

**SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY****PARLIAMENTARY****DEBATES****(HANSARD)****FIRST SESSION****TUESDAY 07 NOVEMBER 2023**

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THE CABINET
(Formed by Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth)

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

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|---|--|
| Hon. Mahen Kumar Seeruttun | Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance |
| Hon. Maneesh Gobin | Attorney General, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade |
| Hon. Jean Christophe Stephan Toussaint | Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation |
| Hon. Mahendranuth Sharma Hurreeram | Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development |
| Hon. Darsanand Balgobin | Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation |
| Hon. Soodesh Satkam Callichurn | Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training |
| 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 Agro-industry and Food Security |
| Dr. the Hon. Mrs Marie Christiane Dorine Chukowry | Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection |
| Dr. the Hon. Anjiv Ramdhany | Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms |

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| | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
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MAURITIUS

Seventh National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 28 of 2023

Sitting of Tuesday 07 November 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)

ANNOUNCEMENT

HON. JUMAN – MEDIA INTERVIEW – UNFOUNDED ALLEGATIONS

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I have an announcement to make. My attention has been drawn to an interview given by the hon. Juman to *L'Express* on Sunday 05 November 2023. In the said interview, hon. Juman is reported to have stated that Dr. the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness met three religious persons in the Committee Room of the National Assembly when the Assembly was sitting on Tuesday last whilst Members of the Opposition are refused access to the offices for holding Press conferences.

Hon. Members, the responsibility for the management of the buildings and the general administration of the Assembly Chamber is vested in the Speaker pursuant to the provision of Standing Order 78. Hon. Members are well aware that the two Committee Rooms of the National Assembly are meant exclusively for the holding of Parliamentary Committee Meetings. Hence, requests for the use thereof for other purposes by Members, both from the Government and the Opposition side are not acceded to.

I must point out that neither my Office nor the Office of the Clerk was in presence of any request from Dr. the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness for the use of any of the Committee Rooms of the National Assembly. Following the above press article, I caused an internal enquiry to be carried out. I have to report to the House that the internal enquiry has revealed that at no point in time did Dr. the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness make use of any of the Committee Rooms of the National Assembly...

(Interruptions)

Mrs Luchmun Roy: *Al peye do!*

Mr Ramano: *La honte pour le Parlement !*

Mr Speaker: ... of the Committee Rooms of the National Assembly on Tuesday last, which in any event remain closed at all times on Sitting days.

Mr Juman: *Demann Dr. Rawoo!*

Mr Speaker: The enquiry has further revealed that, in fact, Dr. the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness made use of the Conference Room of the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development.

Mr Toussaint: *Menter!*

Mr Hurreeram: *Menter!*

Mr Toussaint: *Menter!*

Mrs Luchmun Roy: *Manipulateur!*

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I take the view that such a statement coming from an hon. Member ...

An hon. Member: *Protez dimounn ...*

Mr Speaker: ... without confirming his averments ...

Mr Hurreeram: *Malpropte!*

Mr Speaker: ... shows an utter lack of seriousness ...

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members: *Menter!*

Mrs Luchmun Roy: *Menter! Menter!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order!

An hon. Member: *Malpropte!*

Mr Speaker: Hon. Juman, I will take you to task if you continue!

Mr Juman: What about them?

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I take the view that such a statement coming from an hon. Member ...

Dr. Boolell: *Lalimier ...*

Mr Speaker: ...without confirming his averments shows an utter lack of seriousness. Moreover, the said statement is misleading and is tantamount to a gratuitous accusation of the connivance between the Speaker and Members of the Government to the detriment of Members of the Opposition regarding access to Committee Rooms of the National Assembly.

An hon. Member: *Pa gagn drwa sa!*

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, in view of the seriousness of the unfounded allegations against the Chair, not worthy of an hon. Member, I cannot allow the matter to go unchecked...

An hon. Member: *To enn menter!*

Mr Speaker: I cannot allow the matter to go unchecked...

(*Interruptions*)

Silence!

Mr Mohamed: Check, check, uncheck!

Mr Speaker: ...failing which...

Mr Mohamed: *Inn rat enn mot la!*

Mr Armance: *Lin blier!*

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: I cannot allow the matter to go unchecked...

Mr Mohamed: Comma, comma...

Mr Speaker: ...and I am inviting the hon. Juman to make amends and tender his unreserved apologies to the House, failing which I will have no alternative than to order the hon. Member out of the Chamber.

Dr. Boolell: *Kisisa sa?*

Mr Mohamed: *Sanse li pann fer sa* during Sitting! Not even during Sitting? You are wrong!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Ameer Meea: *Ti dan zournal sa.*

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Apologise!

Mr Mohamed: Not even during the Sitting!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: *Ti dan zournal sa.*

Mr Speaker: Are you tendering apologies?

Mr Juman: No.

An hon. Member: *Apre vinn dir sori dans Parlman? Kiete sa?*

Mr Juman: Mr Speaker, Sir, thank you for giving me the opportunity ...

Mr Speaker: No! I have given instructions!

Mr Juman: He met the three ...

Mr Speaker: I am on my feet!

Mr Juman: The meeting ...

Mr Speaker: I am on my feet!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Apologise!

Mr Speaker: I am on my feet! I have given you instructions to tender apologies. If you don't tender apologies, you will have to withdraw from the Chamber.

An hon. Member: *Laryaz!*

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Juman: *To dir mwa laryaz? To dir mwa laryaz? Non, to dir mwa laryaz? Monn truv trwa dimounn laba, to dir mwa laryaz?*

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: You are not tendering apologies. I am ordering you to withdraw from the House.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Bye!

An hon. Member: *Ale, al pren...*

The Prime Minister: *Pren 200 roupi.*

Mr Speaker: And if you insist to stay in the House, I will have to name you!

Mr Toussaint: *Gagn letan fer video tou.*

Mr Juman: You have to name yourself!

An hon. Member: Apologise!

Dr. Boolell: *Sa enn zom!*

An hon. Member: Apologise!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: You have already been ordered out. If you continue, I will name you instantly!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Juman: *Demann Dr. Rawoo! Demann Dr. Rawoo!*

(*Interruptions*)

An hon. Member: *Menter!*

Mr Juman: La honte!

Mr Mohamed: But you don't hear others insulting him! You don't hear others insulting him!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: *Menter!*

Mr Mohamed: You don't hear others insulting him!

Mr Speaker: So, let's continue!

Mr Mohamed: Do you not hear me?

Mr X. L. Duval: *Lin konfirm renion la.*

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Dr. Rawoo ti laba!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order! What is happening?

Mr X. L. Duval: My Private Notice Question...

Mr Mohamed: They have fire under their butts.

Mr Hurreeram: Yes.

Mr X. L. Duval: ...is addressed...

(Interruptions)

Bon assez!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Excuse me! Hon. Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: Yes?

Mr Speaker: You are trying to provoke the Chair to ask you to withdraw from the Chamber.

Mr Mohamed: Oh no! You are wrong!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You are coming to the Chamber after long; so, be careful.

Mr Mohamed: I was hoping that...

Mr Speaker: Respect the Chair and the authority of the Chair!

Mr Mohamed: I am asking the Chair to see others insulting people in the Opposition.

Mr Speaker: You do not have to instruct the Chair.

Mr Mohamed: No, I am requesting.

Mr Speaker: And if you continue along that line, I will ask you to withdraw right now.

Mr Mohamed: I'll keep quiet then.

Mr Speaker: Keep quiet; you better keep quiet!

Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am starting at 11.38. Please take note.

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Prime Minister's Office

Ministry of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications
Ministry for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity

The Information and Communication Technologies (Universal Service Fund) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 159 of 2023)

B. Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development

- (a) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Treasury Foreign Currency Management Fund for the year ended 30 June 2022.
- (b) The Report of the Director of Audit and the Financial Statements of the National Resilience Fund for the year ended 30 June 2022.

C. Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities

The Central Water Authority (Dry Season) (Amendment No. 8) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 161 of 2023)

D. Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance

The Financial Intelligence and Anti-Money Laundering (Mauritius Revenue Authority) (Exemption) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 166 of 2023)

E. Ministry of Health and Wellness

The Quarantine (COVID-19 Restrictions) (Revocation) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 160 of 2023)

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

The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Seafarers' Welfare Fund for the year ended 30 June 2022.

G. Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection

- (a) The Consumer Protection (Safety Requirements) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 162 of 2023)
- (b) The Consumer Protection (Safety Requirements) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 163 of 2023)
- (c) The Consumer Protection (Control of Manufacture and Sale of Bread) (Amendment) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 164 of 2023)

- (d) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 31) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 165 of 2023)
- (e) The Legal Metrology (Pre-packed Commodities) (Amendment) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 167 of 2023)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

PUBLIC HOSPITALS – HYGIENE & CLEANLINESS – REMEDIAL ACTIONS

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the state of hygiene and cleanliness in public hospitals, he will state if consideration will be given for the setting up of a Select Committee of the House to report on the current state thereof and propose remedial actions therefor.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to the current state of hygiene and cleanliness in public hospitals, there has been no complaints.

Since one week, the hospital services, in particular warehousing of food items, have been brought in the limelight by some hon. Members of the Opposition who intentionally, deliberately and without authorisation gained premeditated access to restricted areas of Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on 30 October 2023, one Member of the Opposition trespassed into a restricted area and acceded to the General Store of Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital and used a mobile phone to make a video of the stored commodities therein with live comments/allegations and posted same on social media. He was later joined by another Member of the Opposition who in turn made another live video, making several allegations as well, wherein he informed that he has received several complaints from patients about the quality of food being served in Jeetoo Hospital.

To dissipate any doubts in the interests of the public, the Regional Health Director, on the same day, held a press conference. He stated that no official complaint about the quality of food served to patients or staffs, who are entitled for same, has been officially reported.

The Senior Catering Officer and the Manager Procurement and Supply also reported that all food prepared are subjected to stringent hygienic conditions and control.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is clear that these hon. Members are deliberately inducing the public in error by making false and malicious allegations, sapping the confidence and trust of the public, purely for political mileage and gains. They also live streamed in their video, images of expired food items in one of the stores illegally accessed out of the seven existing. It is true that there were some expired items temporarily kept in the said store awaiting proper disposal as per established procedures and protocols.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to inform the House about the disgusting rusted tomato cans of 2.5 kg capacity which has been focused upon in their video clip. Unfortunately, I do not have the right to show the photograph of these clips. These cans were empty, rusted and purposely...

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order. My question has nothing to do with his reply!

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir...

Mr X. L. Duval: It is an entirely different question!

Mr Speaker: Please, let me rule on this point of order!

Mr X. L. Duval: I will show you...

Mr Speaker: Let me rule on this point of order! Quiet! I am on my feet!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Do not shout!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am on my feet! No voice to be heard! I am on my feet!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: *Ki no voice to be heard?*

Mr Speaker: I am ruling on this point of order. You put a question; the Minister, forming part of the Executive, answerable and accountable to the Legislative, is replying...

Mr X. L. Duval: He has no...

Mr Speaker: ...and the reply has been prepared by his officers and himself maybe. So, we should, in a parliamentary democracy, allow the Minister to reply!

(Interruptions)

Quiet! Reply!

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, to point out, in his question, it is in regard to current...

Mr X. L. Duval: Why exactly are you shouting? Why are you shouting?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Now, I am warning you for the last time! You are disrupting the procedure of the House! Continue!

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, this reply is in regard to the current state of hygiene and cleanliness. I have to point this out.

Allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, to inform the House about the disgusting rusted tomato cans of 2.5 kg capacity that has been focused upon in the video clip. These cans were empty, rusted, and purposefully turned upside down to create the impression that they were full and to eventually be used for patients' consumption.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members: *La honte ! La honte !*

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, just imagine how vile and malicious the intentions of those protagonists are!

I will continue. Let me inform the House that those cans of capacity 2.5 kg each, have never been procured by neither Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital nor in the Health Institutions of my Ministry.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members: *La honte !*

Dr. Jagutpal: My Ministry always procures cans of 425 g – the small one – and never that of 2.5 kg capacity. Now, the question is, Mr Speaker, Sir: how come those empty and rusted cans have landed in the store of Dr. Jeetoo Hospital?

An hon. Member: *Sa aussi ena foto.*

Dr. Jagutpal: What is more suspicious is that those empty and used-up cans were pictured upside down – you know they are so good at making videos – to project and simulate that those cans were full and available for use.

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: Shame!

Dr. Jagutpal: I will stop here. I will not say more than this.

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *La honte !*

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Jagutpal: Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding *le chou, chouchou, la menthe* – I don't know whether *cotomili* was there –, these pictures do not correspond to the vegetable items in our hospitals. It is important to give this information.

My officers have already made a statement to the Police on the matter and an inquiry is ongoing.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry operates five regional hospitals, six specialised hospitals, two district hospitals, two community hospitals, seven medicclinics, 19 area health centres and 113 community health centres as well as 13 health offices. My Ministry caters for more than 70% of health care needs of the population.

For the period 2022, there were around 8.9 million attendance; 166,000 more admissions and more than 49,000 surgeries. On a daily basis, around 2,600 patients stay in public hospitals. Thus, over 10,000 meals are prepared for both patients and staff, providing 24-hour service; three times per day, including breakfast, lunch, dinner and in-between tea breaks.

Furthermore, I would wish to highlight that in 2022, some 929,000 patients were recorded in hospitals, which means that nearly 3 million meals were prepared for patients for a year.

Additionally, in respect to hygiene and cleanliness, linen services were provided to those patients together with washroom and bathroom facilities. I hope that these hon. Members who are experts in doing video clips will go in toilets one day and also make some live comments.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the internal cleaning of hospitals is carried out by the Senior Attendants and Attendants, supervised by the Ward Managers and Heads of Sections. At the Health Centres, cleanliness is carried out by Handy Workers/General Workers posted thereat, supervised by Charge Nurses. The Maintenance Team posted at Regional Hospitals is responsible for overall minor repairs and maintenance of hospital infrastructure. It is also responsible for general upgrading works. Rare are the countries which are able to offer free healthcare services at point of delivery, including transport, medication, consultation, investigation and treatment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if our current state of hygiene and cleanliness is being challenged, surely this would have been impacted on our key health indicators, such as improved life expectancy at birth, decrease in infant mortality rate, and increase in bed occupancy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, however, my Ministry does receive complaints through different channels, namely the complaint desk at the level of hospitals, the Citizen Support Portal

and on a daily basis on private radios and social media. These complaints are attended to promptly. I am tabling the list of complaints for the year 2022 for the hospital services which can be categorised into treatment, human resources, drugs, and infrastructure.

In regard to bugs in public hospitals, in the past, complaints were received from our staff regarding probable infestation of bed bugs in wards. As per a well-established protocol, the Vector Biology and Control Division of my Ministry is immediately informed to conduct an entomological survey to assess presence of species and density of bed bugs. In parallel, the Public Health and Food Safety Inspectorate conducts an environmental health survey to check on the extent of infestation, harbourages, and further course of actions, which entail spraying with a residual insecticide, are immediately taken.

Furthermore, infested mattresses and beddings are immediately disposed of, followed by treatment of the infected area. After 10 days, the entomological department carries out another survey to check on efficacy of treatment applied.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have to inform the House that my Ministry leaves no stone unturned to ensure a safe environment for all patients admitted as well as staff involved.

The Rodent Control Unit of my Ministry carries out regular inspection and site visits at all hospitals and health institutions. The frequency of visits varies from daily to thrice weekly depending on the requirements of the hospital or health institution.

As regards the storage of pharmaceutical products, same are stored in ambient temperature, except drugs such as vaccines, insulin and ampoules, which are stored in temperature range of 2 to 8 degrees centigrade.

With regard to monitoring of cleanliness and sanitation, from January 2023 to date, a total of 232 visits have been carried out in all hospitals, wards, yards, surroundings and other units, and 34 statements of nuisances have been issued by the Public Health and Food Safety Inspectorate to ensure remedial actions are taken.

Furthermore, 159 inspections have been carried out in various catering units of our hospitals, which led to seizure of more than 350 kg of foodstuffs and 138 samples were taken for microbiological analysis. All were found to be within prescribed microbiological standards.

Mr Speaker, Sir, moreover, the Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) unit is another crucial set of practices aimed at preventing the spread of infectious diseases within communities, healthcare facilities and various public settings. My Ministry has strived to reduce hospital-acquired infections by implementing the National Action Plan on IPC.

Moreover, training was provided to more than 8,000 staff on infection prevention and control. Improvements in IPC scores have been noted.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if health services delivered in our hospitals are so awful, as depicted by some on the other side of the House, then how do we explain these –

- The management of the COVID-19 in Mauritius has been commended on the international front, yes, by the WHO and the IMF.
- In 2021, my Ministry obtained the Gold Award in the Public Excellence Award 2021 for Managing the COVID-19 pandemic.
- In 2022, my Ministry obtained the Gold Award in promoting an agile and responsive public service.
- the Coronary Care Unit of Dr. A.G.Jeetoo Hospital has been rewarded winning the NPCC 2019 Award, African Kaizen Special Award in 2021, Gold Award of the Public Service Excellence in 2022;
- the Director General of WHO also congratulated Mauritius;
- the Presidential Award for the “Effective Organizational Change for the National COVID-19 Vaccination Programme;”
- In addition, the Spine Unit of the Victoria Hospital was also awarded the Silver Award of the Public Service Excellence Award in 2022,
- In a statement, the Director General said –

“Mauritius is a role model, not only for Africa and for Small Island Developing States, but also for the world.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, in light of what I have elaborated, I will leave it *à qui de droit* to decide whether a Select Committee is warranted. I would like to remind the Leader of the Opposition that such powers to institute a Select Committee is the prerogative of the hon. Speaker.

Mr Speaker, Sir, à qui profite le crime ? Il est évident que l’opposition est en chute libre avec le verdict du Privy Council.

(Interruptions)

Elle veut détourner l’attention...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Jagutpal: ...de cette gifle magistrale qu'elle a reçue. En faisant de la démagogie, elle veut aussi détourner l'attention...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Jagutpal: ...du public de ce qui s'est passé à la Citadelle. Ce qui est dommage, c'est qu'une partie de la presse joue le jeu de l'opposition, mais la population n'est pas dupe. Ce qui est malheureux, M. le président, c'est qu'en agissant ainsi, l'opposition est en train de saper la confiance des Mauriciens dans les services hospitaliers, alors que celle-ci fait partie intégrante du traitement.

Je laisse à la population le soin de juger qui sert mieux son pays : les membres de l'opposition ou les 14,000 hommes et femmes qui travaillent dans la santé publique pour sauver des vies. Et pour terminer, je pense à tous les patients bénéficiaires de notre système de santé que je remercie pour leur confiance et pour lesquels tous les employés de mon ministère travaillent nuit et jour. Merci.

Mr Hurreeram: Bravo!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will turn the Minister and his reply upside down!

(Interruptions)

I would like to ask the Minister whether he is aware of...

Dr. Jagutpal: Like this one. This one, the...

Mr X. L. Duval: ...an internal audit report...

Dr. Jagutpal: It is upside down! The figure!

Mr X. L. Duval: ...an internal audit report...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, both sides of the House!

Mr X. L. Duval: ... an internal audit report dated 11 July 2023 - you are aware of that, good - and an exit meeting chaired by your Permanent Secretary, Mr D.C? In that report, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the Minister whether he has read it and he has seen that the internal audit report looks at Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital and Brown Sequard

mainly, talks of deplorable conditions in wards, huge wastage of food, chaotic situation, rotten foodstuffs, fresh food not being served to the public...

Mr Mohamed: Shame!

Mr X. L. Duval: Is he aware of that report?

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: Shame on him!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Mohamed: Shame!

Mr X. L. Duval: And why that report...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: He just said there is no...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: I said shame on him!

Mr X. L. Duval: ...was submitted by...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Uteem, hon. Mohamed, I am warning you! Order!

Mr Mohamed: Shame is parliamentary!

Mr Speaker: I have already warned you twice!

Mr Mohamed: It is not parliamentary?

Mr Speaker: Last time!

Mr Mohamed: It is not parliamentary?

Mr Speaker: Last warning!

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: That report was dated 11 July and the exit meeting by your Permanent Secretary attended by some 30 other people was in September 2023. Are you aware of that, and if so, why did you not disclose this to the House today?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am fully aware of all audit reports. It is my duty to take all the audit reports and to improve on that. I am sure the hon. Member also knows what has been the reply of the Ministry to the audit report. The Auditors can make any report, it is their right, but it is also the officers' right to give a reply to these audit's reports. We do agree at times, yes, but not as you said, it has been as if the whole system is not working. So, all the patients are being provided with whatever! I totally agree. In fact, it is good that we have seen expired items because if we do not use expired items, it will be there and you have to undertake procedures to get rid of them. This is completely clear.

Mr X. L. Duval: Your Permanent Secretary in that meeting took note that there was huge wastage of food because patients were not being consulted for the meals, which is contrary to practice. Are you aware of this?

Dr. Jagutpal: Totally, Mr Speaker, Sir!

Mr X. L. Duval: Huge wastage of food, your...

Dr. Jagutpal: Food...

Mr Speaker: Let the Minister reply!

Mr X. L. Duval: He said yes! He said yes! He said yes! Your...

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir...

Mr X. L. Duval: Your...

Mr Speaker: Let the Minister reply!

Dr. Jagutpal: Let me reply to this part!

Mr Speaker: You already put a question. Let the Minister...

Mr X. L. Duval: He replied!

Mr Speaker: Let him reply!

Dr. Jagutpal: Now, I will reply to this part...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You keep quiet! You reply!

(Interruptions)

Keep quiet!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Jagutpal: The hon. Leader of Opposition is stating that food is being wasted. It is totally agreeable because the quantity of food is being prepared based on a formula. It is obvious, patients are kept fasting in wards, they do not take food. There have always been cases where preparations are being done in the morning and patients being discharged at times even in the morning or afternoon. So, there would be wastage of food. There is no system, there is no formula that the exact quantity of food can be prepared and that is totally agreeable. But what is more important is that patients are being provided with quality food, patients are being provided safe food and patients are being provided food that has been freshly cooked. For the wastage, I totally agree with you, Leader of Opposition.

Mr X. L. Duval: I will continue. Therefore, because you did not consult the patients, that is why there are huge wastages. Now, on paragraph 2.14 it says this –

“The committee was informed...”

(Interruptions)

Listen to this!

“The committee was informed that stale leftover food cooked six days prior was also found in the BHS. It was understood that fresh food was not being served to patients.”

Did you read that part also? So, why are you...

(Interruptions)

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, all the recommendations of the Audit Report have totally been taken care of. 80% of all the recommendations of the internal control are being implemented. As I said earlier in my reply, to have 10,000 food cooked on a daily basis for the staff and the patient. Obviously, it is totally correct to say that the Audit has to do its report and the Ministry has to implement the recommendations of the Audit Report. But this does not mean that, Mr Speaker, Sir, we take political mileage through all these officers...

(Interruptions)

...who are working. From the Store Manager to the Cook, and those who are in charge of the Catering Unit and now to come and blame them for whatever they have been doing.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is the Minister’s officers who are giving us these reports because they are disgusted with you. That is the truth!

(*Interruptions*)

Dr. Jagutpal: No, obviously,...

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I continue with the report. It says here, Mr Speaker, Sir, according to surveys carried out, hygienic conditions of wards were deplorable. Now, this report was dated 11 July. The exit meeting by your PS was a few weeks ago in September. You took more than two months to even consider the report and nothing has been done since that time. Nothing!

An hon. Member: *Kestion!*

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir...

Mr X. L. Duval: So, are you aware?

Dr. Jagutpal: Let me reply!

Mr X. L. Duval: Who is that fool talking about *kestion laba*?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me reply to this part.

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: Wait! Wait a minute! Leader of the Opposition, bear with me. I find the House a bit unruly today.

Hon. Members: Yes!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: I am giving a warning to both sides of the House! We are doing serious business today!

Mr X. L. Duval: Yes!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: And Leader of the Opposition, your question should be specific!

Mr X. L. Duval: Are you aware that your own Ministry – this is not the report of the Director of Audit, this is your own Ministry – says that your own wards' hygienic conditions were deplorable, that foods served in the wards were cold - Section 2.9 of the report.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, that is what the Ministry has to do whenever there is a report from the Audit! The Ministry does not work in the hospital and the food is being prepared on a daily basis, the hygiene is on a daily basis and whenever it has been

pointed out that the hygiene is not proper, the food is not proper, my question is: has the Ministry taken action or not?

Obviously, the Ministry is taking action. It is not only about waiting for audit reports. Our IPCs, the Sanitary Divisions do make continuous monitoring of the hygiene and sanitary conditions of the wards. It is an ongoing process and we have to admit that we have to continuously do it. We have to continuously improve and monitor these services. This is totally normal. Even if I give you examples of what is happening in private clinics, it does not mean that we should blame private clinics or any other institutions but it is a question of hygiene, food items. It is a continuous process and we have to continuously implement...

Mr X. L. Duval: You are repeating...

Dr. Jagutpal: ...whether it is recommendations from the hospitals, the Ministry has to act. Obviously, the Ministry will take time to act but action is being taken.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we will keep on having complaints, be it for the wards or toilets – I do not know whether they are also experts on these - and from all the different services because they are being used by the public. And how these services are being used is not a question of who to blame or when. It is a question of how we address these complaints and the how the Ministry has been engaged in addressing these complaints.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether he read the Internal Audit Report (IAR), on page 21 at section 8.2 where it is mentioned rotten vegetables: “In the Catering Unit, vegetables were found rotten and not fresh, rotten ladyfingers and *margoz*, *aubergines* and cucumbers are all rotten. Onions had already sprouted.”

This is from your hospital, three months ago and the pictures that have been taken and put on the web by my colleagues, and rightly so, were a few days ago. That proves beyond doubt, that you have done absolutely nothing after this report on Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital and Brown Sequard.

Mr Speaker: Let the Minister reply on this!

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, vegetables are being delivered directly in the Catering Unit, in the kitchen, on a daily basis. The volume of vegetables being procured is as per the conditions of the contract. It is obvious, even in your kitchen, Mr Speaker, Sir, and in all our fridges, that there are vegetables that have started to decompose or so.

Mr Speaker, Sir, for that volume of vegetables, before sending them to Mare Chicose, we have to be reassured because if they are left there, even if you have taken pictures, it means that the vegetables have not been cooked. What you have been saying is that those vegetables have been left over there, and obviously, it takes time to get rid of them. In fact, it is a good thing that we have seen these vegetables, and you will keep on seeing them because they are being procured on a daily basis and there would be a quantity that will start getting rotten and have to be disposed of later on. In fact, I think it is a good thing that the Leader of the Opposition has pointed out that you can see those vegetables because the Catering Unit, the officers will tell you that those vegetables that are rotten are meant for disposal.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, on page 24 of the report, 16.5 kilos of *brède songe* - you are a bit like *brède songe* yourself...

Dr. Jagutpal: Maybe.

Mr X. L. Duval: ...prepared six days ago, this might imply...

(*Interruptions*)

This might imply...

An hon. Member: Withdraw!

Mr Speaker: What have you said?

Mr X. L. Duval: Forget it. This might imply that fresh food...

Mr Speaker: What have you said, leader of the Opposition?

An hon. Member: Withdraw!

Mr X. L. Duval: Yes.

Mr Speaker: What is that word '*brède songe*'?

Mr X. L. Duval: I withdraw it; don't worry about it!

Mr Dhunoo: You should apologise!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: Leader of the Opposition!

(*Interruptions*)

Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Dhunoo: Apologise!

Mr X. L. Duval: What is it?

Mr Hurreeram: *Arrogant!*

Mr Speaker: You have to apologise.

Mr X. L. Duval: I apologise, no problem!

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the Minister, on page 24, 16.5 kilos of *brède songe* prepared six days ago, and this is what your own audit report says: ‘this might imply that fresh food was not being supplied to patients because it was found that 16.5 kilos of *brède songe* and 85 kilos of ladyfingers which have been kept for five days are already rotten.’ So, your own Internal Audit says that this would imply that fresh food was not being supplied to patients.

Mr Speaker: Let the Minister reply!

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, vegetables are kept in cold rooms in our Catering Units. In my fridge, there are vegetables kept for one week that we do consume, and even after one week, my wife does prepare food with those vegetables.

Mr X. L. Duval: *To wife ki ena pu faire ladans?*

Dr. Jagutpal: So, if the vegetables are being kept properly in the storeroom, they are cooked after five days. If the one in-charge of the Catering Unit would have told you that these vegetables are rotten, it would have been left over there. And after five days, we do cook whatever vegetables you have mentioned, unless anybody in our house does not cook vegetables kept after five days. I have not seen anything like this as a sanitary protocol; that fresh vegetables, whenever they are bought and kept properly in a proper storeroom should not be used for cooking after five days. If this report can be submitted to me, I will be happy. And we will put it in the Food Act that whenever somebody purchases vegetables five days back from your market or so, after five days, we have to discard it. So, this is the reply to you.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is his own report.

Mr Speaker: Time is over!

Mr X. L. Duval: I have no need to submit...

Mr Speaker: Time is over! Time is over!

Mr X. L. Duval: It is your own report!

Mr Speaker: Time is over!

Mr X. L. Duval: *Pa tap lame? Personn pa tap lame laba ?*

(*Interruptions*)

An hon. Member: *Lamok vide!*

Mr X. L. Duval: *Personn pa tap lame!*

An hon. Member: *Nou'nn fini tape!*

(*Interruptions*)

Mrs Luchmun Roy: *Al paye ! Ban move payer! Zot dwa, al paye!*

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: If the House needs more time to explain themselves or whatever...

Mr X. L. Duval: Exchange ourselves.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: *Manze gate!*

Mr Speaker: ... we are here. Leader of the Opposition, try to be polite!

Mr X. L. Duval: It is not an exchange.

Mr Speaker: I did not say 'exchange'!

Mr X. L. Duval: You did!

Mr Speaker: I did not say 'exchange'!

Mr X. L. Duval: You did!

Mr Speaker: I said something else, not 'exchange'! Oh! Try to be polite!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: What did you say?

Mr X. L. Duval: You said 'exchange'!

Mr Speaker: I didn't say 'exchange'! I said 'explain'!

(*Interruptions*)

Order! Order! You are becoming mad!

(*Interruptions*)

Go and check Hansard! Leader of the Opposition, you are on slippery grounds!

The Table has been advised that PQ B/1403 will be replied by the hon. Prime Minister, time permitting. PQ A/10 has been transferred to the hon. Prime Minister.

Hon. Doolub!

(No. B/1380) 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 Mauritius Police Force, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the on-the-job trainings provided to Police Officers, giving details thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Mauritius Police Force has a unique specificity because of its diverse roles and functions. Our Police Force is one among the few Police organisations in the world which is responsible for both internal and territorial security which encompass crime investigation, combatting drugs, border control, traffic policing, responding to disasters, conducting driving tests and undertaking prosecutions among others.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that in order to fulfil its mandate and achieve the different objectives as mentioned earlier, the Police is organised in different adjuncts including the regular Police posted in Police Stations, amongst others –

- (a) Special Mobile Force (SMF);
- (b) Special Supporting Unit (SSU);
- (c) National Coast Guard (NCG);
- (d) Police Helicopter Squadron (PHS);
- (e) Maritime Air Squadron (MAS);
- (f) Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit (ADSU),
- (g) Central Crime Investigation Department (CCID),
- (h) Traffic Branch,
- (i) Emergency Response Service (ERS),
- (j) *Brigade pour la Protection de la Famille (BPF)*,
- (k) *Police de L'Environnement*, and
- (l) Passport and Immigration Office (PIO).

Each Police adjunct has specific roles and is responsible to provide specific services to the community. Assuming such diverse set of roles and responsibilities hitherto requires the Police to have a flexible and multiskilling human workforce to deliver the highest quality of service to the community. Given the complex nature of policing, Police Officers require appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes to face the actual and future challenges. These are inculcated to them through a comprehensive Training and Development Programme.

I am further informed that, training for Police Officers of all ranks in the Mauritius Police Force is ongoing both locally and abroad. The training roadmap comprises, *inter alia*, the following –

- a) Foundation training (residential);
- b) On-the-job training;
- c) Continuation training;
- d) Refresher courses;
- e) Periodic short term courses;
- f) Generic courses, and
- g) Specialised/advanced training.

As such, beside a standard basic training on Police duties, laws and evidence and general administration, whenever Police Officers are posted to any unit they have to acquire specific skills through various on-the-job trainings/coaching/ mentoring, so that they are properly equipped to deliver the best quality service to the public within the specific unit where they are posted to.

On-the-job training is based on the principle of “learning by doing”. It is imparted to employees to help them familiarise with the grades and overall functioning of the concerned organisation where they are posted. It is a cost effective and result oriented approach to acquire new competencies and skills needed for a job in a real working environment under the guidance of a Supervisor, Manager, or another knowledgeable employee. Hence, on-the-job training for Police officers is a crucial part of their preparation for law enforcement duties and is an ongoing process for their professional development. It typically involves a combination of classroom instructions and practical field experience. The under-mentioned areas are, *inter alia*, the key components of the on-the-job training for Police officers –

- (i) Field Training: As part of their training, new recruits as well as newly posted officers are paired with experienced officers. They observe and participate in real-life policing situations to enhance their knowledge gain practical experience;
- (ii) Learning the established policies of the Mauritius Police Force: Regular lectures are carried out at station, Division and Force Levels for all Police Officers with regard to learning the specific policies, procedures, and

standing orders regulating the organisation, including rules of conduct, use of force protocols, amongst others;

- (iii) Training on legal matters: Periodical courses are organised for Police Officers posted to Division/Branches/Units at the level of Police Training School and Divisional/Branch Training Units on laws and regulations that they are expected to enforce, including upholding of human rights;
- (iv) Physical Fitness: Regular physical training including officer safety and self-defence are dispensed to Police Officers posted to Branches and Specialised Units, such as SMF, SSU and GIPM to ensure that the officers are in good shape and are able to handle the physical demands of their jobs;
- (v) Firearms Training: All Police Officers receive training on the safety rules and handling of firearms. They also participate in practical firing exercise. And for such training, the Police have set up The Mauritius Police Force Shooting Range at SMF Rodrigues which is a secure and certified safe live – fire indoor shooting range. Additionally, an advance weapons stimulated is being implemented at SMF Complex Vacoas for Firearms training using 3D visualisation software;
- (vi) Crisis Management & Response: Officers are trained to handle various situations ranging from routine traffic stops to disaster management, including effecting arrest, public order policing, responding to emergencies, and providing first aid. And simulation exercise on above are organised at divisional and branch level at least twice yearly;
- (vii) Community Policing: To build positive relationships with the community, designated Police Officers undergo tailor-made courses on community policing which may include topics like crime prevention, conflict resolution, customer care interpersonal communication, courtesy, amongst others;
- (viii) Report Writing: All Police Officers are trained on report writing for documenting of incidents and investigations, and
- (ix) Continuation Training: Ongoing training and education are dispensed on regular basis to keep officers updated on the latest techniques, technologies, and legal developments.

For the period 2015 to date, Police Officers have benefitted from 711,567 training courses organised and conducted in Divisions, Branches and at the Police Training School.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed by the Commissioner of Police that in its Police Strategic Plan 2022-2025, the Police has identified nine priorities pillars which serve as a road map to improve the level of service delivery whilst at the same time, enhancing the organisation's effectiveness in addressing policing challenges in this increasingly digital world.

Thus, under Priority 6 of the Police Strategic Plan - Strengthening Human Resource Management, training and capacity building is one of the key components. For that purpose, a host of strategies have been elaborated to ensure that the Police Officers are equipped with the right skills to meet the job demands, which are, *inter alia*, as follows –

- a) Creating a dedicated component to carry out research, design and evaluate training in the Mauritius Police Force;
- b) Developing training syllabi on emerging threats in consultation with the appropriate stakeholders;
- c) Developing a mechanism for evaluating the quality of training;
- d) In order to engender a learning culture in the Force, scholarships will be offered in suitable courses locally and abroad for interested officers, and
- e) Adopting the concept of open online course to all personnel.

Furthermore, Police has, through its various reform programs, continuously revised the training curricula for Police Officers by adopting a systematic approach to training through the Training Needs Analysis to identify new training methodologies to meet the gaps identified in competencies and skills and to equip the workforce to face emerging threats. The last Training Needs Analysis exercise for the whole Force was carried out from May to June 2022 at the Police Training School following which several courses have been identified and are being run.

Moreover, to ascertain that such exercise captures the latest trends in policing at the international and regional levels, be it emerging threats, modern crimes, latest advancement and technology to combat crimes in general, foreign law enforcement agencies were solicited to conduct needs analysis study for the Police with a view to identify areas of cooperation in terms of technical assistance and capacity building.

As such, experienced Police Officers from the Singapore Police Force conducted a needs assessment study in September 2019.

Two senior Police Officers from the United Kingdom National Police Chiefs' Council undertook a needs analysis in April 2022 which resulted in the organisation of

three trainings on cybercrime/crypto-currency, crime investigations and crime intelligence conducted locally by resource persons from the UK Police from 27 January to 19 March 2023 for the benefit of 201 Police Officers.

To further ensure that a Police Officer performs his/her job efficiently and effectively, the service of other local training institutions and law enforcement agencies like the University of Mauritius, the Civil Service College and ICAC have been approached to dispense sponsored training on non-policing matters to Police Officers. Thus, 314 Police Officers have followed a degree course in Police Duties, 525 attended a Certificate in Police Leadership and Management, 3,495 attended a Certificate in Police Duties and 3,500 in IT at University of Mauritius for the period 2000 to 2021 under this sponsored training scheme.

I am also informed by the Commissioner of Police that Mauritius being a member of several regional and international organisations such as SADC, Southern Africa Regional Police Chiefs Cooperation Organisation (SARPCCO) and the United Nations, as well as other friendly countries under bilateral agreements, have also provided Police Officers the opportunity to attend general as well as specialised training abroad. For the period 2015 to date, 2,994 trainings, workshops and courses in India, USA, France, China, Egypt, Seychelles, South Africa, Botswana, and Reunion Island under different education programs were attended by Police Officers. For instance, the Police is offered numerous training opportunities every year under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) in recognised training establishment in India including prestigious academies such as the Indian Military Academy, Indian Naval Academy, Indian Police Academy, Training Institutions of the Indian Air force and other professional schools.

The Police also interact with International Law Enforcement Agencies such as INTERPOL which provides training on regular basis in specific fields locally and abroad. For example, from January 2023 to date, 29 Police Officers have attended training conducted by resource persons from INTERPOL. Consideration is also being given to second Police Officers to the INTERPOL for first hand training and to gather experience thereat. They will gain and share experience with other police agencies from INTERPOL's prestigious network of 195 countries.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is important to note that the training of Police Officers is not limited to the normal classroom setting. Regularly, Police Officers of different adjuncts participate in large scale joint bilateral, regional and international training exercises such as –

- (a) Cutlass Express Exercise – which is conducted by the United States Naval Forces for the benefits of African countries including Mauritius, Comoros, Kenya, Madagascar, Seychelles, Djibouti. The last exercise was conducted from 06 to 17 March 2023;
- (b) Papangue Exercise – conducted with the collaboration of France to strengthen maritime security. The last exercise took place from 10 to 15 April 2022, and
- (c) Phoenix Exercise – organised jointly by the *Force Armée de la Zone Sud de L’Ocean Indien* and Mauritius Police Force with counterparts from the different regional countries. The last exercise was held in Mauritius from 05 to 08 December 2022.

Additionally, with regard to Agalega, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Government of Mauritius and the Government of the Republic of India for *inter-alia* the improvement in the sea and air transportation facilities at Agalega. The MOU also provides for the Government of India to facilitate technical training in Mauritius and in India to Police Officers deputed on the island.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in an endeavour to give more structured facilities for the training of the Police, the construction of a Disciplined Forces Academy costing around Rs2 billion financed by India under a line of credit is being implemented. The Academy has been designed to accommodate modern training facilities to cope with the new demands and challenges. It will also enable the harmonisation of the recruitment and training of Police Officers, Fire and Rescue Officers and Prisons Officers.

Training would continue to play a major role in capacity building and the overall development of Police Officers and would be an on-going process. It is fundamental to match individuals' competencies with the jobs they have to do and bridge competency gaps for current and future roles. My Government is committed to have a fully trained Police Force and thus since 2015 to date, some Rs81 m. have been allocated for the training of our Police Officers.

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, and I thank the Prime Minister for this very comprehensive reply. In his reply actually, the Prime Minister mentioned that regular physical training is provided to specialised units like SSU, SMF and GIPM. Can he state whether such initiative will be taken to provide regular physical training to all Police Officers in view to ensuring that they are physically fit at all times? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the training imparted to Police Officers, of course, does not cover all the officers in the Force. In fact, I asked the

same question to the Commissioner of Police and I have been informed that serious consideration is being given to provide regular physical training to all Police Officers to ensure that they are in good shape and physically fit. However, Police Officers who are over aged and suffering from medical problems, obviously they would be exempted.

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the Prime Minister state whether successful completion of training by any Police Officer entails monetary reward or constitutes an advantage for promotion?

The Prime Minister: I am informed that they do not entail any monetary compensation. However, Police Officers, who succeed and secure, for example, a BSc in Police Studies at the University of Mauritius, are entitled to two increments in their basic salaries. And as I stated in my reply, the possibility of linking promotional aspects with courses undertaken and educational qualifications obtained, of course, will be examined because that will be also a motivation for those officers to follow training.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

MR M. R. G. K. C. T. M - DRUG DEALING – ARREST – INQUIRY

(No. B/1381) 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 Mr M. R. G. K. C. T. M., arrested on 03 October 2023 for an alleged offence of drug dealing with aggravating circumstances for possession of cannabis with an averment of trafficking, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if an inquiry has been initiated thereinto and, if so, where matters stand.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, alongside being a caring Government towards the victims of the drug scourge, my Government is ruthless towards the drug traffickers who are destroying the lives of our youth. The massive seizures of drugs amounting to Rs15.5 billion since 2015 and as many as 23,668 arrests speak volumes of the crusade we are leading against the drug peddlers.

In regard to the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on Tuesday 03 October 2023 at about 14.15 hours, based on reliable information and by virtue of a search warrant, a team of officers of the Anti-Drug Smuggling Unit (ADSU) from Eastern Division proceeded to the residence of one Mr M.R.G.K.C.T.M.K. at Coville Street, Union Park. His premises, comprising his concrete house and a greenhouse situated adjacent to his house, were searched in his presence. During the search, the ADSU Officers found and secured the following –

- (i) four plastic bags containing around 7.347 kgs of dried leaves suspected to be cannabis;
- (ii) a plastic bag containing 9166 suspected cannabis seeds;
- (iii) two electronic scales bearing traces of cannabis leaves, and
- (iv) a sum of Rs11,100 suspected to be proceeds from sale of dangerous drugs.

On the same day, Mr M.R.G.K.C.T.M.K. was arrested and brought to ADSU Office at Flacq District Headquarters together with the exhibits for investigation. The street value of the dangerous drugs secured was estimated at Rs9,733,000.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed by the Commissioner of Police that on Wednesday 04 October 2023, Mr M.R.G.K.C.T.M.K. was brought before the Grand Port District Court where he was provisionally charged with the following offences in breach of the Dangerous Drugs Act –

- (i) possession of cannabis for the purpose of selling with an averment of trafficking;
- (ii) possession of cannabis seeds for the purpose of cultivation, and
- (iii) money laundering.

In view of the seriousness of the offences, Police objected to his release on bail and he was remanded to Police cell up to Tuesday 10 October 2023.

On Tuesday 10 October 2023, the accused appeared before the Court and he was remanded anew to Police cell up to Monday 16 October 2023. Given that on the same day, there was still objection to his release on bail, he was remanded to jail. The enquiry is ongoing.

I am further informed that Mr M.R.G.K.C.T.M.K. is an activist of the Mauritius Labour Party...

(Interruptions)

... and is known to have formed part of the private security team of Mr Patrick Assirvaden.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Government has been relentlessly fighting the drug scourge whilst the previous Government has been tolerating the drug barons who have been allowed to flourish their illegal trade much to the detriment of innocent people. We are all aware of the number of people close to the Labour Party who have been involved in drug cases. One of them has recently been found guilty by the Assizes for drug dealing on 19 October 2023.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell! Behave yourself!

The Prime Minister: This explains why the former Prime Minister had systematically refused to set up a Commission of Inquiry on drug trafficking.

Combating the drug scourge is a tough task, but as a responsible Government we proved by our actions and the results registered that we mean business. My Government has and will continue to strive harder to combat the drug mafia. Necessary measures and initiatives are being taken by relevant authorities at all level to eliminate this problem. My Government has also invested massively in the procurement of tools and equipment to assist departments such as the Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit (ADSU) and the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA).

Some of the measures being implemented by the Police Force at local, regional and international level are –

- (i) regular intelligence-led crack down operations are being carried out across the island;
- (ii) use of Safe City Cameras for monitoring the movements of drug traffickers and drug peddlers;
- (iii) a risk-based approach has been adopted at points of entry such as airport and port to prevent the entry of dangerous drugs in the country;
- (iv) the movements of pleasure craft are being closely monitored by the National Coast Guard in collaboration with the Mauritius Tourism Authority and the Mauritius Port Authority to prevent the entry of illegal drugs in the island;
- (v) amendment has been brought to the Road Traffic Act to prevent drivers/riders from driving under influence of intoxicating substances;
- (vi) financial investigations are being carried out into drug dealing/ trafficking cases in order to prosecute dealers/traffickers for money laundering. To this end, the Police are working in close collaboration with other agencies such as the Independent Commission Against Corruption, Mauritius Revenue Authority, Integrity Reporting Services Agency, Financial Intelligence Unit, the Asset Recovery Investigation Division and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecution to forfeit the proceeds of such crime and unexplained wealth;

- (vii) aggressive sensitisation campaigns are being carried out by ADSU Educational Cell, Crime Prevention Unit, *Brigade pour la protection de la famille* to raise awareness on the ill-effects of illicit drugs;
- (viii) the Police have established formal/informal contacts/agreements with friendly countries in the region for sharing intelligence on drug traffickers;
- (ix) the National Central Bureau (Interpol), in collaboration with the Attorney General's Office, assists in Police investigation for obtaining information by way of Mutual Legal Assistance, and
- (x) the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) provides facilities in terms of training and equipment for enhancing the capacity building of Police Officers particularly ADSU personnel to effectively combat drugs.

In addition to the measures that I have mentioned, the Agreement signed with the Government of India on the infrastructural projects in Agaléga caters for the implementation of measures to promote, protect and safeguard our maritime security needs in areas such as counter-piracy, counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics and human trafficking amongst others.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with the objective to mobilise and create awareness among the population on the dangers and risks of drug use and to promote the prevention of drug abuse, my Office launched a National Campaign Against Drugs entitled “*Unis contre la drogue*” in August this year.

A first community event was organised at Souillac Youth Hub, in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation, whereby some 100 youth were gathered to reflect and discuss on drug-related thematic questions.

I also engaged personally with the youth to discuss drug related issues. Similar activities are being carried out in other locations around the island targeting primarily the youth as well as other members of the civil society. The National Campaign also comprises an island-wide communication strategy including billboards, social media, radio, TV and newspapers amongst others.

Furthermore, other Ministries such as the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology, the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation and the Ministry of Health and Wellness are also contributing massively in this combat through the implementation of several measures in the field of prevention, treatment and aftercare.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me emphasise once more our determination and resolve to dismantle the drug networks in our country and region and accordingly, we are unflinchingly pursuing our unwavering fight against drug traffickers and their accomplices.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Time is over!

Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/1394 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Energy and Public Utilities. PQ B/1417 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training. Also, PQs B/1384, B/1386, B/1387 have been withdrawn.

Now, I will call hon. Tour.

MORCELLEMENT RAFFRAY – FLOODING – MEASURES TAKEN

(No. B/1389) Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to flooding in Morcellement Raffray, he will state the measures taken by his Ministry to address same.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to point out that the region around Morcellement Raffray including Le Hochet and Terre Rouge has been declared flood prone area by the Land Drainage Authority. Accordingly, appropriate mitigating measures have been proposed and implemented in the region under the National Flood Management Programme to address flooding and flood-related events.

In this respect, I am informed, Mr Speaker, Sir, that a project relating to the clearing and desilting of Rivulet Terre Rouge, to the tune of around Rs11.1 m. was completed in August 2022 under the supervision of the National Development Unit.

Moreover, the construction of culverts at New Ste Marie, Le Hochet for an amount of Rs13.3 m. and at Cité Briquette for an amount of Rs14 m. are nearing completion, that is, up to 90% have been completed as at date at both sites. These projects are, like I said 90% nearing completion.

I am further informed that a project relating to the reconstruction of a culvert at Eugène Street, Le Hochet for an amount of Rs9.7 million scheduled to start in June 2022 could not be kick-started due to the protests from the inhabitants concerning a traffic diversion scheme which had to be put in place during the implementation phase. So, we

need to put those types of things on record, Mr Speaker, Sir, because in the eventuality of flooding, we will then find some people going and taking pictures.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with a view to bringing a long-term solution and addressing the flooding problem in the region in a holistic manner, the LDA recommended the implementation of a 'Flood Mitigation Measures at Morcellement Rafray, Terre Rouge' project. The scope of works for the project comprises, amongst others –

- (a) construction of a cut-off drains upstream of Morcellement Raffray and Le Hochet regions over a stretch of 1,790 metres;
- (b) the construction of covered drains over a length of approximately 225 metres;
- (c) the construction of a retention pond over a surface area of approximately 100,000 square metres and over a depth of 2.5 metres, and
- (d) the milling, reshaping, and resurfacing of road over a length of approximately 225 metres.

In September 2022, the project had been allocated by the Land Drainage Authority to the Drains Infrastructure Construction Ltd. (DICL) for implementation. Subsequently, the DICL launched a bidding exercise on 19 May 2023, with closing date 10 July 2023. I am informed that two bids have been received.

I am further informed that the bids are currently being evaluated. Once the evaluation exercise will be completed, the award of the contract to the successful bidder will be issued shortly thereafter.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Ms Tour: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister mentioned that two projects namely, one at Ste Marie and the other one at Briquette are nearing completion. However, is the hon. Minister aware that there has been considerable delay on these two projects and there is currently no ongoing works on site? Can the hon. Minister inform the House as to why this is so?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, yes, the Member is right. There has been a delay in that project. In fact, we have had issues – contractual issues I must say – with the contractor and finally we have agreed that the contractor's contract has been terminated on these two projects. The NDU is in the process of appointing another contractor to do the finishing work on those two sites but currently what is worth noting is that the hydraulic

capacity of the bridges is right and should work properly in the eventuality of heavy rainfalls.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Next question! Hon. Abbas Mamode!

MOTORWAYS M1, M2 & M3 – LANDSCAPING WORKS

(No. B/1390) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the landscaping works along motorways, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to

—

- (a) the measures taken to maintain the motorways M1, M2 and M3, and
- (b) if consideration will be given for the visual upgrading and embellishment thereof.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Road Development Authority is responsible for the care and maintenance of the motorways and the main roads. In this respect, it endeavours to provide safe and comfortable mobility across the island to all Mauritian citizens, the economic operators and the road users at large by developing, preserving and maintaining a high standard of road network under its purview. The total length of such roads is approximately 1,274 km, among which, 104 km are classified as motorways, namely M1, M2 and M3 and the others as main roads.

As regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that with a view to ensuring vegetation control along the motorways M1, M2, M3, the RDA has, following prevailing procurement procedures, enlisted the services of competent contractors to carry out works such as trimming of grass, cutting, pruning of decorative plants, removal of weeds, raking, removing and carting away of debris and stones, among others.

In addition, I am informed that the National Environment Cleaning Authority (NECA), through its Clean-Up Campaign for motorways M1, M2, has enlisted the services of Mauri-Facilities Management Co. Ltd. to ensure cleaning both road shoulders of motorways, whilst the cleaning and maintenance of the central verge rest with the RDA. Subsequently, since May 2023, the NECA, in collaboration with the RDA and other concerned authorities, has embarked on the cleaning exercise on the shoulders of motorways M1 and M2, with the assistance of some 300 cleaning technicians of Mauri-Facilities Management Co. Ltd.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, in my reply to Parliamentary Question B/544 on 25 May 2021, I informed the House that the embellishment and maintenance of roundabouts on motorways are mostly sponsored by private companies. There are currently 35 roundabouts on motorways M1, M2, M3, out of which, two are under construction, two are being maintained by the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change, while the remaining are maintained by private and State-owned companies under the supervision of the RDA.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are all aware that the world is experiencing the brunt of climate change and the RDA is accordingly deploying considerable efforts to make our road infrastructure greener and more conducive for road users. In fact, as part of the projects being implemented, landscaping works are being incorporated in the project requirements in the form of softscaping, that is, plantation of low growing trees, shrubs, decorative plants, scenic features and grassing on the surplus of lands surrounding the road infrastructure, namely, adjoining flyovers, roundabouts and bridges. Some examples are the flyover at Quay D, flyover at Soreze, flyover at Pont Fer. Future projects where same are being incorporated are the Grade Separated Junction at Wooton, the Interchange Constructions and Improvements along M3 and A14 Corridor at Ebène.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Abbas Mamode: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May we know from the hon. Minister what are the procedures involved when allocating contracts for vegetation control along motorways?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for this question and this will also give me the opportunity to enlighten the House and the population about this procedure, as a lot has been said by people *de mauvaise foi*.

The procurement exercise for all projects at the Road Development Authority is carried in strict compliance with the provisions of the Public Procurement Act, aiming to make public procurement available competitively to eligible and qualified firms in a transparent and non-discriminatory manner.

As regard to the contract control of vegetation along motorways, an Open National Bidding Exercise was launched through notices in local newspapers and the Public Procurement Portal of the Government of Mauritius, where local contractors having the necessary experience in the field of vegetation control were requested to submit their proposals through the e-Procurement System.

During the bidding process, as per requirements of the bidding document, a pre-bid meeting was held with interested bidders to explain the scope of works to be undertaken as well as to thrash out ambiguities and respond to any clarification related to the contract. Bids received were open on the scheduled date by the Procurement Committee of the RDA after the standard encryption/ decryption process by bidders.

An independent Bid Evaluation Committee, commonly known as BEC, was assigned to evaluate the bids in line with the requirement of the bidding document, the Public Procurement Act and the PPO Directives. After a detailed evaluation of both the technical and financial proposal, the BEC recommended the lowest evaluated. But what is more important to understand, is that the substantially responsive bidder might be cheaper, but that does not mean he is responsive to what we have requested. The recommendation of the BEC was submitted to the RDA Procurement Committee which scrutinised the bid evaluation report, and in turn, submitted its recommendation to the RDA Management and Board for award of the selected bidder. Once approval of the RDA was obtained, the procurement proceedings were completed and the letter of award issued. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Abbas Mamode: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Many of our pedestrian bridges are currently in bad state. Can the Minister inform the House what are the measures being taken to remedy same?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have 20 footbridges which have been constructed across motorways M1 and M2 at different locations and three have been constructed on main roads. While the daily cleaning of the walkways and electrical lighting network are done by the local authorities, the RDA, on the other side, is responsible for the periodic maintenance of the whole structure to ensure that all parts of the footbridge are performing to satisfaction. Consequently, regular inspections are carried out monthly to inspect the structure comprising of ramps, handrails, cladding and gutters. Footbridges were found to have a high bridge coefficient index warranting a quick rehabilitation plan.

In the Financial Year 2022-2023, two footbridges, namely that of Oxenham Footbridge and Camp Fouquereaux, were completely renovated for the sum Rs11 m. For this financial year, three footbridges, namely those of Midlands, Sorèze on M1 and the one on A1 Road at Venus, Port Louis will be completely renovated for a sum of Rs15 m. The remaining will be done on a phase-manner.

Mr Speaker, Sir, also, we are also coming up with a policy where we will eventually consider giving those structures to private companies so that they can renovate

and, eventually, advertise their company on those footbridges. A bit like on the roundabouts where we have sponsors, we will also consider having sponsors for those footbridges eventually. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

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

At 12.57 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

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

Mr Speaker: Please be seated! MP Anquetil!

BEAU CHAMP DAY-CARE CENTRE – 7-MONTH BABY – PHYSICAL ABUSE

(No. B/1391) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the alleged case of physical abuse of a 7-month baby in a Child Day Care Centre in Beau Champ, she will state if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and, if so, indicate the findings thereof.

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that on 04 October 2023, the manager of a Child Day Care Centre located at Beau Champ reported an incident which occurred on the eve that is the 03 of October, whereby a caregiver fell unconscious whilst carrying a seven months old baby in her arms. Both the baby and the caregiver were transported by the management of the Day Care Centre to Bruno Cheong Hospital for treatment. On the same day, officers of my Ministry provided psychological support to the family.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the matter has been referred to the Police and the enquiry is still ongoing.

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, M. le président.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is one case too many. Would the hon. Minister inform the House what actions will be taken to ensure that security and welfare of babies are enforced?

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would kindly refer the hon. Member to the statement I made in Parliament, regarding this very issue. Mr Speaker, Sir, in the light of all the recent concerns that were raised, it is essential to underscore and to highlight that there are particular provisions under section 34 in fact of the Children's Act of 2020 which mandates the reporting of a child in danger.

The Act, Mr Speaker, Sir, unambiguously stipulates that anybody who is witnessing a child or believes that there are reasonable grounds to believe that a child is exposed to harm, it is of paramount importance that this is reported. When it comes to what is being done, my Ministry, Mr Speaker, Sir, has been taking unflinching sustained steps to ensure that Child Day Care Centres operate first of all, within the ambit of the law and it remains a challenge to ascertain, unfortunately, the number of illegal Child Day Care Centres that are in operation.

As a matter of fact, there has been a very solid team that has been put together with the officers of my Ministry with the help of the Office of the Commissioner of Police to track, in fact those illegal day care centres. So, there is a multipronged approach to resolve the issues of illegal operations and hereby ensuring the safety of our children in Child Day Care Centres. There is also, Mr Speaker, Sir, the question of the grant-in-aid facilities that are provided by the Ministry of Finance to upgrade Child Day Care Centres to the right standard.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, everything is being done so that we can ensure our children are placed in appropriate and regulated up to the standard Child Day Care Centres. I would once again urge, like I did in my statement in Parliament the other day, all the parents to enroll their children, it is not just about adhering to the regulations or adhering to the law, legislation. It is of paramount importance to ensure the child's safety, it is the prime duty of the primary care giver who happen to be the parents.

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, M. le président. Failing to plan is planning to fail. You have failed hon. Minister...

Mr Speaker: No, please! I stop you there and I disallow this question!

Next question!

CONSTITUENCY NO. 1 – WATER PIPE REPLACEMENT – UPDATE

(No. B/1392) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the replacement of waterpipe in Constituency No. 1, Grand River North West and Port Louis West, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to where matters stand.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to refer the hon. Member to my reply to PQ B/1114 at our Sitting of 15 November 2022 on the same subject. Grand River North West and Port Louis West are located in Central Water Authority (CWA) Water Supply Zone of Port Louis.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in my previous reply, I had indicated that since 2015, the regions of Richelieu, Pointe aux Sables, La Tour Koenig, part of Grand River North West, Residence Vallijee, Plaine Lauzun, and Cassis, are supplied with potable water on a 24-hour basis following the commissioning of rapid gravity filters at the Pailles Water Treatment Plant compared to 18-hour daily previously.

I had also outlined that between 2017 and 2020, the Central Water Authority had renewed some 4.7 km of old and defective pipelines at a cost of around Rs22.1 m. These concern –

- (1) Renewal of Service Mains along Floribunda Street, Marcel Cabon Street, Lady Seton Lane, Royal Highness Avenue and Stella Street at Débarcadère Pointe aux Sables;
- (2) Renewal of Service Mains along E. Harness Street, Norman Hartnell Street, Lady Seton Lane, Picadilly Lane, Apricot Silk Street, Papa Meillar Street and Dr. Baugéard Street at Débarcadère Pointe aux Sables;
- (3) Pipelaying works near SLDC Housing Units at Pointe aux Sables;
- (4) Pipelaying works at Kensington, Petit Verger, Pointe aux Sables;
- (5) Renewal of Service Mains along Dumaurier Street in Grand River North West;
- (6) Renewal of Service Mains at Camp Firinga in Pointe aux Sables (part 1) and Ancillary works, and
- (7) Renewal of Service Mains at Camp Firinga in Pointe aux Sables (part 2) and Ancillary works.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Central Water Authority has identified an additional 11 kms of old and defective pipes to be renewed as priority in the regions of –

- (1) Pailles (Pailles Road);
- (2) Mudhoo Lane, Guibies Branch Road, Cite Jonction and Sonah Lane, Guibies in Pailles;
- (3) from Main Bridge Road to Canal Dayot, Sable Noir, Royal Road, GRNW, James Mercier and Montee Hussard in Grand River North West;
- (4) Cite Ilois, Azalee, Sunny Hill, Novembrier, Flamboyant Lane, Crecerelles Avenue, Caille Avenue, Perdrix Avenue, Heron Street, Mouettes Avenue, Merle Street, Peruches Avenue, Hirondelles Street;

- (5) Baissac Avenue, Hibou Avenue, Moineau Avenue, Morc Ghurburrun Phase 1, Aldrine Lane, Paquerette Street, Arianne Street, Impasse Pic Pic, Multipliant Street and Dauphin Street in Pointe aux Sables, and
- (6) Belsamine and Residence La Tour Koenig in Terrasson.

These projects are expected to be implemented in calendar years 2023 and 2024.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Government has provided funds to the tune of Rs900 million in Budget 2023/2024 for the Central Water Authority to carry out national pipe replacement programmes in all the six water supply zones on a priority basis. The Central Water Authority will undertake these works in-house, through small and medium contractors and through large contractors. The projects are ongoing.

I am informed that an additional 440 metres of pipes have already been laid between February to June 2023 at Flamboyant Street, Pointe aux Sables and Pailles, Cite Junction. Works are planned between July to December 2023 at Albion, Petite Rivière, Gros Cailloux, La Tour Koenig and Ward 4 in Port Louis.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Armance: In a similar PQ in 2016, the then Minister mentioned that there was an urgency to replace pipe from Pierrefonds funnel to New Bosquet Reservoir; that was 12 kms of pipe. Can the Minister confirm whether this piping has been done?

Mr Lesjongard: Unfortunately, Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not have that specific information right now with me, but I can tender same to the hon. Member at a later stage. I have mentioned a lot of streets and I do not think the street that you have mentioned is in the list, but I need to check.

Mr Armance: Okay. The Minister again, in 2022, mentioned that there was a replacement program for calendar 2023-2024. Can he table a copy of the programme that he mentioned?

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, of course, Mr Speaker, Sir, I can do so.

Mr Armance: I have a last question, Mr Speaker, Sir, if I may?

Mr Speaker: Next question! Next question! Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

NEONATAL DEATHS – CAUSES

(No. B/1393) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to neonatal

deaths in public hospitals, he will state the number thereof since January 2023 to date, indicating the –

- (a) causes thereof, and
- (b) number thereof having passed away with positive blood cultures for MDR Serratia Marcescens.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, substantial progress in child survival has been made since 2019. The total number of neonatal deaths was 181 in 2005, 168 in 2006, 176 in 2007, 143 in 2008 and 135 in 2009. In January 2015, the Neonatal ICU of J. Nehru Hospital became functional with 4 NICU beds capacity. The NICU of Dr. Bruno Cheong Hospital, Flacq, opened in 2017, thanks to my colleague, hon. Dr. Husnoo, and in 2018, the NICU of Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital was inaugurated. The old NICU of Victoria Hospital was closed and a New NICU was opened in 2021.

Thus, before 2014, the total number of NICU beds was 10. Now, there are 28 Neonatal ICU beds for the whole island with 4 additional NICU beds that can be made available in the new second NICU at Jeetoo Hospital, which was used during the temporary closure of NICU of SSRN Hospital.

The House may wish to note that the global SDG target for neonatal mortality rate is 12 per 1,000 live births, whereas in Mauritius, it was 8.9 in 2022; so, well below the required standard. In comparison to previous years, before the opening of 3 additional NICUs, the number of neonatal deaths is constantly declining. In 2016, it was the lowest, that is, a total of 94.

I am informed that since January 2023 to date, a total of 80 neonatal deaths have been reported. If I compare it again to 2007 where the neonatal deaths was 176, why I am comparing this is because the hon. Member in a gathering at Plaine Verte stated 80 neonatal deaths that will require a *commission d'enquête*. So, I have to point out that, in fact, the *commission d'enquête* was due in 2007 when there was that number of neonatal deaths! At that time, he was a public servant and he was a gynaecologist working in the public sector and we know very well in 2008, he retired from the service.

So, the main causes of deaths are as follows –

- (a) Extreme prematurity;
- (b) Cardiorespiratory insufficiency;
- (c) Multiple congenital anomalies;

- (d) Septicaemia and multiple organ failures due to infections, comprising of Serratia, and
- (e) high-risk pregnancies (antenatal causes) such as infertility undergone IVF, pregnancy induced hypertension which can lead to Eclampsia and HELLP syndrome, antepartum haemorrhage secondary to placenta previa or abruptio placentae, gestational diabetes, no antenatal follow-up, active substance Abusers, including smoking and alcohol consumption, Sexually transmitted disease such as syphilis, HIV, hepatitis B and C, resus incompatibility, advanced maternal age (above 35years) and history of recurrent miscarriage.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that among the 80 neonatal deaths, nine babies had blood cultures with Serratia and they passed away due to Septicaemia, multiple organ failures and extreme prematurity.

It is worth highlighting that the outbreak of Serratia which is a multi-resistant bacterium, occurs in Neonatal ICUs across all countries. Research has shown that a salient abuse of antibiotics is most likely the underlying driver of these outbreaks.

However, I wish to inform the House that antibiotics stewardship guidelines are being implemented in all NICUs of Regional Hospitals with a view to preventing the occurrence of Nosocomial infections.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister will recall surely his presence at the Caudan Arts Centre on 12 April 2023 where there was a presentation on the causes of deaths of neonatal babies presented by Assistant Professor Arvin Bundhoo where it was highlighted ...

Mr Speaker: No, excuse me.

Dr. Aumeer: My question is coming.

Mr Speaker: May I?

Dr. Aumeer: Yes, sure.

Mr Speaker: You don't mind? I am the Speaker. You are the listener. You know supplementary question is not like putting a case where you are looking for evidence and all these. If ever you heard something on which you want to have further information/elucidation, you ask a specific question. This is the purpose of supplementary questions. The number of supplementary questions depends upon the Speaker. Even to allow you to put one supplementary question, it depends upon the Speaker. So, I have

given you the permission to put one supplementary question. Let me listen to your supplementary question.

Dr. Aumeer: Noted.

Mr Speaker: No question. Next question!

Dr. Aumeer: No, I said noted.

Mr Speaker: Ah! Please!

Dr. Aumeer: Please, I have been listening to you! Can the hon. Minister inform the House why in April 2023, he was made aware of the presence of *Serratia Marcescens* causing death in neonatal babies, he did not – and I repeat – he did not close the Neonatal ICU SSRN until nine babies died in August?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will not use my high voice to answer to this question...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: What is happening to the mic there? There is something wrong with the mic there or have you become the loudspeaker?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, seriously, this is the objective of this workshop conducted by Arvin Bundhoo who is a Mauritian national, now established in Connecticut, UK, whom the Ministry of Health has invited because we have to keep improving our services. This is the outcome of the process stated by hon. Dr. Husnoo – he started a process. Dr. Arvin Bundhoo is neonatologist. He has to come and guide us on what to do. The Minister of Health does not go and open or close NICUs. In the NICUs, they are supervised by a Consultant in Charge Paediatrics, who has to abide by the Infection Prevention Control of the Ministry where there is one dedicated person, which was never there in 2005 when there were so many deaths. We did not even know what was the bacterium that caused those deaths.

Now, there are reported cases, protocol and guidelines established; we agree. When Professor Dr. Arvin Bundhoo came, he was the one who gave us the advice on what we have to do and we abided by his recommendations. This is how we should proceed. It is not the Minister who is going to open or close an ICU; this is not the job of the Minister. This is the job of the Consultant in Charge, the Director of the hospital, the NIPC, and the pathologist to guide the Ministry. Once the panel has decided that the ICU has to be closed and then re-opened after doing so and so. That is what has been done. In fact, we are very

much thankful to Dr. Arvin Bundhoo who is an international consultant and has given us guidance on a daily basis on how to treat neonatal babies.

Dr. Aumeer: Nine neonatal babies died of Serratia Marcescens as you just mentioned yourself but unfortunately, you chose as ...

Mr Speaker: You continue along the same path!

Dr. Aumeer: No, the question...

Mr Speaker: No, hon. Member, mind well! It is the Speaker who allows the question! You have no right! If I do not give you the floor for a supplementary question, you have no right. Mind well!

Try to understand this. It is the second time that I am warning you; put a specific question regarding what you want to be enlightened on from the Minister.

Please go ahead!

Dr. Aumeer: Okay. Can I ask the hon. Minister...

Mr Speaker: That's it!

Dr. Aumeer: Yes. Can I ask the hon. Minister why he chose not to disclose the cause of death of nine neonatal babies with Serratia Marcescens and put the blame on elderly mothers, no follow-up and medical disorders in pregnancy?

Dr. Jagutpal: Thank you, hon. Member, for addressing me this question.

Mr Speaker, Sir, is the cause of death or the death certificate written by the Minister of Health? Which country is it done? Is it the Minister of Health who certifies the cause of death? Because the hon. Member is saying that 'he has chosen'. On a daily basis, the death certificates are being filled up by the doctors attending to the patient. Am I the doctor attending those nine babies? Am I responsible? Am I a gynaecologist to certify that they are elderly members?

Dr. Aumeer: You have been doing gynaecology part-time!

Mr Speaker: Be polite, Doctor!

Dr. Jagutpal: I will reply to you. Mr Speaker, Sir, is that my job? This is not my job. It is the job of the doctors treating the babies who have to certify the cause of death. If this hon. Member has a problem with the cause of death, he has to report it to the Medical Council because he is registered as a medical practitioner and as per the Code of Practice, if you have found that your colleague has done something illegal, then this is the

procedure; not here in Parliament as an MP, as an hon. Member that you are coming to voice out your frustration.

(Interruptions)

Now, secondly he said that I have been practising as gynaecologist; I am a qualified medical practitioner. I have worked in gynaecology as a Medical and Health Officer for years; I have been assisting deliveries; I have been working under Consultants in Charge who are his colleagues. They have given me reports that I have been a good Medical and Health Officer, and he is the one who is going to tell me that I am practising as part-time gynaecologist.

And now, as a medical practitioner, whatever he has seen being done wrong by any of his colleagues and as per the code of practice, he has to report to the Medical Council, the authority to deal with such complaint. And failing to do so, he has, as a registered medical practitioner, failed in his duties to report his colleagues.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Léopold!

BUDGET 2023/24 – WATER TANK GRANT SCHEME – RODRIGUAN BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/1394) Mr J. B. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the provision of a water tank and a domestic water pump under the Water Tank Grant Scheme as announced in the 2023-2024 Budget, he will state if same is also applicable to the inhabitants of Rodrigues and, if so, give details thereof.

The Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr G. Lesjongard): Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall reply to this question.

The Water Tank Grant Scheme has, as main objective, to support low income families to avail of a water tank and a domestic water pump so as to provide them with adequate water storage during periods of disruption in water supply.

Initially, families with a monthly household income of Rs10,000 were eligible for a grant of Rs3,000 to purchase a water tank. Since 2015, this grant has steadily increased to Rs5,000 and subsequently to Rs8,000 in 2019/2020. The income ceiling for eligibility has also increased to Rs25,000 in 2017/2018 to Rs50,000 in 2019/2020.

In the last Budget 2023/2024, Government has increased the grant from Rs8,000 to Rs15,000 and extended it to households with a monthly income of less than Rs60,000.

This grant now covers the purchase of a water tank of 1000 litres, essential fittings for an amount of Rs1,000 and a domestic water pump of a value of Rs4,000.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Water Tank Grant Scheme is currently being managed by the Development Bank of Mauritius. Applications can be made online through the DBM website, at all DBM branches across Mauritius, through the Citizen Advice Bureaux, and during outreach programmes organised by my Ministry in collaboration with the Development Bank of Mauritius and the Central Water Authority especially in the water stressed regions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, following a request made during the visit of the hon. Prime Minister to Rodrigues from 10 to 13 October 2023, Government has decided that the Water Tank Grant Scheme be extended to beneficiaries in Rodrigues.

The modalities and conditions of the Scheme to cater for the requirements and specificities of the water sector in Rodrigues are being worked out currently in collaboration with stakeholders concerned.

This decision, Mr Speaker, Sir, is yet another testimony of the support of the Central Government to alleviate the hardships of our fellow Rodriguans and build a more resilient water sector in Rodrigues.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

11TH IOIG — MAURITIAN HANDBALL TEAM – ALLEGATIONS

(No. B/1395) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to Handball, he will state the actions taken by his Ministry following allegations of non-compliance with the Code of Ethics by some members of the Mauritian Team on 02 September 2023 during the 11th Indian Ocean Island Games, held in Madagascar and, if not, why not.

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Mauritius Handball Association submitted a report dated 25 September 2023 to my Ministry regarding the alleged incident that occurred on 02 September in Madagascar during the Indian Ocean Island Games. I am further informed that officers of my Ministry met with both the President of the Mauritius Handball Association and Mr G. J. on 30 September and on 3 October 2023 respectively to hear their respective versions of the alleged incident.

I am informed that the Mauritius Handball Association held a meeting with Mr G.J. on 17 October 2023 and will have another meeting with the players involved. My Ministry will continue to follow up with the Mauritius Handball Association regarding the development thereon. Thank you.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, suivant la réponse de l'honorable ministre, peut-il nous dire si lui-même ou le chef de mission du club Maurice furent informés de ces incidents à Madagascar, comme le stipule le *code of ethics*, et si oui, pourquoi à ce moment précis – parce que le cas a été dénoncé par le *Head Coach* de l'équipe féminine de handball – peut-on savoir pourquoi aucune action n'a été prise suivant la dénonciation faite par le *Head Coach* de l'équipe féminine de handball?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, en pleine compétition, les officiers de mon ministère ont pris note du problème, et évidemment, ce n'est pas en terre étrangère que nous allons régler nos problèmes. C'est pour cela, comme je l'ai dit, dès le retour de la délégation qui s'est faite en trois parties, le président de la fédération a pris ses responsabilités et a rencontré les personnes concernées. Comme je l'ai dit, le 25 septembre, un rapport a été soumis à mon ministère.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, je suis au courant aussi que toute cette question a été soulevée lors de la dernière rencontre du *Steering Committee of Team Mauritius* le 26 septembre dernier que le ministre lui-même a d'ailleurs présidé. Peut-il nous dire de ce fait sur quelle base, je me réfère à ce qui est écrit dans le rapport à la page 9, paragraphe 5.2. Je vais être bref –

“The Committee proposed that the Ministry would not intervene in the internal matters of the Mauritius Handball Federation.”

Doit-on déduire que cette affaire est considérée à la légère par le ministère et doit-on s'attendre à ce qu'il y ait vraiment un dénouement des actions qui soient prises parce que cela, M. le président...

Mr Speaker: Let the Minister reply!

Mr Quirin: ...implique une mineure.

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, comme le rapport le dit, ce sont les affaires internes de la fédération. La fédération, le président et les autres membres ont déjà rencontré les différents protagonistes, et bien sûr, nous respectons la liberté, l'indépendance, l'autonomie des fédérations. Sinon, on va nous dire que nous sommes en train d'ingérer dans les affaires internes d'une fédération.

Toutefois, comme je l'ai dit maintenant, cela fait plus de six ans, il me semble, toute personne dans le monde du sport qui se sent lésée, il y a des instances de par le *Sports Act* de 2016, des instances légales où ces personnes peuvent se référer. Je fais référence à l'*Ombudsperson for Sport*, au *Tribunal for Sports*. Donc, si les personnes concernées, c'est-à-dire Monsieur G.J. sent qu'il n'a pas été écouté ou que la fédération n'a pas pris les mesures qu'il soit, il peut toujours déposer une plainte à l'*Ombudsperson*. Merci.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that the following PQs have been withdrawn: B/1399, B/1400, B/1402, B/1420, B/1421, B/1423, B/1427, B/1428, B/1429, B/1438.

Next question! Hon. Uteem!

NATIONAL PENSIONS FUND – ACTUARIAL VALUATION

(No. B/1396) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the National Pensions Fund, she will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the –
 - (i) amount of current deficit thereof, and
 - (ii) adjustment made to secure the future value thereof, and
- (b) table copy of the latest actuarial valuation report thereof.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the National Pension Fund (NPF) is a pension scheme established in 1978, covering private sector employees in Mauritius. Contributions into the Fund were being made by both employers and employees at the rate of 6% and 3%, respectively.

With regard to part (a)(i) of the question, I am informed that as per the Actuarial Report 2017-2020 carried out by RisCura Solutions Ltd, the actuarial deficit of the NPF has increased from Rs55 billion for the period 2014 to 2017 to Rs116 billion as at August 2020 based on a 75 year projection. According to the Report, the Fund will continue to decrease.

It is to be noted that the Actuarial Report for the period 2014-2017 also stated that

“While there is no immediate danger of the scheme running short of funds, it is likely that in due course the assets which have been built up in the scheme to date

will be entirely used up paying for pensions and other benefits, at which point the scheme will be insolvent and will be unable to pay out any further benefits in full, as contribution income will be inadequate to meet the needs.”

With regard to part (a)(ii) of the question, the responsibility to secure the future value of the fund rests with the NPF/NSF Investment Committee set up in accordance with Section 38(2) of the National Pensions Act.

I am informed that in line with its mandate, the NPF Investment Committee is investing in fixed income instrument. A copy of the report of the actuarial review for period 01 July 2017 to 31 August 2020 is being tabled.

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister referred to the actuarial report. May I know from the hon. Minister by when will the NPF come into deficit and will require injection of capital?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Well, at the present moment, it is very difficult to say at what particular time the NPF will be in deficit. What I can tell the House is that as per the Actuarial Report, a projection on a 75 year period has been made. So, I am taking what there is in the report.

Mr Uteem: In answer to a PQ which I asked the hon. Minister on 07 July 2020, the hon. Minister stated that if ever there is a deficit in NPF fund, Government would do the needful and take care of the deficit. So, may I know from the hon. Minister whether so far, Government has put any amount of money in the NPF to cover any deficit?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: No, not at all because the NPF stands at Rs145.2 billion as at date. So, we are talking of actuarial deficit in the long term.

Mr Uteem: So then, the hon. Minister...

Mr Speaker: No, it is over.

COVID-19 LEVY – WAIVER – 2023-2024 BUDGET

(No. B/1397) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, whether, in regard to the waiver of COVID-19 levy measure introduced in the 2023-2024 Budget, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Revenue Authority, information as to the –

- (a) amount of COVID-19 levy refunded, and

- (b) amount of wage assistance received by employers, indicating the amount of such levy refunded and allowance received by –
 - (i) individual employers;
 - (ii) hotels, and
 - (iii) corporate employers other than hotels, respectively.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, afin de répondre à la question de l'honorable membre, permettez-moi de rappeler que Maurice a traversé la pire crise de son histoire en raison de la pandémie de la Covid-19 qui a immobilisé des secteurs entiers de notre économie, notamment le secteur manufacturier et touristique.

Face au spectre des 100 000 chômeurs, ce gouvernement a déployé un arsenal de mesures historiques dans le but d'atténuer l'impact de la pandémie de la Covid-19 sur notre économie, et donc, notre population.

Si nous n'avions pas agi avec courage et pro-activité, une vague de faillites aurait eu lieu et des dizaines de milliers de familles mauriciennes se seraient retrouvées sans emploi, sans ressources et sans rien.

M. le président, c'est dans ce contexte de grave crise que le *Wage Assistance Scheme* a été mis en place en 2020 afin, d'un commun accord avec les opérateurs, d'apporter un soutien financier aux employés du secteur du privé qui se seraient retrouvés sinon au chômage.

Le gouvernement a également mis en place le *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme* et a accordé une subvention mensuelle aux travailleurs indépendants afin de préserver les moyens de subsistance de ces derniers.

Dans le cadre du *Wage Assistance Scheme*, avant janvier 2021, un travailleur percevant jusqu'à 50 000 roupies par mois recevait une allocation équivalente à son salaire de base plafonné à 25 000 roupies. Ces montants ont été augmentés de 375 roupies à partir de janvier 2021 pour tenir compte de la compensation salariale.

Pendant les deux périodes de confinement national, l'allocation au titre du *Wage Assistance Scheme* a été versée à tous les travailleurs éligibles.

Après la levée partielle du confinement, nos frontières sont restées fermées aux touristes et les arrivées de touristes sont restées faibles par la suite.

Par conséquent, le *Wage Assistance Scheme* a été maintenu pour les travailleurs du secteur du tourisme et les secteurs connexes pendant cette période.

En outre, afin d'empêcher la réurgence et la propagation de la COVID-19, un certain nombre de locaux ont dû rester fermés au public, tandis que d'autres entreprises ont été autorisées à ouvrir sous réserve de restrictions sanitaires strictes.

Certaines régions ont également été déclarées zones rouges et certaines activités d'attrouement ont été interdites. Ces entreprises ont continué à bénéficier du *Wage Assistance Scheme*. La MRA m'a informé que certaines entreprises ont retiré leur demande et ont volontairement remboursé, en totalité ou en partie, le montant précédemment perçu dans le cadre du programme.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne le *COVID-19 Levy*, il a été introduit dans l'*Income Tax Act* via la *COVID-19 (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act* afin de récupérer une partie du montant de l'aide financière accordée dans le cadre du *Wage Assistance Scheme* auprès des entreprises qui ont réalisé des bénéfices.

Selon la loi, le prélèvement était applicable aux entreprises pour deux périodes comptables, 2020-2021 et 2021-2022 et devait entrer en vigueur en juillet 2020.

Ce prélèvement est calculé comme étant soit le montant de l'aide salariale versé à un employeur au cours d'une année, soit 15% de son revenu annuel imposable, le montant le plus bas étant retenu. Le prélèvement n'est pas applicable aux entreprises qui n'ont pas réalisé de bénéfices imposables.

Il convient de noter que pour alléger le fardeau des entreprises confrontées à des difficultés financières, suite au COVID-19 et leur permettre d'honorer une compensation salariale de R 500 accordée pour l'année 2021 et de R 1000 accordée pour l'année 2022, les entreprises ont demandé d'annuler ce *levy*.

Le gouvernement a alors décidé d'annuler toutes les dettes impayées au titre du *COVID-19 Levy* au 20 janvier 2023. Cela afin de s'assurer que les centaines de milliers d'employés ne soient pas privés de compensation salariale.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne la partie (a) de la question, la MRA m'a informé qu'un montant de 2,78 milliards de roupies a été perçu au titre du *COVID-19 Levy*.

En ce qui concerne la partie (b) de la question, le montant net déboursé dans le cadre du régime d'assistance salariale s'élevait à 20,79 milliards de roupies et a été versé à 16 390 employeurs pour 279,857 employés.

En ce qui concerne la partie (b) (i), (ii) et (iii) de la question, les informations sont en train d'être compilées par la MRA et seront ensuite déposées.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Ramful: Thank you, I hope the Minister will table the document.

Dr. Padayachy: Bien sûr.

Mr Ramful: Now, for at least two financial years, the employers, including the SMEs and individual employers as well, have had to refund the levy. Does the Minister find it just and equitable that now hotels are making billions of profit and they have also benefitted from the MIC Fund, and as a result of the measure that have been announced in the Budget, they are now being exempted to pay back the levy? Is this just and equitable?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, au moment où on avait annulé ce remboursement, on était dans la période de reprise ; on n'était pas en 2023. Ce qu'on a écrit dans le Budget 2023, ça a été une rectification par rapport à la décision qu'on a prise en 2022. C'est en 2022 qu'on a annulé ce *levy*. Oui, parce que les deux années imposables sont 2021 et 2022, je l'ai dit. On a annulé par rapport à la compensation salariale qu'on était en train de donner. Décembre 2021, on accorde une compensation salariale de R 500 aux employés malgré le contexte très difficile.

A l'époque, souvenez-vous, 2021, on était toujours dans la période où on n'avait pas encore ouvert complètement les frontières ; on n'avait pas eu une reprise complète des activités économiques. En 2021, nous n'avons eu que 178, 000 touristes, pour vous dire, on était toujours dans ce contexte de reprise. Pour pouvoir accorder cette compensation, les entreprises, quand on avait fait la tripartite, nous ont demandé d'accorder un répit par rapport à la situation financière concernant le *levy*. Et nous, nous avons fait notre travail interne et nous avons vu qu'il était préférable d'accorder les R 500 aux employés plutôt que de continuer à demander ce *levy* pour l'État.

Donc, c'est à la suite de cela que le ministère des Finances a ajusté et a demandé qu'on retire ce *levy* et qu'on a passé ça au *Cabinet*. Ce qui s'est passé dans le budget, je le dis, c'est simplement pour corriger cette annonce qu'on a mis dans le Budget 2023-2024 parce que ça a été une décision qui a été prise en amont.

Donc, pour revenir à la question de l'honorable membre concernant les profits que sont en train de réaliser tous les secteurs, nous avons des profits record, cela veut dire que l'économie est en train de s'améliorer. Je le dis ici, en 2020, le PIB était autour de R 440 milliards ; en 2023, il devrait s'établir à R 650 milliards, je dis bien 210 milliards supplémentaire par rapport à 2020 parce que c'était une année de crise. Donc, là, M. le président, nous sommes en train de travailler avec mon collègue du ministère du Travail pour revoir par rapport à la profitabilité qu'est-ce qu'on peut faire pour encore une fois améliorer le pouvoir d'achat de tous les travailleurs à Maurice.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

atrium building, rose hill – demolition order

(No. B/1398) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the Atrium Building situated at Rose Hill, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill, information as to if any demolition order has been received therefor and, if so, when same will be effected, indicating the traffic diversion plan put in place during the demolition works.

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 Beau Bassin-Rose Hill that it has not issued any demolition order for the Atrium Building situated at Rose Hill.

The site of the Atrium Building has been acquired by the Government and same will be included in the proposed Urban Terminal Project. The draft request for the proposed project is under preparation and it is envisaged that the option to either upgrade or demolish the Atrium Building will be left to the selected promoter. It is expected that the request for proposal will be launched in the near future.

Mr Nagalingum: Can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, if investigation has been completed regarding the Pulling Down Order, and if yes, what action has been envisaged as regard to the Pulling Down Order?

Dr. Husnoo: No, I have just mentioned, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have not decided about the pulling down of the Atrium Building. We are going to leave it to the promoter. If they find that the building is okay and they can use it, they are going to use it. They are not going to demolish it. If not, they are going to demolish it, and at that particular time, if the decision is taken, then we will consider about other issues.

Mr Speaker: The question has been sufficiently canvassed. Next question!

public service – alleged sexual harassment cases – measures

(No. B/1399) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms whether, in regard to sexual harassment in the Public Service, he will state the number of reported alleged cases thereof, since January 2023 to date, indicating the measures taken in relation thereto, if any.

(Withdrawn)

CONSTITUENCY NO. 15 – SOCIAL HOUSING UNITS – CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/1400) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the construction of social housing units at Hermitage in Constituency No. 15, La Caverne and Phoenix, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the New Social Living Development Co. Ltd., information as to the –

- (a) number thereof being constructed;
- (b) names of the contractors, consultants and project managers selected therefor, if any, and
- (c) surface area and locations earmarked to be used as green spaces and parks, giving details thereof.

(Withdrawn)

LA VIGIE-FLIC EN FLAC – NEW LINK ROAD – CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/1401) Mr A. Ittoo (Third Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the construction of a new link road from La Vigie to Flic en Flac, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Speaker: Minister Hurreeram!

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

- (i) 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 La Marie Road (B102);
- (ii) La Vigie-La Brasserie-Beaux Songes Link Road – Phase 2, starting from La Marie Road (B102), passing through Henrietta, Holyrood and ending at Pierrefonds. The new road will link the Palma (B2) and the Phoenix-Beau Songes Link Road (B130), and
- (iii) the Flic-en-Flac Bypass, starting from Pierrefonds Roundabout to end at Flic-en-Flac, which is also being considered as being the Phase 3.

I also wish to inform the House that with a view to providing a complete solution to all commuters, my Ministry is proposing to construct a flyover at La Vigie, which will

be implemented concurrently with Phase 2 and 3 of La Vigie-La Brasserie Link Road Project.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with the construction of Phase 1 of the project, there will be a relief on the distribution of traffic between the west, central and southern region of the country, including Black River, motorway M1 and consequently the SSR International Airport. The scope of works *inter alia* comprises the construction of 6.5 km single carriage way with a width of 7 metres, shoulders of flexible pavement of 1.5 metres on each side from La Vigie to La Marie, construction of box culverts and other drainage structures as well as construction of a cycle lane.

The Phase 1 project was awarded to General Construction Company Limited on 31 December 2020 for the sum of Rs655.7 m. inclusive of VAT and works started on site on the 10 February 2021. I am pleased to announce that the works will be completed by mid-November, that is, almost in a week's time and the road will be operational by the beginning of December after receiving all necessary clearances from all authorities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to Phase 2 of the project which is a continuation of the first Phase, it consists of a single carriage way from La Marie over a length of 9.5 km and includes the construction of 5 bridges slope stabilisation works and a cycle lane, among others. The project has been awarded to Beijing Construction Engineering Company Ltd. on 15 September 2022 to the tune of Rs1.5 m. inclusive of VAT. Works on site started on 31 October 2022 and are scheduled to be completed by 31 October 2024. At present, the progress of work is 25%.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Flic en Flac bypass project, that is, Phase 3 consists of a new link road of a length of 5.2 km with a grade separator junction at Cascavelle, a bridge of length of 72 metres across Rivière Rempart and a cycle track. The objective of this part of the project, which is the continuation of Phase 1 and 2, is to increase the connectivity of Flic en Flac with other region of the island and to reduce traffic congestion during morning and afternoon peak on existing roads. The project has been awarded to Transinvest Construction Ltd on the 11 of May 2023 for the sum of Rs1.2 billion inclusive of VAT. The progress of work on site which started on 17 July 2023 is 10%. The works will be completed in phases as follows –

- i. Segment 1 which includes the grade separated junction, construction of 2 roundabouts near Geoffroy Road B91 to connect Palma Road B2, including a road of length of 400 metres to link Flic en Flac bypass and approximately 2.5 km of road which with all amenities is expected to be completed December 2024.

Overall completion which includes the remaining 2.5 km of road, a bridge of 72 metres and a roundabout is scheduled to be completed in July 2025.

- ii. Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards the construction of a flyover on motorway M1 La Vigie, it comprises the construction of a slip lane from motorway south bound to connect to the flyover with the provision of a cycle lane among others. The project is expected to be awarded in the days to come and the works should be for duration of 14 months.

Mr Speaker, Sir, upon the completion of all the three phases, it is expected that the journey from La Vigie to Flic en Flac will be effected in around 20 minutes as compared to more than one hour which is presently the case. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am made to understand that there is an existing health track which Phase 1 will be going through and from his answer hon. Minister also informed the House with regard to the cycle track which is going to be implemented. Can we have more information on these two new items to be implemented on this new road? Thank you.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Montvert Health Track is over a distance of 2.2 km starting from the forestry office at 16^{eme} Mille and ends at Montvert Health Park and crosses the new La Vigie-La Brasserie-Beaux Songes Link Road. To allow safe movement of pedestrian from one side to the other, a pedestrian foot bridge has been constructed on that road. So, to reply to my hon. colleague, the health track is well preserved and exists. Being on both sides of the road – because now the road crosses the health track – we have provided for an overhead bypass.

Regarding the cycle lane, the total stretch of the road will be 21.2 km and the cycle track will be 18.5 km. So, my hon. colleague might be curious to know why there is this discrepancy. It is because there is an existing pit of 2 km of cycle track, which is another existing health track, which we are currently keeping and then it merges with the current cycle track. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Last!

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister also inform the House how the coming into operation of Phase 1 is going to impact on the upcoming Maha Shivratri Festival and the pilgrimage to the Ganga Talao? Thank you.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, you will agree that, obviously, this will be a new and very convenient access towards Ganga Talao. Yes, it being ready mid-November 2023, traffic can be diverted on this road. I leave it to the competent authorities, the

TMRSU and eventually the Task Force to decide about the traffic arrangement during the forthcoming Maha Shivratri. But, obviously, this will be a definite *soulagement à la population mauricienne*; the very fact that they will get a direct link in and out from the motorway M1. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

CWA – WATER PIPE REPLACEMENT – BIDDERS & COSTS

(No. B/1402) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the water pipe replacement since May 2022 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to –

- (a) the length replaced, indicating the cost incurred therefor;
- (b) the list of companies taking part in the calls for proposal and their respective bid, indicating in each case the –
 - (i) name of the successful bidders;
 - (ii) bid amount, and
 - (iii) conditions attached thereto, and
- (c) start and expected completion dates thereof.

(Withdrawn)

AUTO/MOTORCYCLES & CARS –NOISE POLLUTION – CONTRAVENTIONS

(No. B/1404) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to auto/motorcycles and cars emitting loud noises due to modified silencers, he will state the number of contraventions booked and convictions secured since July 2020 to date, district-wise, indicating the additional measures that will be taken to address same, if any.

Mr Ramano: Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: *San permission, bez sa...*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: What is happening?

Dr. Boolell: This matter should have been raised in Cabinet and then transferred to the appropriate Minister.

Mr Speaker: No, hon. Dr. Boolell...

(Interruptions)

Hon. Dr. Boolell!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Dr. Boolell! I think you are referring to transfer of questions?

Dr. Boolell: Yes!

Mr Speaker: The transfer of question does not rest with the Speaker or the Table or Opposition Members. The transfer of question rests with Cabinet.

Dr. Boolell: Yes! But...

Mr Speaker: We stop there. This is Question Time.

Dr. Boolell: No...

Mr Speaker: You had your question! Who is the Minister answering this question, please?

Dr. Boolell: But you don't stop halfway! I spell the naked truth!

Mr Speaker: And stop there! You answer the question.

Mr Ramano: Yes, it's a good question, Mr Speaker, Sir, relating to silencers...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You don't know!

Mr Ramano: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that from 01 July 2020 to 01 November 2023, 1,183 riders of auto/motor cycles and 152 car drivers have been contravened in regard to loud noises emanating from modified silencers in breach of regulations 83(2) and 83(3) of the Road Traffic (Construction and Use of Vehicles) Regulations 2010, entailing 343 convictions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am tabling the breakdown of those contraventions and convictions district-wise.

Allow me to also inform that according to information obtained from the Ministry of Land Transport and Light Rail, the Vehicle Examination Stations reported 3,282 cases

involving auto/motor cycles and 7,676 cases where cars could not be issued a Fitness Certificate due to modified silencers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Section 191 of the Road Traffic Act makes provision for fixed penalties for road traffic offences as specified under the Fourth Schedule, as amended, to include, amongst others, fixed penalties for the following –

- exhaust silencer system not in good and efficient order;
- altering silencer system;
- using a motor vehicle causing excessive noise, and
- using or causing or permitting to be used, a motor vehicle not as per prescribed standard of noise emission.

As I mentioned in my replies to PQ B/248 and B/346 in July 2020 and April 2022 respectively, the need to abate the problem of noise from auto/motorcycles emitting loud noises due to modified silencers was discussed at the *Assises de L'Environnement* held by my Ministry in December 2019. The quantum of fixed penalties was subsequently increased by the Ministry of Land Transport and Light Rail to make the law more stringent against defaulters through the Road Traffic (Amendment of Schedules) Regulations 2020, as follows –

- exhaust silencer system not in good and efficient order from Rs1,000 to Rs5,000;
- altering silencer system from Rs2,000 to Rs5,000, and
- using or causing or permitting to be used a motor vehicle not as per prescribed standard for noise emission from Rs2,000 to Rs5,000.

Moreover, the Environment Protection (Control of Noise) Regulations 2008 has been also revoked and replaced by the Environment Protection (Control of Noise) Regulations 2022 with effect from 01 October 2022. Accordingly, new provisions have been introduced at regulation 6 to empower an authorised officer, including a Police Officer, or the enforcing agency, being the Ministry of Health and Wellness, to issue a fixed penalty of Rs10,000 where an offence specified in the Second Schedule is committed, that is, make or caused to be made noise which constitutes a noise nuisance. Any person served with a fixed penalty notice shall be liable to the payment of the fixed penalty within 21 days as from the date of the notice failing which he shall be liable to pay a fine not less than thrice the fixed penalty upon conviction.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I should highlight that, in addition to crackdown operations carried out island-wide by the *Police de l'Environnement* in relation to noise pollution arising from vehicles, as a preventive measure, sensitisation campaigns are also being conducted through Community Policing with the support of neighbourhood Police.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, the issue of auto and motorcycle emitting loud noises has been debated in this House on several occasions by myself and other colleagues but unfortunately, Mr Speaker, Sir, the state of affairs is almost the same in terms of nuisance and discomfort.

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr Ameer Meea: Can I ask the hon. Minister at a point in time, it was the question of seizure of auto and motorcycle for recurrent offenders, why this measure has not found its way into our law, into our regulations as at now?

Mr Ramano: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, upon query from the Commissioner of Police regarding seizure of auto/motorcycle of vehicles emitting loud noise, the advice of the Attorney General's Office was sought on the matter. I should say that with respect of seizure of auto/motorcycle of vehicles emitting loud noise through modified silencers, the Attorney General's Office advised that Section 81 of the EPA provides that where there is or has been a contravention of an environmental law or there is a reasonable suspicion that a contravention of an environmental law has been or is likely to be committed, an authorised officer may, at any time, without warrant secure any article, object, equipment, plant, machinery related to the contravention. Therefore, Section 81 of the EPA empowers an authorised officer to seize auto/motorcycles of all vehicles with inefficient silencers causing excessive noise.

So, as at to date, no information is available at the *Police de L'Environnement* as regard to seized vehicles as at date. The reason is clear, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that seizure of vehicles may entail implications such as –

- (a) safe custody;
- (b) civil liability in case of damage to seized vehicles,
- (c) insurance coverage need to take remedial actions to prevent continuity of the offence amongst others.

Therefore, to ensure proper enforcement further consultations would need to be held with all stakeholders including the Attorney General's Office. The hon. Member should rest assured that we are working in collaboration with the Police Force and also with the Ministry which is responsible for land transport to be able eventually to come forward

with a proper legal framework for us to be able to proceed with seizure of vehicles in case of modified silencers.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, why I am bringing the issue of seizure of vehicles, is for it to act as a deterrent because we are increasing the fines but the problem remains. So, it should be in our law to act as a deterrent. Can I ask the hon. Minister apart from contraventions, *opération* crackdown to auto and motorcycles, have there been any checks in garages that do the modifications of silencers and what does the law provide for such garages?

Mr Ramano: Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning inspection in workshop, as per the Road Traffic Construction and Use of Vehicles Regulations 2010, no person shall fit on the exhaust pipe of a motor vehicle or extension or other device likely to cause excessive or unusual noise or alter the silencer in such a way that the noise caused by the escape of the exhaust gases is made greater by the alteration.

However, I should specify that when the vehicles are under repairs and under the care of a workshop, no breach of the Road Traffic Act and regulations can be established as these vehicles are not found on a public road. So, we need further consultations, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

NTC - YU TONG BUSES – PURCHASE & COSTS

(No. B/1405) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail whether, in regard to National Transportation Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to number of buses of the make Yu Tong purchased, indicating the –

- (a) year of purchase and costs thereof;
- (b) mode of financing therefor;
- (c) procurement method resorted to, and
- (d) maintenance and servicing costs thereof since the procurement thereof to date.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that since 2014 to date, a total of 122 semi low floor Yu Tong buses have been procured by the National Transport Corporation for a total amount of Rs465,653,450 VAT excluded. I am tabling the information sought as to part (a), (b) and (c) of the question. It is to be noted that for the acquisition of semi low floor diesel buses, the government provides a subsidy under the bus modernisation

scheme. For instance, a semi low floor diesel bus whose length is above nine metres is eligible to a subsidy allocation of Rs1 m.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also advised that the People's Republic of China had, in the year 2016 and 2017 donated 48 semi low floor Yu Tong buses. In all, the NTC presently holds a fleet of 170 semi low floor buses of the make Yu Tong.

As for part (d) of the question, I am tabling the maintenance and servicing cost of these buses; the maintenance and service cost also include repairs. Up to the year 2017, the NTC was outsourcing the maintenance repair for both Yu Tong and Nissan buses to ABC Motors and ABC Coach Works. It is to be noted that the cost of servicing and maintenance for the years 2015, 2016 and 2017 includes both Nissan and Yu Tong buses. From 2018 to October 2023, Yu Tong buses were being outsourced for maintenance and repairs to ABC Coach Works Ltd. The NTC has informed that during the year 2023, ABC Coach Works was unable to perform repairs and maintenance on several Yu Tong buses.

In view therefore, the Yu Tong buses were serviced in-house and as from October 2023, the NTC has outsourced the in-house servicing and maintenance of some 30 Yu Tong buses to another local service provider, namely, Irfan Dundas Company Ltd.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. Can I ask the hon. Minister why is it that even though there were a lot of recruitment of mechanics, even though this year it is about 25 to 30 mechanics who have been recruited under this CNT, equipment and tools have been purchased, the decision to have maintenance done in-house has been outsourced to another contractor moving from ABC Motors to another contractor thereby leaving a lot of casualties among the buses – a lot of them remain at the garage, a high percentage disrupting services and that is against the agreement of the Union.

Mr Ganoo: Well, Mr Speaker, Sir, I must inform the hon. Member that besides the 170 Yu Tong buses, NTC has also to cater for about 340 other buses – Ashok Leyland, Nissan buses, other makes and models.

With regard to the recruitment, Mr Speaker, Sir, unfortunately, when we look at all the five depots, the ratio with regard to the number of buses and the number of mechanics in some depots is still low and this is why the NTC has embarked on a project of recruiting mechanics to enhance its labour force.

The decision to outsource another contractor, Mr Speaker, Sir, is also because of, as I just said, so many buses unfortunately were staying in the depot either at ABC Coach Works Ltd. or in the different NTC depots, so, that is why NTC decided to have recourse to this contractor.

Mr Osman Mahomed: In a letter dated 24 October 2023, referenced: ‘servicing of Yu Tong buses’ a copy of which I can give to the Minister for his own eyes, the staff has informed me that there was several accusations leveled against management...

Mr Speaker: That could be a subject matter for a new question.

Mr Osman Mahomed: What?

Mr Speaker: A subject matter for new question. This is not a supplementary!

Mr Osman Mahomed: This is servicing of Yu Tong buses which is the subject of my question.

Mr Speaker: No, it does not form part of the main question!

Mr Osman Mahomed: It does... It does.

Mr Speaker: If you have any other questions you put or I will not allow.

Mr Osman Mahomed: This is my question. It is part of the question.

Mr Speaker: I have given my ruling. I don't have to give more explanation on that!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Even if your ruling is not correct?

Mr Speaker: No! No questions for you! We move to the next question.

MP David!

MAURITIUS TELECOM – INTERNET HOUSEHOLD CONNECTIONS – SPEED CATEGORIES

(No. B/1406) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to internet household connections in Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Mauritius Telecom, information as to the –

- (a) current number thereof for each of the following internet speed categories –
 - (i) up to 50 Mbps;
 - (ii) 100 Mbps;
 - (iii) 200 Mbps, and
 - (iv) above 200 Mbps ;
- (b) annual revenue generated therefrom, and
- (c) annual maintenance costs therefor.

Mr Balgobin: As the hon. Member is aware, Mauritius Telecom is a private company operating in a competitive environment governed by the Companies Act and by its Board of Directors. The hon. Member will therefore appreciate that it is not appropriate for me to give the details asked as these are commercial sensitive information.

Mr Speaker: Supplementary questions!

Mr David: Merci, M. le président. Il y a trois semaines, Mauritius Telecom a organisé une cérémonie à laquelle le ministre a participé et a annoncé publiquement qu'il doublait la vitesse de connexion internet au même prix. C'est une information publique qui a circulé dans les medias...

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr David: Puis-je demander au ministre la raison pour laquelle les clients du *Social Internet Package* à 10Mbps, eux n'ont bénéficié d'aucune augmentation de leur vitesse de connexion ? Pourquoi cette discrimination envers celles et ceux qui sont en bas de l'échelle sociale et numérique ?

Mr Balgobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, the question is specific to a certain subject that is, the connection of Internet household. The reference that the hon. Member is making, that the SRM which is connected is not exact as per the question put. I said that Mauritius Telecom is a private company, is governed by the Companies Act and the Board of Directors; any question pertaining to commercial and sensitive information, I cannot answer on these.

Mr Speaker: Let's move to the next question! MP Doolub!

MAHEBOURG – DEFECTIVE PIPES’ REPLACEMENT – COST

(No. B/1407) Mr R. Doolub (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the projects for the replacement of defective pipes over 3 years as announced in the 2023/2024 Budget, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the expected starting and completion dates thereof in the region of Mahebourg, indicating the total cost thereof.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the CWA that the village of Mahebourg is supplied with approximately 6000 m³ of water per day from Mon Desert Reservoir through an existing 225mm Asbestos cement and 150mm Cast Iron gravity mains over a stretch of approximately 1 km from Mahebourg Museum up to Cavendish Bridge.

Some 21 km of laterals composed of mainly Asbestos Cement and Cast-Iron pipes are connected to the gravity main and feed 3391 consumers. The existing Cast Iron (CI) and Asbestos Concrete (AC) network which had been laid since more than 50 years have outlived its lifespan. These pipes are subject to frequent pipe burst resulting in water supply disruptions and high levels of non-revenue water.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have elaborated in my replies to previous PQs, the CWA has embarked on a national pipe replacement project across all the six water supply zones in order to replace 500 km of critically defective pipelines over a period of three years. The CWA has informed that the pipe replacement in the region of Mahebourg will be implemented in 3 phases as follows –

- (i) In the first phase, it is proposed to supply water through a new gravity main over some 1 km from Mahebourg museum to Cavendish Bridge on both sides of the roads that is a total of 2 km and renew some 3.3 km of pipes within the most critical consumer area in the region of Quartier.
- (ii) In the second phase, approximately 8.7 km of old and defective pipelines will be renewed in lateral roads (ranging from 63 to 160 mm HDPE pipes) and include the shifting of some 1100 households. The Project area under Phase 2 is delimited by –
 - (a) Rue de La Passe, Rue Marianne, Rue St Martin, Rue du Bambou and RDA Road A12, and
 - (b) RDA Road A12, Rue Marianne, Rue des Hollandais and Rue du Hangard.
- (iii) Phase three of the project will comprise the renewal of approximately 6.2 km of old and defective pipelines in the remaining lateral roads (ranging from 63 to 160 mm HDPE pipes) in the region of Mahebourg and also the shifting of some 950 households. The Project area under Phase 3 is delimited by RDA Road A12, Rue du Hangar, Rue Sivananda and Sir Abdool Razack Mohamed Street.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Central Water Authority that the contract for renewal of pipeline in the region of Mahebourg (Phase I) has been awarded to Serveng Ltd for an amount of rupees sixty-two million four hundred and seventy-nine thousand eight hundred and forty-seven and cents ten only, exclusive of VAT on 26 October 2023.

The duration of the contract is eight months. Works are expected to start by the first week of December 2023 and the expected completion date is in August 2024.

The scope of work for phase one includes the following –

- (a) excavation and backfilling works;
- (b) laying of some 5.3km of HDPE pipe of diameter ranging from 63mm to 250mm;
- (c) connection works to existing CWA network;
- (d) construction of pre-cast ring chambers;
- (e) supply and installation of marker posts;
- (f) installation of appurtenances;
- (g) construction of reinforced concrete chambers to accommodate appurtenances;
- (h) house connection/reconnection works, and
- (i) temporary road reinstatement.

Necessary action, Mr Speaker, Sir, has been initiated for the implementation of phase 2 and phase 3 which are expected to cost around Rs300 m. I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Considering that the stretch, as mentioned in the reply of the Minister, from Mahebourg Museum to the newly renovated Cavendish Bridge is a very busy one, will the Minister request the CWA to have a community meeting with stakeholders and residents to apprise them of the works?

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a good question. I can tell the hon. Member that the CWA before starting works on the sites that I have mentioned will carry out a PR exercise through its communication cell and different stakeholders will be participating in that PR exercise.

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the Minister inform the House measures being taken in view of the coming dry season for the region of Mahebourg?

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, there are, Mr Speaker, Sir, several measures that are being taken all around the island to face the dry season. In Mahebourg, I can tell the House, mostly in the region of Plaine Magnien, that is, Solitude and Dahlia regions, I understand that there will be the commissioning of a borehole at *La Grotte* in the region of Plaine Magnien with some 700 metres of pipe laying. There is also the drilling of a duplicate borehole under the new framework contract, that is, within the region of AML. Presently,

some 4000 m³ is being extracted and we will have with those two boreholes, an incremental/additional volume of some 2,400 m³ of water per day.

With regard to Mahebourg, I understand that there is, in the contingency plan, the replacement of some 5.4 km of pipes. Unfortunately, they had launched tenders, but there were no responsive bids that were received. I understand that fresh bidding documents are under preparation. I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

SUGAR SWEETENED PRODUCTS – SUGAR CONTENT – EXCISE DUTY

(No. B/1408) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the excise duty levied on sugar content of sugar sweetened products, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) the amount of money collected since the introduction thereof to date, indicating the amount used for the sensitisation campaign on diabetes, and
- (b) if any research was carried out to determine the impact thereof on the sale of these products.

(Withdrawn)

MOGAS & GASOIL – MECHANISM

(No. B/1409) Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to Mogas and Gasoil, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to the mechanism, if any, put in place –

- (a) by the Mercantile and Maritime Investment Pte Ltd., to prevent the lifting thereof from tankers on high seas, and
- (b) to ensure that the quantity procured by the Corporation is actually delivered and, if so, give details thereof.

Dr. Mrs Chukowry: Mr Speaker, Sir, I presume that the hon. Member wishes to know whether Mercantile and Maritime Investment Ltd. has put in place a mechanism to prevent the lifting of Mogas and Gasoil from tankers on high seas, that is, during the trip of the tankers from the ports of embarkment to Port Louis.

I am informed that the contract awarded by the State Trading Corporation is for the supply of White Oil on a Delivery-at-Place basis, that is, delivery in Port Louis. The term

Delivery-at-Place is routinely used in international trade to describe an agreement wherein the seller bears the responsibility and cost of transporting the products, in this case, Mogas and Gasoil, to a place specified in the contract. Accordingly, the seller is liable for any potential losses of moving goods sold to a specific location.

I am further informed by the STC that according to the conditions of award, the quantity and quality of each consignment of White Oil is determined independently by accredited and internationally recognised surveyors, both at the loading port and at discharge port, to ensure that the same products loaded at the initial port are delivered in Port Louis.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, at the discharge port, that is, once the vessel has reached Port Louis, the surveyor appointed by the STC boards the tanker vessel to calculate and verify the amount of products on board and to collect samples of the petroleum products prior to discharge, in order to compare the quality with the samples taken at loading port. It is only when the products have passed quantity and quality checks that discharge operations are initiated.

I am informed by the STC that, as per conditions of the contract agreement, in the event the petroleum products are not within the required parameters, the STC does not take delivery of the products.

Additionally, after completion of discharge in Port Louis, the STC's Surveyor inspects the tanker to ensure that all the cargo tanks are empty, following which an 'Empty Tank Certificate' is issued by the Surveyor and signed by the Master or the Chief Officer of the tanker vessel. Furthermore, the Surveyor carries out measurements of the tanks at the local oil companies to ensure delivery of the agreed amount and prepares a final survey report.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed by the STC that it is only once the Surveyor has submitted his final survey report to the STC that the latter effects the payment for the products to the supplier. Thank you.

Dr. Boolell: Can I ask the hon. Minister if she could apprise the House as to the port of loading or embarkment and the name of the shipping company being charted by the Mercantile and Maritime Investment Ltd. to carry the oil cargo?

Dr. Mrs Chukowry: Mr Speaker, Sir, as at date, the STC has received five consignments of White Oil from its supplier under the present contract in line with the requirements of the STC. These five consignments were all accompanied by their certificates of origin attesting that the White Oils originated from the following countries –

- (i) the United Arab Emirates;
- (ii) the Bahrain;
- (iii) the Saudi Arabia, and
- (iv) India, none of which are on the United Nation sanctions list.

The first consignment was from the United Arab Emirates. You asked for the name of the ships, is that it?

Dr. Boolell: The name of the shipping company.

Dr. Mrs Chukowry: The first one is the MT Velos Forza from the United Arab Emirates. The second consignment is the MT Maestro from Bahrain, UAE. The third consignment is from the MT Hafnia Nanjing, from the United Arab Emirates. The fourth one is from MT Torm Singapore from India, and the fifth one from MT Queen of Doria, the United Arab Emirates.

Dr. Boolell: Is the hon. Minister aware that the CEO of that company is under investigation by the Department of Justice for breaching Western sanctions? I have in mind of course, Mr Murtaza Lakhani.

Dr. Mrs Chukowry: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think that this question has nothing to do with...

Mr Speaker: Okay, let's move to...

Dr. Mrs Chukowry: You set that question last week, but it did not come. I do have...

Mr Speaker: Let me take over.

Dr. Mrs Chukowry: I do have all the answers.

Mr Speaker: Let me take over, Minister! We move to the next question!

NEW MARKET FAIR, ROSE HILL – PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/1410) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the proposed construction of a new market fair in Rose Hill, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill, 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 wish to inform the House that with

regard to the new market fair in Rose Hill, a first meeting was held on 11 May 2023 at the level of my Ministry with representatives of the relevant Ministries and Departments, namely the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning, the Ministry of Health and Wellness, the Road Development Authority, the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit, the Wastewater Management Authority, the Central Water Authority, the Central Electricity Board, and the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill, amongst others.

A technical committee was set up to look into the proposed project. During the technical committee, the possibility to explore the enlargement of Boundary Road was discussed and a site visit was also conducted under the lead of the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development. It was decided that the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit and the Road Development Unit would work out on the proposed enlargement of the Boundary Road and submit a project request form.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a coordination committee was held on 19 October 2023 at the level of my Ministry with all the relevant stakeholders wherein it was noted that clearance of some organisations has been received. Subsequently, I personally chaired a meeting on 23 October 2023 in the presence of the hon. Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity and representatives from relevant stakeholders and the following was noted –

- (i) the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning has already vested two plots of land out of the six plots identified for the project into my Ministry on 17 October 2023 and the acquisition of the remaining four plots of land are at the Notary level;
- (ii) the clearance from the Central Water Authority, the Central Electricity Board, the Wastewater Management Authority, Mauritius Telecom and the Ministry of Health and Wellness have been obtained and are subject to some conditions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has submitted a request to the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development to set up a technical committee to look into the project holistically and also to constitute a technical team to design and supervise the proposed construction of the new Rose Hill Market and the high-rise car park project.

Mr Nagalingum: If I understand the reply provided by the hon. Minister, in a reply to PQ B/928, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister stated that the full report is expected from the technical team by mid of July 2023. Can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister why is there such delay?

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, initially, this project was limited and we did not have enough land. But now, as I have said, we are trying to get extra plots of land to make it a more appropriate project. As I have mentioned, we have already got two plots of land and four are at the Notary level. That is why the project is taking a bit of time.

Mr Nagalingum: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask of the hon. Vice-Prime Minister to inform the House where matters stand concerning the protest made by nearby inhabitants on this project?

Dr. Husnoo: As far as the project is concerned, we are still working on it, a committee has been set up and they are working on it to look at it holistically. There are maybe some protests, but we are trying to get all the stakeholders on board. For example, for Boundary Road, we are trying to enlarge it to make the traffic a bit fluid. We are trying to find alternative routes to help the traffic in these particular areas. I know we are going to have some problems because the project is a new one. It is not the same market like it used to be. It is going to be a new project; a bigger project. Obviously, there are going to be some problems and we are going to solve the problem as we go along.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

BAIE DU TOMBEAU WOMEN CENTRE – REOPENING

(No. B/1411) 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 Women Centre, she will state –

- (a) if same has been closed and, if so, indicate the reasons therefor, and
- (b) the reasons for the reopening thereof.

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, one of the mandates of my Ministry is to empower women economically, socially and politically for the attainment of gender equality.

Women Empowerment Centres are used to hold different programmes, activities and short term courses offered by the National Women's Council and the Home Economics Section of my Ministry so as to benefit women from all walks of life. Moreover, the centres are used to hold Information, Education and Communication programmes on specific themes which relate mostly to the social, economic and political empowerment of women. They are also used as venues by other institutions or organisations for activities falling under their purview and that relate to women's empowerment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Baie du Tombeau Women Empowerment Centre, was temporarily closed in March 2020 due to the complete lockdown announced by the Government after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. A drastic decline in the number of women attending the Baie du Tombeau Women Empowerment Centre was noted in the year before, that is, 2019.

Consequently, following the uplifting of all sanitary restrictions in July 2022, courses that were being carried out at Baie du Tombeau Women Empowerment Centre were shifted to the nearby Social Welfare Centres and Community Centres.

In light of the interest shown for the different courses by women of the locality and being given that there were no centres for women in that region, my Ministry took the decision to reopen the Baie du Tombeau Women Empowerment Centre to cater for the demands of women.

Since 11 September 2023, sessions on Zumba and Exercise to Music are being dispensed thereat on a voluntary basis every Monday and Tuesday.

The centre is also presently being re-furbished in terms of furniture, equipment and outlook to provide a more conducive environment for women of all walks of life to come to the centre and benefit from the various courses, programmes and other services. Thank you.

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, M. le président. La ministre pourrait-elle nous fournir des informations sur le nombre de centres pour femme qui sont fermés depuis 2020 ainsi que les raisons...

Mr Speaker: No, this is a different question! You would agree with me?

Ms Anquetil: Non, non!

Mr Speaker: Don't lift your hand, I am ruling!

Ms Anquetil: Okay.

Mr Speaker: We change question!

Ms Anquetil: Une autre...

Mr Speaker: We go to question...

Ms Anquetil: S'il vous plaît, M. le président, une autre question ?

Mr Speaker: Please!

Ms Anquetil: Une autre...

Mr Speaker: Please, be polite!

Ms Anquetil: Une autre supplémentaire ?

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ramful!

Ms Anquetil: Mais donnez-moi la chance au moins de poser une question, une deuxième supplémentaire. Ce n'est pas possible!

CWA – WATER SUPPLY SERVICES

(No. B/1412) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to water supply, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to –

- (a) the volume of water produced by the Authority, indicating the –
 - (i) volume sold, and
 - (ii) percentage of non-revenue water, in 2014 and 2022, respectively, and
- (b) the amount invested in water distribution pipe replacement since 2015 to 2022.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Central Water Authority (CWA) ensures delivery of water services through a network of some 5,300 kilometres of distribution pipelines, which draw water from 105 service reservoirs. I am further informed that there has been a significant increase in the daily output within the distribution network over the years with an average of 670,000 m³ per day in 2015, which has risen to 875,000 m³ per day at the end of June 2023 (during normal seasons).

However, it is also important to acknowledge that there has been a growth in demand for water at an average annual rate of 2.3% over the past decade.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regards to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Central Water Authority that in 2014, it had produced 229,613,976 m³ of water, of which 111,780,262 m³ were sold to consumers. In 2022, the volume of water produced has increased to 319,533,897 m³, with 127,381,311 m³ sold to consumers. The difference between production and sale, that is, non-revenue water, is 51% and 60% respectively.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I explained in reply to PQ B/1163, at our Sitting of 29 November 2022, non-revenue water is calculated as the difference between sales and production. However, this figure is not accurate in view of defective meters – both production and at the level of consumer meters.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with the assistance of the British High Commission, my Ministry has enlisted the services of experts from the Climate Resilient Infrastructure Development Facility who are currently carrying out a detailed assessment of Non-Revenue Water in the water supply zone north and east, initially. The project is expected to be completed by March 2024 and the same assessment will be replicated in the other zones. We expect to have more accurate figures after the completion of the detailed assessment of the Central Water Authority network.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, at our Sitting of 29 November 2022, I had elaborated, in my reply to PQ B/1163, on the concept of water losses and the methodology adopted by the Central Water Authority to address same.

Indeed, the issue of water losses is a significant challenge faced by water utilities worldwide. These losses, Mr Speaker, Sir, typically fall into three main categories –

- a) Physical losses which occur due to leakages in the distribution system. Physical losses are primarily the result of infrastructure issues, such as deteriorating pipelines, joint failures, or other system vulnerabilities that lead to water escaping from the network;
- b) Commercial losses which result from theft or incorrectedness in the billing process due to metering inaccuracies. These can also include unauthorised water connections, tampered meters, or billing errors that lead to revenue losses for the water utility, and
- c) Non-Revenue Water (NRW) is the difference between the amount of water being produced/ be injected into the distribution system and the amount of water being billed to consumers. NRW encompasses both physical and commercial losses and it represents the difference between the total water supply and the water that is billed to consumers.

Addressing these challenges, particularly reducing Non-Revenue Water, is a priority for water utilities to improve operational efficiency, conserve valuable resources and ensure a sustainable and cost-effective water supply for communities. The Central Water Authority is addressing the issue of Non-Revenue Water through different strategies tackling physical as well as commercial losses.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have mentioned in reply to previous PQs, the Government has embarked on a National Pipe Replacement Programme across all water distribution zones for improved efficiency and water services. Thus, funds to the tune of Rs900 million have been appropriated in Budget 2023/2024 for such projects to be undertaken either in-house,

or by Small and Medium Contractors, based on a priority list of some 500 km of old and defective pipe networks to be replaced. The Budget also provides funding for major pipe replacement works in the amount of Rs824 m.

It is worthy to outline that during period 2015 to date, the CWA has completed some 61 projects with investment to the tune of Rs5.3 billion, of which pipe replacement accounts for Rs3.5 billion.

Mr Speaker, Sir, other efforts are also being done concurrently with respect to the replacement of defective water meters, the setting up of a telemetry system and the reinforcement of the Non-Revenue Water Unit at the Central Water Authority. Moreover, following the pilot Non-Revenue Water project in the District Metered Area of Melrose Reservoir to Morcellement Sans Souci, the Central Water Authority has decided to replicate a similar exercise in the distribution network of St Julien D'Hotman. Pipes are being replaced there.

In addition, Mr Speaker, Sir, the *Agence Française de Développement* will provide financial support to the water sector over the next five years. Mr Speaker, Sir, it is expected that the combined actions, as mentioned above, would bring a meaningful improvement to the Non-Revenue Water and the efficiency of the water system.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Ramful: From what the hon. Minister has said, basically the amount of Non-Revenue Water has increased by 10% since 2014, despite the investment of billions of rupees and despite the operation of the Bagatelle Dam, will the hon. Minister agree that his Ministry has failed to address the problem of Non-Revenue Water?

Mr Lesjongard: Not at all, Mr Speaker, Sir. First of all, the commissioning of the Bagatelle Dam does not have to do anything with decreasing Non-Revenue Water but I do have knowledge, it has increased and in my last reply, I did say to the House that the figures that we are getting with regard to the Non-Revenue Water has been computed not in a very professional way, I should say. It is for this reason that we are trying to look at the problem on different fronts. That's why I said we are embarked on a major project for pipe replacement across the island but at the same time, we are looking into other issues for example; the replacement of meters, what we call district meters where we can get reliable information. We are also looking into equipment which will help us for leakage detection and we are also, Mr Speaker, Sir, looking into a telemetry system where we will be able to use information technology to have more and precise information about water being used in our network.

Mr Speaker: Time over! Some questions have been withdrawn; I will inform the House accordingly.

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

The 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.

Mr Gobin seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

(4.22 p.m.)

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

DESECRATION OF RELIGIOUS PLACES – SECURITY MESURES

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to make a statement following the matter raised by the Second Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central, on the adjournment on 31 October 2023 with regard to the issue of desecration of several religious places.

I have already requested the Commissioner of Police to look into the matter and also to reinforce presence and vigilance of the police on the ground and in the vicinity of religious places for the respect and preservation of religious places.

I am informed that necessary actions have been taken by the police which are, *inter alia*, –

- (i) conducting foot and mobile patrols in Police Divisions including near places of worship;
- (ii) making optimum use of safe city cameras for surveillance and monitoring the movements of suspicious characters;
- (iii) gathering information on persons likely to cause disturbances or commit illegal activities that may impact on social harmony;
- (iv) sensitising heads of religious bodies on the importance of social harmony and also encouraging them to report any matter which is likely to disrupt the peace and serenity of the community, and

- (v) carrying out cyber patrols on social media platforms for the purpose of identifying comments which are likely to stir racial hatred or raise disaffection among the citizens.

I am further informed that some images which have been circulating in the social media recently relate to past occurrences. However, a few cases reported recently to the police are under investigation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to reiterate to the House and to the population at large, my commitment to preserve harmony, peace and security in the country. I will not tolerate any action aimed at disrupting our social fabric, be it on religious or any other ground. This is of utmost importance for maintaining social harmony and stability in the country without which socio-economic development cannot be sustained.

I have, therefore, requested the Commissioner of Police to deal severely with all those who attempt to threaten the prevailing harmony in our society and we are following the matter very closely. Thank you.

(4.25 p.m.)

SITUATION IN NEPAL – DEVASTATING EARTHQUAKES

The Attorney General, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr M. Gobin): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I have two statements to make: the first one concerning the situation in Nepal following the earthquakes and the second one concerning the case of Nandcoomar Bodha and others versus Prime Minister of Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to make a statement on the situation in Nepal following the devastating earthquakes. A 6.4 magnitude earthquake struck Nepal during the night of Friday 03 November 2023, with the epicentre at Barekot Rural Municipality of Jajarkot, situated 500 km west of Kathmandu, causing the loss of lives and physical damages in the districts of Barekot and West Rukum.

According to information gathered as at 06 November 2023, the number of deaths stood at 157 and 375 were injured. Initial assessments indicate that thousands of buildings and houses were damaged exposing about 1.3 million people while 250,000 people may be in need of humanitarian assistance.

Days after this tragic event, Nepal was hit by another strong earthquake with 5.6 magnitude yesterday. The epicentre of the quake was located 233 kilometres north of

Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh. This event caused panic among residents in Delhi and the National Capital Region.

In response to the earthquake, the largest to impact Nepal since the 7.8 magnitude earthquake in 2015, the UN agencies in Nepal and neighbouring countries are assisting the Nepalese authorities in the remote and mountainous districts in the western part of the country.

The Government of Mauritius has conveyed its deepest condolences and sympathies to the Nepalese authorities and to all those who have been afflicted by this tragedy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has been in contact with our High Commission in New Delhi and our Honorary Consul in Nepal, and they have informed that all the Mauritian citizens in Nepal are safe.

(4.28 p.m.)

NANDCOOMAR BODHA & ORS – JUDICIAL REVIEW

The second statement, Mr Speaker, Sir, concerns the matter of Nandcoomar Bodha and two others versus Prime Minister of Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, an *ex parte* application for leave to apply for judicial review was made by Nandcoomar Bodha, Maynanda Rajaratnam, and Vir Abhi Manuyu Trilochun called the “Appellants” before the Supreme Court of Mauritius on 16 June 2023 against the decision of the hon. Prime Minister to advise the President to further extend the life of the Municipal City Council and Municipal Town Council by 2 years with effect from 13 June 2023.

By way of order dated 16 June 2023, the hon. Chief Justice declined to grant the order prayed for on an *ex parte* basis and ordered that a summons be issued calling upon the Respondent to be and appear on Monday 26 June 2023 at 10.00 a.m., date on which the matter would be mentioned before the hon. Chief Justice.

On 22 June 2023, the Appellants made a similar *ex parte* application before the Court of Civil Appeal on the basis of section 6 of the Court of Civil Appeal Act. In that similar *ex parte* application, the Appellants prayed for the following orders –

- (A) For an Order granting the Appellants leave to apply for Judicial Review against the decision of the Respondent to advise the President to further extend the life of the Municipal City Council and Municipal Town Councils by 2 years with effect from 13 June 2023;

(B) In the event LEAVE FOR JUDICIAL REVIEW IS GRANTED –

- (i) For a procedural order setting out the calendar for the matter to be heard by the Supreme Court within a delay of 3 months as a matter of urgency;
- (ii) For a mandatory order ordering the Respondent to advise the President of the Republic of Mauritius to issue writs of election within 60 days of the present Court Order, in line with section 11 of the Local Government Act, and the said elections to take place according to law;
- (iii) For a declaration declaring that the advice given to the President to further extend the life of the Municipal City Council and Municipal Town Councils is against the Rule of Law and/or unlawful and/or procedurally improper and/or irrational and/or arbitrary and/or unfair and/or made without purpose and/or unreasonable in the Wednesbury sense, thus void for all intents and purposes,
- (iv) An order declaring that the Respondent has broken his oath of Allegiance taken by him before acceding to the position of Prime Minister.

On 26 June 2026, the Appellants withdrew the first application before the Supreme Court because they had lodged a similar *ex parte* application before the Court of Civil Appeal.

On 27 June 2023, this similar *ex parte* application lodged before the Court of Civil Appeal was set aside by the Court. The order reads as follows, I quote –

“We have taken cognizance of the applicants’ *ex parte* application under section 6 of the Court of Civil Appeal Act for “an Order granting to the Applicants LEAVE to apply for JUDICIAL REVIEW against the decision of the Respondent to advise the President to further extend the life of the Municipal City Council and Municipal Town Councils by 2 years with effect from 13 June 2023”. We are of the considered view that the application raises complex issues of laws and some other intricacy which may affect the grant of leave to proceed to a judicial review and accordingly it is a fit and proper case for the respondent to be served with the motion paper and the affidavit.

We hold that the decision of the hon. Chief Justice on 16 June 2023 declining to grant the orders prayed for on a similar application made on an ex parte basis was correct. The present ex parte application is set aside.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Appellants sought permission directly from the Judicial Committee to appeal to it under section 81(1)(a), (2) and (5) of the Constitution.

Leave to appeal to the Judicial Committee was resisted by the Respondent, on whose behalf a Notice of Objection was duly filed.

On 31 October 2023, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council ordered that –

“Permission to appeal be refused on the grounds that

- (i) an appeal does not lie as of right as there is no final decision on a question as to the interpretation of the Constitution; and
- (ii) special leave to appeal is not granted as the appeal does not raise an arguable point in law.”

The Judicial Committee has also ordered as follows –

“Subject to any submissions (to be filed within 21 days of the date of this Order), the Appellants pay the Respondent’s costs...

Hon. Members: *Paye! Paye!*

Mr Gobin: ... the amount of those costs be assessed, if not agreed.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Office has instructed our Solicitors in the United Kingdom that the Respondent will claim and make submissions for costs.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bodha: *Monn fer mo devwar!*

An hon. Member: *Paye aster! Paye!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Bodha: *Monn fer mo devwar!*

An hon. Member: *Wa, al paye aster!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order! Let me do my work!

(Interruptions)

Let me do my work!

PQs B/1415, B/1422, B/1424, B/1426, B/1435, and B/1439 were withdrawn during Question Time.

Resumption of debate!

PUBLIC BILLS

Second Reading

THE FISHERIES BILL

(No. XIII of 2023)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the second reading of the Fisheries Bill (No. XIII of 2023).

Question again proposed.

(4.34 p.m.)

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to say a few words on this important piece of legislation. The fishery sector and fisherman as an important segment of our population, Mr Speaker, Sir, have always been very close to my heart. In fact, I remember having participated in the debates in 2010 when the Fishermen Welfare Fund Act was adopted by this House and also in 2007 when the Fisheries and Marine Resources Bill was also voted in this same House, Mr Speaker, Sir.

I remember in 2010 during my address to the House, my intervention, I raised the case of the difficult situation in which the fishermen were living and the various challenges of this particular profession. I said the following, Mr Speaker, Sir –

“we hardly know of any rich fishermen, now just imagine somebody at the age of 60, 65 or 70 years old who has spent all his lifetime fishing and who is so old now that he cannot go any more so as to feed himself and his family. I think one of the priorities of this fund should be to reflect upon the possibility or the advisability of setting up a pension scheme for these fishermen. Mr Speaker, Sir, this would also encourage the young generation to embrace this profession.”

I will stop here but it was 23 years ago, Mr Speaker, Sir, that I proposed to this House to set up a pension scheme to contribute to the welfare of this important segment of our population.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill is an innovative legislation, setting a new framework for the fisheries sector which represents almost one fifth of our export earnings, responsible for 10,000 direct and 12,000 indirect employments. This sector is a growing pillar of our economy and the proposed Bill contains the roadmap for its transformation and continued growth. But I must say I was disheartened to listen to a few members of the Opposition, Mr Speaker, Sir. Probably they have been destabilised by the content of this Bill, the seriousness with which this Government and the hon. Minister have shown with respect to proposing such a Bill to the House.

When I listen to the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Speaker, Sir, I could not refrain from underlining the inherent contradictions in his statement. On the one hand, he was describing and I am quoting from his speech –

“This Bill (the Fisheries bill) is a very, very important Bill; (for) a very, very important sector” and after some time he stated, I quote –

“This is the sort of ridiculous Bill that is being proposed today. This is the sort of ridiculous stuff.”

He expresses his feelings, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this Bill emanates from an inspection visit by the EU DG MARE in September 2022 insisting that the EU has threatened us with a *carton jaune* if this Bill is not passed quickly. While on this chapter, I would like to remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition that Mauritius and the EU have been involved in a series of succeeding fishing agreements since 1989 and these opened the way for a dialogue process on the fishing rights, sustainability of the fish stocks and financial packages. So, this is a normal process, Mr Speaker, Sir, which the EU has been holding and still holds with its own members and with international partners.

From time to time, Mr Speaker, Sir, we even see fishermen protesting against the EU in member countries but that does not mean a *carton jaune*, a *carton rouge* for the EU or for the fishermen. The Leader of the Opposition also said, Mr Speaker, Sir, –

“This law is totally unacceptable; it is a blank cheque! It is a blank cheque for abuse! [...] Yes, I am not afraid to say it! It is a blank cheque for corruption. It is a blank cheque for nepotism.”

As he perceives that the EU is behind the Bill, does he mean, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the EU is corrupting the State of Mauritius or is the EU corrupting our fisherman or the EU fishing operators? I’m sure that the EU and the fishermen would have taken good note of the comments of the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would invite the Opposition to align their arguments because on the one hand, the Leader of the Opposition was saying that this Bill includes disproportionate fines while his colleague, hon. Dr. Boolell, from the same constituency is applauding the fines as I will highlight in a few instances. In his statement the first member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes stated the following and I quote –

“To turn a Small Island Developing State into an Ocean State, but to do so, we have to make sure that there is proper monitoring, surveillance and control of our EEZ.”

I would invite him to go through the different propositions of the Bill and he will find now that this is in fact the very purpose of the Fisheries Bill. According to the Member, the Fisheries Bill is being rushed through after the European Community has threatened us with a yellow card over inadequate safeguard in our legislation to wage war on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing amongst other issues.

Well, Mr Speaker, Sir, this hon. Member has held the portfolio of agriculture for a number of years. He has had to deal with the phasing of the sugar protocol with the European Union. How would he qualify his consultations that he had with the EU at the time? Were they threatened by the EU in pressing for the reform of the sugar sector? Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member further stated that the regime has not even levelled up to meet the international standards on responsible fishing.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it goes without saying that the international context of fishing has evolved since the previous legislation. It is a legitimate objective to always catch up with new initiatives for responsible fishing. The hon. Member should instead congratulate the hon. Minister Maudhoo for his laudable initiative to introduce this Bill after extensive consultations with local and international stakeholders. I would like to remind the Member that the EU has been a privileged partner since our independence in 1968, opening its market for our sugar and textile without any tariffs. Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes also stated that the regime has failed to implement the IUU regulations to identify the origin of the catch and has not even levelled up to meet international standards on responsible fishing. He also alleged that the Directorate MARE has taken over and prepared this Bill, adding, I quote –

“This is tantamount to relinquish our sovereign rights to the dictate of the European Commission and I will comment on it as I go along.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, how does such an hon. Member make such unfounded accusations against this Government? Talking about relinquishing our sovereign rights

when this Government has brought back the Chagos Archipelago in our fold after a heroic struggle of the United Nations and at the International Court of Justice. The international community, as we know, Mr Speaker, Sir, was taken by the audacity of our Government and our Prime Minister, and a time will come when we will reap the fruits of what this Government under the leadership of the Prime Minister has shown for the benefit of the population with regard to our struggles for the Chagos Archipelago.

I am happy, Mr Speaker, Sir, that unlike the Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes is happy with the provisions in the legislation in respect of penalties and that they are high, and I hope they will act as a deterrent. We were reassured by the Prime Minister that the recommendation, Mr Speaker, Sir, made by Justice Lam Shang Leen in the findings of the Commission of Enquiry would be implemented.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot, but express my agreement with the hon. Member of Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes when he says that Mauritius is a fully independent State and must see to it that fishing is done in a sustainable manner and that there is responsible fishing to benefit all the stakeholders as this is the very purpose of this Bill.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to conclude on the contradictions of the Opposition with regard to the Fisheries Bill, I think after delivering their respective speech, that they have been self-inflicting *carton rouge* and *carton jaune* upon themselves.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would also commend the hon. Minister for coming up with this comprehensive piece of legislation. Allow me to recall, Mr Speaker, Sir, that in my previous capacity as Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and IT, I had been called on many instances to work closely with my esteemed colleague and I can assure the House that the Fisheries Bill in its current form and substance is a result of constructive consultations with both local and foreign stakeholders. Indeed, I recall when numerous meetings with Ambassador Vincent Degert, then representative of the EU for the past two years and our encounter with Mrs Charlina Vitcheva, the Director General of the DG MARE, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of the EU in May 2022 with a view to consolidating the Mauritius EU partnership in the field of fisheries.

Mr Speaker, Sir, what is the *raison d'être* of this proposed Fisheries Bill? It marks a crucial milestone in our nation's commitment to the sustainable development of the blue economy sector, fisheries management, conservation of marine resources and the livelihoods of those who depend on our coastal waters and ocean for their wellbeing.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill has been crafted with a keen focus on balancing the complex needs of our fishermen, our coastal communities, of the environment and the larger economy. The Bill is a theme of prime significance, especially for a Small Island Developing State like us. I would like to particularly focus on its international obligations, good governance and the vital aspects of conservation and management measures that the Bill contains.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in a world marked by the depletion of national resources at an alarming rate, it is imperative that we recognise our international obligations, embrace conservation and implement effective management measures to safeguard our fisheries resources for the generations to come. The global fisheries industry plays a critical role in sustaining both our economy and to broader extents, the planet and it is imperative that we recognise our responsibilities and obligations on the international front.

Indeed, the FIO estimates that the livelihood of 600 million people depend at least partially on fisheries and aquaculture. The Bill represents a comprehensive framework for the sustainable management and conservation of our aquatic resources. It underscores our commitment to fulfilling our international obligations and these obligations stem from various treaties, from various agreements and conventions, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the Agreement on Port State Measures to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing and our membership to the Regional Fisheries Management Organisations such as the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) and the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA). These international agreements set the base for concerted efforts to ensure the responsible utilisation of our oceans as they are going through a triple crisis through the impact of climate change affecting their capacity to absorb greenhouse emissions, biodiversity losses and particularly plastic pollution. Conservation lies at the heart of any sustainable fisheries development strategy and this Bill recognises the need to strike the right balance between harvesting the bounties of the sea and preserving them for future generations.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we should understand that overfishing not only depletes fish stocks, but it also disrupts the balance of marine ecosystem. By implementing conservation measures such as seize and catch limits, effort limitation fishing capacity, quotas, seasonal closures and protected areas, we can allow fish populations to replenish and ecosystems to recover. Moreover, promoting responsible fishing practices such as selective fishing gear and reducing bycatch can significantly minimise the impact of non-target species. Overcapacity, overfishing, bycatch and habitat disruption are global issues that threaten the very foundation of the fisheries industry and this Bill employs a range of

measures to address these challenges, Mr Speaker, Sir. Science based management, quota systems, marine protected areas, reducing bycatch, combating IUU fishing, engaging with international bodies, all these constitute these measures.

This Bill provides for conservation and management measures to ensure sustainable management of fisheries and aquaculture and implement obligation and standards in line with international agreements and commitments of Mauritius. Conservation and management measures shall be enforced through effective monitoring, control and surveillance. The precautionary approach would be applied to the management and development of all fisheries resources.

Mr Speaker, Sir, blue economy is the future pillar of the Mauritian economy and it is crucial to provide appropriate incentives to attract local and foreign investors to invest in the sustainable development of the fisheries sector. This Bill precisely provides management measures for all fishing operators either local or foreign or should comply and fulfil all international obligations concerning conservation and management measures adopted by the Regional Fisheries Management Organisation to which Mauritius is a party.

This Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, embodies our commitment to these measures and principles, ensuring that we meet our international obligations to conserve and manage our marine resources responsibly. The sustainable management of fisheries is not just a matter of economics, but it is also a moral obligation to protect the environment and ensure food security for present and future generation. The Bill with its international obligations and conservation and management measures pave the way, in fact, towards a more sustainable, responsible and prosperous future of our fisheries industry. It reflects the dedication of this Government to safeguard the oceans and marine life while maintaining the livelihoods of those who depend on fishing.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we should also pay a special attention to a crucial aspect of this Bill – the introduction of the new element focused on combating IUU fishing. These provisions represent a significant step towards our ongoing efforts to protect marine resources, foster sustainable fisheries and uphold our international commitments. IUU, Mr Speaker, Sir, is a global maritime security threat for the health of our oceans and the livelihoods of countless people who depend on them. It deprives genuine fishers of their rightful catch, undermines conservation efforts and poses serious economy and environmental challenges. It jeopardises food and economic security, resulting in global losses in the tens of billions of dollars each year and has destabilising effect on vulnerable coastal states and SIDS like Mauritius. It also undermines sport and maritime security as

criminal elements may use similar routes, trade routes, landing sites and vessels from trafficking arms, migrants and drugs.

As a responsible steward of our economic systems, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is imperative that we promptly address this critical issue, and one of the key element of the Bill addresses precisely enforcement measures to combat IUU fishing and this includes strengthening penalties for those involved in illegal fishing activities and enhancing the capabilities of the authorities to detect, investigate and prosecute offenders. We should make it clear that the IUU fishing will not be tolerated in our EEZ and the consequences for those who are engaged in these illicit practices will be dire.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this new Bill seeks to combat IUU fishing and ensure a sustainable fishing in the EEZ of Mauritius through the use of strengthened monitoring control and surveillance system with particular emphasis on Port State Measures based on FAO Model Scheme and supported by a VMS, which has been set up since 2005 and is fully operational. A Fisheries Monitoring Centre, which will be responsible for the monitoring of the VMS, the electronic reporting system and the automatic identification system have also been provided in the Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Provisions are being made in the Bill to prevent transactions such as the import, landing and transhipment of species which are under the mandate of the relevant regional fisheries management organisations and have been caught or carried by a fishing vessel that is listed on the IUU Vessels List.

Provisions are being made to prevent IUU fishing by controlling transhipment activities without a valid and applicable authorisation in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Fisheries and Marine Resources Act 2007 catered for a maximum fine of USD 1 million for activities relating to IUU fishing but in this Bill, a maximum fine of Rs100 million has been imposed for all offences regarding the IUU fishing. The level of fines has been increased to discourage that type of fishing in our waters.

Mr Speaker, Sir, much has been said by the Opposition with regard to observers but we should know that to be in line with Resolution 2004 and the IOTC Regional Observer Scheme, the Fisheries Bill makes provision for the appointment of observers on fishing vessel for the purpose of observing, collecting, recording and reporting reliable and accurate information and data for scientific monitoring, management and compliance purposes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the existing Act of 2007 does not also make provision to keep updated records of fishing vessels listed as IUU vessels on the list maintained by the relevant regional fisheries management organisations such as the IOTC, the CCMLAR, the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission and the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement amongst others. This shortcoming is now being plugged and addressed in the new Bill, which makes provision to prevent activities carried out by IUU listed fishing vessels.

Provision is also being made, Mr Speaker, Sir, for this Ministry to enter into fisheries access. Moreover, international cooperation is essential in the fight against IUU fishing and the Bill encourages collaboration with other nations, with other management organisations, international agencies to share information, intelligence and best practices. Strengthening these partnerships will enable us to tackle this global problem effectively.

More importantly, Mr Speaker, Sir, public awareness and engagement should also be an integral part of the Bill's strategy. By educating and involving local communities, our fishers and stakeholders, we can create a network of individuals and groups who actively support efforts to combat IUU fishing. These communities are often on the frontlines and can serve as valuable allies in our fight against illegal fishing.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the introduction of all these new elements, aimed at addressing IUU fishing, in this Bill is indeed a laudable initiative towards protecting our marine resources. We must all support and strengthen these provisions, for they hold the key to the conservation of our oceans and the long-term sustainability of our fishery.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to new licensing requirements of fishing vessels, here also, the introduction of new elements in the Bill related to the licensing and registration of fishing and fish-related vessels represent a fundamental shift in our approach to fisheries management and have the potential to enhance accountability, conservation efforts, the fight against IUU fishing and the sustainability of our fisheries.

One of the key and fundamental elements, in fact, the pivotal element of this Bill pertains, Mr Speaker, Sir, to the establishment of this robust licensing and registration system. This includes clear criteria and standards for obtaining licences, renewable processes and a requirement for vessels to be registered in Mauritius. Furthermore, the Bill introduces the use of modern technology and data management system to improve the efficiency of licensing and registration process.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as we know, under the current legislation, fishing vessels above 24 metres and made of steel hull are registered under the Merchant Shipping Act. The new

Bill comes up with a series of new measures to enhance this process. All fishing and related vessels irrespective of the length of the vessel will now be registered by the Supervising Officer of the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping.

A series of measures follow, Mr Speaker, Sir, the MOU to be entered between the Director of Shipping; the streamlining of procedures; all the administrative, technical and social matters under Article 94 of the Law of the Sea and international standards for registration of fishing vessels. Upon approval by the Director of Shipping and the Registrar, the Supervising Officer of the Ministry will sign the certificate of registration. And the Bill also makes provision for the Supervising Officer of the Ministry to suspend or cancel a registration.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to licensing of fishing vessel, the Bill also outlines the procedures for granting licence to Mauritius fishing vessels, foreign vessels and joint venture vessels.

Mr Armance: Mr Speaker, Sir, on point of order.

Mr Ganoo: Finally, Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not intend to dwell lengthily on other aspects of the Bill, but I will just say a few words, just one paragraph on another essential component of this Bill, which introduces new elements to fish farming and aquaculture, which in fact represent a significant shift in our approach to fisheries management and which has the potential to contribute not only to the sustainability of our fish stock but also to the economic growth and food security of our nation.

Mr Armance: *4 paz la.*

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, this also means that aquaculture has the potential to boost our rural economies, create jobs, provide alternative means of livelihood and strengthen food security.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the introduction of these new elements related to fish farming and aquaculture in the Fisheries Bill is a forward-looking and proactive step. It acknowledges the importance of aquaculture in ensuring stable seafood supply, relieving the pressures on wild fisheries and supporting the economic growth of our nation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I must end up, unfortunately...

Mr Speaker: Last time?

Mr Ganoo: ...by saying that this Bill is masterpiece legislation.

En vérité, M. le président, concernant un sujet aussi complexe et avec autant de ramifications, l'honorable ministre a réfléchi à tout quand nous parcourons ce projet de loi. Si l'opposition est honnête et objective, elle doit se souscrire à ce que je dis, M. le président. Ce projet de loi est élaboré, it is indeed *comprehensive, all-encompassing*, avant-gardiste. C'est un vrai pas de géant que la République de Maurice franchit en adoptant ce *Fisheries Bill*, M. le président. Bravo encore une fois au ministre et je vous remercie.

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

At 5.01 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.42 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Thank you for your good manners. Please be seated!

I call hon. Lesjongard!

The Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr G. Lesjongard): M. le président, permettez-moi de vous remercier, de me donner la parole d'intervenir sur le *Fisheries Bill 2023*, un projet de loi qu'on est en train de débattre depuis la semaine dernière. Le secteur de la pêche, M. le président, est un secteur important pour notre économie et qui nous concerne tous. Selon les chiffres avancés par mon collègue, le ministre de la Pêche, l'honorable Sudheer Maudhoo, que je félicite, il y a 22,000 emplois sont concernés, soit directement ou indirectement.

M. le président, c'est un secteur que j'ai connu pendant ma carrière politique parce que j'étais ministre de la Pêche en 2005. Et j'ai eu l'occasion, M. le président, d'aller à la rencontre de cette communauté qui très souvent brave le mauvais temps afin de nourrir leurs familles, mais aussi nous nourrir. Ce soir, M. le président, j'ai une pensée spéciale pour toutes ces familles de pêcheurs qui ont perdu un être cher en mer. M. le président, cette communauté a été impactée directement par la Covid, et surtout durant le confinement qui a duré pendant pas mal de temps. C'est un secteur où il n'y a pas de système salarial et nous savons tous qu'un pêcheur vit au jour le jour. C'est une des raisons que nous devons être encore plus sensibles – oui M. le président, je le dis – encore plus sensibles sur les risques qu'ils ou elles doivent encourir et aussi sur leurs conditions de vies.

Il est un fait, M le président, que toute loi ou cadre légal doit évoluer et l'actuelle législation, c'est-à-dire le *Fisheries and Marine Resources Act de 2007* ne répond plus aux défis dans le secteur de la pêche, plus particulièrement par rapport à la pêche illégale et la protection de nos ressources marines.

Ce projet de loi que nous débattons aujourd’hui, M. le président, le *Fisheries Bill* renforcit le cadre légal quant aux activités dans nos zones marines et il nous faut impérativement aller dans cette direction. Cela, M. le président, afin de mieux protéger nos zones marines et de réduire la pêche illégale.

Mr Speaker, Sir, one of the main arguments raised during this debate is in relation to the objective of this Bill. The explanatory note of the Ministry of Fisheries is very clear, that is, to –

“(...) to repeal the Fisheries and Marine Resources Act and to replace it by a more appropriate legislative framework following the recommendations made by the Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of the European Commission (DG MARE) and taking into consideration the rapid growth of the fisheries sector worldwide, (...) with a view to meeting international norms and standards (...).”

M. le président, la bonne réputation de l’État mauricien, que ce soit sur le plan économique ou sur le plan social, mais aussi la réputation de nos institutions, ont été bâties sur une longue période de temps, M. le président, sur des dizaines d’années. Il nous faut préserver cette réputation auprès des institutions avec qui nous travaillons, tel que l’Union européenne, la Banque mondiale, afin que nous puissions bénéficier des aides qui mettent à notre disposition.

M. le président, la pêche illégale aujourd’hui nous coûte des millions, peut-être des milliards et sans l’aide des pays amis – et là, je fais référence à la France ou à la Grande Péninsule – nous ne pourrons combattre cette pêche illégale dans notre territoire maritime.

It is a fact that the European Union, Mr Speaker, Sir, is a privileged partner, as rightly said by my colleague, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, hon. Maneesh Gobin, when he intervened on this piece of legislation.

Members of the Opposition and particularly hon. Dr. Arvin Boolell, and this was stated earlier by hon. Alan Ganoo, stated in his intervention that ‘Mauritius is being dictated by the European Union.’ Mr Speaker, Sir...

Dr. Boolell: That is specific directorate!

Mr Speaker: Wait!

Mr Lesjongard: He is a seasoned politician and former Minister and he should know when he says that we are going as far as relinquishing our sovereign rights to the dictate of the European Union. He said that when he intervened last time, Mr Speaker, Sir. I remind the House that hon. Dr. Arvin Boolell was the former Minister of Foreign Affairs

and in saying what he said, he is grossly misleading the House and also showing a lack of consideration for our developing partners, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mauritius, Mr Speaker, Sir, as a Remote Small Island Developing State has to safeguard its markets. We should not forget that we export more than Rs16 billion worth of fish and fish products to the European Union and the United Kingdom. Now, to have access to these markets, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are required to comply with their norms and conditions.

In such circumstances, it is only normal, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we should take into consideration the recommendations made by the Directorate General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of the European Commission (DG-MARE) in the context of drafting the Fisheries Bill. This does not at all tantamount to being dictated as stated by hon. Dr. Boolell.

On the contrary, Mr Speaker, Sir, these recommendations of the DG-MARE have resulted in a modern Fisheries Bill that is meant – this is important to stay for years – to come. *Une loi qui est beaucoup plus adaptée aux défis de ce secteur.*

Let me turn now on the ‘Penalty and Fine’ in this piece of legislation because this was canvassed a lot by the Leader of the Opposition and other Members of the Opposition.

Mr Speaker, Sir, some people seem to be very alarmed by the levels of fines provided in the Bill. I would encourage them to consult the legislations of countries like Seychelles, Tanzania and Sri Lanka which are also coastal and flag states like Mauritius. The penalties that we have provided in the Bill are at par with provisions made by these countries in their fisheries legislations. For example, Sri Lanka is well known in the region to have been able to deter irregular, unreported and unregulated fishing by implementing high penalties against IUU fishing.

Now, let us not forget one thing that the very purpose of imposing penalty is first and foremost to sanction fishing vessels which have engaged in those irregular, unreported and unregulated fishing activities. We should also not forget that the revenue derived from this type of illegal activity can be in terms of billions of US dollars not to mention the damage which is caused to our resources.

The penalty should be such that it discourages such fishing activities in our Exclusive Economic Zone which is quite big, Mr Speaker, Sir. I think this was said in an earlier intervention; we have an EEZ which is about 2.3 million km², three and a half times the size of France, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me share some information with regard to illegal fishing today in this House. I have been informed that, for example, in December last year, the Fisheries Protection Service has received information that a vessel was carrying diesel in its fish hold. An operation was carried by the National Coast Guard and the Fisheries Protection to hot pursuit the fishing vessel and the fishing vessel was at about some 12 nautical miles off the coast of Le Morne.

The authority found that the fishing vessel was carrying diesel in its three fish hold. The case was prosecuted in a District Court. The master pleaded guilty to the charge and you know, Mr Speaker, Sir, what was the fine that he paid? Rs5,000 plus Rs100, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Another case, Mr Speaker, Sir, which happened in November 2022. Dans ce cas, la National Coast Guard avait intercepté un bateau de pêche battant illégalement le pavillon mauricien. Les éléments de la *National Coast Guard* ont tiré 66 tirs de sommation en direction du bateau car il tentait de s'enfuir au lieu de rentrer à Port Louis et cette opération avait été montée conjointement avec le concours du CGS Barracuda, du patrouilleur PS Etoile et un Dornier des Seychelles et ce navire avait illégalement hissé le pavillon mauricien dans nos eaux territoriales et encore une fois savez-vous la condamnation infligée ? M. le président, vous serez surpris, non seulement vous mais toute le Chambre – le capitaine a été condamné uniquement à verser une amende de R5,000.

M. le président, permettez-moi de dire ça - *balle kine tire mem ine coute plus cher ki sa lamane la.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, we should not mislead the population in believing that artisanal fishers would be liable to these huge penalties. They are not the one, Mr Speaker, Sir, and this is clear, who are indulging in huge illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities and it is for these reasons that the Minister has provided in this Bill for fixed penalties of only Rs5,000 for small offences.

Now, another point that was pointed out by the Leader of the Opposition when he intervened on this piece of legislation was in relation to the safety aspects of a fishing boat. In fact, the necessary regulations, Mr Speaker, Sir, are being drafted under the Fisheries Bill to regulate measures to ensure the safety and security of fishers, fishing vessels and fishers at sea.

Another issue that was also canvassed when the Leader of the Opposition intervened was with regard to fish caught through sports fishing. Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill has

addressed a major lacuna in providing for sports fishing activities to be registered with the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping.

We all know that fishing is a very popular activity in Mauritius whereby huge fish are caught in our EEZ and sold without the knowledge of the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping, which is the entity which is mandated to regulate all fishing activities in our country. The Leader of the Opposition has the misconception to believe that fish caught through such activities cannot be sold. In fact, provision has been made at clause 116 which caters for pleasure crafts registered under the Tourism Authority Act to sell their fish but subject to a license from the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping.

Let me now come, Mr Speaker, Sir, to the issue of licenses. This Bill does cater in fact for a large number of licenses that would be required for different categories of activities under this Act and the purpose of this Act is to ensure the sustainability of our fisheries resources mainly through surveillance and control.

Mr Speaker, Sir, licenses and authorisations are specifically meant to monitor and control these activities in a transparent and fair manner. I understand that we have not introduced any new license. All the licenses and authorisations mentioned in the Bill are already existing, currently referred to as “permits”, “approval”, “clearance” and “authorisations” and all these terms have been harmonised and will henceforth be referred to either “license” and “authorisation”.

He also made some comments with regard to the building or construction of a fishing boat and he said in his intervention that he found it strange and dramatic that a person who intends to build a pirogue, for example, for fishing needs permission from the Ministry.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is not at all superfluous. All fishing boats, be it pirogues, should respect certain construction norms to ensure safety of navigation. When seeking the authorisation of the Ministry for the construction of a boat, an applicant is already made aware of those safety requirements. This will, in fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, facilitate the registration of the boat as a fishing boat at a later stage when he has already constructed his pirogue. This also will allow the Ministry to control or to have control over the number of vessels that are being constructed on the island for fishing and fishing related activities and thereby, like I said earlier, ensuring the sustainability of our resources. An applicant need not come to Port Louis to make submit his application. He can do so, I understand, at the fisheries post nearest to his place of residence.

Now, I understand that with regard to a recommendation of the Lam Shang Leen Report, the Minister will bring certain amendments to some clauses such as a fisher shall inform the fisheries post one day before their fishing expedition because this could be a very tedious thing for a fisher to do if he had to report whenever he has to leave the island to go fishing.

Permettez maintenant, M. le président, de faire quelques commentaires sur l'aquaculture. L'introduction de l'aquaculture, M. le président, dans le *Fisheries Bill* démontre l'importance de ce secteur. L'application des nouvelles réglementations et la promotion de ce secteur sont importantes pour le pays, car l'aquaculture peut répondre à cette situation de surpêche ou à cette situation de pêche illégale dans nos eaux maritimes.

Nous avons le potentiel marin et les ressources nécessaires pour mieux développer ce secteur et permettre – et c'est important – aux petits et moyens opérateurs d'entrer dans ce secteur d'activité. Les réglementations sanitaires et environnementales permettront aussi à notre pays de produire plus sainement et exploiter ainsi les marchés internationaux.

Nous avons aussi désigné ce qu'on appelle des *fish farming zones* dans nos lagons et aussi en dehors de nos lagons et c'est une très bonne décision pour le développement de ce secteur.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will now conclude with my speech by saying that the fisheries industry has great potential, and as I said at the start of my speech, it is an important sector for our people and for our economy. It is a fact that much has been done and much has to be done for the local fishermen community and for the sector.

Je vous donne quelques exemples, au fil des années il y a eu, par exemple, l'introduction des bourses d'études en 1991 pour les enfants des pêcheurs. Ensuite, il y a eu l'introduction du *Fishermen Welfare Fund* qui permet aux pêcheurs et aussi à leur famille de bénéficier de certaines allocations sociales.

Et c'est un fait, l'opposition n'aime pas trop quand on le dit, mais c'est un fait et il faut l'accepter que depuis 2015, il y a eu une augmentation constante du *Bad Weather Allowance* qui était à cette époque, c'est-à-dire en 2014 à R 249 et qui est passé cette année à R 650.

À travers ce projet de loi, M. le président, nous adressons les défis du secteur en –

- (i) apportant les changements et les pénalités nécessaires pour combattre l'exploitation de nos eaux maritimes par les mercenaires de la pêche ;

- (ii) amenant aussi des mesures pour l'introduction de la technologie, que ce soit dans le combat contre la drogue et aussi pour mieux localiser les pêcheurs en cas de danger en mer, et
- (iii) pour conclure, M. le président, c'est de mieux professionnaliser le secteur.

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

Mr Speaker: I now call the hon. Minister to conclude.

(6.08 p.m.)

The Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping (Mr S. Maudhoo): M. le président, je pensais sincèrement que l'opposition allait saisir l'importance de mon invitation pour contribuer à cette nouvelle loi en exprimant des avis pertinents. C'était, à mon avis, l'option la plus logique étant donné qu'après tout, les députés de l'opposition sont aussi payés avec l'argent des contribuables.

Je m'étais trompé, bien sûr ! C'était sans compter sur la formidable capacité de l'opposition à créer une tempête dans un verre d'eau dès que la situation leur échappe, comme ils ont essayé de faire ce matin lors du *PNQ* avec leurs boîtes rouillées, plantées, si bien expliqué par mon collègue, l'honorable Dr. Kailesh Jagutpal.

M. le président, ils ne se rendent même pas compte qu'ils n'ont pratiquement rien fait pour les pêcheurs, l'industrie de la pêche dans son ensemble quand ils étaient au pouvoir. L'opposition utilise les mêmes tactiques de l'Ancien Monde pour détourner l'attention encore et encore alors que nous faisons avancer notre pays chaque jour vers plus de prospérité.

M. le président, j'attendais plus d'eux, mais ils sont tellement déconnectés et dépassés qu'au fond, je ne leur en veux plus maintenant. Avec un tel niveau de démagogie, une troisième vague orange de 3-0 tout autour de l'île va s'abattre sur ce ménage à trois. Comme dit l'adage, jamais deux sans trois !

Mr Speaker, Sir, unlike other countries, we do not have natural resources such as oil and minerals that we can exploit for the economic benefit of the country. We have, however, been endowed with a vast EEZ with an invaluable fisheries resources. This is the only natural resource in Mauritius which we can exploit to contribute to the overall sustainable growth of the economy and ensure food security for the population.

M. le président, je me dois de répondre à l'honorable leader de l'opposition à propos de sa remarque sur les ressources naturelles. C'est vrai que nous avons d'innombrables ressources naturelles qui constituent notre écosystème si unique à

Maurice, mais les seules ressources naturelles exploitables de façon durable sont nos ressources marines naturelles – je tiens à apporter une précision à ce sujet.

Worldwide fisheries are big businesses providing jobs and recreation and keeping coastal communities vibrant. So, why not here, Mr Speaker, Sir? Under the guidance of our hon. Prime Minister, the ambition of this Government is to be recognised in the region as a leader in the responsible management of our fisheries. This can only happen when the fisheries sector is scientifically monitored, regionally managed and legally enforced, and this is precisely what the Bill is aiming at.

M. le président, cette loi englobe plusieurs aspects clés qui sont liés à notre industrie de pêche. Le spectre qui est couvert va de la technologie au développement durable en passant par la prévention de la criminalité. Il n'est pas possible d'adopter une approche *piecemeal* dans ce cas, tout simplement parce que comme je viens de le dire, tous ces éléments sont liés et ne peuvent pas être réglementés de façon séparée. Ce n'est pas l'opposition qui va nous reprocher d'en faire trop, car elle n'a rien fait lorsqu'elle était au pouvoir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are being accused by some Members on the other side of the House, be it the Leader of the Opposition, hon. Bodha or hon. David for being dictated by the European Union in the drafting of the Bill. Mr Speaker, Sir, let me put it clearly. The livelihood of thousands of persons depends on this sector, either through direct or indirect employment. Fish and fish products as explained by my colleague, hon. Lesjongard, represent more than 19% of our total exports and our niche market is the European Union and the United Kingdom. It is therefore normal that we should take into consideration the recommendation made by the European Union for the drafting of this Bill. Otherwise, how do we ensure that our products meet the necessary requirements to our access to the European market? This is only common sense, Mr Speaker, Sir, and not the threat of a yellow card as some Members on the other side of the House are insinuating.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the European Union has always been one of our privileged economic partners of Mauritius, not only in the fisheries sector but in so many other sectors of the country such as agriculture and manufacturing. We should not forget that Mauritius has a long standing and solid partnership with the European Union based on shared values such as respect for democracy, human rights and the rule of law. I think hon. Bodha must surely know all these. It is therefore not a question of being dictated or threatened by the EU. It is a matter of listening to a development partner to ensure that our exports to the EU market are not jeopardized.

M. le président, j'en viens maintenant aux articles de presse qui ont été circulés au sujet de l'allocation de quota de thon jaune à un opérateur de la pêche thonière en particulier. En effet, un hebdomadaire du dimanche 29 octobre 2023 a fait état de favoritisme dans le cas de l'allocation des quotas en reprenant presque mot pour mot les propos du leader de l'opposition. Il y a aussi une radio privée qui s'est également prêtée à ce jeu, y compris l'honorable Dr. Boolell, l'honorable Uteem, et l'honorable Bodha. On se demanderait s'ils ne sont pas tous de mèche quand il s'agit des *fake news* ou de faire de la sensation. A les entendre parler, M. le président, on pourrait presque croire que mon ministère s'adonne à une sorte de méchanceté gratuite à l'encontre de cette entreprise. Bien sûr, c'est totalement faux ! Au contraire, aujourd'hui le 7, cette compagnie qu'ils ont citée a émis un message à tous ces employés, la cession de ses trois thoniers sous pavillon mauricien. Voilà ! Alors, je vais expliquer pourquoi.

Mr Speaker, Sir, these comments regarding the allocation of yellowfin tuna to fishing operators do not concern the Fisheries Bill per se. I deem it appropriate, however, to take this opportunity to point out a few facts so as to eliminate any misconception on this matter.

En réponse au leader de l'opposition ainsi que l'honorable Uteem, l'honorable Bodha et l'honorable Dr. Boolell, je dois revenir sur la chronologie des évènements qui ont conduit mon ministère à allouer des quotas mensuels plutôt qu'annuels à cette entreprise classée sous surveillance. Je vais tirer toute cette histoire au clair, parce que gouverner c'est prévoir, gouverner c'est d'agir pour l'avenir.

Le point de départ se situe en août 2021. Mon ministère a été informé que le *holding* qui détient 90 % de l'entreprise française qui bénéficiait de la totalité des quotas avec trois senneurs sous pavillon mauricien était dans une situation inquiétante dû à un lourd endettement d'après une communication officielle sur son site web –

« Le plan de sauvegarde a été homologué par le tribunal de Marseille par un jugement du 11 août 2021. Le plan d'une durée maximum de quatre ans prévoit la cession progressive de tous les actifs de la compagnie française et l'attribution du produit de la vente aux créanciers. »

M. le président, il faut bien comprendre que le quota appartient à l'Etat mauricien et que si une entreprise est à vendre, elle ne peut pas être vendue avec les quotas qu'elle a reçus. En apprenant ces informations, mon ministère a décidé de placer l'entreprise française sous surveillance et donc, les quotas sont passés d'une base annuelle à une base mensuelle. C'est cela la bonne gouvernance, M. le président.

Mr Speaker, Sir, immediate action was taken to allocate license to new operators to avoid disruption in the tuna supply chains for our processing industries and in November 2021, letters of intent were issued to two local companies for 22 long liners.

M. le président, en octobre 2021, deux senneurs battants pavillon seychellois appartenant à l'entreprise française, ont été vendus et un senneur battant pavillon l'Union européenne était mis à vendre. Nos craintes concernant cette entreprise française sont confirmées bien en octobre 2021.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the uncertainty of supply from this company, my Ministry allowed other tuna fishery operators to enter the industry. The more so that one of the new operators has given the undertaking that it would guarantee supply to the local processing plants. A letter of intent was issued in April 2022 to a local company to operate one purse seiner and as a result, the long liners started operation in July 2022 and the purse seiner in October 2022 and we were able to fulfil the quota allocated by the IOTC.

M. le président, en décembre 2022, il a été porté à notre attention que la *holding* française avait vendu tous ses principaux actifs et qu'il ne restait plus que la société française de pêche sous surveillance. C'est la raison pour laquelle on a été proactif et qu'à partir de janvier 2023, les quotas de thon de toutes les entreprises, sans discrimination, ont été soumis à une licence mensuelle pour surveiller nos quotas, assurer la livraison des matières premières à nos usines de transformation et éviter que nos quotas de la CTOI diminuent en 2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, all operators were requested to ensure supply of raw materials to the local processing companies and will be subject to monitoring. Unfortunately, the French company persistently went against the Ministry's intent and failed to provide justifiable reasons for not supplying our local canneries during the month of January and February 2023. In March of this year, one of the local processing plants in which the company holds 50% of shares and which depends only on the supply of raw materials from this company to operate had to undergo a technical closure for the whole month of March due to lack of raw materials.

M. le président, en avril 2023, la *holding* française a officiellement mis en vente la société française opérant les trois senneurs battant pavillon mauricien. Mon ministère a été prévoyant et c'est ce qui confirme notre décision d'inviter de nouveaux entrants dans ce secteur pour parer à toute éventualité des conséquences d'une éventuelle fermeture de la compagnie.

M. le président, je précise aussi que notre système d’allocation de quota mensuel inclut une marge de manœuvre pour éviter toute rupture de quota et donc opération de ces senneurs. C’était important de souligner cet aspect parce que la presse a voulu faire croire à une rupture des opérations de l’entreprise à chaque renouvellement mensuel. Vu que les nouveaux entrants ont réalisé une performance qui a dépassé nos attentes, leurs quotas sont passés de quotas mensuels à des quotas annuels à partir du 31 juillet 2023, tandis que le quota de la compagnie française est resté un quota mensuel, surtout avec l’incertitude de l’avenir de cette entreprise qui était en vente, comme je viens d’annoncer avec ce message qu’on a reçu aujourd’hui. Voyez-vous qu’au final on s’est montré plus conciliant avec l’entreprise française malgré sa situation financière précaire ?

Mr Speaker, Sir, how could we allocate yearly quota to a company which has been put on sale? In fact, we should have stopped allocating quota there and then but this would have been a risk to fulfil our annual quota by the time we could establish new fishing vessels to start operation.

J’espère avoir répondu à l’accusation de l’opposition concernant une soit disant politique de deux poids, deux mesures. M. le président, l’honorable Uteem a mentionné que le quota de thon jaune alloué par la CTOI en 2019 était obtenu grâce à la compagnie française. Pour la petite histoire, l’entreprise française n’a pas respecté les termes de la lettre d’intention qu’elle avait reçue en 2012 pour opérer cinq senneurs à pavillon mauricien. Cette lettre d’intention leurs donnait une préférence et fermait *de facto* la porte à d’autres investisseurs.

Elle n’a finalement déployé qu’un navire en 2013, un deuxième en 2014, puis un troisième en 2019, ce qui a nettement impacté nos quotas alloués par la CTOI en 2019. En effet, ces quotas étaient basés sur la performance de 2018.

Alors, M. le président, comme l’honorable Uteem l’a souligné pendant son intervention, non, ce n’est pas grâce à cette compagnie, à cette entreprise française que nous avons obtenue des quotas. C’est à cause de leur mauvaise gestion que nous nous retrouvons avec des quotas 3 à 4 fois inférieurs à nos voisins des Seychelles et des Maldives. Nos quotas sont donc virtuellement passés de 25,000 à 10,490 tonnes de thon jaune, par manque de navires, M. le président !

Cependant, malgré tous les déboires financiers de sa holding, et des performances clairement en-dessous de nos attentes, nous avons toujours soutenu l’activité de cette entreprise française en lui accordant des quotas. Nous ne pouvons pas être tenus pour responsables de sa mise en vente.

M. le président, pour répondre au leader de l'opposition, qui a tendance à se faire beaucoup d'illusions sur le secteur de la pêche, il n'y a pas que 6 bateaux de pêche dans notre zone économique.

Non, encore une fois, c'est faux. Il y a 4 senneurs et 16 *long-liners*...

Mr X. L. Duval: *Pavion morisien !*

Mr Maudhoo: *Pavion morisien !* Le 16 *long-liners*, les 4 senneurs...

Mr Speaker: Order, Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Maudhoo: ...ce qui fait un total de 20 bateaux de pêche battant pavillon mauricien, et ce chiffre va encore augmenter dans les mois à venir après l'entrée en vigueur de cette législation.

Donc, encore une fois, l'opposition, la presse et les radios privées pourraient au moins se renseigner un peu avant de venir raconter de pareilles histoires. Ils sont complètement hors-sujet et ignorent tout de cette industrie, et je vais dire, c'est vraiment honteux.

M. le président, c'est également totalement faux de dire que nous ne pourrons pas atteindre nos objectifs de 10,400 tonnes de quotas pour cette année, comme l'ont mentionné le leader de l'opposition et l'honorable Bodha.

À ce jour, nous avons déjà épuisé 9,600 tonnes et il se peut même qu'on se retrouve avec un manque de quotas jusqu'à la fin de l'année pour l'ensemble des opérateurs qui pêchent sous pavillon mauricien. Ce qui prouve qu'encore une fois, l'opposition propage des faussetés au sujet de la performance de notre industrie. Comment peut-on arriver à de telles inepties au sein de l'opposition ?

On est en droit de se demander à quoi joue l'opposition. Le leader de l'opposition encore une fois, je préfère ne pas le dire, mais il doit avoir honte de dire tout cela dans cette auguste Assemblée.

M. le président, je pense que cette histoire a pris des proportions démesurées, tout simplement parce que l'opposition veut jouer la carte de la surenchère. Mais elle ne fait que mettre à nu sa profonde méconnaissance du secteur de la pêche.

La diversification des acteurs économiques est à la base de notre stratégie. Le leader de l'opposition doit être familier avec ce concept. Les risques encourus en cas de dépendance excessive sur un seul participant sont trop grands, aussi bien pour l'obtention de quotas, que pour l'approvisionnement de nos usines de transformations, et enfin en

termes de sécurité alimentaires. Nous ne faisons que protéger les intérêts de l'État en réallouant des quotas qui auraient été perdus autrement.

C'est également un signal fort pour les nouveaux entrants qui vont devoir s'aligner avec notre vision pour plus de transparence et de bonne gouvernance dans ce secteur.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Leader of the Opposition was himself Minister of Finance for so many years. He could then have done what he is blaming this Government for not doing today. But we all know he did nothing then, and he will never ever do anything except, as I used to say and I repeat it again, he will keep crowing at odd hours!

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Leader of the Opposition claimed that he had a good laugh when he read about the Vessel Monitoring System, known as VMS. But I must admit I had an even better laugh than him when I heard what he said. Let me put the records right. Since July 2023, the VMS located at the Albion Fisheries Research Centre is operating on a 24/7 basis.

In fact, we have increased the manpower at the VMS from two to ten officers and all the officers have been given the necessary training. We are not stopping there, Mr Speaker, Sir. Once the Fisheries Bill is promulgated, we will come up with the appropriate regulations under the Act to operationalise the provisions in the Bill.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the allegation made by hon. Uteem on the Spanish company practicing IUU fishing, hon. Uteem fails to mentioned that this was an allegation done by some NGO's and which the company, I understand, has refuted.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to point out that this Spanish company is a member of the European Union Countries, is Europe's Biggest Fishing and Processing Company, operating 17 Purse Seiners, out of which, 11 is registered under the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) and 6 under the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), the Inter American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), the Western & Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), and the Convention for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT), and owns 3 processing factories around the world with a fourth one in construction in Tanzania. Moreover, none of the 5 listed tuna commissions have ever triggered any vessels of this company in IUU Fishing.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is good to note, as I said, this Spanish company with one Purse Seiner has supplied 7,009 tonnes of tuna out of 8,524 tonnes of tuna caught to local canneries whereas and the French company has supplied only 5,876 tonnes out of 13,677 tonnes of tuna caught to local canneries and processing plants with 3 Purse Seiners.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since more than 10 years, this Spanish company has been one of the biggest suppliers of Princes Tuna Mauritius over an average of 20,000 tonnes of tuna per year which they have increased through a MOU to 35,000 tonnes of tuna annually since operation of their vessel in 2022, in Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a matter of pride to have the biggest European Tuna Company having registered 1 of its Purse Seiner Fishing Vessel under Mauritian Flag.

M. le président, avec cette nouvelle législation qui durci la loi contre la pêche illicite, non-déclarée et non règlementée, nous continuerions à surveiller les différents acteurs du secteur et nous prendrons les décisions qui s'imposent si besoin est, bien sûr.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I think the only “joke”, the hon. Leader of the Opposition said “the Bill is a joke,” that I am a “joke,” I think the only ‘joke’ here, and it is a sad one, is the way the Leader of the Opposition always leaves this Assembly after 30-45 minutes!

Never before, have previous Leaders of Opposition disrespected this constitutional post in such a shameful manner! Hon. Duval has turned it into a mockery of our temple of democracy. This is what is called “joke,” Mr Speaker, Sir!

His colleague, hon. Dr. Boolell, I think he was looking for me during the resumption of the debate, ‘Where is the Minister of Blue Economy?’ He was shouting. I was coming; I was on the way. But every time when the Leader of the Opposition is not here, his colleague who is always absent, hon. Mohamed, *comme dit l’adage, je cite ce fameux dicton –*

« Cessez de chercher la paille dans l’œil de son voisin quand vous avez une poutre dans le sien. »

I think hon. Dr. Boolell did a much better job as he stayed for the entire duration of Sittings when he was Leader of the Opposition.

The population knows exactly what is going on here! In due time, we will see their reaction, as rightly pointed out in the morning by my colleague here, to such a disrespectful behaviour towards the temple of democracy.

Let me talk a bit on the penalties, Mr Speaker, Sir. While the Leader of the Opposition finds the penalties to be excessive, I am happy that hon. Dr. Boolell has rightly understood the necessity of imposing high penalties as a strong deterrent to IUU fishing.

The monitoring, control and surveillance of our waters may be efficient, but without the appropriate sanctions, their effectiveness would be compromised. This Bill is

the opportunity to show the will of this Government to curb IUU fishing in our waters, and in so doing, ensure the sustainability of our fish stock.

The Leader of the Opposition also naively believed that our artisanal fishers are bank fishers and would be sanctioned by these heavy penalties. Let me reassure the House again that this will never be the case as we have provided for fixed penalties to deal with minor offences under the Act.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it does not do credit to the Leader of the Opposition to encourage our fishermen to believe that they have been kept on the backside of development. This is not true at all. My colleague hon. Huroyal has talked on several measures which this Government has introduced to support the artisanal fishers and we are not stopping here. Our objective is to empower our artisanal fishers to make them become more professional. We do not want them to stagnate in a precarious situation but rather to become entrepreneurs and contribute to the national economy. Members on the other side of the House have repeatedly mentioned that the fishers have not been consulted. I would like to point out here that I have personally met the Fisher Association on several times to listen to them.

In fact, consultation, Mr Speaker, Sir, with fishers are currently being done on *Ad hoc* basis but after the enactment of the Fisheries Bill, there will be a legal framework in place to formalise this consultation process on a permanent basis through the Consultative Committee.

M. le président, pour ce qui est de la concertation avec les pêcheurs, je souhaite à l'honorable David de devenir ministre un jour, ministre de l'Economie bleue, bien sûr mais pas tout de suite bien sûre ; car il devra encore patienter des longues années en vue de nombreuses défaites qui l'attendent en chemin. Alors il aura ainsi l'expérience de la gestion d'un ministère; il comprendra que les remontées et les feedbacks au cours de nombreuses interactions avec les parties prenantes constituent une consultation en soi.

M. le président, l'honorable David a fait mention de l'appel d'offres lancé par mon ministère pour l'achat des équipements qui permettront aux pêcheurs d'être en contact avec les autorités portuaires ou les garde-côtes. Il a dit on a fait des bidons etc., je précise que ces équipements existent bel et bien et qu'ils sont des appareils satellitaires. J'espère que l'honorable David comprendra qu'on ne peut pas encourager les pêcheurs à aller au-delà de cinq milles nautiques sans leur fournir des équipements de communication adéquate pour leur sécurité mais je profiterai pour demander à l'honorable David et à tous les membres de l'opposition, quand vous étiez au pouvoir qu'est-ce que vous avez fait au juste ? Est-ce que vous avez déjà pensé à accorder 1,300 cartes de pêcheurs ?

Mr Hurreeram: *Lamok!*

Mr Maudhoo: Non, ça c'est nous. Est-ce que vous avez déjà donné des contributions financières pour l'acquisition des casiers, hameçons ou autres ?

Mr Hurreeram: *Lamok!*

Mr Maudhoo: Non, c'est encore nous. Est-ce que vous avez déjà pensé à augmenter le *Bad Weather Allowance* comme nous avons fait ?

An hon. Member: *Enkor!*

Mr Maudhoo: Vous avec vos cinq roupies, sept roupies, deux roupies, encore décidément, c'est toujours nous. Est-ce que vous avez mis en place un plan de retraite volontaire pour les pêcheurs ?

Mr Hurreeram: *Lamok!*

Mr Maudhoo: Évidemment non, c'est toujours ce gouvernement qui l'a fait. Est-ce que vous avez déjà introduit un *scheme* que la Banque de Développement de radier les dettes pour les pêcheurs et les pêcheurs décédés ?

Plus de 40 millions, M. le président, bien sûr que c'est nous encore. Est-ce que vous avez déjà pensé à augmenter tous les prestations pour les pêcheurs sous le Fishermen Welfare Fund et augmenter le *stipend* pour les 300 étudiants, les boursiers pour les enfants de pêcheurs de Maurice et Rodrigues qui ont obtenu une bourse ? Encore et encore c'est ce gouvernement la, M. le président !

Et là, le dernier qu'on a fait, est-ce que vous avez déjà pensé à offrir un compte bancaire à chaque boursier – *zenfan pêcheur* pour inculquer la culture d'épargne ? Encore une fois nulle autre que ce gouvernement. Alors encore, est-ce que vous avez déjà augmenté la Canot Scheme ? *Sa si nou mem !*

Hon. Members: *Lamok!*

Mr Maudhoo: Et *last but not least*, *Mr Speaker, Sir*, pour nos braves femmes pêcheurs, une allocation de R 30,000 pendant trois mois est offerte poste maternité. *Sa si nu mem !* Mr Speaker, Sir, all these measures have been introduced precisely in response to the demands which have been made during meetings with artisanal fishers of the representatives. En fin de compte, M. le président, tous ces honorables membres de l'opposition qui prétendent tenir à cœur les intérêts des pêcheurs n'ont jamais fait grand-chose pour cette communauté mais ne vous en faites pas, nos pêcheurs ne sont pas dupes et voient clair dans votre petit jeu malin. Ce ne sont pas ces quelques oiseaux de malheur qui vont stopper ce gouvernement en si bon chemin, M. le président.

I have no doubts, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the majority of our fishermen community is aware that this government has their best interest at heart and they will not let themselves be misled by persons with ill intentions. We should not use the Fisheries Bill today to make cheap politics over the head of vulnerable group, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have also taken good note of what my colleagues from Rodrigues, hon. Léopold and hon. Francisco François have said about the expectations of the fisher community in Rodrigues. We will no doubt have the opportunity to discuss all these matters. However, I thank hon. François for having raised the issue during his intervention with regard to the issue clause 34 and I will propose to amend same in sub clause (3) (b) to reduce the number of nets from 8 to 5 for fishing in lagoon of the island of Rodrigues.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the empowerment of the artisanal fishers is high on the agenda of this Government. Hon. Navarre-Marie mentioned that fishers should be empowered to fish outside the lagoons. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is precisely the objective of my Ministry. This Bill is making provision to allow net fishers to fish off-lagoon with larger nets. In the same vein, fishing cooperative who wish to avail of the grant of Rs6 million to acquire a semi-industrial fishing vessel, shall have at least three registered fishers as members to be eligible for the grant.

I should also point out, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this Government has a vision for transforming the fisheries sector into a major economic pillar and our fishers will be an integral part of that transformation. The Trou Fanfaron Fishing Port is excessively congested and is today hampering the whole process. As a forward-looking Government, provision has been made in the centrally-managed budget, for the construction of a new state of the art fishing port that would propel Mauritius as a fishing nation with a vision to curtail our dependence on importation of seafood.

Moreover, with the assistance of the United Nation Development Programme, Ice Making Machines are being provided at four Fisheries posts in Mauritius, namely in Trou aux Biches, Trou d'Eau Douce, Mahebourg and Case Noyale as well as one in Rodrigues. These machines will allow fishers to obtain ice flakes free of charge for the preservation of their catch in hygienic conditions until the catch is landed and put for sale.

Mr Speaker, Sir, some Members on the other side of the House have talked about the importance of introducing a Fishing Authority. I think hon. Lobine has mentioned a Fisheries Court also.

I wish to highlight that this Bill is not an end in itself. It is the pathway that was required to allow my Ministry to implement the vision of this Government. We have already embarked on this interesting and promising journey and we are not stopping here.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, the Members on the other side of the House are not consistent. The Leader of the Opposition has talked of a very technical piece of legislation which, according to him, should have been brought piecemeal because, no doubt, he is having difficulty in assimilating this Bill.

On the other hand, hon. Lobine said that the Bill is not complete and should have also introduced provisions for the setting up of a Fisheries Authority and a Fisheries Court.

M. le président, les honorables membres de l'opposition doivent avant tout savoir qu'est-ce qu'ils veulent au juste et accorder leurs violons bien sûr.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will repeat it again and again; this Fisheries Bill will go a long way towards transforming the Fisheries Sector into a modern and dynamic pillar of the economy. As hon. Doolub said, what better sign from Mother Nature than to witness a very rare coral bloom in several regions including Mahebourg lagoon right now, when we are discussing this Fisheries Bill. We could not have wished for a better signal to show us the right path.

This coral bloom, Mr Speaker, Sir, is a clear indication of the healthy ecosystem of our pristine lagoons which even the regretful Wakashio event could not spoil for long. The resilience of our marine environment has been built over time. Thanks to the several measures which are being implemented.

This Bill is making provision for even more control measures, but, of course, again, the Leader of the Opposition would not understand this as he only sees prohibitions in the Bill, instead of the control mechanism that is being put in place to preserve our marine ecosystem.

Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Lobine has referred to the power being given to the Supervising Officer with respect to the removal of wreck, as opposed to the power conferred upon the Registrar of Ships under the Merchant Shipping Act.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to point out that there is no ambiguity and no amendment is required to the Fisheries Bill, simply because the provision of the Merchant Shipping Act concerns only vessels that are registered by the Registrar of Ships.

All fishing vessels, irrespective of size and hull material, will be registered by my Ministry, and as such, the power for wreck removal in respect of fishing vessels is being conferred upon the Supervising Officer.

I understand that the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, had difficulty in assimilating the Bill as a whole because of its technical nature. Or is it because the Leader of the Opposition is too busy playing politics every time and could not spare some of his precious time to understanding the essence of this Bill. *Mais, M. le président, moi, j'ai la satisfaction du devoir accompli.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, we really want the Blue Economy to take off and become the main pillar, as I said, of the economy. We are embarked on a transformative journey, poised to revolutionise the very bedrock of our economic landscape – the Blue Economy.

In shaping the future, Mr Speaker, Sir, we chart a course where our maritime resources are harnessed with wisdom and care, fostering sustainable growth that resonates across our nation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our commitment is unwavering. We are entering in an era where innovation and sustainability converge, where the rhythm of the waves harmonises with the pulse of our economy. Through a strategic initiative, forward thinking policies and absolute dedication, we are sculpting an industry that will stand as a formidable pillar for our country. We are sculpting a Blue Economy that, not only sustains us today, but lays the foundation for generations to come.

M. le président, avant de conclure, je tiens à rassurer la population que les bateaux de pêche industrielle sous pavillon mauricien ont un rôle fondamental à jouer pour l'avenir de notre industrie du thon et pour la sécurité alimentaire du pays.

C'est dans cette optique que mon ministère a introduit en 2022 le "*Right of First Refusal*," obligeant les bateaux de pêche industrielle mauriciens à proposer leurs captures, en premier lieu, aux usines mauriciennes avant de pouvoir vendre leurs poissons à d'autres pays.

Dans l'océan Indien, cela fait maintenant 4 ans que Maurice a, tout comme les autres États membres de la Commission des thons de l'océan Indien, est assujetti à un quota pour le *yellowfin*. Ce quota appartient, comme je l'ai dit, à la République de Maurice, et il est du devoir de mon ministère de s'assurer qu'il est bien utilisé et au maximum de sa capacité tout en respectant la durabilité.

M. le président, dans cette optique, les bateaux mauriciens ont comme consigne d'utiliser le quota, afin de ramener le plus possible de *skipjack*, espèce associée au

yellowfin et qui est le principal poisson transformé par notre industrie. Les stocks de *skipjack* sont au vert et ne présentent donc aucun problème de durabilité.

Au cours de ses cinquante années d'existence, notre industrie de transformation du thon a fait un beau parcours, hissant Maurice au premier rang de cette industrie en Afrique et en faisant partie du *Top 10* des exportateurs mondiaux de thon.

Notre industrie du thon et sa chaîne de valeur associée est exemplaire, M. le président. Elle emploie non seulement directement plus de 6,000 personnes, dont une majorité de Mauriciens, mais elle a aussi anticipé les défis que pose le réchauffement climatique, en investissant dans une usine qui, en recyclant les eaux usées de cuisson, de la conserverie et de l'usine de farine de poisson, produit de l'énergie *green*, et avec les parties solides récupérées, un bio fertilisant.

Cette énergie ainsi produite, M. le président, est utilisée par ces mêmes usines afin de réduire leur consommation d'énergie fossile, allégeant ainsi nos importations de fuel. Ce modèle d'économie circulaire est unique en son genre et n'a pas été recensé ailleurs jusqu'à maintenant.

M. le président, il est donc, comme je le disais plus tôt, le devoir de mon ministère, de notre gouvernement, d'apporter tout le soutien possible à cette industrie de transformation qui est le fleuron de notre économie bleue, en choisissant des armateurs qui auront à cœur d'optimiser, de façon durable, le quota mauricien, en assurant l'approvisionnement de nos usines en priorité.

M. le président, notre filière de la pêche entre dans une nouvelle ère aujourd'hui et les générations futures nous remercieront d'avoir continué à apporter des réponses concrètes à des problèmes concrets.

Mr Speaker, Sir, together, we are building a legacy of prosperity where the riches of the sea become the source of enduring strength for all Mauritians.

On a concluding note, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank all the Members of the House for their intervention on this Bill, the Office of the Attorney General, the officers of my Ministry and the European Union for their assistance in the drafting of the Fisheries Bill.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

THE FISHERIES BILL

(No. XIII of 2023)

Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2 (Interpretation)

Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stand part of the Bill.”

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Chairperson, I move for the following amendment in clause 2 – “in clause 2, by inserting, in the appropriate alphabetical order, the following new definition –

“fishmonger” means a person who purchases fish for the purpose of resale from a registered fisher or from an applicant fisher at a fish landing station or at an approved cold room;”

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 2, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 3 to 8 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 9 (Consultative Committee)

Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stand part of the Bill.”

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Chairperson, I move for the following amendment to clause 9 – “in clause 9, in subclause (2) –

(i) by inserting, after paragraph (j), the following new item, the existing paragraphs (k) and (l) being reletterred as paragraphs (l) and (m);

(k) a veterinary officer of the Ministry responsible for the subject of agro-industry, to be designated by its supervising officer;

(ii) by inserting, after the newly reletterred paragraph (m), the following new paragraph, the existing paragraphs (m), (n) and (o) being reletterred as paragraphs (o), (p) and (q) –

(n) a representative of the University of Mauritius;”

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 9, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 10 (Meetings of Consultative Committee)

Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stand part of the Bill.”

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Chairperson, I move for the following amendment to clause 10

—
“in clause 10, in subclause (2), by deleting the words “8 members” and replacing them by the words “9 members”;

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 10, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 11 to 33 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 34 (Prohibition to use, possess, manufacture, import, purchase or sell prohibited gear).

Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stand part of the Bill.”

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Chairperson, I move for the following amendment in clause 34 –

“in clause 34, in subclause (3)(b), by deleting the words “8 large nets, 8 pocket nets, 8 canard nets” and replacing them by the words “5 large nets, 5 pocket nets, 5 canard nets””

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 34, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 35 to 119 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 120 (Registration of artisanal fisher, bank fisher and trainee fisher).

Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stand part of the Bill.”

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Chairperson, I move for the following amendment in clause 120

—
“in clause 120, by deleting subclause (2) and replacing it by the following subclause –

(2) Subsection (1) shall not apply to a person who –

(a) is employed as a bank fisher on a registered semi-industrial fishing vessel;

- (b) engages in fishing for sports or recreational purposes; or
- (c) accompanies a registered fisher on a fishing trip in a registered fishing vessel.”.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 120, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 121 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 122 (Deregistration of registered fishers).

Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stand part of the Bill.”

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Chairperson, I move for the following amendment in clause 122 –

“in clause 122, in subclause (1), by inserting, after paragraph (d), the following new paragraphs, the existing paragraphs (e) and (f) being relettered as paragraphs (g) and (h) –

- (e) is engaged in any gainful employment;
- (f) is convicted for a drug dealing offence under the Dangerous Drugs Act;”

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 122, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 123 (Obligations of registered fishers).

Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stand part of the Bill.”

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Chairperson, I move for the following amendments in clause 123 –

“in clause 123, in subclause (7), by deleting the words “, (5)”;

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 123, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 124 to 128 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 129 (Licence required for underwater fishing)

Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stand part of the Bill.”

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Chairperson, I move for the following amendment in clause 129

—
“in clause 129 –

- (i) in subclause (4), by deleting the words “or (2)” and replacing them by the words “, (2) or (3)”;
- (ii) by adding the following new subsection –
 - (5) Any person who is found to be in possession of fish, together with a diving cylinder, shall be deemed to have been engaged in underwater fishing.”

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 129, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 130 to 132 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 133 (Registers)

Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stand part of the Bill.”

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Chairperson, I move for the following amendment in clause 133

—
“in clause 133, in subclause (1), by deleting paragraph (b), paragraphs (c) to (f) being reletterred as paragraphs (b) to (e);”

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 133, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 134 to 139 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 140 (Powers of seizure)

Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stand part of the Bill.”

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Chairperson, I move for the following amendment in clause 140

—
“in clause 140, by deleting the words “fisheries control officer” wherever they appear and replacing them by the words “fisheries enforcement officer”;

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 140, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 141 (Removal of parts from seized fishing vessels)

Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stand part of the Bill.”

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Chairperson, I move for the following amendment in clause 141

—
“in clause 141, in subclause (1), by deleting the words “fisheries control officer” and replacing them by the words “fisheries enforcement officer”;

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 141, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 142 (Pursuit beyond the maritime zones of Mauritius)

Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stand part of the Bill.”

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Chairperson, I move for the following amendment in clause 142

—
“in clause 142, by deleting the words “fisheries control officer” wherever they appear and replacing them by the words “fisheries enforcement officer”;

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 142, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 143 to 207 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 208 (Consequential amendments)

Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stand part of the Bill.”

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Chairperson, I move for the following amendment in clause 208

—
“in clause 208, by deleting subclause (6);”

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 208, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 209 and 210 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedule

The First to Fourth Schedules ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Fifth Schedule

Motion made and question proposed: “that the Schedule stand part of the Bill.”

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Chairperson, I move for the following amendment in the Fifth Schedule –

“in the Fifth Schedule –

- (i) in item 3, by deleting the words “or a bank fisher”;
- (ii) by deleting item 8 and its corresponding entry, items 9 to 16 being renumbered as items 8 to 15.”

Amendment agreed to.

The Fifth Schedule, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

The Sixth Schedule ordered to stand part of the Bill.

The title and the enacting clause were agreed to.

The Bill, as amended, was agreed to.

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

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Fisheries Bill (No. XIII of 2023) was read a third time and passed.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister!

Second Reading

THE MAURITIUS AGRICULTURAL MARKETING (AMENDMENT) BILL

(NO. XVI OF 2023)

Order for Second Reading read.

(7.12 p.m.)

The Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security (Mr T. Hurdoyal): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I move that the Mauritius Agricultural Marketing (Amendment) Bill (No. XVI of 2023) be read a second time.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I stand before you today, deeply honoured, and conscious of the immense responsibility bestowed upon me, to bring to the National Assembly, the Mauritius Agricultural Marketing (Amendment) Bill. This is not merely a Bill, but a transformative piece of legislation that is set to modernise the current system of trade for

fresh locally produced fruits, vegetables and flowers and address the issues related to parallel auctions, hygiene, food safety transparency, and accountability.

The intent of this Bill is not just to create a law but to create a framework that nurtures and supports the backbone of our economy - our diligent planters, while safeguarding the interests of our consumers. This Bill is a reflection of our commitment to them and our dedication to enhancing the agricultural landscape of Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Bill is a critical step towards systematically addressing the challenges faced by our planters and consumers alike, and to provide a robust, transparent, and efficient system that caters to their needs. It is an embodiment of our relentless pursuit of improving the quality of life of our citizens and creating a sustainable and prosperous future for our nation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, four years ago, on this very day, our esteemed Prime Minister was entrusted with the task of steering our nation towards a promising future. Under his visionary leadership, our Government has consistently demonstrated commitment, resilience and unwavering dedication to the welfare of our citizens. It's an honour to acknowledge these remarkable efforts that have had a significant impact on our nation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I stand today in this august Assembly not only as the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security, but, as the son of a planter, as a farmer who has cultivated land and finally, as a former Chairperson of the Flacq District Council. These have given me enough experience and knowledge to understand the hardship our farmers face on a daily basis. Likewise, as the former Chairperson of Flacq District Council, I was responsible for overseeing the operations of 2 Major Markets and the Flacq Auction site as well. Despite the fact that conditions were not ideal for auctions at that time, we had to ensure the smooth operation so as not to disrupt the sale and distribution process of fruits and vegetables.

M. le président, la production de fruits et légumes pour l'année 2022 s'élevait à 121,953 tonnes. Pour cette année, une production de 125,000 tonnes est prévue. Une telle quantité de produits est essentielle pour notre économie, car l'agriculture joue un rôle crucial dans notre secteur économique, fournissant des emplois et soutenant nos communautés locales. De plus, ces produits sont une source importante d'alimentation pour la population locale, contribuant ainsi à notre sécurité alimentaire.

Mr Speaker, Sir, auction of vegetables has been a long-standing tradition in Mauritius, deeply ingrained in the country's agricultural practices. For four generations,

auctions have served as the primary means for planters to sell their produce, providing a platform for trade and economic activity.

However, in recent years, this system has experienced increasing dysfunction. The problems are multifaceted, but one significant issue is the emergence of parallel and unauthorised auctions which are conducted outside the regulated marketplaces, often in private locations that are not overseen or regulated by any official body.

These unauthorised activities undermine the traditional auction system, skewing market dynamics and making it difficult for official auctions to function efficiently. This situation has led to a lack of fairness and transparency, which ultimately harms both the sellers and buyers in the market.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the history of vegetable auctions in Mauritius can be traced back to the early years of the 1900s. Starting in the streets of Port Louis and gradually shifting to the Port Louis Central Market, the auction markets grew popular amongst the growers and traders over time. The growth of the sector led to an increase in the demand for auction services, cementing their role in the Mauritian economy. Thus, historically, the auctions were carried out by auctioneers shouting out prices in “*piastre*”. One *piastre* was valued at Rs2.00 and the conversion into rupee was made at the time of payment. In 2015, this practice was abolished at the Vacoas Auction and recently stopped in Port Louis as well.

Today, fruit and vegetable auctions are an integral part of the Mauritian economy, providing a platform for farmers to sell their produce and for consumers to have access to a wide variety of fresh, high-quality produce.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the planters community is the backbone of the Mauritian economy. Today, our country has a total of 10,249 registered planters serving our population. They work tirelessly to produce the food that we eat. They deserve our respect and admiration.

Our hardworking farmers in Mauritius face many challenges every day. They wake up early in the morning, even before the sun is up. They work in the fields all day, sometimes in very harsh conditions, very hot or rainy weather. It’s hard physical work that can be tiring and tough on the body. For our planters, every day is a working day. Whether it is a public holiday or weekend, they are always active in their plantations. Without their continuous efforts, our population would not have on their table fresh fruits and vegetables that we consume every day. They also face uncertainty. They never know if the weather

will be good for their crops. Too much rain can wash away their hard work. Not enough rain and their crops might not grow well.

Mr Speaker, Sir, they also have to fight off pests and diseases that can damage their crops. Sometimes, even after all their hard work, they may not have a good harvest. Despite investing heavily in production of crops, our planters may not break even. Yet, despite these challenges, they keep going. They keep working hard because they care about their work, and they know how important it is for all of us. Their strength, dedication and perseverance are truly inspiring.

M. le président, je vais ici citer Jean-Jacques Rousseau qui illustre parfaitement l'importance de nos planteurs, je cite –

« L'agriculture est le premier métier de l'homme: c'est le plus honnête, le plus utile, et par conséquent le plus noble qu'il puisse exercer. »

Mr Speaker, Sir, before the National Wholesale Market was established, the hardworking planters of Mauritius had to grapple with a multitude of obstacles. These obstacles made it difficult for them to earn a decent living from their labour-intensive work. One major problem was the painfully low prices their fruits and vegetables brought in. There have been claims that fresh produce were being undervalued quality wise, causing planters to receive less money than they should have. This was a harsh reality faced by many planters.

For many years, the method of auctioning vegetables was far from ideal. Vegetables were simply left lying on the ground, exposed to various elements. This was unhygienic and it also meant that the vegetables were prone to damage, reducing their value.

Additionally, the auctioneers had to work in challenging conditions. They were often working in precarious situations, especially during rainy seasons, which made the process difficult and messy. This also potentially contaminated the vegetables, making them less appealing to buyers and unsafe for consumption.

Furthermore, there were claims that stray dogs and rodents were often present at these auction sites. The sellers, buyers, and consumers alike were all negatively affected by such conditions. The buyers had to deal with lower quality goods, and the consumers were left with products that were potentially unsafe. Imagine harvesting your produce with care, only to see it damaged due to inadequate logistics or lost due to lack of organisation. These issues resulted in even lesser earnings for the planters.

Mr Speaker, Sir, another obstacle was the poor infrastructure at many auction sites. These sites were not designed to accommodate fruit and vegetable auctions. Planters and

consumers visiting these sites were left with inadequate amenities including washrooms, parking areas and loading bays.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No conversation!

Mr Hurdoyal: Mr Speaker, Sir, there was no monitoring of the products being brought and sold. In fact, there was no traceability on the origin of the products being traded, whether they were locally produced or imported. Absence of a registration mechanism and traceability system had left the door open for potential sale of stolen fruits and vegetables amongst others. Such a situation necessitated a reform.

The auction system also lacked transparency. This meant that planters were often left in the dark about how their produce was being graded or priced. This made it incredibly hard for planters to plan their production. Furthermore, authorities were unable to gather appropriate information with regards to the volume and types of vegetables and fruits being traded.

While operating at extremely odd hours, some even starting around one in the morning, visitors of the then auctions would recall the high insecurity they faced. Loading and unloading of produce was being carried out in the dark and insufficient lighting, making them prone to thefts and attacks.

These numerous challenges, Mr Speaker, Sir, discouraged many planters, causing them to give up and leave the sector. Likewise, our younger generations are not motivated to join the sector. These experiences highlight the urgent need for a solution like the National Wholesale Market, which aims to create a fairer, more transparent, and more efficient system for the hardworking planters of Mauritius and our future generations.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the National Wholesale Market has been designed to provide a modern, safe, hygienic and clean auction system to the population. It provides all necessary facilities, ensuring the process is smooth and efficient. This benefits the sellers who would likely receive a fair price for their goods. The auctioneers benefit from dealing in a suitable and healthy working environment. The consumers benefit from knowing the products and they are of good quality standard.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the idea to set up a National Wholesale Market emanated from none other than our Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, in the year 2000s when he was then the Minister of Agriculture. Later, in 2012, the then government thought it to be important to include the National Wholesale Market into its Government Programme

2012-2015, acknowledging the vital role of agriculture and the need for a fair, transparent, and efficient system for the sale of local produce.

In 2014, they went on to carry out a feasibility study by Cabinet Gressard Consultants. The study evaluated the potential benefits, operational challenges and financial implications of setting up a National Wholesale Market.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in January 2019, under the leadership of hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, the foundation stone ceremony took place. It was a significant event that symbolised the Government's strong commitment to the project.

To gain insights into best practices, a team was sent on a study tour to the Lyon Corbas Wholesale Market in France in August 2019. This visit allowed the team to understand the infrastructure, operations, management and logistics of an established and successful wholesale market so as to apply these learnings to the Mauritian context.

Between 2020 till date, the Government has held more than 20 consultative meetings with various stakeholders, including farmers, buyers, and representatives from the agricultural sector. These meetings were crucial in ensuring a two-way dialogue, understanding the needs and concerns of stakeholders and incorporating their feedback into the project.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Agricultural Marketing Board (AMB) was established in Mauritius in 1964 under the Mauritius Agricultural Marketing Act 1963, with a primary objective to implement food security strategies. It was also tasked with boosting the local production of strategic crops such as onions, potatoes, and garlic. The AMB is endowed with extensive powers in areas concerning the production, storage, import, export and sale of numerous commodities which are declared as "Controlled Products" by law.

Given that the Agricultural Marketing Board was already dealing with the import and distribution of agricultural products, it was the most appropriate institution to operate and manage the National Wholesale Market. In fact, this was one of the recommendations of the consultancy report prepared by Cabinet Gressard Consultants in 2014.

In line with the vision of a more regulated and efficient agricultural sector, the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2020 was enacted in August 2020. This provided the legal basis for the Agricultural Marketing Board (AMB) to operate the National Wholesale Market, marking another crucial step towards the realisation of the project.

In May 2021, a comprehensive business plan for operating the National Wholesale Market for fruits, vegetables and flowers was released by BDO & Co, a global network of

public consulting and business advisory firm. This business plan provided a roadmap for the successful operation of the market.

Mr Speaker, Sir, finally, thanks to commitment and dedication of this Government, in July 2023, the Mauritius Agricultural Marketing (National Wholesale Market) Regulations 2023 were enacted and the Standard Operations Procedures were approved. The regulations aim to govern the operation of the market ensuring that it serves the interests of both the farmers and the consumers. This marked the official launch of the National Wholesale Market, situated at Five Ways, Belle Rive and was inaugurated on 27 July 2023 by the hon. Prime Minister. I would like to pay tribute to my two colleagues hon. Mahen Seeruttun and hon. Maneesh Gobin, who have played pivotal roles in the successful implementation of the National Wholesale Market.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the project aims at providing adequate wholesale and auction facilities for agricultural produce for the whole of Mauritius. It has four main objectives –

- the creation of a modern marketing infrastructure for the handling of fruits and vegetables which would be compliant with relevant legislations, agricultural and food norms and standards;
- to improve the financial livelihood of the planters;
- to provide quality produce at an affordable price to the consumers, and
- to ensure more transparency and traceability of agricultural produce traded at the National Wholesale Market.

Mr Speaker, Sir, soon after I was given the ministerial responsibility of the Ministry of Agro Industry and Food Security, it was my highest priority to visit the National Wholesale Market. In fact, this was the first site I visited after my appointment, following which, I am pleased to inform the House that measures are already being taken to cater for the sale of locally produced fruits and vegetables brought to the National Wholesale Market by MauriGAP Certified growers. I would go further to say that in the future, even our auctioneers will be able to certify themselves that will bring them to internationally recognised norms and standards.

Moreover, it is envisaged that a special desk be set up at the National Wholesale Market to provide information and support to our planters. Secondly, the special desk will act as a facilitator in collecting vital information to help the authorities in supporting our planters. Actions have also been initiated to provide for labelling and signs to display the details of auctioneers at their respective stalls.

In view of helping the agricultural sector in Rodrigues, provision is being made to allocate a specific stall to auctioneers selling fruits, vegetables and other products from Rodrigues.

In the long run, recommendations have been made to equip the National Wholesale Market with a public announcement system to facilitate communications.

To promote transparency, the Agricultural Marketing Board is exploring the possibility of electronically displaying the daily trading prices for fruits and vegetables auctioned at the National Wholesale Market.

All green waste generated at the National Wholesale Market will be recycled through composting and this will be used in agricultural production.

As at date, 43 Auctioneers are registered with the Agricultural Marketing Board and are operating at the National Wholesale Market. Likewise, some 200 to 250 planters and 400 to 500 traders are known to be visiting the National Wholesale Market on a regular basis. The volume of produce in terms of locally produced vegetables, fruits and flowers traded thereat, varies from 75 tonnes to 100 tonnes daily.

All stakeholders visiting the National Wholesale Market are provided with numerous facilities, such as a loading and unloading bay and palettes. Health and Safety measures such as safety signs, floor markings and fire hoses have also been put in place. Moreover, the building will soon be equipped with CCTV Cameras to ensure the safety for all visitors.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since the operation of the National Wholesale Market, my Ministry has received several representations in respect of unregulated and parallel markets of locally produced vegetables, fruits and flowers at Port Louis, Flacq and Rose Belle, amongst others. The auctioneers who are registered with the Agricultural Marketing Board and operating at the new National Wholesale Market have informed that their volume of business has decreased due to these unregulated and parallel markets.

It is to be noted that during consultative meetings prior to the coming into operation of the National Wholesale Market, the auctioneers and planters proposed to strengthen the legal framework to combat unregulated wholesale of locally produced vegetables, fruits and flowers.

Such a proposal had also been reiterated by the representatives of auctioneers in the Operations Committee of the National Wholesale Market, set up under the Mauritius Agricultural Marketing (National Wholesale Market) Regulations 2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it was therefore agreed that my Ministry would initiate appropriate action in consultation with the Attorney General's Office to bring the necessary amendments to the Agricultural Marketing Board Act. This will require consequential amendments to the relevant pieces of legislation in order to make the National Wholesale Market the sole place where auction activities for locally produced vegetables, fruits and flowers could be carried out in Mauritius. Subsequently, the draft Mauritius Agricultural Marketing (Amendment) Bill has been prepared and duly vetted by Attorney General's Office.

The object of the Bill is to amend the Mauritius Agricultural Marketing Act to provide for the wholesale by auction of locally produced vegetables, fruits, and flowers to be conducted at no place other than a National Wholesale Market. Consequential amendments are also to be made to the Local Government Act.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Mauritius Agricultural Marketing (Amendment) Bill is a proposed piece of legislation that will help to reform the auction system in Mauritius. The draft Bill contains the following –

- (i) Definition of “Auctioneer”, “Locally Produced Product”, “National Wholesale Market” and “Wholesale by Auction”.
- (ii) Inclusion of a new function of the Agricultural Marketing Board to provide for the latter to regulate the wholesale by auction of locally produced products in a National Wholesale Market.
- (iii) Provisions for record keeping of transactions, operations and payments and same are available for inspection as and when required.
- (iv) Provision that no person shall conduct the wholesale by auction of any locally produced product at any place other than a national wholesale market and any person who contravenes same, shall commit an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding Rs100,000 and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year.
- (v) Provision of a section for licensing of auctioneers and the licence, valid for a period of twelve months and renewable for a further of twelve months under payment of such fee as the Board may approve. A licence may with the approval of the Board be transferrable to heirs of the auctioneers.
- (vi) Provision for any person who is conducting the wholesale by auction of locally produced products in a national wholesale market shall, not later

than 60 days after commencement of the above section, make an application to and obtain a licence from the Board; and

- (vii) Provision for entry and search by an officer of the Board in the presence of a police officer on grounds of suspicion that the Mauritius Agricultural Marketing Act is being contravened.

Furthermore, the Bill provides for consequential amendment to the Local Government Act in the Twelfth Schedule so that auctioneers under the Mauritius Agricultural Marketing Act are not subject to the provisions of the Local Government Act.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill caters for the wholesale by auction of locally produced fruits, vegetables and flowers at ‘a’ National Wholesale Market instead of ‘the’ National Wholesale Market. This crucial flexibility ensures that should the need arise, other locations can be swiftly designated to operate as national wholesale markets. This adaptive approach is a testament to our commitment to support the agricultural sector under all circumstances, demonstrating both foresight and adaptability.

Mr Speaker, Sir, promptly after the Bill was proposed, I could read a couple of press articles reporting a sentiment of fear and reticence in the planters community. I hope those listening to us at home understand that it is not the objective of this Government nor this Bill to collect information for tax purposes or to apply any fiscal burden on the planters community.

In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Government is working relentlessly on different measures and schemes to support the farmers’ community at every stage. In reality, the information that the AMB is collecting from the National Wholesale Market through the “Goods Received Note” is as follows –

Mr X. L. Duval: For the moment!

Mr Hurdoyal: This is a copy.

- Supplier Name and Registration Number;
- Transporter Name and Registration Number;
- Product Name;
- Grade – to determine quality in the future;
- Labelling – to determine product origin of product in the future;
- Quantity – in terms of Bags or Crates, and
- Weight of Product or No. of Units.

These are what the GRN is taking. These are the only information that is gathered and it will be used to develop additional measures to support this sector. This information will enable the transformation of the Mauritian Agri-Food System and enable traceability measures which will support the Farm to Fork Concept.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the National Wholesale Market is not just a trading hub, but a key facility for overseeing safety and quality measures like pesticide monitoring, sampling, testing, and control. By centralising the trade of locally produced vegetables, fruits, and flowers, the market allows for a more efficient and systematic approach to pesticide management. Comprehensive information gathered from the market can inform the development and implementation of robust pesticide control measures. Regular monitoring and testing can then be conducted to ensure these measures are being followed, and that the produce sold in the market adheres to safety standards.

The advent of the new National Wholesale Market at Wooton, which is ideally situated at the centre of the island with good road accessibility, has brought about a modern trading environment with numerous benefits to planters and the citizens.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to re iterate that we on this side of House have at heart the welfare of the nation. In addition to ensuring better transparency and traceability in fruits and vegetables trade, the National Wholesale Market will also ensure food safety and minimise food waste and losses which are major concerns globally. Let me remind the House that food waste globally accounts for 30% of total food production. It is therefore imperative that this Government acts proactively in reducing our local food waste.

Moreover, the weighing equipment readily available at the National Wholesale Market is regularly calibrated, ensuring that the weight of the produce being traded is accurately recorded.

This precise data collection is invaluable for both the planters and buyers. For the planters, this accuracy means that they are assured of a fair and transparent process where their produce is correctly weighed, ensuring they receive the appropriate revenue for their hard work.

Mr Speaker, Sir, change is a process that has always caused reluctance. We are aware...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No conversation there!

Mr Hurdoyal: We are aware that there have been a few proposals and grievances from different stakeholders operating at the National Wholesale Market. Whether it concerns with regards to transportation cost, stall prices or operations of unregulated parallel markets, we are following up on all these matters.

We acknowledge that some of these grievances require our special attention. We, as a responsible Government, hold at heart the betterment of each and every one. We are trying our best to propose well balanced solutions that are most appropriate for all parties for a win-win situation.

Just a few weeks ago, I held consultations with members of the planters' community and soon after, measures had already been taken by the Agricultural Marketing Board to propose a *modus operandi* and to register freelance porters at the National Wholesale Market.

Mr Speaker, Sir, like every major project, actions are taken in a phased manner. The National Wholesale Market can still be optimised and it has opened doors for a number of opportunities to promote and market locally produced fruits and vegetables as well as other agricultural products. It is the vision of this Government to develop the Wooton Fiveways region into an Agricultural Hub similar to the Rungis International Market in France, which will include a Special Agro Processing Zone and a wholesale market for local meat, seafood, dairy and organic products.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the proximity of the National Wholesale Market to the proposed Special Agro Processing Zone would enable the sale of locally produced fruits and vegetables to agro processors in a timely manner. Consequently, this will create opportunities for increase in production. Just last weekend, I visited the World Food India 2023, along with officers of my Ministry to look into opportunities with regards to agro-processing in Mauritius. I am sure that soon we will be able to come up with different strategies to support the agro-processing industry in Mauritius.

In view of further supporting planters delivering fruits and vegetables at the National Wholesale Market, we are currently working on additional measures. These measures will be communicated to the planters' community and users of the National Wholesale Market in due course.

The design of the National Wholesale Market also makes provision of space for cold room facilities and construction of a food court which will start very soon.

The modern facilities available at the National Wholesale Market will enable the use of innovative technologies such as electronic displays, agricultural information

system, online auctions and this is the trend actually, online auctions such as those being practiced in Europe and one example is Belgium's Bel Orta Fruit and Vegetable Auction. Besides, the venue is equipped with a spacious meeting room at mezzanine level where training can be delivered to planters by institutions such as FAREI, on best agricultural practices without the need of going to remote locations.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I invite the House to look at the Mauritius Agricultural Marketing (Amendment) Bill as more than just a legislation. Let's see it as a symbol of our respect and gratitude to our hardworking farmers who feed us and the people who trust and buy from them. This Bill is our promise to make things fair, clear and respectful for everyone in our farming sector.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Proverb 20:4 in the Bible states –

“Those too lazy to plough in the right season will have no food at the harvest.”

This proverb underscores the importance of timely action. It is a valuable lesson not just for farming, but for all aspects of life and in the present situation, it highlights the need for proactive and timely actions in implementing the Mauritius Agricultural Marketing (Amendment) Bill.

In the words of the great Mahatma Gandhi –

“To forget how to dig the earth and to tend the soil is to forget ourselves.” Let's not forget who we are, who our farmers are, and our responsibilities to each other.

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

Thank you.

Mr Toussaint seconded.

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

At 7.59 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 8.20 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Please, be seated! Apologies for the little inconvenience at this late hour. I have spoken to both sides; I understand right now that hon. Xavier-Luc Duval shall not be taking the floor and it is hon. Mahen Seeruttun that shall be the next person, and in no way he is losing his chance. Thank you.

I call upon hon. Mahen Seeruttun.

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move for the adjournment of the debate.

Mr Ramano seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

ADJOURNMENT

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 14 November 2023 at 11.30 a.m.

Mr Seeruttun seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned!

For Specific Matter today, it is hon. Ms Joanne Tour and the Minister of Health. Thank you very much. Please.

MATTER RAISED

(8.21 p.m.)

NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASE – STATUS & STRATEGIES

Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): M. le président, mon intervention ce soir vise à interroger sur la plus importante cause de décès dans le monde, les maladies non transmissibles également appelées maladies chroniques. Les quatre principaux types de maladies non transmissibles sont les maladies cardio-vasculaires, les cancers, les maladies respiratoires chroniques et le diabète.

M. le président, à Maurice comme dans le monde, les maladies non transmissibles sont un problème de santé majeur. Elles sont à l'origine de 41 millions de décès chaque année ce qui représente 74 % de l'ensemble de décès dans le monde. Selon le rapport *The Mauritius NCD Survey* de 2021, la prévalence du diabète de type 2 parmi la population mauricienne âgée entre 25 à 74 ans était de 19,9 %, celle de pré-diabétiques de 15,9 % et de l'hypertension de 27,2 %.

M. le président, si le rapport de 2021 révèle qu'on a fait du progrès en matière de prévention car il y a eu une réduction de prévalence chez les diabétiques ainsi que chez les pré-diabétiques et que l'on note aussi une meilleure connaissance de la population sur les

risques des maladies non transmissibles, le fardeau des maladies non transmissibles reste néanmoins très conséquent et pèse lourd sur l'économie.

Le budget actuel annuel pour le traitement des maladies non transmissibles s'élève, M. le président, à R 7 milliards. Ce chiffre devrait nous interpeller car le ministère de la Santé et du bien-être dépense pas moins de, tenez-vous bien, R 700 millions pour les traitements, les préventions, les campagnes de dépistage et de sensibilisation et pourtant ces maladies sont en grande partie évitables. 80 % des maladies cardiaques, des accidents vasculaires cérébraux, du diabète du type 2 et plus d'un tiers des cancers peuvent être évités grâce à l'abandon de la consommation du tabac, à une alimentation plus saine et une activité physique et à l'arrêt de la consommation nocive et abusive d'alcool.

M. le président, permettez-moi d'élaborer sur ces causes de maladies non transmissibles qui sont causées principalement par quatre comportements nocifs ou facteurs de risque que sont le tabagisme, la mauvaise alimentation, la sédentarité et l'usage nocif de l'alcool. Ces comportements nocifs entraînent des changements métaboliques et biologiques qui augmentent les risques de maladies non transmissibles.

Le tabagisme, M. le président, est de loin le principal facteur de risque évitable, j'ai bien dit évitable, de cancer. Les personnes qui fument sont plus à risque de développer un cancer que celles qui ne fument pas. La consommation du tabac est aussi responsable de maladies cardio-vasculaires telles que l'hypertension artérielle, les cardiopathies coronariennes et l'insuffisance cardiaque. La fumée du tabac contient des substances irritantes qui vont affecter le bon fonctionnement des poumons et des bronches.

M. le président, si je me suis attardée sur les effets nocifs de la consommation du tabac sur la santé, c'est parce que je suis d'avis qu'il ne faut pas ignorer ou sous-estimer son impact sur la santé publique. M. le président, ceci dit, rien que pour l'année 2022, 1,1 milliard de cigarettes ont été vendues à Maurice. Je trouve ce chiffre alarmant. Mais la bonne nouvelle, selon un article en date du 31 juillet 2023 sur le site du *World Health Organisation (Mauritius)*, –

“Mauritius is first in Africa to adopt WHO full-scale tobacco control measures.”

Well done to our Minister of Health and Wellness and his team!

D'autre part, M. le président, nous comptons aussi huit *tobacco cessation clinics* à Maurice, dont un dans ma circonscription à Montagne Longue, qui visent à réduire la consommation de tabac. Même si nous sommes sur la bonne voie sur ce sujet, seule une approche collaborative et holistique basée sur les soins primaires peut être efficace. Je suis d'avis qu'il faut intensifier des campagnes de sensibilisation pour réduire la consommation

du tabac surtout auprès de nos jeunes et de nos adolescents. Il faut travailler de concert avec le ministère de l'Éducation afin d'inclure une matière de sensibilisation sur les maladies non transmissibles dans le cursus scolaire couplée d'un accompagnement psychologique. Idem, M. le président, pour la consommation nocive d'alcool quand l'alcoolisme a un impact important sur notre santé entraînant des risques de pathologie telles que la cirrhose du foie, la pancréatite, les cancers et d'autres maladies cardio-vasculaires.

M. le président, une mauvaise alimentation constitue aussi à un des principaux facteurs de risque d'un éventail de maladies chroniques. Il est connu qu'il faut une alimentation saine et une hygiène de vie afin de rester en bonne santé. Mais l'amélioration des habitudes alimentaires n'est pas uniquement un problème individuel. Il s'agit en effet d'un problème de société qui par conséquent nécessitera l'adoption d'une approche fondée sur la population qui soit multisectorielle, multidisciplinaire et culturellement adaptée à notre société.

La quatrième cause principale des décès prématurés dans le monde est la sédentarité. Elle est aussi facteur de risques majeurs de maladies non transmissibles. La sédentarité se caractérise par la réduction progressive de l'effort physique dans la plupart de nos actes quotidiens. En résumé, on marche de moins en moins, on fait de moins en moins d'efforts physiques. Si des petits réflexes quotidiens peuvent permettre de lutter contre un mode de vie trop sédentaire, par exemple, si on a un travail sédentaire, il est recommandé de se lever régulièrement, de faire une pause d'une minute toutes les heures. Au-delà de ces petits ajustements quotidiens, il est recommandé de pratiquer une activité physique régulière. L'activité physique permet de réduire de 30 % les risques de cardiopathies, de 27 % le risque de diabète et de 21 à 25 % le risque de cancer du sein et du colon.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the last NCD Survey of 2021 not only showed that the prevalence of NCDs has decreased, it also showed that 40.2% of the 24 to 70 years old in Mauritius carried out sufficient physical activity to meet the National guidelines of 30 minutes of moderate and vigorous activity per day. This is a great improvement from 20.7% in 2015 to 40.2% in 2021. This has been possible through an intensive campaign for the practice of physical activity. The National Sport and Physical Activity Policy of 2018-2028 was developed in collaboration with the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation and the Mauritius Sports Council to cater for the substantial gaps which existed between Mauritius and the global standards by

promoting the culture of community sports and physical activity as well as by empowering the medical sector to prescribe sports and physical activity.

I would like to point out, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that on one hand, it costs huge amounts to the Government for the treatment of NCDs but on the other hand, physical activities cost nothing to an individual and as a nation, we need to be aware of this. Thus, I insist that we need to maintain aggressive campaigns to create awareness for the practice of physical activity.

The Government is doing considerable efforts to promote a healthy culture through physical activities on various levels. Our new roads are being equipped with cycle lanes. On places of work, we recently saw the setting up of gyms. After school outdoor activities are being promoted and facilitated for the students in various schools through the Active Mauritius throughout the island.

Pour conclure, M. le président, à Maurice, nous n'avons pas de ressources naturelles sur lesquelles notre économie peut compter. Notre meilleure richesse est notre capital humain. Si notre industrie touristique affiche des arrivées approchant les 1 million de touristes cette année-ci après une crise sans précédent de la covid-19, c'est grandement grâce à ces hommes et femmes qui travaillent dans ce secteur.

Si notre secteur d'exportation affiche R 23,4 billions pour la période de janvier à juin 2023, c'est parce que notre main-d'œuvre mauricien a travaillé pour honorer la production destinée à l'exportation ou encore, M. le président, si notre île Maurice est un chantier à ciel ouvert où l'industrie de la construction est en pleine ébullition pour bâtir notre île Maurice moderne, c'est parce que nos ouvriers, nos maçons y travaillent. Il est donc de notre devoir en tant que gouvernement responsable de protéger notre population contre les maladies non transmissibles et de garder notre main-d'œuvre en bonne santé pour un développement durable du XXIe siècle. Nous devons accentuer nos efforts afin de mieux conscientiser la population, l'éduquer et s'assurer que les soins primaires et les préventions soient accessibles à tous.

M. le président, nous avons aussi un devoir envers nos aînés, ceux qui ont contribué à jeter les bases pour le développement de Maurice, je plaide ici pour une méthodologie ciblée et adaptée pour nos aînés. L'épidémie des maladies non-transmissibles a des effets catastrophiques sur la santé des individus, les familles et des communautés et elle menace de saturer le système de santé.

M. le président, le problème des maladies non transmissibles reste un défi majeur à relever, même si selon le dernier *survey* nous constatons une amélioration, il est primordial

de maintenir nos efforts, des efforts soutenus et surtout un monitorage constant suivi de stratégie dynamique pour diminuer les risques de pathologies non-transmissibles à Maurice et j'en suis convaincue, M. le président, que notre ministre de la santé continuera ses efforts afin de garder notre population en bonne santé.

J'ai terminé, M. le président. Merci pour votre attention.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Minister!

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me first thank the hon. Member for taking this important subject at today's Sitting during specific matters.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, non-communicable diseases remain a global issue responsible for 74% of all deaths worldwide and 27% to 88% of mortality in the African Region.

NCDs are responsible for the bulk of morbidity, disability and premature deaths in Mauritius. Non-communicable diseases are chronic diseases requiring long-term treatments, which are free of user cost in our public health institutions.

In fact, as per the previous Mauritius NCD Survey 2015, the standardised prevalence among adults of 25 to 74 years –

- for diabetes type 2 was 22.9%;
- that of pre-diabetes was 19.6%;
- that of hypertension was 27.3%;
- that of obesity was 45.5%.

The prevalence for the risk factors responsible for NCDs were as follows in 2015 –

- high cholesterol at 44.1%;
- smoking at 19.3%, and
- recommended physical activity at 23.7%.

The prevalence of HbA1c of 9% or more was at 35.6%, showing poor glycemic control.

Furthermore, in 2016, 71.5% of deaths were only due to diabetes, cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases and cancer. My Ministry has been relentlessly engaged in tackling NCDs through a strategic measure for the Prevention, Control and Management of NCDs and their risk factors, targeting the population as a whole, the community, and

the individual, as well as through surveys and research to provide evidence-based recommendation for Action Plan development.

Our Prime Minister also has shown his full commitment in the fight against NCDs, as evidenced by his declaration in many of his speeches and at United Nations General Assembly earlier in September 2023.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to address NCDs in the population, strong preventive measures have been taken to deal with the source of the problem, which is the risk factor.

A number of laws and regulations have been passed in order to protect the health of the people, such as the Food (Amendment) Regulations which include the permissible maximum level of industrially produced trans-fatty acids in fats and oils.

The sale of soft drinks which contain excessive amounts of sugar and are responsible for weight problems and dental caries later in life has been prohibited in all educational institutions and the sugar tax which was introduced in 2013 has been increased.

The Government has also passed Regulations under the Public Health Act to regulate the use of Tobacco and Alcohol. Taxes on tobacco and alcohol are regularly increased in the budget contributing to the provision of subsidised prices for basic commodities. Additional measures have been implemented for tobacco control since 31 May of this year, such as plain packaging and not issuing new tobacco-vending licences to retailers located within a perimeter of 200 metres of educational institutions, sports and leisure activities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Universal Health Coverage, my Ministry has devised various Action Plans to combat NCDs and their associated risk factors –

- The Health Sector Strategic Plan (HSSP) 2020-2024 was devised with the overall objective of ensuring the enhancement of health sector development in the Republic of Mauritius, to attain positive health outcomes for the individual.

The Strategic Goal 5 of the HSSP is to reduce preventable and premature morbidity, mortality and disability due to NCDs, by addressing their risk factors.

- The National Sport and Physical Activity Policy (2018-2028) was developed in collaboration with the Prime Minister's Office and other Ministries and its implementation is ongoing to foster a culture of community sport and physical activity in Mauritius.

- The National Action Plan for Tobacco Control (2021-2025) aims at preventing use of tobacco, especially among young people and adults, preventing exposure to second hand smoke and promoting smoking cessation.
- The National Action Plan to Reduce the Harmful Use of Alcohol (2020 – 2024) has for objective to reduce alcohol consumption and alcohol-related harm.
- The National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP) 2022-2025 was designed to reduce cancer incidence and mortality, as well as to improve the quality of life of cancer patients.
- Oral diseases are among the most common non-communicable diseases in the world and as such the National Action Plan for Oral Health (2022-2027) was devised to prevent oral diseases and reduce the proportion of children and adults with untreated oral diseases, helping the population to attain an optimum Oral Health.
- The National Integrated NCD Action Plan (2023-2028) was recently launched to provide a road map and a range of policy options for the country to implement a coordinated and coherent NCD action, at all levels, to attain global targets. Some of the strategic objectives are –
 - to raise the priority accorded to the prevention and control of NCDs through advocacy;
 - to strengthen the national capacity, leadership, governance, multi-sectoral action and partnerships and to accelerate the country's response to the prevention and control of NCDs;
 - to reduce modifiable risk factors for NCDs in the population through creation of health-promoting environments;
 - to strengthen the health systems to address the prevention and control of NCDs through person-centred primary health care and universal health coverage
 - to promote and support national capacity for high-quality research and development for the prevention and control of NCDs, and
 - to monitor the trends and determinants of NCDs and evaluate progress in their prevention and control.

So as to reach the wide audiences as part of communicative strategies for prevention, TV and Radio programmes dedicated to health promotion are broadcasted and much emphasis is laid on lifestyle modification –

- TV programme named “*Priorité Santé*” is being broadcasted every week for 26 minutes;
- special TV programme known as “*Tou Korek*” is mounted in collaboration with the PMO Office with the aim to sensitise the population on Non-Communicable diseases;
- Regular 3-minute radio programmes on health issues as well as the radio programme known as “*Moricien kone ou la santé*” are broadcasted,
- Additionally, a Facebook page has been created “*Maurice en bonne santé*” to increase public health awareness since information is shared in Creole, the local dialect, as well as in English and French.

My Ministry has also put in place several programmes to encourage and empower the community with regard to a healthy lifestyle –

- Local Health Committees (LHC) have been set up in 143 localities across the island with the aim to sensitise the population and enlist their participation in the fight against NCDs and their risk factors, through the help of Community Health Champions;
- These committees have been instrumental in the organisation and implementation of health promotion programmes;
- Through the Physical Activity Programme facilities for health activity have been put at the disposal of the population. 6 health tracks, 5 outdoor gyms, 22 Health Clubs, 77 localities throughout the island wherein yoga, aerobics and physical activity sessions are held;
- Since 2020 a series of workshops have been organised for the empowerment of Housewives on “Nutrition and Healthy Lifestyle” with the objectives of –
 1. encouraging housewives to adopt a healthy lifestyle;
 2. empowering them with the required knowledge and skills for choosing as well as preparing healthy foods/meals for their families, and
 3. teaching them how to take anthropometric measurements (height, weight and waist circumference and BMI).

Measuring tape with coloured waist guide along with pamphlets were also distributed. So far, this activity has been carried out in 30 localities and 1,500 housewives have been empowered.

The “Know your number campaign” was also carried out to sensitise the community on weight management by distribution of colour guided measuring tapes and demonstration and teaching on waist measurement and its interpretation.

Health Promotion Campaigns have been conducted since 2022, in the compound of commercial centres, shopping malls, District Councils, Municipal Councils across the island, to increase awareness on health-related issues such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer, food safety and nutrition. Some 4,500 to 5,000 persons visit the different stands at each session.

About 160,000 people were reached through live radio programme of local radio during the campaign. Through Facebook, about 1,600 persons were sensitised on the page “*Maurice en bonne santé.*”

Health talks are organised regularly in the community such as at worksites and secondary schools during NCD screening sessions. Talks are delivered on healthy lifestyle, healthy diet, benefits of physical activity, harmful effect of tobacco and alcohol, cancer and mental health. Leaflets and pamphlets on different NCDs and their risk factors are also distributed. For the period 2022-2023, over 100,000 persons have been sensitised.

So as to target employees at worksite, several preventive measures were implemented. 80 Health Promotion Clubs were launched on 14 November 2022 in different Ministries and Departments in collaboration with the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) and Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms, to encourage public officers to practise regular physical activities and adopt healthy eating habits.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for the Control of Non-Communicable Diseases, early detection of any NCD is critical, to delay or prevent costly complications. In this context, so as to leave no one behind, strategic measures were undertaken at different levels of the population, namely at worksites, in communities and in schools.

Herein, the Government has launched the NCD Screening programme throughout Mauritius, namely the “*Prevention Nationale pour les Maladies Non-Transmissibles programme*”, under the responsibility of NCD, Health Promotion and Research Unit, for early screening of the population.

To prevent absenteeism, disturbance of flow of work and to reach the maximum of participants, the NCD screening programme was extended to worksites.

Yearly –

- about 270 communities and 295 worksites are visited;
- around 40,000 persons are screened for NCDs, and
- about 10,000 women are screened for breast and cervical cancer.

The NCD screening programme has also been carried out in association with civil societies/NGOs. Since 2020, NCD screening sessions are conducted during the “*Ansam Avek CSU*” communication campaigns of the Citizen Support Unit (CSU) in different regions of the island.

Furthermore, in collaboration with the National Empowerment Foundation, screening programme is ongoing regularly on Saturdays, to offer free and easily accessible medical services to economically vulnerable groups of the population.

The NCD, Health Promotion and Research Unit has also worked with the National Women Council to reach women of different socio-economic background, thereby pooling maximum participants for early detection of breast and cervical cancer by screening.

Screening programmes for students of secondary schools of Grade 7, 9 and 12 (aged between 13 to 17 years) is being carried out through the School Health Promotion Secondary School Programme.

Yearly –

- 180 secondary schools are visited, and
- around 40,000 students of Grade 7, 9 and 12 are screened.

Considerable progress has also been made in regard to management and treatment of patients with NCDs. Regular NCD Clinics were carried out by Community Physicians in the Primary Health Care, with regular assessments of NCD patients for complications. As such Primary Health Care services have been both re-engineered through the provision of modern equipment and latest technology and decentralised.

New primary health care facilities have been established since 2020, namely –

- Floreal Mediclinic;
- Petite Rivière Area Health Centre, and
- Baie du Tombeau Community Health Centre.

New health care facilities such as diabetic foot care service, palliative care and Electrocardiogram have been made available at regional level i.e. at Hospitals, Mediclinics, Community Hospitals, Area Health Centres and Community Health Centres.

The Decentralisation Programme of Medical Specialties was launched in 2022 to relieve patients of long hours of waiting and facilitate access to specialised medical doctors.

The Ministry is establishing the Family Doctor Scheme to provide holistic care to NCD patient within the family and community setting in order to enable decongestion/decentralisation of Regional Hospitals.

Concerning the management of diabetes, Retinopathy Screening Services are available at retinal screening units. Diabetic Foot Care Services which comprise of advanced wound care dressing services at Podiatry Unit, new medications in diabetes therapy have been introduced, namely Dapagliflozin and Vildagliptin offering more options in the management of diabetes.

In regard to Chronic Renal Disease, it is noted that there are about 1,500 patients undergoing dialysis in the renal dialysis centres.

Mr Speaker, Sir, measures have also been taken in connection with National Cancer Control Programme. Digital Mammography Section was launched at the Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital in 2020. New National Cancer Centre in 2021 is operational and soon the National Cancer Centre will be operational once the equipment are installed.

Screening of Breast Cancer is carried out among women aged 25 to 65 years with full breast screening. Cervical Cancer Screening Programme which aims to screen about 10,000 married or sexually active women is being done every year and since 2021, liquid based cytology is being used instead of conventional cytology.

To improve the health care services, the National Service Framework for NCDs has been designed to standardise the management and treatment of NCDs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Government recognises the importance of a multi-sectoral approach to curb the scourge of NCDs in Mauritius. Hence, my Ministry has set up a Multi-Sectoral Committee under my chairmanship, and comprises of different ministries and institutions.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister, it is 30 minutes for Specific Matter. I would like you to wrap up and not...

Ms Ramyad: Please conclude.

The Deputy Speaker: No, you don't decide that he continues! I decide!

Ms Ramyad: *Non*, he concludes...

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, conclude. Try to conclude!

Prior to doing this, I just noticed that wearing of masks is optional even for the messengers, isn't it? They are humans just like us. Yes? Wearing of masks is optional for you as well I understand as per the ruling.

Yes, try to conclude.

Dr. Jagutpal: To conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, tackling NCDs remain a complex matter requiring the engagement of not only my Ministry, but also that of different stakeholders, NGOs, Civil Societies as well as the engagement of all Members of the National Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: I have not asked you to rush it as well. I did not even ask you to complete but try to be respectful of the time. You do not have to rush it as well.

Go on!

Dr. Jagutpal: Each of us should provide sustained efforts in tackling NCDs to bring positive results.

So with this, I wish you and all Members of the National Assembly, the staff of the National Assembly a happy Divali.

Thank you so much.

The Deputy Speaker: The best wishes are extended to all Members who are present at this time. Have a good and safe trip back.

At 8.53 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 14 November 2023 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

AIR MAURITIUS OPERATIONS – LONDON GATWICK AIRPORT

(No. B/1382) 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 Air Mauritius moving operations to London Gatwick Airport as from 29 October 2023, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Air Mauritius Ltd., information as to –

- (a) if this decision emanates from a commercial and/or financial survey;

- (b) the gains, if any, accruing to the company for leasing its slots at the Heathrow Airport and, if so, indicate the name of the company/entity, and
- (c) the expected benefits thereof for the Mauritians/Diaspora travellers and the tourism industry, if any.

Reply: As the House is aware, except for any specific matter falling under the purview of 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 House will appreciate that Air Mauritius Ltd, being a public company with limited liabilities, is governed by the provisions of the Companies Act, its own Memorandum and Articles of Association and is managed by a Board of Directors.

Furthermore, the Memorandum and Articles of Association of Air Mauritius Ltd provides for a Confidentiality Clause which prohibits disclosure of any information concerning the company's business, trading or customers, except those relating to the company's accounts which are required to be laid at the general meeting of the company.

The information requested by the hon. Member cannot therefore be disclosed.

I must add that Air Mauritius had already, by way of a communiqué issued on 17 March 2023, announced the forthcoming start of its operations from London Gatwick Airport, explaining the rationale thereof.

CITADELLE FORT – EVENTS – INCIDENTS

(No. B/1383) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the incidents which occurred at the Citadelle Fort on 21 October 2023, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the measures taken prior to the holding of the event, indicating the time they were put in place.

(Withdrawn)

PRIVY COUNCIL JUDGMENT – PROPOSED MEASURES

(No. B/1384) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in the light of the judgment in the Appeal before the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in the case of Surendra Dayal v Pravind Kumar Jugnauth & others and following the dismissal and/or withdrawal of the 14 electoral petitions lodged since the 2019 General Election, he will state the measures he proposes to take following the comments and recriminations made on the reputation and credibility enjoyed by the Office of the Electoral Commissioner and the Electoral Supervisory Commission with a view to repairing the damage caused to the public trust and confidence therein.

(Withdrawn)

PHYSICAL, SEXUAL ASSAULTS & THEFTS – REPORTED CASES

(No. B/1385) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to physical and sexual assaults, and thefts, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information since October 2021 to date, as to the number of reported cases thereof perpetrated on –

- (a) tourists, and
- (b) foreign –
 - (i) students;
 - (ii) workers, and
 - (iii) retired persons currently living in the country, indicating the remedial measures being envisaged to address same.

Reply: It is presumed that the hon. Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central is referring to cases of larceny in breach of Sections 301 to 311 of the Criminal Code rather than cases of thefts.

With regard to part (a) of the question, the Commissioner of Police has informed that the number of cases of assault, sexual assault and larceny reported by tourists were as follows –

- i) for the period 01 October 2021 to 31 December 2021, there were 3 cases of assault, 1 case of sexual assault and 47 cases of larceny;
- ii) for the period 01 January to 31 December 2022, there were 5 cases of assault, 4 cases of sexual assault and 200 cases of larceny, and
- iii) for the period 01 January to 31 October 2023, there were 11 cases of assault, 7 cases of sexual assault and 161 cases of larceny.

Concerning part (b) of the question, the Commissioner of Police has informed that the number of cases of assault, sexual assault and larceny reported by foreign students, foreign workers and foreign retired persons were as follows –

Foreign Students:

- i) for the period 01 October 2021 to 31 December 2021, there were 1 case of assault and 3 cases of larceny;
- ii) for the period 01 January to 31 December 2022, there were 10 cases of assault, 5 cases of sexual assault and 9 cases of larceny, and
- iii) for the period 01 January to 31 October 2023, there were 3 cases of assault, 3 cases of sexual assault and 9 cases of larceny.

Foreign Workers:

- i) for the period 01 October 2021 to 31 December 2021, there were 2 cases of assault, 1 case of sexual assault and 20 cases of larceny;
- ii) for the period 01 January to 31 December 2022, there were 8 cases of assault, 2 cases of sexual assault and 48 cases of larceny, and
- iii) for the period 01 January to 31 October 2023, there were 5 cases of assault and 25 cases of larceny.

Foreign Retired Persons:

- i) for the period 01 October 2021 to 31 December 2021, there were 3 cases of larceny;
- ii) for the period 01 January to 31 December 2022, there were 2 cases of larceny, and
- iii) for the period 01 January to 31 October 2023, there were 1 case of assault and 4 cases of larceny.

Regarding the last part of the question, the Commissioner of Police has informed that numerous remedial measures have been put in place by the Police to address the issue of assault, sexual assault and larceny against tourists and foreigners as follows –

- (i) Foot and mobile patrols are conducted by regular Police and the *Police du Tourisme* in areas frequently visited by tourists, including locations near hotels;
- (ii) Sensitisation campaigns are organised by the *Police du Tourisme*, Crime Prevention Unit, Brigade Pour la Protection de la Famille, and local Police to raise awareness among foreign students, workers, and retired individuals about precautionary measures to prevent victimisation;
- (iii) The *Police du Tourisme* is being reinforced with additional personnel for bike patrols in strategic locations, including tourist sites, industrial areas, and local campuses where tourists, foreign workers and students are located;
- (iv) The Passport and Immigration Office, in collaboration with the Migration Unit of the Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, conducts sensitisation campaigns for foreign workers regarding their rights. During these campaigns, pamphlets titled 'Know your rights' in different languages are distributed to them;
- (v) The Police actively utilise safe city cameras to monitor the movements of suspicious individuals who may target tourists, foreign students, and retired persons;
- (vi) Continuous training is provided to Police Officers to improve service delivery, particularly in assisting vulnerable persons, and
- (vii) The role and responsibilities of the Emergency Response Service have been reviewed to enhance the effectiveness of Police assistance to victims.

JUDGE IN CHAMBERS – INTERCEPTION ORDER – PURPOSE & OUTCOME

(No. B/1386) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to application made to a Judge in Chambers for an Order to intercept,

withhold or disclose audio and other telecommunication messages, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof for each of the years 2019 to 2022 and for the period January 2023 to date, indicating in each case the purpose and outcome thereof.

(Withdrawn)

**MEDICINAL CANNABINOIDS – POLICE MEDICAL OFFICER –
PRESCRIPTION ISSUED**

(No. B/1387) 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 medicinal cannabinoids, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if any Police Medical Officer has prescribed the use thereof as at to date and, if so, indicate –

- (a) the number thereof, and
- (b) follow up thereon as a result thereof, if any.

(Withdrawn)

RECOUNT EXERCISE – BALLOT PAPER – INQUIRY

(No. B/1388) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to a ballot paper of Constituency No. 1, Grand River North West and Port Louis West found during the recount exercise for Constituency No. 19, Stanley and Rose Hill held on 01 February 2022, 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.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, statements have been recorded from representatives from the Electoral Commissioner's Office, and Officers from the Supreme Court involved in the recounting exercise.

The Commissioner of Police has further informed that enquiry into the case is proceeding.

**FOREWORD BY ADMIRAL THE LORD WEST OF SPITHEAD –
SOVEREIGNTY AND SECURITY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN**

(No. B/1403) **Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes)** asked the Attorney General, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether he will state if he has taken cognizance of the Foreword by Admiral the Lord West of Spithead in the report entitled Sovereignty and Security in the Indian Ocean by the Policy Exchange and, if so, indicate if the matter has been taken up with the High Commissioner of the United Kingdom.

Reply (The Prime Minister): I am aware that Policy Exchange, a British think tank, has recently published a paper entitled “Sovereignty and Security in the Indian Ocean – Why the UK should not cede the Chagos Islands to Mauritius”, which contains a foreword by Admiral the Lord West of Spithead.

Both the paper and the foreword, which totally disregard the fact that under international law, the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius, claim that “ceding” the Chagos Archipelago to Mauritius would be an irresponsible act on the part of the UK Government, which would put the strategic interests of the United Kingdom and the interests of its closest allies in danger, whilst also recklessly undermining fundamental principles of international law.

The paper also recommends that the UK Government should discontinue negotiations with Mauritius to the extent that their aim is to conclude a treaty of cession.

The ongoing negotiations between Mauritius and the United Kingdom are on the exercise of sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago and not about “ceding” the Chagos Archipelago to Mauritius, as erroneously claimed by the paper and Admiral the Lord West of Spithead.

Since the paper has been published by a think tank and not by the British Government, the issue of taking up the matter with the British High Commissioner does not arise.

**RODRIGUES – HIGH VOLTAGE CABLES – RELOCATION &
REPLACEMENT**

(No. B/1413) **Mr J. B. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the relocation and replacement of high voltage cables in Rodrigues effected upon the request of individuals

and companies, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, since January 2022 to date, information as to the –

- (a) cost incurred therefor;
- (b) number thereof attended to as at date;
- (c) list of individuals and companies having benefitted therefrom, and
- (d) number thereof pending, if any.

Reply: I am informed by the Central Electricity Board that a total of 17 requests for relocation and displacement of high voltage cables have been received at CEB (Rodrigues) from individuals and companies in Rodrigues as well as from the Rodrigues Regional Assembly since January 2022 till date.

With regard to part (a) and part (b) of the question, the CEB informed that out of the 17 applications received, relocation works have been completed in respect of 4 sites. The applicants concerned are the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, Mr J.S.G. and a company B.M.C.W. Costs incurred for the completed works amount to Rs439,138.

As for part (c) and part (d) of the question, I am informed that works are ongoing at 2 sites and payment from the applicant following claim submitted by CEB is awaited for the remaining 10 applications. Cost estimate for relocation works is under preparation in respect of one application.

RIYADH 2023 WORLD COMBAT GAMES– ATHLETES’ PARTICIPATION & FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

(No. B/1414) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the Riyadh 2023 World Combat Games held in October in Saudi Arabia, he will state the names of the athletes who represented Mauritius thereat, indicating –

- (a) in each case the funds allocated and other support extended thereto by the Ministry, and
- (b) the reason as to why financial support was not extended by his Ministry for the participation of Mr K. V., the National Coach therein.

Reply: I would like, first of all, to point out that my Ministry has earmarked a total amount of Rs50 m. in financial assistance to support 51 National Sports Federations and sports organisations for this financial year. These funds are disbursed based on agreed sports development plans, which outline a range of activities with detailed budgetary breakdowns. These activities include participation in competitions abroad, talent identification and grassroots development, training and administrative expenses.

In the context of the 2023 World Combat Games held in Saudi Arabia in October 2023, I am informed by the Mauritius Kickboxing Federation that Mauritius was represented by Ms Annelle Coret in kickboxing, accompanied by her coach, Mr Judex Jeannot.

As per their development plan, the Mauritius Kickboxing Federation received a grant of Rs100,000 from my Ministry to cover expenses related to this event.

Additionally, Ms Annelle Coret, who is a beneficiary of the High Level Sport Assistance Scheme under my Ministry, has been receiving a monthly allowance of Rs20,125 since July 2023.

Furthermore, I am informed by the *Fédération Mauricienne de Boxe Française Savate et Disciplines Assimilées* that Mauritius was represented by four fighters namely, Ms Lindy Bhantooa, Ms Savineta Henriette, Mr Brian François-Fils, and Mr Kailash Bhantooa.

Regarding part (b) of the question, it is important to note that the *Fédération Mauricienne de Boxe Française Savate et Disciplines Assimilées* did not earmark any budget within their development plan for participation in the World Combat Games. Consequently, my Ministry was not in a position to extend financial support for participation thereat.

However, Mr Brian François-Fils has been receiving a monthly allowance of Rs20,125 since July 2023 under the High Level Sport Assistance Scheme under my Ministry.

REDUIT & MOKA - LEASED STATE LAND – BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/1415) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the lease of State land in Réduit and Moka since January 2023 to date, he will table a list of the beneficiaries thereof.

(Withdrawn)

BAKERIES – SUBSIDY ON BREADS – AMOUNT DISBURSED

(No. B/1416) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the payment of subsidy on scheduled breads to bakeries, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the total amount disbursed since 01 July 2023 to date, indicating the number of bakeries registered thereunder.

Reply: Comme le savent les honorables membres de cette Assemblée, le prix de la farine est actuellement largement subventionné par le gouvernement. La farine étant un

bien de première nécessité pour de nombreuses familles mauriciennes, son prix est plafonné au tarif de 4,85 de roupies par demi-kilo. Sans cet important soutien financier du gouvernement, le prix de vente non subventionné facturé par la State Trading Corporation (STC) aurait dû être de 15,99 roupies par demi-kilo de farine.

Pour l'exercice 2022/23, la subvention sur la farine s'élève à 2,2 milliards de roupies, ce qui représente une augmentation du montant de plus de 4 fois par rapport à il y a 5 ans. Une attention particulière est accordée aux boulanger afin que leurs coûts de production ne soient pas trop fortement impactés par la hausse des prix des matières premières dans le monde et que les produits boulanger restent accessibles au plus grand nombre.

Ainsi, grâce au soutien additionnel du gouvernement, les boulanger s'approvisionnent en farine au tarif de 2,18 roupies pour un demi-kilo de farine au lieu du prix déjà subventionné de 4,85 roupies mentionné ci-dessus. En outre, les boulanger ne paient pas les marges de gros et de détail lorsqu'ils achètent la farine directement auprès de la STC.

Le soutien financier sous la forme de subvention additionnelle aux boulangeries est en vigueur depuis le mois d'octobre 2022 et la MRA s'est vu confier la responsabilité d'effectuer les paiements sur une base mensuelle.

J'ai en sus été informé par la MRA que le paiement effectué pour la période du 1^{er} juillet 2023 au 3 novembre 2023 s'élève à 6,03 millions de roupies, au profit des boulangeries sous la forme d'une subvention de neuf cents pour chaque 100 gramme de pains.

J'ai également été informé que 125 boulangeries ont choisi d'être enregistrées auprès de la MRA pour le paiement de cette subvention. La MRA fait le nécessaire pour effectuer le paiement aux boulangeries éligibles.

En tant que soutien financier aux opérateurs commerciaux et comme indiqué dans le communiqué de la MRA daté du 16 octobre 2023, les boulangeries, dont le chiffre d'affaires annuel n'excède pas 100 millions de roupies, auront droit à un remboursement de 5 roupies par litre de diesel consommé à partir du 7 octobre 2023.

PORABLE RETIREMENT GRATUITY FUND – AMOUNT COLLECTED, BENEFITS PAID & APPLICATIONS

(No. B/1417) 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 the Portable Retirement Gratuity Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

- (a) total amount thereof collected since its introduction to date;
- (b) categories of benefits paid out therefrom, indicating the –
 - (i) total amount disbursed for their payment, giving a breakdown thereof, and
 - (ii) corresponding remaining amount, if any, thereafter.

Reply (The Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training): As the House is aware the Portable Retirement Gratuity Fund (PRGF) was introduced in the Workers' Rights Act in 2019 in order to ensure that a worker, upon retirement, benefits from the payment of a retirement gratuity for the whole length of his service with all his employers, thus encouraging labour mobility without losing social rights. I wish to point out that with the advent of COVID-19 pandemic, the obligation for employers to make monthly contributions to the Fund was postponed to January 2022 through the Workers' Rights Act (Portable Retirement Gratuity Fund) (Amendment) Regulations.

This is a landmark and completely novel measure and no African country has ever implemented such a measure.

By virtue of section 94 of the Workers' Rights Act the payment of contributions by eligible employers is made to the Director-General of the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA), which thereafter, remits same to the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity, which is the Administrator of the Fund.

In regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the MRA that the contributions collected as at October 2023 stood at MUR 3,723, 565, 396.70

In regard to part (b) of the question, the categories of benefits paid out of the Fund is gratuity or lump sum to a worker or a self-employed person who has contributed to the Fund, upon his/her retirement or to legal heirs or legal representative upon death of the worker or the self-employed person.

In accordance with section 91 of the Workers' Rights Act, the PRGF is administered by the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity, which, therefore, has the responsibility to credit the contributions received from MRA into the individual account of each worker. Upon applications for payment of gratuity, the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity, after obtaining all the information, carries out the benchmarking exercise computed on 15 days remuneration per year of service and pay out the gratuity to the worker or the legal heirs, as appropriate.

I am informed by the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity that the total amount disbursed so far is MUR 8,122,246 to 382 retired employees.

I am further informed that some 2,766 applications for gratuity have been received by the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity since the operation of the PRGF. Out of the 2,766 applications, 508 applications have been approved and 382 already paid. Of the remaining 2,258 applications, 1,247 are without exit statements from employers and the balance 1,011 applications have missing information. The Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity is contacting the employers for the missing information.

As I said, it is a new policy measure. Its operationalisation is no doubt having some teething issues and the disruption caused by COVID-19 just after the introduction of the PRGF has not helped.

We are aware of the delays in paying the gratuity to beneficiaries. That is precisely why amendments were brought to some sections of the Workers' Rights Act through the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act this year to simplify certain processes and for a more efficient administration of the Fund. Technical consultations are being held with the MRA and the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity to devise the best possible way to determine the amounts payable as gratuity and for its prompt payments. Once the technical issues are resolved, we would come up with regulations for a more efficient and effective way to administer the PRGF.

FERTILITY CLINICS – SETTING UP

(No. B/1418) Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the project for the setting up of fertility clinics in each regional hospital, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: Infertility is a disease of the reproductive system and can cause significant distress, stigma and financial hardship, affecting people's mental and psychosocial well-being. According to the World Health Organisation, roughly 1 in 6 persons experience infertility issues worldwide, showing the pressing need to increase access to affordable and quality fertility care.

Despite the significance of the issue, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of infertility remain inaccessible to many in view of the high costs, social stigma and limited availability. At present, in most countries, fertility treatments are largely funded out of pocket and are attributed to high financial cost implications.

Over the past decades, the ageing population has been constantly on the rise. In parallel, Mauritius has been witnessing a declining birth rate and couples are being strongly encouraged to have more babies. It is however a fact that Mauritius has not been spared from the fertility issue. According to the Contraceptive Prevalence Survey 2014, 10% of women in the age range 15 to 49 years and a small proportion of their male partners reported having fertility issues.

Considering the growing importance of this health issue and in line with the Strategic Objective 12.1 of the Health Sector Strategic Plan 2020-2024 which is to increase overall fertility rate, my Ministry has in early 2022 set up a Fertility Clinic at SSRN Hospital to address the healthcare needs of patients facing fertility issues. In addition, gynaecologists are also providing appropriate care to all patients requiring fertility treatment during OPD clinics in regional hospitals.

My Ministry has also sought assistance from the Merck Foundation for the training in Fertility and Embryology, respectively. During the period January to June 2023, two gynaecologists and two Medical Laboratory Technologists received training at the Indira IVF Hospital and the Manipal University Udupi in India, respectively.

The current services being provided by the fertility clinic consist of a baseline work up, fertility enhancing surgery (Laparoscopy and Hysteroscopy) and medical management with time-intercourse. To enhance the quality of care and services, my Ministry has acquired state-of-the-art equipment. A total of 9.5 million rupees has been invested in the procurement of cutting-edge medical equipment, including 3D/4D echography, a video laparoscopy, hysteroscopy set and an electrosurgical device.

In addition, to improve the success rate, Assisted Reproductive Techniques are also being introduced in phases. The first phase consists of the introduction of intrauterine insemination that will be provided to eligible patients by the end of this year at SSRN.

This introduction of this new technique will be a stepping stone for fertility care in the public sector, where health care services are free. This will allow patients to save nearly Rs100,000 on treatment for three cycles.

My Ministry is committed to patient care and hence, we are investing massively and introducing fertility medications such as ovulation induction drugs and ovulation triggering agents in the public sector which will improve the success rate.

My Ministry is also ensuring that along with infrastructural advancement, appropriate training is being provided to all health care providers. Hence, educational initiatives, involving dedicated healthcare professionals who are committed to advancing the care of infertile couples, are being conducted in all regional hospitals every now and then.

My Ministry is dedicated to improving and expanding fertility treatment options for our citizens. The investments made in equipment, medication and training, along with provision of this new service of intrauterine insemination, demonstrate our commitment to addressing fertility-related issues comprehensively and effectively. Along with improving the services, my Ministry is also working on the development of a legislation that will provide for a regulatory framework in respect of fertility treatment in Mauritius.

PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTIONS – CONSUMABLES PROCURED

(No. B/1419) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the consumables procured for in-patients in public health institutions, he will state the –

- (a) amount spent thereon for Financial Year 2022-2023 and July 2023 to date;
- (b) storage conditions thereof at the regional hospitals, and
- (c) frequency at which sanitary inspections are carried thereat.

(Withdrawn)

LA SALLE DES FÊTES – RENOVATION COSTS

(No. B/1420) 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 renovation of the building *La Salle des Fêtes* of the Municipal Council of Vacoas Phoenix located within the premises of the Council, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the –

- (a) costs incurred in the procurement and installation of a lift thereat;
- (b) date of the commissioning thereof, and
- (c) total costs incurred therefor.

(Withdrawn)

HOSPITAL-ACQUIRED INFECTION – RISKS, PREVENTION & IPC GUIDELINES

(No. B/1421) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to Hospital-Acquired Infection in public health institutions, he will state –

- (a) the current incidence rate thereof, since 2019 to 2022 on a yearly basis and since 01 January 2023 to date, indicating the number of patients having passed away as a result thereof, including the department concerned therewith;
- (b) the risk factors associated therewith, indicating the preventive measures being envisaged, and
- (c) where matters stand as to the implementation of the Infection Prevention Control Guidelines.

(Withdrawn)

VOCATIONAL LEGAL EDUCATION COUNCIL – 2023 EXAMINATION – STATUS

(No. B/1422) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Attorney General, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the Council for Vocational Legal Education, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the number of candidates who sat for the 2023 –

- (a) Barristers;
- (b) Attorney, and
- (c) Notary Public examinations thereof, indicating in each case the number thereof having –
 - (i) passed, and
 - (ii) obtained a resit.

(Withdrawn)

HARRY LATOUR STADIUM – RENOVATION

(No. B/1423) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the Harry Latour Stadium, he will state –

- (a) the reasons as to the closure thereof, indicating since when;
- (b) when the last renovation work was carried out thereat, giving details thereof and the total amount spent therefor, and

(c) the renovation plan thereof, if any, being envisaged by his Ministry and, if so, give details thereof and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

LAND DRAINAGE AUTHORITY – SURVEY

(No. B/1424) 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 drains, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Land Drainage Authority, information as to if a survey has been carried out to monitor the current structural state thereof in view of the forthcoming rainy season and, if so, the outcome thereof.

(Withdrawn)

HORSE RACING DIVISION – MR D. M. – CONTRACT TERMINATION

(No. B/1425) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to Horse Racing, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Gambling Regulatory Authority, information as to if the contract of Mr D. M., Racing Executive Officer and Chairman of Stewards of the Horse Racing Division has been terminated and, if so, the reasons therefor.

Reply: Je suis informé par la Gambling Regulatory Authority que son conseil d'administration a, lors de la séance du vendredi 13 octobre 2023, mis fin à l'engagement du consultant, Monsieur D. M. auprès de la GRA, conformément à son contrat de service et dans l'intérêt de la GRA.

Je suis également informé que le conseil d'administration a également mis fin à ses fonctions de président des stewards stipendiaires ainsi qu'à sa nomination en tant que membre du comité des courses de chevaux.

Je suis enfin informé par la GRA qu'êtant donné les droits légaux de chaque partie dans le cadre de ce contrat de service et le fait que chaque partie peut envisager d'engager une action en justice contre l'autre, il n'est pas dans l'intérêt de la GRA de divulguer d'autres informations à ce stade.

ROSE HILL - ILLEGALLY OPERATING NURSERY – INCIDENT & INQUIRY

(No. B/1426) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the 9-month-old

infant who suffered second-degree burns in a nursery allegedly operating illegally in Rose Hill, she will state if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and, if so, indicate the actions taken in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

CONSTITUENCY NO. 15 – DRAINS MAINTENANCE – COST

(No. B/1427) 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 cleaning and maintenance of existing drains in Constituency No. 15 Vacoas and Phoenix, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Vacoas Phoenix, information as to the –

- (a) list of regions having benefitted therefrom;
- (b) maintenance work being undertaken thereat, and
- (c) total costs thereof.

(Withdrawn)

FREE PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION – GRANT-IN-AID SCHEME

(No. B/1428) Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the free pre-primary education, she will state where matters stand as to the implementation and the defining of the modalities for the Grant-in-Aid scheme thereof.

(Withdrawn)

HOTEL PROJECTS – CONSTRUCTION APPLICATIONS – LOCATION, PERMITS & PROMOTERS

(No. B/1429) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to hotel projects, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

- (a) number of applications for the construction of new ones received and approved, indicating in each case –
 - (i) the locations earmarked for the construction thereof,
 - (ii) if EIA licences or PER approval have been issued thereto and conditions imposed, if any, and
- (b) name of the promoters therefor.

(Withdrawn)

PUBLIC SECTOR DEBT – QUANTUM

(No. B/1430) 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 Public Sector Debt, he will state the –

- (a) current quantum thereof, indicating the quantum thereof –
 - (i) denominated in Mauritian rupees and foreign currencies, respectively, and
 - (ii) as a ratio of the Gross Domestic Product, and
- (b) measures that will be taken for the reduction thereof.

Reply: Les données relatives à la dette du secteur public sont compilées, consolidées et publiées sur le site web du ministère des Finances sur une base trimestrielle, vers la fin du mois suivant chaque trimestre. Les données complètes pour la fin du mois de septembre 2023 ont été publiées le 31 octobre.

La dette du secteur public à la fin du mois de septembre 2023 s'élevait à 497,4 milliards de roupies, dont 374,8 milliards libellés en roupies mauriciennes et 122,6 milliards en devises étrangères.

Je souhaite informer l'Assemblée que la dette du secteur public est passée d'environ 63 % du PIB à la fin juin 2019 à 81 % à la fin juin 2020 en raison des diverses mesures prises par le gouvernement à la suite de la pandémie de la Covid-19.

Cela était nécessaire pour préserver les emplois, protéger la population et relancer la croissance économique. Un pic de 91,9 % du PIB a été enregistré à la fin du mois de juin 2021. Par la suite, grâce à la stratégie de consolidation fiscale mise en place par ce gouvernement, la dette du secteur public en pourcentage du PIB a affiché une tendance à la baisse. À la fin du mois de juin 2023, elle est tombée à 81,2 %.

En ce qui concerne la partie (a) de la question, à la fin du mois de septembre 2023, la dette du secteur public est passée sous la barre des 80 % du PIB et a atteint 79,6 %, en deça de l'ancrage fiscal déterminé par le FMI pour Maurice.

En ce qui concerne la partie (b) de la question, ce gouvernement a adopté une stratégie à plusieurs volets pour réduire de manière cohérente le ratio de la dette au PIB, qui est passé d'un niveau élevé de 92,5 % en septembre 2021, c'est-à-dire pendant la pandémie, à 79,6 % en septembre 2023.

Tout d'abord, nous avons pris un certain nombre de mesures pour soutenir les secteurs économiques et assurer une reprise rapide après l'impact négatif de la pandémie.

Le PIB réel a augmenté de 8,9 % en 2022 et nous prévoyons un taux de croissance d'environ 7 % cette année.

Deuxièmement, nous maintenons le déficit budgétaire à un niveau bas et durable. En ce qui concerne les recettes, nous avons réformé le système de l'impôt sur le revenu afin d'améliorer encore le dynamisme fiscal tout en le rendant plus équitable.

En outre, nous avons introduit le système de divulgation volontaire des revenus et le système de paiement des arriérés, ainsi que l'utilisation des avancées technologiques pour faciliter et améliorer le respect de la loi par les contribuables.

En ce qui concerne les dépenses, les ressources sont utilisées de manière efficiente. Des mesures sont prises pour éliminer les gaspillages et améliorer l'efficacité opérationnelle en traitant les questions soulevées par le directeur de l'audit. En outre, nous donnons la priorité à la mise en œuvre de projets d'investissement à fort potentiel de diversification et de croissance économique. Les projets et les schémas sont désormais mieux préparés pour une mise en œuvre en temps voulu afin d'éviter les dépassements de coûts.

Troisièmement, le fonctionnement de nos organismes publics est revu de manière à ce qu'ils soient moins dépendants du budget national. Les entreprises publiques sont également restructurées afin d'améliorer leur capacité à générer des revenus et d'être en mesure de rembourser leur dette. À l'avenir, nous continuerons à mettre en œuvre de telles mesures qui contribueront à réduire encore davantage le ratio dette/PIB.

Malgré les perspectives de croissance mondiale défavorables dues à la guerre en Ukraine, aux tensions géopolitiques au Moyen-Orient et à la hausse significative des taux d'intérêt dans le monde, nous visons à réduire la dette du secteur public à environ 70% du PIB à moyen terme.

MRA – WAGE ASSISTANCE SCHEME – REIMBURSEMENT FROM ENTERPRISES

(No. B/1431) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Wage Assistance Scheme, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Revenue Authority, information as to the number of enterprises having benefitted therefrom, indicating the –

- (a) number thereof having reimbursed same, and
- (b) aggregate amount reimbursed to date.

Reply: Suite à l'impact de la pandémie de Covid-19 sur notre économie, le *Wage Assistance Scheme* a été mis en place en 2020 par ce gouvernement afin d'apporter un soutien financier aux employés du secteur privé qui se seraient sinon retrouver au chômage technique.

Le gouvernement a également mis en place le *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme* et a accordé une subvention unique pour les travailleurs indépendants afin de préserver les moyens de subsistance de ces derniers.

Dans le cadre du *Wage Assistance Scheme*, avant janvier 2021, un travailleur percevant jusqu'à 50 000 roupies par mois recevait une allocation équivalente à son salaire de base plafonné à 25 000 roupies. Ces montants ont été augmentés de 375 roupies à partir de janvier 2021 pour tenir compte de la compensation salariale.

Pendant les deux périodes de confinement national, l'allocation au titre du *Wage Assistance Scheme* a été versée à tous les travailleurs éligibles.

Après la levée partielle du confinement, nos frontières sont restées fermées aux touristes et les arrivées de touristes sont restées faibles par la suite.

Par conséquent, le *Wage Assistance Scheme* a été maintenu pour les travailleurs du secteur du tourisme pendant cette période.

En outre, afin d'empêcher la résurgence et la propagation de la Covid-19, un certain nombre de locaux ont dû rester fermés au public, tandis que d'autres entreprises ont été autorisées à ouvrir sous réserve de restrictions sanitaires strictes.

Certaines régions ont également été déclarées zones rouges et certaines activités d'attroupement ont été interdites.

Ces entreprises ont continué à bénéficier du *Wage Assistance Scheme*.

En ce qui concerne la partie (a) de la question, j'ai été informé par la Mauritius Revenue Authority qu'une allocation au titre du *Wage Assistance Scheme* a été versée à 16 390 entreprises, pour quelque 279 857 travailleurs.

La MRA m'a aussi informé que certaines entreprises ont retiré leur demande et ont volontairement remboursé, en totalité ou en partie, le montant précédemment perçu dans le cadre du programme.

Sur 16 390 entreprises, 323 ont remboursé, en totalité ou en partie, l'aide salariale reçue.

En ce qui concerne la partie (b) de la question, un montant total de 513,2 millions de roupies a été remboursé par les dites entreprises ayant bénéficié du *Wage Assistance Scheme*.

Le deuxième mode de remboursement a été l'introduction d'un *COVID-19 Levy* pour récupérer une partie du montant de l'aide financière versée dans le cadre du *Wage Assistance Scheme* aux entreprises qui ont réalisé des bénéfices.

Le prélèvement était payable sur une période de deux ans et ne dépassait pas 15% du revenu imposable de l'entreprise pour chacune des deux années. Le premier paiement de la taxe a été effectué dans la déclaration d'impôt sur le revenu soumis en 2020/2021.

J'ai été informé par la MRA qu'un montant de 2,78 milliards de roupies a été collecté sous le *COVID-19 Levy*.

Afin d'alléger le fardeau des entreprises confrontées à des difficultés financières liées à la nécessité de payer la compensation salariale en 2023, le gouvernement a décidé d'annuler toutes les dettes impayées au titre *COVID-19 Levy* au 20 janvier 2023.

BAIE LASCARS, RODRIGUES – RECREATION CENTRE – CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/1432) Mr J. B. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the proposed construction of a Recreational Centre for the elderly and disabled at Baie Lascars in Rodrigues as announced in the Budget 2023-2024, she will state where matters stand.

Reply: In the Budget Speech 2023-2024, the construction of a Recreation Centre at Baie Lascars, Rodrigues, was announced.

I am informed that the suitability of the site is currently under consideration. Once the site is finalised, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly will come forward with an implementation plan.

SOLICITOR GENERAL – BOARD & OVERSEAS MISSIONS

(No. B/1433) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Attorney General, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the Solicitor General, he will state the number of boards of which he is a member, indicating the –

- (a) allowances drawn, and
- (b) number of overseas missions undertaken as a member thereof, further indicating the costs thereof, including air tickets and per diem.

(Withdrawn)

CÔTE D'OR SPORTS COMPLEX – CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER – COMPLAINTS

(No. B/1434) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the Mauritius Multi sports Infrastructure Ltd. (MMIL), he will state if his Ministry and/or the board thereof is in presence of any complaint against Mr B. H., the Chief Operating Officer of the Côte d'Or Sports Complex and, if so, indicate the measures taken thereon.

Reply: I am informed that anonymous letters have been received against the Chief Operating Officer of the Mauritius Multi sports Infrastructure Ltd (MMIL).

However, I am further informed that the complaints have been accordingly dealt with by the Board of the MMIL.

ASBESTOS – RELATED DISEASE CASES & TREATMENT

(No. B/1435) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to asbestos, he will state the number of reported cases of diseases resulting therefrom, if any, over the past 8 years and, if so, indicating the –

- (a) treatment prescribed therefor, and
- (b) accompanying support, if any, available in public hospitals to those diagnosed therewith.

(Withdrawn)

GRA – HORSE RACING – MR W.W. & MR D.M. – RESIGNATIONS

(No. B/1436) Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to Horse Racing, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Gambling Regulatory Authority, information as to the reasons for the submission of resignations by Mr W.W. and Mr D.M., two former Chief Stipes of the Human Resource Department therefrom.

Reply: J'ai été informé par la Gambling Regulatory Authority (GRA) que Monsieur W.W., qui avait pris ses fonctions de Chef de la division des courses à la Gambling Regulatory Authority le 3 septembre 2021 et qui exerçait également les fonctions de président des commissaires stipendiaires, a présenté sa lettre de démission au

Gambling Regulatory Board le 3 octobre 2022. Et cela, après avoir servi l'autorité pendant près de quinze mois et après avoir mis en place la division des courses hippiques.

J'ai également été informé que Monsieur W.W., dans sa lettre de démission, a déclaré qu'il était temps pour lui de se retirer après avoir terminé son mandat conformément à son contrat de travail. Dans le même ordre d'idées, il a remercié le Gambling Regulatory Board de lui avoir donné l'occasion de mettre en place la Horse Racing Division.

En ce qui concerne Monsieur D.M., dans ma réponse à la question parlementaire B/1425 de la séance d'aujourd'hui, j'ai déclaré que le Gambling Regulatory Board avait, lors de sa séance du vendredi 13 octobre 2023, mis fin à l'engagement de Monsieur D.M. en tant que consultant auprès de la GRA, conformément à son contrat de service, et dans l'intérêt de l'Autorité.

J'ai également informé l'Assemblée que –

- (i) le conseil d'administration a aussi mis fin à ses fonctions de président des stewards stipendiaires ainsi qu'à sa nomination en tant que membre du comité des courses de chevaux , et que
- (ii) compte tenu des droits légaux de chaque partie dans le cadre de ce contrat de service et du fait que chaque partie peut envisager d'engager une action en justice contre l'autre, il n'est pas dans l'intérêt de l'Autorité de divulguer d'autres informations à ce stade.

METRO EXPRESS PROJECT – FUNDS INJECTED & LOAN REIMBURSEMENT

(No. B/1437) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail whether, in regard to the Metro Express Project, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Metro Express Ltd., information as to the total amount of –

- (a) funds injected by Government through equity participation;
- (b) loan reimbursed to Government as at to date, and
- (c) profit generated by the company as at to date.

Reply: As mentioned in the reply to PQ B/1334 on 31 October 2023, the Light Rail Transit System should not be assessed solely on the basis of financial returns as one should not to lose sight of the numerous benefits generated with the advent of the Metro Express both on the economic and social fronts.

It is important to appreciate that transportation is a public good and this applies particularly for the light rail as it enhances the mobility of thousands of our citizens in addition to providing a rapid and comfortable commute. There is, therefore, the need to see beyond figures.

As regards part (a) of the question, as at 03 November 2023, Government has injected an amount of Rs14.85 billion as equity contribution for the financing of the project. However, there is need to emphasise that the above amount includes the grant funding components, to the tune of USD 277 million, received from the Government of India in respect of the Metro Express Project.

The equity contribution includes, amongst others, payment to the engineering, procurement and construction contractor, Larsen & Toubro, and payment to RITES Ltd. which provided Project Management Consultancy services. The funds advanced under equity also comprised payment for Advisory Services and for funding ancillary works as well as the Ebène Recreational Park. The equity contributed by Government, therefore, pertains to capital costs, consultancy fees, preparatory works and pre-operational expenses which had to be incurred for the successful implementation of the Metro Express Project.

With regard to part (b) of the question, it is apposite to note that though the commercial operations, in respect of Phase 1, running from Rose Hill to Port Louis, started on 10 January 2020, shortly thereafter, the COVID-19 pandemic struck and as a result, the Metro Express Ltd. was negatively impacted as the light rail was not operational for some time.

Even after the lifting of the national lockdown, the then travel restrictions did not allow MEL to fully maximise its revenue due to limited ridership while, on the other hand, the costs remained almost the same. The launching of Phases 2A and 2B of the project, therefore, suffered delays as a result of COVID-19 pandemic.

All of the above impacted on the income of MEL leading to the forecasted revenue not being achieved. As such, the Government had to provide financial support to MEL so that the light rail operator could meet its operating expenditures and maintain the required level of service.

No reimbursement has been made yet but there is need to highlight, however, that the first loan was advanced during the Financial Year 2019/2020 and there is provision for a grace period of 3 years as regards the repayment thereof.

With regard to part (c) of the question, MEL started its full commercial operations only as from 23 January 2023 with a daily ridership of around 40,000.

Bearing in mind that the Metro Express has been fully operational for around 9 months only, the question of profit generated to date is premature as the operations are not fully bedded in yet and the company is yet to reach its cruising speed. Moreover, the financial performance of the light rail cannot be gauged over such a short period of time. However, it is comforting to note that MEL is currently already operating at nearly 80% of its break-even level.

For Mass Transport Systems such as the light rail, the main priority is to provide a safe and reliable means of transport to the public. The Metro Express is, thus, a linchpin acting as a catalyst for economic growth and integrated development.

It is on this basis that the light rail should be appraised and in a spirit of fairness, there is need to give the light rail operator time to settle the more so that one cannot make a fair appreciation of its financial performance as the light rail was operating over a limited stretch of the alignment from 2020 to 2022.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM UNIT – SETTING-UP

(No. B/1438) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the Sustainable Tourism Unit, he will state where matters stand as to the setting up thereof, indicating how same will assist the stakeholders of the tourism industry to contribute towards Mauritius becoming Green Certified by 2030.

(Withdrawn)

FLORÉAL, RÉSIDENCE L’OISEAU COMMUNITY CENTRE – MAINTENANCE

(No. B/1439) Ms Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the *Résidence l’Oiseau* Community Centre in Floréal, she will state –

- (a) the composition of the *Comité de Gestion* thereof, and
- (b) if she has been made aware of the current state of the centre and the surroundings thereof.

(Withdrawn)

ALBION – FOOTBRIDGE – RENOVATION WORKS

(No. B/1440) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk

Management whether, in regard to the footbridge of Albion village, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the District Council of Black River, information as to where matters stand as to the renovation works to be carried out thereat.

(Reply not available)

CHAMP DE MARS – SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT PLAN

(No. A/10) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the Champ De Mars, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal City Council of Port Louis, information as if any sustainable management plan thereof has been put in place including the racecourse thereat.

Reply (The Prime Minister): The control and maintenance of the State Lands at Champ de Mars (CDM) has been vested with the Côte d'Or International Racecourse and Entertainment Complex Ltd (COIREC) following amendments brought in the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2022 in June 2022.

Since the taking over of CDM, COIREC has carried out an assessment of the state of affairs at CDM. Several technical surveys and site visits have been carried out with the collaboration of various Government institutions such as the Central Electricity Board, Central Water Authority and the Land Drainage Authority, together with engineers of the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development.

All the reports have concluded that the CDM is in a very deplorable state as no proper maintenance has been carried out over the years and the operators have been left on their own.

In this regard, COIREC has come up with a Rejuvenation Plan of the CDM, which has been approved in the Budget 2023/2024 with a project value of Rs160 m., span over 2 years, Rs25 m. for 2023/2024 and Rs135 m. for 2024/2025.

The following preliminary works have already started on the CDM –

- (i) new lightings have been installed around the racetracks for the safety and security of jockeys and horses;
- (ii) dedicated utility points have been installed for better water and electricity supply;
- (iii) two new CEB cabins have also been constructed;

- (iv) cleaning services are provided by a dedicated service provider during the race season and also during the off-racing season;
- (v) upgrading, repairs and patching works have been undertaken on the access roads, the tarmac and the main entrance of the CDM, and
- (vi) the water tank, which was unattended for years, has been cleaned. COIREC intends to replace the tank with a new one.

The CDM being flood prone, COIREC is currently working with the Land Drainage Authority on the development of a sustainable land drainage plan, which will eventually also lead to a complete revamping of the racetracks.

The racetracks are presently being maintained by the Horse Racing Organiser.

BOULEVARD VICTORIA STREET, VALLÉE PITOT – ROAD SAFETY ASSESSMENT & MEASURES

(No. A/11) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail whether, in regard to the Boulevard Victoria Street at Vallée Pitot, he will state if consideration will be given for a road safety assessment to be conducted by the Road Traffic Management Safety Unit thereat with a view to coming up with solutions having regard to the frequency of road accidents occurring thereat recently.

Reply: Boulevard Victoria (B136) road at Vallée Pitot is approximately 1.3 km in length and is one of the busiest roads with many commercial activities running on both sides of the road with many haphazard on street parking and many road intersections, and some are controlled by traffic lights.

The TMRSU has implemented several projects along Boulevard Victoria (B136) road, namely –

1. Traffic lights at its junction with Alma/La Paix Street;
2. Fixing of Pelican Crossing before its junction with Inkermann Street;
3. Construction of bus lay by opposite GMD Atchia State Secondary School;
4. Construction of footpath with handrails and drains along Boulevard Victoria (B136) road up to its junction with Eugène Laurent Street;
5. Traffic Lights and Pelican Crossing of Boulevard Victoria (B136) road at its junction with Frère Felix De Valois Street, Chateau d'Eau Street and Mahatma Gandhi Street.

Moreover, the TMRSU has already prepared a list of roads whereby a Road Safety Inspection (RSI) and Accident Blackspot Investigation (ABI), which includes Boulevard Victoria Street at Vallée Pitot.

It is to be noted that the TMRSU has recently acquired new software, iMAAP software, and is currently updating its road crash database to know the frequency of road accidents along our roads and has compiled a list of accident prone areas based on severity of crashes. The Boulevard Victoria Street at Vallée Pitot will be given due consideration for a RSI and ABI to be carried out.

The Road Safety Inspection will be carried out in a systematic manner, whereby the aim will be to identify any features that may lead to future road crashes so that remedial treatment may be implemented before crashes occur.