aussi avec un système de

frais réduit pour la publicité. Voilà ce qu'il faut faire ! Ce n'est pas la mer à boire encore une fois. Qu'est-ce qu'on demande à faire ? L'autre jour, M. le président, quand j'ai préparé ce discours, je suis allé au *Caudan Arts Centre*, truc privé, 400 places, rempli jusqu'à la fin de l'année. On ne pouvait pas *book* cette salle-là jusqu'à la fin de l'année - rempli. C'est ce genre de choses qu'il faut construire à Quatre Bornes, Curepipe, Rose Hill – Plaza tout ça c'est révolu, c'est joli, une jolie petite pièce de musée et c'est tout – Goodlands, Flacq. Il faut construire partout et mettre cela à la disposition des artistes à prix réduits.

De ce fait, tous les week-ends il y aura quelque chose. Tous les week-ends, les artistes vont gagner leur vie. Ils vont être soutenus par la municipalité ou le gouvernement central pour gagner leur vie. Cela, M. le président, va faire exploser l'offre culturelle à l'île Maurice. Donc, M. le président, cela c'est ma proposition : la découverte des talents – je ne vais pas faire 1,000 propositions – auditoriums dans chaque chef-lieu, district ou municipalité. Cela va nous amener plus de performances, une baisse des prix des activités culturelles et une forte augmentation de l'offre, M. le président. C'est cela qui va nous amener à l'épanouissement de la culture mauricienne, et de ce fait, comme je l'avais dit au début, de l'amélioration de la qualité de la vie ici, qui est un élément déterminant pour nous, M. le président.

Donc, en passant, M. le président, l'autre jour je suis allé voir au *Caudan Arts Centre* une pièce de théâtre qui s'appelle 'Le Faiseur De Miracle' qui a été écrit par un Mauricien à l'époque, Georges André Decotter. J'étais émerveillé, M. le président, par le talent de ces acteurs-là qu'il faut renforcer seulement, comme on l'a fait pour les sportifs, des voyages d'étude et de perfectionnement pour nos artistes et bien sûr des artistes étrangers qui viennent inter-changer avec les Mauriciens.

M. le président, au titre de propositions, où on en est avec ce *National Symphony Orchestra* ? Est-ce que c'est trop ambitieux pour notre pays, 1.2 millions de personnes ? On parlait autrefois d'un *National Symphony Orchestra*; personne n'en parle maintenant. L'orchestre de la police, aujourd'hui, tellement ils manquent d'instruments, on se demande s'ils peuvent encore jouer. Et donc, là aussi, M. le président, il nous faut, à Maurice, un *National Symphony Orchestra* qui va faire relever, remonter la culture mauricienne.

Et un *National Dance Troupe*. Moi-même j'étais combien de fois ministre du Tourisme, j'aurais adoré avoir eu à ma disposition un *National Dance Troupe*, quand je pars à l'étranger

j’emmène ces personnes-là et on ‘éclate partout’ avec le talent des Mauriciens, mais on n’en a pas. J’espère qu’un jour un autre gouvernement le fera.

J’ai écouté le gouvernement, M. le président, on a parlé du Festival International Kreol, que j’ai créé. Pourquoi avoir créé le Festival International Kreol? Pourquoi ? J’avais un manque d’occupation ? Pas du tout, on avait beaucoup de travail. On a voulu donner les lettres de noblesse à la culture créole. C’est la pure vérité. C’est la pure vérité ! Il faut que chaque composante de notre population se retrouve *on top*, sur le devant de la scène, qu’ils soient fiers de leur langue, de notre langue, de la culture, de ce qu’on mange, de comment on s’adresse, des poèmes – on a fait tout cela. On a fait beaucoup d’efforts. Aujourd’hui, cela a disparu. Je ne sais pas quel nom on a donné à cela maintenant.

M. le président, à l’époque le *all night concert* qu’on faisait soit à Pailles ou sur le Port amenait jusqu’à 200 000 personnes. C’était *all night*, cela commençait à 6 heures de l’après-midi - je ne sais pas peut-être que vous êtes venus - et cela finissait à 6 heures du matin. Jamais on n’a eu une bagarre. Jamais il n’y a eu un coup de poing. Jamais on n’a eu un problème. Jamais ! Ça c’était le Festival International Kreol, M. le président.

Il n’y a pas eu que ça. Il y avait *Porlwi by Light*. Je regrette beaucoup *Porlwi by Light*. C’était une manifestation culturelle extraordinaire faite par le secteur privé, Astrid Dalais, mais avec le soutien de mon ministère et du gouvernement. C’était quelque chose d’extraordinaire. Sur 3 jours, tout le monde, l’île Maurice *net* était à Port Louis et après, le gouvernement a décidé que non, *pa bon sa*, il y a mieux. Qu’est-ce qu’il y a de mieux ? On ne sait pas et c’est mort.

Mais bien avant cela, M. le président, peut-être que vous ne vous rappelez pas, en 2009 pour la fête de Divali, on avait amené la mairie de Lyon ici, parce que la mairie de Lyon fait le festival des lumières. Et la mairie de Lyon avait fait la fête de Divali, ici, à Maurice avec nous, principalement à Curepipe et à Port Louis. Donc, nous sommes fiers de ce que nous avons fait au PMSD, M. le président, avec nos collègues du Parti travailliste.

Il y a aussi, M. le président, le Festival International de la Mer. Il n’y a jamais eu, probablement il n’y aura jamais, ce genre de festival encore à Maurice, organisé du début jusqu’à la fin par feu Sir Gaëtan Duval. Cela avait aidé énormément à mettre l’île Maurice sur la carte internationale, sur la carte du tourisme et de la culture, M. le président.

Donc, aujourd'hui, qu'est-ce qu'on voit ? Une nette réduction des activités. Mon collègue de l'époque, Vasant Bunwaree, était ministre de l'Éducation. Pour une raison et pour une autre, il faisait le Festival 24/7 dans toutes les villes.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: L'Éducation et culture.

Mr X. L. Duval: Ah ok, l'éducation et culture, voilà la raison. Il faisait le Festival 24/7. C'était terrible, vraiment populaire. Mais où c'est parti tout cela ? Où c'est parti tout cela ? Pendant 4 ans, et maintenant on vient – où sont parties toutes ces activités ? Réveillez-vous un peu messieurs! Réveillez-vous un petit peu, faites quelque chose ! Il est l'heure de bouger ! Il est l'heure de bouger !

Mr Toussaint: Messieurs et Mesdames.

Mr X. L. Duval: M. le président, je parlerai bien vite et je termine sur un pays qui a réussi son développement culturel, la Corée du Sud, un exemple pour le monde entier. Vous vous rappelez de la chanson 'Gangnam Style' ? Comment c'est ça ?

An hon. Member: *Dance enn kou!*

Mr X. L. Duval: Comment est-ce que c'est ? 'Oppa Gangnam Style, hey hey hey sexy lady...' vous vous rappelez ?

Mr Nuckcheddy: *Dance enn kou nou gete!*

Mr X. L. Duval: Ganga style.

Mrs Mayotte: 'Gangnam'.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: 'Gangnam Style'.

Mr X. L. Duval: M. le président, on peut rire, surtout quand on se regarde dans *laglas* pour certains.

M. le président, l'économie culturelle et créative en Corée du Sud est la septième au monde. Corée du Sud - septième au monde. En premier, l'Amérique et on descend même et la Corée du Sud, septième au monde. Ils ont fait ça de rien, dans une langue que personne ne comprend à part eux-mêmes. Comment ils ont fait ? Ils ont mis l'argent dans le digital. Ils ont mis de l'argent dans la créativité, dans la libéralisation, dans la formation. Et pourquoi ne pas

envoyer le ministre des Arts et du Patrimoine culturel quelques semaines ou bien des mois mêmes en Corée là-bas et à apprendre comment faire cela mon cher. Ça ce serait une bonne idée.

(Interruptions)

Ça ce serait une bonne idée. *Al aprann* un petit peu ‘Gangnam Style’ et vous revenez ! M. le président, voilà c’est une industrie qui rapporte des milliards.

M. le président, je finirai par dire ceci. Il y avait un Premier ministre français, Georges Clemenceau, c’était pendant la première guerre mondiale, et voilà ce qu’il avait dit –

« La guerre ! C’est une chose trop grave pour la confier à des militaires. »

Vu l’importance de la culture, je vais faire quelques adaptations, et je dirai, M. le président, que la culture c’est une chose trop, trop, trop grave pour la confier à ce gouvernement-là.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Hon. François!

(6.46 p.m.)

Mr F. François (First Member for Rodrigues): Merci, M. le président. Mesdames et Messieurs, les honorables membres, comme annoncé par le gouvernement...

Mr Speaker: Non, excusez-moi!

Mr François: ...dans le but...

Mr Speaker: Excuse me! Excuse me! I made this comment last time; I will not tolerate it anymore. You have to address the Chair! ‘*Merci, M. le président*’ *tout court!* ‘*Mesdames et Messieurs*’, ‘*les honorables membres*’, no! This does not apply here. You are in Parliament!

Mr François: *Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.* Comme annoncé par le gouvernement dans le but de reconnaître la contribution positive des artistes au développement socio-économique de notre société républicaine, je salue ce projet de loi, *The Status of The Artist Bill (No VII of 2023)*, dont l’objectif principal est la création d’un ‘*Professional in the Arts Council*’.

Il s’agit d’un mécanisme juridique additionnel visant à promouvoir le statut des artistes afin d’améliorer le statut économique, social et politique des artistes professionnels, après les

projets de loi sur le droit d'auteur, *Amendment Bill of 2017*, le *Workers Rights Act of 2019 and surely* qui corrigera en parallèle des manquements d'aujourd'hui concernant nos artistes.

M. le président, permettez-moi, de féliciter l'honorable ministre, Avinash Teeleck, d'avoir présenté ce texte législatif lorsque j'ai réalisé que depuis 1980, au cours d'un processus de recherche et de discussion sur la situation des artistes du monde, l'UNESCO a recommandé aux gouvernements d'adopter des lois et de mettre en œuvre des mesures politiques pour reconnaître le rôle fondamental que jouent les artistes de nos sociétés.

La plupart des personnes deviennent des artistes en raison de leur amour de la forme d'art. Une personne doit tout d'abord aimer danser, peindre, écrire, chanter, jouer ou jouer d'un instrument de musique et ils le font souvent pendant de nombreuses années avant de devenir un professionnel.

M. le Président, en novembre 2017, l'ancien ministre des Arts et de la Culture, l'honorable Roopun, a déclaré dans cette Chambre, et que je cite –

« Alors que nous présentons le projet de loi sur le droit d'auteur (*Amendment Bill*) dans cette auguste Assemblée, depuis les deux dernières semaines et pour la deuxième fois cette année, deux experts délégués par l'UNESCO ont eu des consultations approfondies et des séances de travail avec des artistes, des fonctionnaires de divers ministères et d'autres parties prenantes majeures veiller à ce que les bases soient jetées pour l'élaboration de la législation sur le statut de l'artiste. Ils devraient terminer leur mission d'ici la fin de l'année et, espérons-le, la rédaction de la législation commencera dans le courant de 2018. »

M. le président, dans cette même foulée, les artistes de Rodrigues ont salué les séances de travail qu'ils ont eues avec les experts de l'UNESCO et un représentant du Ministère des Arts et du Patrimoine culturel lors de leur mission officielle à Rodrigues en octobre 2017.

M. le président, on m'a informé que parmi les résultats des consultations tenues avec les partenaires locaux figuraient –

- a. la catégorisation des professionnels des arts ;
- b. la mise en place de l'organisme d'enregistrement dont le MAPA (*Mauritius Agency for Professional Artists*) ;

- c. la mise en place de l'organe de recours; et
- d. l'introduction d'un programme d'allocation de reconnaissance de l'État, une aide aux artistes de haut niveau, un programme de prix en espèces.

Eh bien, voilà, aujourd'hui, c'est devenu une réalité à travers ce projet de loi.

M. le président, il est important d'examiner brièvement la façon atypique dont les artistes font leur travail. Je suis sûr que l'honorable Sandra Mayotte, une de nos plus grandes voix et artiste locale, sera d'accord avec moi.

Ce projet de loi, vise à améliorer les conditions de travail et d'exercice de leur art de nos artistes. Elles ont depuis trop longtemps atteint leurs limites et ne permettent pas d'assurer adéquatement un revenu minimum décent et un filet protecteur social comme revendiqué.

M. le président, je suis ravi que ce projet de loi, entre autres, va reconnaître –

- a. légalement la valeur des artistes professionnels, qui n'est pas purement symbolique, mais surtout la contribution authentique et importante de nos artistes à notre société, qu'il faut valoriser;
- b. la précieuse contribution des artistes à l'héritage culturel et de son développement. Ici, j'ai en tête le Segga Tambour rodriguais comme patrimoine culturel immatériel de l'humanité. J'y reviendrai sur ce sujet;
- c. le rôle des artistes, notamment d'exprimer dans sa diversité ainsi que leurs aspirations individuelles et collectives. On constate que nos artistes veulent évoluer davantage et ont besoin de notre soutien, d'où l'importance de ce projet de loi,
- d. l'importance pour les artistes professionnels de recevoir une juste rémunération en contrepartie de la création de leurs œuvres artistiques et de l'utilisation qui en est faite à travers un contrat d'engagement en bonne et due forme.

M. le président, il nous faut aligner dans nos jargons économiques le terme économie culturelle et de considérer nos artistes comme des vrais entrepreneurs.

Après l'épisode de la crise sanitaire, on constate que la protection de nos artistes comme travailleurs indépendants est primordial, pour ne pas basculer dans la pauvreté lors d'une maladie ou à la retraite, faute de protection sociale adéquate.

M. le président, les artistes passent essentiellement beaucoup de temps à se préparer, à gagner un revenu, à se former, à répéter, à étudier, à faire de la recherche ou à créer un produit fini. Bien souvent, quand on écoute les cris des artistes - j'ai bien écouté l'honorable Mayotte - ils ne sont pas satisfaits de leur situation sociale et économique, malgré leurs grands efforts et sacrifices. Je les comprends, et c'est clair que les artistes bien souvent galèrent pour gagner leurs vies comme aussi mentionné par l'honorable Duval et Mayotte.

La plupart de nos artistes professionnels doivent compléter leurs revenus par des revenus générés par un travail à temps partiel à l'extérieur de leur domaine d'expertise professionnelle afin de survivre économiquement. Pour certains, cela peut représenter la majeure partie de leur revenu.

M. le président, avec la fragilité de notre société, nos artistes, n'ont aucune garantie du succès de leurs produits sur le marché, parfois avec le piratage et l'influence de la technologie moderne surtout l'internet.

M. le président, il faut valoriser et reconnaître nos artistes *ki inn fer rekonet nou zil*. Comme annoncé dans le discours du budget 2023-2024, aux paragraphes 161 à 165, la mise en place d'un système d'allocation de reconnaissance de l'État aux professionnels qui ont obtenu une reconnaissance au niveau national et international.

M. le président, en raison de la nature des secteurs de la culture et de la création, les artistes et les professionnels ont tendance à être soumis à un degré de mobilité transfrontalière à des fins culturelles et économiques pour gagner leur vie, comme, par exemple l'organisation des concerts à l'île de la Réunion, à Rodrigues ou en Europe.

Le Conseil, dans sa stratégie du développement et de promotion des artistes sur le plan régional et international, est une très bonne initiative. Aujourd'hui, la nouvelle génération d'artiste est tenue à travailler à l'échelle internationale comme un processus naturel. Il faut les soutenir et les encourager davantage, d'où l'importance de l'article 4(f), qui prévoit de développer et encourager la promotion et la commercialisation de produits et services artistiques à l'échelle nationale et internationale.

M. le président, maintenant, je vais parler sur le projet de loi par rapport à Rodrigues, qui à ce jour, le nombre approximatif d'artistes et groupes actifs, est estimé d'environ 500 à 600 artistes.

M. le président, j'ai bien écouté l'honorable Avinash Teeluck, le ministre, concernant Rodrigues, qui disait et je cite –

“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, Mr Speaker Sir, I also positively take note of Cabinet's decision of Friday last, 07 July 2023, for an MoU on matters related to arts and cultural heritage through a set of objectives, as defined between the Ministry of Arts and Culture and the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, which was delayed because of COVID-19 since 2018/2019.

M. le président, d'après les échanges avec certaines personnes locales, ils sont d'avis que le projet de loi devrait –

- a. être étendu à Rodrigues et aux îles éparses;
- b. s'assurer qu'un représentant de l'Assemblée régionale de Rodrigues, sous l'égide de la Commission des Arts et de la Culture, fait partie du conseil d'administration du Conseil des Arts pour sauvegarder les intérêts des artistes rodriguais selon l'article 6 du projet de loi.

M. le président, l'article 10, stipule que le Conseil peut constituer d'autres comités qu'il juge approprié. À cet égard, je propose de plus qu'un comité spécial soit créé à Rodrigues pour agir au nom du Conseil afin de surveiller et de suivre les questions relatives à l'application de la loi à Rodrigues. Or, comme ce projet de loi vise à –

“(...) to provide for the establishment of the Professional in the Arts Council (...)”

En tant que corps corporatif, une même structure ne peut être mise sur pied à Rodrigues.

Avec la création du *Professional in the Arts Council*, un élément fondamental, dont nous avons la responsabilité, est d'assurer la pérennité de surtout notre Segá Tambour de Rodrigues inscrit au patrimoine culturel immatériel de l'UNESCO.

M. le président, ce projet de loi est une occasion de consolider les spécificités culturelles et identitaires de Rodrigues, qui compte un certain nombre d'éléments faisant partie de son patrimoine culturel immatériel qui sont menacés de disparition, notamment notre Segá Tambour, les contes, des instruments de musiques, entre autres.

Ce projet de loi devait tenir cela en compte, surtout pour répertorier les travaux des personnes qui font un travail extraordinaire pour la sauvegarde de ces éléments.

M. le président, Rodrigues doit être représenté pour faire entendre sa voix, surtout concernant les questions touchant à la défense et la promotion des arts traditionnels et ces *cultural mentors* qui en assurent la transmission à nos jeunes qui veut exceller dans l'art. A titre d'exemple, de notre instrument comme l'accordéon et le tambour, *Lapo Cabri*. Concernant ces *cultural mentors*, l'introduction d'une catégorie des maîtres d'arts, basée sur le système international pourrait leur apporter une reconnaissance et une forme de rémunération en parallèle.

M. le président, notre Séga Tambour, outre sa vocation divertissante, a aussi une vocation très importante dans la préservation et la promotion de l'identité, un lien avec l'histoire et les traditions de la spécificité culturelle rodriguaise, et aussi, un vecteur de notre cohésion sociale à Rodrigues dont –

- i. la transmission et la sauvegarde des valeurs sociétales ;
- ii. la transmission des expressions locales et la valorisation des spécificités linguistiques (les expressions métaphoriques, proverbes rodriguais, expressions idiomatiques, etc.) ;
- iii. la transmission des connaissances et savoirs des femmes rodriguaises (pharmacopée traditionnelle, pratique de la médecine traditionnelle, les prières traditionnelles, croyances populaires), et
- iv. la sauvegarde et transmission des repères historiques importants.

M. le président, je dois dire que c'est extraordinaire de constater que chaque texte de notre Segá Tambour raconte un fait étant survenu à un moment précis de notre histoire.

Je continue –

- v. la sauvegarde d'éléments d'importance majeure pour des études par nos universitaires et autres chercheurs dans le domaine de l'histoire, l'anthropologie, l'ethnographie, l'ethnomusicologie, et l'ethnologie, entre autres ;
- vi. le comportement musicologique du peuple rodriguais à travers les âges; entre autres, et
- vii. la transmission de la croyance populaire comme j'ai mentionné autour des célébrations (la naissance, le mariage, les décès) et voire aussi de la superstition.

M. le président, j'ai énoncé ces quelques éléments, parce que j'entends résonner en moi, la vibration et l'âme du Rodriguais à travers sa culture, dont sa musique et ses paroles de nos artistes, entre autres.

M. le président, ceci dit, c'est évident que les enjeux et réalités culturels de Rodrigues n'étant pas nécessairement les mêmes que ceux de l'Ile Maurice, une voie devrait être ouverte afin que Rodrigues puisse mettre sur pied son conseil des Arts qui travaillerait en collaboration avec celui de Maurice et serait régi par les mêmes lois ou règlements.

M. le président, il est à noter, que la plupart des groupes du Séga Tambour furent créés en 1976, en parallèle avec la création de l'OPR de Serge Clair et le Groupement des Artistes Rodriguais, dont les groupes tels que –

- Camaron, historiquement extraordinaire ;
- Loizeau Teti ;
- Bwa Siro Dibwa Dir ;
- Cardinal Jaune, entre autres.

J'ai aussi une pensée spéciale pour nos aînées ténors et artistes comme –

- Lorenza Gaspard ;
- Lucrece Prosper ;

- Julie Perrine ;
- Jacqueline Allas ;
- Tino Samois ;
- Thiong, et
- tous ceux décédés qui figurent sur la muraille de la reconnaissance des grands artistes rodriguais à Port Mathurin.

Parmi, pour ne citer quelques-uns dont –

- Roland Casimir ;
- Julie Collet alias Tann Grofi ;
- Serge Roussety avec la ballade de mon pays ;
- Marie Jeanne Léopold ;
- Wills Félicité ;
- Richmond Flore ;
- Floricourt Collet ;
- Sylvio Legentil ;
- Cindy Augustin ;
- MacDonald Farla ;
- Rosange André – conteurs ;
- Ben Gontran – écrivain ;
- Stevenson Clair – peintre, et
- Eloi Begue, entre autres ...

M. le président, de plus, je suis ravi de constater, la création de plusieurs nouveaux groupes d'artistes et d'arts à Rodrigues avec des jeunes Rodriguais talentueux et ambitieux, en quête d'excellence artistique.

J'apprécie la contribution artistique et remarquable chez nos jeunes du groupe Rodrigues S'Kool of Arts (ROSA) créée en 2016 par un groupe d'artistes Rodriguais pour, entre autres, ROSA ma grand-mère, faire de l'art un outil pour le combat contre les fléaux sociaux, encourager l'écriture chez nos jeunes, préserver notre patrimoine culturel par la promotion de la langue *kreol* rodriguaise et la promotion de la danse traditionnelle et moderne, théâtre, slam, et photographie. En passant, je salue la grande contribution d'autres artistes, écrivains comme –

- Noel Allas, historien ;
- Chantel et Jean Noel Baptiste ;
- Luc Clair au niveau du théâtre ;
- Marcel Poinen, auteur, compositeur, entre autres
- Vallen Pierre Louis et tant d'autres.

Je les encourage d'aller encore plus loin et surtout de placer Rodrigues sur la carte du monde, et cela contribuera dans cette vision culturelle et artistique vers un nouvel horizon.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne l'enregistrement des professionnels des arts à Rodrigues et en lien avec l'article 14, je propose la création d'un bureau à part entière à Rodrigues ou nommer un responsable de Rodrigues dans ce secteur pour Rodrigues. C'est dans la même lignée que le bureau de la MASA qui a été établi à Rodrigues pour servir de point focal pour la mise en œuvre de la loi sur le droit d'auteur et comme souhaité par les artistes locaux, je pense qu'il est primordial de prendre en compte la nature et le contexte spécifiques de nos artistes locaux, des arts et de la culture de Rodrigues, l'éloignement et le manque de visibilité au niveau national et international.

M. le président, avant de conclure, je vais énumérer quelques-uns des prix nationaux et internationaux décernés aux artistes rodriguais et rodriguiques, et un approfondissant de notre sentiment de fierté de faire partie intégrante de la République de Maurice –

- (a) La reconnaissance de l'inscription du Ségá Tambour comme Patrimoine Culturel Immatériel (PCI) par l'UNESCO ;
- (b) Prix nationaux dans le domaine de la poésie et du slam ;

- (c) Prix Spécial du Jury au groupe Manniok lors de la 8e édition des Jeux de la Francophonie en 2017 en Côte d'Ivoire ;
- (d) Publication du 1er dictionnaire encyclopédique monolingue en *Kreol Rodrige* par l'Assemblée régionale de Rodrigues avec la pleine collaboration de l'Université de Maurice ;
- (e) Lauréat du Concours Acapella, M. le ministre Toussaint, en 2022 et 2023 organisé par le Ministère de l'Autonomisation de la Jeunesse et des Sports ;
- (f) Participation bientôt à la Délégation Nationale des poètes et danseurs hip-hop de Rodrigues à la 9e Edition des Jeux de la Francophonie à Kinshasa, République du Congo du 28 juillet au 6 août 2023, et
- (g) Participation d'un groupe de jeunes artistes traditionnels de Rodrigues au prochain Jeux des Iles 2023 à Madagascar.

Je dis bien bravo aux artistes rodriguais et je leur demande de garder notre lumière culturelle et artistique allumé et ensemble dirigeons nous vers un nouvel horizon.

M. le président, pour conclure, sans nos artistes, il n'y a pas de secteur des arts et de la culture, car ce sont les artistes qui expriment la culture.

Ce projet de loi sur le statut de l'artiste, d'un point de vue culturel, s'agit d'une décision marquante prise par le ministère des Arts et du Patrimoine culturel, qui est historique, permettant la professionnalisation des artistes de la République de Maurice, qui comprend également Rodrigues et les îles éparses.

Je tiens à féliciter l'honorable ministre Avinash Teeluck et le ministère des Arts et du Patrimoine culturel pour ce projet de loi, et je recommande sa recevabilité.

M. le président, Je vous remercie de votre aimable attention.

Merci, M. Duval pour votre sourire.

Mr Speaker: MP Mrs Navarre-Marie!

(7.05 p.m.)

Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Merci, M. le président.

Je suis surprise que ni le ministre de la Santé ni mon ami l'honorable quatrième député de Belle Rose-Quatre Bornes ne figurent sur la liste des orateurs sur ce projet de loi alors que les Mauriciens ont découvert avec délectation leurs talents de chanteur. Par contre, la deuxième députée de Savanne-Rivière Noire a essayé de sauver la mise.

M. le président, alors que pour certains ce projet de loi représente une avancée surtout en ce qui concerne une pension à la retraite, d'autres l'accueillent avec un optimisme prudent. Pour beaucoup d'autres, ce projet de loi suscite pas mal d'interrogations. D'ailleurs, l'Union des artistes a été véhémente lors d'une conférence de presse et a même adressé un document au ministre – un *report and analysis* de ce projet de loi. L'Association des auteurs-compositeurs mauriciens exprime également ses appréhensions.

L'objectif principal de ce projet est la création d'un *Council* qui sera un *one-stop shop* et aura comme responsabilité *to provide a State Recognition Allowance Scheme to professionals who have gained recognition at national or international level*. Comment est-ce que cela va se faire ? Quelles en sont les critères ?

Le ministre tente de dresser un parallèle avec les athlètes, mais alors que pour les athlètes il y a des compétitions qui déterminent la performance des athlètes, tel n'est pas le cas pour les artistes. Pour ceux-ci, il n'y a pas de compétitions; leurs produits finis sont les œuvres, des créations.

Des allocations en termes de *State Recognition Allowance* sont certainement importantes. Comment bien le faire et surtout comment le mettre en pratique ? Comment ne pas exclure aucun artiste professionnel ? À mon avis, le ministre se doit de concerter davantage.

Il y a aussi le concept du *Equitable Remuneration* pour les artistes de catégorie musique surtout, qui doit être respecté. En effet, les musiciens devraient recevoir une rémunération équitable lorsque leurs enregistrements sont joués en public ou diffusés sur les ondes. Est-ce que les musiciens ou compositeurs sont rémunérés équitablement ? Est-ce que les radios ou autres médias respectent ce principe ?

Pour l'artiste, le travail se fait beaucoup plus en amont, il y a beaucoup plus de travail avant la performance si on se réfère aux chanteurs et acteurs de théâtre, par exemple. Nous avons à Maurice une perception que les artistes sont uniquement des chanteurs ou des compositeurs, mais il faut prendre en considération le fait qu'il y a également d'autres types d'arts tels que le théâtre, la danse, la peinture et bien d'autres. La liste n'est pas exhaustive.

Deuxième point, le projet de plan de pension à la clause 4(d), cela est un point positif, c'est une bonne chose. Cela cadre bien avec l'annonce du ministre des Finances lors de son discours du budget. En effet, au paragraphe 164, il dit ceci –

“164. Henceforth, registered artists will be provided with a pension scheme for their retirement.”

Le ministre avait annoncé la mise en œuvre d'une pension de retraite en sus du régime de pension de vieillesse existant pour ceux qui réussissent au niveau national et international. Le plan de pension est certainement une avancée dans le sens que malheureusement beaucoup d'artistes finissent leurs jours dans la misère, et surtout sans reconnaissance par l'État. Quand je parle de reconnaissance, je me réfère à ces centaines d'artistes qui ont fini leurs jours sans être reconnus.

Je suis sûre que beaucoup d'entre vous connaissent Jean Claude Gaspard et son fils Denis Claude, mais combien d'entre vous avait connu le père : Roger Augustin ? Sa voix était sublime, pourtant il n'était qu'un simple travailleur du port, un débardeur, il était mon voisin au *Dockers' Flats*. A l'époque, le débardeur ne travaillait pas tous les jours. Il n'était pas employé à plein temps et quand il ne travaillait pas, Roger Augustin prenait sa guitare, descendait du Bloc M9 et chantait au bas de son appartement. C'était un vrai régal ; je vous inviterai à l'écouter.

Il y a tellement d'artistes qui sont maintenant décédés sans une reconnaissance nationale. J'ai cité Roger Augustin, parce qu'il était mon voisin, et j'en suis fier. Dans ma circonscription, M. le président, la circonscription No. 1, Grande Rivière Nord-Ouest, Port Louis Ouest, la circonscription regorge d'artistes. Le célèbre groupe Cassiya prit naissance à Bain des Dames, Cassis. Aujourd'hui, les chanteurs et musiciens *perform* en solo. Nous avons encore d'autres groupes qui *perform* dans des célébrations de veille de mariage, de mariage. Qui de nous n'avons jamais assisté à un *Ghazal* tellement transcendant ? Nous avons à Maurice un riche patrimoine

artistique, des artistes professionnels et des artistes en herbe, et cela dans toutes les langues ancestrales du pays.

Je parlais donc de la pension. Quel sera le mécanisme qui sera mis en place pour sa mise en application? C'est une question que les artistes se posent et cela avec raison, mais avant d'arriver à la pension, il faut que nos artistes puissent vivre de leur art. Malheureusement, nos artistes font face à d'énormes difficultés financières. Ils ne jouissent pas des mêmes droits que les autres travailleurs. Ils ne bénéficient pas d'un régime contributif et de congés payés par exemple, ils ne sont pas admissibles à un prêt bien qu'ils puissent avoir un compte bancaire. Pour les chanteurs par exemple, cela est cher d'enregistrer un morceau. L'année dernière, le ministre des Finances avait annoncé au paragraphe 126 –

« (a) 20 millions de roupies sont affectées à la création d'un *National Arts Centre*, comprenant un studio d'enregistrement à Réunion Maurel, Petit Raffray ; »

Le studio n'a jamais vu le jour, au grand dam des artistes. Cette fois encore, dans son intervention, le ministre annonce la même chose. Nous espérons que ce projet sera réalisé au plus vite dans l'intérêt des artistes.

Venons maintenant au *Council*. D'abord, la composition du *Board* – le chef de l'opposition en a longuement parlé. Tous les membres seront nommés par le ministre, y compris le *Chairperson* et les artistes. Je me pose les questions suivantes –

- (i) Le fait que le ministre nomme les artistes, est-ce que ceux-ci devront avoir allégeance au ministre ?
- (ii) Où est l'indépendance des artistes ?

Et, le *Board* déjà asservi au ministre, aura pour tâche de nommer un directeur *with the approval of the Minister*. Cela fausse complètement le concept de l'art, synonyme d'autonomie et d'indépendance pour la créativité. Ce n'est donc pas un *Council* mais plutôt un comité émanant du ministère, comme le dit si bien Jean-Jacques Arjoon, artiste et membre de l'Association des auteurs compositeurs mauriciens.

Autre point, '*Deregistration as Professionals of the Art*' est le pouvoir du ministre de nommer un *Appeal Committee*. La clause 16 fait mention des situations où le *Council* peut *deregister a Professional in the Arts*. Au cas où l'artiste ne serait pas d'accord avec son

deregistration, il pourra avoir recours à un comité d'appel. Or, c'est le ministre qui aura le pouvoir de mettre sur pied ce comité d'appel qui comprend un représentant de son ministère, un représentant du ministère du Travail et un représentant du ministère de la Sécurité sociale ; tous des fonctionnaires et aucun représentant des artistes sur ce comité d'appel.

L'affaire ne s'arrête pas là. Le comité d'appel soumet son rapport au ministre et *where the Minister decides in favour of the appellant, he shall instruct the Council to review its decision and the Council shall act accordingly*. Le ministre peut donc renverser la décision du comité d'appel. Si cela n'est pas mainmise, cela y ressemble étrangement. Le ministre nomme les membres du *Board*, nomme le comité d'appel composé uniquement de fonctionnaires et revoit la décision du comité d'appel qu'il aura lui-même nommé.

Ce projet de loi, s'il est voté, confèrera trop de pouvoir au ministre selon les artistes et représente une menace pour la créativité. L'Union des artistes cite l'exemple du séga *Polico Crapo*, interdit par la police. Il y a également le cas du défunt chanteur, Lin, parti trop tôt et que le ministre a mentionné dans son discours. Les Mauriciens étaient écœurés que son séga '*Zot pa pran nou traka*' ait été délibérément retiré de la *MBC*. Ce séga retrace la misère des petites gens et évoque le cas de certaines personnes, une fois au pouvoir, *pa pran traka lepep*. Il y a également le cas de ce peintre qui avait dessiné le visage d'un politicien mauricien sur le pan d'un mur et qui avait été arrêté par la police. Les artistes perçoivent également les sections 23 et 26 comme une menace et craignent même des représailles au cas où ils ne seraient pas d'accord avec les membres du staff du *Council* dans des situations où ils viendraient réclamer leur dû.

Nous apprenons dans les *Estimates* que la *MASA* a distribué 2,098 *royalties* aux *Registered Local Copyright Owners*, mais nous ignorons le montant de ces *royalties* et le nombre d'artistes qui en ont eu droit. Le nombre paraît énorme, mais en réalité, les artistes ne reçoivent que des miettes. La grande question pour les artistes est l'impact de cette législation sur la *MASA*. Quel sera l'impact de ce projet de loi sur la *MASA*? À première vue, aucun. Toujours est-il que dans le présent *Estimates*, le budget de la *MASA* a connu une baisse allant de R 7,2 millions à R 5 millions.

Les R 2 millions iront à ce nouveau *council*. Ne serait-ce pas là un premier pas visant à se débarrasser de la *MASA*, dont le rôle est de *protect copyrights, related rights and administer copyright fees* ? Si le but est de se débarrasser de la *MASA*, qu'on nous le dise clairement. D'un

côté, on coupe le budget de la MASA par R 2 millions, et de l'autre, le *Key Performance Indicator* mentionne le développement d'un plan de restructuration de la MASA. *Which is which?*

Ce projet de loi, M. le président, mérite des consultations élargies et des réflexions plus poussées pour répondre aux besoins des artistes et être plus efficace. Le projet de loi tel qu'il est donne trop de pouvoirs au ministre et pas d'informations suffisantes sur les avantages que les artistes pourraient en tirer. Ce projet de loi octroie beaucoup trop de pouvoir au ministre et n'est pas suffisamment clair sur les avantages que les artistes peuvent en tirer.

Le ministre a affirmé dans son discours qu'il avait eu des consultations avec les artistes sur les recommandations de l'UNESCO. C'est bien, mais il semblerait que certaines de ces recommandations et les résultats de ces consultations n'aient pas été prises en compte dans la préparation de ce projet de loi. Est-ce qu'il y a eu des consultations sur le projet de loi tel que présenté devant cette Assemblée ? Je ne le pense pas, d'où l'indignation des artistes. J'inviterai donc le ministre à rencontrer les différents *stakeholders* artistiques et à revoir sa copie en prenant considération leurs préoccupations et appréhensions.

J'en ai terminé.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

(7.22 p.m.)

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

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, for giving me the opportunity to bring my humble contribution to the debate.

Mr Speaker, Sir, *c'est la coutume, bien sûr*, in this august Assembly that we need to rebut the previous orators. It was a blatant example of how the previous hon. Member, who just spoke right before me, takes art for granted. I say so because she started her speech by saying she expected hon. Dr. Jagutpal to deliver a speech, because it is the Artist Bill and because he loves singing. So, he had to perform here and he had to deliver a speech, as well as the Fourth Member of Quatre Bornes. And she congratulated hon. Mrs Mayotte. So, for me, I feel sad because these people really do not value art. Coming here in this august Assembly, taking art and artists for granted, is what she has done right now.

Mr Speaker, Sir, while the Leader of the Opposition was talking, this has triggered so many thing and so many thoughts in the mind of so many Members on this side of the House. I was just thinking about it, you know, the relationship, Mr Speaker, Sir, between art and economics is a profound tragedy. This is not me, but there is an article on the internet where people can just go and read about it. It goes further saying that art is the essence and it should not reduce to economic value. Listening to the Leader of the Opposition - I would like to point out he is not present in the House, while one of the basic respect towards the Chair is to be present and listen to the other orators as well. So, there is one thing that I would like to tell the hon. Leader of the Opposition is that artists are not service providers. Artists have art in them, have talent in them and have something creative which they need to put outside.

Previous Members in the House have been talking mainly about MASA, music, paintings, art as well, but let us not mix all of them. Let us give each and every one their due and their respect. The Leader of the Opposition further mentioned, « *on ne peut pas tout faire.* » This is a really ridiculous because, Mr Speaker, Sir, he comes in the august Assembly giving us lessons while he has been the Minister of Tourism. When we talk about tourism, through MTPA, you promote culture and this is what the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage is doing currently. *On ne peut pas tout faire, oui. Mais kan nou fer, li pa bon!* So, please, let us decide.

Furthermore, it also brings to the House that there is no coordination between Members of the Opposition. The hon. Leader of the Opposition had a different kind of speech, while hon. Dr. Boolell was quite positive about this Bill. So, *il n'y a pas de coordination* between Members of the Opposition.

He also further mentioned that if he was the Minister, he would have created a dance troupe, taking them around. But when he was the Minister of Tourism, I do not think he did it. *Mais par contre, ce qu'il a fait*, I am sure the House will remember, he was talking about the 'prince,' but who was the 'prince' when there was a *reportage* on Thalassa and he was there on the island! So, hon. Member who just spoke right in front of me, yes, we are talented because *on a la joie de vivre*, we love singing. We are happy unlike you, on the other side, who are always seeing everything dark. So, this brings me to one thing that we, on this side, yes, we love singing. So, do not be jealous if on your side, you have more dancers, whether it is *Macarena*, whether it is dancing on Thalassa! You are talented as well! So, please, *aret zalou! Les nou travay!*

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me just come back to the Bill right now. Of course, I am very grateful to be able to lend my voice to this important Bill, which is about to change the scenery of artist in Mauritius. It is actually an immense pleasure, I would say, a heartfelt pleasure for me to lend my voice after the speech of my knowledgeable colleague and friend, hon. Mrs Mayotte in the Chamber. Trust me, it is not an easy task *de prendre la parole juste après l'honorable* Mayotte. I would like also to congratulate my brother, hon. Minister Avinash Teeluck for daring to change the artistic scenery in Mauritius.

Today, more than ever, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is important to make sure that we acknowledge the contribution of the Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage and the officers working relentlessly. I will lay emphasis on this that the team of the Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage has been working relentlessly in improving the lives of the artists. Here, I would like to mention the name of late Mr Soobarah, who was part of the Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage and who did a very good job in preserving the cultural heritage of Mauritius. The team of Arts and Cultural Heritage has been making sure that our cultural fabric, our heritage from our fathers and grandfathers are maintained and preserved.

Hon. Avinash Teeluck has delivered a clear and explicit speech which highlights his zeal and passion in giving the artist their due. Mr Speaker, Sir, the advent of social media has changed how the artists expose their art now. On one side, it allows the artists to market their products, skills, getting themselves some new brands and also obtaining a bigger market. However, this overexposure does not necessarily guarantee a career to the artist whether it is on musical side, whether it is painting or any form of art.

I shall here refer to an article published in Forbes on February 27 2018, which is still relevant after almost 5 years, where there is the question, 'This is Why The world Needs Artists?' –

“These days, carving out a career in a creative industry requires artistic perspective, technical skill and an entrepreneurial spirit. Statistically speaking, more and more of us are becoming freelancers.”

It further says that some artists now go to –

“selling products, soliciting services and doing all we can to pay the bills.”

This Bill being brought to this House, Mr Speaker, Sir, is what exactly we do not want our artists to do. We do not want our artists to do anything just to be able to pay the bills. Previous Members have stated it very clearly, *nou pe donn artist zot dû*, as has been said by so many other colleagues.

Being an artist in any sphere be it musical, creative, artistic side, painting, movie making amongst other is a kind of a form of expressing oneself, letting one's imagination work. Not everyone really wants a job 9-4. Some find peace in letting their creativity reach new heights. But how do they do that while paying their bills if we, local people, do not show support to their works?

The hon. Leader of the Opposition mentioned about Lyon, I wonder whether it was artists from Lyon *ou bien* it was local artists. Why not promoting local artists? This is what has been done relentlessly by the hon. Minister Avinash Teeluck in different concerts, in different moment, promoting the language and the cultural heritage of Mauritius.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is one question that we need to ask us here, whether it is Ministers or anyone who is following the debates right now: how many times has an artist expose his product whether it is performing art or a painting, exposing it for free? For too long artists have been waiting for their due. You know, the argument they use to have an artist to come to an event is: come, you will have exposure, *pu gagne exposure*, more people will get to know about them.

This is what the Bill comes to really correct, that is, as stated in the main object of the Bill, to set up and implement for the establishment of Professional in Arts Council. And as it is stimulated in the memorandum of explanation, the role is to –

- “(b) promote the status of professionals in the Arts,
 - (c) enhance the social and economic status of professionals in the Arts;
 - (d) implement the State Recognition Allowance scheme and pension scheme for professionals in the Arts;
 - (e) enhance access to training and skills development for professionals in the Arts;
- and

- (f) develop and promote the marketing of artistic products and services nationally and internationally.”

This Bill is not just a creation of the hon. Minister of Arts, there have been representations, there have been communications, there have been dialogues with artists but this also comes in line with the recommendations of the UNESCO 1980 whereby it says –

“The 1980 Recommendation concerning the Status of the Artist calls upon Member States to improve the professional, social and economic status of artists through the implementation of policies and measures related to training, social security, employment, income and tax conditions, mobility and freedom of expression”.

Another section which I would like to share my opinion about, which I welcome, is the Section 9 - Sectoral Expert Committees, whereby there is going to be Sectoral Expert Committees, that is, they are going to have different committees with experts on it. And of course, we need legislators as well to see whether it is right or wrong. That is why we need the support of the Officers of the Ministry of Arts. I fully agree to this section and it has my full support as well.

However, Mr Speaker, Sir, if there is one thing that I would like to draw to the attention of the hon. Minister is, he is definitely bringing a change in the life of artists, but if there is one thing that we need to make sure that we protect our artists is the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Artificial Intelligence is now taking over the world and AI generated images or paintings are now gaining more momentum. So we need to know how as legislators, as policy makers, we can help our artists, protect their rights as well.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall not repeat what has already been said by my colleagues. I would therefore conclude by saying that we are talking about an industry of artists who provide joy, happiness to each and every individual in this House and they have been doing so during the pandemic. We have been seeing on Facebook, on live Twitter or Instagram as well, our local artists performing while we were confined at home and it has been so valuable for us, for our mental health as well. Therefore, it is important that those artists be remunerated and they should have also a plan for their retirement. So, on this side of the House, we embrace change, foster innovation and optimise resources to meet the evolving needs and priorities of the artist community.

I, therefore, fully support this Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am done, thank you very much.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bodha!

(7.33 p.m.)

Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal): Merci, M. le président.

Que voulons-nous réaliser, M. le président ? Quel est l'objectif de ce projet de loi ? Pouvons-nous galvaniser la force créatrice du génie mauricien ? Pour beaucoup dont j'ai entendu le discours, le projet de loi est comme une panacée et que demain pour les artistes, on aura un monde nouveau. Mais posons-nous les vraies questions. Que représente la culture dans l'émergence d'une nation ? Comment faire naître le talent de demain ? Le chef de l'opposition en a parlé. Comment est-ce que la conscience d'un peuple, l'âme et le battement du cœur d'une nation se reflètent dans la culture ? Comment est-ce que l'expression du talent, du génie créateur, l'épanouissement de l'artiste peuvent ne pas être garantis mais assurés par les autorités ? Parce que l'artiste rêve toujours d'un avenir meilleur, d'un monde meilleur, et il est universel.

Alors, M. le président, je me pose la question. Mais qui est l'artiste ? Si vous me donnez le temps, on raconte que les mineurs qui partaient dans les mines de charbon emmenaient avec eux un petit oiseau, un serin dans une cage. Au fur et à mesure qu'ils entraient dans les entrailles de la terre, ils observaient le comportement du serin et dès que l'oiseau montrait des signes qu'il avait du mal à respirer et qu'il allait mourir, les mineurs décidaient alors de s'arrêter. Ils savaient que l'air est devenu irrespirable à cause de carbone monoxyde, fatal pour eux. Alors, on raconte que dans la vie, dans notre société, ce sont les artistes qui nous démontrent quand notre société est en danger, tant sur le plan moral ou social que celui de la misère des hommes et des femmes dans tous les sens.

L'artiste a la sensibilité à fleur de peau pour chanter, pour créer, pour pleurer, pour jubiler lors des grands moments de notre vie et de notre histoire, et c'est lui qui donne le pouls de la nation dans son âme. Est-ce que ce projet de loi reflète tout ça ? Je ne pense pas. Vous allez voir que les plus grandes révolutions ont connu des heures de gloire et ont été chantées dans les rues et ici même dans les années 1976 à 1982, pourtant des années sombres où de multiples raisons socio-économiques, la misère, le chômage, la corruption, ces années-là ont connu une vitalité culturelle forte. Pourquoi ? Je pense à Soleil Rouge, à Bam Cuttayan, Zul Ramiah, les frères

Joganah. Ces textes étaient extraordinaires, remplis d'émotions et de vitriol dans une perspective révolutionnaire et que le tout peut être dans son essence sublime en quelques mots. *Ene sel lepep ene sel nation*, c'était la résonance de liberté et la foi dans l'avenir. Pourquoi il y a eu un désert culturel après ?

Il y a eu 1982, les 60-0 ont été l'apothéose de cette quête et on se souvient de ce grand rendez-vous au Champ de Mars pour célébrer la victoire. M. le président, notre terre, c'est une terre extraordinaire et il faut se rappeler les élections de 1967 ont eu lieu en août. Après les élections de 1967, il y a eu les émeutes de janvier 1968, il y a eu le couvre-feu et l'état d'urgence. Il y a eu l'arrivée des soldats et des KSLI de Singapour. Il y avait un pays déchiré, un climat d'angoisse face à l'avenir, des morts et des violences inouïes frisant la barbarie, M. le président. La date choisie pour l'indépendance était le 12 mars et vous savez qu'est-ce qui s'est passé ? Le Premier ministre et le gouvernement d'alors a demandé une chanson en créole et en bhojpuri des frères Gowry « *donn to la main, prend mo la main, do tohar haath le hamar haath* » et ils allaient partout dans le pays pour chanter justement l'unité, pour dire que nous allons connaître la liberté et qu'il fallait maintenant travailler ensemble. Eh bien moi, j'ai eu le bonheur de raviver cette chanson, 50 ans plus tard, avec 400 artistes au Champ de Mars, M. le président.

C'est pour vous dire que chez nous aussi, avec l'histoire, nous avons célébré la liberté, le vivre-ensemble. Mais nous sommes une terre d'inspiration et pendant des siècles, des artistes, et non des moindres, ont trouvé dans cette île une inspiration exceptionnelle. Il faudra renouveler cela, M. le président. Joseph Conrad, Charles Baudelaire, Mark Twain, avec cette phrase éternelle – Dieu créa l'île Maurice et en a fait une copie du paradis. Il y a eu VS Naipaul et aujourd'hui nous avons Ananda Devi, une romancière, née de Maurice, qui parle de ses entrailles de l'île Maurice. Où est-elle? Où se retrouve-t-elle dans ce projet de loi, M. le président ? Nous avons bien sûr un prix Nobel de la littérature, Jean-Marie Le Clézio, de souche mauricienne. Où est-il dans ce projet de loi ? Où viendra-t-il ? Nous avons eu Vaco, peintre qui a laissé sa marque et son style, et bien sûr nous avons eu Malcolm de Chazal qui a conquis le monde avec sa palette empreinte de d'innocence et de simplicité.

M. le président, ce projet de loi, je le salue. C'est bien, il fallait répertorier ; il fallait répertorier les artistes, il fallait consolider dans des structures une liste. Il fallait dire aux artistes, bien sûr qu'ils devraient pouvoir compter sur les autorités, mais il y a eu une trop grande

politisation à outrance dans un monde où les artistes veulent œuvrer en toute liberté. Je salue le brillant discours du leader de l'opposition, parce qu'il a posé les vraies questions, M. le président.

Maintenant, pour moi, il y a un impératif absolu. Le ministère dépense énormément de son temps – ce n'est pas la faute du ministre, parce que nous avons vécu ça pendant des années – et de ses ressources à organiser les événements nationaux au fil des mois ; le plus important étant la célébration de la fête nationale. Il s'occupe des fédérations, des Trusts, des *Councils*. Moi je propose qu'il y ait un comité national indépendant qui assume cette responsabilité pendant toute l'année, libérant le ministre et le ministère pour se consacrer totalement aux artistes, à la culture et la promotion des arts.

Il faut changer le fonctionnement du ministère, M. le président. Un ministre ne peut pas passer son temps à organiser les célébrations. Il y a un comité, il faut laisser ça. Il doit devenir lui-même Monsieur culture. Il nous faut un Jack Lang mauricien. Il nous faut un André Malraux mauricien. Il doit respirer la culture, le ministre, et il doit rencontrer les gens, et sa porte devrait être grande ouverte comme la dit Gandhi. Il devrait être un homme, je définis peut-être ce qu'il pourrait être demain. Il faut qu'il ait les portes ouvertes. Il faut qu'il soit là pour rencontrer les artistes. Il faut qu'il soit là pour organiser des événements, pour organiser et aider l'émergence du talent. Il faut qu'il soit là comme celui qui respire la culture et qui devient Monsieur culture. C'est comme ça que Jack Lang a réussi et ce pays est un pays fabuleux de métissage, de cultures, de races.

M. le président, c'est un projet de loi qui propose une liste - c'est un peu comme le *Workers' Rights*. Qu'est-ce que les artistes pourraient être ? On n'a pas compris les artistes. On ne peut pas embrigader les artistes dans une liste. On ne peut pas embrigader les artistes dans une catégorie. Dans quelle catégorie allez-vous mettre Jean Marie Le Clézio ? Dans quelle catégorie allez-vous mettre Ananda Devi ? Vaco ?

Il nous faut une révolution culturelle, M. le président et je vais parler maintenant de l'île Maurice à l'international. Jean-Marie Le Clézio est là bien sûr, Ananda Devi, il y a eu Marie-Thérèse Humbert avec « *A l'autre bout de moi* ». Il y a eu énormément d'autres romans, M. le président.

Vous savez, l'honorable Madame Sandra Mayotte a parlé de Denis Azor. J'étais en France à cette époque. Il avait été sur tous les grands plateaux de télévision de l'Europe. '*A la li la*' était devenu la chanson de l'été. C'était un bouleversement extraordinaire, le séga porté sur le plan international avec des millions de disques. Ça m'a fendu le cœur de voir Denis Azor gratter la guitare dans un restaurant il n'y a pas longtemps, et il y a tellement d'autres artistes qui n'ont pas eu ce que nous devrions faire, et ce soir, M. le président, il y aura un dîner, ce soir ou demain soir, au palais du Louvre à Paris où le président Emmanuel Macron va recevoir le Premier ministre indien, Narendra Modi, à un dîner au musée du Louvre et il va lui présenter quelques pièces de l'art française; ça veut dire de la culture française ce soir lors d'un dîner.

Mais nous devons donner, je suis entièrement d'accord la culture, c'est le fondement même de notre pays. Un pays qui est riche, économiquement riche mais culturellement pauvre n'est pas un pays où on vit, et c'est pour cela que je dis ce que le leader de l'opposition a dit, les R 20 millions – savez-vous un concert au Swami Vivekananda coûte plus de R 20 millions ? Un concert ? Moi j'en ai organisé plusieurs. M. le président.

J'ai organisé le '*Soul of the World*', j'ai fait deux festivals de cinéma. J'ai fait 'L'Eveil des couleurs' à Chamarel. J'ai fait 'Lumière et partage'. Je voulais la symbiose entre le ministère du Tourisme et le ministère de la Culture et j'ai proposé aussi pourquoi on ne fait pas dans le billet d'avion de chaque touriste, un *voucher* de 25 dollars ou 25 euros obligatoire qu'il peut dépenser à aller assister à une œuvre ou une représentation culturelle ou artistique.

M. le président, il y a eu beaucoup de choses qui ont été faites autour de Maurice, parce que c'est une terre, une terre d'inspiration ; une belle terre, M. le président, et je ne comprends pas pourquoi le ministre, dans son *Board*, il n'y a aucun artiste. Mais c'est dramatique. Je ne dis pas que les fonctionnaires ne sont pas des hommes et des femmes cultivés, mais il nous faut des artistes. Alors je pose une autre question. Je voudrais que le ministre puisse répondre à cette question. Quand on va faire l'enregistrement des artistes, est-ce qu'on va demander leur certificat de moralité ? C'est une vraie question, M. le président. Quand on va choisir les artistes pour représenter Maurice, quand on va choisir les artistes pour leur donner les *schemes*, pour leur donner des facilités, va-t-on tenir compte de leur certificat de moralité ? Parce qu'on le fait pour le sport. Stéphan Buckland a fait ce commentaire. Alors, si pour moi, c'est une question fondamentale, j'aimerais bien que le ministre me réponde, et bien sûr le ministre s'arrose de trop

de pouvoir. Il s'arrose de trop de pouvoir de *register*, *deregister* et au Conseil, il n'y a que des hommes et des femmes qui sont du service public. Mais il faudrait une majorité d'artistes pour conseiller le ministre. Il faudrait une majorité d'artistes pour entourer le ministre, le pauvre.

An hon Member: Eh le pauvre.

Mr Bodha: Non, non, je dis 'le pauvre'.

Ms Anquetil: Dans le bon sens.

Mr Bodha: Dans le bon sens! C'est ce que je propose. Demain un ministère de la Culture devrait être le pilier central pour le *nation building*, pour que nous soyons un peuple, pour que nous soyons un peuple riche de sa culture, de ses talents, de son génie et de son épanouissement. Le leader de l'opposition a évoqué la Corée du Sud, mais la Corée du Sud a élevé justement la culture de la chanson comme une industrie et il y a des académies, il y a les jeunes talents qui montent, on fait le *scouting*. On leur donne toutes les facilités pour qu'ils puissent s'épanouir. Il nous faut faire ça, M. le président, et le talent ne manque pas dans ce pays. Comment allons-nous savoir si un enfant aime le piano et qu'il peut jouer du piano ? Pour l'athlétisme, on est en train de faire le *scouting*. On peut le faire parce que c'est à l'école, mais pour les arts, il n'y a pas, parce que les arts sont les parents pauvres de tout gouvernement et je propose là justement que le ministère devienne un pilier. Maintenant ...

Mr Speaker: Try to conclude.

Mr Bodha: *Oh so fast? So fast!* Alors, je prends le *Council* qui parle de *State Recognition Allowance Scheme and Pension Scheme*. Bon, je voudrais savoir comment les *schemes* vont être mis en place. Cette question a été posée. Je pense que les artistes aussi souhaiteraient savoir combien ils vont contribuer, combien l'État va contribuer et comment justement ce *Pension Scheme* va fonctionner. Il y a aussi le *Promote the status of professionals in the Arts*. Vous savez que Cliff Richard est devenu Sir Cliff Richard, Elton John est devenu Sir. Avons-nous pensé un jour donner la plus haute distinction mauricienne à un artiste mauricien ? Il faut le faire, il faut l'encourager, M. le président.

Et moi, je pense à Bob Geldof, qui avait organisé *Live Aid*.

Alors, je suis content qu'il y ait un début. On est en train de répertorier, de faire un *listing*, de prendre l'artiste sérieusement, mais il faut lui donner la liberté et il faut qu'il y ait un

conseil où il y a une majorité d'artistes. Et deuxièmement, le directeur, 'Monsieur culture' – je ne sais pas qui sera cet oiseau rare – qui pourra demain dire que 'c'est moi qui vais diriger la révolution culturelle de Maurice.'

Je pense qu'il faut redéfinir complètement notre politique culturelle et le ministère. Je demande au ministre des Finances de lui donner les moyens et il faut demander les moyens aux sponsors. Beaucoup d'événements sont faits finalement par les sponsors. Je termine là-dessus, M. le président, une semaine au festival de Cannes...

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Inn bien voyaze !*

Mr Bodha: Pour faire le marketing de 'Maurice île Paradis.'

An hon. Member: *Pa vre sa ?*

Mr Bodha: Et c'était aux frais des sponsors. Il faut sponsoriser, il faut donner aux ministres les moyens, et il faut que chaque touriste donne 30 dollars ou 30 euros dans son voucher. Cela se fait à Dubai et cela nous donnera une manne. A ce moment, on pourra dire à l'artiste 'maintenant, on est avec toi. Vas-y, crée et laisse fleurir ton génie, et donne nous de belles choses.' Parce que la beauté, c'est la culture.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: I will now suspend the Sitting for one hour.

At 7.51 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 9.01 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, be seated! I now call hon. Nuckcheddy!

(9.01 p.m.)

Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, for giving me this opportunity to intervene on this Bill. I am happy to see my friend from the other side of the House, hon. Franco Quirin, on the list because...

(Interruptions)

...hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie mentioned that those who got a talent in singing, like our friend hon. Dr. Jagutpal, hon. Mrs Tania Diolle should have been intervening. He is also a good singer for those who do not know! We saw his talent during the pandemic! *Pa bizin zalou, mais* I am happy that he is on the list.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, this magnificent country around which ‘we gather as one people, as one nation in peace, justice and liberty’ had to wait for this caring Government to bring a Bill, which the hon. Minister mentioned while moving the Bill, that it is a Bill that will provide dignity to our artists. It took us four years, yes, four years to bring this Bill. When we listened to a former Minister of Tourism, who is today the Leader of Opposition, who is very much aware of the problems of the artists and who did nothing to give dignity to the artists, and today when I listened to him, it seems that he is very proud of it.

This Government, Mr Speaker, Sir, will be known for giving dignity to its fellow citizens. We gave dignity to our pensioners, we gave dignity to those women who were working on a full time basis for a mere salary of Rs1,500 per month, and now, we are giving dignity to our artists. By looking at what we are doing, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am very much sure that our artists will be proud of us. All the artists that we have on this island, I am just imagining our artists, our singers like Claudio, at this moment, he would be saying ‘*bhai Teeluck, bhai Teeluck, get ki kalite dost ou ete do bhai!*’

Today, on this magnificent Tuesday, as I move to intervene on this Bill, I am sure that the soul of Fanfan, Ti Frère, Sona Noyan, Siven Chinien, Bam Cuttayan, Serge Lebrasse, Hossanee, Meera Mohun and many others from wherever they are, they must be feeling proud of this Government.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not saying that nothing has been done in the past, be it this Government, the previous government or the one before the previous government. They have at their level given recognition to artists by, for instance, honouring at least one artist every year on the occasion of the Independence Day. We have seen postage stamps on our artists, but this Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, is a landmark in our history.

This Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, is promoting those of our fellow citizens who have helped in making our country known for our unity in diversity, those people who ‘*avek lakok pistas finn afront vag losean!*’ Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Dr. Boolell mentioned that our artists are now being

hon. Members in this House, but let me remind him that these artists, in a recent past, have been mocked in this House for their background. Hon. friends on the other side of the House, in their attempt to belittle us, did not know what harm they have done, not to us, but to themselves. Hon. Dr. Boolell once again came with the argument that this Bill's merits have been outweighed by the demerits. The Opposition that we have today, Mr Speaker, Sir, who cannot even negotiate an *alliance*, they keep on singing '*Marye mwa mo kontan li*,' but still, we do not see *ni fiansay, ni mariaz*, and they keep giving us lessons!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, these are the people who have been in power for generations and have done nothing apart from *khale pile*, having Macarena party at Albion and doing '*paink painku julwa loto*' or '*maza karle meri jaan phir se na hoga jawan!*' (Have fun my beloved, we won't get young once again.)

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, our artists are people who have contributed to build a *nation mauricienne*. Unfortunately, we saw that hon. Dr. Boolell appreciates an artist depending on the political party to which he/she belongs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, last time, while intervening on the Central Procurement Bill, I mentioned that this Government gives importance to international institutions. While moving the Bill, the hon. Minister mentioned the Recommendation of 1980 concerning the Status of the Artist which calls upon "Member States to improve the professional, social and economic status of artists through the implementation of policies and measures related to training, social security employment, income and tax conditions, mobility and freedom of expression. It also recognises the rights of artists to be organised in trade unions or professional organisations that can represent and defend the interest of their members."

I agree with the hon. Members when they say that artists are the important players in the socioeconomic development of a country. Mauritius is an island and a country of immigrants, Mr Speaker, Sir. When our ancestors landed here from India, China, Africa, Europe, and the other parts of the world, they brought their language, their cuisine, their culture, and their music with them. Despite that they were *esklav enn lot esklav*, no one had ever been able to remove this

heritage which they brought as it were the things that were buried deep in their soul. Together with cultivating the fields, building the infrastructures, fishing or whatever trade they were doing, they sowed the seed of new culture that we so cherish today, Mr Speaker, Sir.

We have today blended the *ravann* with the *tabla*, the *tabla* with the guitar and the guitar with triangle. Today, while for the West, Sega may just mean a videogame company for them, but for us, it means our soul. Our soul, Mr Speaker, Sir, which makes us move forward as Alain Ramanisum would have said, '*nou met nou lekor devan, nou lekor derier, nou tourne, nou tourne.*' '*Lame dan lame,*' we build this '*nation morisien.*' This '*nation morisien*' which we are all proud of it, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is our *chéri*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, please, allow me to express my love for my country by the phrase of Claudio '*Chérie je t'aime, chérie je t'adore.*'

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill is intended to empower our artists, to provide a dignity to our artists; we are talking of those existing artists. And the hon. Leader of the Opposition mentioned that the first step would have been to identify among the 1.4 million of population that we have and this is the only proposition which I could note from the long intervention he had. As per his say, we must do nothing for our existing artists and just concentrate on identification of new artists. This is how we should perform, Mr Speaker, Sir, according to the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

I also listened to hon. Bodha. Listening to him makes you feel that hon. Bodha has forgotten that some time back, in a recent past, he was part of this Government; a Minister in this Government. He is concerned about what this Bill reserves for our artists and instead he feels that we must change the way the Ministry operates. The role of the Minister – he wants the Minister to be '*Monsieur Culture*'. Hon. Bodha finds no artist in the Council but if he had gone through the section 6 (1), he would have seen different representatives of the artists who would be represented in the Council. But for him, just because the Minister is going to appoint these artists, these people are no longer artists. Hon. Bodha mentioned he organised several concerts, several activities, travelled a lot.

Mr Toussaint: *Bien promene!*

Mr Nuckcheddy: But hon. Bodha, unfortunately, it does seem that this country has not benefited much from him. Had he not mentioned all these concerts, the trips, no one would have known that he had been an event organiser of concerts and had been a globetrotter. What I would now advise hon. Bodha is to let this Government take this country to a new height. And to him, I will advise – *dodo baba, dodo baba, laissez papa courtize mama.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill provides for the establishment of the professional in the Arts Council, whose functions are described in the Bill and whatever hon. Dr. Boolell may say, this Bill will definitely empower our artists. Let me explain why I believe so, Mr Speaker, Sir.

First of all, let me explain what ‘empowerment’ means. Empowerment, Mr Speaker, Sir, means bringing autonomy and self-determination in people so that they can live their life in a responsible and self-determining manner. They have a strength on which we should not doubt. As if you doubt on your strength, you are giving strength to your doubts. So, Mr Speaker Sir, the Council that will be created will be called in the discharge of its function –

- to promote the status of professional in the Arts;
- implement the State Recognition Allowance Scheme and Pension Scheme for professionals in the Arts;
- enhance access to training and skills development for professionals in the Arts, and
- develop and promote the marketing of artistic products and services nationally and internationally.

If this is not empowering, Mr Speaker, Sir, what is it then?

Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand, hon. Dr. Boolell, sitting on the other side of the House, he cannot just come and say that this Bill is what is required. However, he does recognise that the Government did some efforts, as he said during the pandemic, and he is perfectly right in believing so, for people will recognise that this Government introduced the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme under which the artists were not left stranded. We even introduced the Artists Support Plan 2021 and there are several other such measures that we have put in place, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Dr. Boolell mentioned that he had the opportunity to interface with many artists and he was led to understand that these artists want to be heard and be

part of the decision-making process. Then, Mr Speaker, Sir, when you look at the composition of the Board that will administer the Council, provision is made to have representatives from the field of visual arts, literature, music, audio-visual, digital media and so on. But the issue of hon. Dr. Boolell and of the hon. Leader of the Opposition is that these people will be nominated by the Minister. Also, he referred to section 17 of the Bill, which says that aggrieved artists can make appeal to the Minister, but he is concerned that the Minister will have a *mainmise totale*. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, should a Minister not have a *mainmise* on the institutions that fall under his Ministry?

Mr Speaker, Sir, it seems that the Opposition has a problem when the Ministers look after their Ministries. And then, they will come with PQs, some will even come and ask questions on the names and pay packets of the Chairman and boards and yet, they do not want the Minister to look after the Ministry properly. Hon. Dr. Boolell dares to say that the Labour Party alliance will crush the MSM regime in the next elections because they will campaign in poetry and govern in prose; this is what he said here. Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not know how he will campaign, whether in prose or in poetry. But I have seen him, and the people of Mauritius have seen him, campaigning with *macaroni*, not in poetry and prose. Everyone saw that, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me tell hon. Dr. Boolell that the next election will be the '*dernier regard lor la gare*'. As for us, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are the dawn; we are the light with a new hope. We are the '*naiya sirey*' for these people. In the meantime, I will tell the Opposition to continue *pomper, pomper, ziska gramatin zot pomper*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill makes provision for the Council to implement the State Recognition Allowance scheme and pension scheme, as I said earlier. And while we are doing all this, now hon. Dr. Boolell is talking about election and campaign in prose and poetry.

Dr. Boolell: Campaign in poetry.

Mr Nuckcheddy: Election campaign, *la marche*, this is all that they know, Mr Speaker, Sir. Elections will come when the time for it to come. We are not there yet, and they dare talking of bribe *électoral* and even going up to the Privy Council just for their own benefits.

Our artists are people who compose songs based on their sufferings, on their daily lives, their tragedy and their happiness. And to these people, Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government is

bringing a law which will enhance access to training and skill development. *On veut débarrasser ces gens-là de leur souffrance, M. le président. Enough of the aköz zot kouler, zot pe pas mizer lor sa later ki nou apel lafrik de mo ban frer.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, if you go on La Chaussée Street during the daytime, just around KFC, you will see a musician playing some instruments and singing in different languages in a very melodious voice. This is how this gentleman earns his living actually. Mr Speaker, Sir, I know this gentleman since the 1980's and at that time he was a star as an entertainer in a big hotel. His talents were appreciated by everybody. I still remember him doing mimicry and the one I liked the most was the way he was imitating Bollywood star, Shatrughan Sinha with '*ek bol daal, dugo puri*' (a bowl of dhol and two puris). And today, when you pass by the La Chaussée Street, you see him just playing his guitar and singing to earn his living. This is not what this Government wants our artists to become, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I agree with those who say that you do not cease to exist because you are ignored. Mr Speaker, Sir, our artists, our Sandra, our Rambha Ramtohol, our Alain Ramanisum, our Laura Beg should not be ignored. This Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, is about taking care of them. And if you go through the e-book published by UNESCO entitled '*Culture & Working Conditions for Artists*', it represents an overview of the existing and emerging laws to improve the status of artists, the artists in the current digital age environment, copyright and fair remunerations, issues related to transitional mobility of artists for greater possibilities of funding and collaboration, and a summary of the human rights and fundamental freedoms that these conditions should provide through the different social protection system that exists so far.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in a country like ours where we understand that the art plays an important role in the development of a nation, we are a country where our people have developed their skills without any formal training.

Mr Speaker, Sir, keeping the above in mind and to provide support in the implementation of the recommendations concerning the status of artists adopted by UNESCO in 1980 and the UNESCO 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression, this Bill is the need of the hour.

I would like to thank the hon. Minister for this Bill. Believe me, Mr Speaker, Sir, a law in an area that is multidisciplinary and encompasses numerous aspects is a laudable effort.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have always been by the side of our fellow citizens and today, it is an opportunity to be by the side of those who believe that being an artist means believing in life. Today we are by the side of those people who make us see what they can't see and I am proud to say that I will support this Bill.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(9.20 p.m.)

Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): M. le président, le *Status of the Artist Bill* est un projet de loi qui était réclamé par le monde culturel et artistique mauricien depuis de nombreuses années, car il est important que nos amis les artistes et autres professionnels de l'art et de la culture bénéficient d'un ensemble de dispositions légales qui visent à protéger leur droits sociaux et professionnels, notamment qu'ils soient traités d'une façon équitable en termes de rémunération et de protection sociale, d'emploi et de conditions de travail. Mais tout laisse croire que le ministre des Arts et du Patrimoine culturel a malheureusement raté le coche, ce qui explique sans aucun doute la déception affichée si ce n'est une levée de boucliers des artistes après la présentation de ce texte de loi en première lecture.

En effet, M. le président, dans d'autres pays où il existe une loi pour la protection des artistes, en particulier en Europe, ces lois reconnaissent les artistes comme des travailleurs à part entière avec des droits et des obligations similaires à ceux des autres travailleurs. La loi établit également un régime de sécurité sociale spécifique pour les artistes qui leur permet de bénéficier d'une couverture sociale adaptée à leur situation professionnelle et dans la même foulée, ces lois ont été également conçues pour protéger leurs droits d'auteurs et leur propriété intellectuelle.

C'est donc fondamental, voire primordial que les artistes ont le droit de contrôler la production, la distribution et la communication de leurs œuvres ainsi que le droit de percevoir des redevances pour leur utilisation. Je pensais sincèrement que l'expérience traumatisante vécue par nos amis les artistes et le monde culturel dans son ensemble pendant la pandémie de la Covid-19 allait beaucoup inspirer le ministre dans la rédaction de sa loi, mais, M. le président, après avoir lu et relu ce texte de loi, consulté quelques amis artistes, je dois avouer ma déception, car comme je l'ai indiqué au départ, ce texte de loi ne vient pas répondre aux besoins de l'art et de la culture mauricienne. Pourtant, le monde culturel est un espace dynamique et diversifié avec de nombreuses formes d'expression artistique et des influences variées.

Être un artiste aujourd'hui ne consiste pas uniquement à évoluer sur un podium pour amuser un public spécifique, pour aller danser dans des hôtels ou dans des cabarets. Le monde artistique mauricien a évolué, M. le président. Il a même fait sa révolution. Aujourd'hui, l'espace culturel et artistique mauricien est beaucoup plus vaste, que ce soit le cinéma, la télévision, le théâtre et les arts de la scène, la littérature, l'écriture, l'art numérique, la réalité virtuelle, les arts visuels, la pluralité linguistique et les réseaux sociaux, entre autres. Nous avons à Maurice un espace culturel et artistique bouillonnant, créatif, inspirant, sensible au fléau de notre société et à de l'énergie à revendre et qui mérite donc d'être soutenu et encouragé.

Les artistes mauriciens, M. le président, maîtrisent désormais toutes les plateformes qui sont mises à leur disposition, que ce soit localement ou sur les scènes internationales. Or ce texte de loi leur apporte comme réponse une carte des artistes, comme établie sous la section 14 (6) du texte de loi. Et la grande faiblesse de ce texte de loi est l'absence d'une définition appropriée des artistes à Maurice, comme a du reste déploré l'Union des artistes dans une analyse qu'elle a circulée après la présentation du *Status of the Artist Bill*. Pourtant, dans l'élaboration de cette loi, le gouvernement avait bénéficié des conseils d'un expert de l'UNESCO, et cela depuis 2017. Le rapport de cet expert que j'ai pu consulter, aborde les différents points que j'ai mentionnés plus haut et qui va dans le sens que réclament les artistes.

Malheureusement, dans l'élaboration de ce texte de loi, certains aspects importants des recommandations faites par l'UNESCO, qui je dois le rappeler a travaillé avec un expert mauricien nommé par le ministre des Arts et du Patrimoine culturel, n'ont pas été pris en considération et ne donnent pas les définitions qui étaient attendues. Comme je l'ai indiqué plus tôt, le cœur du problème demeure l'absence d'une définition légale du mot 'artiste'. En effet, les artistes disent qu'à chaque fois qu'ils ont eu l'occasion de s'adresser au ministre, la question de donner une définition appropriée du mot 'artiste' a été proposée et reconnue comme étant un des problèmes majeurs au sein de cette profession.

Or, M. le président, c'est sidérant que l'honorable ministre n'ait pas pris cette requête si importante pour les artistes en considération. Certes la section 2 du texte de loi donne une interprétation de quelques corps de métiers du monde artistique, mais pas une définition du mot 'artiste'. Pourtant, il existe bel et bien une définition donnée pour les artistes par l'UNESCO et

avec votre permission, M. le président, je vais citer cette définition qui est très importante dans le cadre de ce débat. Pour l'UNESCO, un artiste est et je cite –

“A person who creates or performs in any field of activity including but not limited to writing cinema, theatre, dance, music, visual and virtual animation which generates emotions and public infatuation, whether the creation is original or an interpretation which entertains the public and whether or not the work can be protected by copy right.”

Je vous avoue de ce fait mon incompréhension du fait que le ministère concerné ait décidé de faire l'impasse sur ce point aussi important.

M. le président, ce texte de loi réduit l'artiste à une fonction qui est attribuée par le secteur du tourisme, un *entertainer*, autrement dit un animateur pour ne pas dire un amuseur, ce qui est loin d'être acceptable par nos amis les artistes. Ce qui est encore inacceptable, c'est que ce projet de loi actuel, par son contenu et son objectif, ne garantit aucune protection sociale aux artistes alors que ces derniers sont engagés dans des activités professionnelles, et comme le disait si bien un célèbre philosophe allemand « un artiste a le pouvoir de réveiller la force d'agir qui sommeille dans d'autres âmes ». Mais il me semble que malgré ces rencontres, comme il a lui-même mentionné, avec les artistes, la force d'agir du ministre ne s'est pas réveillée. Sinon comment expliquer malgré le fait que le ministre ait décidé dans sa loi de restaurer les artistes dans leur droit en incluant la définition *atypical worker*, il n'a pas jugé nécessaire de les inclure dans la catégorie des *self-employed*?

On se souviendra, M. le président, comment pendant la période du *lockdown* et de la Covid-19, le gouvernement avait décidé, avec raison, d'accorder un soutien financier aux artistes dans le cadre du régime d'aide aux travailleurs indépendants, le *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme*. Cette décision avait aussi eu un effet boomerang sur certains artistes qui avaient des contrats de travail avec leurs employeurs. Donc, pour recevoir cette assistance financière de l'État, ils avaient dû de facto démissionner. De ce fait, ces artistes ont été exclus du *payroll* de leurs employeurs et avaient dans la foulée perdu tout leur droit. Et si on note avec satisfaction la définition '*atypical worker*' dans la loi, par contre aucune référence n'a été faite à la section 21 du *Workers Rights Act* de 2019 sur les droits des artistes, qui je vous rappelle sont des travailleurs comme les autres par rapport aux heures de travail comprimées.

Pourquoi est-ce que nos amis les artistes ne peuvent pas bénéficier aux droits des heures de travail comprimées ? J'espère que l'honorable ministre nous apportera des réponses à cette question dans son *summing-up*. Il va sans dire, M. le président, que les définitions données aux différentes catégories des artistes dans la section 2 de ce texte de loi va créer, à coup sûr, plus de confusion parmi les travailleurs de l'industrie culturelle et artistique mauricien.

Par ailleurs, selon ce texte de loi, nos amis les artistes ne seront pas considérés comme des professionnels des arts sauf si leur demande pour obtenir une carte professionnelle est approuvée. On pourrait appeler cela, M. le président, de l'exclusion, car il est inconcevable que la définition, voire la vie d'un ou d'une artiste, se résume à une carte. D'autant que la loi n'indique pas les conditions attachées pour l'obtention de ce fameux sésame.

M. le président, venons-en maintenant à la section 3 qui établit que le Conseil professionnel des artistes (CPA) est visiblement, comme toutes les lois qui sont présentées devant cette Chambre depuis 2015, il y a toujours des postes à pourvoir pour les proches du pouvoir. Avec la création du Conseil professionnel des artistes, plus d'une trentaine de postes seront créés, dont le président et les membres du *Board*, le directeur, le secrétaire et les experts des *sectoral committees*, entre autres. Toutes ces personnes seront payées des fonds publics avant même qu'une seule roupie ne soit déboursée pour les artistes. La question est donc posée : quelle est vraiment la priorité de ce texte de loi ? Faire plaisir aux amis du ministre et du gouvernement ou satisfaire les artistes ? Cette question mérite donc d'être posée quand on sait comment fonctionnent les différents *Boards* et les autres comités qui ont été mis en place ces dernières années, y compris celui de la *Mauritius Society of Authors (MASA)* qui tombe sous la responsabilité de ce même ministère.

Qui plus est, M. le président, les conditions attachées à la nomination de ces experts ne sont pas claires dans le texte de loi, et de ce fait, permet au ministre de nommer qui il veut. La manière dont sera constitué le Conseil professionnel des artistes pose aussi un problème. Un petit exercice, M. président, indique que sur les 13 membres de ce *Board*, six seront nommés par le ministre, y compris le président du Conseil, les trois représentants qui ont supposément de l'expérience dans le domaine artistique et son directeur, et les autres membres seront des représentants de divers ministères.

Je comprends mieux maintenant pourquoi la grosse majorité des artistes ont exprimé leur appréhension devant la composition de ce Conseil, qui aura le pouvoir de décider qui est un artiste ou pas dans notre pays, comme indiqué dans la section 5(b) du texte de loi. Surtout si l'on se réfère à la section 22, *Powers of Minister*, il est clair que le Conseil et les comités d'experts sectoriels seront les exécutants du ministre.

Face à cela, M. le président, nous ne pouvons que souhaiter que le président de ce conseil, de même que les six autres personnes, comme indiqué dans le projet de loi, un *wide experience* dans différents types d'arts qui seront nommés par le ministre, soient issus du monde artistique et culturel mauricien.

Donc, parmi les objectifs du Conseil professionnel des artistes figure à la section 4(d), l'implémentation d'une *State Recognition Allowance Scheme* et the *Pension Scheme* pour les professionnels des arts. Si la loi annonce la création de ces deux *schemes*, par contre, elle ne définit pas comment ils vont être mis en œuvre. Ces deux points problématiques au sein du monde artistique culturel à Maurice ont été soulevés et mis en épingle dans le document de l'UNESCO, notamment dans son *Explanatory Note 2*.

Sur la question du *State Recognition Allowance Scheme*, le modèle qui a été mis en place dans le sport a été cité comme exemple. Comme nous le savons, toutes ces allocations sont accordées en fonction de la performance de l'athlète sur le plan international et continental. Comment appliquer ce même système dans le milieu artistique ? La loi n'apporte malheureusement pas de réponse, et j'ose espérer que le ministre, dans son *summing-up*, viendra avec des éléments de réponse. Également pour la *Pension Scheme*, puisque pour ce plan, l'UNESCO a bel et bien formulé des recommandations que l'on ne retrouve malheureusement pas dans le projet de loi.

Surtout, M. le président, le constat est assez amer à ce niveau où beaucoup de nos amis artistes indépendants ne sont pas couverts par le *National Pension Scheme*, car l'idée d'une reconnaissance sociale à travers une pension supplémentaire aux professionnels des arts ne doit pas être considérée comme un privilège. Il doit, M. le président, s'agir d'une mesure qui stimule les opportunités créatives, substantielles, et le capital culturel de la nation.

Pour conclure, j'invite le ministre à prendre connaissance, s'il ne l'a pas déjà fait, du document rendu public par l'Union des artistes après que ce texte de loi a été rendu public.

Certes, il y a des critiques, mais les artistes ont aussi formulé toute une série de propositions qui méritent d'être considérées. Pour cela, nous devons les remercier sincèrement, mais les remercier aussi pour leur immense contribution au service du pays. Je dis, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Maudhoo!

(9.36 p.m.)

The Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping (Mr S. Maudhoo): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, for granting me the opportunity to intervene and share my humble contribution to the Status of the Artist Bill 2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, first of all, when I listened to the Leader of the Opposition, in fact, I said it once in this House and I do want to repeat again that we have no lesson to learn from a cock who crows at odd hours and runs away every time!

Alors, pour le dire encore, M. le président, l'honorable leader de l'opposition porte très bien son nom, pour ne pas dire *touletan zaza mem*, comme il l'a fait aujourd'hui. Il était ministre pendant autant de fois, il était dans le gouvernement, et il n'a rien fait ! En l'écoutant aujourd'hui, comme s'il est le plus grand défenseur des artistes !

Alors, cessez de faire de la démagogie ! L'honorable leader de l'opposition, c'est vraiment un peu trop ! Encore une fois, de l'autre côté de la Chambre, ils étaient tous au pouvoir, que ce soit le Parti travailliste, le PMSD ou le MMM.

Mr Lobine: Et toi-même !

Mr Maudhoo: Fidèle à leur habitude, ils ne font rien et ce n'est que quand ils sont dans l'opposition qu'ils trouvent qu'il fallait faire plus, qu'il fallait faire ceci, qu'il fallait faire cela !

M. le président, ils n'ont pas tort. Vous savez pourquoi ? Parce qu'ils savent très bien s'il y a quelqu'un qui travaille pour le bonheur de tout un chacun, c'est notre Premier ministre, l'honorable Pravind Kumar Jugnauth. C'est ce gouvernement-là !

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill represents a significant step in recognising and supporting the contribution of artists in our society. Its main objective is to establish the Professional in the Arts Council which will serve as a vital platform for the advancement of our artists especially with

regard to lack of financial stability, lack of recognition and limited access to training and skills development.

The Bill also encompasses provisions that will have a direct impact on the well-being of our artists. It introduces a State Recognition Allowance Scheme and Pension Scheme for professionals in the arts, aiming at providing them with necessary financial support and security they deserve. These measures are intended to alleviate some of the challenges faced by artists and provide them with a stable foundation from which they can pursue their artistic activities. The function and powers outlined in this Bill empowers the council to effectively carry out its responsibilities and serve the needs of professionals in the art, be it specialised, technical or occasional.

By developing and maintaining a directory of professionals in the arts, the council will create a comprehensive resource that facilitates collaboration, networking and the discovery of artistic talent. Mr Speaker, Sir, I am particularly pleased to note that the council will also actively promote opportunities for participation in national and international cultural shows, events and festivals.

By doing so, our talented artists will gain exposure, create international networks and contribute to the cultural exchange that enriches our nation.

Additionally, the Council's role will be to advise the Minister and other public authorities on artistic and cultural policy developments which are crucial. It ensures that decisions made at the policy level are informed by the expertise and experiences of those directly involved in the arts. This collaboration will lead to more comprehensive and inclusive policies that support the growth of our art sector.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the proposed Status of the Artist Bill of 2023 represents a significant stride towards recognising and supporting our artists. By empowering the Council with the necessary functions and powers, we are paving the way for a vibrant, thriving and inclusive arts community in our nation.

M. le président, l'écrivain Natsume écrit dans son ouvrage intitulé 'Oreiller d'herbes' –

« Tout artiste est précieux car il apaise le monde humain et enrichit le cœur des hommes. »

Le célèbre écrivain japonais a parfaitement raison, M. le président. Qu'il s'agisse des écrivains, des chanteurs, des danseurs, des dessinateurs, des sculpteurs, des peintres ou des imitateurs, les artistes nous permettent de nous arrêter, de réfléchir et de penser à travers des messages. Il n'est pas un secret que ma circonscription et ces environs regorgent de nombreux artistes talentueux qui, à leur manière, contribuent à l'économie du pays et font le bonheur de notre industrie touristique. Il enchante les touristes qui nous visitent. Toutefois, il est indéniable que jamais par le passé, ils n'ont été autant valorisés que comme le souhaite notre gouvernement actuel.

M. le président, le projet de loi présenté par mon collègue l'honorable Avinash Teeluck, représente une révolution positive en faveur de la communauté des artistes. Nos artistes ont tout à gagner avec la création d'un Conseil des arts. En examinant de près son contenu, il est impressionnant, voire extrêmement impressionnant. Alors, j'ai dit dans ma région lorsqu'on parle des artistes, on fait principalement référence aux musiciens, chanteurs et danseurs qui enchantent les visiteurs. On ne se rend peut-être pas compte du travail colossal accompli par ces artistes pour soutenir l'industrie touristique.

Mais aussi, M. le président, dans notre région il y a aussi des artistes de renom de l'est. Qui ne connaît pas aujourd'hui madame Rambha Ramtohul pour les *Geet Gawai* ? Qui ne connaît pas Monsieur Mahen Hurrpaul, 50 ans. Sa contribution pour les *bhajans* et *Bhojpuri Gamat* est immense et aussi le jeune Jean Christophe L'omelette du groupe Maista qui régale tout le monde avec ses ségas, ses chansons engagées et jazz. Bref, un artiste très engagé.

Alors, ce projet de loi démontre que ce gouvernement, dirigé par notre Premier ministre, l'honorable Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, souhaite accorder la reconnaissance que nos artistes méritent au sein de notre société. Leur statut socio-économique sera rehaussé. Ils bénéficieront des facilités pour s'épanouir grâce à des formations dispensées à Maurice ainsi qu'à l'étranger. Ils auront la possibilité de promouvoir leur création artistique et leur service à Maurice et surtout sur la scène internationale. Un artiste est un génie, un artiste est une personne talentueuse.

Cependant, M. le président, nous savons que le talent de l'artiste ne peut se développer sans un travail colossal. Le talent seul requiert de nombreux sacrifices et la réussite demande de la persévérance. Pour connaître un grand succès, une personne talentueuse doit s'entraîner en permanence afin d'améliorer et de perfectionner son art. Mais accordons-nous véritablement à un artiste ce qu'il mérite, comme l'a bien dit notre collègue Sandra ? Je ne parle pas seulement de

l'aspect financier, mais également de la reconnaissance et des facilités qui lui sont offertes. Pourtant, il est également un acteur économique dont la contribution à la société est indiscutable, mais il n'est pas suffisamment protégé.

Aujourd'hui, avec ce projet de loi qui reconnaît en somme la valeur d'un artiste chez nous et dans nos îles, ce gouvernement souhaite montrer que l'artiste ne doit pas être relégué de l'autre côté de la route mais qu'il doit faire partie intégrante de l'effort entrepris pour moderniser notre république.

M. le président, encore une fois, c'est notre gouvernement dirigé, comme je l'ai bien dit et je le répète à chaque fois, par l'honorable Pravind Kumar Jugnauth qui est déterminé à donner aux artistes la place qui leur revient dans notre société et nous devons tous en être très fiers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank once again and congratulate my colleague, hon. Avinash Teeluck, all the artists and relevant stakeholders who have contributed for the preparation of this significant Bill which clearly demonstrates the strong commitment of this Government to support the creativity of our artists.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with this I fully support the Bill. I am done, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I will call upon the Deputy Speaker to take the Chair.

At this stage, the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much, please be seated. Hon. Duval!

(9.46 p.m.)

Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): Merci, M. le président. J'aimerais bien répondre et réfuter mon ami l'honorable ministre Sudheer Maudhoo, mais comme il se fait tard, ce sera pour une prochaine fois.

M. le président, nous sommes appelés ce soir à discuter d'un projet de loi qui comme mes collègues l'ont fait ressortir est sérieusement contesté par de nombreux artistes. En revanche, le moment est arrivé pour rendre justice à la communauté des artistes qui souffrent le martyre depuis l'arrivée de ce régime dépourvu de toute politique cohérente en matière artistique, de la protection du patrimoine et de la culture dans son ensemble.

Il faut bien l'avouer, M. le président, que la communauté des artistes a beaucoup souffert ces dernières années et c'est cela qui a poussé les artistes à réclamer une loi pour protéger leurs droits dans le respect de la loi et leur garantir une sécurité financière sur le long terme. Qui ne se souvient pas du sort réservé à nos artistes durant la période post confinement ? Nous n'allons jamais oublier leurs cris de détresse. Alors que dans tous les secteurs ils avaient été autorisés à reprendre les activités, des artistes eux étaient restés confinés sans pouvoir exercer leur profession pour survivre, et ce n'est que l'année dernière qu'ils ont pu vraiment se relancer et cela en dépit des multiples appels, notamment de chanteurs, comédiens et autres, car les portemonnaie étaient vides et l'aide financière de l'État à travers le *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme* n'était pas suffisante pour survivre.

M. le président, certains artistes ont crié famine et à ce propos, je voudrais saluer la solidarité que les artistes ont démontrée entre eux pour sortir de cette situation financière difficile. Oui, c'est grâce à leur talent d'artiste et leur persévérance qu'ils ont pu garder la tête hors de l'eau en organisant des concerts. Grâce à leurs propres efforts, M. le président, ils ont mis un terme au chômage forcé qui leur a été imposé.

Maintenant, revenons donc à ce projet de loi dont le motif principal est la création d'un Conseil professionnel des arts – '*The Professional in the Arts Council*'. *The Professional in the Arts Council* disposera si l'on se fie aux détails fournis dans ce projet de loi des pouvoirs suivants –

- catégoriser les personnes engagées en tant qu'artistes professionnels, occasionnels dans les arts et les enregistrer afin qu'ils obtiennent une carte professionnelle ;
- promouvoir le statut professionnel des arts ;
- rehausser le statut social et économique des artistes ; et aussi
- promouvoir à tous les niveaux.

La question que je me pose, M. le président, tout de suite en prenant connaissance de la responsabilité de ce nouveau Conseil au niveau de la sélection, c'est comment est-ce que ce Conseil va choisir les artistes qui auront cette manne tombée du ciel qui est la carte des artistes, comme indiqué dans la section 14 de ce texte de loi ?

Je dois avouer que depuis 9 ans déjà nous savons tous comment fonctionne ce gouvernement, surtout envers ceux qui ont eu le courage de *voice out* haut et fort leurs revendications. Est-ce que ces artistes qui ne se laissent pas faire vont être pénalisés? Seront-ils mis de côté? Une fois qu'un artiste aurait disposé de sa carte, de quelle marge de liberté va-t-il disposer? Un caricaturiste, un chanteur, un humoriste dont les dessins ou les paroles risquent de ne pas plaire aux maîtres du jour, pourra-t-il continuer à se produire sur une scène ou à publier son œuvre dans les journaux? Il faut bien le dire, M. le président. Ce sont des questions simples et inquiétantes qui ont besoin de réponses au plus vite.

Et pour être franc à ce niveau, je n'ai aucune confiance quand nous voyons bien la situation au sein de la MASA, un organisme censé protéger les droits des artistes. Et au lieu de ça, M. le président, il s'est transformé en une machine à sous pour certains protégés et les copains de ce régime. De ce fait, je suis d'avis que ce texte de loi va davantage frustrer certains des artistes au lieu de leur rendre service et améliorer leur situation. En effet, nous constatons trop d'interrogations, d'appréhensions, de suspicions autour de ce projet. Je m'explique – ce qui veut dire que ce texte de loi, dans sa forme actuelle, n'est pas approprié pour nos artistes.

M. le président, avec votre permission, je reste sur l'administration et la gestion du *Professional in the Arts Council*. Personnellement, j'émets de sérieuses réserves, car une odeur de petit copinage plane dans l'air comme à chaque fois que ce régime vient avec l'idée d'instituer un nouvel organisme. Et c'est comme cela pour chaque loi qui a été présentée dans cette auguste Assemblée.

Ce nouvel organisme, M. le président, sera administré et géré par un conseil qui se compose d'un président, d'un directeur qui sans surprise sera nommé évidemment par le ministre. Mon opinion – pourquoi ne pas passer par un exercice d'appel de candidatures pour ces postes en toute transparence? Et le plus intéressant, bien entendu, M. le président, reste *a representative of the Prime Minister's Office*, puis celui de l'Education, des Finances, du Travail et de la Sécurité sociale. Et ce n'est pas fini, M. le président. Le texte de loi stipule aussi que cet organisme sera composé d'une personne possédant une vaste expérience dans le domaine des arts visuels, nommée par le ministre; une autre personne dans le domaine de la littérature; une autre personne d'une vaste expérience dans le domaine de la musique nommée par le ministre, et

d'une autre personne avec une vaste expérience dans le domaine des médias audiovisuels et numériques nommée encore une fois par le ministre de tutelle.

Et aussi, M. le président, comment vouliez-vous qu'il n'y ait pas de sérieuses interrogations au niveau de l'indépendance même du *Professional in the Arts Council* et que cet aspect ne soit pas au centre des préoccupations des artistes ? Nous savons déjà quelque part, nous de ce côté de la Chambre, ce que le ministre en question a en tête pour s'occuper de la *Chairperson*. Quand on évoque la gestion de ce Conseil, on pense tout de suite aux dispositions financières et aux comptes. Et selon le texte de loi en circulation, il y aura un fonds général dans lequel seront versés toutes subventions, dons et contributions.

M. le président, dès qu'on parle d'argent en ce qui concerne des organismes gouvernementaux, l'inquiétude fait surface, surtout que pas plus tard que la semaine dernière, il a été démontré dans cette Chambre au cours des débats sur la *Central Medical Procurement Authority Bill* à quel point les organismes gouvernementaux et parapublics n'ont aucun *accountability* dans la manière dont ils gèrent les fonds publics. Je me rappelle aussi des rapports du Directeur de l'audit, du *Public Accounts Committee*, qui sont les preuves de ce que j'avance.

M. le président, dans le passé, il y a eu des allégations de dysfonctionnements faites par des artistes eux-mêmes concernant le programme d'assistance financière aux membres de la *MASA* durant la période de couvre-feu sanitaire. Et pour bénéficier du statut de membre de la *Mauritius Society of Authors*, un artiste enregistré devra remplir certaines conditions évidemment. Or, des artistes ont fait état dans les journaux récemment que certains qui n'avaient absolument pas droit à cette assistance auraient bénéficié des allocations déjà. La question que je me pose et que se posent les professionnels de ce milieu avec lesquels j'ai eu une discussion : est-ce qu'en mettant cette nouvelle entité, ce genre de problème ne fera plus surface ? Est-ce que ce sont eux, qui sont aujourd'hui dans les *good books* de ce gouvernement, qui vont en profiter en termes de contrat, de promotions au niveau local, international et de formation ?

Justement, je voudrais soulever un autre point, M. le président. Il y aura un représentant du ministère de l'Éducation qui fera partie de l'administration de ce Conseil. Je comprends tout à fait l'importance de cette présence. Je pense aussi que nombre de parents et d'artistes sont d'accord avec moi que si dans ce pays, M. le président, on veut bien vraiment redonner aux artistes un statut digne de ce nom, il faudrait commencer par les institutions scolaires. Et là, je

m'adresse à Madame la ministre de l'Éducation, malheureusement qui n'est pas dans la Chambre, pour lui dire pourquoi ne pas faire une matière à part entière quand il s'agit de la musique, la danse, le théâtre et d'autres ? Pourquoi ne pas offrir des cours, d'autres facilités comme des instruments de musique dans nos établissements scolaires aux élèves qui ont du talent, à ces artistes en herbe ?

Je me suis renseigné, M. le président, auprès des parents et savez-vous qu'un cours de piano coûte en moyenne R 850 de l'heure ? Même chose pour la guitare et la flûte. Offrir, M. le président, de telles facilités dans les écoles apporteront un grand plus à nos enfants et permettront à certains de développer très jeune leur talent d'artiste.

Cela évitera à bon nombre d'entre eux de tomber dans le fléau de la drogue. À ce propos, je voudrais saluer l'excellent travail que fait l'école de musique Mo'Zar au niveau de la région de Roche Bois, dont la troupe composée est essentiellement de jeunes, et est actuellement en tournée en Europe. L'atelier Mo'Zar a formé de jeunes talents qui font la fierté de notre pays.

Il y a aussi des enfants qui font partie des petits groupes, M. le président, qui sont des passionnés de la ravane, de djembé, de chant et de slam. Ce que l'on souhaite à ces jeunes, c'est comment cette loi va les aider en termes d'encadrement. Nous attendons avec impatience la réponse du ministre de tutelle dans son *summing-up*. Une autre mesure cruciale que j'estime qui doit être prise très au sérieux, toute personne qui aura officiellement le statut d'artiste doit être assurée d'une pension en fin de carrière. C'est une très bonne chose. Cela aussi doit être fait en toute fluidité, sans qu'il y ait de longues procédures administratives. Je termine ma plaidoirie en faveur des artistes, toute catégorie confondue, avec lesquels j'ai une affinité particulière.

Avant de conclure, un artiste très connu, que j'ai rencontré durant le week-end dans ma circonscription, m'a fait cette confidence à propos de ce texte de loi, et je cite –

« La MASA existe déjà. Nous aurons ainsi deux organismes presque identiques. Ce n'est pas un *Art Council* qui viendra mettre de l'ordre dans ce bazar. Le ministre aurait consulté une douzaine d'artistes, et moi, je n'en faisais pas partie. C'est injuste. »

Ce sont, M. le président, les propos d'un artiste qui a énormément de métier, un artiste de carrière, et pourtant, son avis n'est pas important pour le ministre. Je ne sais pas, mais pour la mise sur pied de cet *Art Council*, je pense sincèrement que le ministre en question aurait dû, à

mon humble avis/opinion, prendre un peu plus de temps et consulter un grand nombre d'artistes, surtout ceux qui ont de l'expérience, M. le président, dans le domaine. Leur voix est aussi importante, M. le président.

Moi, de mon côté, je terminerai en disant que je souhaite bonne chance à la communauté des artistes. Je vous remercie pour votre attention.

Merci, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much! I just want to draw attention of all the hon. Members. I am sure you are conversant with Section 39 (9) where a Member shall not read his or her speech. At least, try! I can understand, but, at least, try. It is going to make things more lively. At least, while I am in the Chair, try not to read it. I will stop you. Please! Thank you very much!

Hon. Abbas Mamode!

Dr. Boolell: We can refer to it?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, referring is good.

(10.03 p.m.)

Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Thank you very much for giving me way to express myself on this Bill. I would like to say something very important because *pratiquement tous les membres de l'opposition, dans chacune de leurs interventions, font référence à l'Union des artistes.*

M. le président, à ce que je sais, moi, l'Union des artistes n'est qu'une association de quelques artistes qui reposent leurs griefs sur les membres de l'opposition, mais ne représente pas l'ensemble de la voix des artistes. Ayez un peu de respect, M. le président, pour d'autres organisations, d'autres types d'arts. Je suis peut-être d'accord avec l'honorable Richard Duval, mais qu'a-t-on fait avant ? Il n'y a eu aucune loi concernant les artistes. Laissez-moi vous dire, à travers le *Deputy Speaker*, que je suis fier d'être parmi ceux qui sont derrière l'école que vous avez mentionnée, l'école Mo'Zar de Roche Bois, et je salue tous ces enfants. J'ai une pensée spéciale pour mon ami, José Thérèse, qui a été mon colistier, et je serai honnête de dire que c'était sous un gouvernement MSM/MMM. Donc, je suis flatté que vous ayez fait référence à cette école.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to first of all have a word of thank for my colleague, the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage for having brought this particular Bill, which will allow the establishment of the Professional in the Art Council, a council which will allow that categorisation of persons engaged as professional artists, specialised professional in the arts, technical professionals and occasional professionals in the arts. Furthermore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow their registration as professional in the arts.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mauritius has around 4,000 musical artists, 700 approximately in literary, and more than 1,000 in other sectors of the art industries such as calligraphy, etc. With this Bill, those artists will now get a social and economic recognition as professionals in the art. The council being set up has, among its objective, the promotion of the status of professional in the arts, the development and marketing of artistic product and services nationally and internationally, and also, the implementation of a State Recognition Allowance Scheme and a Pension Scheme for professionals in the arts.

By doing so, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government aims at placing artists on an equal ground as other professional in the labour market and to allow them to earn equitable share from their contribution within the economy.

This Bill, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, results from discussion and exchange with different stakeholders. Yes, hon. R. Duval, we have been discussing the Bill before presenting it to this House. The work really started in 2016. Prior to that, nothing was undertaken! From 2017 to 2018, experts from UNESCO worked on the legal framework and during their visit in Mauritius, they had several discussions and workshops were organised whereby the artist community and relevant stakeholders had the opportunity to submit their views and recommended practical solutions in term of measures.

In 1980, a Draft Report on a series of provision and measures submitted by the UNESCO, excerpts were uploaded on the Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage's website for public consultation. I repeat it for public consultations. The proposal received following the public consultation was sent to UNESCO for approval and validation. In 2019, the provision and measures for the drafting of the bill were amended and validated by UNESCO on 30 June 2022. A presentation of these provisions and measures to the artist community was made by the hon. Minister and this received a positive response.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Bill is in line with the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions adopted in 2005, to which Mauritius has adhered. This Convention aims to safeguard and promote cultural diversity worldwide and recognise the importance of supporting artist, protecting their rights and enhancing their socio-economic status. This Bill, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will allow Mauritius to foster cultural participation, creativity and the preservation of cultural heritage.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the arts, entertainment and recreation industrial sector represents 15.1 billion gross value added for 2023, a rise by around 1.5 billion compared to 2022 where it was at 13.6 billion. This industrial sector encompasses wide disciplines such as –

- visual arts;
- performing arts;
- literature;
- music, and
- film, amongst others.

Each of them comprises 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. Thus, it is imperative that these professionals be recognised and categorised to enable a better grasp of their needs and support them in the best way possible. That's what Section 4 (a) and (b) of this Bill provide.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Section 4 (c) and (d) of this Bill entrust the council with an object which is of utmost importance for the artist community but also to this Government. In the

provision to improve the social and economic status of the professional in the arts, as financial stability is one of the main concerns of artists and with this Bill, this Government aims at ensuring that the professional in the arts receive fair compensation for their work and enhanced condition of work.

Additionally, to further enhance the economic status of professional in the arts, focus on the implementation on a State Recognition Allowance scheme and pension scheme is being ensured. This is a historical and significant measure made by this Government to address the serious shortcomings in the lives of the artists while they are nearing old age. These subsections will contribute to secure a sustainable future and enhance the socio economic development of professional in the arts.

Furthermore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Section 4 (e) and (f) of this Bill, gives importance to capacity development, promotion of cultural industries and facilitating the international circulation of cultural goods and services. There are several advantages for artists and the broader cultural community in facilitating the international circulation of cultural goods and services. This allows artists to reach audiences beyond our national boundaries. It provides an opportunity to showcase their work to diverse audiences worldwide increasing their visibility and expanding their fan base. It also promotes cultural exchange by allowing artists to share their unique perspectives, traditions and artistic expressions with people from different cultures. This fosters cross-cultural understanding, appreciation and the celebration of diversity.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, international circulation opens new market and economic opportunities for artists. It enables them to sell their works, secure international collaboration and participate in international festivals, exhibitions and events. This can lead to increased revenue, career advancement and sustainable livelihoods for artists.

Furthermore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, engaging with international audiences and artistic communities can enhance an artist's professional development. It exposes them to new artistic practices, ideas and approaches, encouraging creativity, innovation and growth. International collaboration can also lead to valuable learning experiences and knowledge exchange. The international circulation of cultural goods and services serves as a form of soft power and cultural diplomacy. It helps to promote our country's cultural heritage, values and identity on the global stage. Fostering positive international relation and intercultural dialogue while exposure to

different artistic traditions and perspective from around the world can inspire artists and spark new creative ideas.

International promotion of our artistic products and services can contribute to cultural tourism. Visitors are drawn to experience and appreciate a country's artistic and cultural offering leading to economic benefit for local communities. It also raises awareness about the importance of preserving cultural heritage and encourages its continued safeguarding.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, training and skill development are essential for professional in the arts to enhance their artistic abilities, expand their knowledge and adapt to the evolving demands of the industry. Some key advantages of investing in training and skills development for professional in the arts, skill enhancement, training programme, provide opportunities for artists to refine their technical and artistic techniques. They can learn new methods, explore innovative approaches and deepen their expertise in their chosen artistic discipline.

This continual skill development allows artists to improve the quality of their work and stay competitive in the field. Adaptation to technological advantages, the arts industry is constantly influenced by advancements in technology. Training and skill development programme enable artists to stay up-to-date with the latest tool, software and digital platform relevant to their artistic practice. This knowledge equips them to embrace technological innovation and leverage them to enhance their artistic expression.

Professional growth and career advancement, investing in training and skill development can contribute to an artist's professional growth and career advancement. By expanding their repertoire of skills and knowledge, artists become more versatile and adaptable to different projects and opportunities.

This is can lead, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to increased recognition, more significant role and high profile engagement within the art industry. Networking and collaboration programme often bring together artists from different backgrounds, creating opportunities for networking and collaboration, interacting with peers, mentors and industry professionals can foster valuable connection, exchange of ideas and potential collaborations that can lead to new artistic projects and career prospect.

So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, professional standard and ethics training programme often emphasise professional standards and ethics specific to the arts industry. Artists learn about best practices, ethical consideration and the importance of maintaining integrity in their work. This fosters a strong professional identity and promotes the overall reputation and credibility of the arts community. Personal development and self-expression training and skill development in the art not only focus on technical aspect but also nurture personal development and self-expression. Artists can explore their artistic voice, experiment with different styles and challenge themselves creatively. This personal growth contributes to the artist's unique artistic identity and helps them develop a distinct artistic vision.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, investing in training and skill development programme for professionals in the art benefits both individual artists and the broader arts ecosystem. It promotes artistic excellence, supports the professionalisation of the sector and enriches the cultural landscape by fostering the growth of talented and skilled artists.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to congratulate the hon. Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage for this Bill which will help in enhancing the art entertainment and recreation industry and provide a status to the profession in the arts. Definitely, I am for the Bill and I will vote for the Bill.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much, hon. David please.

(10.22 p.m.)

Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Merci, M. le président.

Je vous écoutais donner ou rappeler les *Standing Orders* de notre Parlement, à savoir essayer d'éviter de lire, et cela m'a évoqué une image qui m'a frappé, et je suis sûr que les parlementaires dans cette Chambre l'ont été également. Je ne sais pas, M. le président, si vous avez vu cette vidéo du ministre australien de la Culture et des Arts qui, lors de son intervention, dans l'hémicycle australien, s'est mis à chanter son discours.

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *En Angleterre ousi ti fer sa.*

Mr Abbas Mamode: You can do it.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Allow him, please! Allow him!

Mr David: Alors, j'ai pensé à le faire, hon. Abbas Mamode, mais je n'étais pas certain de ce que les *Standing Orders* de notre Parlement mauricien prévoient à ce sujet, à savoir, est-ce que je pourrais chanter mon discours.

The Deputy Speaker: I will give you the opportunity.

Mr David: J'y travaillerai une prochaine fois. D'entrée de jeu, M. le président, sur la scène de ces débats, j'aimerais affirmer que s'il y a une chose avec laquelle je suis entièrement d'accord avec le ministre des Arts et du Patrimoine culturel mauricien, c'est que ce texte de loi visant à la catégorisation et à la professionnalisation de nos artistes est effectivement, comme l'a mentionné le ministre lors de son intervention mardi dernier, '*a long outstanding issue*' pour les artistes mauriciens, mais aussi pour celles et ceux de Rodrigues, d'Agaléga, et des autres îles de notre république, et le ministre l'a lui-même dit dans son intervention en donnant les dates.

Et là, je me suis rendu compte, M. le président, qu'il aura fallu moins de temps pour la préparation, les consultations et les propositions de l'UNESCO entre 2016 et 2019 que pour la rédaction des 20 pages de texte de loi sur une période de quatre ans entre 2019 et 2023. Et, curieusement, alors que c'est le programme gouvernemental 2015-2019 du gouvernement *Lepep* qui annonçait au paragraphe 80, l'introduction du *Status of the Artist Project*, aucune mention explicite dans ce sens ne figurait dans le programme 2019-2024 du présent gouvernement et il aura fallu attendre fin juin 2022 pour que le ministre des Arts fasse une présentation des provisions et des mesures de ce projet de loi, *timing* qui coïncidait à quelques jours près avec le lancement par l'UNESCO d'un exercice de monitoring qui vise à fournir l'état d'avancement du statut de l'artiste dans les différents états membres dont la République de Maurice fait partie en lien avec la recommandation de l'UNESCO de 1980 relative à la condition de l'artiste.

Et, précisément, M. le président, pour faire écho à ce document de référence, document de 52 pages, j'aimerais savoir du ministre la raison pour laquelle le texte de loi qu'il nous a présenté et qui établit un Conseil pour les artistes, qui catégorise les artistes, qui crée une carte

professionnelle pour les artistes, n'a pas jugé bon de définir simplement ce qu'est un artiste alors que la recommandation de 1980 définit clairement à la page 9, un artiste comme je cite –

« Toute personne qui crée ou participe par son interprétation à la création ou à la recreation d'œuvres d'art, qui considère sa création artistique comme un élément essentiel de sa vie, qui ainsi contribue au développement de l'art et de la culture et qui est reconnue ou cherche à être reconnue en tant qu'artiste qu'elle soit liée ou non par une relation de travail ou d'association quelconque. »

Voilà la définition de l'UNESCO sur ce qu'est un artiste. Et cette définition, M. le président, ou son équivalence à mon sens, si elle avait été inscrite au projet de loi, aurait fort probablement évité la colère de nombreux artistes qui ont jugé être réduits à l'appellation d'*entertainer* qui se traduit en français par 'un amuseur'.

Alors certes, j'ai écouté le ministre venir défendre la terminologie et malgré les différences qui peuvent nous opposer régulièrement le ministre et moi, je veux croire en sa bonne foi quant à la présentation de ce texte de loi. Et c'est la raison pour laquelle je tiens à rappeler à l'honorable Teeluck, et à lui rappeler amicalement, qu'avant d'être le ministre des Arts, il est le ministre des artistes et il est le ministre des artistes mauriciens et qu'il est vrai que les mots dans notre contexte local ont parfois une portée ou une connotation qui peut échapper à d'autres cultures. Aussi, M. le président, je propose que le projet de loi soit modifié en conséquence et qu'on y introduise une définition claire, simple et adaptée du mot 'artiste', car cette législation, M. le ministre, leur est clairement dédiée.

Un autre aspect du texte de loi que je souhaite aborder est celui de l'appréciation et de l'évaluation artistique de nos artistes. Le projet de loi à la section 4(a) mentionne le premier rôle du Conseil des professionnels des arts comme étant la catégorisation des artistes professionnels, spécialisés, occasionnels, et des professionnels techniques. La section 9 quant à elle crée des comités d'experts sectoriels qui auront à évaluer les demandes d'enregistrement des professionnels des arts et envoyer par la suite leur recommandation au conseil pour l'émission d'une carte professionnelle ou non. Alors, mon interrogation à ce sujet, M. le président, est la suivante – quelles seront les compétences et l'expérience artistique de ces experts et de ces assesseurs, tous nommés directement ou indirectement par le ministre et qui pourront décider d'émettre, de rejeter ou de retirer le statut d'artiste à quelqu'un ?

Autrement dit, qui sont celles et ceux qui auront le sort et l'avenir de nos artistes entre leurs mains ?

À ce sujet, M. le président, j'aimerais souligner au ministre une erreur répétée de correspondance dans le texte de loi. À la section 9, *Sectoral Expert Committees*, la composition de chacun des six comités sectoriels commence par la *Chairperson*, qui est supposée correspondre à la, je cite –

“Person having wide experience in the field”

Du secteur en question de la section 6(1). Or, il y a eu un décalage de deux lignes, de deux sous-sections. Je pensais que les *proposed amendments to be moved at Committee Stage* allaient prendre cela en considération. Donc, il y a eu un décalage de deux sous-sections dans la correspondance. Autrement dit, pour que je sois plus clair, je vais prendre un exemple. Dans le texte de loi, tel qu'il est rédigé actuellement, M. le ministre, la *Chairperson* du comité sectoriel du *visual arts* se retrouverait être le représentant du ministère du Travail, mentionné à la section 6(1) (f) au lieu de 6(1) (h).

Autre exemple, la *Chairperson* du comité sectoriel de la littérature se retrouverait dans le texte de loi actuelle être le représentant du ministère de la Sécurité sociale. Alors, je ne doute pas des compétences des officiers de Madame la ministre, mais encore une fois, c'est une petite erreur de frappe, d'inattention que je demanderai au ministre de bien vouloir faire amender par ses officiers.

Mais au-delà de cette petite erreur d'inattention, je me pose sincèrement la question de l'autorité et de la probité de ces nouveaux juges artistiques qui auront à évaluer une palette de talents extrêmement large. Si je prends, M. le président, le secteur musical, ces mêmes experts et assesseurs, définis et nommés par le ministre, auront à évaluer d'un côté, le pianiste de jazz, Jerry Léonide, lauréat de plusieurs concours de piano à l'international, dont nous sommes fiers, moi en particulier, car c'est un enfant de Pointe-aux-Sables, dans ma circonscription, et de l'autre côté, ce même comité avec ces experts aura à juger d'un jeune prodige musical talentueux mais totalement inconnu et dont l'avenir professionnel dépendra d'un conseil ou d'un comité d'expert qui lui accordera une carte professionnelle ou pas.

Cela me renvoie, M. le président, à une autre déclaration du ministre des Arts dans son discours de mardi dernier, à savoir que ce projet de loi, je le cite, « s'adresse principalement aux 6,000 artistes enregistrés auprès de la MASA. » Or, ce n'est un secret pour personne que beaucoup d'artistes refusent volontairement de s'enregistrer auprès de la MASA pour des raisons qu'ils déplorent dans la gestion de la Société des droits d'auteur. Est-ce que le ministre, donc, veut nous dire qu'aujourd'hui, seul les artistes libellés 'MASA' pourront se faire enregistrer et reconnaître par le *Professional in the Arts Council* ? J'apprécierais que l'honorable Teeluck vienne clarifier ce point lors de son *summing-up*.

Une autre demande de clarification que je relaie au ministre, car elle m'a été transmise hier, concerne un groupe très spécifique, à savoir celui de nos policiers musiciens. Je veux ici parler de nos talentueux officiers de la *Mauritius Police Band*, qui jouent dans certains établissements en dehors de leurs horaires de travail contre une rémunération. Alors, certains de ces officiers de police, M. le président, se demandent s'ils vont bénéficier de deux statuts –

- celui de fonctionnaire de police affecté à l'orchestre de police, et en même temps,
- celui d'artiste professionnel ?

Vont-ils être bénéficiaires du *State Recognition Allowance scheme* et du *Pension Scheme* prévus dans le *Status of the Artist Bill* ?

Cela me renvoie précisément, M. le président, au dernier point principal que je souhaite aborder, à savoir la question cruciale de la rémunération de nos artistes. Je veux croire, ici, les 70 membres de cette Chambre, que nous aimons tous, chacun selon ses goûts, selon son expérience et son vécu, une forme ou un secteur d'art, et nous apprécions tel ou tel artiste plus qu'un autre ou plus qu'une autre. Mais sommes-nous pleinement conscients que pour développer et faire perdurer l'art, il nous faut d'abord un système qui parvienne à faire vivre les artistes ? Cela peut paraître comme une démarche d'enfoncer une porte ouverte, M. le président, mais j'aimerais citer un artiste, parce que je suis certain que nous l'avons toutes et tous croisés au moins une fois en nous rendant à Port-Louis au Caudan.

Il s'agit d'un ancien laboureur de la municipalité de Port-Louis, devenu un sculpteur en bois. Il s'agit de Philippe Edwin Marie, ou PEM, comme le dit l'honorable Toussaint, pour les intimes. Cet homme, ce sculpteur, cet artiste, a un talent exceptionnel qui lui permet de

transformer un morceau de bois de letchi, de longane, ou de goyave en un personnage unique qui raconte une histoire atypique. On peut difficilement le rater, parce que quand vous quittez le parking qui se trouve en surface et que vous allez dans la galerie marchande, vous trouvez ses sculptures posées sur les marches en plein air, et vous le reconnaissez à sa bonhomie, avec sa grande barbe blanche, qui lui vaut d'ailleurs le surnom de 'bonhomme Noël.' Voilà ce que raconte PEM lors d'une interview donnée au magazine culturel en ligne, KOZÉ, précisément sur le statut des artistes à Maurice, il y a quelque temps. Je le cite –

« *Travay la rantab, me li inkontrolab. Ou pa kone komie kass pou rantre tou les mwas.* »

Comme PEM, combien d'artistes, tous secteurs confondus, ont des difficultés à boucler leurs fins de mois, à payer leurs factures, à planifier leurs budgets, ou encore, à obtenir un prêt à la banque ? Puis-je suggérer que ce projet de loi ou les *regulations* qui en découleront, puissent, de façon plus structurée et plus encadrée, encourager, par exemple, les entreprises à soutenir davantage financièrement la création artistique, soit à travers des mécanismes de responsabilité sociale, ce que nous appelons communément le *CSR*, ou alors via des incitations fiscales qui seraient mises en place par la *MRA* ? Encourageons donc nos entreprises à encourager nos artistes.

Toujours sur cette question essentielle de la rémunération des artistes, M. le président, si j'ai bien noté, à la section 21, *Contract for services*, que nul ne pourra retenir les services d'un professionnel des arts sans établir un contrat qui précise les conditions de paiement et de durée des services. Je fais une petite parenthèse pour souligner une petite erreur de frappe sur le mot '*duration*' à la section 21(2). Je propose qu'un tel contrat mentionne que le taux de rémunération horaire ou journalier respecte un seuil de rémunération minimum, à l'image du salaire minimum qui prévaut désormais dans le pays.

M. le président, je termine bientôt. L'art est un incontournable moyen pour préserver et transmettre aux citoyens d'ici et d'ailleurs, ainsi qu'aux générations futures, l'histoire, les traditions, les valeurs et l'identité de notre nation. Les artistes quant à eux sont les gardiens de la créativité, de la beauté, de l'expression et de la diversité culturelle. Sans artistes, pas d'art, et sans art, notre pays n'aurait pas d'âme. Il est donc de notre responsabilité, en tant que législateur, de dessiner le cadre législatif adapté qui définira et protégera le statut, la liberté, les droits et les conditions de vie, et de développement de l'artiste.

J'en ai terminé, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much.

Hon. Dr. Mrs Dorine Chukowry. I will appreciate that you try not to read it all.

(10.39 p.m.)

Dr. Mrs D. Chukowry (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at the very outset, I seize this opportunity to thank you for giving me the floor to bring my contribution on the Status of the Artist Bill (No. VII of 2023).

I take the floor today in support of the proposed Status of the Artist Bill, which seeks to establish a Professional in the Arts Council. I wish to congratulate the hon. Minister Avinash Teeluck for bringing to the House such a long awaited bill which without any doubt will bring a breath of fresh air to our local artists. J'ai aussi une pensée spéciale pour une grande artiste, pour une grande dame et aujourd'hui parlementaire, l'honorable Sandra Mayotte qui a toujours été la voix des artistes depuis son entrée dans cette auguste Assemblée.

As we all know, Mauritius is a nation with a rich and diverse cultural heritage and the arts have always played a crucial role in shaping our national identity. Our artists have contributed to the vibrancy of our society by expressing their creativity through various forms of art, such as music, dance, theatre, and literature. Unquestionably, artists play a significant role in shaping our societal endeavours and cultural engagement. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, artists are the ones who inspire us, challenge us, and help us to see the world in novel and fascinating ways. However, despite their immense contributions, artists often face significant challenges, including lack of recognition, inadequate funding, and limited legal protections, wherein the professional status of artists in our country has been relatively underplayed.

This Bill seeks to address this critical issue by establishing the Professional in the Arts Council, which will play a crucial role in promoting the status of professionals in the arts, enhancing their social and economic status, and providing them with access to training and skills development. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, artists, like any professionals in any other field, require continuous training and skill development to improve their craft and keep up with the latest industry trends and technologies. This is especially true in the ever-evolving landscape of the arts, where new forms of expression and techniques are constantly emerging. Therefore,

providing access to training and skill development opportunities is crucial for the growth and success of our artists.

The Professional in the Arts Council established by this Bill will play a vital role in enhancing access to training and skills development for professionals in the arts. The Council will work to identify gaps in the training and skill development opportunities available to artists and develop programs that will meet their needs. They will also collaborate with universities, colleges, and other training institutions to provide artists with access to formal training programs. Additionally, the Council will work to create mentorship programs where emerging artists can learn from established professionals in their respective fields. These mentorship programs will not only provide artists with the opportunity to improve their craft but also allow them to develop valuable professional relationships and networks.

Furthermore, the Council will facilitate workshops, seminars, and other training events to provide artists with access to practical training and skill development opportunities. These events will cover a wide range of topics, including business management, marketing, intellectual property rights, and digital technologies, to name a few.

By categorising people engaged as professional artists, specialised professionals in the arts, technical professionals, and occasional professionals in the arts and registering them as professionals in the Arts, the Council will help to create a formal recognition of artists as a professional class. In so doing, the Bill aims to formalise the status of professionals in the arts and provide them with the recognition they deserve. For instance, specialised professionals in the arts may require different support and resources than technical professionals, and occasional professionals in the arts may have different needs altogether. Categorising these professionals will help to ensure that the Council can provide opportunities, appropriate support to each group.

Registration is also an important aspect of this section of the Bill. Registration will enable professionals in the arts to be recognised formally and will provide them with access to benefits and support provided by the Council. Registered professionals will have access to training and skills development opportunities, financial support, and other benefits such as the State Recognition Allowance Scheme and Pension Scheme for professionals in the arts. Furthermore, registration will enable the Council to create a database of professionals in the arts, which can be used to better understand the needs of the industry and provide insights into its development.

This database can be used to identify emerging artists, monitor the diversity of the industry, and track industry trends and developments.

The Council will also play a vital role in promoting the marketing of artistic products and services nationally and internationally. This will not only help to showcase the exceptional talent of our artists but will also contribute to the development of our cultural tourism industry, which is a vital component of our national economy. The marketing of artistic products and services is essential to the growth and success of the arts industry. Artists and arts organisations require marketing strategies to promote their work and reach new audiences. Effective marketing can help to increase demand for artistic products and services and can also generate revenue for artists and the industry as a whole.

The Professional in the Arts Council established by this Bill will play a crucial role in the development and promotion of the marketing of artistic products and services nationally and internationally. The Council will work to create programs and initiatives that support the marketing efforts of artists and arts organisations. They will collaborate with artists and arts organisations to develop marketing plans that are tailored to their specific needs and goals.

Furthermore, the Council will work to promote the arts industry nationally and internationally. They will participate in events and exhibitions that showcase the work of Mauritian artists and promote the cultural richness of our nation. This will not only increase awareness of Mauritian artists and their work but also promote Mauritius as a cultural destination and increase tourism to the country. In addition to promoting the arts industry, the Council will work to develop partnerships with other industries to expand the reach of artistic products and services. For example, partnerships with the hospitality and tourism industry can help to integrate artistic products and services into the tourism experience, providing visitors with a unique and culturally rich experience.

Furthermore, this Bill seeks to implement the State Recognition Allowance Scheme and Pension Scheme for professionals in the Arts. This is a significant step towards recognising the value and importance of artists to our society and providing them with the financial support they need to continue their work. It encourages the inclusion of diverse voices and perspectives in the arts, ensuring that all members of society have the opportunity to participate and contribute.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Status of the Artist Bill is an important step towards professionalising the status of artists in Mauritius. It is an opportunity for us to recognise the significant contribution that artists make to our cultural landscape and the critical role that they play in shaping our national identity. By establishing the Professional in the Arts Council, we can create a formal mechanism to support and promote our artists, enhance their professional status and provide them with the requisite support they need to continue their work, through the provision of the necessary legal barricade and resources they need to continue to create and inspire.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I urge all members of this Parliament to support this Bill and to demonstrate their commitment to promote arts and our artists. We owe it to our cultural heritage; we owe it to our economy and our artists to recognise their contribution and provide them with the support they need to continue to thrive and succeed.

Sur une note finale, je tiens à remercier chaleureusement, *mo kapitenn*, notre Premier ministre, l'honorable Pravind Kumar Jugnauth pour son engagement en faveur de la dignité des artistes à travers ce projet de loi.

Merci beaucoup.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. I appreciate that you tried not to read despite being tempted. Thank you very much.

Hon. Nagalingum! I hope you follow the trend, have some eye contact.

Mr Nagalingum: Merci, yes.

(10.53 p.m)

Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill): Merci, M. le président. La culture dans son sens large, a toujours été le parent pauvre de tout gouvernement. Le ministère de la Culture fut tantôt un ministère autonome, c'est-à-dire qu'il s'occupait uniquement de la culture, mais le plus souvent attaché à un autre ministère, par exemple l'éducation. Il est louable que maintenant nous avons un ministère responsable uniquement de la culture et du patrimoine culturel. Il est encore plus louable que cette législation, *The Status of the Artist Bill*, soit enfin présentée à la Chambre.

M. le président, les artistes mauriciens – chanteurs, musiciens, comédien de théâtre et de cinéma, peintres, danseuses, écrivains, entre autres, luttent depuis des décennies pour avoir une reconnaissance légitime tant au niveau social, économique que légal. L’artiste qui gagne sa vie à travers son art entièrement ou partiellement, a trop souvent été considéré comme ne faisant pas parti de la société active. Or tout artiste qui produit une œuvre contribue à l’économie du pays, à la construction de sa richesse. Il était temps donc que cette législation devienne réalité. D’autant plus que des études sérieuses ont été entreprises en la matière comme mentionné par le ministre, et je fais référence ici au rapport de l’UNESCO – ‘Recommandation relative à la condition des artistes’ adoptée par la conférence générale à sa 28^{ème} session en Belgrade, le 27 novembre 1980; Étude de l’UNESCO ; *Cultural Economic in Mauritius, Strategic and Action Plan 2012*.

M. le président, je vous propose d’analyser ce *Status of Artist Bill* en référence à ce qui a été proposé dans ce rapport et surtout après les réactions des artistes eux-mêmes quand ils ont pris connaissance du projet de loi. C’est vrai que le ministre a effectivement fait référence à certaines critiques formulées par des artistes, mais pas celles dont je parle ici. Premièrement, les manquements dans les objectifs comme énoncés dans le projet; en second lieu, les instances des décisions et administratives pour les *Professional in the Arts Council*, et finalement, les modes de financement de ce nouvel organisme. A l’article 5 (c) du projet de loi, nous lisons, et je cite –

“gather and disseminate information on funding sources, opportunities for creative and professional collaboration and educational programmes.”

Nous savons, M. le président, que le ministère de la Culture et du Patrimoine culturel se voit offrir annuellement de nombreuses bourses d’études, d’invitations à des sessions de formation et autres conférences internationales par des pays amis. Malheureusement, ces facilités pour la formation des artistes sont souvent, trop souvent, accaparées par des personnes autres que des artistes et ce sont souvent des fonctionnaires du ministère ou des artistes choisis unilatéralement par le ministère lui-même. Donc, il faut démocratiser ces procédures. Toutes les bourses et autres séminaires et conférences destinés aux artistes doivent être rendus publique et des appels à candidatures lancés par le *Professional in the Arts Council*. C’est ainsi que les plus méritants auront leur chance.

Par ailleurs, M. le président, l’article 5(3) du rapport de l’UNESCO de 1980 recommande, et je cite –

“Endeavour to take the necessary steps to see that artists enjoy the same rights as are conferred on a comparable group of the active population by national and international legislation in respect of employment and living and working condition and see that self-employed artists enjoy within reasonable limits protection as regard income and social security.”

Ce projet de loi, M. le président, n'est pas assez clair dans l'application de cette recommandation. Ces artistes, une fois leur reconnaissance professionnelle légalisée, pourront-ils bénéficier de tous les acquis reconnus légalement que les autres travailleurs du pays ? Plus loin, le rapport de l'UA parle de pension, et je cite l'article 4 (d) –

“(d) implement the State Recognition Allowance scheme and pension scheme for professionals in the Arts;”

Pas plus de précisions sur ce *State Recognition Allowance* dans ce cas spécifique, ni sur le plan de pension.

Les artistes attendent des explications, car, M. le président, la question de pension est depuis toujours le souci majeur des artistes. Tandis que toutes les catégories de travailleurs perçoivent, outre leur pension de vieillesse, une pension contributive, soit comme ancien fonctionnaire ou de leur ancienne entreprise privée, les artistes n'ont que leur pension de vieillesse.

La *Mauritius Society of Authors (MASA)* a tenté, il y a quelques années de cela, de mettre sur pied un programme d'allocation mensuelle pour ses membres qui avaient l'âge de 60 ans, allant de R 1,000 à R 2,000. En dépit de toute la bonne volonté de la *MASA*, ces plans sont sur le point d'être abandonnés faute de moyens financiers. C'est pourquoi, M. le président, il est impératif d'élaborer un plan de pension viable et professionnel pour les artistes.

Ce projet de loi propose la mise sur pied d'un *Professional of the Arts Council* qui aura la responsabilité de gérer les affaires de ce nouvel organisme. Or, nous constatons donc que tous les membres de ce *Council* sont issus de différents ministères, dont naturellement le ministère des Arts et du Patrimoine culturel. C'est pourtant un organisme qui va défendre les droits, promouvoir les intérêts des artistes. Mais où sont ces artistes justement ? Pas un sur ce conseil ! On nous répondra que les artistes ne sont pas encore enregistrés, donc comment choisir qui parmi

eux siégeront dans ce conseil. Or, la *MASA* fonctionne depuis des années avec une partie de son *Board* composé des artistes élus par leurs pairs.

Dans un premier temps, une élection démocratique parmi les artistes et membres de la *MASA* peut permettre de choisir un certain nombre d'entre eux pour siéger au sein du *Professional of the Arts Council*. Sinon, pendant les deux premières années, le ministère peut inclure sur le conseil des représentants de l'université de Maurice, du *Mahatma Gandhi Institute*, de l'*Aapravasi Ghat*, du *Nelson Mandela Centre* ou de la *MASA*, entre autres. Après ces deux années, quand presque tous les artistes seraient enregistrés, des élections seraient tenues de choisir, comme pour la *MASA*, des représentants des artistes sur le Conseil.

Par ailleurs, M. le président, il est inadmissible que le directeur administratif de ce Conseil soit nommé par le ministre lui-même. C'est à se demander où sont passés nos principes de démocratie et de méritocratie ? Non, M. le président, après tous les scandales qui affligent nos institutions à cause des nominés politiques, il ne faut pas que ce nouvel organisme en souffre à son tour. Le poste de directeur doit faire l'objet des appels publics, des candidatures choisies, pourquoi pas par le *Public Service Commission*.

M. le président, permettez-moi d'aborder la dernière partie de mon intervention, soit le financement de ce nouvel organisme. Le projet de loi, à l'exception des dons que pourraient recevoir le *Professional of the Arts Council*, ne mentionne nulle part comment sera financé ces organismes. Il est évident que les contributions annuelles des membres seront loin de suffire pour financer ce projet et autres coûts administratifs. L'État compte-t-il injecter des sommes annuellement ?

Ce mode de financement solide et défini, nous voyons mal comment ce projet connaîtra un bon fonctionnement. Il faut lui donner les moyens et il faut que le ministère nous dise quel sont ces moyens.

M. le président, pour conclure, je demanderai au ministre de veiller à ce qu'il n'y ait pas double emploi entre les objectifs du *Professional of the Arts Council*, la *MASA*, et le ministère des Arts et du Patrimoine culturel lui-même. Finalement, permettez-moi, M. le président, de demander au ministre des Arts et du Patrimoine culturel de tenir compte des suggestions et critiques formulées par des artistes eux-mêmes suite à la publication de ce projet de loi. Je lui demande entre autres de considérer mes critiques et suggestions comme des propositions

positives et constructives formulées pour le bien des artistes, et non comme des objections et remarques politiciennes.

Je vous remercie, M. le président.

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

(11.05 p.m.)

Mr Toussaint: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move for the adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Prime Minister seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Thursday 13 July 2023 at 3.00 p.m.

Mr Toussaint seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: Specific matter, hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

MATTER RAISED

(11.06 p.m.)

LES MARIANNES VILLAGE – AMENITIES & SERVICES OFFERED

Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue):
Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will try to be very brief and precise in my specific adjournment matter this evening being mindful of the time that it is right now.

I am very grateful to be able to present my specific adjournment matter which is addressed to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management, which reads as follows: Pamplemousses District Council services offered in Les Mariannes Village which falls under the purview of Long Mountain Village.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will try to rather focus on providing the solution rather than the problem. Through you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am the voice of around 1,200 to 1,400 inhabitants of Les Mariannes which is, for those who do not know it, located in the boundary of Long Mountain, Congomah and Ripailles next Nicolière as well. This little village has a panoramic view while you are driving through it. I like to call it as the *route zanana*. It stands aloof on its own as a small community having a small area, the shops, two *kalimayes*, one *shivala* which is run by *chacha* Chintaram and only one Social Welfare Centre, which I am grateful to the hon. Minister of Gender who brings several activities in that area. This is what keeps the inhabitants very busy. The young and the elderly have to walk to Congomah if they want to use the football pitch. For one month, I requested the House for the lightings to be changed to 10 p.m., but I am still waiting for same.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the problem is to change the street lights, there needs to do a patching or to do an *asphaltage* as we say, or bring a new road. Even for the collection of wastes, the inhabitants of Les Mariannes need to have recourse to the District Councillor or Village Councillors of Long Mountain, and relying on its budget over there.

Taking into consideration the very few matters raised tonight, which is only the tip of the iceberg of the sufferings of the inhabitants of Les Mariannes, I would appeal to the Minister and the House that - I am aware that there are consultations going on right now - but my solution would be that if we could amend - I know that it is a huge decision and it is a huge change that we need to bring forward - the First Schedule for the Local Government's Act and include Les Mariannes as a village council on its own. This could be as a long term project, but in the short term, if consideration could be given by providing special attention to the inhabitants with a special budget for *asphaltage*, patching or even the acquisition of a plot of land for the setting up of a football pitch.

I am done, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. You were very short and concise. Hon. VPM, please!

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I wish to make a statement pursuant to the matter raised by the hon. Second Member for Port Louis North &

Montagne Longue pertaining to the services being offered by the District Council of Pamplémousses in the village of Les Mariannes, Long Mountain.

I am informed by the District of Council of Pamplémousses that, the village of Les Mariannes, which has a population of 1,300 inhabitants, falls under the purview of the Village Council of Long Mountain.

Most of the public roads are tarred and from what I have been told are in good conditions. There is one cremation ground in the locality. There is a social welfare hall, as mentioned by the hon. Member, and the following services are provided by the Council in the village of Les Mariannes –

- the weekly refuse collection;
- herbicide spraying along rural road;
- lopping of trees;
- bulk waste collection;
- cleaning of rivers, drains and canals as per scheduled programme of work;
- service of cremation ground and its maintenance;
- street lighting service – there are some suggestions and we will have to take that on board – and the extension of street lighting network as and when requests are received and upon the availability of funds by the District Council of Pamplémousses;
- maintenance of road and construction of new roads upon, again, availability of funds, as mentioned by the hon. Member.
- organisation of socio-cultural and sport activities at the level of the Village Council of Long Mountain, which also includes the village of Les Mariannes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that at present, the sport amenities are not well-developed at Les Mariannes. The District Council of Pamplémousses has, at its meeting of 29 March 2023, decided to acquire a plot of land of an approximate extend of 25 perches at Les Mariannes for the construction of a futsal mini soccer pitch for the benefit of the youngsters of that locality. This project will promote obviously sound physical and mental well-being of the youth and will prevent them from indulging in unsocial activities and other kind of activities.

The Council has made a request on 05 May 2023 to my Ministry to approach the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning with a view to acquiring the plot of private land. The request has already been forwarded to the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning for its consideration and an initial amount of Rs1 m. has been earmarked in this current financial year to kick-start the implementation of the project as soon as land is acquired and vested in the Council.

As mentioned by the hon. Member, we know there are some problems when it is a small village. It is attached to Long Mountain, but there are still a bit of problems. We will consider in the forthcoming Local Government (Amendment) Act if there is a possibility for a new village council to be created at Les Mariannes in the future, but we will have to look at it in all its aspects before we pronounce on it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Council may consider the provision of other amenities in the future for the welfare of the inhabitants of the region. *Naturellement*, it is subject to the availability of funds. But I am going to talk to the District Council of Pamplemousses to make sure that Les Mariannes gets its fair share of development.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Have a safe trip back home!

At 11.13 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Thursday 13 July 2023 at 3.00 p.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

MRS S. K. – STATEMENT – ALLEGED FICTITIOUS EMPLOYMENT

(No. B/990) 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)

**MAURITIUS BROADCASTING CORPORATION – VOLUNTARY
RETIREMENT SCHEME**

(No. B/991) Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floreal) 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 Voluntary Retirement Scheme recently implemented by the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to the number of employees who have

—

- (a) opted therefor, and
- (b) been re-employed on a contractual basis, indicating the new responsibilities assigned thereto, if any.

(Withdrawn)

HONOURABLE M. E. J. – RESTRICTED ZONE – PORT AREA

(No. B/992) 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)

MAURITIUS & REUNION ISLAND – DRUGS - SEIZURE BY SEA SINCE 2020

(No. B/993) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to drugs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information since 2020 to date, as to the amount seized during the trafficking thereof by sea between Mauritius and Reunion Island.

(Withdrawn)

ALLEGED FAKE DRIVING LICENCES – E-DRIVING LICENCE INTRODUCTION

(No. B/994) 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 –

- (a) where matters stand as to the inquiries initiated thereinto, and
- (b) if the introduction of an e-driving licence is being envisaged.

(Withdrawn)

BRIGADE POUR LA PROTECTION DE LA FAMILLE – INTERVENTIONS – 2020 to JULY 2023

(No. B/995) 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 –

- (a) number of arrests effected, and
- (b) actions taken in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

COVID-19 – MOLNUPIRAVIR PURCHASE - INQUIRY INITIATED

(No. B/996) 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)

UNION PARK - ROAD ACCIDENT - INQUIRY STATUS

(No. B/997) Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) 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 death of Mr R. P. M. which occurred on Sunday 02 July 2023 at Union Park resulting from a fatal road accident, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police information as to where matters stand as to the inquiry initiated thereinto.

(Withdrawn)

ATOL – CEO – REMUNERATION

(No. B/998) Mr Osman Mahomed (First 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 Mr P.B., Chief Executive Officer of Airport Terminal Operations Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the remuneration and other benefits drawn, indicating the –

- (a) qualifications, and
- (b) field of expertise thereof.

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 Mr P. B. was initially appointed as the Chief Executive Officer of Airport Terminal Operations Ltd on 19 September 2022 for a period of two years.

In the context of the proposed merger of the Airports of Mauritius Co. Ltd and Airport Terminal Operations Ltd, Mr. P. B. was appointed as Chief Executive Officer for both Airports of Mauritius Co. Ltd and Airport Terminal Operations Ltd with effect from 11 May 2023 for a period of two years to lead and facilitate the process of merger. His terms and conditions of employment are as follows –

- basic monthly salary of Rs350,000;
- performance and productivity bonus of 0.15% of the company's annual net profit (excluding dividends from subsidiaries) before dividends and tax but after deductions of finance costs. The payment of this bonus is based on the annual audited accounts;
- chauffeur driven executive company car of up to 2000cc capped to a maximum value of Rs3.5 m.;
- Fleetman Card for fuel expenses capped to Rs20,000 per month, and
- two business class air tickets (Mauritius/London/Mauritius annually by most economical route) for each year of completed service without receiving cash in lieu of travelling.

In regard to parts (a) and (b) of the question, I am informed that Mr P. B. holds a Postgraduate Diploma in Business and Management and a Master degree in Business Administration. Moreover, he has the relevant experience in the field of business management.

SEPT CASCADES, HENRIETTA - FATALITIES & INCIDENTS - REMEDIAL MEASURES

(No. B/999) Mr A. Ittoo (Third 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 cases of fatalities and incidents at Sept Cascades, Henrietta, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof since 2013 to date, indicating the measures envisaged to avert the recurrence thereof.

(Withdrawn)

NOUVELLE FRANCE – ROAD ACCIDENT – INQUIRY

(No. B/1000) 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 fatal road accident which occurred on 02 July 2023 at Nouvelle France leading to the death of Mr R.P.M., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) why Mr R.P.M. was initially arrested, and
- (b) where matters stand as to the inquiry initiated in regard to the three Police Officers arrested in connection therewith, indicating the charges levelled against them.

Reply: The Commissioner of Police has informed that on 02 July 2023 at 0330 hours, following phone calls from the inhabitants of Rishi Dayanand Road, Camp Carol Kenya, Plaine Magnien, that one Mr R.P.M. was disturbing public peace, three Police Constables who were on duty at the Plaine Magnien Police Station proceeded to the locus in Police vehicle 152 RM 18.

The Commissioner of Police has further informed that prior to the arrival of Police on site, the mother of Mr R.P.M. had, through several phone calls by neighbours, already been requested to bring back her son home. As she was unwell, she could not proceed on site. However, she phoned the Plaine Magnien Police Station and requested the Police to take her son into custody. According to the Commissioner of Police, Mr R.P.M. resided at Plaine Magnien in the company of his mother.

The Commissioner of Police has additionally informed that on their way back to Plaine Magnien Police Station, Mr R.P.M. felt unwell. As such, the Police Officers decided to convey him to the Jawarharlal Nehru Hospital at Rose Belle. However, later on, Mr R.P.M. requested to instead drop him at his girlfriend's place at Rose Belle. He again changed his mind and asked the Police Officers to drop him at Nouvelle France near Parbeaux Hall. Mr R.P.M. was left thereat after being warned to keep peace, to which he agreed and the Police drove away.

The Commissioner of Police further informed that on the same day at about 0500 hours, at Union Park, Mr R.P.M. knocked at the door of one Mr K.M. and requested to make a phone call to his mother. Consequently, Mr P.B., the neighbour of Mr K.M., who is a Police Constable,

having heard Mr R.P.M. talking to Mr K.M. in a loud tone, intervened and called the mother of Mr R.P.M. using the latter's mobile phone. He put the phone on loudspeaker and the mother stated that "*pena transport attane fer clair to prend bus to retourne*". Thereafter, Mr P.B. phoned the Rose Belle Police Station and reported the matter.

The Commissioner of Police has also informed that Police Officers from the Rose Belle Police Station reported on spot and Mr R.P.M. told them that he had lost his way back home. The Police Officers proposed to drop him to the nearest bus stop to which he refused by stating "*mo pou tracé monsieur*". He was advised to go on the main road to pick a bus to go back home.

The Commissioner of Police has further informed that on 02 July 2023 at 07.16 a.m., Mr K.S., a resident of L'Escalier, called at the Nouvelle France Police Station and reported that at about 05.40 a.m., while he was driving on M1 Motorway along Royal Road Balisson, proceeding towards Nouvelle France, reaching near Nouvelle France roundabout, he knocked against something and heard a bang noise on the left side of the windscreen which cracked. He did not stop there, believing that someone had thrown a stone on his windscreen and he was afraid for his life. When he reached his destination in Nouvelle France, he noticed that his vehicle was damaged and human hairs were stuck on his windscreen.

The Commissioner of Police has additionally informed that at 07.20 hours, Police attended to the above case along M1 Motorway and found a male person, later identified as late Mr R.P.M., in a gutter on the left side of the road when facing Nouvelle France roundabout, inert and his face was injured. The victim was conveyed to the Jawaharlal Nehru hospital, Rose Belle in ambulance. Thereat at 0800 hours, he was examined by Dr. Bhuguth, Medical Health Officer, who certified that death had already ensued.

According to the Commissioner of Police, on the same day an autopsy was carried out at 11.00 hours upon deceased Mr R.P.M. and the certified cause of death was "fracture dislocation of cervical vertebrae with resection at spinal cord." The body was thereafter handed over to relatives for cremation.

Later at 08.40 hours, on the same day, a breath test was conducted upon the said driver Mr K.S. and same revealed to be negative. Mr K.S. was conveyed to Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital to have his blood sample taken for a drug test. The driver is holder of a provisional licence for

Private Car only. He was arrested and detained at the Rose Belle Police Station pending Court appearance.

On 03 July 2023, Mr K.S. appeared before the District Magistrate of Grand Port Court for the offence ‘Involuntarily Homicide’ which was lodged against him. He was remanded to Police cell up to 07 July 2023.

The Commissioner of Police has informed that in the course of an enquiry initiated into the above case, on 02 July 2023, the three Police Officers who attended the above request were arrested and charged with the offence of conspiracy in breach of Section 109 (1) of the Criminal Code (Supplementary) Act. Police objected to their release on bail and they were remanded to Police cell.

Furthermore, on 03 July 2023, the three Police Officers were released on bail after furnishing a surety of Rs5,000/- and entering into a recognisance of Rs40,000/- each. On 05 July 2023, they were interdicted from duty.

The Commissioner of Police has informed that enquiry into both cases is proceeding.

AIR MAURITIUS LTD – AIRCRAFTS SALE

(No. B/1002) 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.

Reply: As the House is aware, except for any specific matter falling under the purview of, or involving the Government, information relating to the internal affairs of a company is, as a matter of principle, not disclosed in the National Assembly, as all such matters fall under the responsibility of the Board of Directors and Management of the company.

The information requested by the hon. Member cannot therefore be disclosed.

Air Mauritius Ltd., being a public company, is governed by the provisions of the Companies Act, its own Memorandum and Articles of Association and is managed by a Board of Directors. As such, the company's disclosure and accountability mechanism is governed by the provisions of Section 211 of the Companies Act, under which the company is required to file its Financial Statements with the Registrar of Companies within a specified period. Such Financial Statements, which are available for public consultations, will already include information relating to addition, disposal and re-valuation of assets, etc.

CHAMP DE MARS - RACING TRACK SABOTAGE – INQUIRY STATUS

(No. B/1003) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the inquiry initiated into the alleged sabotage of the racing track of the Champ de Mars on the eve of the Maiden Cup Day last year, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

MEDICAL SERVICES – PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTIONS

(No. B/1007) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the medical services provided by private health institutions to his Ministry, he will give the list thereof, since July 2021 to date, indicating in each case the –

- expenditure incurred in relation thereto;
- details of the services provided, and
- list of the public health institutions concerned therewith.

Reply: I am informed that the services provided by private health institutions to public health institutions since July 2021 to date are as follows –

- Dialysis Services;
- Cataract Surgery Services;

- Paediatric Surgery Services;
- Medical and Intensive Care Services;
- Pathology Services;
- Pharmacy Services;
- Electromyography Services, and
- Radiology Services.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the total expenditure relating to the provision of such services from private health institutions for the period July 2021 to date are as follows –

- Rs54,624,800 for Dialysis Services;
- Rs5,054,000 for Cataract Surgery Services;
- Rs800,000 for Paediatric Surgery Services;
- Rs453,363 for Medical and Intensive Care Services;
- Rs1,623,201 for Pathology Services;
- Rs31,262 for Pharmacy Services;
- Rs17,500 for Electromyography Services,
- Rs216,426 for Radiology Services.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am detailing the services sought during the period July 2021 to date as follows –

- Dialysis Services
68,281 dialysis sessions carried out by private health institutions for our patients.
- Cataract Surgery Services
266 patients were referred to a private clinic for cataract surgery.
- Paediatric Surgery Services

One case of oesophageal reconstruction was referred to a private health institution following recommendations of a medical board.

- Intensive Care and Medical Services

Intensive Care and Medical Services comprise admission in intensive care for one patient and the 24-hour ambulatory blood pressure monitoring for one patient.

- Pathology Services

Pathology Services comprise biopsy and certain specific laboratory tests, including Anti Neutrophilic Cytoplasmic Antibody Test, Karyotyping, Aldosterone, Serum Folate, Vitamin B12, Antibody to Human Glomerular Basement Membrane Test, 25-Hydroxy Vitamin D test, Parathyroid Hormone Test, Procalcitonine Test, and Human Leukocyte Antigen Test, which are not available in the Central Health Laboratory of my Ministry.

- Pharmacy Services

Pharmacy Services relate to a specific drug, that is, Alprostadil injection, in respect of a paediatric patient.

- Electromyography Services

Electromyography Services relate to tests that measure the electrical activity of muscles and nerves and which is required in very few cases.

- Radiology Services

Radiology Services relate to a case of Left Zygomatic Angiography with Embolization.

With regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed that the public health institutions concerned are as follows –

- For Dialysis Services

- AURAM Dialysis Centre
- Nephron Dialysis Centre
- National Dialysis Centre

- Chisty Shifa Clinic
- Wellkin Hospital
- Clinique Du Nord
- Cataract Surgery Services
 - Agarwal Eye Hospital
- Paediatric Surgery Services
 - Wellkin Hospital
- Medical and Intensive Care Services
 - City Clinic
 - Healthfocus Ltd
- Pathology Services
 - Biosante Medical Laboratories
 - C-Care (Mauritius) Limited
 - Bio Reference Laboratories Limited
- Pharmacy Services
 - C-Care (Mauritius) Limited
- Electromyography Services
 - La Clinique Mauricienne
- Radiology Services
 - Wellkin Hospital

SILVER BANK LTD – CAPITAL ADEQUACY RATIO

(No. B/1038) 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 Silver Bank Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Bank of Mauritius, information as to if –

- (a) the Capital Adequacy Ratio thereof is being met, and
- (b) complaints have been received from clients, regarding the non-refund of deposits and, if so, the remedial measures taken to address same.

Reply: The Bank of Mauritius Act 2004 and the Banking Act 2004 as well as regulations issued under these Acts provide the primary legal framework for banking operations in Mauritius. The framework is supplemented by instructions, guidelines or requirements imposed by the Bank of Mauritius.

As part of the prudential regulations for banks and in line with the Basel III international standards, the Bank of Mauritius imposes a requirement on Banks to maintain a minimum Capital Adequacy Ratio, which is currently set at 12.5%.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Bank of Mauritius that the Capital Adequacy Ratio of Silver Bank Limited stood at 16.52% as at 31 March 2023, which is well above the minimum requirement of 12.5% laid down by the Bank of Mauritius.

Concerning part (b) of the question, I have been informed that the Bank of Mauritius has received three complaints and these have been referred to the bank for necessary action.

It is noted that out of the three complaints, two have legal or compliance issues while the other one concerns a Deposit Retention Agreement that was reached between the client and the bank.

24/7 SPECIALISED MEDICAL SERVICES – MEDICAL OFFICERS, DAY & NIGHT SHIFTS

(No. B/1045) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the 24/7 specialised medical services in public health institutions, he will state the number of –

- Medical Officers concerned therewith, indicating their fields of speciality, and
- cases attended to on –

- day shifts, and
- night shifts, respectively, since the coming into operation thereof to date.

Reply: I am informed that there are presently 98 Medical Officers who are servicing the 24/7 specialised medical services in the five Regional Hospitals. The number of Medical Officers assigned to each speciality is as follows –

- 30 Medical Officers in the field of Obstetrics and Gynaecology;
- 31 Medical Officers in the field of Paediatrics,
- 37 Medical Officers in the field of Anaesthesia.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the total number of cases attended to on day shifts is 6,399 for Anaesthesia, 18,245 Paediatrics and 4,401 Obstetrics and Gynaecology. For night shifts, a total of 2,070 cases have been recorded for Anaesthesia, 30,096 for Paediatrics and 1,521 for Obstetrics and Gynaecology.

MV MAURITIUS TROCHETTIA DRYDOCKED - DISTURBANCE ALLOWANCE

(No. B/1050) Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the vessel MV Mauritius Trochettia drydocked in Colombo, Sri Lanka during the COVID-19 lockdown in April 2021 with 28 crew members, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd., information as to if –

- the disturbance allowance payable thereto, if any, have been disbursed, and
- the Corporation is considering the replacement of the local workforce thereof by foreign workers.

(Withdrawn)

16ÈME MILLE - NEW MULTIPURPOSE HALL - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/1051) Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in

regard to the construction of a new Multipurpose Hall at 16ème Mille, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the District Council of Grand Port, information as to where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

CAP MALHEUREUX RELAY SHELTER - ALLEGATION OF ABUSE

(No. B/1052) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Cap Malheureux Relay Shelter, also known as L'Oiseau du Paradis, she will state if 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)

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY – SETTING UP

(No. B/1053) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the Skills Development Authority, he will state where matters stand as to the setting up thereof.

Reply: The House may wish to note that the Skills Development Authority Act has already been proclaimed and is in force as from 01 November 2022.

As provided at Section 7(1) of the Act, the Skills Development Authority will be managed by a Board.

I am informed that consultations have been carried out by my Ministry for the constitution of that Board. Same will be set up shortly. The Skills Development Authority will come into operation soon after.

IOIG 2023 - PROGRAMME DES JEUX – SAILING REINSTATEMENT

(No. B/1054) 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 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.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that the inclusion of any sports discipline other than those which are mandatory as per the Charter of the Indian Ocean Island Games lies with the Local Organising Committee of the hosting country.

I am not officially aware if the Republic of Seychelles has requested the reinstatement of sailing in the programme of the Games. However, I would like to point out that Mauritius has consistently supported the inclusion of sailing as a sports discipline in the Games. In fact, I personally proposed to the Minister of Sports of Madagascar our technical assistance towards that end.

SIR SEEWOSAGUR RAMGOOLAM INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - SPECIAL STRIKING TEAM - COMPLAINT

(No. B/1055) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the intervention of the Special Striking Team at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport on or about 19 June 2023, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Post Ltd., information as to if it has received any complaint from any Postal Officer in relation thereto and, if so, if an investigation has been carried out thereinto.

(Withdrawn)

REGIONAL HOSPITALS – EMERGENCY DENTAL CASES – NIGHT SERVICES EXTENSION

(No. B/1056) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to dental services, he will state if he will consider extending the services in regional hospitals at night for emergency cases to be attended to and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

Reply: My Ministry provides dental care to the community in 61 dental and specialised dental clinics during normal working hours.

Since 2004, our dedicated dental specialists in the field of oral surgery, are already on call on a roster basis for attending to emergency cases. The coverage is applicable for all main hospitals as follows –

- (i) Monday to Friday as from 16 00 hours to 09 00 hours the next morning, and
- (ii) Saturday from noon till 09 00 hours on Monday.

MSAW – FREE STERILISATION CAMPAIGNS – OUTCOME

(No. B/1057) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the free sterilisation campaigns organised by the Mauritius Society for Animal Welfare, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom information as to –

- the number thereof held, since January 2022 to May 2023, indicating the –
 - number of animals neutered island wise, and
 - cost incurred therefor, and
- (b) actions being taken to reduce the number of stray dogs on our roads.

Reply: The growing number of stray dogs in Mauritius represents all kind of risks and hazards for inhabitants and tourists as well. In this context, numerous measures have been put in place by my Ministry through the Mauritius Society for Animal Welfare (MSAW) to address the issue of stray dogs.

One of the main solutions to reduce the number of stray dogs in a sustainably and humanely way is through mass sterilisation. I am informed by the MSAW that for the period January 2022 to May 2023, 65 sterilisation campaigns have been carried out and 4,692 dogs have been sterilised.

Coming to part (a) (ii) of the question, I am informed that an amount of Rs8,687,364.50 in the Financial Year 2022/2023 has been disbursed to cover expenses, such as veterinary services, payment to MSAW staff, transport facilities, communication and awareness campaigns, as well as equipment used in connection with the sterilisation exercises.

With regard to part (b) of the question, as I mentioned earlier, several measures have been put in place by the MSAW to tackle the problem of stray dogs on our roads.

Since 2015, the Mauritius Society for Animal Welfare (MSAW) has embarked on a free mass sterilisation campaign and is actually reviewing its mass sterilisation campaign process under the “Sustainable Project for the Dog Population Control in Mauritius.” This project, which is funded under the National Environment and Climate Change Fund to the tune of Rs30 m., consists of –

- the mass sterilisation of dogs;
- the registration of dogs;
- survey of the dog population,
- the Catch-Neuter-Release (CNR) of stray dogs.

A mass sterilisation project of owned dogs was launched in June 2022 where dogs are being registered and microchipped.

To this end, the MSAW is organising several free outdoor sterilisation campaigns every week in towns and villages across the island with the assistance of NGOs and volunteers, as well as with the collaboration of stakeholders, such as the National Environment Cleaning Authority, Municipal Councils and District Councils and the National Housing Development Corporation.

The outdoor sterilisation campaigns are preceded by a canvassing and awareness campaign. In addition, in a bid to provide an extra helping hand to those who do not have the means to transport their dogs, the MSAW provides free transport facilities during each of its sterilisation campaigns. Post-operative care is also provided.

These campaigns have already been held in regions, such as Dubreuil, Malherbes, Montagne Longue, Cité La Cure, Bramsthan, Britannia, Mangalkhan, Albion, Sebastopol, Ecroignard, Pointe aux Sables, St Julien d’Hotman, Plaines des Papayes, La Brasserie, Cottage, Roches Noires, Pointe aux Piments, Rivière du Rempart, Grand Gaube and Terre Rouge.

Similar campaigns have been planned and will be carried out shortly in the regions of Clunny, Chamarel, Bambous, Dagotière, Tamarin, Vallée des Prêtres and Crève Cœur.

Moreover, a digital platform has been introduced to provide information on the project and online bookings for sterilisation. This service is free for members of the public. Through the platform, the dog owner applies for a voucher of Rs1,300, and then, has the choice to go either to the MSAW stations or private veterinary clinics or veterinarians registered with the MSAW.

The sterilisation of the dogs is being done by an appointed veterinary surgeon duly registered by the Mauritius Veterinary Council.

I wish to point out that free sterilisation of pet dogs is a facility provided by very few countries around the world.

My Ministry is also proposing to amend the Animal Welfare Act 2013, whereby the owner of a dog who declares that the dog shall not be kept for breeding purposes, the dog shall be sterilised with the consent of the owner.

Furthermore, Government has announced in the recent Budget Speech that individuals adopting animals from registered NGOs will be allowed to deduct an amount of Rs10,000 on their chargeable income for each animal adopted. It is hoped that this budget measure will help in reducing the number of stray dogs on our roads.

I have often highlighted in this House the need for the Mauritian dog owners to change their mindset and be more responsible towards pet ownership. I am again making an appeal to the public at large to develop a more responsible approach towards pet ownership.

HIGHLANDS – INCINERATOR – MAINTENANCE COST

(No. B/1058) 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 incinerator at Highlands, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Vacoas and Phoenix, information as to the –

- (a) monthly cost of maintenance thereof;
- (b) date of the coming into operation thereof, and
- (c) cost incurred for the setting up thereof, indicating the date of the commissioning.

Reply: My Ministry had awarded a contract to Kanta Electricals India Ltd on 26 July 2019 for the Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of 16 LPG-fixed Human Incinerators. The project is financed under the Indian line of Credit. The construction of the building to house the incinerator equipment and associated site works were undertaken by the Local Authorities concerned. Highlands is one of the 16 sites where an incinerator has been provided.

I am informed by the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix that the monthly cost of maintenance of the incinerator at Highlands is as follows –

- water charges amounting to Rs670;
- electricity charges amounting to Rs3,650, and
- an average amount of Rs15,000 on gas.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that the date of coming into operation of the incinerator was 20 December 2021.

As regards part (c) of the question, I am informed that –

- (i) cost for the setting up of the incinerator building and associated site works was Rs5,362,852.50 whereas the cost for Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of the incinerator is approximately Rs5,960,500, and
- (ii) the date of commissioning of the incinerator was 10 December 2021.

MAURITIUS POST LTD – SUSPICIOUS LETTERS/PACKAGES – PROTOCOL

(No. B/1059) 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.

Reply: The Mauritius Post Ltd. is a private company incorporated in March 2003 under the Companies Act 2001, following the enactment of the Post Office (Transfer of Undertaking) Act. The company is governed by its Constitution and managed by a Board of Directors.

It is, accordingly, not the practice to disclose information with regard to Government Owned Companies as such disclosure may cause prejudice to the company in its operations.

PARIS 2024 OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES - MONTHLY ALLOWANCE

(No. B/1060) Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the monthly allowance to be provided to athletes preparing for the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games as announced in the 2023-2024 Budget Speech, he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE HEALTH INSTITUTIONS - CANCER PATIENTS

(No. B/1061) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to cancer patients, he will state –

- (a) the number thereof currently undergoing treatment in;
 - (i) public health institutions, and
 - (ii) private health institutions, indicating the type of therapy prescribed therefor, and
- (b) where matters stand as to the completion of the New Cancer Center.

(Withdrawn)

STC - LIQUEFIED PETROLEUM GAS - PETREDEC LTD

(No. B/1062) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the storage of Liquefied Petroleum

Gas, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to a detailed yearly breakdown of the amount paid to Petredec Ltd., since 2015 to date, indicating if there has been an increase in the rental value and if so, the reasons therefor.

(Withdrawn)

CAMP MARCELIN - FOOTBALL GROUND

(No. B/1063) Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the proposed construction of a football ground at Camp Marcelin, he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

NEONATOLOGY - ONE-YEAR TRAINING IN UK - REGISTERED MEDICAL OFFICERS

(No. B/1064) 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)

REAL ESTATE AGENT AUTHORITY ACT – PROCLAMATION

(No. B/1065) 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 Real Estate Agent Authority Act, he will state if all the provisions thereof have been proclaimed and, if not, why not.

Reply: I am informed that sections 1 to 11, 17, 20, 33 to 41, 43, 45 and 47 of the Real Estate Agent Authority Act have been proclaimed.

I am also informed that the remaining sections will be proclaimed shortly.

FSC STAFF – SALARY REVIEW

(No. B/1066) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance whether, in regard to the salary review for the staff of the Financial Services Commission, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commission, information as to where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

CONSTITUENCY NO. 3 - PROJECTS

(No. B/1067) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to projects undertaken by his Ministry in Constituency No. 3, Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East since 2020 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

- number of roads, drains and amenities projects completed and the amount disbursed therefor, and
- forthcoming projects in current financial year, indicating the funds earmarked therefor.

(Withdrawn)

VELORE STREET TO ST. FRANÇOIS XAVIER STREET, PORL-LOUIS – BAD STATE

(No. B/1068) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to Velore Street, from Nicolay Road to Saint François Xavier Street, Port Louis, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal City Council of Port Louis, information as to if it is in a bad state, including pot holes and, if so, indicate the urgent remedial measures to be taken in relation thereto.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal City Council of Port Louis that Velore Street from Nicolay Road to Saint François Xavier Street, Port Louis which is 290 metres long, is in a bad condition and requires resurfacing.

My Ministry has allocated an amount of Rs8 m. on 30 June 2023 to all local authorities including the Municipal City Council of Port Louis for construction and resurfacing of roads.

As such, the Municipal City Council of Port Louis has been requested to consider submitting a revised priority list of sites where it intends to undertake construction and resurfacing of roads.

RESIDENCE VALLIJEE (T-JUNCTION) – TRAFFIC CONGESTION – REMEDIAL MEASURES

(No. B/1069) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the junction at the intersection between the main road and the entrance into Residence Vallijee, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to if consideration will be given for the installation of traffic lights thereat.

Reply: I am advised that there is recurrent traffic congestion along the A1 Port Louis-St Jean Road due to the large volume of traffic converging towards Upper Plaines Wilhems and Pointe aux Sables from Port Louis and vice-versa.

The entrance of Residence Vallijee is situated along the already congested A1 Port Louis-St Jean Road at approximately 125 metres from the T-junction of the A1 Road and the road leading to Plaine Lauzun Industrial Zone.

The said T-junction is already controlled by traffic lights due to the imbalance of traffic flow. During peak hours, considerable traffic queues are formed along the A1 Road both in the Northbound and Southbound directions.

I am advised that the installation of traffic lights at the entrance of Residence Vallijee, as suggested by the hon. Member, would cause further delays in the traffic, thereby impeding the smooth flow of traffic which would eventually lead to a breakdown in traffic flow due to its close proximity with the signalised T-Junction.

It is expected that the A1-M1 Link Road, being presently implemented by the Road Development Authority, would change the traffic patterns and the traffic volumes along the Junction A1 (Port Louis-St Jean Road) and B31 (Pointe aux Sables Road) and the Junction A1

(Port Louis-St Jean Road) and A3 (Rivière Noire Road) also known as Montée S Junction. This would reduce the traffic volume at these junctions, improve the level of service and mitigate to a considerable extent the traffic congestion along the A1 corridor.

My Ministry is currently carrying out traffic counts and traffic modelling exercise along the following junctions –

- i. junction A1 (Port Louis-St Jean Road) and B77 (Pailles Branch Road);
- ii. junction A1 (Port Louis-St Jean Road) and B31 (Pointe aux Sables Road);
- iii. junction A1 (Port Louis-St Jean Road) and A3 (Rivière Noire Road), also known as Montée S Junction, and
- iv. junction A1 (Port Louis-St Jean Road) and B93 (Old Moka Road).

The preliminary results have revealed that in order to improve the level of service along the junction between A1 (Port Louis-St Jean Road) and B77 (Pailles Branch Road), a dedicated slip lane and a grade separated junction should be implemented along the said junction. Once the traffic modelling exercise is completed, my Ministry would consult with the Road Development Authority on the implementation of the dedicated slip lane and the grade separated junction.

WHO REPORT – LOW CALORIE SWEETENER & CANCER

(No. B/1070) Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether he will state if he has taken cognisance of a World Health Organisation Report which establishes a probable harmful link between low calorie sweetener and cancer and, if so, indicate the actions envisaged in relation thereto.

Reply: The World Health Organisation Country Office has informed that an evaluation of the risk of aspartame has been conducted by WHO/International Agency for Research on Cancer, and there is a possibility that aspartame gets added to the list of carcinogens. However, the official results are due to be announced on the 14 July, 2023.

In the light of forthcoming recommendations from the World Health Organisation as to the carcinogenic nature of aspartame, my Ministry will initiate control and sensitisation measures accordingly.

**FIRE AND NATURAL CALAMITY VICTIM SCHEME – MONEY
DISBURSED**

(No. B/1071) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the Fire and Natural Calamity Victim Scheme, she will state, since January 2022 to date, the –

- (a) amount of money disbursed thereunder, and
- (b) eligibility criteria to benefit therefrom.

(Withdrawn)

MEDICAL & NURSING OFFICERS – RECRUITMENT

(No. B/1072) 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 –

- presently in post, and
- to be recruited for financial year 2023- 2024.

(Withdrawn)