



SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 19 APRIL 2022

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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	Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
Dr. the Hon. Renganaden Padayachy	Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development
Hon. Mrs Fazila Jeewa-Daureeawoo, GCSK	Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity
Hon. Soomilduth Bholah	Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives
Hon. Kavydass Ramano	Minister of Environment, Solid Waste

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

Hon. Teeruthraj Hurdoyal

Minister of Public Service, Administrative
and Institutional Reforms

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

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MAURITIUS

Seventh National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 04 of 2022

Sitting of Tuesday 19 April 2022

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

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

The Ag. Prime Minister (Mr S. Obeegadoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, the Papers have been laid on the Table.

A. Office of the President

The Annual Report 2021 of the National Human Rights Commission. (In Original)

B. Prime Minister's Office

Ministry of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications

Ministry for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity

Certificate of Urgency in respect of the National Environment Cleaning Authority Bill (No. V of 2022). (In Original)

C. Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development

(a) The Economic Development Board (Real Estate Development Scheme) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 79 of 2022)

(b) The Private Pension Schemes (Technical Funding Requirement) (Amendment) Rules 2022. (Government Notice No. 80 of 2022)

(c) The Private Pension Schemes (Disclosure) (Amendment) Rules 2022. (Government Notice No. 81 of 2022)

(d) The Census Order 2022. (Government Notice No. 82 of 2022)

(e) The Census Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 83 of 2022)

D. Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security

The Annual Report 2016/2017 of the Small Farmers Welfare Fund.

E. Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change

The Annual Reports and Audited Financial Statements of the Beach Authority for Financial Years ended 30 June 2019 and 2020.

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

- (a) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 6) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 84 of 2022)
- (b) The Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 85 of 2022)
- (c) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 7) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 86 of 2022)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

PHARMACEUTICAL PRODUCTS – MARK-UP SYSTEM

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to medicines, he will state if, following the submission of the report of the Competition Commission on the Pharmaceutical Sector on 08 June 2021 and in view of the hardships being faced by sick persons, he will consider applying the following package of measures with immediate effect –

- (a) amending the present fixed mark-up system thereof to a regressive one;
- (b) authorising parallel imports of branded pharmaceutical products, and
- (c) facilitating and encouraging the widespread use of generic medicines.

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, since 1977, the price of pharmaceutical products is under mark-up price control with a special allowance of 2% for landed costs and a mark-up of 35%. All importers, including wholesalers who have been duly authorised by the Pharmacy Board of the Ministry of Health and Wellness to import medicines, are required to submit their costings along with the bills of entries and invoices for each consignment imported to the Price Fixing Unit (PFU) of my Ministry for verification.

In accordance with section 3 of the Consumer Protection (Consumer Goods) (Maximum Mark-up) Regulations 1998, importers of pharmaceutical products, as approved by the Pharmacy Board, are required to submit to my Ministry, before selling or supplying the products, not later than 10 days from the date of passing of the first bill of entry, a return of cost relating to import as well as supporting documents.

These include their invoice, bill of lading, bill of parcel, bill of entry, letter of credit and other bank document, freight and insurance voucher relating to the importation of the consumer goods and these are uploaded on the Price Fixing Information System (PFIS) of the Price Fixing Unit of the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection.

Pharmaceutical products fall under the maximum mark-up regime as per section 35 of the Consumer Protection (Price and Supplies Control) Act 1998. The price of pharmaceutical products comprises a CIF, special allowance, landed cost, and a mark-up allowance.

The purpose of a special allowance is to help the importers/wholesalers of pharmaceutical products to partially cover the following costs –

- (i) bill of entry fees;
- (ii) storage costs;
- (iii) imports local charges: documentation fees, agency fees, handling charges, clearance costs;
- (iv) transport charges to warehouse, and
- (v) bank charges and interest.

The purpose of the mark-up is to help importers/wholesalers and retailers to cover cost such as administration, distribution, storage, transport and also an element of profit.

In 2019, the Competition Commission, which is mandated to undertake general studies on the effectiveness of competition in individual sectors of the economy in Mauritius, launched a market study into the pharmaceutical sector. This study was conducted following complaints received from two wholesale pharmacies and issues raised by consumer organisations in relation to the registration process and pricing of pharmaceutical products.

The objective of the study was to understand and publicise the conditions of competition in the pharmaceutical sector and to identify any potential competition concern that may be arising therefrom. It also covers the market structure and concentration as well as identification ...

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order. Five minutes have gone by and neither points (a), (b) nor (c) have been addressed by the Minister. He is going into history. We are interested to know what he is going to do about (a), (b) and (c). Please Minister, come to the point!

Mr Speaker: Every Tuesday you do the same scenario.

Mr X. L. Duval: It happens every Tuesday, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: You know better than me. I am convinced you know the situation better than me. So, I have given my ruling so many times and you keep repeating the same objection and point of order which is not a point of order.

Please continue!

Mr Calichurn: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The objective of the study was to understand and publicise the conditions of competition in the pharmaceutical sector and to identify any potential competition concern that may be arising therefrom. It also covers the market structure and concentration as well as identification of potential hurdles to competition across the pharmaceutical supply chain.

The study aimed at ensuring that the pharmaceutical sector is not constrained by regulatory or other market conditions that might unnecessarily limit competition amongst the market player to the detriment of the consumers.

In 2020, that is, in September, views and comments were sought from interested parties on draft report for consultation and on 08 June 2021, the Competition Commission issued its report. The main recommendations of the Commission were –

- (a) facilitating access to information in relation to the Pharmacy Board's Registration Process, criteria, and applicable standards;
- (b) reviewing of pricing control policies which concern my Ministry, and
- (c) consideration to be given for amending the law for parallel imports.

The Competition Commission has also recommended that more in-depth study should be carried out in consultation with the wholesalers and retailers of pharmaceutical products for using the regressive mark-up system to lower the costs of products. It is considered that

implications of proposed changes made in the report ought to be analysed before any implementation and such an intricate and technical analysis can only be carried out effectively to a large extent by competent experts, professionals, policy makers and regulatory authorities in the field.

As such, extensive consultations are being held with all stakeholders concerned in order to assess the impact of the implementation of a Regressive Mark-up and its unintended consequences on the Pharmaceutical Sector.

Mr Speaker, Sir, coming to part (a) of the question, in regard with the specific issue of pricing policies, a Technical Committee has been set up at the level of my Ministry in July 2021 to look into the recommendations of the Competition Commission on the market study and advise on the implementation of a regressive mark-up as recommended by the WHO guideline on country pharmaceutical recommendations pertaining to price control.

The Committee comprises representatives of the Ministry of Health and Wellness; the Pharmacy Board; the Mauritius Revenue Authority (Customs); the Economic Development Board, and my Ministry. Four meetings have been held so far on 22 July 2021, 06 August 2021, 16 September 2021 and 10 February 2022. In addition, the Committee appointed a sub-committee under the Chair of the representative of the Ministry of Health and Wellness to categorise and establish a database for all the drugs and medicines in Mauritius.

The sub-committee met on 07 October 2021 and I am informed that at the next meeting of the Technical Committee, they will consider the recommendations for regressive mark-up and make recommendations accordingly. A meeting of the Technical Committee was scheduled on 13 April 2022 but could not be held as the leading member was COVID positive and under self-isolation. I have impressed on the Committee to meet as soon as possible but in any case not later than next week, that is, by 28 April 2022. Once this is done, Government will take a decision.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that in accordance with the Industrial Property Act 2019, which is administered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, branded products are Intellectual Property (IP) protected as our law provides for a national exhaustion regime. Consequently, any person who wishes to import a branded product which is already protected will mandatorily need the express authorisation of the right holder.

In this respect, my Ministry has indeed received representations from several importers of, among others, pharmaceutical products to the effect that considering the prevailing legal provisions of IP, growth of commerce is detrimental and the rights and interests of consumers are not safeguarded since importers could have imported substitute products at a much cheaper price.

In this respect, my Ministry has already made a recommendation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade to consider amending the Intellectual Property Act and replace the National Exhaustion Regime by an International Exhaustion Regime so that importation of branded products may be made and sourced from different parts of the world without the express authorisation of the right holder. I will personally have a word with my colleague to expedite matters.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (c) of the question, the issue of facilitating and encouraging the widespread use of generic medicine does not specifically fall under the mandate of my Ministry. However, in view of the fact that it is undeniable that there are economic advantages to generic medicines, I will request my colleague, the Minister of Health and Wellness to look into the matter urgently.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, the House and the nation were shocked two weeks ago when the Minister of Health and Wellness told us that, on average, for 15 products, prices went up by up to 30% annually, which means that it doubles every two and a half years; prices of medicines double every two and a half years according to the Minister of Health himself. So, I would have thought, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the Minister would have taken this seriously and instead of seeing these huge price increases, had he taken his work seriously and followed up the Competition Commission Report, we would have seen a drop in prices.

Firstly, therefore, my question, Mr Speaker, Sir, is this –

- (i) when one of the main recommendations of the Commission, which this Committee is supposed to follow up, is parallel imports, how come that there is no member here representing the Ministry concerned for International Trade, and
- (ii) why the WHO, which is directly concerned with regressive mark-up and parallel imports, which it recommends strongly, has never been contacted by the Ministry or this Committee over the last nine months? This is very amateurish.

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, like I said in my reply, I have made recommendations to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade.

(Interruptions)

And I am sure...

Mr Speaker: That will be a supplementary question.

Mr Callichurn: ...they will take into consideration the recommendation of my Ministry. This is a Technical Committee; we can co-opt members at any given point in time. I take good note of your suggestion and we will amend accordingly.

Mr X. L. Duval: Perhaps you can tell us when you sent the letter to the Ministry concerned.

Mr Speaker: Wait! The Minister has not finished. You have finished?

Mr Callichurn: Yes.

Mr X. L. Duval: When was the letter sent, and, secondly, why the Ministry of Health and Wellness is represented and not the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade? Was this a deliberate attempt to fudge the issue? When was the letter sent to the Ministry, please?

Mr Callichurn: I do not have the details...

(Interruptions)

...when was the letter sent to...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: This is not permitted!

Mr Callichurn: ...the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but...

(Interruptions)

...I can reassure...

Mr Speaker: Temple of democracy!

Mr Callichurn: I can reassure the Leader of the Opposition that a request has been made to that effect.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, nine months have gone by, prices have doubled, and there is nothing to show for this Committee who sat. Can I ask the Minister whether there is one Mr Jawaheer, the same Jawaheer who was interdicted for corruption, is he not the person representing the Ministry until recently? Was he not the person in charge of that famous sub-committee in charge of regressive mark-up, which has never up to now, after 9 months, produced a single report?

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, actually, the Leader of the Opposition is right. Mr Jawaheer was member of that Technical Committee and he was chairing the sub-committee. But, at the end of the day, it is good to note that Mr Jawaheer has been replaced by one Mrs Elahee, who is now chairing one of the sub-committees.

Mr X. L. Duval: Can I ask the Minister, given that the two regressive mark-ups and the parallel imports are strong recommendations of the WHO, why Dr. Musango and his team in Mauritius have never been contacted by this Committee to see whether they could provide assistance given the dramatic increases in prices of medicines that we have seen in recent years, as confirmed by the Minister himself - doubling in two and a half years? Why?

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, in any event, WHO has made recommendations. I do not think the presence of Dr. Musango on the Technical Committee would be advisable. We will go by the guidelines and the recommendations of the World Health Organisation.

Mr X. L. Duval: The Minister is talking about the guidelines of 2020 by the WHO. I am asking, as far as implementation is concerned, how much would it have cost you to get a team of WHO experts, Consultants to come and to help you as far as best practice? This is not the only country in the world with parallel imports, generic substitution and regressive mark-up. Why didn't you get? Or is it, in fact, that the whole Committee is just...

Mr Speaker: Too many questions!

Mr X. L. Duval: Or is it really that this whole Committee is just a joke to protect some vested interest?

Mr Callichurn: Certainly not, Mr Speaker, Sir, but any proposition is welcomed and we can consider. Dr. Musango is the World Health Organisation representative in Mauritius. We will have to seek his agreement before we co-opt him on any Technical Committee.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, at a time when the country is reeling from high prices - this morning only, as you know, there have been increases - therefore, why isn't it an urgent matter for the Minister to apply the regressive mark-up system as recommended by WHO and the Competition Commission immediately? Why isn't it an urgent matter for you, Minister? May I ask you?

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, as per the report, applying regressive mark-up is a complex issue. So, let the Technical Committee finish its work and recommend whatever recommendations they will make, and then we will consider. But I can tell you one thing straight away, in addition to the recommendations of the Competition Commission for regressive mark-up, my Ministry is also independently considering a review downwards of the maximum mark-up. Furthermore, the possibility of applying different mark-ups for different medicines is also being considered at the moment.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have the Minutes of the four Committees here, and the public will see that, in fact, nothing has been done in these four Committees except blah, blah, blah! That has happened over the last nine months, Mr Speaker, Sir, because the Ministry is just not interested in bringing prices down to protect consumers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, coming to parallel importation now, you cannot give us a date. I am sure that your PS, etc., at the back of you there can provide the date that you sent...

Mr Speaker: No! Do not comment upon...

Mr X. L. Duval: I am sure that your officers...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, do not comment upon any stranger present in the Assembly! Please, behave yourself!

Mr X. L. Duval: I am behaving. I may have done something wrong, but I am not misbehaving.

Mr Speaker: You named one Mr Jawaheer, and now you are talking about PS and all these. This is very unbecoming from a Leader of the Opposition!

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Jawaheer, Mr Speaker, Sir, is a relevant part of this question! I am sorry about that! I withdraw the reference to the PS, but I will not withdraw the reference about Mr Jawaheer. Mr Speaker, Sir, I want to ask the Minister to give us the date that the letter was sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade or is his Ministry in such disarray that he cannot provide the date of the letter?

Mr Callichurn: Well, I am informed, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the matter has been discussed with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade since last year, and I confirm that a letter...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Wait!

Mr Callichurn: ...has been sent to the relevant Ministry.

Mr Speaker: Very unbecoming! Let the Minister reply!

Mr X. L. Duval: Which date for the letter, please?

Mr Speaker: Unbecoming!

Mr Callichurn: The date for the letter...

Mr X. L. Duval: What is unbecoming?

Mr Speaker: Question! If you have a question!

Mr X. L. Duval: What is the date of the letter? That is a question!

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, I mentioned it earlier. Unfortunately, I do not have the date the letter was sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade. I confirm that a letter has been sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, and also, the matter was discussed with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade last year. So, this is to comfort the Leader of the Opposition. We are not sleeping on our laurels. We are actually looking into the recommendations of the Competition Commission.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, this morning I went to the pharmacy. I bought one Nexium at Rs55 for one, Rs550 for ten; and one Nexmezol, absolutely same medicine, at Rs14

for one, Rs140 for ten. One is an original, branded product and one is a generic. There is a huge saving that can be made by sick people in Mauritius simply by the fact that legislation should be provided not only to facilitate, but to oblige chemists and doctors to offer the generic alternative. Here, in this case, Mr Speaker, Sir, if you take two a day, it is Rs110 against Rs28.

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr X. L. Duval: I am asking the hon. Minister, Mr Speaker, Sir. In July, one of the first things that was noted, here it is at paragraph 1.4, is that recommendations pertaining to the amendment of legislation is being sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Regional Integration and International Trade.

Mr Speaker, Sir, so, why is the generic taking so long? What is happening? Where is the legislation? I may have got the wrong paragraph, but why is the legislation taking so long? There you are, Mr Speaker, Sir: '(...) informed that currently the Ministry of Health and Wellness was processing a request to legalise generic substitution by pharmacies.' I am sorry, I got the wrong paragraph before. So, this is 28 July.

Mr Speaker: So, you already put your question? Allow the Minister to reply!

Mr X. L. Duval: Yes, the question is: why 28 July? The Ministry of Health and Wellness, Mr Jawaheer...

Mr Speaker: You put your question already!

Mr X. L. Duval: ...was asked to prepare legislation...

Mr Speaker: So, I will disallow this question! You are going out of bounds!

Mr X. L. Duval: Why?

Mr Speaker: Either you leave it for the Minister to reply or...

Mr X. L. Duval: What?

Mr Speaker: Your reply, Minister!

Mr Callichurn: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, like I said earlier on, the use of generic medicines does not specifically fall under the mandate of my Ministry. We have taken the matter with the Ministry of Health and Wellness and they are currently looking into the prospect of importing

generic. I have also been informed that, currently, the Ministry of Health and Wellness, which caters for 75% of the population who are in need of medical care and medicines, they are using generic medicines at the hospital.

Mr X. L. Duval: I am talking about the private sector. Mr Speaker, Sir, two weeks ago, this is what Dr. Jagutpal said: ‘the recommendations of the Competition Commission is under the mandate of the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection.’ So, he refuses to answer questions. Here, the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection says it is the Ministry of Health and Wellness. And his own Minutes, 1.1 says that ‘the Technical Committee has been set up to examine the recommendations of the report of the Competition Commission.’

So, now, he tells us that he is not concerned with generic medicines? How come? Please, tell me to which Minister we should go? Not him? Not you? Who?

Mr Callichurn: I have not said that we are not concerned with making available to the general public the use of generic medicine. But let me remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition that it is our Government in 2016, when we announced that Mauritius would adhere to the Patent Cooperation Treaty, Hague Convention, and Madrid Protocol to facilitate registration of patent, trademark and industrial design, it had something to do with generic medicine. It is good to know that in 2020, Mr Speaker, Sir, India, which remains the main supplier of pharmaceutical products to Mauritius with 31% of the market share, followed by France 15%, Germany 9%, and UK 5%, the then Leader of the Opposition, hon. Dr. Boolell, in June 2020, during debates on 2020-2021 Budget exercise, had criticised vehemently our choice of encouraging importation of generic medicine from India.

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: The quality of the product ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: This is not addressed to you!

Mr Callichurn: Let me state what hon. Dr. Boolell stated.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: This is not addressed to you!

Mr X. L. Duval: Where is the relevance?

Mr Callichurn: Hon. Dr. Boolell...

Mr X. L. Duval: It is wasting time!

Mr Callichurn: Hon. Dr. Boolell said that we are importing substandard medication. And you are talking about the same generic medicine which the Ministry of Health is currently importing, which represents 31% of the medicines imported from India.

Mr X. L. Duval: We are talking about...

Mr Callichurn: So, which is which?

Mr Speaker: Wait!

Mr Callichurn: Which is which?

Mr X. L. Duval: We are talking about medicines much cheaper to the public going to the pharmacy. Three quarters of medicines are purchased privately in the pharmacy; the Minister should know that. Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a bias by importers and pharmacists not to offer generic products because the mark-up, as it stands, is far, far less the profit on generic products than on branded products. That is why we need legislation to make sure that doctors, chemists and pharmacists prescribe that.

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr X. L. Duval: I am going to ask the hon. Minister to just tell me how many times has Government checked the quality of products imported in Mauritius? I will give you the answer. Never in the last few years!

Mr Speaker: No, you cannot do that!

Mr X. L. Duval: And this is what the previous Leader of the Opposition meant, I am sure.

Mr Speaker: You can't...

Mr X. L. Duval: Never! Tell me now, how many times have you checked?

Mr Speaker: You put a question and you give an answer.

Mr X. L. Duval: Can I move on to the next question?

Mr Speaker: Let him reply!

(Interruptions)

Then, you are wasting the time of the House!

Mr Callichurn: The difference between branded name and generic drugs, Mr Speaker, Sir, while branded name drug refers to the name given by producing companies, generic refers to drug produced after the active ingredient of the branded name drug. So, basically, the same ingredient, the same chemical composition or molecule are being used to produce generic medicines. So, there is no substandard whatever.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, every country has a quality control laboratory to check the quality of medicine being given to the population. I mean you do not need to go back to school to know this.

Mr Speaker, Sir, now, may I talk about transparency and corruption? Because the market study has a whole chapter on the process which is opaque and perverted, the amount of time it is taking, the possibility of conflict of interest on the Pharmacy Board and the Therapeutics Committee, the guidelines for registration which are still now...

Mr Speaker: The question! The question!

Mr X. L. Duval: ... not publicly available, Mr Speaker, Sir. People being refused registration of medicines without giving any reasons.

Mr Speaker: Time running out.

Mr X. L. Duval: Yes, may I finish? I would like to ask the hon. Minister what has his Committee - I don't even see anything being mentioned on that - done to ensure that the concerns of the Competition Commission, falling under his Ministry, have been taken into account so far as the process which has been taken over by some importers, about the process of registration of medicine?

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Technical Committee is still working on the recommendation. I have not been communicated with any final recommendation yet.

Mr X. L. Duval: You are going to table it.

Mr Callichurn: So, as soon as the work will be completed, I am sure I will be apprised of same and I will inform the House accordingly.

Mr Speaker: Time over! Prime Minister's Question Time! Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQs B/385 and B/400 will be replied by the hon. Acting Prime Minister, time permitting. PQs B/335 and B/339 have been withdrawn.

Mr Bhagwan: B/315!

MR D. N. S. W. - CHAIRPERSON - ICTA - OFFICIAL MISSION

(No. B/315) **Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to Mr D. N. S. W., Chairperson of the Information and Communication Technologies Authority, he will state if he has approved the participation thereof in an official mission in France from 21 to 24 February 2022 and, if so, indicate –

- (a) when, and
- (b) the amount of *per diem* paid thereto and for which period.

The Ag. Prime Minister (Mr S. Obeegadoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, according to established practice, participation in an official mission of Board members or Senior Management of a Public or Statutory Body is subject to the approval of the relevant parent Ministry.

In this particular case, I am informed that no approval has been conveyed by the hon. Prime Minister for Mr D. N. S. W. to proceed on official mission to France from 21 to 24 February 2022. As such, parts (a) and (b) of the question do not arise.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I know from the Ag. Prime Minister which authority has paid the air ticket and how much?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I am sorry. I did not hear the last part of the question.

Mr Bhagwan: Which authority has paid the air ticket and the cost of the air ticket; whether he has been informed of that?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Well, I am given to understand that this was not an official mission and, therefore, Mr D. N. S. W., inasmuch as he travelled privately, would be responsible for any cost attendant to his trip.

Mr Bhagwan: The Ag. Prime Minister has stated that this Chairperson travelled privately. Can he inform the House whether, during that private trip which he has effected, he had official meetings on behalf of the ICTA with French authorities and French organisations and whether reports have been forwarded to the parent Ministry on these so-called meetings he had during his private trip?

The Ag. Prime Minister: So, again, I did not hear clearly the last question. Have reports been...?

Mr Bhagwan: ... circulated to the parent Ministry, to the Prime Minister's Office?

The Ag. Prime Minister: So, again, for a private trip, there is no need for reports to be circulated to the parent Ministry. But inasmuch as the question was asked, I have enquired, and this is what my information indicates. Both at personal level and at institutional level, there is a long relationship of friendship and the working relationship between the regulatory authority in Mauritius, that is, the ICTA, and regulatory authorities in France, that is, the *Autorité de régulation des communications électroniques, des postes (l'Arcep)*, the *Agence nationale des fréquences (ANFR)* and the *Autorité de régulation de la communication audiovisuelle et numérique (l'Arcom)*. Now, accordingly, in the course of his visit to France, I understand that Mr D. N. S. W. would have met Mr Gilles Brégant, the General Director of ANFR and Mr Jean-Pierre Le Pesteur, its Chairperson, as well as Mrs Laure de La Raudière, President of Arcep and Mr Roch-Olivier Maistre, President of Arcom, in the course of that trip.

Mr Bhagwan: May I ask the Ag. Prime Minister to enquire with the Prime Minister's Office whether the Finance Department of the ICTA issued a purchasing order to one travel agency for the purchase of the air tickets of the part-time Chairperson, Mr D. N. S. W.?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I will repeat what I said, Mr Speaker, Sir. Inasmuch as this was a private trip, neither Government nor the ICTA will or has been responsible for any attended costs.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Collendavelloo: B/316.

RECTIFICATION OF CIVIL STATUS DOCUMENTS – APPLICATIONS

(No. B/316) Mr I. Collendavelloo (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to applications for rectification of civil status documents, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Civil Status Office, information as to if measures are being taken for same to be dealt with expeditiously so as not to deprive persons of their fundamental human rights to be recognised as persons before the law, in accordance with Article 6 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 16 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 5 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Right, following the observations and findings of the Supreme Court in the judgment dated 11 April 2022, in the matter of Ms. Marie Ange Brique (born Keil) v. The Registrar of Civil Status.

The Ag. Prime Minister (Mr S. Obeegadoo): May I thank the hon. gentleman for drawing our attention to the judgement delivered on 11 April 2022 by the Supreme Court of Mauritius in the matter of Marie Ange Brique (born Keil) vs the Registrar of Civil Status. The gist of the case, Mr Speaker, Sir, as hon. Members of the House may be interested in learning, is that upon making an application in November 2017 for a birth certificate in order to obtain a new National Identity Card, Mrs Marie Ange Brique, born on 10 October 1964, was informed that she is, according to the Civil Status record, registered as having passed away on 05 April 1973 at the age of 8 years old as her birth certificate was annotated with the mention –

“Deceased on 05/04/1973”.

Now, Mrs Marie Ange Brique believes that her birth certificate was erroneously used to declare the death of her half-sister, Marie Rosinette Keil, who passed away on 05 April 1973 at the age of 8. She was, therefore, advised by the Civil Status Officer to seek redress before the Supreme Court, which she eventually did.

Mr Speaker, Sir, after considering the evidence on record, the Judge concluded that the Plaintiff was wrongly declared dead instead of her half-sister, Marie Rosinette Keil and, therefore, ordered the Defendant, that is, the Registrar of Civil Status to, I quote –

- “(a) delete the annotation “Deceased on/*décédé(e) le - 05/04/1973*” in the plaintiff’s birth certificate;
- (b) insert the annotation “Deceased on/*décédée le - 05/04/1973*” in the birth certificate of Marie Rosinette Keil;
- (c) amend the death certificate No. 10 of 1973 of Baie du Cap Registration Office in the District of Savanne by deleting the names “Marie Ange” and the corresponding National Identity Card and replacing them by the names “Marie Rosinette” and the corresponding National Identity Card respectively, and
- (d) cause this Order to be registered and the relevant entries to be made in the appropriate registers.”

It is apposite to note that in the observations and findings of the judgement, the hon. Judge stated, and I quote –

“I must at the very outset state that it is a matter of regret that this case took four years to be in shape. It must be highlighted that the State is under the obligation, under various international and regional instruments to which it is a party, to see to it that everybody’s right to recognition as a person before the law is upheld (see, for example, Article 6 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 16 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 5 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights). It cannot be denied that the very enjoyment by a person of fundamental human rights, including his or her access to health care and other services, is predicated in contemporary Mauritius on that person having a valid birth certificate and a national identity card. It is incumbent, therefore, on the defendant and other relevant authorities to ensure that any such application is dealt with on an expedited basis.”

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius fully ascribes to the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights that I have just quoted and to which the question refers, which all assert the right to recognition of a person before the law.

I am informed by the Registrar of Civil Status that there are a multitude of factors that may contribute to delays in the preparation and consideration of such cases. Keeping in mind that this process involves, *inter alia*, and I will give the examples of the different steps involved –

- (a) the issue of Plaintiffs with Summons to concerned parties by the Supreme Court, including the Registrar of Civil Status;
- (b) seeking legal assistance from the Attorney General's Office by the Registrar of Civil Status upon receipt of the Summons;
- (c) submission by the Registrar of Civil Status of official copies of civil extracts and Photostats of Registers to the Attorney General's Office;
- (d) carrying out of relevant enquiries by the Police Department;
- (e) carrying out of relevant social enquiries by the Probation Office;
- (f) identification of witnesses and their availability and evidence to the case, and
- (g) cases being called Proforma by the Supreme Court.

I am further informed at the level of the Civil Status Division, that the following measures have already been taken to mitigate and/or avoid such errors –

- (a) in 2001 the Civil Status Database was introduced – a computerised Civil Status Database – whereby all Civil Registrations are recorded electronically;
- (b) further, section 38(1)(b) of the Civil Status Act 1981 has been amended in August 2020, so that officers of the Civil Status Office have the obligation to, *inter alia*, electronically verify the accuracy of the information on the deceased before registering the death;
- (c) moreover, section 50 of the Civil Status Act 1981, which relates to Amendment of Entries and is applicable in such matters, has been further reinforced by amending section 3 of the Civil Status Act 1981 in August 2020, in addition to section 3(3)(ga) to cater for mistakes of a clerical, typing and numerical nature, and
- (d) finally, the death registration module was enhanced in April 2021 and details pertaining to parents and spouse are automatically pulled from the Civil Status Database, which was not possible before the introduction of the module.

Mr Speaker, Sir, further to the judgement in the matter of Marie Ange Brique (born Keil) vs The Registrar of Civil Status dated 11 April 2022, all concerned parties will be called upon to review the procedures adopted so as to expedite matters in such cases. I have requested the Prime

Minister's Office to coordinate this endeavour and I shall, of course, welcome any other suggestions that the hon. gentleman may have.

Mr Collendavelloo: In the context of that new development from the Prime Minister's Office, would it be considered that pending applications in such similar cases, consideration be given to exempting applicants from the need to have to produce their National Identity Card until the matter is finally sorted out?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Once again, Mr Speaker, Sir, the suggestion is most welcome. I do not know what the actual implications of the suggestion made by the hon. gentleman might be, but I shall certainly be pleased to bring it to the attention of the hon. Prime Minister.

Mr Uteem: This issue of right to be recognised as a person also crops up in matters of tardy declaration and there is a lot of people, including children living in shelters, who do not know who their parents are and they are having problems once they reach the age of 18 to be recognised because the *Ministère public* cannot give a favourable conclusion so that a birth certificate can be issued.

May I also ask the Ag. Prime Minister to see with his officers whether there can be an expedited channel for tardy declaration where children reaching the age of 18 have to be given an Identity Card, and through no fault of theirs, because the system requires going through all this Court processes, it takes years for them to be issued with an ID Card?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I fully understand the concerns of the hon. Member. Fortunately, these cases are less and less frequent, but if the hon. gentleman has any specific case in mind, I shall be very happy to draw the Prime Minister's attention to any such case.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs B/319, B/322, B/325, B/327, B/329, B/331 and B/332 have been withdrawn.

Next question!

Dr. Boolell: PQ B/317, please.

SCOMAT, PAILLES – COCAINE SEIZURE – JULY 2019

(No. B/317) **Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the 95 kgs of cocaine worth Rs1.6 billion discovered in the engine of an excavator in July 2019 on the site of Scomat, in Pailles, 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 by the Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit.

The Ag. Prime Minister (Mr S. Obeegadoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I propose to reply to PQs B/317 and B/327 together inasmuch as they relate to the same subject matter.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is proper that I should remind the House that on Wednesday 10 July 2019 at 16.20 hours, following a request made by the Service Manager of Scomat Ltd situated at Grewals Lane, Pailles, a team from the Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit (ADSU) proceeded to the location of this company.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that –

- (i) the ADSU officers were informed by the Manager of the company that on the same day at around 15.30 hours, while two employees were inspecting the engine of a wheel loader imported by the company from Brazil, they found three black kit bags which were concealed in the engine compartment near the exhaust muffler of the said vehicle. The bags were handed over for safekeeping to the Store Supervisor, who, whilst checking the three bags, came across several rectangular parcels, each containing suspicious substances;
- (ii) the three bags were handed over to ADSU Officers who opened them in the presence of the employees on the spot at that moment and the contents thereof were suspected to be dangerous drugs. An enquiry into the matter was immediately initiated by the ADSU and the exhibits were secured and sent to the Forensic Science Laboratory for examination;

- (iii) I am informed that in the course of the enquiry, the drugs secured from the three bags were identified as cocaine. The total weight of the drugs seized was 85 kgs 166.8 gms of a street value amounting to Rs1.4 billion, and
- (iv) I am also informed that to date, statements from 18 persons, including employees of Scomat Ltd have been recorded by ADSU Officers. So far, no evidence has been obtained that could lead to the arrest of any person and that could also shed further light on the circumstances of this discovery and help in the investigation.

But the hon. Members may be interested to learn that according to further information obtained from the Commissioner of Police, the Police inquiry was able to determine the itinerary of the wheel loader from the port of embarkation to its destination.

According to intelligence, the vehicle was embarked in Brazil for Mauritius. The wheel loader was off loaded in Morocco and re-embarked for shipment to Mauritius.

I am also given to understand that ADSU has liaised with Interpol as well as the Brazilian and Moroccan authorities for further intelligence that could have provided a lead in the enquiry. However, the exercise has proved extremely complex as it requires the collaboration of a multiplicity of international agencies.

In view of the complexity of the investigation in this case, I am informed that the Commissioner of Police is submitting an interim report to the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice as to the way forward.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ag. Prime Minister has given almost a copycat reply of what the Prime Minister said. Can we ask the Ag. Prime Minister why is the enquiry taking so long? It is more than three years since the investigation started. Why is it taking so long? Where is your unflinching commitment to wage war on drugs? Is this your unflinching commitment?

Mr Speaker: Let us hear the reply!

The Ag. Prime Minister: Is the question over? I would invite the hon. gentleman, through you, Mr Speaker, Sir, not to get excited. That would be bad for his health.

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: You are talking of discord!

Mr Speaker: Okay!

Dr. Boolell: Where is your unflinching commitment to wage war on drugs?

Mr Speaker: No! You are repeating your question!

Dr. Boolell: I am not repeating! I am saying facts!

Mr Speaker: No! You are repeating the same facts!

An hon. Member: *Navin pe koze laba!*

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: But it has to ... into the heart...

Mr Speaker: No! You are very romantic. Keep quiet!

The Ag. Prime Minister: Beyond the political posturing of the hon. gentleman, Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No! Come on!

(Interruptions)

What is happening now?

Dr. Boolell: Where is the political posturing?

Mr Speaker: Let him answer! Let him give his reply! You cannot bully a Minister!

(Interruptions)

Yes, but he should give his reply!

(Interruptions)

You are not interested in the reply?

(Interruptions)

Are you sure?

Dr. Boolell: Carry on.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Thank you. Mr Speaker, Sir, it would seem that for some, when they are in Opposition, Question Time is a matter of intimidation and bullying, and I am afraid this does not work. We can certainly have a proper, courteous and polite exchange in the course of Question Time.

Now, in this particular case, I have taken the pain to answer the hon. gentleman as well as hon. Nagalingum who asked the same question. I have provided all the information that is at hand, as provided for by the Police. We are well aware that in order not to, should I say destabilise, interfere with a Police investigation, of course, we cannot go into each and every detail. This is a case where drug has been found in Mauritius, on a vehicle imported from overseas.

The Police have taken statements from all persons who could conceivably have some relevant information to offer. The Police have been in contact with all the international agencies and the Police have been able to establish where this excavator/wheel loader came from, how it travelled to Mauritius, where it transited and how it was disembarked here in Mauritius and taken to Pailles.

The investigation at this point in time has not yielded any further information, and the hon. gentleman, who has been in Government, as well as hon. Nagalingum, might realise that such cases are exceedingly difficult to solve. So, to be committed to fight with all our means against the drug scourge; and I think the number of seizures over the last couple of years testifies to the will of Government, to the will of this Prime Minister, to the will of the Police to protect our population, and to unmask and act against drug importers and drug peddlers.

However, that does not mean that we live in a perfect world where each and every case can instantaneously be solved. Now, in this particular case, on the basis of the information yielded by the investigation, as provided for by law, the Commissioner of Police proposes to refer the interim report to the Director of Public Prosecution for him to advise as to the way forward, and I hope the hon. gentleman will see no objection to that.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, my concern is the concern of one and all, and I am glad that the Ag. Prime Minister has stated that the enquiry is still ongoing. My concern is also with the ADSU. Is he aware that in the past, exhibits kept at ADSU Headquarters have disappeared and

replaced by substitute like the 'Boost'. This is why I am saying these drugs finally ended up in the streets to maim, to kill our kids.

Mr Speaker: No, this is an assumption!

Dr. Boolell: It is not an assumption! I am saying the truth! Are you not aware that in the past ...

Mr Speaker: No, don't discuss with me!

(Interruptions)

Don't discuss with me!

(Interruptions)

The good part of it is that you allow some laughter!

Dr. Boolell: The Ag. Prime Minister has been...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No!

Dr. Boolell: He is aware of it, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: No debate! No comments! Let the Ag. Prime Minister reply!

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, I do concede that the hon. gentleman is much more aware than I am of what took place prior to 2014.

(Interruptions)

But the question does not relate to the past. And the hon. gentleman who is a seasoned parliamentarian - quite apart from realising that he should not constantly interrupt the person who is trying to answer his question - should be aware that supplementary questions are meant to elucidate the question asked. So, if the hon. gentleman would wish to have information pertaining to past cases, he is most welcome to present a proper question and I am sure the Prime Minister will address his concerns.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, le Premier ministre suppléant parle de 85 kilos de cocaïne alors qu'en 2019, la communication de la police avait parlé de 95 kilos de cocaïne. Deuxième petite chose que je voudrais savoir du Premier ministre suppléant, il concède, lui-même, après trois ans - 2019 à 2022 - que l'enquête n'a pas abouti, que personne jusqu'ici n'a été arrêté. Donc, trois ans après, M. le Premier ministre suppléant, peut-on conclure que les trafiquants de drogue, à la hauteur de R 1.6 milliards, sont toujours dans la nature et continuent de nuire à nos enfants et à la famille mauricienne ? Peut-on conclure cela ?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Quelle était la question au final ? 'Peut-on conclure que les trafiquants de drogue sont toujours dans la nature ?' D'abord, M. le député attire mon attention sur le fait que je me suis référé à une quantité de 85 kilos alors que la police aurait, antérieurement, parlé de 95 kilos. Je n'ai pas ces renseignements. On m'a communiqué le chiffre de 85 kilos. En ce qui concerne les responsables, il doit bien y avoir un responsable. Il y a bien un responsable quelque part. Ce responsable se trouve-t-il...

(Interruptions)

Pardon, je me permets d'éclairer l'Assemblée nationale. Je comprends que 95 kilos *was inclusive of packaging*.

(Interruptions)

Voilà la différence selon les renseignements qui m'ont été fournis. Si vous avez d'autres renseignements - parce qu'il est important qu'on sache la vérité - il est de votre devoir de nous communiquer l'information. Et je vois que M. le Premier ministre, le 7 juillet 2020, s'était référé, je cite -

"the three bags were found to contain a total amount of 92.5 kgs (including also the wrappings)"

Donc, c'est probablement la réponse à cette différence que vous avez relevée, avec raison. Donc, il y a bien un responsable. Est-ce que ce responsable est au Brésil ? Est-ce qu'il est au Maroc ? Est-ce qu'il est à Maurice ? Nul ne le sait à ce stade. Est-ce que cette drogue était destinée à Maurice ou est-ce qu'il y a eu quelque part, parmi les responsables, l'erreur ? Nul ne le sait. L'enquête s'est efforcée, d'abord, de retracer la route qu'aurait suivie ce véhicule pour parvenir à Maurice. La police tente toujours d'obtenir, de l'étranger, des renseignements quant à ce qui

s'est passé au moment de l'embarquement ou du transit. Mais à Maurice, à ce stade, nous n'avons pas plus d'informations. Et c'est pour cela, comme le prévoit la loi, que tout le dossier va être référé au *DPP* pour que nous soyons mieux instruits quant à la voie à suivre ; que la police soit mieux instruite.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs B/334, B/341 and B/342 have been withdrawn.

Hon. Members, the Table has also been advised that PQ B/362 will be replied by the hon. Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development. PQ B/415 will be replied by the hon. Ag. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development. PQs B/353, B/368, B/406, B/420 have been withdrawn.

Hon. David!

POINTE AUX SABLES ROAD (B31) - UPGRADING

(No. B/345) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the project for the upgrading of Pointe aux Sables Road (B31), he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to the –

- (a) name of the contractors therefor;
- (b) scope of works;
- (c) total cost, and
- (d) works schedule thereof.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Road Development Authority (RDA) that the upgrading of Pointe aux Sables Road (B31) concerns works from its junction with Albion Road (B78) to the Prisons Road at Petit Verger, over a length of 2.7 kilometres. The road also provides an alternative route to La Tour Koenig Industrial Zone.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to parts (a) and (c) of the question, I am informed by the RDA that following a national bidding exercise carried out, the contract for the upgrading works was awarded to Gamma Construction Ltd for a total amount of Rs114.5 m., inclusive of VAT.

However, only an amount of Rs96.7 m., inclusive of VAT, was paid to the contractor, based on the value of the works completed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the initial scope of work covered a distance of 2.7 kilometres, of which 2.5 kilometres have been carried out and completed by the RDA.

With respect to the remaining 200 metres of road, as the National Development Unit (NDU) had already appointed a contractor in November 2018, namely Best Construct Co. Ltd, for the construction of drain at Crescerelle Avenue, the RDA and the NDU jointly agreed that the latter's Contractor would undertake this upgrading work with a view to ensuring a proper integrated drainage and road network.

In this respect, the Contractor, that is, Best Construct Co. Ltd revised its initial contract value for the construction of the drain from Rs25.2 m. to Rs31.5 m. inclusive of VAT, to enable it not only to cater for the 200 metres road which were initially to be undertaken by the RDA but also for the additional works relating to the enlargement and resurfacing of the Pointe aux Sables Road (B31) over some 500 metres from the junction with Avenue Crescerelle up to the sea outlet and for extension work uphill at Avenue Crescerelle.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed that in view of some contractual issues, on one hand, and, as there were land acquisition issues, on the other hand, the construction of the drain project was put in abeyance in year 2019. Subsequently, after having obtained all necessary clearances, and taking into account the new resources brought in by the contractor, works have resumed early this month and are expected to be completed by 31 July 2022. In fact, there is a close supervision and monitoring on the contractor's work to ensure that the revised contractual completion date is respected.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that the works undertaken by the RDA consisted of the following –

- (i) widening and upgrading of the road, with a maximum width of 7.0 metres and a shoulder of 1.2 metres wide on both sides;
- (ii) realignment of the horizontal and vertical curves;
- (iii) construction of a box culvert;
- (iv) provision of drainage structures;

- (v) provision of miscellaneous road safety furniture, such as road markings, handrails, traffic signs, cat's eyes, etc.;
- (vi) temporary traffic diversions;
- (vii) demolition of the existing masonry structures, block wall and their reconstruction wherever required, and
- (viii) obviously, as in all projects, we have the rerouting of services of Telecom, CEB, CWA, etc.

Those undertaken by the NDU, included, in addition to the works I mentioned earlier, the following –

- (i) construction of 955 metres of covered reinforced concrete drain with a width of 700 millimetres;
- (ii) construction of 100 metres of covered reinforced concrete drain of a width of 1000 millimetres;
- (iii) provision of kerbs, slab and gratings;
- (iv) and here also, relocation of services, and after
- (v) there will be also the reinstatement of the road along the drain edge.

I am informed that, as at date, the outstanding works from Avenue Dauphin to Sea Outlet to be completed by the NDU are –

- (i) the resurfacing of 104 metres of road;
- (ii) construction of 50 metres of drains of a width of 700mm, and
- (iii) construction of 55 metres of drains of a width of 1000mm.

With respect to part (d) of the question, I am informed by the RDA that the upgrading works started on 09 February 2019 and were completed on 23 December 2019, before the contractual completion date of 10 February 2020. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr David: Merci, M. le président. Ce projet d'élargissement et de rénovation de la route de Pointe aux Sables, figurera très certainement dans le prochain rapport du Directeur de l'audit comme l'un des projets avec une mauvaise gestion et j'ose le dire avec un gaspillage de fonds

publics. Le ministre dans sa réponse a affirmé que nous parlons de 200 m de route qui dure depuis 2019. Je précise pour ceux qui nous écoutent qu'il s'agit de 200 m et non pas de 200 m aller-retour comme dirait l'autre. Sur le site de la NDU, un document émis en date du 18 février 2021 précise l'exclusion de *Best Construct Co. Ltd* de tout exercice d'approvisionnement pour une période de six mois à effet du 17 février 2021, soit en plein projet d'*upgrading* de cette *road*. Puis-je savoir de l'honorable ministre les sanctions qui ont été prises au-delà de cette exclusion et des pénalités qui ont été appliquées à *Best Construct Co. Ltd* pour ce chantier exécrable ?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is easy to come and do politics on anything and everything. I have mentioned earlier. Yes, in the first instance, it was 200 m but then it was when RDA and NDU tried to do the project together. So, we have extended the scope of work to 500 m. So, once again, it is not 500 m back and forth; it is 500 m.

So, pertaining to Best Construct Co. Ltd - I have said in my reply - we have had contractual issues. But also, there were land acquisition issues. And yes, Best Construct Co. Ltd was sanctioned, and the hon. Member will agree that it is a company employing so many people. Trying to take sanction which may please *la galerie* but there will be fathers and mothers working in that company as *mason, labourer* who will end up in the street. So, this Government has a concern about these people also. And that company was given the chance after having been suspended to remedy, because that work has already started. Now, in the middle of it, if we were to go and find another contractor, firstly, it would have taken much more time. And no other contractor, as we have seen in the past, will try to come and complete the work of someone else, then the cost will be higher. And in this case, we have done what needed to be done. The contractor is on site and is working, and the work is going to be completed on, as I said, 31 July this financial year. And as I said in my reply again, the contractor is working, the NDU is supervising. Some issues that happened on one of those sites are not totally under our control. But we do as much as we want. We have issues on those construction sites. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr David: M. le président, j'emprunte cette route régulièrement chaque semaine et je dois dire que depuis deux mois je n'ai vu aucuns travaux de réaliser comme l'affirme M. le ministre. Cette question que j'ai adressée aujourd'hui au ministre des Infrastructures nationales fait écho à l'ajournement que j'ai soulevé à trois reprises dans cette Chambre en adressant ma

question à l'honorable Ganoo pour un problème de transport routier. Et je m'adresse aujourd'hui au nom des pères et des mères du Morcellement Soobrah qui depuis trois ans voient un trafic incessant de bus dévié dans leur morcellement le long de la rue Guillaume Apollinaire, pour laquelle j'ai déposé une pétition mardi dernier. Ces habitants n'en peuvent plus d'une déviation qui avait été annoncée comme étant temporaire et qui dure depuis trois ans. Le ministre peut-il s'engager pour la date de juillet 2022 ? Parce que des dates on en a parlé, reparlé à chaque fois dans cette Chambre à propos de ce projet qui me paraît interminable. Et je le redis, c'est un chantier exécrationnel réalisé par *Best Construct Co. Ltd.*

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, it all depends how the hon. Member wants to see things. Whether he wants to see half full or half empty, it is up to him. As he mentioned, he is going there since two months. But I said in my reply again - they don't listen, Mr Speaker, Sir - work has started early this month. So, obviously if he was there two months before, there would not have been anything. That is logic. And, Mr Speaker, Sir, 90% of the job has been completed by the RDA. It has been done wonderfully. The contractor was Gamma Construction. *S'il veut polémiquer, on va polémiquer. On va passer des heures à s'expliquer.* I have said work has started again and it is going to be completed by 31 July 2022. Thank you.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. The hon. Minister is very tolerant towards the contractor Best Construct Co. Ltd. Is he aware that this contractor has been defaulting several contracts and currently, there are Court cases between the CWA and this contractor? Yes?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't think I have said I was tolerant against any contractor. I think that hon. Member will have to withdraw what he said because this is imputing motives firstly.

Mr Speaker: You have to withdraw that.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are talking about public funds for contracts which are...

Mr Speaker: Withdraw that, hon. Member.

Mr Osman Mahomed: No, I am not - let me explain.

Mr Speaker: You insist?

Mr Osman Mahomed: Can I explain first?

Mr Speaker: You insist or you withdraw it?

Mr Osman Mahomed: I will withdraw it.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You are imputing motives. There has been a point of order. You are imputing motives.

(Interruptions)

Why don't you withdraw it?

Mr Osman Mahomed: I withdraw.

Mr Speaker: You withdraw. Okay. You reply to this question.

Mr Hurreeram: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Those contracts are allocated by the CPB and the PPO; they are the ones who allocate the contracts. The Minister and the Ministry have nothing to do with it. A contract, as I said, that has already started, where someone has already been working; we have seen cases in other constituencies where one contractor, like for instance, in the case of PAD Co., *on a eu tous les difficultés du monde pour retrouver des 'contracteurs' à venir terminer les travaux parce qu'ils ne veulent pas. Alors, dans ce cas-là, on a pu faire ce qu'il fallait et les travaux sont en train d'être faits. Les Project Managers sont en train de suivre et les fonctionnaires de ce pays sont en train de faire leur travail. Il ne faut pas venir au Parlement, sous l'immunité parlementaire et s'attaquer aux fonctionnaires.*

Mr Bhagwan: In his reply, the Minister has made mention of the project ending at *Petit Verger* junction; this is part of our Constituency No. 20. Has the Minister been informed from junction *Petit Verger* to *Pointe aux Sables* falling under Constituency No.20, wherein Gamma Civic did the project, that there were no provision for drains, only foot paths, which is causing a lot of hardship to the inhabitants in cases of heavy rain. Can the Minister, at least, direct his officers to have a survey done from junction *Petit Verger* up to *Pointe aux Sables* with regard to land drainage?

Mr Hurreeram: I take note, Mr Speaker, Sir, but you will appreciate that this does not form part of the main question.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs B/369, B/373, B/380, B/415, B/419, B/417, B/433, B/375, B/383, B/402, B/429, B/386, B/387, B/405 have been withdrawn.

Next question!

Mr Abbas Mamode: PQ B/346.

**PORT LOUIS - AUTO/MOTORCYCLES - LOUD NOISE EMISSION -
CONTRAVENTIONS - 2020-2022**

(No. B/346) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second 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 emitting loud noises, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the *Police de L'Environnement*, information as to the number of contraventions booked in Port Louis over the past two years.

Mr Ramano: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the *Police de l'Environnement* that 74 contraventions comprising 37 from Port Louis South and 37 from Port Louis North, have been established in the region of Port Louis since January 2020 to 14 April 2022 in regard to loud noises emanating from auto/motorcycles causing nuisance in breach of the Road Traffic (Construction and Use of Vehicles) Regulations 2010. The offences related mainly to –

- (i) breach of Regulations 83(2) and 83(3) regarding exhaust silencer system not in good and efficient order, and alteration of silencer system respectively, and
- (ii) breach of Regulation 84(3) for using a motor-vehicle causing excessive noise.

In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, during the same period, 166 contraveners have been also booked by the Traffic Branch of the Police and 484 contraventions have been established by local Police in the region of Port Louis. I am additionally informed by the Ministry of Land Transport and Light Rail that, since March 2020 to March 2022, the authorised Vehicle Examination Stations reported 794 cases where fitness certificates could not be issued to two wheelers 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, which was amended in 2018, 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 for noise emission.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to highlight that, as I mentioned in my reply to PQ B/248 in July 2020, 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, Mr Speaker, Sir, sensitisation campaigns in relation to noise pollution arising from vehicles are being carried out by the *Police de l'Environnement* through Community Policing with the support of Neighbourhood officers from Police Stations throughout the island. Regular mobile patrols and Stop and Check exercises are being conducted at sensitive areas.

In fact, besides the alteration of silencers which causes noise nuisance, my Ministry is currently also reviewing the Environment Protection (Control of Noise) Regulations 2008 to address other types of noise nuisances such as playing loud music in vehicles and bungalows. The endeavour is 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 for the offence of making or causing noise to be made from a vehicle, building or premises.

Mr Abbas Mamode: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, this subject has been raised in Parliament so many times in the past but unfortunately the situation seems to worsen.

Will the Minister request the *Police de l'Environnement* to work in collaboration with the other units of the Police authority for better control and results?

Mr Ramano: M. le président, c'est vrai de dire que le *main enforcement agency* c'est la Police de l'Environnement. Mais comme *Enforcement Officers*, les membres de la force régulière sont des *Enforcement Officers*. Nous avons eu des séances de travail avec le Commissaire de police, qui nous a donné la garantie, bien sûr, que les autres membres de la force policière seront d'un apport certain pour qu'on puisse sévir contre ces cas de pollution sonores, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether his Ministry is considering reinforcing the team of *Police de l'Environnement* to address the problem for a better result?

Mr Ramano: M. le président, le personnel de la Police de l'Environnement s'élève à 34 officiers. Et là, nous avons eu des séances de travail avec la force policière, nous sommes en train de voir avec le Commissaire de police la possibilité de renforcer l'équipe. Je suis tout à fait d'accord avec l'honorable membre qu'il y va du bienfondé du combat contre les différentes formes de pollutions et qu'on puisse renforcer l'équipe au niveau de la Police de l'Environnement.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. The hon. Minister has listed a series of measures and actions that his Ministry is taking, but in so far as modified and altered exhaust silencers are concerned, can I ask him whether this action goes the workshop that does the modifications for the motorcycle and motor vehicle to become so noisy because if the problem is tackled at source, maybe the Police will have an easier job?

Mr Ramano: M. le président, je dois dire que nous sommes en train de travailler là-dessus. A titre de parallèle, nous sommes venus de l'avant avec les nouveaux règlements en ce qui concerne les véhicules fumigènes. En ce qui concerne les règlements concernant les véhicules fumigènes, oui, les règlements nous donnent la possibilité d'entrer dans les garages pour faire des vérifications pour constater sur place s'il y a lieu de sévir contre les véhicules fumigènes. Mais en ce qui concerne les *silencers*, à ce stade des choses la loi ne nous donne pas

cette possibilité mais c'est une éventualité sur laquelle nous sommes en train travailler, M. le président.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, the issue of auto/motorcycle emitting loud noises has been canvassed in this House for more than ten years by me and other colleagues from the Opposition side. I must say up to now the result has been very disappointing. Having said that, the hon. Minister will agree with me that the only way forward to have positive results in this fight is to make our law, to make penalties much tougher, including the seizure of auto/motorcycles emitting loud noises for habitual offenders. I heard the hon. Minister say there is a maximum penalty for Rs5000, I can tell you it is not enough. You just have to come in Port Louis...

Mr Speaker: No!

Mr Ameer Meea: ...and I am sure in all the cities as well and you will see...

Mr Speaker: Let him consider.

Mr Ameer Meea: ...*l'ampleur de la situation* !

Mr Ramano: M. le président, comme je l'ai mentionné, nous prenons très sérieusement le problème de pollution sonore. Et comme je l'ai mentionné dans ma réponse initiale, nous sommes en train de finaliser l'amendement de l'*Environment Protection (Control of Noise) Regulations* 2008. L'idée c'est de combattre la pollution sonore sous toutes les formes et nous sommes en train de venir de l'avant avec des propositions en ce qui concerne les *fix penalties*. Les *fix penalties* iront jusqu'à une somme de Rs10,000.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. In his answer, the hon. Minister mentioned about 34 staff working for the *Police de l'Environnement*. We have the same situation in Le Cornu and La Cure. Can the hon. Minister inform the House of the working hours of the staff, please? Is it 9 p.m. to 4 p.m. or do they work over and above 4 p.m.?

Mr Ramano: Non, je dois dire que la Police de l'Environnement travaille pour 24 heures, M. le président. Donc, le bureau de la Police de l'Environnement, les *substations* qui existent à travers le pays travaillent 24 heures sur 24, M. le président.

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

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

On resuming at 2.36 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please remain seated and be seated. Hon. Lobine!

NAIROBI INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON REMOVAL OF WRECK

(No. B/347) **Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the Nairobi International Convention on Removal of Wrecks, he will state if Mauritius is a signatory thereof and, if not, why not.

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the purpose of the Nairobi Convention is to provide a legal basis for coastal States to raise and remove, to have removed, wrecks which pose a hazard to the safety of navigation or to the marine and coastal environments, when located in our territory or Exclusive Economic Zone.

The Convention came into force in 2015 and to date out of 175 Member States of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), 57 States have acceded to the said Convention.

As matters stand today for our country, I am informed that the Republic of Mauritius has not yet acceded to the Nairobi Convention for the Removal of Wreck.

The challenge to accede to the convention is that the existing provisions of the Merchant Shipping Act allow the registered owner of the ship wreck to put a cap on the quantum of expenses that he would incur or that could be ultimately recovered from him in the event that the removal operation is done by the Government. This is because the limits of liability under the Nairobi Convention is linked to the liability regime provided for under the International Convention on Limitation of Liability on Maritime Claims 1976 (LLMC).

In order to ensure that the registered owner of a wreck is made to shoulder the full financial responsibility of the wreck removal, the existing provisions of the Merchant Shipping Act need to be reviewed. However, there is beforehand a need to sort out the diplomatic issue of updating the country's international commitments under the LLMC which has already been acceded to and is in force.

My Ministry is conscious that due to climate change, navigation is becoming more hazardous, with higher risks of shipwrecks in its wake. For this reason, the accession to the Nairobi Convention is being seriously considered. The main challenge is to find an appropriate legal and diplomatic remedy which would be in the interest of Mauritius and ensuring that there is no loophole for owners of wrecks to escape or diminish their liability.

I am informed that the concerned officers of my Ministry along with officers of the Attorney General's Office are attending to this matter. I have also taken note that the Director of Shipping is responsible for taking up this matter with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade and this is to be done without any further delay. Once this matter is cleared, the accession process will be initiated.

Meanwhile, I am also informed that draft legislation has already been prepared to give effect to the Nairobi Convention as soon as the ratification process is completed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Nairobi Convention is a modern international instrument reflecting best international practices as far as dealing with wreck removal is concerned. The said Convention will surely give additional protection to the State of Mauritius as a coastal State and strengthen further the existing legal framework on wreck removal.

Once the administrative and legal issues are cleared, my Ministry will ensure that Mauritius becomes party to the Nairobi Convention.

Mr Lobine: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Minister for the answer; that he is considering signing this Convention. But would the hon. Minister agree that it does not preclude your Ministry to come forward with draft legislation with regard to amending the Merchant Shipping Act? But in the meantime, you can adhere to signing this Nairobi Convention, because it goes in line with the current international practice for coastal States to sign this Nairobi Convention, which is a further protection for coastal States.

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I take good note of the suggestions of the hon. Member which are obviously most welcome, and I will refer them to the Attorney General's Office to look into this possibility, legal issues.

Mr Lobine: And would the hon. Minister also consider with regard to the Limitation Convention of 1976? This also is out-dated because we have got the Limitation Convention of

1996 which will enable States to gain maximum compensation if same is adhered to. Will the hon. Minister consider amending the law to bring into operation the 1996 Convention on Limitation?

Mr Maudhoo: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, as rightly pointed out by the hon. Member, it is possible for States to remove the limit of liability for removal of wrecks by way of reservation, and we are looking into that possibility also.

Mr Lobine: One last, Mr Speaker, Sir. Thank you. With regard to the powers vested upon the Director of Shipping as per the Merchant Shipping Act, Section 132 which empowers him to act as the Receiver of Wrecks. In that respect, we have got a vessel, a Mauritian flag vessel, Tresta Star, which has been declared a wreck near Reunion Island. What actions have been taken with regard to this problematic issue of the wreck being a Mauritian flag vessel? What actions have been initiated by the receiver of wreck in that particular case?

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, the Director of Shipping as Receiver of Wrecks is empowered with the Merchant Shipping Act to take necessary actions where wrecks are to be raised and removed in the eventuality of any default on the part of owners. With regard to Tresta Star, being given that it is a Mauritian flag vessel, in fact, we are working in hand with the Reunion-French Authorities. And up to now, I think they have up to 26 of this month to forward their wreck removal plan; the owner and P&I have to submit their wreck removal plan. There is a close follow-up.

As regards whatever pollutants that there were on that vessel, all have been removed by the salvage company appointed by the owner. Now, as to the removal of the wreck, we are waiting their removal plan.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

COVID-19 PANDEMIC - STUDENTS - MINISTRY OF EDUCATION - TESTING TEAM

(No. B/348) **Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard of the testing team for educational institutions created in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, she will state –

- (a) the number of tests carried out as at to date, indicating the number of students positive tested, and
- (b) if same is still operational.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, I wish to inform the House that a testing team was constituted by my Ministry in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Wellness to conduct Rapid Antigen Tests on students upon detection of a positive case within the classroom, and to advise schools on infection prevention and control protocols.

The team of 91 Trainee Nurses followed a training programme on Rapid Antigen Testing and infection prevention and control, which was organised by the Ministry of Health and Wellness in collaboration with the World Health Organisation. They have been clustered in 31 education testing teams and posted as from 10 April 2022 in 28 educational institutions which acted as education testing team base.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that 40,920 Rapid Antigen Tests have been carried out since the start of the testing exercise from 10 February 2022 up to 15 April 2022. A total of 1,505 students have been tested positive in the pre-primary, primary, secondary and Special Education Needs (SEN) institutions.

With regard to part (c) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the Education testing team will continue their assignment until further notice.

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you very much, hon. Minister. We commend the idea of setting up the testing team for the welfare and safety of our school going kids. Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether any evaluation or appraisal of the work done by the testing team has been carried out with the view to improving its efficiency? Because as at now, hon. Minister, the time gap before the testing team actually response to requests made by the school is lengthy. Will the hon. Minister see to it that the response time can be faster?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, initially, the testing was done on all the students within the classroom. But following the protocol from the Ministry of Health and Wellness; we have come down to the students around the person who is detected positive and

therefore, the number has gone down; the number of tests carried out. However, I must say that, if initially there was a delay because there was some time of adaptation required for the team to start working, towards the end of the term, we have noted that the time taken was very much reduced.

Dr. Gungapersad: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I request the hon. Minister to inform the House about the Scheme of Service of the members of the testing team? May we know, for example, whether they report to the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Education?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, they have got to report to the Ministry of Health and to the Ministry of Education as well. And I can even give the duties of the testing team. So, the testing team comprises a Team Leader who oversees the collection of the test samples; distributes the collection kits and swabs; serves as a point of contact for communication; oversees the site set up and enforces test procedures; ensures that students are tested on the correct days, because we started having the test on the first day and then the third day, and eventually we came to the test being carried out solely on the third day. And they are responsible to register the test takers, ensure that consent has been signed by parents prior to the testing; explain the testing results; log entries and test results; number of tests used; and full details of positive results. And then, we have a Test Administrator who provides instructions on the Rapid Antigen Tests, administers the tests and performs test analysis on samples. They also have the responsibility of disposing the testing kits in collection bins.

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Will the hon. Minister inform the House - because initially we know the testing team is for kids; will the testing team in the future, in the short-term or long-term carry out tests for teaching and non-teaching staff as well?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, initially as mentioned by the hon. Member, the testing team was meant solely for the students but whenever the exposure of a teacher to the student exceeds the two hours that have been prescribed by the Ministry of Health and Wellness, the test can be carried out. We are very positive for that.

Dr. Gungapersad: One last question. Hon. Minister, in the short term or long term, is the Ministry planning to review the scheme of service of the testing team so that they carry out other health-related exercises, for example, in the prevention of chronic diseases or contamination?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, in my initial answer, I had mentioned that they were responsible for carrying out the tests but also to help the schools to set up the infection prevention protocols. They have been trained for that as well.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs B/389, B/410 and B/424, B/432 have been withdrawn. Next question!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: PQ B/349!

PUBLIC BEACHES - PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES - ACCESS

(No. B/349) **Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to public beaches, he will state where matters stand as to the implementation of projects earmarked for easing of access thereto of persons with disabilities.

Mr Ramano: Mr Speaker, Sir, at our sitting of 09 November 2021, the hon. Mrs Fazila Jeewa-Daureeawoo, Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity, in reply to Parliamentary Question B/1016, informed the House that, further to the announcement of the budgetary measure 2021/2022 to make public beaches accessible to persons with disabilities, the Beach Authority had initiated the necessary actions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Beach Authority, which falls under the purview of my Ministry, is mandated to ensure proper control and management of public beaches in Mauritius and Rodrigues. The Beach Authority has been providing various amenities at those public beaches, along with cleaning thereat. The various amenities include toilet blocks, parking areas, lighting, benches and picnic tables, amongst others.

Presently, there are 32 toilet blocks at public beaches which are equipped with a disabled unit, and there are disabled-friendly access leading from the parking area to the beach frontage at six public beaches, namely Mont Choisy, La Cuvette, St Felix, Belle Mare, Bain Boeuf and Blue Bay public beaches.

It is to be recalled that, in the context of the implementation of the phase 1 of the Beach Management Plan at four public beaches, namely Mont Choisy, Flic en Flac, Belle Mare and La Prairie, the following amenities have also been designed and will be put in place thereat to facilitate access to persons with disabilities –

- (i) disabled-friendly picnic tables;
- (ii) disabled-friendly open shower;
- (iii) disabled-friendly toilet blocks, and
- (iv) reserved parking slots for persons with disabilities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in line with the budgetary measure in respect of persons with disabilities, the Beach Authority is currently working, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity, NGOs and other community stakeholders on a project to provide access to the sea to the latter. The objective of this project is to provide the required amenities and infrastructure to allow people with disabilities to fully enjoy the public beaches including the swimming zones.

The project comprises the procurement of forty floating beach wheel chairs and 150 metres of beach access mat, which shall be put at the disposal of persons with impaired mobility.

I am informed that meetings have been held with the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity, the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning, the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping to fine tune the requirements of the project. Also, site visits have been conducted to make a preliminary assessment of the beaches for the implementation of the project. The latter shall initially be implemented at four public beaches namely, Mont Choisy, Flic en Flac, Belle Mare and St Felix.

An online booking system is being designed by the Beach Authority to enable bookings to be effected in a user-friendly manner. The operations at sea, within identified swimming zones, shall be overseen and supervised by beach life guards to be employed by the Beach Authority. In that respect, discussions are underway with the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development for the recruitment of new personnel to enable the kick-starting of operations. The Beach Authority is looking into collaboration with other organisations for the successful implementation of the project along with ensuring training of the personnel.

I am informed that bids for the procurement of the floating beach wheel chairs and beach access mat have been launched on 07 March 2022 and closed on 14 April 2022. Bids received will be evaluated. The contract is expected to be awarded in May 2022, and equipment delivered in the coming months. We are looking forward for the operationalisation of the project.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, and this is a laudable initiative on behalf of both Ministries. I am sure there are so many people with disabilities who are following this question and the answer. So, they have a request if the hon. Minister could extend this initiative to some other places which could be under the aegis of the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change for the accessibility to some green spaces, to some sports facilities as well, why not, for those who suffer with disabilities? If he can just extend the same service to those who cannot access those mentioned places.

Mr Ramano: M. le président, pour le gouvernement, il est important que toute personne, quelle que soit leur condition physique, puisse bénéficier des facilités offertes par les autorités. Je dois dire que cette mesure donnant accès aux personnes autrement capables à la mer et à la plage est très bien accueillie par la population. Nous travaillons sérieusement pour pouvoir offrir ces mêmes facilités à un nombre plus important de plages. Et je dois dire aussi que les structures qui sont prévues doivent être facilement enlevées. Je parle notamment des tapis roulants pour donner accès à la mer. Et cela se fait, bien sûr, dans le respect de l'environnement et du décor de nos plages. Nous nous préparons donc à accueillir cette nouveauté, qu'il faut le dire, est une bouffée d'air frais pour les personnes autrement capables et leurs familles.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: PQ B/350!

PORT LOUIS, LATANIER RIVER– CLEANING, DISILTING & MAINTAINANCE

(No. B/350) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether in regard to the Latanier River, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal City Council of Port Louis, information as to –

- (a) when was the desilting and dredging thereof carried out, indicating the extent thereof desilted and dredged, and
- (b) measures taken, if any, to avert recurrence of the overflowing thereof.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Municipal City Council of Port Louis that it has undertaken cleaning, disilting and maintenance work all along Latanier

River between 13 December 2021 and 28 January 2022 over a total approximate length of 5.25 kilometres. No dredging work was undertaken thereat.

I am also informed by the Municipal City Council of Port Louis that no case of flooding has been reported thereat during the torrential rains of February and March 2022.

However, the flood which occurred on 13 March 2022 at *Morcellement* Ramlagun, Vallée des Prêtres was due to the overflowing of Rivulet Latanier, which is a tributary to Latanier River. As per information gathered by the officers of the Municipal City Council of Port Louis at the latter site, it has been reported that the reserve of the Rivulet Latanier might have been tampered by an individual at the time of construction works, thereby causing the water path to be diverted towards the residential area during the heavy rainfall of 13 March 2022, hence the resulting overflow of water.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Land Drainage Authority and also by the Municipal City Council of Port Louis that in order to avoid recurrence of overflowing of the Rivulet Latanier, the following works are being undertaken –

- (i) As a temporary measure, cleaning and removal of debris were effected by the Municipal City Council of Port Louis after the heavy rainfall on 13 March 2022, including the region of *Morcellement* Ramlagun, Vallée des Prêtres, Pont Marjolin, *Résidence* La Cure, Bait-UL-Noor Street and Louis Léchelle Bridge and Abattoir Road, Roche Bois;
- (ii) desilting and widening of Rivulet Latanier over a stretch of 850m from an average width of 6m to a recommended width of 10m and an average depth of 1.5m to an average depth of 2.5m, wherever feasible has been recommended by the Land Drainage Authority. This work will be undertaken by National Development Unit through its framework contractor, over a period of four months, starting by the end of April 2022 at an estimated cost of Rs3.8 m.
- (iii) Construction of flood walls along Rivulet Latanier as per recommendations of the Land Drainage Authority, which will be carried out by the National Development Unit under its framework agreement. The work could start by early June 2022 and would last over a period of about four months.

- (iv) the Road Development Authority would upgrade the Bernardin de Saint Pierre bridge to ensure adequate hydraulic capacity of Rivulet Latanier crossing the bridge, for which works could start by early June 2022 and would be completed in eight months' time, and
- (v) the Municipal Council of Port Louis will conduct regular monitoring of the state of cleanliness of Latanier River and will also carry out maintenance of the said river as and when required.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Municipal City Council of Port Louis has also requested the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security to initiate appropriate actions under the Rivers and Canals Act against one individual who has illegally undertaken development along the river of the Rivulet Latanier contrary to conditions imposed by the Forestry Service at the time of seeking a Building and Land Use Permit.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you very much, hon. Minister for this answer and I am sure my hon. colleagues as well are very happy to learn about the works which are forthcoming for *Rivière Latanier*. But in your answer you did mention that we have several tributaries, like several rivulets, which come down to *Rivière Latanier*. So, I would love to request the hon. Minister to look into the matter that when we do the desilting of the river, we do not focus only on the main ones but we do for the tributaries as well because they do contribute to the flooding of the main river as well. Thank you.

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I completely agree with the hon. Member and this is going to be looked into by the LDA. Thank you.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Another last request, hon. Minister.

Mr Speaker: Question! Question! Not request!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Another question to the hon. Minister. He has mentioned about the length of the river being desilted by the Municipality of Port Louis. However, can he confirm to the House that he is giving the same focus for the outlet of the River Latanier because some inhabitants on the side of Batterie Cassée, Briquetterie have shared their concern saying that we are taking the water from *Rivière Latanier* and we are bringing it to the outlet which goes through Batterie Cassée, Briquetterie to Roche Bois. Thank you.

Dr. Husnoo: Actually, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a major work that is going on there and it is not just Latanier River, the hon. Member is right; the river continues through Roche Bois as well. A different project has been earmarked for Roche Bois to clean the Roche Bois area where it cannot join the sea; we are working on this as well.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

**MATERNAL & NEONATAL SERVICES – ALLEGED MEDICAL NEGLIGENCE –
INDEPENDENT AUDIT**

(No. B/351) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Maternal and the Neonatal Services, he will state –

- (a) the number of complaints of alleged medical negligence received in respect thereof at his Ministry since 2019 to date, indicating the outcome thereof in each case;
- (b) if an independent audit thereof has been carried out, and
- (c) the measures taken to prevent recurrence of medical negligence thereat.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to part (a) of the question, I am informed that 80 cases were referred to the Medical Negligence Standing Committee since 2019 to-date. Out of these 80 cases, a total of 20 cases of alleged medical negligence pertain to Maternal and Neonatal Units registered in all our health institutions. Out of the 20 cases, 6 were related to Neonatal units and 14 to Maternal units.

Mr Speaker, Sir, after preliminary investigation conducted by the Medical Negligence Standing Committee, out of the 20 cases, medical negligence was concluded in 2 cases relating to neonatal services and 7 to maternal services which were subsequently referred to the Medical Council for further investigation and appropriate disciplinary action, as deemed necessary.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that an independent audit in regard to neonatal death has been carried out by Dr. Simon Clark, the Vice-President for Policy, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health of United Kingdom. The latter has visited all the Neonatal Units of the five regional hospitals and has carried out a medical auditing in November last year.

Since then, he is running a weekly virtual ward round with the Specialists and Medical and Health Officers. He is providing his advice in the care and treatment offered to critically ill babies and has already submitted his recommendations.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (c) of the question, my Ministry has recently opened a National Neonatal ICU at Victoria Hospital with 11 NICU bed capacity. My Ministry is also setting up a new Neonatal ICU at J. Nehru Hospital with 8 to 10 NICU bed capacity.

To further improve the Neonatal Service and improve critical Care Management of new-borns, case discussions for all new-borns while admitted are being done by Consultants-in-Charge and daily meetings are being carried out by NICU Units to follow up on the status of all babies admitted. Consultants-in-Charge have developed Neonatal guidelines and protocols that will be implemented in the Neonatal Services as benchmarks to carry out medical auditing.

In the same vein, my Ministry has enlisted the services of Dr. Simon Clark, the Vice-President for Policy, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health of United Kingdom, who is currently establishing a training programme for Paediatricians so that, in future, our medical doctors who follow the training may be certified to work as Neonatologist.

Dr. Simon Clark is also providing support in the training of Medical and Health Officers, Nurses and Midwives to allow for a multi-disciplinary approach in the care of critically ill new-borns. He is additionally advising and helping in the implementation of Neonatal Health Services guidelines and protocols which will be applicable in all the Neonatal ICUs to standardise the ongoing practice.

Mr Speaker, Sir, ongoing training courses are also being run in collaboration with the World Federation of Paediatric Intensive and Critical Care Societies represented by the Neonatal and Paediatric Intensive Care Foundation, namely –

- Certificate in Neonatal Ventilation and Advanced Life Support for medical staff in NICU, and
- Certificate in Neonatal Critical Care Nursing for nurses.

As at date, 105 Doctors and 104 Nurses have already received the training.

In addition, my Ministry is currently working on proposals for implementation of the posts of Neonatal Registrar and Specialised Nurses that would be appointed to work in the NICUs of Regional Hospitals with a view to improve the service delivery.

Two new courses, Certificate in Critical Care for NICU Trained MHOs/SMHOs and Certificate in Neonatal Respiratory Therapy for NICU Trained Nurses, leading to Specialised Nurses in the field of Neonatal Respiratory Therapy, will start in the near future.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to further enhance our neonatal services, new treatment modalities are being introduced. A new cooling therapy has been recently implemented in all the 5 Neonatal Intensive Care Units. Nitric Oxide Therapy will also become a reality soon in Neonatal Intensive Care Units. Mauritius will be one of the very few African countries to provide this therapy in the Neonatal Intensive Care Units.

Dedicated training programmes aimed towards treatment of critically ill babies with severe pulmonary hypertension who have minimal chance of survival are also being envisaged. This treatment will lead to increased chance of survival of critically ill babies. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Merci. Malgré tout ce qui a été dit par l'honorable ministre juste là, les faits sont que semaines après semaines nous entendons encore et encore des cas de négligences alléguées sur des nouveaux nés. De toute évidence, le système de santé actuel tel qu'il est a malheureusement le potentiel de faire de grave tort à beaucoup de bébés si les changements qui sont nécessaires ne sont pas implémentés. Puis-je demander à l'honorable ministre de dire à la Chambre le montant des compensations payées pour négligence médicale sur les nouveaux nés de 2019 à ce jour ?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I strongly disagree with the word "*malgré*". Efforts are being done by the Ministry, by officers, by doctors, pediatricians and nurses to improve the service and it is not a question of "*malgré*". It is a question of improving and all that I have said is being done. Here I will congratulate the whole team working in the neo natal services for all the efforts they are putting in to improve the services.

Secondly, it is not "*malheureusement*". I believe that the question should be targeted to 'why are we having neo natal problems'? This question, I would have given the answer: why we

are having these problems? What about those cases that are having difficulties? The neo natal problems, why do they arise? These should have been the questions. We should understand why we are having these difficulties. Who are the mothers who are positive and mothers who are well beyond child bearing age are now delivering in our institutions. There are also cases referred from the private clinics where they know that to be admitted in our public services when babies are in critical situation.

We should also not forget that there are mothers suffering from various comorbidities like diabetes and other medical problems and having babies delivered in our hospitals. There are so many causes. So, it is not a question of “*malheureusement*”, it is a question of what are we doing for these mothers. What are we doing for these babies as well, who, unfortunately, are born in a critical state? This is what should be addressed.

The question of compensation does not rest with the Ministry. This has a legal procedure and the cold case has to be followed and as per the Court verdict, the compensation is based on these particular cases. It is not the Ministry to determine the compensation in a case of medical negligence or in a case where there have been loss of human lives. It is all for the Court to determine compensation.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Aumeer!

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, I think as the Minister said Professor Simon Clark is obviously doing a great job in this country with regard to neo natal services and I thank the Ministry to have sought his help. However, will his Ministry consider the setting up of a National Confidential Inquiry into stillbirth and maternal death on a trial basis which is already happening in so many developed countries? This will thereby enable both clinicians, gynecologists, pediatricians, neonatologists, nursing staff to learn from the mistakes of the past and improve and so as to decrease neo natal death and maternal death. Thank you.

Dr. Jagutpal: Thank you, hon. Member. Again, I myself came to know and the House may wish to know that in February 2019, a Committee of Inquiry was set up by the Government to inquire into cases of maternal deaths in Mauritius. This committee is chaired by a former Judge and is assisted by a specialist in obstetrics and gynecology. The Ministry has also introduced in, 2020, a maternal child health handbook, where future mothers can collaborate with professionals. This committee, chaired by the former Judge, because of the pandemic or

has not been able to conduct its inquiry but as per my information, it is expected that they will come up with a report by the end of this year. We will then come to know what is the status of the healthcare delivery system specially for maternal neo natal services.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Tour!

Ms Tour: Question already canvassed, Mr Speaker, Sir. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Merci, M. le président. Le ministre peut-il informer la Chambre sur le nombre de médecins qui ont été suspendus ou ont fait l'objet de mesures disciplinaires par le *Medical Council* depuis 2019 suite à ces rapports ?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, unfortunately I do not have this reply but surely I will find out with the Medical Council and the PSC to get the number of doctors who have been given warnings, severe warnings, reprimanded or even suspension. Unfortunately, at this moment I do not have these answers.

Mr Quirin: Merci, M. le président. Le ministre de la Santé peut-il nous dire si son ministère compte prendre les mesures nécessaires afin de s'assurer qu'un gynécologue et un spécialiste obstétricien soient basés en permanence au lieu d'être *on call* comme c'est le cas actuellement et cela afin de parer à toute urgence ?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, as rightly pointed out by the hon. Member, in fact the Ministry is working to have 24-hour on call of the gynecologists, obstetricians in the hospital. Obviously, for this also we are working with the Ministry of Finance and then once we get the green light, this will be implemented. Hopefully, let us cross fingers that in the coming budget, we can have something along this line.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether his Ministry intends to formalise this collaboration with Dr. Simon Clark?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, Dr. Simon Clark is in Mauritius at present for a visit in connection with his collaboration with the Ministry. He will have regular visits to

Mauritius for a teaching program with foreign consultants. We are planning to enlist him as advisor in neo natal services. We are working on the contract to be signed with Dr. Simon Clark.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Ameer Meea: PQ B/352.

MAURITIUS POSTS LTD – EMPLOYEES – VACCINATION

(No. B/352) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the post offices, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Posts Ltd., information as to the number of employees thereof who are presently not fully vaccinated and debarred from attending duty, indicating the respective posting thereof.

Mr Balgobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Mauritius Post Ltd. that out of its 1148 employees, 53 were not fully vaccinated as at 19 April 2022 – which is today – representing only 5.6% of the workforce. Out of these 53 officers, 51 have been debarred from attending duty as from 19 April 2022 in accordance with the Consolidated COVID-19 (Amendment No 5) Regulations 2022 made under the Quarantine Act 2020, wherein Mauritius Post Ltd. has been listed in the Fifth Schedule as a place where access is restricted to officers who are not fully vaccinated with a booster dose. The remaining two officers have been granted access to the workplace upon production of a valid negative PCR Test Certificate.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the posting of these 51 officers, I am tabling the information.

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware of long queues at post offices, especially in Port Louis and in Rose Hill due to lack of officers thereat?

Mr Balgobin: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is quite obvious when we have 53 officers not attending duty because they are not fully vaccinated, that will have an effect on the service delivery but what is important is measures that have been taken by the Mauritius Post in order that there is less obstruction in the services and there are a couple of measures that have been taken, for example, redeployment of officers in post, as well as using the pool of relieving postal officers. They have also extended the hours of service to pensioners and customers in various posts. Counter officers have voluntarily reduced their lunch time to support the service, and a

long list of various initiatives that have been taken to have less disruption in the service of customers.

Mr Ameer Meea: Can I ask the hon. Minister what the Mauritius Post envisages to do for the officers who are not fully vaccinated?

Mr Balgobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, there have a few communiqués that have been sent to all the staff at the Mauritius Post, circular notes and also personalised letter from the Management to encourage those officers to do their vaccines because they work with the public, and we have to protect the public and the population at large. There has been sensitisation with those 54 or 53 officers so that they do their vaccines and could resume their work.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

CAMP GARREAU, CENTRAL FLACQ - SWIMMING POOL

(No. B/353) Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the project for the construction of a swimming pool at Camp Garreau in Central Flacq, he will state where matters stand as to the implementation thereof.

(Withdrawn)

CENTRAL ELECTRICITY BOARD (FACILITIES) CO. LTD

(No. B/354) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Central Electricity Board (Facilities) Co. Ltd, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if it is presently in operation.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, in my reply to the House on 24 November 2020, I had informed that the activities and operations of CEB (Facilities) Co. Ltd were being re-assessed with a view to rationalising and streamlining current procedures for an improved service delivery in the energy sector.

Subsequently, taking into account financial sustainability aspects, especially with the COVID-19 pandemic and other relevant factors, it was decided that CEB (Facilities) Co. Ltd would discontinue activities relating to tree lopping and cleaning. Arrangements were made for

staff and assets concerned to be transferred to the Central Electricity Board, in line with prevailing procedures.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as at date, I am informed that CEB (Facilities) Co. Ltd is operating only its Call Centre.

Mr Assirvaden: Merci, M. le président. M. le président, j'ai trois questions pour le ministre. Avec votre permission, permettez-moi de *canvass* ce thème. M. le ministre, le mot exact qu'on peut qualifier *CEB Facilities* c'est que la compagnie est en faillite. En juillet 2018, votre prédécesseur, en tant que ministre, accepte le plan proposé par les directeurs de *CEB Facilities* préconisant un profit à la première année de R 16 millions, deuxième année R 20 millions, et troisième année R 27 millions. Le dernier rapport financier du *CEB Facilities*, le 30 juin 2020, montre un profit de R 3,797. Le *CEB Facilities* a emprunté du CEB R 47 millions le 12 février 2020. Est-ce que, M. le ministre, vous voulez dire à la Chambre que le *CEB Facilities* ne pourra pas rembourser les R 47 millions, l'argent des contribuables, pris au CEB ?

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member has provided the House with a lot of information. But the question that he has put to me, at no point in my main reply did I evoke that issue. But it is good to note, Mr Speaker, Sir, that is why in my main reply dated 24 November 2020, I had informed the House that the activities and operations of CEB Facilities were being reassessed with a view to rationalising and streamlining current procedures for an improved service delivery in the energy sector.

This was based on a decision taken by Government in the month of October 2020 in order to review the state of affairs of the subsidiaries of the CEB, thereby moving forward with a reduction in cost of operation and making those subsidiaries more optional and creating a synergy with the result for greater efficiency and effectiveness. This is the Government's decision, Mr Speaker, Sir, and that decision was implemented. The loss could have been more today, Mr Speaker, Sir. That is why that I said the only activity that the CEB Facilities has now is its Call Centre, whereby it has discontinued activities related to tree lopping and cleaning.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, il faudra savoir qui a raison ? L'ancien ministre est venu avec ce projet de *CEB Facilities* ; je parle ici de l'ancien ministre Collendavelloo. Quand vous venez en juillet 2020, M. le ministre, vous visez le contenu de *CEB Facilities* de ses *hardcore services*, le *tree lopping* comme vous le dites, le *security services*, le *cleaning services*.

Même le *Call Centre*, la *CWA* se retire, il ne restera que le *CEB*. Donc, c'est clair que le *CEB Facilities* aura une mort certaine dans quelques jours. Donc, M. le ministre, vous êtes au courant que R 42 millions ont été dépensés dans l'achat des équipements de *telescopic boom lift, single cab*: 11, 14 *trucks*. Donc, M. le ministre, il faudra...

Mr Speaker: Put your question !

Mr Assirvaden: Il faudra quelque part dire la vérité. Est-ce que quand vous avez vidé le *CEB Facilities* de ses contenus, de ses *hardcore services*, c'est pour cette raison que le *CEB Facilities* va mourir sans rembourser les R 47 millions, l'argent des contribuables, pris au *CEB* ? Il faudra quelque part dire la vérité.

Mr Lesjongard: I am a bit surprised by the question, Mr Speaker, Sir, because some months back when the Opposition had put questions with regard to *CEB* subsidiary companies, they wanted to close all the three companies. Now, like I said, we have taken the decision to maintain the operation of the *Call Centre* because this was the main reason that *CEB Facilities* was created, because at that time the *CEB* was paying quite an amount of money to a subsidiary of *Mauritius Telecom* in respect of *Call Centres*.

Now, a year later, *CEB Facilities* came forward with a strategic plan, and in that strategic plan they included tree lopping, cleaning and security services. And I said we have taken that decision because we wanted to reassess the performance of *CEB Facilities*. We have reassessed the performance of that subsidiary of the *Central Electricity Board* and, based on that, we have taken the decision to stop, discontinue activities related to tree lopping and cleaning. Now these activities are being taken care by the *CEB* itself, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le ministre, donc vous acceptez que tôt ou tard le *CEB Facilities* va mourir avec les R 47 millions, l'argent des contribuables. M. le ministre, comment expliquez-vous qu'au même moment que le *Directeur général* du *CEB* touche un salaire de R 250,000, *CEB Facilities* qui n'a plus aucune activité que le *Call Centre*, comme vous le dites vous-même, le *Directeur général* du *CEB* est payé R 45,000 en tant que *Officer-in-Charge*; R 25,000 pour siéger sur un *Board* fantôme, R 350,000 en termes de *net salary* ? Ce n'est pas dilapider l'argent des contribuables, M. le ministre ?

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr Assirvaden: Avec une compagnie fantôme ?

Mr Nuckcheddy: *Aret fer palab do!*

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr Lesjongard: Not at all, Mr Speaker, Sir. I believe the hon. Member...

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden: *On a point order!* L'honorable Nuckcheddy a dit « arrêtes de faire palabre ». Vous lui demandez de retirer ces mots.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Hon. Nuckcheddy, if you have said so, please withdraw that!

Mr Nuckcheddy: I withdraw.

Mr Lesjongard: Can I, Mr Speaker, Sir?

Mr Speaker: Yes, please!

Mr Lesjongard: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member has come with a question related to the operation of CEB facilities. I have given all the required information with regard to that. But then, he has been putting forward issues that are not at all related to what the main question is. I have given all the required information, Mr Speaker, Sir. On the Government side, we are satisfied with the decision that we have taken with regard to CEB facilities and I have stated that with regard to tree lopping, cleaning and security services, this has been absorbed by the Central Electricity Board. CEB facilities will only operate its call centre. He has mentioned also with regard to CWA. This is not at all related with today's question. And with regard to the salary of the General Manager, we should not make people believe that the General Manager is not doing his work correctly. He is at the head of the CEB facilities and this is on a temporary basis until a final decision is taken with regard to CEB facilities. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: The Table is advised that PQs B/363, B/399, B/409, B/400, and B/428 have been withdrawn. Next question!

CEB – DOMESTIC & COMMERCIAL PURPOSES - INCREASED COST

(No. B/ 355) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to electricity, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to if decision has been taken to increase the cost thereof for domestic and commercial purposes and, if so, give details thereof.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, according to the latest published Energy and Water Statistics 2020, imported fuels comprising petroleum products and coal made up 86.7% of the total primary energy requirement in 2020. The remaining 13.3% was from local sources, namely, bagasse, hydro, wind, landfill gas, photovoltaic and fuel wood.

Moreover, in 2020, the share of electricity generation from such non-renewable sources stood at 76.1%, and includes CEB's thermal plants and the IPPs coal production.

In such situation, Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius is very much exposed and vulnerable to fluctuations in prices on the international markets as well as exchange rates. These have a direct bearing on the CEB's costs of production of electricity.

It is to be highlighted that over the past 12 months, the price of HFO has risen by 61%, while that of coal has known a one-time high of USD430 in March this year.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will recall that in spite of such difficult situation, the CEB had come up with special COVID-19 relief measures during the two lockdown periods to alleviate the financial burden of consumers. Thus, the vulnerable households were exempted from payment of electricity bills, surcharge was not applied and disconnection was not effected on account of non-payment of bills, over defined periods. Recently, the Prime Minister had announced a subsidy on electricity tariff for a period of 12 months, again in a spirit of solidarity with the population.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in order to reduce our dependence on imports and decarbonise the energy grid, Government has a target to increase the share of renewables in electricity production while encouraging local sources of biofuel. My Ministry is actively working on achieving these targets.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to point out that, with regard to cost of production of electricity per GWh, there is no distinction made in respect of domestic or commercial use. Thank you, Mr Speaker Sir.

Mr R. Duval: I thank the hon. Minister. Due to the fluctuation of the foreign currency rate and fuel price, has the CEB undertaken a study to optimise his production cost by using power plant having the lowest production cost?

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. This study has already been done since last year, and that was done because of COVID-19, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr R. Duval: Can the hon. Minister tell the House how many households are benefiting from the domestic social tariff?

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, 62,961 households are currently benefiting from the social tariff of 110A and that tariff, they pay 31% less on the first 75 kWh consumed and there is also a further 10% as Government subsidies.

Mr R. Duval: I have a last question. My question is regarding a Press conference on 05 March where the hon. Minister announced that the CEB board would submit recommendation to Government regarding the rise of electricity tariff. Could the Minister precise when this recommendation is expected?

Mr Lesjongard: No, Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot. It is for the CEB board to decide when they are going to submit it to the Minister.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. In relation to the increase in tariff, can I ask the hon. Minister whether, the time has not come to revisit the tariff structure, especially with regard to the industrial tariff, which CEB is selling at below production cost and the loss is being partaken to the household? Whether the time has not come - especially that the budget is forthcoming - to revisit that tariff so that people at the lower rungs of the ladder do not have to cross subsidise for the industrial tariff?

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is being looked into and will be taken on board in the review of the tariff.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

QUATRE BORNES - NEW TRAFFIC RECONFIGURATION

(No. B/356) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the new traffic reconfiguration along St Jean Road and in the region of Sodnac and Belle Rose at Quatre Bornes since Saturday 26 February 2022 in connection with trial runs of light rail vehicles, he will state if –

- (a) a Traffic Impact Assessment has been carried out as at to date, regarding particularly traffic coming in and out of Quatre Bornes during peak hours, and
- (b) consideration will be given for a modification of the traffic schemes aiming at the decongestion of certain routes leading to the St Jean Road.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, a Traffic Impact Assessment was carried out in around September 2020 under the Hillcrest Interchange Project to assess the main access to Quatre Bornes, namely the St Jean roundabout which operates as a connecting point to St Jean Road A8 and Port Louis-St Jean Road A1. It also serves as a major access point to complexes including La City Trianon, which generates a high influx of traffic. This Traffic Impact Assessment showed that the St Jean roundabout was operating beyond capacity during peak hours with a subsequent queuing along Motorway M1 and the main roads.

In this context, to ensure a proper and efficient transport network in the region of Quatre Bornes, especially Sodnac whilst releasing the pressure from St Jean Road, an alternative access to Sodnac at Hillcrest has been set up. The Hillcrest interchange allows traffic from the motorway M1 moving towards Sodnac to bypass the St Jean road A8 and the St Jean roundabout thereby reducing the volume of traffic along St Jean road and ensuring proper integration with the light rail system.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a traffic study and modelling and simulation exercise were carried out along St Jean road by Larsen & Toubro in 2020. Following this modelling and traffic simulation exercise before the introduction of the new traffic configuration along St Jean road, a traffic master plan in October 2020 was developed jointly by the Metro Express Ltd. and the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit of my Ministry, and the Police to review the traffic outlined in the region of Quatre Bornes. Consequently, a new traffic scheme and a series of measures

have been implemented whereby all secondary roads have been reviewed and redesigned and ancillary works have been carried out where necessary to facilitate access to Quatre Bornes in September 2021 in line with the master plan of 2020.

Furthermore, for the introduction of the new traffic signal arrangements along St Jean road, Larsen and Toubro Ltd. and its contractor, for the traffic signal priority system, carried out extensive traffic simulation and modelling to synchronise the train movement with the road traffic and pedestrian movement. All the above exercises considered the traffic coming in and out of Quatre Bornes particularly during peak hours.

As to part (d) of this question, the present traffic configuration is in place since 26 February 2022, and so far, the traffic situation is relatively smooth. In fact, the new traffic scheme has eased the flow of traffic along St Jean road and no major problem has been encountered so far although the road users have yet to be fully accustomed with the new configuration.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, hon. Minister. I have only two supplements. In light of the much increased time that it is now taking, since February 2022 to move from old Quatre Bornes and Belle Rose to get to the M1 motorway *via* the newly adjusted single lane of St Jean up and down, will the Minister see with the relevant authorities whether we could have one policeman to override and regulate the traffic particularly at two intersections where the Metro Express at Sir Guy Forget and Belle Rose, and at its junction with St Jean so as to improve the fluidity of the traffic. Let me inform the Minister, as a regular user of this junction, it now takes 25 minutes in the morning at peak time to move from old Quatre Bornes on just to the roundabout of St Jean, whilst before the plan of February 2022, it was taking only 10 to 12 minutes.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I should also have added that before the implementation of this new traffic configuration, extensive consultations were held during many meetings and committees; the Mayor of the Municipality of Quatre Bornes was present, the MLA's of the region: hon. Ramano and hon. Mrs Diolle, and other stakeholders were present. I myself have chaired a few meetings at the level of my Ministry. A sensitisation campaign was also effected, Mr Speaker, Sir, distribution of flyers, social media and so on.

I must inform the hon. Member that a multidisciplinary team composed of different authorities such as the TMRSU, the RDA, the Municipality of Quatre Bornes, the Police, the Fire Services are in fact in place to monitor the situation.

Of course, Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said in my reply, we are in the beginning of the process. In fact, the Metro will be launched in a few weeks. And we have this team, Mr Speaker, Sir, and we have done whatever was humanly possible to fluidify the traffic. We have catered for new parking lots. In fact, there are now four different parking lots which in fact provide about 112 new parking slots on the main street of St Jean; 4 bus stops and four layby's; 9 pedestrian crossings, all controlled by traffic signals; delivery bays; even raised platforms have been set up as safety measures for pedestrians, Mr Speaker, Sir.

So, we are at the start of the process, of course, we are open to suggestions and I welcome the proposal made by the hon. Member and we will certainly take on board what was proposed by him and try to improve this new situation. It is a question of getting accustomed to the whole setup.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I would like to know from the hon. Minister how does the parking facilities differ from the situation before works started at St Jean road?

Mr Ganoo: Well, as I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have provided for much more parking facilities than obtained before the Metro works started. We have acquired land, Mr Speaker, Sir, to provide parking facilities in the vicinity of St Jean road. So, to us, with regard to the new parking lots, we have acquired land as I said, now the four parking lots at Surath, St Jean; corner of St Jean and Tulip; corner of Glaieul and St Jean; on the St Jean road between Draper and Poivre Avenues, near the Goliva Building which everybody knows is on the main road at St Jean. So, we have off street and on street parkings totalling in fact to the number of about 112 parking facilities, Mr Speaker, Sir, which is better than the situation before the works started.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Aumeer!

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Hon. Minister, has the relevant authorities, particularly the TMRSU, make any contingent plans for example: a towing vehicle or a towing unit at the Victoria Station should there be a breakdown or an accident along the up or down lane

of St Jean, keeping in mind that during the peak hours it is bumper-to-bumper and therefore for any unfortunate reasons, be it myself here, or the public in general, have an emergency in their car – a medical emergency where seconds matter – there is no other way to remove that car unless there is a backward pedalling of all cars from behind the car that has broken down? Please, it is a serious matter and it can happen to anybody at any time. Thank you.

Mr Ganoo: I thank the hon. Member for giving me the opportunity to answer this question, Mr Speaker, Sir, which I am sure, would be of interest to all Members of this House and the viewers who are watching us today.

In fact, in case of a vehicle breakdown we have also provided – in case of accident, in case of breakdown – for specific protocol, Mr Speaker, Sir; one protocol with the Fire Services and the Police. But I must inform the hon. Member also that all-around St Jean road there are available spaces on the side, not many, and we are trying to improve the number of spaces which could, maybe, be made available in addition, but there are now spaces where vehicles in case of breakdown can be parked temporarily while waiting for load truck. And I must inform the hon. Member also – I am sure he knows – for small vehicles, they can also be temporarily parked along the newly constructed, relatively large, foot path which is mountable, which is sufficiently large along St Jean road. And, as I said for larger vehicles, several layby's are available. And, as I said just now, Mr Speaker, Sir, five additional parking spaces have been created along St Jean road. So, in case of emergency or accident along St Jean road, Mr Speaker, Sir, the normal traffic might be diverted on alternative routes by the Police and the emergency vehicles would be allowed to attend the emergency following a strict protocol.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Dr. Boolell: Since the Minister has stated that it is publicly open and he has stated it in no uncertain terms that he is willing to hold a consultation, can I ask him, in the interest of all inhabitants and all those who use those roads because we know that there is heavy traffic congestion, can I impress upon him since he has stated it publicly, to hold another consultative meeting, to meet representatives of the inhabitants of Quatre Bornes? He has said that there is modelling study, that there is traffic simulation; people want to know the truth. Can I impress upon him to hold this consultative meeting and to make sure that all MPs of the constituency are invited?

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are an open Government. We are ready to open our ears to reasonable and sensible proposals and suggestions. So, even this morning, Mr Speaker, Sir, I met somebody from Quatre Bornes whom I did not know - Quatre Bornes is not my constituency, but I even called him at my office - because he told me he has certain proposals regarding Quatre Bornes, the new traffic model and so on. He made a suggestion to me and I listened to him.

In case, the hon. Member wishes to make any proposal, I am prepared to listen to him or to his colleague or to any other citizens of Quatre Bornes, Mr Speaker, Sir, to better the situation. But again, I must repeat what I said earlier on, Mr Speaker, Sir, in the case we are talking about, our technicians, our experts have made optimum use of the existing road facilities in Quatre Bornes to cater for a safe and efficient movement of traffic, including pedestrian safety, Mr Speaker, Sir.

We have reversed the traffic in certain roads at Belle Rose; we have some lateral roads, we have changed the flow of traffic, we have changed the direction. What we have offered to the public today, Mr Speaker, Sir, is the product of elaborate planning and design by experts. We have considered different options, but the criteria were primarily: criteria of safety, of risk, of integration and efficiency. Nevertheless, any reasonable improvement will be given consideration, Mr Speaker, Sir. I can assure the hon. Member.

Dr. Boolell: Can I trust that the Minister will set a date?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Abbas Mamode: PQ B/357.

E-HEALTH PROJECT - IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/357) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the e-Health project, he will state where matters stand as to the implementation thereof, indicating the expected date of coming into operation thereof.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to Parliamentary Question B/353 by hon. Bodha, at our sitting on 11 May 2021, where I informed

the House that in view of the complexity of the e-Health Project, the Ministry decided to review the project specifications and cost of the National e-Health Project and endorsed the proposal of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to support and review the project free of cost, prior to its launching.

Accordingly, the UNDP's Consultant has reviewed the technical specifications and advised on some essential components that should be included at conception stage of the project. The UNDP's Consultant subsequently submitted his recommendations in September 2021.

On 26 January 2022, my Ministry signed a Project Portfolio Document on e-Health Initiatives with the UNDP for the implementation of the e-Health Project which includes, *inter alia* –

- i. implementing a long-term Digital Health Transformation Strategy Framework for my Ministry;
- ii. study on site assessment and readiness;
- iii. implementing a Patient Administration System (PAS) as the first-phase of the roll-out of the e-Health Project, and
- iv. setting up of a Project Management Unit by the UNDP to assist my Ministry during the duration of the project.

I am also informed that the UNDP has launched the Expression of Interest for implementation of the e-Health on 10 February 2022 with closing date on 20 March 2022. 29 bids were received and are presently being evaluated by the UNDP.

A demo exercise of shortlisted solutions is being envisaged as from end of April 2022, which would be followed by launching of the Request for Proposal by the UNDP in June 2022 for the implementation of e-Health. The targeted date for the complete roll-out of the Patient Administration System is December 2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me reassure the House of the highest-level commitment from both my Ministry and the UNDP for the implementation of the e-Health Project. A Steering Committee, which meets on a monthly basis, has already been set up at the level of my Ministry which comprises of representatives of the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation and the

United Nations Development Programme. I have chaired two Steering Committee meetings to date.

The next meeting is scheduled on Thursday 21 April 2022 and will be co-chaired by the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation and myself.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Abbas Mamode: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House of the implementation of the COVID-19 Laboratory Information Management System?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is again a project in collaboration with the UNDP and the WHO. The Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) is fully operational at the Central Health Laboratory and in all the COVID Testing Centres and Regional Hospitals. LIMS is now being scaled up to include other tests in the virology, bacteriology, biochemistry and haematology departments. We are benefiting the support of UNDP in the up-scaling of this digital solution. I am informed that the equipment necessary for the scaling up are expected to be installed and commissioned by June 2022.

What will change now? What will change is: all the tests that are being sent to the Central Health Laboratory, the results will be in a digitalised form. There will be no need to go back and fetch the results and distribute it to the hospitals or to the other health centres.

Mr Abbas Mamode: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether such digital services are being considered for disease surveillance in Mauritius?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is a priority, especially because of the COVID pandemic and also because of other diseases like dengue fever, chikungunya. So, it is very important for us to have a digital platform to monitor disease surveillance. I am informed under the financing agreement with the UNDP, again, we are implementing a digital solution for the management and analysis of surveillance outbreak and response. This facility will be placed at the port of entries of the country, in regional hospitals and in health centres. It will facilitate the contact tracing for a range of infectious diseases. That is also under preparation.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House if the e-Health Project will also be implemented to all Mediclinics and dispensaries around the island?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. This project will be implemented in all the health services, hospitals or in the Community Health Centres in a phased manner. We will implement it in a phased manner as I have already stated in my reply.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether there was an e-tendering exercise for the e-Health project and where matters stand?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, in October 2019, the HSCC India, which was the Consultant for the e-Health project, launched bids in India, and none of the bids received was technically responsive. Consequently, a Steering Committee was set up, co-chaired by the Permanent Secretaries of my Ministry and the Ministry of ICT, for appropriate recommendations and the requirements for the e-Health projects were thus reviewed. So, in the past, we did that but it was not fruitful.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

CONSTITUENCY NO. 12 - MAHEBOURG & PLAINE MAGNIEN – FLOOD MITIGATION MEASURES

(No. B/358) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to Constituency No. 12, Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Land Drainage Authority, the list of current identified flood prone areas, indicating the land drainage works being undertaken to prevent the recurrence of flooding thereat.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Land Drainage Authority has declared the following regions of Constituency 12, Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien as flood-prone areas -

- a) Cité Paul Langlois, Plaine Magnien;
- b) Mare Tabac Village;
- c) Trois Boutiques Village;
- d) Grand Bel Air Village, and

e) Petit Bel Air Village.

As at date, the NDU has already completed major drain projects in those flood-prone areas amounting to some Rs158 m. as follows –

- a) Flood Mitigation Measures in Cité Paul Langlois Phase 1;
- b) Flood Mitigation Measures in Mare Tabac (Phase 1) along River Tabac and along School Lane to river outlet;
- c) Flood Mitigation Measures in Trois Boutiques;
- d) Drainworks at Rishi Dayanand and Pandit Sahadeo Streets, Petit Bel Air;
- e) Drainworks at Renoir Street, Raphael Street, and Ruben Street, Ville Noire and at Morcellement Ville Noire near Kalité Boutique;
- f) Drainworks at Lolljee Lane, Mare Tabac;
- g) Drainworks at Awatar Lane, near Baitka and Naseer Shop, Cité Balance, Biswa Lane and La Grotte Lane in Plaine Magnien;
- h) Drainworks near Dupere Primary School and at Auffrey Street, Mahebourg, and
- i) Drainworks at Club Road, Plein Bois.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed that projects amounting to some Rs188 m. are currently under construction, as follows -

- (a) Drainworks in the region of Mahebourg at the following locations -
 - (i) Drain network along Ramnarain Lane, Doolar Lane, Gunputh Lane, and Rue Des Bambous;
 - (ii) Rue Dravidian;
 - (iii) La Passe Street, near Monte Carlo Restaurant;
 - (iv) Rue Camisard;
 - (v) Corner Rue Flammant and St Martin Street, and
 - (vi) Off Rue Maurice.
- (b) Drainworks in the region of Beau Vallon at the following locations -

- (i) Club Road, Beau Vallon, and
 - (ii) near Victoria Shop, Cité Beau Vallon.
- (c) Drainworks in the region of Trois Boutiques –
- (i) along Bijah Road (intersection with Temple Road);
 - (ii) Morcellement Les Palmiers, Beau Fond;
 - (iii) Lateral Cité Trois Boutiques;
 - (iv) Shivala Lane, Bombay Lane and crossing along B8 La Baraque Road,
and
 - (v) Carreau Esnouf.
- (d) Drainworks in the region of Mare D'Albert -
- (i) along Mohabeersing Street, and
 - (ii) along Gandhi Road.
- (e) Drainworks in the region of Petit Bel Air -
- (i) downstream from main bridge to the sea, and
 - (ii) Residence NHDC Pierre De Lune.
- (f) Drainworks in the region of Plaine Magnien -
- (i) completion of drainworks along La Baraque Road;
 - (ii) along Residence EDC Balance;
 - (iii) along Bois D'Oiseaux Road;
 - (iv) along Courteau Lane, and
 - (v) along Chummun Road;
- (g) Drainworks in Junction La Chapelle Le Bouchon;
- (h) Drainworks along School Lane, Grand Bel Air, and
- (i) Drainworks along Jugoo Lane.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the project Flood Mitigation Measures at Mare Tabac - Phase 2 which comprises approximately 325 metres masonry cut-off drain along B82 Road and 495 metres of drainworks along Mandhup Lane, Mare Tabac is at bidding stage for the appointment of a contractor.

In addition, land acquisition procedures have been initiated for Phase 2 of the Flood Mitigation Measures at Plaine Magnien which comprise drain works from outlet of Phase 1 to Trou Maignan over a stretch of 290 metres.

Furthermore, the following projects are at bidding stage for appointment of a Consultant for the study, design and supervision of -

- (i) Flood Mitigation measures in the region of Petit Bel Air and Grand Bel Air, and
- (ii) Drainworks in the region of Morcellement Ville Noire.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Ramful: Thank you, hon. Minister. The hon. Minister is well aware that very recently, on 06 April, we have had severe flooding in the region of Plaine Magnien and Trois Boutiques. Now, may I ask the hon. Minister, what about the Land Drainage Master Plan, has this been completed, and if so, were those areas covered and identified by the Plan?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not think the hon. Member must mix up issues. The Land Drainage Master Plan is one thing; it consists of a drain Master Plan for the whole island. As I said, in 2019, the Land Drainage Authority has already identified all the flood-prone regions and has declared them so, and work has already started. And, obviously, it will take an amount of time to attend to it. As I have already mentioned, we have Rs150 m. of works which have been completed. We have Rs188 m. under construction. So, obviously, it is going to take time and there are other regions that require consultancy services to tell us what to do. What people need to understand, when we are talking about flooding, we are not working in an aquarium. It is not taking the problem from point A and shifting it to point B. We have to solve it in such a way that you take it to a river that eventually takes it to the sea. So, this is what we are doing. When the hon. Member is mentioning Plaine Magnien, he knows very well we have no river in Plaine Magnien. So, what we have to do here? Works are ongoing. For instance, Phase 2,

which I am mentioning here, that will take Phase 1 where it ends in Cité Paul Langlois, we will take this water towards Trou Maignan. This land has been reclaimed. People has come before and backfilled those natural drains. So, now, we have to acquire, to reinstate that natural drainage path so that it goes in Trou Maignan which is a lava tunnel. So, works are ongoing and, I think, Master Plan or not, the LDA today has the required competencies to do what has to be done to solve problems as it should be. And, obviously, dealing with drainage problems, dealing with climate change, we are having heavy precipitations; we have seen new flood-prone regions coming up after solving some. Thank you.

Mr Ramful: My question is very simple. The law has been enacted in 2017, we are now in 2022. My question is: where is that Master Plan which was supposed to identify flood-prone areas and come up with solutions to those problems? Where is it? Has it been finalised? Because the Minister, to a PQ from hon. Ittoo, stated that the Master Plan will be ready by September 2021. We are now in 2022, where is the Master Plan? This is my question.

Mr Hurreeram: Unfortunately, but I answered, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Member should know, he is here for the second mandate. So, he put a question about Constituency No. 12, about the works that have been done and what are flood-prone areas? This has been replied already. And, now, he is being adamant about the Master Plan. There is a Master Plan, the Master Plan is ready but it has to go to Cabinet. I need Cabinet's approval; I need Government's approval. And, anyway, whatever has been written in the Master Plan, it is no rocket science. We have identified the regions, people already know what are the regions and, now, we will propose what are the solutions in a holistic approach. You will also probably have places which will be declared 'No-Go Zones'. But, once again, this does not pertain to the main question, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I refer also to the recent unfortunate flooding around the village of Plaine Magnien. Can the Minister inform the House what are the immediate measures that the LDA has recommended?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, what has happened at Plaine Magnien is in twofold. There has been tampering of natural drainage path. So, firstly, we will have to restore the natural drainage path. Unfortunately, the District Council, authority with which lies the BLUP granting the permission to build, they have not been doing their follow-up and unfortunately, it is what it

is. Secondly, the water table is high in that region. If the hon. Member will agree, at for instance, Cité Bois-d'Oiseaux, there was no water coming on the surface. We were having springs coming from underground. So, the water table is high. So, water plan, master plan or not, the master plan has got nothing to do with the water table getting high, Mr Speaker, Sir. Thank you. So, here also as I have mentioned already in my reply, works order had been issued already for firstly, a drain along Bois-d'Oiseaux Road, Courteau Lane, Chummun Road and there will be upgrading of the drain on the main road by the RDA.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Mr R. Duval: Can the hon. Minister state at which frequency the Land Drainage Authority updates and what are the criteria to be designated as a flood prone area?

Mr Hurreeram: I should thank the hon. Member for this question. It is an interesting one. So, it's important for people to know that for the Land Drainage Authority, when you are talking about flooding, it is not reading it on maps or textbooks. Like hon. Boolell likes to say, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. So, we have to wait for it to rain, then, I should take this opportunity to salute this wonderful team of Land Drainage Authority that is doing a marvellous job, young engineers who go out on the field when it is raining, putting their lives at risk to observe what is happening, what is the flow of water, so that they can come with real solutions, and not sitting and just blabbering. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs B/384, B/366, B/374, B/393, B/416, B/427, B/372, B/397 and B/370 have been withdrawn. Next question!

Mr Assirvaden: B/359!

CEB - SURPLUS, ACCUMULATED SURPLUS & RESERVES

(No. B/359) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Central Electricity Board (CEB), he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the surplus accruing from the operations thereof and the reserves and accumulated surpluses for each financial year since 2015 to date, indicating –

(a) how same have been utilised, and

- (b) the contributions to Consolidated Fund and investment in CEB-owned private companies yearly since financial year 2015 to date.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am tabling information based on audited financial statements of the Central Electricity Board relating to surplus, accumulated surplus and reserves of the Central Electricity Board over the period January 2015 to June 2020.

It is to be highlighted that CEB's financial statements are prepared on an accrual basis as per International Public Sector Accounting Standard (IPSAS) and not on cash basis.

Mr Speaker, Sir, accumulated surpluses are surpluses that have been accumulating since the creation and coming into operation of the CEB, while reserves are surpluses that accumulated after revaluation of CEB's fixed assets which is performed every 5 years.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Central Electricity Board that the accumulated surpluses have been mainly utilised for implementation of capital projects to upgrade the infrastructure, for loan repayment and loans to its subsidiaries.

As for part (b) of the question, I am further informed that the Central Electricity Board has made a total contribution of Rs3.12 billion to the Consolidated Fund since 2015 to date.

CEB has moreover invested an amount of Rs1.2 billion in its three subsidiaries since the latters' incorporation and this comprised equity and loans.

Financial statements for year ending June 2021 are being audited. I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Assirvaden: *Loan à des subsidiaires du CEB from the accumulated reserve* qui est de R 28.4 milliards et une réserve de R 7.8 milliards selon l'*annual report* de l'année 2019/2020. M. le ministre, vous rentrez en fonction en juillet 2020 est-ce que vous êtes au courant que d'après le *Shareholder Loan Facility Agreement* signé entre le CEB et ses subsidiaires, je parle des trois subsidiaires : Green Energy facilities et l'autre CEB subsidiaire. Est-ce que vous êtes au courant, M. le ministre, que ce *Shareholder Loan Facility Agreement* est illégal selon les lois de la Banque de Maurice parce que le CEB n'a pas des licences pour prêter de l'argent pour faire des profits ?

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I believe that was a decision of the Board of the CEB, and I also believe that the board had recourse to legal advice before moving ahead with granting loan to the subsidiaries.

Mr Assirvaden: Avec une réserve accumulée de R 28.4 milliards depuis 2015 et une réserve de R 7.8 milliards compte tenu de la hausse du coût du carburant pour le CEB, M. le ministre, est-ce que vous envisagez d'utiliser une partie, je dis bien une partie de ses réserves accumulées pour atténuer toute augmentation prévue éventuellement du tarif d'électricité par le gouvernement ?

Mr Lesjongard: This question is premature, Mr Speaker, Sir. In due course, we will say what we will do.

Mr Assirvaden: Last one!

Mr Speaker: So, time is over by four minutes! Four minutes. So, any comments, I will not entertain.

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S. O. 10(2)

The Ag. 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.

(4.16 p.m.)

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

BAMBOUS & BASSIN NHDC HOUSING ESTATES - WATER LEAKAGES

The Ag. Prime Minister (Mr S. Obeegadoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, following the matter raised by hon. Mrs Sandra Mayotte at the Sitting of 12 April 2022 at Adjournment Time concerning water leakages at the NHDC housing estates of Bambous and Bassin, I wish, with your permission, to make a Statement.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to emphasise at the very outset, that all NHDC apartment blocks are co-owned property, with “*parties communes*” and “*parties privatives*” in accordance with the standard “*règlement de copropriété*”. As such, it is legally the responsibility of co-owners to ensure that the living environment and conditions in and around the different blocks, as well as those in the “*parties privatives*” of their apartments, are salubrious so that, in the normal course of things, it is entirely and essentially the co-owners’ responsibility to set up their own Syndic to look into the management and maintenance of these housing estates and common areas. There are, to date, some 41 syndics. But, unfortunately, in most cases, these syndics have, since the very beginning, not been functioning, operating properly.

Consequently, with a view to maintaining proper living conditions of the inhabitants of these NHDC apartments, the NHDC has had to intervene, on an ad hoc basis. Government has had to provide funds every year to the NHDC to carry out rehabilitation works, which include waterproofing and treatment of other leakages.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the NHDC cannot, by law, take over the syndics. A proper *modus operandi* has to be worked out for a long-term solution to the whole issue of syndic and management of these housing estates. This can only be achieved with the active involvement of the co-owners. To that end, I understand that the NHDC has already commissioned a study of the experience of syndics on the NHDC housing estates and commercial buildings; the report is expected soon.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Bambous Housing Estate, on which stand 308 housing units, was built in 1999, that is, more than 20 years ago. I am informed that the NHDC launched a Request for Proposal to hire the services of a Consultant to carry out a comprehensive survey of necessary rehabilitation works which include roof waterproofing works, treatment of cracks on external walls, rainwater downpiping, gully traps, catch pits and external painting works. The Consultant will also be responsible for the design, preparation of bidding documents and supervision of works. I understand a Consultant is expected to be appointed by the end of April 2022 and works are expected to start by the end of this year. Again, in the absence of an effective syndic, Government, through the NHDC, will spare no effort to address the concerns of the NHDC inhabitants of Bambous as represented here by hon. Mrs Mayotte at Adjournment Time last Tuesday.

Having regard to Bassin Sugar Estate, which comprises 102 housing units, I am informed that the construction was completed in October 2020 and I am informed by the NHDC that inhabitants have recently complained about roof leakages, as well as wall cracks and leakage in plumbing works; these are considered by engineers as minor defects that have, unfortunately, cropped up after the defect liability period ended in October 2021.

But, again, I am informed that the NHDC has been ready to intervene and the NHDC has awarded a contract for remedial works in March 2022. The contract was awarded in March 2022 and works are expected to start this week, to be completed by the end of May 2022.

May I, again, thank the hon. Lady for having drawn my attention to the issue and I shall remain, of course, attentive to representations from Members from both sides of the House in regard to problems encountered by inhabitants of NHDC Housing Estates.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

LIQUEFIED PETROLEUM GAS – PRICE INCREASE

The Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection (Mr S. Callichurn): Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish, with your kind permission, to make a statement regarding the increase in the price of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) from Rs180 to Rs240 for a 12 kg cylinder effective as from today 19 April 2022.

LPG is a strategic commodity which is solely imported by the State Trading Corporation. The yearly requirement is around 78,000 MT and it is a product that is widely consumed by all segments of the population.

Conscious of the need for LPG to remain affordable at all times, the policy of the Government has always been to subsidize the price of LPG since 2003. At that time, the subsidized retail price of a 12 kg cylinder was Rs224. In between February 2004 to February 2012, the subsidized retail price of a 12 kg cylinder has always fluctuated within a bracket of Rs214 to Rs300. And in March 2012, it reached an unprecedented peak of Rs330 for a 12 kg cylinder. It is needless to add that the fluctuations and the hike of Rs330 were dictated by market considerations and of the price which the Brent crude oil fetched internationally.

When the situation started to stabilise on the international scene and the financial situation of the STC was healthy, Government decided to bring down the price of the subsidized

retail price of 12 kg cylinder to Rs270 in August 2016, Rs240 in June 2018, Rs210 in June 2019 and Rs180 in June 2020.

However, with the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, back-to-back with the COVID-19 pandemic, Mauritius is being affected by a never seen double supply-driven shock. As a Small Island Developing State with a small economy, far away from traditional markets, Mauritius is even more vulnerable. No one can deny that the Russia-Ukraine conflict has had a profound impact on prices of petroleum products, including LPG as a derivative of petroleum products. Indicatively, Russia exports around 6.5 million barrels of Brent per day. Similarly, Russia accounts for 17% of natural gas production.

Crude oil, Mr Speaker, Sir, rose significantly in 2021 as rising vaccination rates, gradual abandonment of restrictions and reopening of borders resulted in petroleum demand rising faster than supply. The spot price of Brent crude oil which was towards the end of 2020 at around USD 50 per barrel rose to USD 80 per barrel in 2021 before stabilising at USD 71 per barrel just before the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. Immediately after the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, the price of Brent on the international market started escalating to reach an unprecedented price hike of USD 140 in the first week of March 2022. The petroleum hub market is very volatile and unpredictable and if the current situation persists, it will be inevitable that on the world market the demand will remain persistently higher than the supply. Consequently, it is not excluded that countries which do not have a robust and sustained procurement and supply programme may face the risk of shortage or scarcity of petroleum products, including LPG.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as a caring and responsible Government and in order to ensure continuity of supply and prevent any possible shortage while allowing the public to access LPG at an affordable price, Government has had no alternative but to intervene at the appropriate time in order to avoid future problems. In fact, to put matters in their proper perspective, Government has simply reduced the subsidy element by a mere 9.1% on LPG. Consequently, out of a 12 kg cylinder which the STC purchases at Rs661.49, the subsidised retail price is Rs240 as opposed to Rs180 as from today.

It is worth mentioning, Mr Speaker, Sir, that for the Financial Year 2016-2017, when the subsidised price of LPG was Rs270, the total cost of subsidy borne by STC was Rs162.10 m. In the Financial Year 2017-2018, the total cost of subsidy went up to Rs348.6 m., Rs622 m. for the

Financial Year 2018-2019, Rs752.4 m. for Financial Year 2019-2020 and slightly more than Rs1 billion for Financial Year 2020-2021. Furthermore, if the price has been maintained at Rs180, a projection for the next 12 months indicates that the total subsidy cost would have been more than Rs2 billion. It was, therefore, necessary to curb down the escalating subsidy costs and prevent a crisis.

I, therefore, wish to remind the House that the decision to reduce the subsidy element on a 12 kg cylinder by 9.1% has been solely motivated by the current international context.

I also take this opportunity, Mr Speaker, Sir, to reassure the population at large that Government is closely following the international situation as it is unfolding day by day. In difficult times, we all need to pull together because national solidarity is a key element to sustainability and success.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: What is it? A point of order?

Dr. Boolell: No, a clarification in the light of the Statement made by the hon. Minister.

(Interruptions)

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

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: I have the right to do. We have done it before.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Is it factual?

Dr. Boolell: Yes.

Mr Speaker: Exceptionally, I will allow this if it is factual.

Dr. Boolell: I thank you.

Mr Speaker: But if you will drag on and make a debate...

Dr. Boolell: No, no.

Mr Speaker: ...I will stop you.

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: In his Statement, the Minister has looked at the different case scenarios, which I appreciate, the whole House appreciates. I know it is difficult for him, but from what he has said, is there any chance that we may not have our full supply of LPG gas? That is what I wanted to say.

Mr Callichurn: Can you repeat your question? If it is not a question, a clarification!

Dr. Boolell: In the light of what you have said and you have looked at different case scenarios in your Statement, since you have said that there is a risk that we may not have our full supply of LPG gas, is this a risk?

(Interruptions)

Mr Callichurn: Well, there is no risk of shortage at the moment, but we are monitoring the international situation, and that's it.

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT CLEANING AUTHORITY BILL

(NO. V OF 2022)

On motion made and seconded, the National Environment Cleaning Authority Bill (No. V of 2022) was read a first time.

Second Reading

THE TOWN PLANNERS' COUNCIL BILL

(NO. XIX OF 2021)

(6.33 p.m.)

Order for Second Reading read.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I wish to move that the Town Planners' Council Bill No. XIX of 2021 be read a second time.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will recall that, one of the measures enunciated in the Annex to Budget Speech 2017-2018, was the setting up of a Professional Planners' Council. The very purpose of introducing this Bill is not only to regulate the profession but also to recognize the professional work of town planners in shaping our built environment and the contribution that town planners make to plan making, site analysis, project evaluation and the preparation of planning policy guidance. Regulating the practice of the profession is therefore considered an important step towards ensuring that the town planner performs his work skilfully, diligently and in a dedicated manner. Planning professionals are expected to uphold high standards of competence and conduct themselves in such a way that inspires trust and confidence.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the main objective of town planning is to create sustainable communities while at the same time protecting and promoting the interests of the public. The preparation of the Town Planners' Council Bill has therefore required an overview of other similar professional councils in the land and construction sector both in Mauritius and internationally. And we have assessed best practices on the African continent such as Zimbabwe, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa and Ghana which have already, in the recent past, established their own town planning associations or institutes. These planning associations guide their professionals in dealing with complex land use challenges and have allowed them to share valuable town planning experiences and propose solutions which can be adapted locally. Mauritius, therefore, cannot and should not lag behind.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in our local context, town planning has been fundamental in the shaping of modern Mauritius. The first settlements in Mahebourg and Port Louis bear testimony to the foundations of town planning in Mauritius with well-planned streets, drains, and colonial buildings.

With the rapid pace of urbanization and the growth of smart cities, the need for master planning at key metro interchanges and the demand for social housing, the profession of town planning will be called upon to play an ever greater role in planning our neighbourhoods, building greener and more affordable houses, balancing between competing needs, job creation and improving the quality of life of our citizens.

Let me assure the House that town planning is not restricted to towns, as the name may suggest, but also includes, *inter alia*, planning, development of villages, rural and coastal areas.

The House will be pleased to know that a new National Land Development Strategy, which will orient development in a manner that will integrate economic competitiveness with environmental sustainability and social equity, is currently being prepared at the level of my Ministry and is expected to be ready later this year. The new National Land Development Strategy will set out the vision for the territorial planning of the Island of Mauritius covering the period up to year 2040. Town planners will be expected to be familiar with the guiding principles and strategic orientations contained in the plan.

Let me, now, Mr Speaker, Sir, indicate that prior to the introduction of the Bill in this House, it has gone through a consultative process with stakeholders concerned. Consultations were held with the Ministry of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management, all the 12 local authorities, with the Town Planning Association of Mauritius, with the Town and Country Planning Board to ensure that their views were taken on board.. Further, the draft Bill was uploaded on the website of my Ministry and there was unanimity among the stakeholders in favour of the setting up of the Council to regulate an important profession in the design of sustainable communities, and, therefore, in the construction sector.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me, now, to introduce to the House, the main provisions of the Bill, the object of which as stated in the explanatory memorandum provides for the establishment of a Town Planners' Council in order –

- (a) to register town planners;
- (b) to regulate the profession of town planners;
- (c) to exercise and maintain discipline in the profession of town planners;
- (d) to promote advancement in the field of town planning, and finally
- (e) to approve conduct or cause to be conducted training courses, programmes, lectures, seminars or conferences, including continuing professional development courses or programmes, for town planners.

I am told that there is presently a pool of around 80 town planners in Mauritius working both in the public and private sectors, including, of course, the local authorities. Clause 5 of the Bill which is before the House spells out the specific functions of the Council in order to meet its objectives. The Council will register town planners; it will exercise and maintain discipline in the

profession, including the establishment of a Code of Practice on standards of professional conduct and ethics; and the Council will monitor compliance with the Code of Practice.

Moreover, as I stated earlier, the Council will organise training for the profession. The Council is also expected to provide guidance on various current planning issues, as well as new planning issues such as heritage, traffic congestion, implementation of the new urban agenda, climate change, and more generally urban renewal.

The proposed composition of the Council is captured at Clause 7 of the Bill. Provision is being made for an adequate representation of the profession. The Council will therefore comprise of 13 members, including 4 registered town planners from my Ministry, 3 registered town planners from the local authorities, 2 registered town planners in private practice, a representative of my Ministry at administrative level, as well as a representative of the Attorney General's Office, and 2 additional persons who are not town planners. Members of the Council will be appointed for a period of two years, with the possibility of renewal, and the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson will be elected from among the members who are town planners either from my Ministry, from the local authorities or from the private sector.

As for Clause 10 of the Bill, Members will note that it makes provision for the setting up of a Registration Board, which will have a critical function in assisting the Council in the determination of applications for registration of town planners, and the Board will consist of a Chairperson and two assessors.

Next, Mr Speaker, Sir, is the important Clause 19, which provides that henceforth, no person shall be allowed to practise town planning in Mauritius unless he is registered as a town planner with the Council. This provision is at par with the provisions of other professional bodies in the very same property and construction sector. And I could quote the examples of the Professional Land Surveyors' Council or the Professional Architects' Council or the Professional Quantity Surveyors' Council or the Council of Registered Professional Engineers.

The registration of town planners is a salient feature of this Bill. The conditions for registration are spelt out at Clause 20 of the Bill, which provides that the prospective registered town planner must be aged at least 21; must not have been convicted of an offence involving fraud or dishonesty not only in Mauritius but in any other country; should not have been disqualified or deregistered from practising town planning on account of professional

misconduct, negligence or a breach of the code of practice in any country, I stress. Also, and, most importantly, the prospective registered town planner will need to hold a degree or a post graduate qualification or equivalent qualification in town planning from a university or institution that is approved by the Council; and on top of the academic qualifications, must satisfy the Council that he has at least 2 years' post-qualification experience in town planning. Of course, there are various related provisions that are spelt out in the Bill.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in this ever changing world, especially with the advent of digital technology, upgrading of skills is considered mandatory to meet challenges of today and tomorrow, which is why continuing professional development in the sense of an ongoing learning process to maintain and develop skills, expertise and competence for all town planners is essential. Therefore, at Clause 22, it is provided that CPD courses will be organised for registered town planners.

I must also refer to the registration of foreign firms of town planners as provided for in Clause 26 of the Bill. Again, the operation of foreign firms will require registration with the Council on terms and conditions that will be prescribed by our local regulatory body. There is at the moment many requests for preparation of master plans both in the public and private sectors, and having recourse to international experts and firms is becoming more and more attractive in this area. It is therefore crucial to ensure, in the light of international experience, that such firms do comply with planning laws and planning instruments in force in Mauritius.

Clauses 27 to 32 enable the Council to investigate complaints against the registered town planner having regard to professional misconduct, malpractice, or negligence or breach of the Code of Practice. And the Council will be empowered to set up a Professional Conduct Committee as and when necessary to look into the necessity of disciplinary proceedings.

There are also the Clauses 36 to 40 that refer to Financial Provisions and Accounts of the Council with the requirement of publication of an annual report and audited accounts every year.

I would like to refer Members of the House also to Clause 47 (d), which is very important because it allows a person who has proven experience over a continuous period of at least 20 years on the basis of an affidavit sworn by that person to be registered as a town planner so that no prejudice is caused to long serving town planners who may not meet the new standards being set. Overall, this Bill provides the appropriate legal framework to be put in place to ensure that

there is a more professional approach by town planners in dealing with land use planning concerns and managing land use changes.

To conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have already stated in my introductory note, town planning is an essential component in the land development sector and we should aim to have high calibre professionals who will provide technical advice in an independent manner. As the construction sector has become a major pillar of our local economy, town planning can play a key part in creating vibrant and dynamic urban spaces.

I, therefore, with these words, Mr Speaker, Sir, commend the Bill to the House. Thank you.

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

(4.49 p.m.)

Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central):
Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to intervene on the Town Planners' Council Bill, which seeks to better regulate the profession of town planners and which henceforth, if passed, will allow town planners to, under terms and conditions as spelt out in the Bill, accede to the status of professionals like engineers, doctors, architects, lawyers, accountants, to mention a few.

A very first observation that I would like to make, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that when this Bill was first circulated in Parliament on 24 September 2019, that is, one week or so before its dissolution on 06 October 2019 by hon. Obeegadoo's predecessor, Mr Mahen Jhugroo and which was even read a first time, well, the Bill was called The Professional Town Planners' Council Bill, but the current version of the Bill circulated in this House today, is called The Town Planners' Council Bill. The word 'professional' has been removed.

Now, I wonder about the reason for this change in the appellation of the Bill, when the real purpose of the Bill is to allow planners to accede to the status of professionals.

Mr Speaker, Sir, for the engineers, the Minister has mentioned it, the Council is called The Council of Registered Professional Engineers, and for the architect, the Council is called The Professional Architects' Council.

Having said so, I have noticed one more difference between this version of the Bill and that of Mr Jhugroo in 2019, and it has to do with the composition of the Board as it was then presented in 2019, at Clause 7 (1) and it consisted of four professional town planners from the Ministry, three from the local government and two from the private sector, making it a total of eight planners over and above one representative from the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning and one representative from the Attorney General's Office. I note that in the current Bill that hon. Obeegadoo has circulated today, addition has been made for two persons who are not town planners to be appointed by the Minister.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if this has been done in the spirit of naming people of competence in as much as town planning is an interdisciplinary field, that it includes civil engineering and other branches of engineering, architecture, human geography, social and design sciences, I am okay with that. But if it has been done with other intention - I am going to say it - to nominate friends and all these things, then, I will say that it will not serve the purpose. In fact, I would even propose to add one member from the public to form part of the Council so as to act as watchdog for the citizens of the country.

Having pointed out these differences between the 2019 and the 2021 Bills, allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, now to move on to section 20 of the Bill on Registration of town planner, more specifically at subsection (c)(i) which states that no person shall be registered as town planner unless he –

“satisfies the Council subject to subsection (3), that –

(i) he has at least two years’ post-qualification experience in town planning.”

I wish to make a preposition here and it has to be mentioned that the two years’ post-qualification has to be under the documented supervision of a registered planner because I do not quite see it in the Bill. The hon. Minister has mentioned just now, that planners serving for over 20 years will upon swearing an affidavit be deemed to be considered as professional planner. So, there we are. We have planners who can supervise these young planners for them to be registered.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now move to section 2 (d) of the Bill which states that it seeks to promote the advancement in the field of town planning. A first comment here: I would like to

highlight for change in the Interpretation Section relating to the definition of planning. The conceptors of the Bill may have missed out that planning legislation is based on two existing legislations, that is, the Town and Country Planning Act of 1954 and subsequently amended, and also the Planning and Development Act of 2004. I would move that the definition of town planning be made to refer to the much wider objects under Section 3 of the Planning and Development Act 2004 as opposed to the very limited version that has been spelt out in the Interpretation Section in this present Bill.

Another comment that I would like to make and the hon. Minister has also touched on this is that we are talking about the advancement of the profession and whether, in referring to the profession as town planners, we are not, in a Mauritian context, sending out the message to the population that our planners do planning only in towns. The hon. Minister has touched on this. So, my suggestion is maybe the time has come to call our planners land planners instead of town planners, per se, so as to get rid of this bias perception.

As a matter of fact, I would even suggest that we call the Council that would be set up following the passing of this Bill as the Council of Registered Professional Land Planners instead of a mere Town Planners' Council as the Bill proposes to call it. This is just a suggestion.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the two most powerful tools that the planners have at their disposal are –

- (1) the Planning Policy Guidelines, and
- (2) the National Development Strategy; a national land use strategy which provides the basis for the long term land use planning and which is currently being reviewed and touted to be called National Land Development Strategy upon finalisation.

Now, I had asked Parliamentary Question on this, on the progress thereof in PQ B/775 of 2020, during which the House took note that it is nearly three years ago from now, that is, on 07 June 2019, that a team of Consultants was tasked with the review of the National Development Strategy of 2003 - 19 years old today - a document that ought to be revised every 10 years.

I would like to ask the hon. Ag. Prime minister today about the progress on the finalisation of the strategy and whether the drafting of an action plan or program for implementation that he had mentioned as being the last two steps in the nine steps process have

actually begun or have they been completed? And whether the issues in connection with climate change that I had canvassed have been taken on board? I do not think the document is public yet. Maybe I have missed it out but I do not think it is public yet.

Climate change and flash floods, more and more a killer, have been the concern of everybody and it has to take on board the National Flood Management Programme and also *l'épineuse problématique des bassins versants. Un bassin versant, M. le président, est un territoire qui draine l'ensemble de ses eaux vers un exutoire commun, un cours d'eau, la mer ou même nos réservoirs d'eaux sur lesquels nous dépendons pour notre approvisionnement en eau potable. Le bassin versant constitue le territoire pertinent pour traiter les causes en amont d'un problème lié à l'eau de surface, surtout la transportation de la pollution de notre territoire puisqu'il est connu que nos agriculteurs utilisent beaucoup d'engrais chimiques.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, the question is whether our planners, be it at central Government or at the local councils, are up-to-date on these issues. In line with the provisions of section 2(e) of the Bill which is -

“(e) approve, conduct or cause to be conducted training courses, programmes, lectures, seminars or conferences, including continuing professional development courses or programmes, for town planners.”

But I understand that there has been a reduction of overseas continuous learning across the board today because of COVID-19 and the current difficult economic and financial situation. But I would wish to point out that planners must be encouraged to keep up-to-date by way of online courses be it at the Ministry or at the local University.

One suggestion that I would like to make at this stage is for the planners to set up an institution of planners of Mauritius just like the Institution of Engineers of Mauritius which was created on 26 February 1948 by a group of 12 engineers who called it, at the material time ‘The Engineers’ Association of Mauritius.’ *Pour la petite histoire*, it had as first President Mr Raymond Bérenger, grandfather of the hon. Joanna Bérenger, also an engineer. Today, the Institution of Engineers of Mauritius has a professional training centre which was registered as a training institution by the Mauritius Qualification Authority in March 2015. I remember it well because at the material time I was a Board member of the Institution of Engineers of Mauritius. The Centre is the training arm of IEM and its aim is to meet the continuous professional

development needs of engineers. So, I do believe that planners can certainly replicate such a model.

I must tell the House that as a Civil Engineer of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, I was seconded for duty to the Ministry of Housing and Lands between 2005 and 2008 on request of the Ministry of Housing and Lands, to be the Officer-in-Charge of the Housing Unit. There, at the Ministry, I must say that I am the officer who made the presentation on the LAVIMS Project – the planners are here, they will know – to a committee of the Cabinet of Ministers and following this presentation, the Committee, chaired by Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, decided to fast track the project. This is how Mauritius, today, has a national digitalised cadastre which I am given to understand is not working at full potential if I compare it with what was presented by this Government – because after taking over from the previous Government – at the 2016 World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty, at the World Bank in Washington DC in March 2016, I quote from the document, it is available online –

“We describe how LAVIMS could form the basis for a National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI). An operational NSDI would contain up-to-date and accurate spatial data on land, infrastructure, utilities and the environment and would support Government in dealing with issues such as planning – very important word –, environmental degradation – also an important word – and flooding, alternative uses of agricultural land, deforestation and mineral extraction. A range of eGovernment services could be based upon such an infrastructure creating increased opportunities and access to information for citizens”.

The question is: do we have all these facilities today available to the citizens?

Mr Speaker, Sir, times have changed since the days of the first town planner of the country, Ms Mackins. As a matter of fact, in those colonial days planning was not an arduous task because there was no development pressure, no teeming population pressure, no multiple development strategy to cope with, and no climate change issues to cope with. Climate change has made this a new and very dangerous phenomenon and all professionals, be it planners, engineers, hydrologist and even meteorologist must be trained, and their knowledge enhanced so that they can adapt their mathematical models thereto.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in addition to training, I now wish to touch on Part VI of the Bill, Discipline. We are now in a very delicate aspect of the professionalisation of the domain and here I would like to say one thing, that is, a mistake repeated more than once is actually a decision.

Mr Speaker, Sir, for too long and so many occasions, so much of development have been allowed on vulnerable areas without planners drawing the alarm bell and the consequences of this is that a large number of inundations have followed heavy rainfall events. For planners to accede to the status of professionals, and in line with the provision of section 27, I would like to raise the following issues that planners ought to revisit and avoid –

- (i) allowing development to take place along drainage channels or to cover up almost 100% of the development plots;
- (ii) not respecting proper setbacks or plot coverage to allow percolation of storm water, thus allowing excess water to seep through soils and reduce the occurrence of severe flooding conditions;
- (iii) not requiring and not maintaining proper setbacks from other neighbouring properties and from the streets so as to allow for sunlight to penetrate and reduce invasion of privacy of other neighbours and to allow for emergency vehicles such as fire and ambulance to come in and allow people and property to be rescued whenever there is an emergency which is required but actually not quite respected all the time;
- (iv) accepting the practice of *signature de complaisance* from architects in lieu of proper design by professional architects;
- (v) allowing developers to fool their way through with 40% ground coverage at ground level, thus satisfyingly the 60% open ground level required in applications for Building and Land Use Permits when, in fact, excavation of the ground level occupy 100% of the land and not just 40%. In many cases the plots are made to carry basements that could even be more than one level, as well as all the services, so as whilst the ground level can show 40% built-up, practically the whole of the land has become impermeable to water percolation leaving the rest

of those neighbourhoods, especially in coastal areas, open to flooding during future cyclones and rainfall events, all the more that there are no drains in our coastal areas.

- (vi) Laxity in the imposition and to exert greater vigilance in respect for the 30 meter distance from the high watermark in the context of climate change which, with the predicted increase in sea level rise as well as more extreme flood events, brings about more receding coastlines. As a matter of fact, – we were talking about it yesterday with my colleague, hon. Dr. Boolell – has the time not come to revisit the level of the high watermark which would have become higher now because of sea level rise.
- (vii) Avoid and take sanctions on local authority town planners who do not refer all the compliant developments to the Land Drainage Authority.

I hope with the professionalisation of the planning domain that this Bill seeks to achieve, the integrity and maintenance of professional standards will be enhanced and will make Mauritius a good place to live, work and play. A place where tourists – the Minister of Land Use Planning is also the Minister of Tourism – will rush to come not only because of its people are welcoming, but the beaches and other sites are safe and are the best looking in the world. The picture will not stay the same unless there is a concerted effort from the planner community around the island to ensure that it stays the same; new applications are professionally screened and to sound the alarm bell when applications for Building and Land Use Permits hide more information than they reveal.

Mr Speaker, Sir, again in the same spirit of section 27 and section 2(b) of the Bill, I would like to touch upon three current issues -

What is happening in the case of the proposed construction of villas as part of the so-called Roche Noire Smart City is worrisome. There are pressing environmental concerns of site drainage and the preservation of wetland and its related flora and fauna.

I hope the Minister of Environment will pay heed to the comments that his Ministry will be receiving as part of the EIA process closing - I am not too sure - in about one to two weeks' time.

What happened in the case of the SME park that the DPM is constructing in Plaine Magnien, on alleged wetlands and which has caused inundation of several houses in the first weekend of April 2022 is unacceptable. The hon. Minister Hurreeram has just mentioned, this afternoon, that construction has been done on existing drainage network and that no necessary follow-ups have been done by the planners and the officers of the District Council after the issue of the building and land use permit. This is unacceptable. And since we are in the region of Plaine Magnien, allow me to touch on the Eastern Highway Project which was the subject of a Parliamentary Question of mine today, B/422, but which was not reached, unfortunately. Mr Speaker, Sir, what I ask for in this question is very simple, the alignment, the feasibility study and the source of financing.

Now let me start with the alignment which is the concern of a planner, be it planner of the Ministry of Housing and Lands or local authority planner.

Mr Speaker: Manage your time, 10 minutes left!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes, I will finish.

Which planner - and I am not referring here to the Road Development Authority; the Road Development Authority has become the real planner today in this country with the amount of roads that they are building - has deemed it possible for a feasible alignment without passing through the Vallée de Ferney? Because the House will recall that when the Government changed in 2005, the contract for the construction of this road was already awarded, but because ecologists have sounded the alarm bell on the Vallée de Ferney - Dr. Navin Ramgoolam had even gone to the extent of trying to find out alternative alignments but it was not possible - and the contract has to be terminated albeit paying damages. And this is how *Maurice Ile Durable* started with *professeur* Joël de Rosnay in the spirit of the preservation of the Vallée de Ferney. So I really want to know, which planner has deemed it 'okay' to go ahead with this road? I really want to know because the question did not come, but unfortunately.

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, before ending - I am not going to take too long of the time - before concluding, I would like to speak about COVID-19, which has also brought more challenges for town planners than they imagined. Many other professionals have to play a lead role in trying to ensure that the world that is planned for the future is increasingly safe from the ready invasion of COVID-19 and its constantly muting variants. Planning of the Ministry of Housing and Land

Use Planning has been strangely silent on post-COVID-19 planning. We did not seem to have heard from them on how planning parameters should be upgraded so as to reduce propagation of the virus through the relative proximity allowed by our existing laws and planning policy guidelines. As you are all aware, Mr Speaker, Sir, the minimum distance allowed between buildings subject to other conditions is no more than 900 mm, less than one meter. In fact, in my own constituency, I have noticed distance between houses of less than one meter, which is COVID social safe distancing. Furthermore, flat development for different family units, one on top of the other is being favoured. Bearing in mind that respiratory droplets from an infected person can be easily transmitted from one person to another by a mere sneeze, is it not time for the planners of the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning to lead a thinking process on the revision of certain planning norms along with their colleagues in other fields in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic? I question. I am glad that in reply to my Parliamentary Question last year regarding provision that is being made in social housing for people of my constituency living in Vallée Pitot, Tranquebar, Ward 4 and Plaine Verte, the hon. Minister of Housing had stated that 600,000 units will be made available for the inhabitants and that two new additional sites at Bell Village and Arsenal are being catered for over and above. This will go a long way in alleviating the pressure in demand and will also reduce the pressure on physical land space in an already very heavy built up area, and the consequential alleviation of pressure that would have otherwise entailed on the existing overburdened public utility networks, recreational and parking facilities.

To end, therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, in the light of my intervention, I am in favour of a Professional Land Planners' Council Bill to provide for better, more transparent and more disciplined town planning in Mauritius; one that will work in favour of the public interest; the interest of the present and future generations; and not in favour of those who seek to cut corners around regulations and allow unconscionable developers to make a fast buck irrespective of the social and environmental costs upon our countrymen, including flooding and destruction of our environment on an incremental basis.

I thank you for your attention.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Mrs Chukowry, you have the floor!

(5.14 p.m.)

Dr. Mrs D. Chukowry (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my views on the Town Planners' Council Bill. First of all, I wish to reassure the previous orator, hon. Osman Mahomed that we are a serious Government and that everything that is being done is for the benefit of the population, and by bringing this Bill to the House, the aim is to enhance the profession.

As the Ag. Prime Minister pointed out, there is unanimity among the profession for this Bill. But as usual the hon. Member...

Mr Speaker: No crosstalking!

Dr. Mrs Chukowry: But, as usual, the hon. Member *crie au feu juste pour mettre des doutes dans la population.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, at the very outset, I wish to congratulate the Ag. Prime Minister, hon. Steven Obeegadoo for bringing to the House the Town Planners' Council Bill. The Town Planners' Council Bill 2021 comes at the right time to bolster the engagement of our Government in its infrastructural development agenda, a benchmark of sustained domestic progress.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the regulation disposition of the Bill needs to be consequently underlined since it provides for the establishment of a Town Planners' Council of Mauritius which seeks to exert the requisite control and monitoring of the profession of town planners. It also provides for the necessary code and nomenclature of practice and discipline in a bid to empower the art and field of town planning so that it meets our national needs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with the advent of demographics, market competitive and a reorientation towards the quality of life and livelihood, the agency of town planning in Mauritius has become more fundamental and critical than ever. The pace at which this present Government, under the Prime Ministership of hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, catalyses on infrastructural development priorities since we took the helm of the country highlights the necessity to create the right pre-conditions in ensuring that the dynamism of our socio-economic enterprise, the very condition of living of our citizens, and the proper utilisation of resources are tangibly safeguarded through the purview of the Council.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as such, town planning is a vital attribute in efficiently mapping out the expansion of commercial, administrative and residential spaces, and helping communities to grow in perfect synergy. The Council's importance cannot be undermined especially taking into account that infrastructure should also stand strong in the face of unexpected adversity through intelligent design, the prospect of disasters.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the exercise of its authority, as a body corporate, the Council will also establish the need to equate employment with accommodating and implementing rules based provisions, regulations in order to ensure that concepts, management, distribution and utilisation of public assets are optimally and rigorously adhered to. Instituting a legal framework with sanctionary powers to better support the profession of town planning is paramount. People need to be safe and able to live in secure environment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in its latest report, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of United Nations underscored that sustainable, structured, and integrated country planning is key to meet the ever-increasing demands of urbanisation and urban migration, energy utilisation, public expenditure, transportation, employment and housing. Rightly so, the Bill espouses those precepts and brings forward through the Town Planners Council Bill a much-needed organisational system that will pave the way for greater and enhanced transparency, accountability and reliability as well as setting the seal on the domain of urban planning.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to conclude, I wish to once again congratulate the hon. Ag. Prime Minister for bringing to the House the Town Planners' Council Bill which will definitely enhance the profession of town planners in Mauritius.

I thank you for your attention.

Mr Speaker: You have the floor!

(5.20 p.m.)

Dr. A. Ramdhany (First Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. At the outset, allow me to congratulate the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning and Minister of Tourism for having introduced this important legislation.

We are today debating a Bill of utmost importance at a time where the world is facing serious consequences due to climate change. Mauritius being a small island country is not spared. The world has already begun to experience global warming and rising sea levels which represent an existential challenge which will cause tremendous damage and lead to massive displacement of people.

Mauritius has had an increase of 1.39 C° of average temperature; decrease of average annual rainfall by 104 mm over 70 years and 7.7% over the last ten years; sea level rise at an accelerating rate of 5.6 mm per year for Mauritius and 9 mm per year for Rodrigues; erosion of coastal lines of up to 20 metres during the last decade, and extreme weather conditions leading to flash floods. As has been witnessed, our island is prone to flash floods, especially in built-up areas.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we can say that planning is a profession that builds communities, protects the environment, enhances economic values, improves the choices for where and how people live, work and spend their leisure time. Planning is the process of making deliberate decisions to achieve desired outcomes in the use of urban space and resources. I lay emphasis on the words deliberate decisions and desired outcomes, Mr Speaker, Sir, to highlight the importance of planners and also the importance of planners to act ethically within a legal framework. The importance of planners in the development of infrastructures is often overlooked for a lack of awareness on this very noble profession.

My address to the House will be threefold, Mr Speaker, Sir, namely –

- a) Planning profession in Mauritius and some statistics thereon;
- b) The importance of this Bill as a Code of Conduct and quality assurance,
- c) The importance of planning to face climate change impact.

Firstly, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning is the biggest employer for planners in Mauritius. The mission of the Planning Division is to promote the planned development of the territory of Mauritius, where it will be pleasant to live and work, where business can thrive and prosper and where the natural beauty of the country will be preserved for the enjoyment of future generations.

The main objective of the Division is to have a modern and dynamic town planning system that will –

- optimise the use of Mauritius' scarce land resources;
- encourage and facilitate the ease of doing business and investment in Mauritius;
- respond to new emerging planning challenges that Mauritius faces as a Small Island Developing State;
- meet visions of the New Urban Agenda adopted at the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development Habitat III 2016 and Sustainable Development Goals adopted at the UN Sustainable Development Summit 2015.

The main function of the Planning Division is to prepare and review the planning instruments, including National Development Strategy (NDS), Planning Policy Guidance (PPGs) and Action Area Plans/Master Plans to be used by local authorities and other institutions whilst granting permits and licences. The Planning Division also contributes to the Ministry's responsibility for the management of State lands through development, control and grant of planning clearances on leased State lands.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is interesting to note that the number of planners at the Ministry of Housing is 30 out of which 9 are women. The Chief Town Planner, the Country Planning Officer and the 2 Deputies are all women. On another note, the Chief Technical Officer of the Ministry is also a planner and the post is currently held by a woman as well. This shows, Mr Speaker, Sir, that women are able to hold posts of responsibility efficiently. This Government, under the leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, has not missed any opportunity for women empowerment and history will remember that the hon. Prime Minister made it possible for a first Lady President, Speaker of the National Assembly, Vice-Prime Minister and so on.

It should also be highlighted, Mr Speaker, Sir, that many civil servants possess a degree in Town and Country Planning but are not practicing as planners, many of whom are working as building inspectors. In contrast, Mr Speaker, Sir, there are some 24 planners at the local authorities level, out of which, there are 7 women and there are also some 7 to 8 planners working freelance, out of which, 2 are women.

Once enacted, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Town Planners' Council Bill will impose a legal obligation on all the planners in the private sector and public sector alike to perform within a legal framework which will bring a consistent approach to planning in Mauritius. This, Mr Speaker, Sir, will be crucial for our island and I would explain why under the third limb.

Allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, to make reference to a recent determination of the Environment and Land Use Appeal Tribunal, namely P.A and Others v/s the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning bearing reference ELAT 1976/20 whereby the Tribunal invited the *Morcellement* Board, the local authorities and other stakeholders to align their respective approaches to the land use of property so that there is more consistency in the application of guidelines and policies. This Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, through its various provisions will help to bring about this consistency which is crucial for the future of our island.

The Bill makes provision for disciplinary procedures to ensure that planners observe the legal frameworks failing which they will have to face serious consequences such as suspension or deregistration. This is crucial, Mr Speaker, Sir, given that planners are called upon to exercise sound judgments in their assessment of projects from a planning perspective and more so Mauritius is already facing the consequences of climate change.

The Bill also provides for Continuing Professional Development programmes which are essential for planners to keep abreast with –

- (i) new town planning techniques and methods of management;
- (ii) changes in planning law, planning guidelines and standards; or
- (iii) any other matter related to the profession of town planners.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this will ensure that the profession of planning in Mauritius is up to the international standards.

Moreover, this Bill makes provision for “foreign firm of town planners” which as per the definition in the Bill means -

“a body, group, company, partnership or *société* which provides town planning services and is under the control of a foreign town planner;

“foreign town planner” –

(a) means a non-citizen who is –

- (i) authorised by the competent authority in his country to practise town planning;
- or
- (ii) a professional member of a recognised institution of his country in the field of town planning;”

This is a commendable inclusion, Mr Speaker, Sir, as it will give the possibility for foreign firms to set up in Mauritius and this will in turn generate employment for local planners. This model is tried and tested in the legal profession, Mr Speaker, Sir, and I am convinced that this visionary approach will bring the profession of planning to the forefront and attract more young people to this field.

The role of planning is critical because shocks and natural hazards only become disasters when they interface with vulnerable people and settlement. Land use strategy, assessment decisions and supporting investment should enable communities and the natural environment to thrive in a changing climate.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, getting town planning right is a prerequisite for human development and environmental sustainability. Decisions around zoning, land management, infrastructure and service build-out are crucial for Mauritius to be geared towards more sustainable development to face upcoming challenges.

Planning should promote measures that reduce hazard exposure and vulnerability as well as increase preparedness for the response and recovery. Planning decisions should strengthen resilience, and limit the impact of disasters and climate related changes on communities, the economy and environment by –

- Ensuring planning strategy and systems are responsive to subtle and pervasive shifts in economic, social and environmental conditions.
- Identifying and managing risks and hazards affected by climate change, including vulnerability to multiple and overlapping hazards over time.
- Locating, building and managing future development within acceptable levels of vulnerability over long-term planning horizon.

- Enabling ‘building back more resilient’, ensuring buildings, property and infrastructure are resilient to acceptable levels of future exposure.
- Ensuring that responses to climate change and hazards do not erode natural values and biodiversity and conservation is strengthened.
- Removing barriers to rapid response that do not prejudice long-term recovery and resilience.

Moreover, Mr Speaker, Sir, in line with the Glasgow Agreement, Mauritius must further strengthen its efforts to build resilience to climate change to curb greenhouse gas emissions. Strategic planning will need to respond to increased demand for land uses and activities that reduce carbon consumption by –

- Planning for transport choices to ensure communities have robust multi-modal transport systems in place, including infrastructure for active transportation (walking, cycling, public transit) and low emissions vehicles.
- Planning for more attractive local destinations and effectively managing parking supply. There is the potential to reduce parking supply in accessible locations where it is practical to reduce the demand for travel and reduce transport emissions.
- Recognising the value of vegetation covers both in reducing heat loads and carbon sequestration.

At a national and regional scale, this means planning settlement patterns to use land resources more efficiently and adopting urban design principles that improve connectivity and address isolation.

This Bill is being implemented at a time when the “save soil save the planet” awareness campaign is being intensified around the globe by the World Food Programme (WFP) of the United Nations. What a laudable initiative by the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning and Minister of Tourism and the Government under the leadership of the hon. Prime Minister to introduce this Bill which aims at regulating the town planning sector.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill will enhance the planning profession by providing the right legal framework, continuing professional development and ethical standard required to face the challenges lying ahead.

Let me end by saying, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this Government is continuing with its vision to upgrade the lifestyle of its citizens. This Bill is another step in the right direction and is evidence of the visionary approach of the hon. Prime Minister. I must say, we, on this side of the House, are proud that we are taking the right decisions for a better Mauritius.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

ANNOUNCEMENT

PRESS ARTICLE – HON. OSMAN MAHOMED – AMENDED PQ

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I have an announcement to make.

My attention has been drawn to a Press article published in *Le Defi Quotidien* of today under the caption “*Une PQ d’Osman Mahomed modifiée*”. In the said article, the hon. Member is reported to have made remarks regarding the amended version of his PQ on the Public Service Commission. In fact, the hon. Member has a Parliamentary Question, PQ B/322, appearing on today’s Notice of Questions, standing in his name addressed to the hon. Prime Minister.

The hon. Member has complained that his original question, as submitted to the Clerk was in reference to the Public Service Commission, the Local Government Service Commission and the Disciplined Forces Service Commission.

In that regard, the attention of hon. Members is drawn to the provisions of Standing Order 22(1)(a), under the heading “Contents of Questions” which provides in no uncertain terms that not more than one subject shall be referred to in any one question.

In connection with his complaint, the hon. Osman Mahomed sought support on two precedents, in 2011 and 2016, respectively, whereby, Parliamentary Questions in regard to the three mentioned Commissions were admitted.

Hon. Members, in the light of the provisions of Standing Order 22(1)(a), referred to above, these cases cannot be relied upon as binding precedents.

It is a matter of regret that the hon. Member instead of taking the matter privately with me in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 21(4), chose to go to the Press thereby conveying the wrong impression that the Assembly faulted in its duty.

I thank you for your attention and I suspend the Sitting for 45 minutes.

At 5.37 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 6.30 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please be seated!

Hon. Bodha!

Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am very happy to see you in the Chair and to give me the opportunity because you have not been in the Chair most of the time...

Mr Speaker: It is shared.

Mr Bodha: Thank you. So, I am very happy to see you in the Chair and thank you for giving me the opportunity to say a few words on this Bill because in fact it arouses a lot of thoughts in my mind, being a town planner myself. And I would like to pay tribute also to the Ag. Prime Minister for bringing this Bill and for coming up with this concept of the Town Planners' Council Bill.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been a lot of debate about the naming of the concept. Hon. Osman Mahomed spoke about the professional town planners Bill and the professional town planners Institute. The Ag. Prime Minister spoke about the Town Planners' Council Bill. In fact, we have to make the difference with the French system. *En français, il y a l'urbaniste qui s'occupe de l'aménagement des villes et il y a l'aménageur du territoire qui s'occupe de l'ensemble des territoires, à la fois urbain et rural.* That is why in English we say 'Town & Country planning'; the 'town' is a town and the 'country' is the rest of the country. So, in fact, it should have been the 'Town and Country Planners' Council Bill' *parce qu'en français, M. le président, l'aménagement de territoire couvre l'ensemble du territoire, l'urbaniste s'occupe de la ville – il y a un Code d'urbanisme et le Code d'urbanisme sont les servitudes qui s'appliquent à la ville et à l'aménagement urbain. Et il y a le Code concernant l'aménagement rural et c'est un Code complètement différent.* So I wanted to make this apartheid.

Now, I thank the Ag. Prime Minister for giving this opportunity to make town planners in the forefront of this community of what I call la *communauté des bâtisseurs, des ingénieurs, des architectes, et tous ceux qui sont là pour modeler, faciliter, transformer un paysage et transformer un pays. Au fait l'urbaniste se perd dans la pluridisciplinarité parce qu'on parle très rarement de l'urbaniste. On parle de l'architecte, on parle de l'ingénieur, et l'urbaniste est perdu dans tout ça. Mais ce Bill, pour une fois, ce projet de loi met en exergue, met les projecteurs sur une profession très mal connue au fait. Et j'ai tendance à dire que l'urbanisme ne nourrit pas son homme et ne nourrit pas ses disciples. Je connais beaucoup d'urbanistes qui ont fait des études très poussées, qui ont abandonné leur carrière d'urbaniste parce qu'il n'y avait pas de possibilités – il n'y a pas de postes – et j'en connais deux qui étaient au ministère des Terres qui se sont retrouvés juristes et qui sont devenus après... Et moi-même je fais autre chose.*

Mr Speaker: *Ministre!*

Mr Bodha : *Donc, c'est dommage, parce que c'est l'urbaniste ou l'aménageur qui transforme le pays et aujourd'hui il y a une urgence. C'est pour cela que je félicite le Premier ministre supplément d'amener ce projet de loi et de mettre les projecteurs sur l'urbaniste ou l'aménageur. Il ne faut jamais oublier que nous n'avons que 2,400 kilomètres carrés de terre – 60 sur 40 kilomètres. Nous n'avons que 240 kilomètres de côtes et nous avons une des densités les plus fortes au monde : 1.4 million sur 2,400 kilomètres carrés ça fait 60,000 personnes par kilomètres carrés. Et nous voulons être un pays producteur de sucre, nous voulons être une destination touristique de qualité, nous voulons être un pays où il y a une certaine industrialisation, nous voulons être un pays où il y a une urbanisation avec les *smart cities*, nous voulons être un pays aussi d'autosuffisance agricole, donc les enjeux sont énormes, et aujourd'hui le bien le plus précieux c'est la terre. Il n'en reste plus de pas géométriques. Il ne nous reste plus de terres fertiles. Donc, la première chose qu'il faudrait faire, M. le président, – *this I have always wanted to press on this – we need a Sugar Map of Mauritius. Land allocated for sugar which cannot be used for something else because we need 300,000 or 350,000 or 400,000 tons of sugar. And to have one arpent is 40 tons of sugarcane and about 4 tons of sugar. So, if you want to have 400,000 tons of sugar, you need 100,000 arpents of land. And you must not sacrifice this land, if we need to still be a sugar land because we need the sugar, we need the**

bagasse and we need it for our ecosystem. Donc, l'aménageur dans un premier temps doit redéfinir Maurice, et il y a urgence, M. le président, pour créer *the Sugar Map of Mauritius*.

Deuxième chose, les *smart cities* sont des projets qui sont pilotés par le privé. C'est eux qui décident où ils veulent faire leur *smart city*. Quel est le rôle de l'autorité ? Quel est le rôle des autorités concernant la transformation de l'île Maurice ? Le Premier ministre par intérim a parlé de l'île Maurice 2040. Moi je crois qu'il faut parler de l'île Maurice 2050, 2060 si on veut vraiment savoir exactement qu'est-ce qu'on va faire avec chaque parcelle de terre. Nous n'avons plus de pas géométriques, il n'y en a plus. Les *smart cities* ne devraient pas être des zones d'urbanisme isolées. Il ne faut pas qu'il y ait une rupture, c'est l'aménagement des territoires qui fait qu'il n'y ait pas de rupture entre les régions aisées, les régions de prospérité et les régions modestes. Et c'est le rôle de l'urbaniste justement de réconcilier ces zones. Je vais prendre deux exemples. Henrietta est un village, c'est un cul de sac au fin fond de Vacoas, mais la route La Vigie, La Marie, Henrietta, Beaux Songes va désenclaver complètement cette région et Henrietta va se retrouver sur un axe passant qui va transformer complètement cette région.

Deuxième exemple : Barkly était un fin fond, le passage du métro a fait que Barkly est devenu maintenant un endroit où il y a un train qui passe toutes les 10 minutes ou toutes les 15 minutes. Donc, le rôle de l'urbaniste, le rôle de l'aménageur est un rôle fondamental pour redessiner la carte de Maurice et créer les zones, remettre les infrastructures et les réseaux au premier rang des priorités. Quand vous construisez une route c'est aussi un axe de développement. Aux États-Unis les villes ont été construites sur les chemins de fer, sur les gares. Donc quand on va redessiner une route, on est en train de redessiner cette région. Alors, le ministère a un rôle extrêmement important à jouer, c'est pour cela qu'en France il y a un grand débat aujourd'hui, c'est que l'aménagement de territoire devrait être dirigiste, volontariste et c'est la politique, c'est-à-dire le gouvernement qui doit dire: oui, vous pouvez faire cet aménagement-là, ici et non pas là-bas. C'est comme cela qu'on a le schéma directeur d'aménagement urbain qui donne les zones de priorité et c'est l'aménagement de territoire volontariste dicté par l'État.

Vous savez, M. le président, on ne peut pas avoir un hôtel cinq étoiles et un village deux étoiles séparés par une route. On ne peut pas avoir une île Maurice de deux vitesses. Qui peut corriger cela ? C'est le *town planner*, l'aménageur qui peut corriger cela et empêcher cette

rupture. Le gouvernement a un projet de 12,000 maisons. J'avais assisté à une réunion, j'avais écouté et regardé tout le monde et à la fin de la réunion, je n'avais rien dit. Alors on m'a demandé pourquoi ? Alors, j'ai expliqué que ce n'est pas possible de faire 500 maisons dans chaque circonscriptions parce que les circonscriptions ne sont pas les mêmes. L'offre et la demande ne sont pas les mêmes, la possibilité d'avoir les terres, la disponibilité des terres n'est pas la même.

Donc, il faudra réaménager maintenant. Quand vous emmenez 500 familles quelque part, c'est 2000 personnes. Ces 2000 personnes, c'est 1000 enfants ! Il faut une école, il faut les espaces verts. Les logements ce ne sont rien, il faut reconstruire les villes. C'est comme cela que nous avons eu les nouvelles villes. Alors, ce que je voudrais dire, M. le président, c'est que nous avons une occasion là en valorisant l'urbanisme, l'aménageur, de lui donner la possibilité avec une équipe pluridisciplinaire, c'est-à-dire, les ingénieurs, les *surveyors* et les promoteurs, de redessiner Maurice. Si on ne redessine pas Maurice à ce moment - là - ce sera la valeur de l'argent et le sens du profit qui va redessiner Maurice en des zones de prospérité, des zones fermées, des *gated communities* et vous aurez aussi *Batterie Cassée*, vous aurez un certain nombre de régions qui seront à ce moment-là des *no man's land*.

Alors, ce que je voulais dire, M. le président, c'est qu'il y a une urgence et la loi arrive au bon moment de valoriser l'urbanisme avec sa compétence.

Deuxième chose, au ministère du Logement et de l'aménagement du territoire, il y a des professionnels extrêmement compétents. J'ai travaillé avec eux et on a fait le -

- *Master plan* de Bel Ombre avec cinq hôtels ;
- le *master plan* de Saint Félix avec cinq hôtels ;
- le *master plan* des Salines avec cinq hôtels ;
- le *master plan* de Grand' Baie,
- le *Urban Terminal* ici à Victoria.

Donc, les personnalités, les experts compétents sont là.

Il faut qu'on ait une vue d'ensemble de l'île Maurice de demain et c'est cette vue d'ensemble qui pourrait donc dessiner l'île Maurice de demain en tenant compte plusieurs choses maintenant –

- (i) la terre est précieuse ;
- (ii) il faut absolument tenir compte de la fragilité de l'écosystème ;
- (iii) il faut absolument tenir compte de l'impact du changement climatique parce que nous sommes un des pays les plus vulnérables. Il faut regarder nos plages, par exemple.

Je prends trois cas. Si on prend le village de Trou d'Eau Douce qui attire 400,000 touristes par an. Si chaque touriste dépense R 1000, cela fait R 400 millions engendrés par ce village. Qu'est-ce que nous lui donnons en retour ? Pas grand-chose. Pour Grand' Baie, c'est pareil. Alors, il y a une redistribution des richesses, il y a une redistribution des priorités d'aménagement et cela peut se faire justement par l'urbaniste et cela peut se faire quand les autorités sont volontaristes et dirigent la politique d'aménagement de territoire.

Let me now say a few words on some clauses of the Bill. When it comes to the composition of the Council, first of all, you have four registered town planners from the Ministry. Then you have three registered planners from the Local Government; that is seven. Then you have one representative for the Ministry; that is eight. You have one representative from the Attorney General's office; that is nine. It means that out of 30, nine people are from the public sector but the development process, the billions; it is true that Government is doing a lot meta-structural works but the billions are coming from investment from the private sector. I am a bit surprised that we only have two representatives of town planners from the private practice.

I think that this synergy between the public and private sector is essential because we as the authority, we can impose a number of conditions but then, the promoter should be given the incentives to be able to invest because he is not going to invest just to invest. *Un promoteur ne va pas venir faire un hôtel parce qu'il veut investir dans l'hôtel. Il faut que l'hôtel se retrouve dans une zone balnéaire qui puisse attirer les touristes. C'est pour cela que par exemple quand on a fait la région de Bel Ombre et Saint Félix, on a vendu cette région la comme une autre île Maurice. Je crois que la synergie avec le secteur privé est nécessaire. Je trouve que le Council est finalement a public sector Council with people from the Ministry and people from the Local Government.*

Maintenant, je reviens à quelque chose que j'avais dit tout à l'heure. Au fait, l'urbanisme se perd dans la pluridisciplinarité parce que finalement il y a les ingénieurs, il y a les architectes, il y a les *surveyors* et il n'a pas de rôle. Au fait, c'est lui qui devrait piloter parce que c'est lui qui a une vue d'ensemble du projet.

Deuxième chose concernant le projet de loi, c'est l'enregistrement des urbanistes venant de l'étranger –

“26. Foreign firm of town planners

(1) No foreign firm of town planners shall provide town planning services in Mauritius unless the firm is registered with the Council on such terms and conditions as may be prescribed.”

It is extremely important, hon. Ag. Prime Minister, to know what are the terms and conditions that are going to be prescribed for foreigners to be able to work in Mauritius. You know that we do not have many big projects in Mauritius. If we were to have foreign firms with all the capacity they have, with all the brilliant ideas they may have, very easily, they will overshadow the local counterparts and they will overshadow the local people. Already as I said, the town planner is a bit lost in this team of developers.

So, what I am proposing here is that if you have foreigners coming, they should, as in other cases, I think it is for the law agencies, they should be able to team up with local town planners to create agencies where you have the synergy between those coming from abroad and those who are based here. So that they can be able then in a mixed partnership, apply to tenders and be able to participate in most of the projects.

I think this is extremely important. It is very sensible and very sensitive. I have been told that we have only 80 planners in Mauritius; about 30 are at the Ministry and about 20 are in the Local Government sector, which means that finally we have very few town planners.

I now come to what hon. Osman Mahomed said. He talked about the institute. I think that we should be able to provide town and country planning degrees at the University of Mauritius for architects, for engineers who want, in fact, to be able to become developers because as I said, the town planner is lost in this huge team of developers. Having the notion, having all the

ingredients of town and country planning would be very helpful and I think that we can, of course, have the Institute for Training.

I think that hon. Osman Mahomed was right in saying that we should have up-to-date technology as regard to climate change, use of materials, how to use solar energy, the house of tomorrow. The house of tomorrow - how do we define it?

We have not yet defined the perfect house for tomorrow in Mauritius, for Mauritius in 2050. What is happening today? Because of the Cyclone Carol, everybody left the iron roofs and built concrete houses. And then, after the concrete houses, we had it one storey and then we build another storey. So, today, we have thousands of storeys of houses, of ground plus one or ground plus two, the children are not here and you have a poor couple in a huge house. But we should define the house of tomorrow, the Mauritian house of tomorrow where we can have the solar energy; where we can have the proper lighting; where we can have the proper material; where we can have the proper construction as regard to climate change. So, these are the comments I wanted to make, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have spoken on Clause 7 and on the foreign town planner.

M. le président, si on laisse la notion de profitabilité dans le développement urbain, on va finir par se retrouver avec des régions riches, prospères et des zones qui seront des régions délaissées. Le rôle de l'urbaniste, c'est de trouver la synergie entre ces différentes régions et le rôle de l'État en définissant les infrastructures - comme je l'ai bien expliqué - en définissant les réseaux. Par exemple, la distribution numérique sur toute l'île, est-ce qu'il y a des zones où l'Internet est accessible ou pas ? Si un industriel veut s'implanter à Goodlands, est-ce qu'il a le débit nécessaire ? Donc, c'est l'aménageur qui peut justement tenir compte de tout cela. Et, donc, il y a aujourd'hui une impérieuse nécessité et l'urgence de faire qu'il y ait l'aménagement de territoire dicté par les autorités publiques parce que la terre est précieuse, on n'en a pas beaucoup. Et il ne faut pas créer des *gated communities* après des *no man's land* où il y aura la drogue, la prostitution, où il y aura des problèmes sociaux. Parce que c'est l'urbanisme d'aujourd'hui qui définit la société de demain, M. le président.

Merci beaucoup.

Mr Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Ramchurrin!

(6.51 p.m.)

Mr P. Ramchurrun (Third Member for Savanne & Black River): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, I am grateful for being granted the floor to intervene on the Town Planners' Council Bill. I could only thank the Ag. Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning for introducing this Bill in this august Assembly. From the very outset, I am welcoming this legislation with much satisfaction and look forward to listening to the constructive feedbacks from other Members as well.

Mauritius, Mr Speaker, Sir, is the leading African powerhouse in terms of accountability, democratic institutions and good governance. Mr Speaker, Sir, it is imperative that the Government continues in the path of establishing solid institutional frameworks to enhance the good governance practices within our country. Hence, the setting-up of the Town Planners' Council is a long-standing requirement to better structure and empower the professionals involved in the planning occupation. Planners throughout the globe have worked closely with the civil society and Governments to create and manage our future villages, towns and cities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the primary merit of this Bill is that it recognises planners' enormous contribution and their potential by utilising the incoming Town Planners' Council to recommend changes within the profession in order to ensure future resilience.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the historical professional origins of town planners comes from the challenges of planning the European social housing reconstruction to avoid the expansion of slums. Mauritius imported town and country planning from the colonial French and British rulers and was bestowed with the vision of builders such as Mahé de La Bourdonnais, Barthelemy David and Robert Farquhar. However, our proud nation also produced leaders who were not professional planners themselves, but had far-reaching vision to change the very landscape of our towns and villages. Under the Prime Ministership of late Sir Anerood Jugnauth, our country's first *miracle économique* produced major infrastructural uplifts of our towns and villages across the island. Currently, under the Prime Ministership of hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, our space, housing, transport and community infrastructural planning has been revolutionised, hence, equipping our nation with cutting-edge infrastructure and amenities to support our socio-economic progress for the next 50 years, as mentioned by hon. Bodha.

Undoubtedly, this Government, under the leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, is through this legislation, putting planners and planning at the forefront of our recovery and future development agenda.

Mr Speaker, Sir, natural catastrophes are having an increasingly destructive impact on people and property and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) such as Mauritius, which has been acknowledged at the highest levels. As a result, the hon. Prime Minister emphasised the necessity of being well prepared for future natural catastrophes by asking for increased coordination among international organisations and agencies to assist the SIDS countries, that is, the Small Island Developing States to prepare beforehand an aftermath of natural disasters.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when a planning framework is backed up by a legislation, it is inevitably rendered more effective. However, a possible barrier to obtaining effective and sustainable outcomes is established when there is discretion in the framework or legislation regarding the necessity to have or formulate plans. Retaining a planner's discretion over whether or not a framework can be eased, for example, means that obtaining a complete and successful planning framework may have considerable gaps or inconsistencies. As a result, Government must guarantee that the legal framework promotes the correct implementation of the planning process which is backed up by sound planning methodology.

Mr Speaker, Sir, lessons learned from natural disasters, be it in Chemin Grenier, in Chamouny or even in Bambous, these examples must be used to help our planners to focus on their capabilities and responsibilities. This guarantees that planning requirements are implemented effectively, that development activities are monitored, and that planning regulations are appropriately enforced. Where plans are developed, they must be backed up by effective enforcement in order to ensure compliance and effectiveness, for example, in SIDS rebuilding after disasters must be done with the appropriate approvals to guarantee that people rebuild properly.

Furthermore, residents and private organisations must fully empower planning authorities. Hence, planning departments must be supported, strengthened and given the freedom to do their jobs with resources provided to educate the individuals about the importance of adhering to the regulatory requirements of our country's formal planning processes. Consequently, the future Town Planners' Council Bill will bridge the legislative and institutional

gap by ensuring that planners have access to the most up-to-date frameworks and support in order to fully engage in our country's holistic space planning process.

Mr Speaker, Sir, given the prevailing challenging international sanitary and economic condition, the introduction of the Town Planners' Council Bill is even more warranted. In fact, rapid urbanisation has rendered many old town planning methodologies, policies and instruments out-dated. The imperatives of poverty reduction, community empowerment, and creating possibilities for women in development have been slow to be recognised by planners. Planning practice has also not been sufficiently integrated into the information economy and informed by research. The Town Planners' Council cannot bring about changes on its own, but it may serve as a hub for ideas, innovations and mutual learning.

Mr Speaker, Sir, planning has traditionally been a rather insular profession. Its institutions and operations have been traditionally derived from local government, national legislation and nationally based professional bodies. Unfortunately, to a large extent, there has been a lack of internationalisation of the perspectives. At a time when urban development is a critical driver of change globally, it is essential that we see beyond our borders. Hence, the future work of the Town Planners' Council will demonstrate how an institution that embraces the diversity can act both regionally and internationally as an effective advocate for holistic planning. The Town Planners' Council will also be able to leverage the strong institutional platforms such as the Commonwealth Association of Planners and UN-Habitat. Indeed, there is a need to accentuate the regional, international and SIDS cooperation, collaboration and exchange. There exist a number of industry organisations which can be leveraged by planners to collectively materialise their contributions to the well-being of society.

Mr Speaker, Sir, for any profession to constantly innovate and adapt to new professional and economic challenges, it is imperative that they effectively listen to the pulse of the civil society. Hence, the Town Planners' Council will be empowered to consult the civil society through consultative approaches that encourage civil society engagement through communication, participation and inclusion.

Mr Speaker, Sir, today's debates on the Town Planners' Council Bill will undoubtedly also create new opportunities to leverage the forthcoming Council. For instance, Council will be able to support the Government with essential institutional support with respect to the gathering,

interpretation and usage of data after natural disasters. We also need their assistance in developing holistic regulations and legislations which support our sustainable long term space planning aspirations by factoring in our cultural heritage and localised developmental requirements. Our adaptability to climate change and natural disasters is key as well as the support from our civil society in the long term value of adhering the planning regulations.

Moreover, Mr Speaker, Sir, one of the main objects of this Bill is to uphold a high standard of professionalism and ethics amongst the planner's profession. The Town Planners' Council will equally be empowered to encourage the development of internationally recognised educational and research facilities underpinned by the required standards in order to encourage the smooth movement of local and international planners as well as to ensure the reciprocity of qualifications. Mr Speaker, Sir, we also look forward to the new council's responsibility to uphold and sustain high professional ethical standards of conduct as well as the generation and dissemination of good practices.

Mr Speaker, Sir, given that through the new Town Planners' Council, foreign planners will also be allowed to practise in Mauritius and it is important, as I mentioned earlier, that reciprocity of qualifications is arranged. Our country indeed has a number of seasoned and promising planning professionals who should be given the full opportunity to provide their professional services abroad. In South Africa, for instance, the Planning Council works closely with the South African Qualifications Authority to determine local educational and professional competency standards as well as works with foreign Planning Councils to ensure foreign planners can smoothly practise in South Africa and also for South Africans to be able to provide their services abroad.

To conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir, through this Bill, indeed we are looking forward to leverage the Town Planners' Council to further demonstrate the critical role of planning in helping secure a more resilient future for our citizens, especially those vulnerable to natural disasters and extreme weather events. Mr Speaker, Sir, hence it is essential that we pave diligently our country's way towards a sustainable urbanisation in order to achieve a resilient, inclusive and efficient economy. The Town Planning Council will thus be fully empowered to regroup, leverage, regulate and initiate innovating ideas for the benefit of our population. I,

therefore, fully support this Bill and thank the hon. Ag. Prime Minister for his diligence in presenting this Bill tonight. I am done, Mr Speaker, Sir. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Woochit!

(7.06 p.m.)

Mr R. Woochit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet): Mr Speaker, Sir, thank you for affording me the opportunity to contribute to the Town Planners' Council Bill. Mr Speaker, Sir, when Mauritius achieved independence in 1968, our economy was heavily reliant on sugar cane. Thanks to the vision of the Father of the Nation, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, and other visionaries such as Prof. Lim Fat, we managed to diversify our economy and we created other economic pillars such as the export processing zone, tourism and financial sector. Since independence, we have witnessed a significant industrialisation process where more and more agricultural land has been put to non-agricultural use in the country's process of urbanisation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, significant changes are taking place in the economy which will impact directly on the use of land and this will continue to take place in the years to come. We are witnessing more and more mushrooming of *morcellement* and gated housing developments, particularly in the coastal areas. The restructuring of the agricultural sector whereby large agricultural areas are being continuously converted for housing and industrial development and the emergence of new poles of development such as the ICT sector have led to a new era in land use planning and development. All these changes have far-reaching consequences on the use of land in Mauritius. It is high time that our planners adopt a more professional approach in the wake of these developments.

Coming to this Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a matter of logic and common sense that each body of professionals needs a specific legal setup of its own in order to regulate registration, conduct and discipline of its members. Just like the Bar Council for barristers, Medical Council for doctors, Dental Council for dentists, Law Society for attorneys, Chamber of Notaries for notaries, amongst others. The establishment of the Town Planners' Council by virtue of Section 3 of this Bill is indeed a laudable initiative and thus is highly recommendable. Without a shadow of any doubt, this Bill comes, though at a late stage, to fill a vacuum in so far as professional town planners are concerned. Mr Speaker, Sir, I would say, better late than never!

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill should have been drafted in the light of the socio-economic development of Mauritius on which I have elaborated in my introduction. Having gone through the legal provisions of the Bill, I feel duty bound to highlight some shortcomings in the Bill which I hope will be favourably considered before the Bill passes to the voting stage.

First of all, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to draw the attention of the august House to Sections 6(b) and 11 (1) and (2) of the Bill. It is my considered opinion that a blanket discretionary power is given to the Town Planners' Council to set up as many committees that it may consider necessary for the discharge of its duties and function under the proposed Bill. This uncontrolled discretionary power may well be the source of abuse of power and authority.

Mr Speaker, Sir, some checks and balances are warranted and call for Section 11(1) of the Bill badly needs an amendment to give the Minister concerned the power to numerically control the setting up of committees by the Town Planners' Council.

Furthermore, Mr Speaker, Sir, Section 11(2) of the Bill reads as follows, I quote –

“(2) A committee shall consist of not less than 3 members and such other persons as may be co-opted by the Council.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Bill is silent on the qualifications, experience, age and nationality of the other persons who are eligible to be co-opted by the Council to sit on a committee which has been set by it. Mr Speaker, Sir, such unqualified terms used in Bill might open the floodgates of abuse and could even be the gateway to favouritism and corrupt practices.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have some observations to make in respect of Section 7 (1) (a), (b) and (c) of this Bill which deal with the composition of the proposed Town Planners' Council. It is a cause of serious concern that none of these paragraphs lay down the specific criteria that will be taken into consideration during the process of selection of registered town planners, be it from the Ministry concerned or from the Local Government Service or from private practice who will be called upon to sit on the proposed Town Planners' Council. Not a single word, Mr Speaker, Sir, as to the qualifications and/or proven experience and/or professional achievements of such planners.

Mr Speaker, Sir, is it in consonance with the principle of good governance? Certainly not! Will this not trigger nepotism or favour the murder of meritocracy? I would like to voice out my opinion on Section 9 (9) of the Bill which stipulates that, I quote –

“(9) Every member, including a co-opted member, shall be paid such fees and allowances as the Council may determine.”

Will it be safe, Mr Speaker, Sir, to leave such power exclusively in the hands of the proposed Council? Every power has to be accompanied by reasonable checks and balances. May I know why no provision has been made for a *droit de regard* on these specific issues?

If the Council is fed by an appetite to self-serve exorbitant fees and allowances, Mr Speaker, Sir, who will stop it? The Bill is silent on this score. I humbly opine that an amendment is fully warranted with the words: ‘but subject to the approval of the Accountant General’ just after the word ‘determine’.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would be failing in my duties as a Member of this august Assembly if I were to close my eyes on the Section 7(1)(f) of the Bill, which reads as follows –

“(1) The Council shall consist of –

(f) 2 persons who are not town planners, to be appointed by the Minister”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, what is the relevance and pertinence of this provision? Why persons not being town planners, and the qualifications, age, experience and nationality made irrelevant by the specific provision of the Bill should sit on the Town Planners’ Council?

Once again, Mr Speaker, Sir, such unchecked power given to the Minister concerned could only lead to abuse and this could also offend the sacrosanct principle of good governance.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am of the considered opinion that Section 7(2) of the Bill invites precise consideration in view of the fact that it stipulates that the –

“Council shall elect a Chairperson and a vice Chairperson from among the members referred to subsection 1(a), (b) and (c).”

This provision sets no specific criteria as to the qualification and experience for election. It would appear that such election would be by majority vote only. At this stage, I find it pertinent,

relevant and material to heed to the House, Section 11(2)(a) of the Law Practitioners Act 1984, Act No. 55 of 1984, which reads as follows –

“(2) The Council (meaning the Council of Legal Education) shall consist of –

(a) a Chairperson, who shall be a person who holds or has held judicial office, a law practitioner or a legal officer of not less than 10 years’ standing, or a person who has proven ability and experience in legal education, to be appointed by the Chief Justice, after consultation with the Attorney-General and such other persons as he may deem fit (...).”

Mr Speaker, Sir, Parliament in its wisdom laid down precise and specific criteria for the appointment of the person eligible to be appointed as Chairperson of the Council of Legal Education. So, why this sound and wise reasoning cannot be applied in so far as the appointment of a Chairperson and a Vice-Chairperson of the Town Planners’ Council is concerned? Why only the numerical criterion is favoured? I humbly invite the hon. Minister to revisit this Bill and kindly consider bringing such amendments as he might consider relevant to make these paragraphs in harmony with the principle of good governance and meritocracy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, over the last decade, the number of illegal construction and development contrary to planning norms have been increased. The revision of existing legislations, such as the Local Government Act, the Building Control Act and the Town & Country Planning Act have hardly reduced the number of cases of illegal development.

Moreover, Mr Speaker, Sir, despite the computerisation of the application system for Building and Land Use Permit had not given the desired effect. Applications are often delayed and rejected for trivial reasons as amendments during the processing phase cannot be undertaken on the existing National Electronic Licensing System of the Economic Development Board.

Mr Speaker, Sir, almost every day, I receive complaints from the public regarding the miseries when it comes to making an application for Building and Land Use Permit. I therefore, expect that this Bill also provides for a discussion and knowledge sharing platform among planners so that our country can move higher up in its development process.

With this a few words, Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank you for your attention.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dhaliah!

(7.18 p.m.)

Mr R. Dhaliah (Second Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart): Mr Speaker, Sir, thank you for allowing me to give my views on the Town Planners' Council Bill which is before this House today.

At the very outset, I wish to stress that this important piece of legislation bears testimony of this Government's will and determination to come forward with the necessary legal frameworks to allow professionals of different sectors to operate within the necessary parameters, and this obviously positively impacts on the development of our country.

The House and the population at large will appreciate that, since 01 October, after its introduction, the debates and its adoption in this august Assembly, the CIDB (Amendment) Act has become in force and provides for a consolidated legal framework for the construction industry as well as for the registration process and the improvement of its operation. And this is just one example.

Today, Mr Speaker, Sir, all across the world towns and cities are witnessing major transformations. And this transition has brought significant transformations in the way people live, travel, work and also in the way networks are built.

Nowadays, all around the world we talk about the integrated network of urban infrastructure, transport and green spaces, among others. And it goes without saying that the key element of the planning is the location of people and their movement through the plan.

Therefore, much emphasis must be laid on sustainability, high quality of public life, a sensitive approach to development for the success of the urban planning and execution.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the world is developing at a rapid pace, and the Republic of Mauritius cannot lag behind. If we want to succeed, we have no choice but to put in place the necessary measures to meet our goals. This is why this Government has taken the bold initiative to come forward with the Town Planners' Council Bill.

There is no doubt that regulating the profession of town planners will ensure that there is a standardisation of the skills and knowledge required for the profession.

The Bill which is before this House today therefore provides for the setting up of a Council to which powers will be vested to ensure that the professionals involved in town planning sector perform according to set standards and policies.

Under the section related to the powers of the Council, it is clearly stipulated that the Council may, I quote -

“Under section 89(2)(b)(i) of the Constitution and subject to Part IVA of the Public Service Commission Regulations, to enquire and report into any complaint of professional misconduct or negligence against a town planner appointed by the Public Service Commission.”

What does this mean, Mr. Speaker, Sir? This clearly means that the code of practice established by the council will certify that all professionals will comply with the ethics and codes.

Moreover, the council will be able to assess the work of each professional and if the latter failed to perform their duties correctly, they may face repercussions from the council and that will certainly help in guaranteeing that all professionals are always delivering quality work.

But, let us hope that those who every time see evil in everything this Government does will not describe this Bill and its provisions as a means of repression.

In fact, this Bill makes provision for the Council to be able to organise training programs and conferences which will guarantee that there is continuing professional development for the members.

In addition to that, the council may co-operate with other local or overseas institutions operating in the same field for training. This is, no doubt, an important aspect as it creates uniformity in the work of local and international professionals.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are all aware of the negative impacts and consequences of climatic change, coupled with the wrong decisions and badly planned development projects implemented by some people who were in Government before us.

With the looming danger of flash floods on the island, having certified professionals who can consider the effects of the topology of a location and the existing buildings, it will certainly decrease the occurrence of such a calamity. It is not a question of petty politics but rather a question of human life, the security and life of our fellow citizens, Mr Speaker, Sir.

M. le président, je suis certain que les membres de cette auguste Assemblée, les professionnels du secteur des infrastructures publiques et la population en général se souviendront des tristes épisodes où des inondations ont coûté la vie à plusieurs de nos concitoyens.

Certes, nous n'avons aucun contrôle sur la nature, mais en tant que décideurs il est de notre devoir et notre responsabilité de nous assurer que notre population ne paie pas le prix des projets mal inspirés et mal exécutés.

Qui ne se souvient pas de l'aménagement de drains et de systèmes de canalisation, surtout dans la capitale, qui sont larges sur tout le parcours mais étroits à l'embouchure, provoquant ainsi un refoulement de l'eau, ou encore le bétonnage de certains endroits stratégiques. Ceux qui ont fauté devront répondre devant l'histoire.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when we talk about town planning, let us not forget that traffic jam during peak hours is yet another recurring issue in Mauritius. This Government has set its vision and major decongestion works have already started at strategic locations all across the island.

For sure, the Metro Express project which started with the track from Port Louis to Rose Hill, which has been extended to Quatre Bornes, and which will soon reach Curepipe, has enormously contributed to the reduction of the number of vehicles on our roads during peak hours.

But, it is a fact that we cannot rest on our laurels and wait for the Metro Express project to alleviate the problem of congestion. Obviously, new roads need to be built. With the Town Planners' Council Bill, the professionals from the council can advise the authorities in the construction of new roads which can lead to effectively reduce the time spent in travelling.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will not take too much of the time of the House, and before concluding, I would like to underline one last aspect. It is undeniable that the past decades were marked with the rapid development with skyscrapers being erected in almost all cities of Mauritius. This has greatly contributed to cause what we call Urban Heat Island effect, which increases the ambient temperature in our cities. Hence, having certified professionals from the council will help to avoid this phenomena to occur when planning for new towns.

For all these reasons which I have mentioned during my intervention, Mr Speaker, Sir, I fully support the Town Planners' Council Bill and I congratulate the Acting Prime Minister, hon. Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism, for coming forward with such a piece of legislation.

Long live the Republic of Mauritius. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. François, you have the floor!

(7.28 p.m.)

Mr J. F. François (First Member for Rodrigues): Thank you very much. Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to congratulate and thank the Acting Prime Minister, hon. Obeegadoo and the Government for bringing this useful and important legislation which seeks to establish the Town Planners' Council Bill (No. XIX of 2021).

As a surveyor-planner technician myself, I will speak in support of this Bill.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the primary objects of the Bill as per Clause 4, shall –

- (a) to regulate and control the profession of town planners; and
- (b) to promote advancement in the field of town planning.

This Bill will strengthen the professions of planning, our planning system and accountability of planners. Mr Speaker, Sir, our planning system is guided by the Town and Country Planning Act of 1954.

In 2004, the then Minister of Housing and Lands, hon. Lesjongard passed the Planning Development Act 2004 (PDA 2004) in this Assembly, which purports to repeal Act 6 of 1954, Act 2 of 1990 and Act 26 of 1995. The PDA 2004 is a fairly revolutionary piece of planning legislation based on the UK and Australian planning model, which, unfortunately, today is only partly in operation. If we want to make progress in the field of planning in our Republic, there is urgency to revisit, adapt, amend and update our planning and ancillary legislations, to make them fully functional and effective. 1954-2022, after more than 68 years, I am glad to see that this Planners' Council Bill will regulate the profession of planners and its members.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to thank the many planners of our Republic for the great impact of their recommendations on developments, all around us, to the healthy benefits of our

country despite there is more to be done. Here, I have in mind Government planners, such as Mr Heemoo, Mrs Saha, amongst others.

Mr Speaker, Sir, planning, by its nature, is about making-decisions that balance the various elements related to people, culture, economy, natural and built environment.

Our planning system is crucial in the efficient support of Government efforts to deliver houses, jobs and services, needed to support our population and our economic growth, especially during this COVID-19 pandemic and the post-COVID19 situation that will drive recovery.

Today, industrial, agricultural, and housing pressures - and here we are talking about construction of 12,000 affordable houses for vulnerable people - ecological sustainability and climate change, all require innovative planning responses in the area of land use and development to maintain and enhance liveability, while promoting the welfare of our people.

Inasfar as agricultural land use planning is concerned, the need to give spatial consideration to the protection of prime and unique agricultural land is of paramount importance for food security and sovereignty for our country, and for its protection against flooding, as was the case a couple of weeks ago at Bois-Cheri, La Flora and Rivière du Poste. I am concerned about hon. Bodha's argument that there is no more fertile land left in Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our National Development Strategy prepared by Halcrow in 2003, stated, and I quote –

“In tomorrow's Mauritius there will be a need for more flexibility in planning, to adapt to new circumstances quickly and to build on the opportunities offered by an increasingly-global economy. Because of the significant and unpredictable changes that are taking place in the economy, a fresh look is needed at the way the nation's towns, countryside and coast are planned and managed.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is absolutely correct, as a matter of fact, planning is an evolutionary process, which involves managing sustainably our societal progress from where it is now to where our country desires it to be in the future, let's say in 2050.

Our planners will have to engage for new policy commitments and initiatives for our New National Development Strategy with an integrated approach in relation to development and planning in this new social and economic normality era of our built environment. The hon. Ag.

Prime Minister mentioned a New National Development Strategy for the island of Mauritius, to be finalised by the end of this year. May I ask him whether this exercise will be extended to Rodrigues, as it was the case in 2003 when Halcrow prepared the 2003 NDS for our Republic.

Mr Speaker, Sir, future plans and visions for our country will require strategic and futurist planners, and surely this will support same, as our actual planning process is planning from the parts to the whole, instead of planning from the whole to the parts in our Republic.

The number of planners shall not be limited; actually there are only 80 planners. So, Government must look into providing more specialised scholarship quota for more planners, be it at graduate or post graduate level either at local or international institution.

Here, I also pledge that Rodrigues in his development process to recruit more planners and development control officers to support its sustainable development.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I also recall, the legendary phrase of my good friend, hon. Bablee –

« le centre de Vacoas pou vin enn Manhattan ».

I guess he is deeply inspired by the present Urban Transport Development of Vacoas Town. This is not a paradox. No, this is not a paradox, as Vacoas Town requires a regeneration and renaissance. I am talking as a planner myself.

(Interruptions)

I have done some research about Manhattan and I came across the Plan Manhattan Project Website for the Town of Manhattan's Growth Policy, titled – ‘Vision For Tomorrow - Solutions For Today’.

And the other phrase also that catch my mind: “*Phoenix pou vinn enn New York*”, that is worth be noted. Mr Speaker, Sir, these are visions that go beyond 2050, and, I guess decision-makers and planners, will need to rethink, reimagine, rebuild, revitalise, and redevelop Vacoas and Phoenix in the process of, what we call, reconstructing New Towns in Mauritius. Time will tell us the truth.

(Interruptions)

As per Clause 22 of the Bill, our planners will have to play the role of experts through Continuous Professional Development in relation to new town planning techniques and changes in planning laws, guidelines and standards.

In the same vein, Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius, as a tourism destination, will need to embark in consolidating its prestigious reputation in spatial planning for the future, otherwise, things might become very challenging if we do not protect, preserve and innovate for our natural and built environment. This concerns mainly our pristine coastal and beaches development, as hon. Bodha said: ‘there is no more *Pas Géométriques* today in Mauritius’.

Our planners must advise Government to take drastic policies for no further development in these sensitive coastal zones, wetlands, sand dunes and environmental sensitive areas.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Clause 5 (c) of the Bill, ensures that the Code of Practice is complied with by town planners. This will encourage the revision of the existing and the development of new codes and standards for planners and planning processes. Mr Speaker, Sir, over time, I have also witnessed of how planners are tasked through our planning system to achieving too many policy objectives to create a healthy and liveable society. They are pulled in all directions, some of which are contradictory. And balancing these objectives alongside private and political interests, when producing local plans and deciding on planning applications, it became a difficult task.

Mr Speaker, sir, The Town Planners’ Council as an independent body, while promoting the profession and its responsibility, will be bound firstly, to ensure that quality planning decision-making entails no conflict of interest through disciplined, honest, fair, transparent and in the best interests of our Republic. More importantly, it must be depoliticised planning decisions, whatever the size of development. This should be through a multi-disciplinary and collaborative approach between planners and other professionals like surveyors, engineers, architects, environmentalists, developers and politicians like us to find solutions and best practices.

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me, to quote a paragraph of my response to the Disaster Risk Management Bill 2016, where I said –

“Madam Speaker, coming to development and planning, disaster risk is spatial in nature and is interconnected with development and planning.”

I said so in 2016.

“Floodings, for example, we have witnessed in our Republic unsustainable development sometimes, unplanned urbanisation, environmental degradation and inappropriate land use through local examples such as what we witnessed at Port Louis,” mentioned by hon. Dhaliah, “Canal Dayot, Fond du Sac, Mont Gout floodings and Chittrakoot landslide. These are just a few examples.”

Secondly, this Town Planning Council will have to propose on how to significantly simplify and decrease the time it takes for developments to go through the planning process and permit to use land at different level of government. The actual planning process is way too long and cumbersome and should not frustrate development, but rather facilitate and accelerate development to make people’s lives better. The impact of this process is reflected in the number of permit applications approved and delivered as well as the number of planning contraventions delivered in our Republic. It will be interesting to know what is the latest figure of permit delivered per year by either the Ministry or at Local Government level.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our land use planning system must create places and communities that are more resilient to chronic stresses of climate change and episodic shocks such as floods. This will be in line, hon. Ramano, with our updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) submission to the United Nation Framework on Climate Change (UNFCCC) at COP26.

With regard to climate change, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Planning Institute of Australia (PIA), believes that planners working for different levels of government or in the private sector have a responsibility to integrate planning for climate change into their work and to be proactive in the development of mitigation and adaptation strategies to avoid harm and negative impacts to present and future ecosystems, human and non-human populations.

A couple of weeks ago, heavy amount of rainfall have again tested our planning system with unprecedented flooding at Longhill, Bel Ombre, I read that in the press. Despite the fact that our Republic is presently witnessing huge number of drains projects being implemented through government’s commitment by NDU and the Land Drainage Authority under the leadership of

hon. Minister Hurreeram and my hon. colleagues, PPS. In that regard, it is imperative for us to complete the Land Drainage Master Plan for the whole Republic which will be a crucial tool for planners and other professionals.

My colleague, hon. Léopold, at PQ B/423 today, timely asked the hon. Minister as to where matters stand with regards to its completion in Rodrigues, being given the topographical complexity of Rodrigues and its necessity for future developments of Rodrigues. Mr Speaker, Sir, further, my question is: what is the actual economic cost of natural disasters as well as bad planning in our Republic today?

I refer to a report, The Australian Deloitte Access Economics report of 2017 stipulated that the simulated cost of natural disasters in the State of New South Wales was calculated to be \$3.6 billion AUD for 2017 and to be significantly increased on a yearly basis due to climate change, increasing quantity and severity of weather events.

In our case, some weeks ago, hon. Ramano, during a site visit at St Martin Coastal Development Project, responded on how good planning is essential to mitigate and adapt to climate change along coastal region, and is much less costly and more effective than retrofitting. Here, I have to say that a planner's role is decisive through this approach to reduce costs for other vulnerable places around our Republic.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to conclude, I am thankful to have contributed to this Town Planners' Council Bill, which will regulate the profession of planners. This Bill will amongst others ignite

–

- our planners to create a new model for planning in a changing climate that support collaboration and partnership approaches across public, private and community sectors and across disciplines, as I said, surveyors, architects and the others, and
- our planners as climate leaders will have to encourage sustainable land use planning, management and development in our Republic.

Mr Speaker, Sir, planners, when valued and work together, can make a big difference in our society, and its role will become central in helping to shape our future and the next target and vision of our Republic in 2050.

This Town Planners' Council Bill will consolidate this endeavour. With these words, Mr Speaker, Sir, I also commend the Bill to the House and I thank you for your kind attention.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

(7.45 p.m.)

Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East):
 Merci, M. le président. Après avoir entendu mon bon ami, l'honorable Francisco François, disait à l'effet que Vacoas allait devenir Manhattan et que Phoenix allait devenir New York, je m'attendais à ce qu'il nous dise que Port Mathurin allait devenir San Francisco ! Mais tel n'a pas été le cas, M. le président ! Merci de m'avoir donné l'occasion d'intervenir sur le projet de loi du conseil de l'urbaniste.

(Interruptions)

Bien sûr, j'aurai aimé. J'aurai aimé !

(Interruptions)

Donc, M. le président, l'objet de ce projet de loi est de prévoir la création du conseil des urbanistes de Maurice en vue de mieux réglementer la profession d'urbaniste et de prévoir la pratique de la discipline des urbanistes. Le projet de loi prévoit donc le conseil enregistrera entre autres les urbanistes, réglementer la profession d'urbaniste, exercer et maintenir la discipline et la profession d'urbaniste, et aussi promouvoir le progrès dans le domaine de l'urbaniste.

Pour ma part, M. le président, je m'attarderai beaucoup sur le dernier point que je viens de mentionner. Et aussi le projet de loi contient que le conseil pourra organiser ou faire organiser des cours de formation, des programmes, des conférences, des séminaires, y compris des cours de programmes de perfectionnement professionnel continu à l'intention des urbanistes.

Le projet de loi, M. le président, prévoit également l'enregistrement des entreprises locales et étrangères d'urbanistes à Maurice. Et là, M. le président, à la clause 26 du projet de loi, ce projet de loi autorise les firmes étrangères de s'implanter à l'Maurice sans un accord de co-entreprise avec des homologues locaux. Donc, M. le président, il y aura aucun filet de protection de notre industrie locale y compris ses employés professionnels et les entreprises qu'ils créent.

Donc, M. le président, il n'y aura aucun filet de protection de notre industrie locale y compris ses employés professionnels et les entreprises qu'ils créent. Un partenariat entre les firmes mauriciennes et étrangères aurait aidé à se maintenir et à développer contre la concurrence déloyale des étrangers proposant de s'installer à Maurice pour offrir des services à un client local. La coentreprise contribue également à promouvoir le transfert de technologie, offre une sécurité à long terme aux clients Mauriciens, qu'il soit public ou privé, et contre toute négligence professionnelle potentielle après l'achèvement du projet. Dans le scénario ci-dessus, il appartient aux partenaires Mauriciens de l'entreprise commune de mettre en place la part de la responsabilité interne au sein de l'entreprise commune et en particulier ce qui concerne le maintien de la couverture de responsabilité professionnelle correspondante pendant la durée requise. Il en résulte une situation de gagnant-gagnant; l'urbaniste local gagne et l'étranger aussi, et les clients locaux, c'est-à-dire toutes les parties. Je comprends parfaitement le nouvel ordre mondial ; la facilité de faire les affaires ; la mondialisation et les conséquences nécessaires pour que notre pays s'ouvre au reste du monde. Notre pays est en effet une économie libre à en juger par le nombre de commerçants étrangers, de nos métiers et dans notre sol local au cours de ces 30 à 40 dernières années.

Toutefois, M. le président, on ne peut ignorer le fait que nous avons le statut plutôt des pays de petits états insulaires en développement ; c'est-à-dire nous sommes, et nous restons, un petit pays dont l'économie est petite et quelque peu fragile où une dose de protectionnisme est nécessaire pour empêcher la destruction totale de notre fragile tissu économique.

M. le président, les chiffres parlent d'eux-mêmes. Les investisseurs étrangers sont par définition souvent des grandes entreprises comptant des employés par centaines, voire des milliers, ayant des bureaux dans plus d'un pays et pourraient facilement sous-coter les prix, mettant parfois nos entreprises locales à genoux et les envoyant dans l'oubli, une mesure qui va bouleverser le secteur local déjà fortement touché par la pandémie. Nous devons être conscients de ne pas ouvrir nos portes aux étrangers et affluer, et par conséquent, mettre nos professionnels locaux au chômage. M. le président, je fais le point par rapport aux étrangers qui vont venir s'implanter à Maurice.

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, let me move on to Clause 17 of the Bill, whereby I quote –

« No liability, civil or criminal, shall be incurred by the Council, any member of the Council, the Registration Board or a committee or any officer, in respect of any act done or omitted by it or him in good faith in the discharge of its or his functions, or exercise of its or his powers, under this Act. »

Mr Speaker, Sir, with powers come responsibilities. What about negligence? What about being negligent? The Public Accounts Committee has recently tabled its report; there are so many cases of misuse of public funds; of misappropriation of public funds; of negligence. The law cannot continue to protect those who have been found responsible of negligence. I think this clause of the Bill, that is, Clause 17, Protection from Liabilities should be revisited, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Maintenant, M. le président, lorsque nous parlons de l'urbanisme, nous devrions également penser au développement durable. Vous conviendrez sûrement avec moi sur ce point, M. le président, que peu de choses ont été faits dans la promotion du développement durable dans l'industrie de la construction. Il y a beaucoup de questions soulevées dans le développement urbain dans l'environnement ; c'est ce qu'on appelle l'expansion urbaine non planifiée.

M. le président, les embouteillages dans les artères principales ; les accidents de la route ; la largeur insuffisante des routes pour augmenter la population de véhicules ; le système de gestion du trafic médiocre sont quelques-uns des problèmes liés aux infrastructures routières. Certains diront que ce sont les questions que les ingénieurs de la circulation ou les gestionnaires de transport doivent traiter. Mais la gestion des transports relève également de la planification. De plus, l'émission des véhicules, les gaz à effet de serre créent une pollution atmosphérique et les îlots de chaleur urbains, ce qui a de lourds impacts sur les zones urbaines. Un mauvais entretien du drainage ; les inondations urbaines ; l'élimination des déchets chimiques et solides dans les plans d'eau intérieure créent une pollution de l'eau et des plans d'eau mort au milieu des villes, cela créé beaucoup de problèmes environnementaux, d'épidémie, ainsi que des réductions de valeur esthétique. Tout cela crée donc de lourds problèmes à long terme où la planification est indispensable pour prévenir les événements désastreux.

M. le président, il y a de nombreux défis à relever et le planificateur doit avoir des compétences spéciales et des diverses disciplines et idées. Divers concepts ont été adoptés par les villes pour qu'elles puissent surmonter les défis. Et quelques-unes des exemples sont des villes

vertes. Les efforts de planification devraient être déployés pour promouvoir les modèles locaux d'utilisation de transport de terre qui encourage le développement des transports à émissions zéro ou à faible émission de carbone. Les infrastructures éco énergétiques, les initiatives des gouvernements locaux qui encouragent les orientations à faible consommation d'énergie et à zéro carbone. L'importance de la verdure doit également être identifiée et les projets de régénération urbaine visant à restaurer les parcelles environnementales si nécessaire sont également indispensables.

M. le président, les planificateurs ont pour tâche, ici, de rendre les villes plus vivables avec les ressources existantes ; c'est ce qu'on appelle les villes inclusives. Pour ce faire, le développement compact est suggéré pour faciliter l'urbanisation tout en intégrant les services urbains et infrastructures dans la localité spécifiée, les investissements axés sur les infrastructures locales, les installations communautaires, les infrastructures de transport, l'habitat et les abris ainsi que le soutien au moyen de subsistance et au commerce. Pour devenir des villes inclusives, la planification devrait fournir des transports publics de qualité et à haute capacité reliant les gens à l'emploi et à un développement abordable à haute densité et à usage mixte.

M. le président, laissez-moi parler par rapport au partenariat pour le progrès urbain avec le secteur privé. Le développement des villes nécessite des investissements haut de gamme, des flux de capitaux pour rendre les villes durables à l'avenir. Pour ce faire, le secteur public ne peut pas financer lui-même de sorte que l'encouragement du secteur privé est également une tâche de l'urbaniste. Avec le gain économique, l'équilibre entre la nature et le développement est une tâche de l'urbanisme moderne qui nécessite des compétences en gestion pour prouver la logique aux investisseurs privés. L'État devrait donc fournir des concessions fiscales, l'approvisionnement des matières premières, des installations de transport à faible coût, des autoroutes, des ponts, des aéroports situés à proximité pour le développement du secteur privé. Entre autres, ils sont nécessaires pour convaincre de fournir des espaces urbains, des installations de loisirs et de logements ainsi que des emplois locaux comme équilibre entre la croissance économique des villes et la durabilité. Outre ce qui précède, les planificateurs ont la responsabilité de gérer le développement en surveillant la croissance et en évaluant son impact sur la société dans son ensemble et en maintenant la compétitivité de la ville avec un scénario de global. L'intervention des planificateurs et la pensée novatrice sont les plus importantes ; le

développement devrait être guidé sur la base des concepts suivants, tels que le partenariat avec les parties prenantes, l'établissement des liens avec les régions.

Pour terminer, M. le président, parmi les stratégies, le rôle de planificateur sera la partie intégrante pour traiter les problèmes à venir avec une pensée visionnaire. Pour faire face aux défis à venir, le planificateur doit toujours être orienté vers l'avenir et prendre des risques et des décisions confiantes. Les décisions de l'urbanisme ne doivent pas s'orienter vers les exemples de l'Ouest ou d'une nation développée. La stratégie devrait découler du planificateur lui-même avec le développement de la base culturelle existante. Les défis doivent être affrontés avec les exemples de l'environnement familial des gens ; pas un concept aliéné. Mais le véritable défi est de mettre en œuvre les concepts disponibles au niveau du sol, c'est-à-dire à l'île Maurice. Dans la plupart des cas, les planificateurs ont échoué dans leur mise en œuvre, mais ceux-là doivent être forts pour faire face et créer un meilleur moyen de subsistance pour la communauté urbaine en développement. Ainsi, les compétences des planificateurs devraient entièrement se concentrer sur le comportement pratique des personnes et l'application du concept de changement dans une phase plus absorbante.

M. le président, j'ai terminé.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Nuckcheddy!

(8.00 p.m.)

Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Before I start, let me thank the hon. Acting Prime Minister for bringing this Bill which is going to provide for the establishment of the Town Planners' Council of Mauritius, with the view to better regulate the profession of Town Planners.

To understand the importance of this Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, we must understand the profession of Town Planning. We must understand that with this Bill, we are entering a new and exciting era for planning, development and regeneration in this country; an era which will put Town Planners in the driving seat as recognised professionals. Some hon. Members mentioned that the word 'professional' is missing. So, just like the Medical Council, there is no mention of the word 'professional', but we all know that we are talking here of professionals of development and regeneration of our urban and rural areas.

From what I have heard and read, I am of the opinion that not only here but globally people don't have a clear understanding of the profession of Town Planning. When I started my Degree in Quantity Surveying three decades ago, the very first module I had to undertake was Town Planning.

It's from there that I realised that Town Planning contributes to sustainable, inclusive and thriving communities and harmonises -

- environmental,
- social,
- cultural and
- economic well-being.

Robert Owen is considered to be one of the early town planners. He was, in fact, not a Town Planner but he was a businessman and wanted his employees to have a happy life. He believed that for his workers to be happy, they need to live in a pleasant environment and he came with the idea of Garden City. It's through his idea of Garden City that Robert Owen brought the radical social reform and established the correlation between workers well-being and profitability.

This Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, is the need of the hour for a new era. When I say that this Bill will set a new era, it is simply because the Town Planners will be now regarded as a separate profession from Architects, Engineers, Quantity Surveyors and other professionals of the Construction, Real Estate, and Property Development. After that the Architects, the Engineers, the Quantity Surveyors, Land Surveyors and the Real Estate Agents, now it is the time for the Town Planners to have their own Council. Town Planners, we have the tendency to think that they plan the future, but, in fact, the profession of Town Planning embodies a much wider sector.

For instance, they protect our coast lines and historic buildings. They regenerate declining places and create new environment. We can also say that they preserve the best of the past and promote innovation so that the town and buildings of the future will continue to meet our needs. It is the art of giving shape, design and structure to cities and towns, of the planet.

In fact, towns and cities they are the results of decisions taken by man and governments. When talking of man, Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill is a tribute to those great men who contributed to shape this world of today. We should today remember men like –

- Giambattista Noli who planned cities without a focal point.
- Ebenezer Howard for the three magnets theory.
- Hugh Ferriss for the Setback principle who in 1916 turned the focus of planning from horizontal to vertical setback so as to cater for light obstruction created by skyscrapers.
- Frank Lloyd Wright for Broadacre City.
- The Swiss Le Corbusier for radiant city.
- Kevin Lynch for Psychogeography in town planning where they started involving people in what they call the bottom to top principle.

Today, here, in this august Assembly, we are recognizing the contribution of these unsung heroes by bringing a regulatory framework for professional of that sector, so that their activities and field of operation are linked to the economic system so that to make it reflective in policy-making of the booms and slump which are enduring characteristic of the property market.

This Bill provides for the necessary legal framework to bring the profession of Town Planning in Mauritius in line with -

- international standards;
- norms, and
- practices

and help to better regulate Town Planning services in Mauritius and establish a Town Planner's Council which will be aligned with the Royal Town Planning Institute of United Kingdom.

While going through the sections of the Bill, I can say that it is going to be a major piece of legislation underpinning urban development in Mauritius and will be considered as a fundamental legal framework governing the built environment.

Let me take a few provisions of the Bill.

Section 20, for example, concerns the registration of Town Planners. This Bill gives recognition to Royal Town Planning Institute of the United Kingdom. The Royal Town Planning Institute exists since 1914 and was awarded the Royal Charter in 1959. It has a roll of 25,000 members.

So, section 20(3) of the Bill provides for exemption to Town Planners already registered with the Royal Town Planning Institute and also with other similar Institutes. They can have sort of direct membership.

Section 22, Mr Speaker, Sir, is about the CPD, that is, the Continuing Professional Development. This Bill makes CPD a mandatory requirement for registration. CPD is a commitment by members of professional bodies to continually update their skills and knowledge in order to remain professionally competent. Professionals operate in a constantly changing environment, for example, new legislation. So, it is expected that professionals are to be competent in order to provide the best possible service. Therefore, CPD is important for professionals to remain updated.

The Bill makes provision that the registered Town Planners are in constant alignment with -

- (a) new town planning techniques and methods of management;
- (b) changes in planning law, planning guidelines and standards; or
- (c) any other matter related to the profession of town planners;

CPD allows professionals to realise that they are not in a comfortable groove all the time and that shall ensure that they continue to be proficient and competent in their profession while also getting furnished with essential skills that could help them to progress.

Hon. Osman Mahomed mentioned that there are less and less CPD events organised nowadays, but there are several free webinars available for our professionals to which they can easily access via the internet.

Section 27 is about the Preliminary Investigation and the Bill provides that whenever there is the necessity for an investigation, the Council can have recourse to professionals with the required expertise on the matter of dispute and, as is provided under section 89(2) (b) of our Constitution, the Council can have recourse to that and appoint a professional for a proper and fair determination.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Bill is about professionals. So, planners will be expected to plan, and Dr. Navin Ramgoolam will not have to go in the forest of Ferney to find alternative routes as mentioned by hon. Osman Mahomed.

It concerns the empowerment of professionals. Mr Speaker, Sir, there are actually lot of talks on women empowerment. But only words and no deeds is like a garden plenty of weeds. This Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, is empowering women. I mentioned earlier that town planners are part of the professionals of the built environment. The professionals of the built environment are mostly men. However, compared to the architects, engineers and others, the town planning has a high ratio of women. These women are already holding high level posts.

As mentioned by my colleague previously, hon. Dr. Ramdhany that the Chief Town and Country Planning Officer at the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning is a lady, the two Deputy Chiefs are also ladies. The Chief Technical Officer of the Ministry is also a lady who has done her studies in town planning. About 30% of the town planners at the local authorities are ladies. There are also several other ladies who have a BSc in Town Planning but not performing the job of town planning.

So, as we can see we are indirectly empowering women. We should also not forget that it is this Government which appointed a lady as the Chairperson of Construction Industry Board for the first time a few years back. Who knows the Town Planners' Council may become the first such Council where the first Chairperson will be a lady?

You may be aware, Mr Speaker, Sir, that a small drop of lime juice can spoil a whole big pot of milk. It is unfortunate that as usual the hon. Members of the Opposition did that again. Hon. Osman Mahomed came with the same argument that this Government is coming with institutions to nominate our people at the head of these institutions. Even hon. Woochit went in the same direction. They came with that argument when we debated on the –

- Taxi Operators Welfare Bill;
- Real Estate Bill;
- Cyber Security and Cyber Crime Bill;
- Children's Bill;
- IBA Amendment Bill,
- Recreation Council Bill.

The same *disque rayer!*

For me, Mr Speaker, Sir, our people; we mean people who are patriots, who have got the same vision as our Government, and people who are consistent. Whenever we come with Bills so

as to implement the framework for a modern Mauritius, to take Mauritius to new heights, what do we hear from the other side? That the timing is not appropriate! *Et bien, M. le président, il n'y a pas d'heure pour les braves. Et nous sommes des braves! Notre équipe, ici, va braver cette période difficile.* We are going to do all that is needed for the welfare of our citizens. Let me remind this House that 100% of the citizens of Mauritius are our people.

One last point, Mr Speaker, Sir, you know this Opposition which is only criticising; you know, in 2013, they brought the Professional Quantity Surveying Council Bill. And you know, section 7 of that Bill which is about composition of the Council, sub-section 1, mentions the following –

“(1) The Council shall consist of –

- (a) 4 professional quantity surveyors, to be appointed by the Minister, from among quantity surveyors posted at the Ministry, a Municipal City Council or Municipal Town Council, a statutory corporation or a Government company;”

But, Mr Speaker, Sir, there were no quantity surveyors posted at the Municipality at that time and even now we do not have any. So, at that time they came with Bills with flaws, everything was good? They had nothing to say! This Bill that we are proposing, Mr Speaker, Sir, is proposing people that do exist. We are proposing –

- 4 Planners from the Ministry;
- 3 Planners from the Ministry of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management,
- 2 Planners from the private practice who will be elected to form part of the Council.

To conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to express my appreciation that this Bill is bringing the much-required framework which will foster the recognition of town planners in their contribution for a sustainable development, well planned and well managed cities, and ultimately, provides the dynamism that the professionals of town planners deserve to build our country. The Bill empowers town planners to deliver to make these great places nice to live, work and be happy not just for now, but for generations to come.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Ag. Prime Minister, you can wind up!

(8.13 p.m.)

The Ag. Prime Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Let me begin, as is the practice, by commending both sides of the House for the interventions we have heard. Let me thank the interveners for their participation. But also, let me thank those who are still with us at this late hour for their presence; the large number of backbenchers of the majority, and a very few Members of the Opposition, who have deemed it necessary to accompany us as we debate and vote on this important Bill. Just a word to say that hon. Wochit did mention that he had a personal predicament and I can appreciate that he could not stay on with us.

Let me thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, for being receptive to suggestions on both sides of the House that we should finish at one go rather than breaking for dinner, which would have led us to be here until very late tonight.

We have had the benefit of hearing from professionals in the area of land use and construction. We have heard from engineers, we have heard from quantity surveyors, we have heard from planners and from others, just like myself, although we have no direct professional involvement in this area but bear a keen interest in the work performed by planners.

This Bill was not meant to usher a general debate about town and country planning. Some have chosen to broaden the debate to discuss the importance of planning, the why and how of planning in the present modern era, and the philosophy of planning that should guide Government in future. So be it!

The tone of the debates has been very interesting, a lot of positive comments and suggestions from this side of the House, for which I am very grateful. Unfortunately, as pointed out by the last speaker, some usual negative comments from the Opposition. As if, being in the Opposition, one has to find something negative to say. Otherwise, one is not doing one's job as an Opposition MP. That is most unfortunate. But I wish to commend hon. Bodha who offered us a very interesting intervention. He did not feel the need to be negative. *Au contraire, l'ayant entendu, je me suis dit qu'il doit amèrement regretter sa décision de quitter la majorité pour passer dans l'Opposition.*

(Interruptions)

Voyez-vous, M. le président, pour avoir appartenu durant - j'ai envie de dire toute ma vie au MMM, qui est le parti d'Opposition par excellence - je sais que quand on est dans l'Opposition, on est dans le dire et jamais dans le faire. On est contraint par le registre de l'oral. On exerce la parole : des discours à l'Assemblée, des conférences de presse, des meetings et des réunions, Covid permettant.

Mais si l'on veut passer du dire au faire, si l'on veut passer de la théorie à la pratique pour servir le pays et le peuple, pour être dans le concret et faire avancer des choses, il faut bien être au gouvernement. Et c'est pour ça que c'est avec beaucoup de regrets que j'ai entendu mon ancien collègue et ami, M. le député Bodha, qui aujourd'hui se voit limité à des propositions au Parlement alors que ces propositions, il aurait pu les avoir exprimés au gouvernement et aujourd'hui encore avoir contribué avec nous à façonner le réel plutôt que d'être uniquement dans le dire. Mais enfin, la vie, elle est faite des choix, parfois des choix malheureux et c'est évident dans le cas présent.

(Interruptions)

Peut-être sincère mais malheureux.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am duty-bound to respond to the points that have been made and I will ask my colleagues to bear with me as I attempt to do so. I will go very quickly, I hope, one by one addressing the comments made essentially by the Opposition but also a comment made on this side of the House.

Now, hon. Osman Mahomed first asked a question: why have we removed the term 'professional'? Well, because everybody realises that town planners are professionals. Just as for the Medical Council, you don't say the Professional Medical Practitioners' Council or for the Bar, you would not say the Professional Lawyers' or Barristers' Council. There was no need, in our opinion, to maintain this term 'professional'.

The composition of the Council which has been the subject of criticism on the part of the Opposition is explained by the numbers presented to me by professionals in the area. I also asked why this ratio of, I believe, it is: 4:3:2. Well, simply because all in all we have approximately eighty planners in Mauritius. Thirty-five belong to the civil service. They are employed by

Government. Twenty-four belong to local authorities and twenty are in the private sector. So, the issue is not about the importance - as suggested by hon. Ameer Meea - of the private sector and development. We all realise this. But the issue is how can we be fair. This is not a body about promoting development. This is a body to regulate and assist in the development of the profession. It is a professional council.

Now, a question was asked as to why we have two members who are not planners. Well, because town planning is multidisciplinary as pointed out by hon. Bodha, hon. Nuckcheddy. Many town planners come from different areas and decide to go on to planning. Just as many planners, as in the case of hon. Bodha, go on to other spheres of professional activity while maintaining their interest in planning. So, the idea was to have two representatives of civil society and obviously one would have to choose persons who can contribute. They might be municipal councillors or district council members, they might be professionals, they might be persons who have experience. We shall see but the idea is to enrich the thinking and the working of the Council by having representatives of civil society.

Hon. Osman Mahomed also said that two years of professional practice, we should have said understudying or registered town planner. But at this point in time we have no registered town planners. So, that could be mentioned at a later stage. But this is a first step and we need to start somewhere. And what matters now is that town planners who seek registration have had some experience.

The definition of town planning, I must say, reflects the international legislation governing such councils that we have seen. And in fact, the Planning and Development Act of 2004 does not have a definition of town planning. So, we don't believe that the present definition is in any way restrictive and will fetter the ability of the Council to undertake its work and fulfil its mandate. Should we have called this Council the Town and Country Planners' Council? Should we have called it the Land Planners'? I prefer the formula suggested by hon. Bodha, but in the international usage, a town planner is understood by and large to mean all that has been suggested.

In any event, again, it is a matter of regret. This Bill has been circulated since very long and the point of circulating a Bill at First Reading, a couple of weeks before it is debated at Second Reading, is precisely to allow everybody and anybody, be it a Member of Parliament or

interested parties outside Parliament to react and to voice criticisms if need be or to make proposals if need be. And some of these proposals, had they been communicated earlier, maybe could have been taken on board. But of course, at the eleventh hour, that is not possible. And in years to come, legislators, maybe ourselves; maybe others who will succeed us in this House will have ample opportunity to improve upon the present legislation.

Now, the National Land Development Strategy is not really the subject matter we are debating today. But for the sake of informing the House, let me say this is an extremely important exercise, so important that honestly as Minister, I do not mind if it takes another six months or another year. It has been very much hampered by COVID-19 with the foreign Consultants not being able to travel to Mauritius. And I believe this team of experts is Australian and the borders of Australia have been closed. Yes, they can work online but physical presence in this case is necessary. So, we will take the time needed. Hopefully, before the end of this year, we will be ready with a draft. I do intend, however exasperated that might make my officers who have been working on this for years, but I do intend to consult yet again. The first draft has been on the website. So, all NGOs, everybody wishing to contribute could and can still contribute. But nonetheless, I will organise a presentation and I do undertake, Mr Speaker, Sir, to invite Members of the other side of the House. When I tried to do this with the National Housing Strategy, it was boycotted by the Opposition. But given their comments today, we will again invite them and we shall see if they do choose to come and contribute.

My friend, the hon. Member from Rodrigues, raised the issue as to whether the National Land Development Strategy also refers to Rodrigues. Now, my understanding is that the Rodrigues Regional Assembly had commissioned its own development strategy. Unfortunately, I have not been able to confirm this right now but I seem to recollect that there has been a separate initiative that we respect in the spirit of autonomy, so that the specificity of Rodrigues is adequately addressed. But again, we are open to proposals and suggestions.

Now, another point made by hon. Osman Mahomed concerns the need for an Institute of Planners to meet CPD needs. Well, the Council, precisely, is there to meet CPD needs; we are talking about a small profession of 80 planners. If we go on to create a second institution, what will the Opposition say? 'Here they go again; jobs for the boys; wasting public funds; multiplying institutions!' So, we chose not to do that. Let us start with the Council, and as it

moves forward, we shall gather experience and if there is need for a specialised body, we will do so. But let me remind Members of the House, in fact, the University of Mauritius does offer undergraduate courses in this area. In fact, the University runs two courses: a Diploma course in Town & Country Planning as well as a three-year BSc course in Town & Country Planning. Some 95 students have completed their studies at the University of Mauritius, and let us commend the University for playing their role. Out of the 95, 26 are employed at my Ministry and 23 in local authorities. Last year, 23 students graduated with a Diploma in Town & Country Planning, and they are all working or following a Top-Up course; for instance, the BSc.

Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is ongoing training provided by educational institutions in our country; there were scholarships in the past offered by the Australian Government and the British Government that have benefited some 12 officers of my Ministry. And since 2017, we are also in receipt of scholarships from China, and five officers have already trained at postgraduate level in town and country planning in China. So, the Institute will come if it needs to at a later stage.

Hon. Osman Mahomed referred to LAVIMS – I do not want to delay matters here by going into details of LAVIMS –, but we were very interested to learn of the contribution of hon. Osman Mahomed to the development of LAVIMS; congratulations to you, Sir, for that. But what I did not appreciate was the criticism levelled at planners. This was not, I believe, Mr Speaker, Sir, the occasion to attack planners for not providing the required setback having regard to flooding, not providing the setback for neighbouring properties construction, accepting *signature de complaisance*, allowing developers to respect the 40% requirement at ground floor and then to build. This Bill really is the opportunity to pay homage to our planners for all they have contributed to the development of our country but not to have a barrage of criticism against planners. I think we can do that elsewhere, on another occasion; this was not the forum and the occasion.

However, reference was made to post COVID planning and I welcome that. I think the point was made by hon. Osman Mahomed but also by hon. Bodha, if I'm not mistaken. Yes, post COVID planning is a new concept and we are, as this concept develops, trying to take on board all the complexities, but potential, of post COVID planning as we know that our planet and humanity will remain at risk of emerging on viruses that will threaten our very existence. So be it for the points raised by hon. Osman Mahomed, whom I thank for his contribution.

M. le député Bodha a soulevé certainement plusieurs points fort pertinents dont nous tiendrons compte dans l'avancement de ce projet de création d'un *Town Planners' Council*. La nécessité d'avoir une carte des terres agricoles essentielles à préserver, à protéger, oui, je considère, je conçois que la *National Land Development Strategy* a pour objectif précisément d'aborder les impératifs de l'aménagement du territoire à l'avenir, mais déjà dans le fait, c'est le cas. C'est le cas, et j'en fais l'expérience, moi, au quotidien. Lorsque nous avons approché le ministère de l'Agriculture pour obtenir des terres de l'État pour les programmes de construction sociaux, je peux témoigner de la ténacité du ministère de l'Agro-industrie, cherchant à protéger les terres agricoles et les terres forestières, si je puis ainsi m'exprimer. Donc, dans les faits, M. le député, c'est déjà le cas, mais je suis tout à fait en accord avec vous. La *National Land Development Strategy* devra – ce sera bien sûr le point de départ même face aux impératifs économiques, sociaux, écologiques de l'avenir – prendre comme point de départ ce qui doit être préservé pour assurer le succès de notre modèle de développement.

Plusieurs des intervenants de l'Opposition ont parlé des étrangers qui viendraient travailler à Maurice. Il faudra là encore trouver le juste équilibre. C'est le même débat qui se pose dès lors qu'on discute de l'avenir des juristes, des médecins, de tous les professionnels. Nous vivons à l'heure de la mondialisation, nous devons nous ouvrir pour accueillir des compétences étrangères, mais en même temps il faut évidemment assurer un certain degré de protection – je n'aime pas utiliser le terme – de nos professionnels. Donc, il faut constamment trouver le juste équilibre, mais la situation sera dynamique. Il faudra constamment redéfinir ce qu'est le juste équilibre, mais nous sommes très attentifs à cet argument. D'ailleurs, ce que prévoit le projet de loi, c'est que cette institution, le *Council*, pourra déterminer les conditions de l'enregistrement des étrangers qui voudront pratiquer à Maurice. Donc, l'idée énoncée de coentreprise – je crois que c'était le terme utilisé par M. le député Ameer Meea – bien évidemment, c'est quelque chose que demain l'on pourrait considérer.

Hon. Woochit referred to the need for the Minister to control creation of committees. Of course, this institution will be attributed a budget, and the budget will determine what it can and cannot do. So, any such statutory body is not free to set up as many committees as it wants and spends as much money as it wants; it is limited by a budget. There is also an oversight by the parent Ministry, if I may say so. So, were hon. Woochit here, I would have liked to reassure him, but, at the same time, town planners are professionals, and that is the whole point of this Bill;

that we need to trust in our planners, who we value. The planners will themselves decide upon the members of these committees; they will decide who they will vote for as Chairperson or Deputy Chairperson of their Council. And who else can do that better than themselves? So, obviously, we choose to trust in them and, within the constraints of their budget, they will set the fees of membership of their committees and the qualifications will be that of town planners; they will be professional recognised town planners.

I believe there was one last point raised by hon. Ameer Meea and I thank my colleague, the Attorney General, for helping me find this in the Bill - Clause 17: Protection from liability. This is a very common clause that is found in all the statutory bodies that are created but it presumes good faith.

It states –

“No liability, civil or criminal, shall be incurred by the Council, any member of the Council, the Registration Board or a Committee or any officer, in respect of any act done or omitted by it or him in good faith,” this is the first element, and secondly “in the discharge of its or his functions,” and thirdly in the “exercise of its or his powers, (...)”

So, the protection from liability applies if you are acting in discharge of your functions or exercising the powers that are yours, not if you go outside the ambit of your functions or your powers. And in any event, you have to establish good faith. So, it is a very common clause found in any such Bill.

Mr Speaker, Sir, thank you for bearing with me. I think I have addressed with your indulgence all the points that have been raised. Let me say this again, this Bill, which has taken a long time to come to this stage, is meant to recognise the contributions, past and present, of our planners called by whatever name town planners, town & country planners, land planners. But we are here and I hope we can unanimously vote on this to pay homage to our planners –

- (1) to recognise the critical importance of the work they do today and that they will do tomorrow and to thank them for that by empowering them to have their own professional body;

- (2) to recognise them as a profession that allows for recognition through registration, that allows for standards to be set by way of a code of practice and the possibility to discipline anyone that acts against the public interest and unprofessionally, and
- (3) allows for continuous development through appropriate training.

Let me, as is the custom, apart from thanking all those who contributed to the debate today, thank those who have contributed in the making of this Bill. I hear thanks addressed to the Minister that I am but I am very humbled by the fact that this Bill did not originate under my mandate. This Bill, I would like to thank my predecessor, hon. Mahen Jhugroo, who first introduced the Bill in the House. But, of course, behind the Minister that does so is a whole team of professionals; from my Ministry - the planners, the administrators, all those who have worked over the years to come up with this Bill and I apologise to them for taking them to task time and time again in an endeavour to improve this Bill by challenging all the basic assumptions and we have come up with this final version.

Thanks to the Attorney General and his dedicated staff who have accompanied us for months in drafting the version that is today before the House and, of course, to thank the Prime Minister without whose blessing, we would not have been able to introduce the Bill.

With these words, Mr Speaker, Sir, I commend the Bill to this House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

The Town Planners' Council Bill (No. XIX of 2021) was considered and agreed to.

On the Assembly resuming with Mr Speaker in the Chair, Mr Speaker reported accordingly.

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, The Town Planners' Council Bill (No. XIX of 2021) was read a third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 26 April 2022 at 11.30 a.m.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned! Adjournment matter, I would ask the Deputy Speaker to take the Chair.

At this stage, the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Please be seated!

Hon. Member, please!

(8.47 p.m.)

MATTER RAISED

INFRASTRUCTURAL MEASURES – MITIGATION OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I am grateful to be able to expose and highlight an issue which is of national interest but which is, at the same time, a great concern in my constituency Port Louis North & Long Mountain. I shall keep my intervention brief and to the point as I believe we need to focus on solution rather than the problem.

My specific matter addressed to the hon. Hurreeram, Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development, and the title being: “Urgency for the taking of infrastructural measures to mitigate the effects of climate change such as unprecedented and unpredictable rainfalls.”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our environment has become a matter of concern for each of us, and this has been the reason why I have addressed my specific adjournment to the Minister of National Infrastructure instead of that of the Environment, because it concerns not only the Minister of Environment, but it concerns each and everyone here sitting in the august Assembly. And the call for today is more like a call for action and to find a solution. On the World Health

Day, Dr. Maria Neira, Director of the Department of Public Health and Environment of the World Health Organisation mentioned, I quote –

“The climate crisis is a health crisis.”

At the recent swearing-in ceremony of the Deputy Chairperson, Mrs Lam Hung of the Human Rights Division of the National Human Rights Commission, in her statement to the Press, mentioned that she will be doing her best to protect and promote the rights of all Mauritian citizens, but she will focus on environment rights as human and environment are intertwined.

And even today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, while voting for the Town Planners’ Council Bill emphasis has been laid upon the importance of good urban planning and upon the climate change. And when we talk about environment, we instantly talk about climate change. It is beyond doubt that climate change is a reality. The point is that the planet has always been undergoing climate change. Sometimes it is quietly, sometimes very dramatically. Periods of change in climate tend to be quite dramatic. We have had huge variations through the ages and evidence is clear.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to quote, here, an article from the BBC –

“South Africa’s government has declared a state of disaster in an area in the east of the country which was hit by severe flooding over the past week, leaving nearly four hundred people dead and causing major damage to homes and businesses.

Most of the destruction has been in the Durban area of KwaZulu-Natal province, the country's third most populous city.

President Cyril Ramaphosa claims the disaster “is part of climate change”, but some locals have blamed poor infrastructure for the scale of the flooding.”

Mauritius, too, has been experiencing almost the same situation more than a decade now. *Petite piqûre de rappel*, the deadly flash flood in the history of Mauritius occurred at midday on Saturday 30 March 2013; 152.2 mm of precipitations flooded the whole island within less than one hour thirty minutes. On 09 April 2019, the region of Fond du Sac received more than 110 mm of water between 06.00 a.m. to 06.00 p.m. The recent one in date is 02 April 2022 with the region of Plaine Magnien.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall now focus my intervention mainly on my constituency as I believe that my constituency in itself is like a case study because it is a mountainous region. To start with, we have the region of Le Hochet, Terre Rouge, Chandra Bose Street, where the water from the main road of RDA from Winners to Père Laval junction gets into the laterals, thus flooding the roads because of poor infrastructure. This is what is being said by the inhabitants. Coming to Vallée des Prêtres on 13 March with the sudden rise in the water level of Latanier River, which I had a question even today, *Morcellement* Ramlugun. And here, I can only imagine and share the distress of the Golam family of *Morcellement* Ramlugun, who lost all their belongings because one person tampered with the Latanier River. And let me set on record and my gratitude towards the Prime Minister, who visited the inhabitants of Vallée des Prêtres following that flood.

The third issue is, the risk of flooding is real along the Latanier River and I am here, exactly to talk about this. And this is why I have put a question to the Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management, because we need to give special consideration. From Chitrakoot to Caroline going through Caro Lalo, Calbala to Briqueterie, to the outlet of Mer Rouge, we need to give special consideration because the water level is unpredictable following the climate change that we have been undergoing.

In the second part of my intervention, I will dwell upon the very fact that with the unprecedented heavy rainfall and unpredictable climate change, very often we get the land which is saturated - this is what we are told - and this might cause landslide or soil erosion. Such an example could be *Morcellement* Raffray, in my constituency near the reservoir, where during the recent heavy rainfall we experience rocks from the mountain falling close by to the residential area. I shall also make reference to the JICA Report in 2015, which identified several regions *à risques*, as we say it, namely Chitrakoot, where works for stabilisation of the land proved to be beneficial for the inhabitants, but there are some other regions where we need to have a closer look and a closer monitoring.

On 09 August 2021, Leckraz Lane, Congomah experienced, what the inhabitants called as, *glissement de terrain*. Same happened in Blackburn Road, Congomah and these regions were already identified by the JICA Report among which, we also have the Crève Coeur region. As I mentioned initially, my constituency is mainly mountainous, so we have Crève Coeur region and

I recently visited the Hoolash family in upper Crève Coeur, where you have cracks which have been noted in several houses.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my appeal today to the hon. Minister is that it is now time for action and as mentioned, these problems are not only in my constituency because my constituency can only be a test case for climate change. However, these problems, whether it is flooding or soil erosion, have been present in almost all the constituencies. In Quatre Bornes and in Cottage recently, we have noticed that we have had that *montée des eaux*, as we say. We have always been questioning whether it is human beings who have tampered with the rivers but there is also the effect of climate change. We have also noticed that there are some people who have constructed on natural water paths. Tampering with rivers, constructions on natural drains as well have been some of the reasons why we have experienced some unprecedented flood in different regions. So, we have an urgent requirement for drain network in the constituency around Mauritius as well to *comme on dit prévenir justement* and to secure the people. Also, I would request a recommendation to the Minister if he can consider doing a second assessment for the region of Congomah and Crève Coeur so that we can bring stabilisation, something to help those people feel safer and more secure as well. As I am exposing this situation in my constituency tonight, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is a call for action to the Minister that we need urgent drain networking, cut-off drains, we need to implement all these things as soon as possible because climate change is waiting for no one. And just to quote a sentence which the hon. Bodha mentioned previously –

“Nous sommes des bâtisseurs.”

Well, I think that the hon. Minister Hurreeram is definitely a *bâtisseur*; and he will, definitely, listen to the request of the MPs; and definitely will bring a solution to the flood, the soil erosion and all the climatic changes which will impact in Mauritius.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you! Hon. Minister, please!

The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Mr M. Hurreeram): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, first of all, let me thank my hon. colleague for coming forward with this specific adjournment matter, which is indeed a matter of national interest. And

I do not propose to dwell on individual issues that she mentioned regarding the specific constituency from where she is, but rather try to explain the strategy that this Government is putting in place with the Land Drainage Master plan and try to share with colleagues in the House today – only this side of the House is present, except for two Members from the Opposition. So, I certainly took on board the suggestion of my colleague for a second assessment in the region of Congomah. We shall look into that together.

And this adjournment matter tonight provides me with the opportunity to highlight certain facts about land drainage and in particular, of actions accomplished over the past two years, those currently being undertaken, and our vision for the coming years.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, global warming is already affecting weather and climate extremes across the whole world, with heavy precipitation, flash floods, heat waves and storms, increasing in terms of their intensity and frequency.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), in its latest assessment report (AR6), has established strong and overwhelming evidence that precipitation trends are rising in terms of their frequency and intensity.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this has never rung truer than in the last decades. Recent events in the world are testimony of such predictions and happenings. For example, as the hon. Member just mentioned, the town of Durban in South Africa has been severely affected by a flash flood event that has, unfortunately, cost the lives of at least 300 people. Some parts of the country have recorded their average annual rainfall in only two days. On the other hand, we have all seen pictures and videos of the floods in Eastern Australia that have occurred just last month, where thousands of homes were inundated. Or again, last year, at least 220 people were killed between July 12 and 15 in Western Europe as part of the deadly floods.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, no doubt, such events have heavy consequences on the economic costs of countries as evidenced, for instance, the floods and storms which have inflicted the largest economic losses in the past 50 years in Europe, that is, at a cost of US\$ 377 billion. One specific example is the economic loss of US\$ 16.5 billion in Germany following the flood occurred in 2002. This loss is considered as being the costliest event in Europe between 1970 and 2019.

I heard the hon. Member also mentioning about landslide issues in her constituency. As she rightly mentioned, landslide is another effect of precipitation and flooding with high water tables. And as far as I am aware, nine landslide prone areas were identified in Constituency No. 4; Congomah, you have 4 sites, Crève-Cœur 1 site, Les Mariannes 2 sites, Eau-Bouillie 1 site, and Chitrakoot 1 site. However, only one site, namely Chitrakoot was identified as being active landslide site requiring immediate countermeasure works. I am further informed that monitoring devices such as extensometers, rain gauges and inclinometers have been installed to monitor the movement of the soil thereat. In addition, an early warning alarm system and evacuation notices are issued by the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre during heavy rainfalls for the safety of the inhabitants of Chitrakoot, using information obtained from both extensometers and the rainfall data from the *Meteo*. Regarding the two other sites in Constituency No. 4, they are classified as low risk, which are being constantly monitored by the local authorities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, therefore, if the most developed countries, equipped with state-of-the-art technology and infrastructure have been subjected to the devastating effects of climate change and water related disasters, we can imagine the fate of the most vulnerable States, in particular the Small Island Developing States (SIDS, as we call them). It is, in fact, recognised today that SIDS, despite being one of the least polluting nations globally, are amongst the most vulnerable countries to climate change and the most exposed to natural hazards due to their geographical location in an active tropical cyclone basin.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, unfortunately, Mauritius has not been spared from this worldwide or regional trend. In fact, the Island of Mauritius, by its location and topography, is highly vulnerable to flooding owing to the rise over the past years of high intensity rainfall over a very short span of time, resulting in flash floods. A number of such extreme climatic events with disastrous and pervasive consequences, among which, the flash flood experienced in Port Louis on 30 March 2013 which caused 11 fatalities and considerable damages to infrastructure and property, are still vivid in our memory. Moreover, very recently, we have experienced record-breaking rainfall events with some unprecedented events, such as the flooding of 16 April 2021 with just under 400 mm of rainfall recorded in 4 hours and the region of Mon Bois experiencing around 400 mm of rainfall recorded in 48 hours last month. Our country has constantly been under heavy rainfall warning most of the time since December last.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it has to be pointed out that our drainage infrastructures have not been designated to cater for such flash flood events. They do not have sufficient capacity to drain storm water during heavy rainfall nor has there been a proper maintenance plan for the drain vehicular.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I have mentioned on several occasions in this House, particularly in my replies to Parliamentary Questions, Government is very much concerned about the effects of climate change. In this respect, addressing the problems of heavy rainfall and flooding in a sustainable manner remain very high on our Agenda. Concurrently, we are also implementing short-term mitigating measures to bring prompt relief to the inhabitants at large.

I said it well. We are into mitigation. There won't be any dry feet policy. The Members of the Opposition, those who are against the Government can go and shout on any roof that Government is doing nothing. But, as I have said earlier, you have seen what is happening in countries with a state-of-the-art technology. You have seen what is happening in America, Holland and Australia. So, when it is raining, there will be some water accumulations. But what is important? It is that the water gets evacuated within minutes. For instance, last month, we had that heavy rainfall in Port Louis. There was accumulation of water in front of Caudan. Pictures went viral like as if it is dooms of scenarios. But within minutes after the rain stopped, contrary to what had happened in 2013 where there were 11 people dying in the city centre of Port Louis, the water got evacuated. So, this is what we need to know. During rainfall, we need to develop that culture of emergency. We need to know how to deal with it just like when we deal with cyclones. When there are cyclones, you reinforce your houses, you buy your candles. So, we will have to get used, when there are rainfalls, we will have to take certain measures. You have had houses that have been built since independence; houses built below road levels. And there are some places where technical solutions are inexistent. This Government is doing everything possible to try to mitigate. So, we should get it right. We are into mitigation.

As the House will recall, one of the priorities of the budget measures in 2021/2022, has been the establishment of a National Flood Management Programme, where around 1,500 drain projects have been earmarked for implementation in three years. In three years, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! But once again when you hear those speaking against this Government, they are like you have got Rs11.7 m., what have you done with it? That is not *badia*, Mr Deputy Speaker,

Sir, *met dan karay tire!* No, we are talking about drains! This is indeed a challenging task, not to say a daunting one ahead.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, currently, we have 71 high risk flood prone areas that have been identified across Mauritius and this figure is dynamic with heavy rainfalls affecting drastically other parts of the island. The flooding and inundation problems in those areas are being dealt with on a fast track basis. In fact, under PPO Directive 41, emergency procurement procedures have been put in place to ensure that drain projects in these localities are implemented urgently.

Out of these 71 sites, 12 drain projects have already been completed, 17 are under construction, and others are under other different implementation stages.

I will briefly explain the other measures being initiated and implemented by Government to address the effects of climate change.

As I had the opportunity to mention in this House, the Land Drainage Authority has, since quite a while now, equipped itself with a 3D imagery of the topography of the whole country including Rodrigues, called the Digital Elevation Model (DEM). This DEM allows us to identify vulnerable areas and natural water courses because you have other funny people going back filling water courses thinking these cannot be located. But no! Now, we can! With this DEM, we know where the natural water courses are. We know!

My colleague mentioned at *Morcellement* Ramlugun, there were those boundary walls falling. Some of those boundary walls were built on natural water courses. This DEM allows us to identify the vulnerable areas and natural water courses. It has already been shared with relevant authorities, including the local authorities. So as from now, when they are giving you a building permit, they can see on that plot of land where you are building, where the natural water courses are and then instruct accordingly where to build, where to put the boundary wall, what are the do's and the don'ts.

More recently, the LDA has acquired a state of the art drone with 4K imagery that we use to conduct our own surveys; whether it is ongoing works, or inundated areas or surveying rivers. For instance, we were surveying Canal Dayot and we saw at two different locations, people throwing their construction wastes into the river. So you can imagine the consequence? What

can happen during a heavy rainfall? All those wastes will be carried into the river and then blocking that river and inundating people's houses. *Lerla gouvernman pa bon!*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to stress here that with the DEM on one hand and the drone on the other, we are better armed to identify promptly any affected zone/area following a heavy rainfall event. Therefore, allowing us to initiate immediate mitigating countermeasure works.

However, we should also recognise that with the increasing population and per capita income and also the rapid infrastructure development, there is a high pressure for forested and agricultural land to be cleared in favour of urbanisation; leading to increased surface runoff and even increase in challenges for an efficient land drainage system.

Accordingly, there is a need to address the emerging climate challenges from a holistic approach. There was a need, therefore, to develop a plan to serve as a basis to conceptualise strategies to be implemented by all stakeholders to reduce anthropogenic effects on the vulnerability to heavy rain and flood incidences, and more importantly to formulate sustainable solutions to mitigate the risk of flooding in the future.

In this respect, the Land Drainage Master Plan was initiated in January 2020. Its aim is to provide technical assistance to the Land Drainage Authority (LDA) in the form of vulnerability and feasibility studies, drafting of national policy, good governance and action plans and capacity building.

It is also intended to support the LDA in their effort to provide guidelines and principles of storm water management to designers in order to mitigate the impacts caused by their projects. It will also propose appropriate regulatory and preventive measures to be able to control the issues of flooding more effectively.

I have the pleasure to inform the House that the Master Plan has been finalised and is ready. Government will take stock of the proposal therein following which, I will have the opportunity to give more details thereon.

Allow me now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to outline some innovative measures which can be implemented in our endeavour to build resilience to climate change –

- (1) Bio-retention swales which is one suggestion that my friend, the Attorney General and Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security made so as we can build same across motorways so as –
 - (i) it captures water, and
 - (ii) it gives you a greener motorway.
- (2) Retention ponds, whereby an integrated approach to flood risk and overall water management has been adopted;
- (3) Blue and green infrastructure to be adopted as part of the urban design and land use planning strategies. Taking inspiration from international Integrated Water Management strategies, including Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) seen in the UK or low-impact developments (LID) in the US, sponge cities aim to control and improve urban flooding, water pollution and microclimates, recycle rainwater resources and re-instate degraded environments;
- (4) Higher safety factors have been applied to the design of drains and culverts in the form of freeboards (safety factor to designate distance between water surface and elevation of a structure);
- (5) An Early Alarm System, as we are saying, we are into mitigation. So, things can go wrong despite infrastructures. We will need evacuation plans, God forbid, but better be prepared;
- (6) Floodplain restoration on riverbanks as well as river training,
- (7) Flood diversion and storage measures, like the *Rivière des Anguilles* dam which the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development has announced its construction in this House, previously.

So in brief, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what we are considering is a mixture of structural and non-structural measures as we now have an urgency to adapt to this dynamic situation. As a long-term vision, this Government will always strive to build better and in a more intelligent manner.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we do not intend, on this issue, to sell dreams in our combat against climate change. Each and every year, you can see for yourself, the number of cities that have the latest technologies in terms of weather forecast or state of the art drainage infrastructure that are submerged by intense rainfall. We are very aware of the dangers that loom on Mauritius at every rainy season. We are at war, Mr Deputy, Speaker, Sir, against yet another invisible enemy. An enemy which may attack at any moment, invade our moments, and even take lives.

But, we are confident that we are on the right track as evidenced by the World Risk Report. This is why I urge this House to put our differences aside and work as one unit to further improve this variation. Some will raise questions on the amount of funds being injected in our new drainage infrastructure. Some will joke that it is “money down the drain” or not a priority. They could not be more wrong, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. *La vie de nos citoyens n’a pas de prix.*

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Have a safe trip back!

At 9.18 p.m., the Assembly, was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 26 April 2022 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

PLAINE CORAIL AIRPORT - NEW RUNWAY

(No. B/318) Mr J. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues) 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 construction of a new runway at Plaine Corail Airport, in Rodrigues, he will state how same will be financed.

Reply: The development of Rodrigues has always been high on the agenda of this Government. As part of the transformational development of the island, a new runway at Plaine Corail Airport will be constructed, enabling the development and the diversification of its economic activities. Thus, this landmark project will further improve air connectivity, boost tourism development, and significantly enhance socio economic conditions in Rodrigues.

The new runway project comprises upgrading of the airfield infrastructure including various airport facilities such as a new control tower, fire station and a new sea rescue facility to support operations of bigger aircrafts (A321Néo type aircrafts).

The implementation of this project dates as far back as 2011. In fact, the Island Chief Executive has informed that in April 2011, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly had enlisted the consultancy services of Ecorys in association with Parsons Brinckerhoff and De Chazal du Mee for a feasibility study on improving and extending the Plaine Corail Airport.

In December 2011, the Consultants had proposed the following options –

- Option 0 Maintain the current arrangements for the foreseeable future
- Option 1 Develop the existing facilities to enable the unrestricted operation of ATR72 aircraft
- Option 2 Develop the existing facilities to accept larger (A319 type) aircraft on short haul routes
- Option 3 Develop the existing facilities to accept larger aircraft on short/medium haul routes
- Option 4 Construct a runway and develop the existing facilities to accept larger aircraft on short/medium haul routes, but with the ability to further expand the new arrangements to accept aircraft operating on long haul routes.

The preferred option for the Rodrigues Regional Assembly had been Option 3.

In view of the importance of this major project for Rodrigues, actions were initiated by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly for the enlistment of the services of a Consultant for the “Design, Cost Estimation and preparation of Tender Documents for the Extension of Runway at Plaine Corail Airport”. The contract was awarded to GIBB (Mauritius) and TPS Consult Ltd in April 2016 for the total sum of Rs24,333,500, in compliance with all procurement regulations.

Along with the consultancy for the design of the extension of runway at Plaine Corail Airport, a tender for Geotechnical Investigations in the vicinity of Plaine Corail Airport was launched by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly in October 2016. The contract was awarded to Water Research Ltd., the successful bidder, for a total sum of Rs17,166,440 and works started in March 2017.

Meanwhile, negotiations were ongoing with the *Agence Française de Développement* for the funding of the project. In this respect, several meetings were held between the European Union, the *Agence Française de Développement* and the then Ministry of Finance and Economic Development.

The then Ministry of Finance and Economic Development submitted a request in February 2018 for the financing of the project to the *Agence Française de Développement* in the form of a loan, inclusive of a grant from the European Union.

Following further discussions in May and June 2018, with the European Union and the *Agence Française de Développement*, at the request of the latter, two studies were carried out, namely –

- (i) the Environmental and Social Impact of the project during and after construction, including a mitigating measures plan and relocation plan, and
- (ii) the Socio-Economic impact of the runway for Rodrigues to be financed by the *Agence Française de Développement*.

With regard to the Environmental and Social Impact Study, a contract was awarded to Setec International on 18 March 2019, to the tune of EUR 408,858.50 (approx. MUR 16.4 Million). The cost of the study was financed by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. In August 2019, Setec was also requested to include in its study, on-site noise and air quality survey. These were executed from 24 to 29 September 2019.

During an *Agence Française de Développement* mission from 25 to 29 November 2019, a meeting was held with the Ministry of Environment on 29 November 2019 for a review of the EIA application process, at the request of the funding organisation.

The *Plan d'Engagement Environnemental et Social* (PEES), as well as the *Plan de Gestion Environnemental et Social* (PGES), which are included in the Report submitted by Setec in February 2020 are both important documents, required not only for the follow up of environmental and social aspects of the new runway project, but are also requirements for the loan agreement.

A request was sent to the Ministry of Environment on 17 November 2021, for the delisting of the runway, jetty and incinerator from the Fifth Schedule of the Environment Protection Act 2002. The request is still under consideration.

With regard to the Socio-Economic study, in accordance with the requirements of the *Agence Française de Développement* and the European Union, a study was commissioned by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly for the new runway. Deloitte was awarded the contract and the final report was received end of December 2019.

In February 2019, a Request For Proposal for the consultancy services for the “Detailed Design and Supervision of the Construction of a new Runway at Plaine Corail” based on the Preliminary Design Report of GIBB 2018 was launched. In May 2019, following consultation with the *Agence Française de Développement*, the bid evaluation documents were reviewed. In the light of new requirements from the *Agence Française de Développement*, the bidding exercise was cancelled and launched anew in September 2020.

In August 2021, the contract for consultancy services was awarded to GIBB (Mauritius) Ltd in association with Pell Frischman and Systems Interface Ltd for the sum of MUR 57,066,500.00 and GBP 625,025.00 including local taxes and excluding local VAT. This undertaking was financed by the Airports of Mauritius Ltd.

However, there was a delay for the start of this exercise due to representation from one bidder. In fact, the notification for award was issued on 27 August 2021 to both successful and unsuccessful bidders. A challenge was received from Royal Haskosning DHV (Pty) Ltd (NACO) on 02 September 2021. Airports of Rodrigues Ltd replied to this challenge on 09 September 2021.

However, on 12 September 2021, Royal HaskosningDHV (Pty) Ltd (NACO) filed an application for review to the Independent Review Panel (IRP). A hearing was subsequently held on 21 September 2021, and the decision of the IRP was issued on 30 September 2021 to the effect that the IRP does not have jurisdiction to entertain the application for review submitted by NACO.

Pursuant to this IRP decision, a kick off meeting was held with GIBB and the Airport of Rodrigues Ltd/Airports of Mauritius Ltd project team on 12 October 2021 and the commencement date of the consultancy services was fixed for 25 October 2021.

However, GIBB's assignments have been further delayed by approximately four months in view of the closure of borders between Mauritius and Rodrigues from Sunday 07 March 2021 to Thursday 03 March 2022 due to COVID-19. Following the resumption of flights between Mauritius and Rodrigues, the Consultant was on a mission to Rodrigues during the week 28 March to 01 April 2022, with a focus mainly on the environmental aspect of the project, which will need to be considered in the detailed design process.

In addition, the following two activities are understood to be critical elements in the detailed design of the runway project –

- (i) extent of the geotechnical investigation that will be required.
- (ii) topographical survey of the site for the geometrical design and to determine the exact position of navigational equipment.

The Consultants are expected to be in Rodrigues in April and May 2022 for these two surveys.

The critical milestone dates for the project implementation have been revised, based on the project schedule submitted by the consultant on 18 March 2022. The dates provided are indicative and may be subject to further changes –

- submission of Detailed Design Report by the Consultant in September 2022
- submission of final tender document by the Consultant in October 2022
- floating of tenders for works in January 2023
- start of construction works in April 2023
- completion of construction works in July 2025

The *Agence Française de Développement* had indicated that the following requirements are necessary to secure the financing of the project –

- (i) Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Airports of Mauritius Ltd and Rodrigues Regional Assembly;
- (ii) Deed for lease of land;
- (iii) Detailed plan for fauna and flora, and
- (iv) Resettlement Action plan (PAR).

With regard to the MoU between the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and the Airports of Mauritius Ltd in respect of the responsibilities of both parties for the implementation of the environmental and Social Management Plan in accordance with the Setec report, same is yet to be signed by both parties.

The land lease of the existing aerodrome had expired in June 2021. Airports of Mauritius Ltd has received a letter of reservation from the Rodrigues Regional Assembly for the land earmarked for the new runway. Discussions are ongoing between the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning, the Airports of Mauritius Ltd, the Ministry of External Communications and the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to finalise same.

With regard to the detailed plan for fauna and flora, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly entered into an MoU with the Mauritius Wildlife Foundation for the development and implementation of the strategic plan for the protection of the flora likely to be impacted by the project. The first draft of the strategic plan had been submitted to the *Agence Française de Développement* for approval and comments and a meeting was convened on 05 November 2021. Another meeting between the representatives of the *Agence Française de Développement*, the Airport of Rodrigues Ltd, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and the Mauritius Wildlife Foundation was held on 13 December 2021 to review the Strategic Plan. The next milestone will be the relocation of the endemic plants located along the proposed runway alignment, prior to the start of construction works.

Lastly, the final version of the Resettlement Action Plan was submitted by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to *Agence Française de Développement* on 09 November 2021. The construction of the new housing to relocate the villagers of St. Marie was financed and managed by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

Government is fully committed to implement this key project to boost the socio-economic development of Rodrigues. In this connection, paragraph 376 of the Budget Speech

for this financial year provides for an investment of around Rs4 billion for the construction of the Runway at Plaine Corail Airport over the next three years.

The Financial Secretary has informed that negotiations are underway with a view to contracting a Sovereign loan of Euro 85 million to finance the construction of the runway. The loan will be accompanied by a grant of Euro 15.6 million from the European Union.

For this purpose, a 'Declaration of Intent' was signed by the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development and the Minister for Europe and the Foreign Affairs, Mr. Jean-Yves le Drian on 20 February 2020.

There is already a high-level commitment between Mauritius and France for this project. The Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development has also informed that, according to the executing agency, Airports of Mauritius Limited, contract for the works is expected to be awarded in January 2023 and first disbursement will be made in March 2023.

POLICE BRUTALITY – CASES & INQUIRIES

(No. B/319) Mr R. Duval (Fourth 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 alleged cases of Police brutality, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases thereof, since January 2020 to date, indicating the number of –

- (a) inquiries in progress;
- (b) Police Officers arrested/suspended in relation thereto, and
- (c) inquiries completed and the outcome thereof.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS DUTY FREE PARADISE CO. LTD - BRIBERY ALLEGATIONS – SUPERVISOR POST

(No. B/320) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications,

Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Mauritius Duty Free Paradise Co. Ltd., he will state if he has been made aware of allegations of bribery in the recent recruitment exercise for the post of supervisor thereat and, if so, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from said company, information as to if an inquiry has been initiated thereinto and the outcome thereof.

Reply: Reference is made to the reply made to Parliamentary Question B/214 at the Sitting of 12 April 2022 wherein the House was informed that the Mauritius Duty Free Paradise Co. Ltd. is a private company governed by the Companies Act, and, as such, information pertaining thereto is not to be made public.

However, the information requested in PQ B/214 was exceptionally given with the express proviso that, henceforth, information relating to the Mauritius Duty Free Paradise Co. Ltd. will not be provided.

DRUG & DRINK DRIVING OFFENCES

(No. B/321) Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to drug and drink driving offences, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) if an increase thereof has been noted;
- (b) if suspects thereof are subjected to blood tests after saliva tests, and
- (c) the cost of the saliva and blood tests per suspect.

Reply: Although the law provides for empowering the Police to conduct drug test on drivers/riders suspected for driving or attempting to drive under the influence of intoxicating drugs, this provision of the law as entrenched in the Road Traffic Amendment Act 2019 will need to be proclaimed. In the circumstances, Police is conducting breath tests of persons suspected to be under the influence of an intoxicating liquor. Breath tests are carried out by means of a breathalyzer to determine the proportion of alcohol in the breath of a driver suspected of driving under the influence of an intoxicating liquor.

With regard to part (a) of the question, the Commissioner of Police has informed that, for the period 2010 to 14 April 2022, out of the number of breath tests carried out on drivers/riders suspected for driving motor vehicle under the influence of intoxicating liquor, 13,852 were found to be positive. It is a fact that an increase from 2010 to 2019 in the number of such cases has been noted every year, due to heightened vigilance by Police. The Police will not leave any stone unturned in the fight against this scourge.

A decrease in the number of such cases from 2020 to 2022 has been recorded, and it is attributable to restrictions in force during COVID-19 pandemic.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the Commissioner of Police has also informed that saliva tests are not being carried out for the time being. Only breath tests are being performed on suspected drivers.

Saliva tests will be carried out once the new section 123 G of the Road Traffic Amendment Act 2019 is proclaimed.

Blood and urine specimen are submitted by the Mauritius Police Force to the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) in cases where there are suspicions of impaired driving and where the breath test for alcohol level is nil. This service is being provided by FSL since 2018 and the latter has upgraded its services with the acquisition of a liquid chromatography – Ultra High Resolution Mass Spectrometry in 2020, dedicated to the analysis of drug driving cases. The equipment has the capacity of detecting both classical as well as new emerging drugs.

From 2018 to 2021, the FSL has detected a total of 17 positive cases for drug driving. However, there has been a decrease in such cases for the years 2019 to 2021.

With regard to part (c) of the question, the FSL has informed that the cost of a blood test for drink driving case is Rs1,500 while the cost for a blood test for drug driving case is Rs2,500. The cost of saliva test does not arise as it is not being carried out.

PSC – CHAIRPERSON, DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON & COMMISSIONERS

(No. B/322) 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 the Public Service Commission, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain and table copy of the names of the current Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and Commissioners thereof.

(Withdrawn)

INTERDICTED POLICE OFFICERS – REMUNERATION

(No. B/323) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to Police Officers, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof presently suspended from duty, indicating the total remuneration being paid thereto on a yearly basis.

Reply: It is assumed that the hon. Member is referring to Police Officers who are interdicted, and he is referred to Police Regulation 28 of the Disciplined Forces Service Commission Regulations 1997, which in fact provides for the interdiction of members of the Disciplined Forces and not suspension as mentioned by him in the Parliamentary Question.

The Commissioner of Police has informed that one hundred and thirty-six (136) Police Officers are presently interdicted from duty.

The information regarding the total remuneration being paid to interdicted Police Officers on a yearly basis for the period 2008 to 13 April 2022 is being placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

PORT MATHURIN HARBOR – UPGRADING - WORK PROGRESS

(No. B/324) Mr J. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues) 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 upgrading of the Port Mathurin harbour and of the facilities to respond to the present and future needs of the population of Rodrigues, he will state the work progress thereof.

Reply: Port Mathurin covers an area of about 2.5 hectares, and the port facility comprises a commercial berth of 130 metres, with a water depth of 7.6 metres, which was constructed in 1977, a passenger terminal building, and a container stacking yard of about 7000 square metres as well as a shed of 875 square metres, operated by the State Trading Corporation for the storage and delivery of bagged rice, sugar and flour. Port Mathurin is currently being serviced mainly by the Black Rhino and occasionally by the MV Mauritius Trochetia calling thereat every 10 days.

The Acting Director General of the Mauritius Ports Authority has informed that, in August 2015, the Mauritius Ports Authority commissioned a Port Masterplan Study for Port Louis and Port Mathurin to assess future requirements for port facilities up to the horizon 2040. The findings and the recommendations of the study were presented to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly in July 2016 and the Port Mathurin Port Masterplan was finalised in November 2016.

The main recommendations in the Report of the Port Mathurin Port Masterplan Study to meet the future needs comprise, *inter alia* –

- (i) expansion of the container stacking yard at Port Mathurin from 7,000 square metres presently to 15,000 square metres;
- (ii) development of a Fishing Port at Pointe L’Herbe, and
- (iii) development of a new quay and associated facilities at Pointe Monnier.

In line with recommendations of the Port Masterplan Report 2016, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly decided to implement the Port Development projects in two phases, which are the development of Fishing Port at Pointe L’Herbe and associated dredging and reclamation works in the first phase. The second phase comprises the development of a new quay at Pointe Monnier, including major dredging works, the realignment of the navigational channel, land reclamation and associated facilities. With regard to the proposed expansion of the container stacking yard at Port Mathurin, the required land has already been secured and earmarked for the development.

The Rodrigues Regional Assembly has already retained consultancy services for the development of the Fishing Port at Pointe L’Herbe.

The Consultants submitted their Feasibility Report in August 2020 confirming the technical feasibility of the proposed Fishing Port project. In accordance with the recommendations of the Consultants, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly carried out Geotechnical Investigation works and Marine Biological and Ecological Investigations in 2020. The data from these studies were used by the Consultants to finalise the detailed design, the Environmental Impact Assessment Report and the Bidding documents for the construction of the Fishing Port, which were submitted to Rodrigues Regional Assembly in December 2020.

In January 2021, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly decided not to proceed with the Fishing Port project but to construct the quay at Pointe Monnier instead. In October 2021, the

Rodrigues Regional Assembly issued a variation order under the Consultancy contract, instructing the Consultant to undertake the feasibility study for the construction of a new quay of about 300 metres and associated dredging and land reclamation works.

The Consultants have submitted a draft Feasibility Report in February 2022. Following consultations with the Mauritius Ports Authority, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has forwarded its views and comments on the Report and requested the Consultants to finalise the Feasibility Report. The Final Feasibility Report for the proposed development of the quay project is expected by end of this month of April 2022.

The implementation Plan of the project will be finalised in the light of the findings made in the Feasibility Report.

PLAINE MAGNIEN, CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU – INCIDENT

(No. B/325) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the incident which occurred at the Citizens Advice Bureau of Plaine Magnien on 06 April 2022 when two Honourable Ministers were having a meeting thereat, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) the names of the persons who were attending the said meeting at the material time, and
- (b) if sanitary protocols were observed in the course thereof and, if not, the actions taken by the Police Officers present thereat in connection therewith.

(Withdrawn)

OVERSEAS MISSIONS – PARLIAMENTARY MEMBERS – CRITERIA FOR APPROVAL

(No. B/326) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the overseas missions

undertaken by Honourable Ministers and Honourable Members, he will state the criteria he uses for the approval thereof, indicating if he proposes to review same and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

Reply: The criteria used while approving overseas missions undertaken by hon. Ministers and hon. Members, or any public officials for that matter, are laid down in circular letter no.10 of 14 September 2017 issued by the then Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. The circular provides for the following policy guidelines regarding overseas missions –

- (i) missions have to be prioritised on the basis of their importance;
- (ii) arrangements need to be made with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade for missions abroad not warranting the formal presence of a Minister or official, for our Embassies/Missions to be represented on same;
- (iii) for any mission, the number of delegates should be kept to the minimum, except for missions where specific technical expertise may be required;
- (iv) the route chosen should be the most economical and direct one;
- (v) the most appropriate officials should be designated for any mission, taking into account the expected objectives and outcome of the mission, and the level of representation required as well as the technical skills demanded, and
- (vi) maximum use should be made of teleconferencing and other modern telecommunication facilities.

Before conveying financial clearance for any mission, the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development ensures that these guidelines have been complied with.

In fact, these guidelines are comprehensive and adequate enough to ensure that public expenditure on overseas mission is kept within reasonable limits, while at the same time ensuring absolutely necessary participation in such missions.

SCOMAT – DRUG SEIZURE

(No. B/327) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister

for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the seizure of drugs in a tractopelle on 10 July 2019 on the premises of Scomat, 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, indicating the number of arrests effected in connection therewith, if any.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS POLICE FORCE – PROMOTION PROCEDURES

(No. B/328) Mr P. Armance (Third 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 promotion exercises in the Mauritius Police Force, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the procedure that obtains therefor, indicating if same are carried out on a grade-to-grade basis.

Reply: The Commissioner of Police has informed that promotion in the Mauritius Police Force (MPF) is governed by Regulation 19 of the Disciplined Forces Service Commission (DFSC) Regulations 1997, and is made by way of –

- (a) competitive examination;
- (b) successful completion of approved courses;
- (c) promotion in specialised unit, and
- (d) seniority.

According to Police Standing Order No.16, promotion in the MPF is made only on a ‘class-to-class’ basis and not on a ‘grade to grade’ basis. The Pay Research Bureau Report 2021 has recommended that class-to-class promotion in the Mauritius Police Force should continue to be invariably made on the basis of selection and of other guidelines such as merits, qualification, seniority, and other required and relevant qualities.

The procedures for promotion in the Mauritius Police Force are being placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY – ELECTORAL REFORMS – WOMEN
REPRESENTATION**

(No. B/329) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the National Assembly, he will state where matters stand as to the proposed electoral reforms to ensure proportional representation and guaranteeing better women representation thereat.

(Withdrawn)

RODRIGUES – WATER SUPPLY

(No. B/330) Mr J. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to water supply in Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to where matters stand as to the commitment of funds for the improvement thereof, indicating how same will be achieved.

Reply: Water remains a priority for the development of Rodrigues. The increase in standard of living and the socio-economic development of the island have contributed to a water stress situation thereat.

Improving water production, storage, and distribution are therefore essential to enable the population to have access to adequate water for domestic and other uses on a more regular basis.

It is a fact that Rodrigues also depends a lot on its agriculture, tourism and related sectors which require an adequate water supply.

Hence, resolving the water shortage is a key challenge.

At paragraph 285 of the Government Programme of 2015-2019, mention was made that the water problem in Rodrigues would be addressed with the construction of new reservoirs and planned exploitation of available resources. This is further reinforced by paragraph 186 of the

Government Programme 2020-2024 which provides that, in order to increase water supply in Rodrigues, Government will support the application of new technologies for desalination and storage.

Since December 2014, Government has been working in close collaboration with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to implement various measures and projects to improve water production, treatment and distribution in line with the following strategies –

- (i) increasing water production through seawater desalination projects;
- (ii) optimal exploitation of other available water sources, mainly boreholes, springs and dams;
- (iii) construction of new reservoirs and upgrading of existing ones;
- (iv) installation of wastewater treatment plant;
- (v) encouraging rainwater harvesting;
- (vi) upgrading of the water distribution network, and
- (vii) reform of the water distribution management.

With a view to improving water sector in the long term, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly is working on the setting up of an *Observatoire de l'eau*. This project is co-funded by the *Agence Française de Développement (AFD)* and the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, and aims at developing an information system for the collection of data from all sectors, sharing of information, identification of priorities and decision-making for better resource management.

In this context, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with *l'Office de l'eau of Réunion* Island and the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities for the setting up of the *Observatoire*. The expected completion date of this project is November 2022.

Moreover, the IT consultant recruited by *Office de l'eau Réunion* is liaising with the IT unit of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly regarding software and server installation. A virtual training session will be held by the end of this month.

The Rodrigues Regional Assembly has also informed that the services of a Consultant were enlisted for the development of a Rodrigues Water Resources Strategy and the definition of

a priority action plan. This project is funded by the AFD and aims at supporting the elaboration and implementation of a strategy in the water sector, and the assignment comprises and covers the following –

- (i) water resources availability and opportunities of mobilisation;
- (ii) water multi-sectoral needs, current and future trends;
- (iii) water scenarios mobilisation development, production and distribution, and
- (iv) priority investments and development of an action plan.

The revised report for ‘Water Development Strategies’ was submitted in January 2022 by the Consultant Firm BRL Ingénierie. The report is being considered by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

To remind, paragraph 47 of the Budget Speech for this Financial Year provides that in order to address the long-standing water shortage in Rodrigues, Rs1 billion are being invested in desalination plants by the Mauritius Investment Corporation. This initiative is expected to increase water supply in the island.

The aim of this measure is to bridge the gap between water supply and demand in Rodrigues and will comprise construction of desalination plants which will be strategically located around Rodrigues at Anse Quittor, Baie Malgache, Pointe Venus, Pointe Cotton and Songe.

The Rodrigues Regional Assembly has also informed that the Special Purpose Vehicle, namely the Rodrigues Public Utilities Corporation had been incorporated as a private company on 18 June 2021, with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly as sole shareholder. The Board of Directors comprises the Island Chief Executive and the Departmental Head, Commission for Water Resources. The objective of this company is water collection, treatment, and supply.

Following the recent regional elections, the Board of the company is being re-constituted and a structure will be put in place. It is expected that necessary funding will be provided to this entity to enable the increase of water production and to improve water distribution in Rodrigues.

The Rodrigues Regional Assembly has further informed that the modalities for the financing and implementation of the project are being worked out by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and the Mauritius Investment Corporation.

It is to be highlighted that in accordance with the Programme 2022-2027 of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, « *garantir un approvisionnement régulier en eau, en quantité et qualité satisfaisantes à toute la population est la préoccupation première* ». The focus of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly is mainly on desalination of water so as to stabilise production, given climate change and lack of regular rainfall and the topography of the island.

The Chief Commissioner has also announced that a Master Plan for the development of water resources for the period 2022-2032 will be prepared.

In that context, on 06 April 2022, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly sought the assistance of the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities with regard to the modalities to be followed for the recruitment of a consultant to draft a Master Plan for the water sector. The request is under consideration by that Ministry.

All these measures which have been enumerated do emphatically reflect the commitment of the Government to improve water distribution and access to safe drinking water on a regular basis.

**DR. B. A. F. G-F., GCSK – FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC –
COMMISSION OF INQUIRY**

(No. B/331) **Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Commission of Inquiry on the Violation of the Constitution and any Other Laws by Dr. B. A. F. G-F., GCSK, former President of the Republic, he will state if he is in presence of copy of the report thereof and, if so, table copy thereof and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

ICTA – CHAIRPERSON – APPOINTMENT & REMUNERATION

(No. B/332) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to Mr D. N. S. W., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Information Communication and Technologies Authority, information as to the terms and conditions of appointment and duration of contract thereof, indicating the remuneration drawn as chairperson of the –

- (a) ICTA, and
- (b) other sub-committees of the ICTA, if any.

(Withdrawn)

YOUTH OFFENDER INSTITUTIONS – REHABILITATION POLICY

(No. B/333) Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the youth offender institutions, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) if they are experiencing staff shortages and rising level of violence;
- (b) if consideration will be given thereat for the –
 - (i) laying of emphasis on therapeutic boarding school;
 - (ii) building of relationships on trust, and
 - (iii) creation of hope and sense of stability in the lives of the inmates thereof, and
- (c) the policy for the rehabilitation of the inmates thereof.

Reply: Section 2 of the Reform Institutions Act defines a young offender as a minor who has been convicted of an offence punishable by imprisonment. Young offenders are not sent to prison. The institution to which they are sent depends on the seriousness of the offence they have committed. There are specialised reform institutions established under the Reform Institutions Act for the detention and training of minors. These are the Correctional Youth Centre and the Rehabilitation Youth Centre.

Interestingly, while the Reform Institutions Act does not mention Probation Hostel and Home, provision was made in the now repealed Juvenile Offenders Act which provided that a Court may order a juvenile to be committed to an institution named by the Court until the juvenile attains the age of 18 or for any shorter period. On the other hand, section 4 of the Probation of Offenders Act still provides that a minor may be given a Probation Order by the Court to reside in a Probation Institution.

The Children's Act, which has been proclaimed on 24 January 2022, goes even further to ensure that the best interests of the child prevail. Section 49 clearly states that no child under the age of 14 shall be prosecuted for any criminal offence. Such a child, having committed an offence is not sent to any of the institutions as provided under the Reform Institutions Act or the Probation of Offenders Act. Instead, section 50 of the Children's Act provides that the child may be subjected to a *régime* which includes, among others, referral to counselling, therapy and any other support services the child may require.

For children above the age of 14, the term used in the Children's Act is juvenile offender and section 55 of the Children's Act provides that, and I quote, –

- “(1) Where the Director of Public Prosecutions considers that –
- (a) in lieu of prosecuting a juvenile for an offence; or
 - (b) criminal proceedings instituted against a juvenile shall be discontinued,
- he shall request a probation officer to assess whether it would be in the best interests of the juvenile to be enrolled in a diversion programme rather than being prosecuted or criminal proceedings being continued against him. [...]
- (3) Where a probation officer makes an assessment to the effect that enrolling in a diversion programme will not be in the juvenile's best interests, the Director of Public Prosecutions may –
- (a) where criminal proceedings have not been instituted, institute criminal proceedings against the juvenile; or
 - (b) where criminal proceedings have been instituted and discontinued, reinstitute criminal proceedings against the juvenile.”

Under section 62(1)(d) of the Children's Act, the Court may, where a juvenile is convicted of an offence, commit the juvenile to custody in a place of detention and training as provided under the Reform Institutions Act.

With regard to part (a) of the question, the Acting Commissioner of Prisons has informed that, as at date, there are 9 children at the Correctional Youth Centre for Boys and 1 child at the Correctional Youth Centre for Girls. Thirty six officers are posted at the institutions to cater for the needs and security of the inmates round the clock and on a shift system. In addition, 72 CCTV cameras have been installed at the Correctional Youth Centres, of which 43 are at the Correctional Youth Centre for Boys, to enhance security. There is therefore, no staff shortage at the Correctional Youth Centres. Few cases of violence have been reported at the Correctional Youth Centres and they include, among others, assault upon detainees, assault on officers, escape, attempt at suicide, and self-inflicted injury. The figures from 2005 are as follows –

SN.	Year	Total
1.	2005	9
2.	2006	3
3.	2007	6
4.	2008	2
5.	2009	3
6.	2010	0
7.	2011	1
8.	2012	0
9.	2013	1
10.	2014	0
11.	2015	1
12.	2016	1
13.	2017	1

14.	2018	0
15.	2019	3
16.	2020	2
17.	2021	8
18.	2022 (so far)	0

For the Rehabilitation Youth Centre for Boys and for Girls, the Superintendent of Rehabilitation Youth Centres has informed that there are currently 3 inmates at the Rehabilitation Youth Centre for Boys and 6 inmates at the Rehabilitation Youth Centre for Girls. The total number of staff at the Rehabilitation Youth Centres for Boys and Girls is 42 round the clock and on a shift system. There is therefore no shortage of staff at the Rehabilitation Youth Centres also. There have been cases of violence at the Rehabilitation Youth Centres and they include mainly cases of mutiny, uprising and escape. The figures since 2005 are as follows –

SN.	Year	Total
1.	2005	1
2.	2006	0
3.	2007	1
4.	2008	0
5.	2009	0
6.	2010	0
7.	2011	0
8.	2012	0
9.	2013	0
10.	2014	0

11.	2015	1
12.	2016	1
13.	2017	1
14.	2018	0
15.	2019	0
16.	2020	3
17.	2021	3
18.	2022 (so far)	1

With regard part (b) of the question, from international practice it is understood that the therapeutic boarding school concept is more applicable for, and I quote –

“troubled teenagers or at-risk teenagers”.

The Children’s Act already makes provision for a specific type of *régime* for juvenile offenders. While, what would be closer to “troubled teenagers or at-risk teenagers” in our context, would be “Children with Serious Behavioural Concerns” as provided under sections 41 and 42 of the Children’s Act and, the Children’s Act already makes sufficient provisions for the well-being of these children. For example, the Commissioner of Probation and Aftercare has informed that the Probation Institutions are semi-opened institutions and the children residing in these institutions attend mainstream schools, receive appropriate medical, psychiatric and psychological treatment when required and are accommodated in a homely manner, with their own beds and meals. In the Probation Institutions, due consideration is given to building relationships of trust between the staff and the children. Active listening, positive regard and communicating emphatic understanding help these children to open up and relate freely with officers. This enables them to engage in the process of developing the necessary values, knowledge, skills and attitudes which help them better understand their problematic situation. All this empowers them and gives them a greater sense of belonging, hope and brings more stability in their lives.

The Acting Commissioner of Prisons has informed that appropriate training is dispensed to the inmates at the Correctional Youth Centre so as to enable them to lead a good and useful life following release. The objective of providing such training is to encourage the progressive development of the children. These children also receive visits from relatives or guardians twice monthly. They are also entitled to receive visits from their lawyers. A Prisons Welfare Officer is posted at the Correctional Youth Centres and he assists the children in –

- (i) maintaining contact with their families;
- (ii) attending to their personal problems, and
- (iii) preparing for their bail or release.

The inmates at the Correctional Youth Centres also receive visits from NGOs such as *Kinouété*, *Caritas* and *Groupe Elan* for counselling. There is an educator at the Correctional Youth Centre whose role is to ensure that the inmates receive literacy and numeracy lessons.

The Superintendent has informed that, at the Rehabilitation Youth Centres, youngsters are empowered through vocational training. Those who reach the age of 16 are enrolled in courses related to hospitality and tourism sector through the Beachcomber Academy.

With regard to part (c) of the question, the Acting Commissioner of Prisons has also informed that the policy for the rehabilitation of inmates at the Correctional Youth Centres comprises the following –

- (i) giving the inmates the opportunity to learn new skills that will help them to stay away from crime when they leave the Centre, thus contributing to public safety;
- (ii) placement opportunities are extended to inmates in the field of hospitality and tourism sector to ensure employability upon release;
- (iii) the provision of constructive activities in the Centre that assists in rendering life in the Centre similar to life in the community, which is important to facilitate the social reintegration of inmates into the community upon release;
- (iv) providing education, vocational training and work programmes in the Centre to enhance safety and security, as inmates involved in constructive activities are less likely to engage in disruptive behaviour;
- (v) the introduction of an Earning Scheme related to work programmes that enable the inmates to support themselves whilst in detention, and

- (vi) governmental organisations and non-governmental organisations also assist in delivering lectures to inmates with the aim to correct their offending behaviours.

The policy of rehabilitation at the Rehabilitation Youth Centres is to equip the inmates with life skills and social skills so as to facilitate their reintegration into society following release. Section 47 of the Reform Institutions Act also provides for an aftercare order whereby a detainee at these institutions is required to live under the charge of a suitable and willing person and to be guided and advised by a Probation Officer. While at the Probation Institutions, the policy for rehabilitation is to provide a congenial environment and family atmosphere with a view to facilitating the reintegration of the children within their families and the community.

An international Consultant was appointed with a view to re-engineering the current Prisons and Probation System, with rehabilitation programmes focused on Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, General Offending Criminogenic Programmes to be run by the Prisons Department, the Rehabilitation Youth Centres and the Probation and Aftercare Service. The final report of the Consultant will be submitted by the end of April 2022 and, thereafter, due consideration will be given to the implementation of programmes aimed at rehabilitating offenders, including young offenders.

ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER & ELECTORAL SUPERVISORY COMMISSION – CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

(No. B/334) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to electoral laws, he will state if he will consider appointing a consultative committee to look thereinto and make recommendations for the review of the –

- (a) powers of the Electoral Commissioner and Electoral Supervisory Commission;
- (b) manner in which –
 - (i) members and Chairperson of the Electoral Supervisory Commission are appointed, and

- (ii) registration of electors are carried out, and
- (c) guidelines of how the Electoral Boundary Commission should carry out its function.

(Withdrawn)

**MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – MR G. S.,
ADVISER/SENIOR ADVISER**

(No. B/335) Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to Mr G. S., he will state the date of appointment thereof as adviser/senior adviser at the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, indicating the –

- (a) duration of tenure of office and monthly remuneration drawn, and
- (b) board of parastatal bodies on which he served over the period 2015 to 2019, indicating in each case, the monthly remuneration drawn.

(Withdrawn)

**CULTURAL PROPERTY- POSSIBLE TRAFFIC- COMMISSION OF INQUIRY
REQUEST**

(No. B/336) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to cultural property, he will state if his Office is in presence of a request for the setting up of a Commission of Inquiry into a possible traffic thereof since December 2021 and, if so, indicate the stand of his office in relation thereto.

Reply: The Prime Minister’s Office has, in fact, received a request dated 18 December 2021 from *SOS Patrimoine en Péril* “Save Our Heritage” for the setting up of a Commission of Inquiry into a possible traffic of cultural property. The request is being examined.

POINTE AUX CANNONNIERS - DRUG SEIZURE - INQUIRY

(No. B/337) **Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to dangerous drugs, 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 into the seizure of an estimated Rs3.7 billion worth of drugs at Pointe aux Cannonniers on 02 May 2021.

Reply: Subsequent to the reply to Parliamentary Question B/384 at the sitting of Tuesday 18 May 2021, the Commissioner of Police has informed that following the seizure of 26 kilograms of Cannabis Resin (Hashish) and 243.45 kilograms of Heroin of an approximate total street value of Rs3.4 billion, the Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit started an enquiry with a view to identifying and apprehending all those persons who are involved in this drug trafficking case.

The Commissioner of Police has also informed that, as at Thursday 14 April 2022, eight persons have been arrested in connection with this case, six of whom have been remanded to jail and two are detained in Police cell.

The Commissioner of Police has further informed that, in the course of the investigation, seventy-four persons have been interviewed. But being given the complex nature of this case and its international ramifications, the enquiry is inevitably taking time to be completed.

PASSENGER VARIANT DORNIER AIRCRAFT – COST & SPECIFICATIONS

(No. B/338) **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 the newly acquired Passenger Variant Dornier Aircraft, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

- (a) cost;
- (b) reasons for acquisition, and
- (c) performance and security features thereof.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, the Commissioner of Police has informed that the new Passenger Variant Dornier, along with a reserve engine, a propeller, spares

recommended by the manufacturer, and training for pilots and technicians, has cost USD 11,644,800.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the Commissioner of Police has also informed that the main reasons for the acquisition of this Passenger Variant Dornier are as follows –

- (i) to increase the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the Mauritius Police Force, whilst adding value to its air fleet in terms of modernity and technological advancement;
- (ii) to improve the connectivity with the outer islands such as Agalega, Rodrigues and St. Brandon as its range of operation is wider;
- (iii) to enable and ensure more effective surveillance over our Exclusive Economic Zone which is of 2.3 million square kilometres with its longer flight duration, and to contribute in the fight against transnational crimes including drug and human trafficking as well as Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing activities;
- (iv) to complement the current fleet of the Maritime Air Squadron which comprises only two Dornier Aircrafts, and
- (v) to provide for more effective casualty evacuation with its increased passenger carriage capacity and flight endurance.

With regard to part (c) of the question, the Commissioner of Police has further informed that the Passenger Variant Dornier is a first of its kind, equipped with glass cockpit, dash-10 engines and 5-bladed propellers. The Aircraft has increased endurance as well as a higher load-carrying capacity, and can be configured in various roles such as Casualty or Medical evacuation and also Search and Rescue operation.

Concerning the security features, the Commissioner of Police has also informed that the new aircraft is fitted with an Automatic Identification System for identifying merchant vessels at sea. The aircraft is also equipped with a fire protection system which includes engine and cabin fire extinguishing system and also ice and rain protection.

**MAURITIUS BROADCASTING CORPORATION – MS M. J., SENIOR NEWS
EDITOR – SUSPENSION**

(No. B/339) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to if Ms M. J., Senior News Editor, has been suspended from duty and, if so, indicate the charges levelled against her.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS PORTS AUTHORITY – TUGS MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS

(No. B/340) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to tugs being used inside and outside the port zones, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Ports Authority, information as to the number thereof presently –

- (a) available and operational, and
- (b) under maintenance and repairs, indicating the costs thereof.

Reply: The Acting Director General of the Mauritius Ports Authority has informed that the Mauritius Ports Authority has a fleet of four big tugs and six small tugs for operation at Port Louis and Port Mathurin.

With regard to part (a) of the question, presently, three big tugs, namely, Sir Edouard, Da Patten and Al Tareef 1 are in operation at Port Louis with valid class certificates, respectively, up to 07 July 2026, 22 April 2024, and 21 October 2024. As regards the big tug, Mahé de Labourdonnais, the Mauritius Ports Authority has decided not to proceed with the renewal of its class certificate given the high costs involved for extensive dry docking works and repairs. In view of its age, that is, more than 20 years and reduced bollard pull capacity, the Authority has decided not to invest in the repairs and maintenance of the tug, but to put it out of service and to dispose of it in due course. The Authority is proceeding with the chartering of one additional big tug of about 60 tonnes bollard pull capacity to replace Tug Mahé de Labourdonnais.

With regard to the four small tugs at Port Louis, two are operational, namely, Kestrel and Ochna. Small Tug Dombeya is presently under repairs and it is expected to be back in operation by end of April 2022, whilst Tug Talipot has been put out of service and will be disposed of in due course. Tugs Solitaire and Albion, mobilised at Port Mathurin, are both operational.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the Acting Director General of the Mauritius Ports Authority has also informed that Tug Da Patten is planned for minor maintenance works by first week of May 2022. These are scheduled to be completed by end of May 2022 and will cost around Rs5.5 m.

Tug Dombeya is presently undergoing major dry-docking repairs and maintenance at a total cost of Rs19.5 m. and will be back in operation by the end of this month of April 2022.

Tug Ochna is planned for major dry-docking repairs and maintenance at the cost of Rs25 m. The works are scheduled to start during the first week of May 2022 to be completed by end of June 2022.

Tug Kestrel is planned for major dry-docking repairs and maintenance at the cost of Rs21 m. The works are scheduled to start during the first week of July 2022 and will be completed by end of August 2022.

The dry-docking maintenance works for Tugs Solitaire and Albion at Port Mathurin are scheduled to start during the first week of June 2022 at a total estimated cost of Rs9 m. and will be completed by the end of August 2022. The works will be undertaken during the idle time between the two vessel calls.

MAURITIUS BROADCASTING CORPORATION ACT – MONTHLY TELEVISION LICENSE FEE – AMENDMENTS

(No. B/341) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the monthly television license fee of Rs150, he will state if consideration will be given for proposed amendments to be brought to the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation Act to provide for the payment thereof to be optional and payable only by subscribers of the television channels thereof and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

*(Withdrawn)***OVERSEAS MISSIONS – MINISTERIAL DELEGATIONS**

(No. B/342) 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 overseas missions, he will state the number of ministerial delegations and Honourable Members having undertaken same since the reopening of the borders in October 2021, indicating in each case the –

- (a) purpose and outcome thereof, if any, and
- (b) cost incurred.

*(Withdrawn)***ADP INTERNATIONAL S. A – SANCTIONS AGAINST FRAUDULENT PRACTICES**

(No. B/343) Mr I. Collendavelloo (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, he will state if he has taken cognisance of a press release by the World Bank dated 04 January 2022 sanctioning ADP International S.A. for collusive and fraudulent practices in Madagascar and Croatia, respectively, and making ADPM Mauritius, *inter alia*, ineligible from participating in projects and operations financed by institutions of the World Bank Group for a period of twelve months and, if so, indicate his stand in relation thereto.

Reply: The Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development has informed that, in a press release dated 04 January 2022, published on the website of the World Bank Group, the latter announced a 24-month sanction against Aéroports de Paris International S.A., a subsidiary company of Aéroports de Paris S.A., reportedly in connection with collusive and fraudulent practices on projects in Madagascar and Croatia. The sanction comprises an initial 12-month debarment followed by a 12-month conditional non-debarment.

The 12-month debarment makes Aéroports de Paris International S.A., as well as its subsidiary companies, namely, ADP Ingénierie, ADP Airport Services, ADP do Brasil Participações, ADP International Americas LLC, ADPM Mauritius, Aéroports de Paris Management 3, Airport International Group, Airport Management Company, Airport Management Services, and Jordan Airport Management, ineligible to participate in projects and operations financed by institutions of the World Bank Group.

Government has a clear policy of not accepting any bid or awarding a contract to any bidder which has been debarred and declared ineligible by multilateral funding agencies including World Bank, African Development Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

Moreover, with a view to ensuring that public bodies comply with this policy, all standard bidding documents issued by the Procurement Policy Office include a provision in the Instructions to Bidders and a link to access the list of debarred bidders.

Such restriction remains in force for the entire duration of the debarment.

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION – BOARD COMPOSITION

(No. B/344) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Public Service Commission, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the composition thereof, indicating the terms and conditions of appointment, including remuneration, of the Chairperson and members thereof.

Reply: The current composition of the Public Service Commission is as follows –

Chairperson

Mr Vidianand Lutchmeepsad, C.S.K.

Deputy Chairpersons

- (i) Mr Anbanaden Veerasamy, O.S.K.
- (ii) Mr Anil Kumar Ramkurrun

Commissioners

- (i) Mr Shailendra Kumar Singh Dusowuth, O.S.K.
- (ii) Mr Antoine Hervé Sydonie

In regard to remuneration, I am informed that the Chairperson is paid a monthly allowance of Rs175,750 while the Deputy Chairpersons are paid a monthly allowance of Rs150,750 each and the Commissioners are drawing a monthly allowance of Rs97,625 each.

The other terms and conditions of their appointment, such as car benefits, leave and gratuity are, in general, in accordance with the recommendations of the 2021 PRB Report.

FLOOD VICTIMS – ALLOWANCES – YEAR 2014 TO 19 APRIL 2022

(No. B/360) 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 allowances granted to victims of floods, she will, for each of the years 2014 to 2021 and since January 2022 to date, state the number of applications received therefor, indicating the –

- (a) number of successful applications, and
- (b) aggregate quantum of funds disbursed therefor.

Reply: I am informed that since January 2014 to December 2021, a total amount of Rs82,563,919 has been paid in terms of allowance to flood victims as follows –

- January 2014 to December 2014: Rs1,100,341
- January 2015 to June 2015: Rs11,318,569
- Financial Year 2015-2016: Rs7,484,424
- Financial Year 2016-2017: Rs6,648,829
- Financial Year 2017-2018: Rs48,668,847
- Financial Year 2018-2019: Rs4,586,603
- Financial Year 2019-2020: Rs1,832,383
- Financial Year 2020-2021: Rs923,923
- July 2021 to December 2021: NIL

I am further informed that for the period January 2022 to date, flood allowance has been paid to 427 families for an amount of Rs296,664.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES - ENERGY TASK FORCE - SETTING UP

(No. B/361) Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to electric vehicles, he will state if consideration will be given for the setting up of an Energy Task Force with a view to ensuring the installation of reliable mobile connection at charge points at home and island-wide to encourage the use thereof.

Reply: In line with its policy to shift towards cleaner energy and reduce carbon emissions, Government has approved, in December 2020, the adoption of a 10-Year Electric Vehicle Integration Roadmap up to the year 2030. The Report was published following extensive consultation with public and private sector stakeholders.

Government has also approved the setting up of an Electric Vehicle Implementation and Monitoring Committee to steer and monitor the implementation of the recommendations made in the Roadmap.

The EV Implementation and Monitoring Committee is chaired by my Ministry and comprises representatives from the following institutions –

- a) Prime Minister's Office;
- b) Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning;
- c) Ministry of Land Transport and Light Rail;
- d) Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development;
- e) Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change;
- f) Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development;
- g) Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection;
- h) National Land Transport Authority;
- i) Road Development Authority;
- j) Central Electricity Board;
- k) Energy Efficiency Management Office;
- l) Mauritius Renewable Energy Agency;
- m) Business Mauritius, and
- n) Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI).

Four sub-committees have been set up under the EV Implementation and Monitoring Committee to look into implementation of specific recommendations relating to –

- (a) Facilitating the Setting Up of the Charging Network;
- (b) Financial Incentives and Green Loans;
- (c) National Battery Plan, and
- (d) Awareness and Training.

The above sub-committees are chaired by my Ministry, MARENA and Business Mauritius respectively. Work is progressing at the level of the main and the sub-committees.

I wish to inform the House that, in a bid to promote e-mobility, the Central Electricity Board has launched the CEB Solar PV Scheme for Domestic Consumers (Households) in November 2021. The main objective of the Scheme is to promote the development of renewable energy by providing the opportunity to Domestic Customers who are willing to invest in and install a solar PV system for domestic uses.

It is worth highlighting that a Time of Use Tariff has been introduced as from 01 July 2021 for domestic customers or domestic prosumers for charging of Electric Vehicles, to encourage charging during off-peak hours at a more favourable rate.

For the Corporate Sector, the Central Electricity Board has launched, in March 2022, the CEB Scheme for Corporate Entities' Electric Vehicles Charging. The main objective of the initial phase of this Scheme is to integrate, in the local grid, accumulated capacity of 10MW of Solar PV power generation to enable participating corporate entities to meet the equivalent annual energy requirement of their electric vehicles fleet.

In addition, following the last meeting of the EV Implementation and Monitoring Committee, the Central Electricity Board has, on 15 April 2022, launched the CEB Scheme for Service Providers Offering Public Charging of Vehicles Services. The Scheme will cater for public charging facilities, to be put at the disposal of the public, at various locations across the island.

In the light of the above, it is considered that the question of setting up an Energy Task Force, in regard to electric vehicles, does not arise.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT – AMENDMENT – DRAINS CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/362) Mr R. Wochit (Third Member for Pamplémousses & Triolet) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the proposed amendment to be brought to the legislation empowering public bodies designated by the Land Drainage Authority to construct drains on private properties where storm water accumulates and represents high flooding risks, he will state where matters stand.

Reply (The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development): Amendment was brought to Section 61(3) of the Local Government Act through the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act No. 15 of 2021 empowering local authorities, the National Development Unit, through its Ministry, the Road Development Authority and such other public body as the Land Drainage Authority may designate in writing to construct drains in privately owned land where storm water accumulates and represents high flooding risks. The amendment relates mostly to private promoters who, while developing their land, should cater for drains to evacuate surface run-off as directed by the relevant Authorities.

Section 8 of the Constitution makes provision for the protection of the citizens of this country from deprivation of their property. It provides that no property of any description shall be compulsorily taken possession of, and no interest in or right over property of any description shall be compulsorily acquired, except where the taking of possession or acquisition is necessary or expedient in the interests, amongst others, of public safety.

Accordingly, whenever drain projects have to be implemented in privately owned land, the NDU seeks way leave from the owners in the first instance. Where way leave is denied by private owners, the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development makes a request to the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning to proceed with land acquisition against payment of compensation to the owners. There is, at this stage, an offer and negotiation between the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning and the owners. In case the negotiation fails, the latter Ministry proceeds with compulsory acquisition of the land.

Government is fully aware that acquisition of private land is one of the major challenges hampering the implementation of drain projects. In this regard, a Fast Track Committee has been set up by Government to look into all issues impeding the implementation of the National Flood Management Programme. The Committee has, as its main functions, to address bottlenecks related to land acquisition and securing of right of entry or way leaves.

The Fast Track Committee comprises representatives from various Ministries and Departments, including the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning, the Project Implementation and Monitoring Agency of the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, the Attorney General's Office, the Land Drainage Authority and the Valuation Department.

As at date, six meetings of the Fast Track Committee have been held under the chairmanship of the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development where 53 drain projects with land acquisition issues are being looked into and expedited.

Furthermore, Government has decided to curtail processes and time involved for acquisition of privately owned land for the construction of drains by relevant Authorities, especially where a region has been declared as High-Risk Flood Prone by the Land Drainage Authority.

Mauritius is no exception to the effects of climate change all over the world. Government is investing massively on drain infrastructure as safety of its citizens is one of its topmost priorities. Mauritians, firstly, should refrain from illegal dumping in our drains and rivers and secondly, collaborate with the Authorities where land acquisitions are involved because at the end of the day, it is for their safety only that Government is implementing the drain projects.

**CASINO DE MAURICE - MR D. N., HUMAN RESOURCE DIRECTOR –
DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS**

(No. B/363) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to Mr D. N., Human Resource Director at the Casino de Maurice, Curepipe, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if disciplinary proceedings have been initiated against him and, if so, give details thereof.

(Withdrawn)

ATLEE BRIDGE - RECONSTRUCTION - WORK PROGRESS

(No. B/364) Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the

reconstruction of Pont Atlee, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to the work progress thereof.

Reply: I wish to thank the hon. Member for this Parliamentary Question.

The problem of over-flooding and inundation at the Atlee Bridge is a long outstanding one which had not been resolved for many years now. The bridge is, in fact, an old composite structure with three narrow channels of one metre high and 0.6 metre wide for water passage.

Over the years, several representations have been received from the inhabitants of the locality, which, unfortunately, it appears, felt on deaf ears.

It is now this Government which has given due consideration to the requests of the inhabitants of that region. In fact, following the torrential rains which occurred in April 2021, causing over-flooding of the bridge and affecting the nearby houses, my colleagues the hon. Acting Prime Minister and the hon. Dhunnoo made a request for the reconstruction of the Atlee Bridge, to which my Ministry acted promptly.

Within one month of this unfortunate event, the Road Development Authority (RDA) awarded a contract to Gamma Construction Ltd on 13 May 2021 for an amount of Rs11.3 m. for the demolition and reconstruction of the Atlee Bridge.

The bridge was thus demolished and reconstructed to a new reinforced concrete bridge of a length of 4 metres and 6 metres wide carriageway which includes a footpath of 1.2 metres wide.

I am pleased to inform the House that the reconstruction works have now been completed and the bridge will be officially opened to the public very soon, within days from now.

STAFF - SAMU DEPARTMENT

(No. B/365) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the SAMU, he will state –

- (a) the number of doctors currently serving same, indicating the capacity in which they are currently employed, and
- (b) plan, if any, to increase the staffing and logistics thereof in the light of the demands for emergency services.

Reply: I am informed that there are 36 doctors serving in the SAMU department. At present, there are 1 Director, Emergency Services, 4 Senior Emergency Physicians and 6 Emergency Physicians in post.

Additionally, 27 Medical and Health Officers/Senior Medical and Health Officers who have recently completed their Diploma in Emergency Medicine are assisting the SAMU Department in its daily operations.

With regard to the second part of the question, the current staffing and logistics at the SAMU Department are adequate for the time being. However, to cater for future demands, my Ministry is planning to train another batch of Emergency Physicians to man the SAMU Department in the long run.

My Ministry is also planning to effectively utilise the SAMU by extending their services to the Accident & Emergency Department of Regional Hospitals.

Meetings are in progress to look into the possibility of extending the services on a 24/7 pilot basis at Victoria Hospital, in a first instance.

B104 ROAD, CHAMAREL-CASE NOYALE - SOIL STABILIZATION WORKS

(No. B/366) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to soil stabilization works currently ongoing along road B104, Chamarel - Case Noyale, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

CUREPIPE, LIGNE BERTHAUD ROAD – RESURFACING

(No. B/367) Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the proposed resurfacing of Ligne Berthaud Road, in Curepipe, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: Ligne Berthaud Road cuts across Constituencies Nos. 16 and 17 and is of a length of approximately 1.6 kilometres.

Following a request made by the hon. Member, the NDU carried out a survey at Ligne Berthaud Road and it was observed that –

- (a) from Junction Daruty de Grand Pré to Junction Belle Rive Avenue, of approximately 600 metres, requires resurfacing, and
- (b) from Junction Belle Rive Avenue to Junction La Vanille Road, of approximately one kilometre, requires enlargement as the width of the road along that stretch varies between 3.5 metres and 4.5 metres thereby preventing the free flow of vehicles in both directions.

The NDU is proceeding with road works at Ligne Berthaud in two phases as follows –

Phase 1 – works order for the resurfacing of the first 600 metres at the cost of Rs3.3 m. has already been issued and works were completed on 21 June 2022.

Phase 2 – enlargement and resurfacing of the road from Junction Belle Rive Avenue to Junction La Vanille Road, estimated to cost around Rs20 m. will be implemented during this financial year upon availability of funds and land issues being cleared.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS SHOW, DUBAI – DELEGATION COMPOSITION

(No. B/368) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the International Women Entrepreneurs Show mission in Dubai held in October 2021, she will state the –

- (a) composition of the delegation of her Ministry which attended same, and
- (b) outcome of the mission.

(Withdrawn)

COVID-19 VACCINES – EXPIRATION & DISPOSAL

(No. B/369) Ms N. Ramyad (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to COVID-19 vaccines, he will state the number thereof purchased and which have expired before use, indicating how same have been disposed of.

(Withdrawn)

EXPIRED MEDICAL ITEMS - DISPOSAL - JANUARY 2015 TO 19 APRIL 2022

(No. B/370) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to expired medical items which had to be disposed of since January 2015 to date, he will give the list thereof, indicating the quantity and cost thereof.

(Withdrawn)

UPGRADING STUDENTS FROM GRADE 1 TO GRADE 2

(No. B/371) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to primary schools, she will state if consideration will be given for the advisability of upgrading all the students thereof born in the same calendar year from grade 1 to grade 2.

Reply: You will recall schools were closed over a continuous period of 4 months from March to June 2020 due to the COVID Pandemic. The school calendar was accordingly extended to compensate for the loss of teaching time. However, the volatility of the times led to a second national lockdown in March 2021 at a time when the schools had programmed their end of year assessments.

In these circumstances, only national and international examinations were held (PSAC, NCE, SC/HSC) and no end of year assessments could be conducted in the year 2021 for the pupils of all other grades who were allowed to move on to the next grade. I must insist that was

an exceptional measure. Such a measure, if replicated for a consecutive year in the Academic Year 2021-2022, will have pedagogical implications.

As I have informed in my reply to PQ B/39, the age difference between the youngest and the oldest pupils with regard to Grade 1 for the cohort of 2020-2021 is around one and a half years. By the end of the Academic Year, the youngest pupils in the grade would reach around 6 ½ years and the oldest nearly 8 years.

We believe that it would be pedagogically sound to group the older students in Grade 1 (born between 01 January 2015 and 31 May 2015) and offer them a dedicated curriculum that will allow them to move to Grade 2 in May 2022. Two conditionalities prevail, namely, parental consent and pupils meeting the readiness criterion further to a school based assessment. I reiterate that the pupils in that category are among the oldest of their class group.

Pupils born from 01 June to 31 December 2015 will pursue their studies at Grade 1 level and will transit to Grade 2 in January 2023. It is not envisaged to allow all pupils in Grade 1 to transit to Grade 2 this year.

FISHERS - FISHERMEN CARDS & RETIREMENT SCHEME

(No. B/372) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the proposed allocation of 500 fishermen cards and the implementation of a retirement scheme for fishers, he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

FULL CONCRETE HOUSING SCHEME - SOCIAL HOUSING UNITS – CONSTRUCTION - 2019 TO 19 APRIL 2022

(No. B/373) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the persons registered on the Social Register of Mauritius, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Empowerment Foundation, information as to the number of social housing units built under the Full Concrete Housing Scheme since 2019 to date therefor, indicating the –

- (a) number of housing units –
 - (i) delivered region-wise, and
 - (ii) not yet constructed or in progress or awaiting delivery, as the case may be, and
- (b) budget allocated therefor.

(Withdrawn)

**SOCIAL REGISTER OF MAURITIUS - RECERTIFICATION OF
BENEFICIARIES – YEAR 2022**

(No. B/374) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the Recertification of Beneficiaries on the Social Register of Mauritius, she will state the total number of beneficiaries/households for the year 2022, indicating the number thereof –

- (a) having signed their social contract as at to date, indicating the duration and terms and conditions thereof, and
- (b) whose social contract –
 - (i) are pending, giving reasons therefor, and
 - (ii) have been cancelled.

(Withdrawn)

DANGEROUS DRUGS - CONTROL

(No. B/375) Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to dangerous drugs, he will state the additional measures taken by his Ministry for the control thereof in the wake of the recommendations of the latest Commission of Enquiry on Drugs.

(Withdrawn)

**UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE FOR WATER,
ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH REPORT - MEASURES**

(No. B/376) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, he will state if he has taken cognizance of the latest report of the United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health with regard to water security in Africa and, if so, indicate the measures being envisaged to address the ratings allocated to Mauritius therein.

Reply: I am informed that the United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health has published a report entitled ‘Water Security in Africa: A Preliminary Assessment’ on 20 March 2022. The report summarises the results of a preliminary assessment of water security in 54 countries in Africa by considering several indicators which are publicly available databases online.

Achieving water security requires allocation among users to be fair, efficient and transparent. Water to satisfy basic human needs should be accessible at an affordable cost. Water, throughout its cycle should be collected and treated to prevent pollution and disease. Fair, accessible and effective mechanisms should exist to manage or address disputes or conflicts that may arise.

The UN Report aims at creating a quantitative starting point and a platform for subsequent discussions on water security issues with national, regional and international agents.

The assessment has been categorised in five stages of water security, namely: “Emerging” which is in the range of 0 to 45, “Slight” which is from 45 to 60, “Modest” which is from 60 to 75, “Effective” which is from 75 to 90 and “Model” which is from 90 to 100. Egypt, Botswana, Gabon, Mauritius and Tunisia make the top five most water-secure countries in Africa at present, yet with only “Modest” absolute levels of water security achieved.

Except for Egypt, all countries scored below 70. The overall score for the level of water security in Mauritius is 69, which is thus categorised as ‘Modest’ and is ranked 4th in Africa.

Despite Mauritius being ranked 4th at the level of Africa in terms of water security as per the above UN Report, there exists a number of challenges pertaining to the water sector with specific characteristics that need to be addressed with a view to attaining long-term sustainability and a water secure Mauritius. For instance, the assessment has shown that the water infrastructure component needs to be given particular attention given that Mauritius has scored 2 in this component. It is to be outlined that Mauritius has adopted a multipronged approach to achieve water security. Some of the measures are as follows –

- (a) infrastructure development such as the Construction of Rivière des Anguilles Dam, the Enlargement of La Nicolière Reservoir and the Rehabilitation of La Ferme Dam;
- (b) improvement in pipe network to reduce Non-Revenue Water;

- (c) water from rivers and lakes are abstracted and treated through mobile containerised pressure filters;
- (d) treatment of additional water of 200,000 m³/day through water treatment plants and boreholes;
- (e) construction of new service reservoirs;
- (f) drilling of new boreholes and acquisition of private boreholes;
- (g) water governance mechanisms, sector strategy and new water legislation to address legal vacuum and policy gaps, and
- (h) better disaster risk management strategy.

To further improve water security, a project has been implemented to use tailrace water from hydro power generator at Tamarind Falls Reservoir.

**CHINNAPYEL LANE & ELIAS COOWAR LANE, COUVENT STREET,
CUREPIPE – DRAINS PROJECT**

(No. B/377) Mr M. Yeung Sik Yuen (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the drains project along Chinnapyel Lane and Elias Coowar Lane, in Couvent street, Curepipe, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Curepipe, information as to where matters stand as to the implementation thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal Council of Curepipe that it does not have any drain project earmarked along Elias Coowar Lane in Couvent Lane, Curepipe since there already exists a covered drain thereat.

The Municipal Council of Curepipe has also informed that the topography of Elias Coowar Lane is sloppy and as at date the Council has not received any complaint regarding flooding or accumulation of water problems at the latter site.

With regard to the Chinnapyel Land at Couvent Street, Curepipe, I am informed that a drain project, namely Construction of Drain Network along Ghoorun Lane/Chinnapyel Lane has been earmarked under the National Flood Management Programme to be implemented by the National Development Unit at an estimated cost of Rs11.3 m.

In this respect, the Land Drainage Authority has recommended that a holistic study be carried out to come up with flood mitigation measures in the region of Rue Couvent and adjoining areas which includes Chinnapyel Lane.

The National Development Unit has, therefore, appointed Benchmark Consulting Engineers Ltd on 12 April 2022 as consultant for the “Study, Design and Construction supervision of Drain Project at Rue Couvent including Ghoorun Lane/Chinnapyel Lane in Constituency No. 17.”

A preliminary design report is expected from the consultant by 19 May 2022.

DBM - WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS - APPLICATIONS

(No. B/378) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the women entrepreneurs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd., information as to the number of applications received therefrom to benefit from loans at a concessional rate of 0.5 per cent per annum, as announced in the 2020-2021 Budget Speech, indicating the quantum of funds disbursed as at to date sector-wise.

Reply: I am informed by the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd that the Women Entrepreneur Scheme was introduced in 2018 to enable women entrepreneurs to have easy access to finance in order to start or consolidate their business. This is in line with Government policy of women empowerment.

Following Budget 2020/2021, the interest rate of the Women Entrepreneur Scheme was reduced from 3% to 0.5% per annum. The maximum loan amount is Rs500,000 without collateral. A moratorium period of up to a maximum of 1 year is granted. Repayment period is up to 7 years.

I wish to inform the House that, since July 2020 to date, 266 applications for a total amount of Rs66.2 m. have been received under the Women Entrepreneur Scheme and 259 women entrepreneurs have benefitted therefrom. An amount of Rs49.6 m. has already been disbursed to these 259 beneficiaries out of an approved amount of Rs64.2 m.

It is to be noted that disbursements are made in installments to ensure that the projects are implemented in accordance with the business plans submitted by the women entrepreneurs.

The amount disbursed in the sector of activities concerned is –

- Rs17.8 m. disbursed to 76 beneficiaries in Agricultural sector;
- Rs14.38 m. disbursed to 70 beneficiaries in Food and Beverage sector;
- Rs8.02 m. disbursed to 65 beneficiaries in Services and Handicraft sector;
- Rs7.81 m. disbursed to 39 beneficiaries in Manufacturing sector, and
- Rs1.54 m. disbursed to 9 beneficiaries in Textile sector.

In addition to the Women Entrepreneur Scheme, women entrepreneurs who have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic are also eligible for the following schemes –

- The Interest-free Loan Scheme of Rs100,000 repayable over a period of 8 years including a moratorium of 5 years, and
- The Covid-19 SME Support Loan Scheme of Rs1 m., with a preferential interest rate of 0.5% and repayable over a period of 5 years including a moratorium of 1 year.

CUREPIPE, GUSTAVE COLLINS, DERBY & ATLEE STREETS - SEWERAGE WORKS

(No. B/379) Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the sewerage works undertaken in the region of Gustave Collins, Derby and Atlee streets, in Curepipe, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Wastewater Management Authority, information as to the work progress thereof.

Reply: In reply to PQ B/1378 at our Sitting of 07 December 2021, I had informed the House that the contract for the sewerage works in the region of Residence Atlee, Gustave Collins Street and Derby Street are being undertaken under a contract for Rehabilitation/Provision of Sewerage Infrastructure at Residence Atlee and environs, Curepipe. The contract was awarded to Sotravic Limitée on 12 November 2020 following a bidding exercise carried out by the Central

Procurement Board. The duration of the contract is 24 months with a defects liability period of 1 year after completion of works.

Following preliminary works such as site set-up, conduct of topographical surveys, excavation of trial pits and design, the Contractor started works on-site at Residence Atlee on 30 April 2021. As at date, 950.60m of lateral sewers have been replaced and 196 housing blocks out of 323 have been reconnected to the sewer line thereat.

Works on Gustave Collins Street started on 01 July 2021. As at date, 297.67 m of main sewer has been replaced and six manholes constructed. For Derby Street, works started on 17 May 2021 and as at date, 169.55 m of main sewer and 410.30 m out of 451 m of water pipe for the CWA have been replaced.

House connections have also been carried out at Impasse J. Avrillon, Dupin St, Commerford St and Brown Sequard Street.

Under the contract, a total of 1248.52 m of main sewer pipes and 950.60 m of lateral sewers have been replaced and 247 houses, including the housing blocks at Residence Atlee, have been reconnected to the public sewer system as at date.

Temporary reinstatement of roads is being undertaken once works are completed in a region so that least convenience is caused to the inhabitants.

Furthermore, public relation campaigns have been conducted with residents, management and teachers of schools in the region as well as bus operators.

I am also informed that regular coordination meetings are held with the Municipal Council of Curepipe, the WMA and the contractor to follow up on progress of works. The project is on schedule.

CONSTITUENCY NO. 4 - LANDSLIDE ISSUES - JICA REPORT 2015

(No. B/380) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the landslide issues in Constituency No. 4, Port Louis North and Montagne Longue, he will state the additional measures taken to address same in line with the findings in the Japan International Co-operation Agency Report 2015 for landslide regions, indicating if consideration will be given for further studies to be carried out in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

FLOODING – PREVENTION MEASURES

(No. B/381) Mr R. Wochit (Third Member for Pamplémousses & Triolet) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to flooding, he will state the measures taken to prevent the recurrence thereof in places where persons/households have been victims thereof over the past five years.

Reply: With the adverse effect of climate change, the country has been experiencing severe rainfall events over the past few years. This has resulted in flooding over various parts of the island. However, to mitigate the risk of flood, the Government is undertaking various measures to prevent the recurrence of flooding.

Firstly, the Local Government Act was amended in the year 2018, given that part of the flooding problems was due to illegal development carried out and in certain cases obstructing water courses where enforcement provisions were made in the Local Government Act.

The following notices were introduced –

- (i) Compliance Notice – for development works being undertaken without having a Building and Land Use Permit. In case the development works are eventually approved by the local authority, a penalty fee of Rs50,000 will have to be paid before the issue of the Building and Land Use Permit;
- (ii) Enforcement Notice – issued for development works being carried out contrary to approved plans. In case remedial measures requested by the local authority are not taken within the required delay, the local authority has the right to revoke the Building and Land Use Permit issued, and
- (iii) Pulling Down Notice – for development works being undertaken without being the holder of a Building and Land Use Permit or in or on any canal, river or drain without having obtained an approval or permission under any other enactment.

It is to be noted that where obstruction of water courses is concerned, the law provides for the issue of a Pulling Down Notice straightaway, giving the defaulter a maximum delay of 30 days to comply with the Pulling Down Notice, failing which the local authority has the right to pull down the development works.

To ensure that the Land Use and Planning Departments of the local authorities were fully staffed, 39 Assistant Building Inspectors and 50 Planning and Development Assistants were recruited for a better and stricter control of planning conditions.

Secondly, the Land Drainage Authority (LDA) was set up in 2019. As at date, the LDA has surveyed all the flood prone areas and it has identified 297 sites as being high flood prone areas across the island.

The Government has made a provision accordingly to the tune of Rs3.6 billion under the National Flood Management Programme, through the Land Drainage Authority for the National Development Unit, Road Development Authority and local authorities to implement drains projects over a period of three years, starting from 01 July 2021.

The implementing agencies have to get the approval of the Land Drainage Authority with respect to their drain designs prior to implementation of the drain projects.

The implementing agencies are giving priority to flood prone areas mapped by the Land Drainage Authority.

The Government is also providing funds to the local authorities and the Road Development Authority for cleaning and maintenance of drains, rivers and canals. For instance, the Local Authorities have been allocated Rs104.5 m. in this Financial Year for the cleaning and desilting of drains, rivers and canals. The cleaning of drains and rivers are being implemented as per an established programme by the local authorities; prior to any payment is disbursed, the certification of the LDA is required.

The local authorities are also being equipped with appropriate tools and equipment to enable them to undertake cleaning of drains. As such an amount of Rs91,648,750 have been provided to them in this Financial Year for the acquisition of equipment, such as excavator loader, skid steer loader, lorries mounted with cranes and tipper lorries.

SOCIAL REGISTER OF MAURITIUS - APPLICATIONS

(No. B/382) 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 Social Register of Mauritius, she will, for the period July 2021 to date, state the –

- (a) number of applications received for registration thereunder, indicating the number of successful applications therefor;
- (b) aggregate number of persons registered thereon, and

- (c) number of persons who have been removed therefrom, indicating the reasons therefor.

Reply: I am informed that for the period July 2021 to date, a total of 4,950 new applications have been received for registration under the Social Register of Mauritius, out of which 2,511 households were found eligible.

With regard to part (b) of the question, there are currently 4,732 eligible households comprising 17,284 beneficiaries under the Social Register of Mauritius.

With regard to part (c) of the question, 2,439 households have been found not to be eligible under the Social Register of Mauritius for the following reasons –

- (i) both the total verified income and the assessed income based on the living standard of the household are greater than the poverty threshold of that household; or
- or
- (ii) the total verified income is greater than the poverty threshold of that household; or
- (iii) the assessed income based on the living standard of the household is greater than the poverty threshold of that household.

TERMINUS LALLMAN TO UPPER CRÈVE COEUR - MAIN ROAD - UPGRADING

(No. B/383) Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the upgrading of the main road at the level of terminus Lallman to Upper Crève Coeur, he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

DUBAI EXPO 2020 - MAURITIAN ARTISTS - PERFORMANCE

(No. B/384) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to the Dubai Expo 2020, he will state if Mauritian artists were solicited to perform during same and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

PUBLIC SERVICE BILL - PROPOSED INTRODUCTION

(No. B/385) **Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms whether, in regard to the proposed introduction of a Public Service Bill in the Assembly, he will state where matters stand.

Reply (The Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity): The draft Public Service Bill is in the process of in-depth examination.

BASIC INVALIDITY PENSIONS – APPLICATIONS – JULY 2021 TO APRIL 2022

(No. B/386) **Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the Basic Invalidity Pensions, she will state the number of applications received for the granting thereof, since July 2021 to date, including the number thereof received from persons suffering from physical and/or mental disability, indicating the number thereof benefitting thereunder.

(Withdrawn)

SURINAM – FOOTBALL PLAYGROUND PROJECT

(No. B/387) **Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the Football Playground Project at Surinam, he will state where matters stand as to the implementation thereof.

(Withdrawn)

SPECIALISTS - VACANCIES

(No. B/389) **Dr. F Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central)** asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to vacancies in the medical field in his Ministry, he will state the existing number thereof for specialists per specialty, indicating if same have been advertised and, if so, indicate when and where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

FISHERMAN CARD – ALLOCATIONS – 2019 TO 19 APRIL 2022

(No. B/390) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the fisherman card, he will give the list of persons having been allocated same since 2019 to date, indicating their respective address and terms and conditions thereof.

Reply: I am placing in the Library of the National Assembly a copy of the list of persons having been allocated their fisherman card since 2019 to date, together with their respective address.

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT MASTER PLAN

(No. B/391) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the proposed elaboration of a National Environment Master Plan, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: The draft Master Plan on the Environment for the Republic of Mauritius, in its pre-final form, was presented and discussed with key stakeholders during an online Technical Validation Workshop organised by my Ministry in mid-December 2021, wherein representatives of public and private sectors, academia, and Non-Governmental Organisations, amongst others, participated.

The final draft version of the Master Plan comprising a 10-year policy and strategy as well as a 5-year Action Plan was submitted to my Ministry in late January this year.

A final round of consultation with key Ministries is being wind up in view of its finalisation. Once finalised and approved at the level of Government, the Master Plan will be uploaded on the website of my Ministry.

9TH MILE, TRIOLET – WATER ACCUMULATION – NEW DRAINS

(No. B/392) Mr R. Wochit (Third Member for Pamplémousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the main road at 9th mile, Triolet, he will state if consideration will be given for the construction of new drains along same to prevent the recurrence of water accumulation thereat after every heavy rainfall.

Reply: The village of Triolet, including 9^{ème} Mille, is found along Terre Rouge-Triolet-Grand Baie Road (A4) and it includes footpaths and drains on both sides of the road. Given the topography of the region which is predominately flat and, in the absence of outlet to rivers, natural drains or the sea, I am informed by the Road Development Authority (RDA) that an absorption drain system has been put in place to cater only for the surface run-off from the carriageway.

While these drains function adequately during normal rainfall, they cannot cater for flash precipitations, as is the case in other parts of the island. Moreover, with the modification of the natural ground following developments in building infrastructures, there is now an additional discharge of surface run-off from these adjacent built-up areas.

I am informed that such water accumulation at 9^{ème} Mille Triolet which is being observed lately, subsides within hours after a heavy rainfall event. Nevertheless, after each heavy rainfall, the RDA carries out an inspection and, as an immediate measure, appropriate cleaning works of the drain along the Terre Rouge-Triolet-Grand Baie Road (A4) are undertaken.

Furthermore, the upgrading of the absorption drain on this A4 road at 9^{ème} Mille, Triolet is being considered for implementation in Financial Year 2022-2023.

The RDA is also having consultations with the Land Drainage Authority (LDA) with respect to identifying a long-term sustainable solution to address the water accumulation problem in that region.

MAURITIUS FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION - 2021-22 & 2022-23 SEASONS

(No. B/393) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to football, he will –

- (a) state if his Ministry has been officially informed by the Mauritius Football Association (MFA) that the 2021-22 season has been cancelled and, if so, give details thereof, and

- (b) obtain from the MFA, information as to when all national leagues, including the women league, for 2022-23 season will start, indicating the terms and conditions thereof.

(Withdrawn)

CANCER CASES – 2018 TO 2021 & 01 JANUARY 2022 TO APRIL 2022

(No. B/394) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to cancer, he will state the reported number thereof on a yearly basis since 2018 to 2021 and since 01 January 2022 to date, giving details, if available, as to the types and predominance thereof, indicating the number of male and female patient in each case.

Reply: Worldwide, cancer is one of the leading causes of death and was responsible for an estimated 10 million deaths in 2020. Globally, about 1 in 6 deaths is due to cancer. According to the World Health Organisation, in 2020, around 10 m. people were diagnosed with cancer, and it is expected that these figures will nearly double by 2040.

Mauritius, over the past decades, has experienced a gradual rise in the incidence of cancer and follows the global trend. It has been observed that females are more affected than males with regard to cancer.

Cancer surveillance is a key component of cancer control and a National Cancer Registry has been maintained on a continuous basis since 1990. The National Cancer Registry provides an accurate picture of the occurrence of cancer in the Republic of Mauritius. The main objective of this cancer registry is to collect and classify information on all types of cancer in order to produce statistics on the occurrence of cancer in a defined population and to provide a framework for assessing and controlling the impact of cancer on the community.

As per the National Cancer Registry 2018, 2,380 new cases were registered, among which 959 cases were males and 1421 cases were females. For the same year, prostate cancer was the main cancer among males with 191 cases reported and for females, breast cancer was the main ones with 570 cases recorded.

2,667 new cases were registered in 2019 with 1,108 cases among males and 1,559 cases among females. The main types of cancer that were predominant in males and females were prostate and breast cancer respectively. 176 cases of prostate cancer and 548 cases of breast cancer were registered respectively in that year.

According to our report in 2020, 2,883 new cases have been registered out of which 1,198 cases were among males and 1,685 cases females. 183 cases of prostate cancer and 557 cases of breast cancer were recorded.

The National Cancer Registry report has shown the same trend in the predominance of prostate cancer in males and breast cancer in females for the three consecutive years, that is, 2018, 2019 and 2020.

Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer for both males and females for the period 2018 to 2020. The number of colorectal cases in males has increased from 124 cases in 2018 to 154 cases in 2020. On the other hand, the number of colorectal cases in females has increased from 104 in 2018 to 164 cases in 2020.

With regard to detailed statistics pertaining to 2021, data is now being compiled and once the National Cancer Registry Report 2021 will be finalised, same will be available on the Ministry's website.

I am further informed that from 01 January till 13 April 2022, 455 new cancer cases have been registered in our public hospitals, out of which 175 cases were among males and 260 among females.

My Ministry has finalised a National Cancer Control Programme for period 2022 to 2025. The action plan will focus on the five most common cancers occurring in the Mauritian population namely breast, colorectal, prostate, cervix and lung cancer without excluding others.

Some of the main recommendations and salient features of the National Cancer Control Programme 2022-2025 are as follows –

- i. Strengthening of cancer awareness campaigns;

- ii. Introduction of national cancer screening programmes for colorectal and breast cancers as well as strengthening of the existing cervical cancer screening programme;
- iii. Introduction of new nuclear medicine services such as Positron Emission Tomography Computed Tomography (PET CT) scan and Single Photon Emission Computed Tomography/ Computed Tomography (SPECT CT) scan at the National Cancer Hospital;
- iv. Extension of palliative care services from hospital to community and domiciliary-based;
- v. Integration of cancer care with cancer research trial and clinical trials and setting up of a research unit at the National Cancer Hospital to develop therapeutic and diagnosis designs for new treatment and prevention strategies, and
- vi. Twinning of the National Cancer Hospital with a reputed international cancer centre.

MESNIL, RAMJANE LANE - FLOODING - COMPLAINTS

(No. B/395) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix, information as to if it is in presence of complaints from inhabitants of Ramjane Lane, Mesnil, as to constant floodings thereat putting at risks their lives and properties and, if so, indicate the immediate remedial actions being envisaged, if any.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix that, following heavy rainfall in January 2019, a complaint was received from one inhabitant of Ramjane Lane, Mesnil regarding accumulation of water in front of his yard.

Ramjane Lane is located in a low-lying area and there is no major drainage infrastructure thereat. Therefore, during heavy rainy spells, storm water run-offs emanating from upstream catchment inundate Ramjane Lane and consequently, the households.

Site visits effected by the Municipal Council with representatives of the National Development Unit, revealed that the existing absorption drain found thereat would have to be upgraded.

According to the Municipal Council of Vacaos-Phoenix, the National Development Unit has already awarded a contract for the implementation of 8 drain projects in Constituency No. 15 for the project value of Rs2,211,743.20 (inc. VAT). The project includes, amongst others, the construction of an absorption drains at Ramjane Lane.

The works for the whole project have started on 28 February 2022 and are expected to be completed by 27 August 2022.

As regards long term solutions, the LDA is exploring the construction of a cut-off drain along Banarally Lane, Mesnil over a stretch of 135m and upgrading of the existing drain along Sonah Lane and along Rabindranath Tagore Lane up to the outlet.

These measures will mitigate the problems of water accumulation in that area and will also solve the problem along Banarally Lane.

FREE TRAVEL SCHEME – CASHLESS BUS TICKETING SYSTEM

(No. B/396) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the Free Travel Scheme, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Land Transport Authority, information as to where matters stand as to the implementation of the Cashless Bus Ticketing System.

Reply: In reply to PQ B/182 on 06 April 2021, the House was informed that an optioneering exercise was being conducted in order to identify the best course of action with regard to the introduction of an Automated Fare Collection System in Mauritius.

Besides enhancing the administration of the Free Travel Scheme, the Cashless Bus Ticketing System would constitute a major leap in the modernisation of the public transport industry as it would also ease inter-modal transport through the integration of fares and provide a convenient payment option to the commuter.

In view of the multidimensional aspects of the Cashless Bus Ticketing System, there is a cogent need to thoroughly assess all the various implications linked thereto inasmuch that the

Cashless Ticketing System is a very intricate system. It is, therefore, crucial that the project requirements and system architecture be properly and minutely framed so that Mauritius implements a Cashless Ticketing solution that fits the local context and hinges on the latest technology. In fact, in case the project is wrongly crafted, there is a high risk of failure in the execution the Cashless Ticketing System due to the complex technical, economic and regulatory components thereof.

In that respect, extensive discussions have been held on the matter with a view to determining the most appropriate pathway for rolling out the system in buses. In addition, consultations have been held in order to have a better understanding of the Cashless Bus Ticketing System and the operation thereof in other jurisdictions.

Several options have been assessed by my Ministry and the most appropriate course of action for the implementation of the Cashless Bus Ticketing System is being charted. In this context, the agreement of Government would be sought on the matter.

Once Government agrees on the way forward, relevant actions would be initiated for the implementation of the project.

SCHOOL MATERIALS - VALUE ADDED TAX LEVY

(No. B/397) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to school materials, he will, for the period January 2015 to date, obtain from the Mauritius Revenue Authority, the list thereof on which Value Added Tax has been levied, indicating the quantum of revenue collected in terms thereof.

(Withdrawn)

NANO SATELLITE - OPERATIONAL COST

(No. B/398) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the Nano Satellite launched last year by Government, he will state the operational cost thereof, including administrative and running costs.

Reply: In April 2018, the Mauritius Research Council, now the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council (MRIC), submitted a proposal entitled the Mauritius Imagery and Radio-Satellite under the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) and the Japan

Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) KiboCUBE Programme 2018. This Programme provides developing countries opportunities to embark into space activities with an ultimate objective to build national capacity in space technology.

The Mauritian proposal was retained as the best submission from a developing country. Consequently, Mauritius was, in June 2018, offered the opportunity, for the first time in its history, to build and deploy a Mauritian Nano Satellite from the International Space Station. The MRIC also benefited from the collaboration of AAC-Clyde Space of United Kingdom, expert in Nano Satellite technologies. The latter provided the relevant sophisticated materials and software as well as assisted the MRIC in designing and building of the satellite, both through online communications and onsite training at a cost of around Rs15 m. (about 300,000-pound sterling) spread over a period of 4 years. JAXA, on its part, fully funded both the transportation of the satellite from Earth to the International Space Station and from there, the deployment thereof into space in June 2021. The in-kind contribution of AAC-Clyde Space in monetary terms amounted to Rs12 m. and that of JAXA for the deployment of the small satellite amounted to around Rs10 m., making a total of about Rs22 m. received in terms of support and collaboration.

The Government of Mauritius fully owns the Nano Satellite since its construction. The operational costs, including administrative and running costs following its deployment in space till mid-April 2022, amounted to Rs1,798,976.38.

With a view to promoting the interest of youngsters in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, including space technology, the MRIC, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology, initiated capacity building in schools whereby 100 participants were taught to build simplified antennas and ground stations to capture satellite data and images from low earth orbiting satellites. They were provided with antenna kits and training by the MRIC. Interestingly, seven colleges and three universities were able to capture signals from the Nano Satellite.

Through the Nano Satellite initiative, Mauritius has become a space faring country and is poised to pursue a space programme with the assistance of friendly countries.

**MAURITIUS/INDIA - COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC COOPERATION &
PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT**

(No. B/399) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement between Mauritius and India which came into force on 01 April 2021, he will state the total value of goods and services exported and imported, respectively, by Mauritius thereunder, giving a breakdown thereof.

(Withdrawn)

VEGETABLES THEFTS – 2019 TO APRIL 2022

(No. B/400) Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to vegetables, he will state the reported number of thefts thereof in 2019, 2020, 2021 and since January 2022 to date, indicating measures being put in place to prevent same.

(Withdrawn)

LECKRAZ LANE, CONGOMAH - RETAINING WALL - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/402) Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the proposed construction of a retaining wall at Leckraz Lane, in Congomah, and upgrading of the said lane, he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

M1, M2 & M3 MOTORWAYS – STREET LIGHTING – SYSTEMATIC INSPECTION

(No. B/403) Mr Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the street lighting systems on the M1, M2 and M3 motorways, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to the frequency at which same are checked at night, indicating when checks were last carried out.

Reply: I am informed by the Central Electricity Board (CEB) that systematic inspection for street lighting blackouts are carried out thrice a week from 07.00 hrs to 22.00 hrs along the M1, M2 and M3 Motorways.

I am also informed by the CEB that the last check was carried out on Wednesday 13 April 2022.

BEACH AUTHORITY - SUB-OFFICES - ACTIVITIES

(No. B/404) Mr I. Collendavelloo (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the Beach Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the number of sub-offices thereof presently being operated, indicating the activities being carried out thereat.

Reply: The Beach Authority, which falls under the purview of the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change, is currently mandated to ensure proper control and management of public beaches in Mauritius and Rodrigues.

There are currently 132 public beaches in Mauritius occupying an extent of a total sea frontage of 48.2 kilometres and a total extent of 327.8 hectares.

In order to provide a better service to all beach users, to manage the effects of climate change, to further enhance the quality of our public beaches and to attend to any repairs and maintenance of amenities, the Beach Authority was decentralised through the setting-up of four sub-offices, in four geographical areas of Mauritius to cater for public beaches thereat, as follows

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- (i) the Peréybère sub-office in the North, responsible for the stretch from Baie du Tombeau to Von Moltke, comprising 38 public beaches;
- (ii) the St Félix sub-office in the South, responsible for the stretch from Rémy Ollier up to Baie du Cap, comprising 25 public beaches;
- (iii) the Belle Mare sub-office in the East, responsible for the stretch from Roches Noires to Rivière des Créoles, comprising 36 public beaches, and

- (iv) the Flic en Flac sub-office in the West, responsible for the stretch from *Pas Géométrique* La Prairie to Sable Noir, comprising 33 public beaches.

In so doing, the Authority has been able to ensure a more effective and efficient control of all the activities and provide a service of proximity on our public beaches. The main activities undertaken at the four sub-offices are -

- (i) the monitoring of the day-to-day cleaning and maintenance of public beaches;
- (ii) the proper enforcement of regulations for all activities on public beaches;
- (iii) the implementation of projects by in-house labour and supervising works undertaken by contractors;
- (iv) taking prompt actions with regard to complaints received from beach users;
- (v) carrying out crack down operations in collaboration with stakeholders such as the Mauritius Police Force, the Ministry of Health and Wellness, the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection and the Mauritius Revenue Authority, amongst others;
- (vi) effecting minor repairs and maintenance of amenities, and
- (vii) carrying out landscaping and embellishment works.

MAURITIUS - MEDICAL CANNABIS - USE

(No. B/405) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to medical cannabis, he will state where matters stand as to the consideration for the use thereof in Mauritius.

(Withdrawn)

DRAINS - CONSTRUCTION - WAYLEAVES & PRIVATE OWNERS

(No. B/406) Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the construction of drains, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Land Drainage Authority, information as to the measures, if any, being proposed in cases where –

- (a) way leaves are being denied by private owners, and
- (b) owners are not being identified in respect thereof.

(Withdrawn)

ANGIOGRAPHY MACHINES – AVAILABILITY

(No. B/407) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to Angiography, he will state the number of –

- (a) Angiography machines available in each public health institution, indicating in each case, the date of coming into operation thereof, and
- (b) number of patients awaiting same.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that presently, there are 3 Angiography machines in the health institutions, namely -

- One at Victoria Hospital which is operational since 27 February 2013;
- Another one at Jeetoo Hospital, operational since 04 December 2013, and
- One at Trust Fund for Specialised Medical Care operational since 21 May 2014.

I am also informed that two additional Angiography machines have been procured as follows -

- One by my Ministry, for Victoria Hospital, the installation of which is ongoing and expected to be completed by mid of May;
- The other by Trust Fund for Specialised Medical Care, the installation of which is at final stages and expected to be completed by end of this week.

I also wish to inform the House that the Government of Japan is donating, *inter alia*, one Angiography machine, which is expected to be delivered at Dr. A.G. Jeetoo Hospital around December this year.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that as at 31 March 2022, a total of 818 patients were on waiting list for Angiography/Angioplasty with an average waiting time of 7.2 weeks.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES – HEALTH CARE SERVICES

(No. B/408) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the persons with disabilities, she will state if her Ministry has held consultations therewith and with their representative organisations with a view to developing guidelines for the prohibition of discrimination against same by private insurers when providing health and life insurance policies thereto and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof and, if not, why not.

Reply: Health care services are provided free of charge by the Government to all citizens of Mauritius, including persons with disabilities. Citizens who wish to avail of private health care services have the option of having a health insurance, the premium of which is determined between the individuals and the companies providing the health insurance scheme.

TOURISTS ARRIVALS - JAN 2022 TO APRIL 2022

(No. B/409) **Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to tourist arrivals, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority, information as to the –

- (a) number thereof since January 2022 to date, giving a breakdown of their countries of origin and/or nationality, and
- (b) estimated number thereof for the current year.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIAN STANDARD ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM (MS 165:2019)/ BLUE OASIS LABEL

(No. B/410) **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 Mauritian Standard on Sustainable Tourism (MS 165:2019)/ Blue Oasis Label, he will state the –

- (a) percentage of tourist operators complying therewith, and
- (b) measures taken to encourage other tourist operators to comply therewith.

(Withdrawn)

WATER PUMPING PROJECT – NEW PLAINE LAUZUN TO UPPER MONNERON

(No. B/413) **Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central)** asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the project for the pumping of water from New Plaine Lauzun to Upper Monneron at the estimated cost of Rs150 million, he will state the –

- (a) name of contractor/s therefor, indicating if a maintenance contract to ensure 24/7 service is part of the services provided;
- (b) scope of works, and
- (c) expected completion date thereof.

Reply: In reply to PQ B/694 at our Sitting of 13 July 2021, I had informed the House that bids for the project for the laying of a dedicated pipeline from New Plaine Lauzun Pumping Station to Upper Monneron Reservoir had been launched by the Central Procurement Board (CPB). However, pursuant to Section 45(4) of the Public Procurement Act 2006, the procurement proceedings had to be suspended until the determination of the appeal made by one bidder at the Independent Review Panel.

Subsequently, the CPB had requested the CWA on 28 July 2021 to cancel this procurement exercise and to submit a revised bidding document. The bidding process was accordingly cancelled.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the CWA that the initial cost estimate of the project has been revised owing to the rise in construction materials due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Financial clearance has been sought on the increased project value.

In parallel, the bidding document has been revised as per the requirements of the CPB and same submitted to the CPB for vetting and floating.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that the scope of works would comprise the supply and laying of approximately 5km of 400mm diameter ductile iron pipe from new Plaine Lauzun Pumping Station to Upper Monneron Reservoir, temporary trench width reinstatement and full width road reinstatement. The objective of the project is to cater for a dedicated pipeline in order to transfer additional 2,000 m³ water to Upper Monneron Reservoir. After completion of the project, Ste Croix, Roche Bois, Cité Martial, Camp Yoloff, part of Vallée des Prêtres, NHDC La Cure, Morc. Al Madina and adjoining areas would benefit from improved hours of supply from 10 hours to 16 hours per day, with adequate pressure.

I am further informed that a maintenance of contract would not be included in the bid document as it is the responsibility of the CWA to operate and maintain the pipeline.

As for part (c) of the question, the bid document is currently at the level of the CPB. The duration of the works would be around 15 months.

GOODLANDS MARKET - COUNCIL & STALLHOLDERS - CONTRACT

(No. B/414) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the ongoing exercise undertaken by the District Council of Rivière du Rempart inviting the general merchandisers of the Goodlands market to sign a Right of Occupation Contract in relation to the existing market, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Council, information as to –

- (a) the rationale therefor;
- (b) if the 1998 contract between the parties is still legally valid, and
- (c) if the terms and conditions of the new proposed contract have been decided unilaterally or in consultation with representatives of the general merchandisers.

Reply: I am informed by the District Council of Rivière du Rempart that the Market/Fair Regulations 2020 of the Council provides for a contract between the Council and a stallholder of a market/fair for occupation of a stall.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the contract signed in 1998 between the Council and the stallholders of the Goodlands Market was for a period of three years and which should have been renewed thereafter. However, the stallholders had not been called to renew their contract for the following reasons –

- (i) the existing market infrastructure was in a bad condition;
- (ii) Council had the intention to relocate and construct a new market, and
- (iii) the Council was having discussion with St Antoine Sugar Estate for provision of land for this project.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that the 1998 contract is still legally valid. The Council is, therefore, proceeding with the updating of the records of the stallholders of the market in accordance with its Market/Fair Regulations 2020 as same has not been done since

1998. This exercise will also enable the Council to update the list of those stallholders who will be provided a stall on a priority basis in the new Goodlands Market.

As far as part (c) of the question is concerned, I am informed that the terms and conditions of the new contract are in line with the Market/Fair Regulations 2020 of the Council and as such consultation with stallholders is not warranted.

PROCUREMENT MATTERS – GUIDELINES - MINISTERS & PUBLIC OFFICERS

(No. B/415) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms whether, in regard to procurement matters, he will state if consideration will be given for the issue of guidelines on the clear demarcation of the roles, powers and responsibilities of Ministers and Public Officers.

(Withdrawn)

RACING SEASON 2022 - HORSE RACING ORGANISER LICENSE

(No. B/416) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the racing season 2022, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Horse Racing Division of the Gambling Regulatory Authority, information as to if a letter of intent has been issued to the People's Turf PLC (PTC-PLC) for a license of Horse Racing Organiser and, if so, indicate the date of issue thereof, indicating the terms and conditions contained therein.

(Withdrawn)

LIVERPOOL FOOTBALL CLUB DEAL – MAURITIUS PROMOTION

(No. B/417) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the deal with the Liverpool Football Club for the promotion of Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority, information as to –

- (a) the quantum disbursed as at date, indicating the amount, if any, that has yet to be paid;
- (b) the benefits derived therefrom, if any, and
- (c) if the contract will be renewed or renegotiated.

(Withdrawn)

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE - CASES - JANUARY 2020 TO 13 APRIL 2022

(No. B/418) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to domestic violence, she will state the number of cases thereof reported to her Ministry since January 2020 to-date, indicating the number thereof referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions under the Protection from Domestic Violence Act and the number thereof which have been prosecuted and number of convictions secured.

Reply: For period January 2020 to 13 April 2022, the number of cases of domestic violence reported at the level of the Family Support Bureaux (FSBx) of my Ministry stands at 5,280. I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that as at 13 April 2022, 6,791 cases have been reported to the '*Brigade pour la Protection de la Famille*', previously known as the Police Family Protection Units (PFPU's).

I am further informed by the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions that during the period under reference, 620 cases have been referred to it under the Protection from Domestic Violence Act. Out of these cases, 215 perpetrators have been prosecuted and 31 convicted.

FIRE STATIONS – FIRE CERTIFICATE

(No. B/419) 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 six fire stations which are operating without valid Fire Certificates, as highlighted in the recent report of the Director of Audit, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Fire and Rescue Service, information as to if remedial measures have been initiated to implement a proper management system for fire risk management thereat.

(Withdrawn)

**LA CIGOGNE & LA MARGUERITE SHELTERS - NON-SUBMISSION OF
ACCOUNTS**

(No. B/420) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to La Cigogne and La

Marguerite Shelters managed by the Children's Foundation, she will state the actions taken, if any, by her Ministry for non-submission of the respective accounts thereof.

(Withdrawn)

EASTERN HIGHWAY PROJECT (M4) - IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/422) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the Eastern Highway Project (M4), he will state if the implementation thereof is considered a priority given the current economic situation and debt level of the country, indicating –

- (a) if a prior feasibility study was carried out and, if so, give details thereof;
- (b) the source of financing thereof;
- (c) if an Environment Impact Assessment is required prior to the implementation thereof, and
- (d) if copy of the alignment thereof will be tabled.

Reply: As I mentioned in my reply to Parliamentary Question B/132, the Motorway M4 consists of a dual carriageway of approximately 50 kilometres, starting at Forbach on Motorway M2, passing through the eastern region to end up on Motorway M1 at Plaine Magnien.

As the hon. Member is aware, the eastern part of the island is currently connected to the Airport and the surrounding regions through arterial roads only. These roads pass through built-up areas and difficult terrains, thereby increasing significantly the travelling time of the road users in that region.

So far, major infrastructural developments have been focused mainly through the centre of the island, along the Plaisance-Grand Baie corridor, on Motorways M1, M2 and M3.

The Motorway M4 aims at providing a new link through the East, particularly for people residing in the northern and eastern regions, not to say Constituencies 5, 6, 7, 9, 10 and 11. So, is the hon. Member implying that such facilities are not a priority and should not be extended to people from these constituencies? Or should the people from these regions be deprived from having easy accessibility to and from the Airport, for example?

The hon. Member is mentioning the current economic situation so as to consider whether the project is a priority.

But it is no secret that investment in infrastructural projects is key to economic growth, and economic growth also implies addressing the debt level of the country. I will mention a few of the expected economic advantages from the implementation of this project.

First, it will connect the northern part of the island to the Airport through a new link, providing significant relief to the road users and subsequently, impacting on work performance and productivity.

Second, it will promote economic growth in the east of the island and contribute positively to the GDP. The transiting tourists will have easy access to visit the eastern part of the country, to the benefits of the economic actors in that region.

Third, it will reduce congestion on the existing road network by shifting the traffic volume from M1 and M3 to the proposed new link. So, workers, in particular, will reach their respective place of work in time thereby being more productive.

Fourth, it will be a major contributor in the sustainable development of the country's infrastructure.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the RDA that a Feasibility Study Report was prepared in August 2012 for the Motorway M4 project from Bel Air to Forbach, formerly known as the East Coast Trunk Road.

The report concluded that the project is highly viable with a rate of return above 35 %.

The benefits of the project as highlighted by the economic assessment of the Feasibility Study are as follows -

- (i) the capital investment in the project will create multiplier effects within the construction industry, provide jobs and contribute positively to national GDP;
- (ii) the vehicle operating costs consisting of maintenance costs and wear and tear will decrease by 23% following the implementation of the project due to shorter trip distances and better road surface as compared to the *status quo* (do nothing scenario);
- (iii) the travel times for trips within the project corridor will decrease by approximately 26% which in turn will decrease the value of time costs within the project corridor by approximately 33%;

- (iv) the overall maintenance costs of the existing road network in the corridor will in turn decrease by about 47% due to a lower traffic usage on the existing network with the diversion of traffic on the new motorway, and
- (v) road accidents and fatalities are likely to decrease by about 20% in the project corridor.

These benefits are, no doubt, over and above the economic advantages I mentioned earlier in my reply.

The RDA has updated the Feasibility Study Report and has confirmed that the recommendations of the initial report are still valid to date, taking into consideration that the project will be the first step in the implementation of the Airport to North connectivity, via the East and will drastically cut commute times between these agglomerations with all the consequential benefits, such as support businesses and support industries, including the tourism sector.

As regards part (b) of the question, the project will be financed under the national budget.

With regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed that the proposed alignment runs mostly along existing sugarcane track. It crosses several tributaries, namely Rivière St Louis, Rivière Sèche and Rivière Pont Blanc, amongst others.

As part of the Feasibility Study, an EIA Report was prepared in 2012 for the whole alignment from Pont Blanc to Forbach and submitted to the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change. The RDA requested and obtained an EIA exemption in December 2020 for part of the new Motorway, that is, from Bel Air to Pont Blanc. I am informed by the RDA that the EIA Report for the stretch Bel Air to Forbach will be updated and submitted to the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change for consideration.

With regard to the last part of the question, the hon. Member will surely appreciate that, for obvious reasons, at this stage, the alignment cannot be disclosed.

RODRIGUES – LAND & DRAINAGE MASTER PLAN – PROJECTS

(No. B/423) Mr J. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the Land and

Drainage Master Plan for Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Land Drainage Authority, information as to if same has been completed and, if not, why not.

Reply: The Land Drainage Authority informed that the first Land Drainage Master Plan (LDMP) has been commissioned for the island of Mauritius and the Digital Elevation Model (DEM) has been instrumental towards the execution of this exercise.

At this stage, the LDMP for Rodrigues has not yet been commissioned. However, the LDA has made significant use of the DEM to identify and confirm the potential flood prone areas for Rodrigues. As at date, 6 flood prone areas have been identified, namely –

- (i) Baie Topaze;
- (ii) Port Sud Est;
- (iii) Anse Ally;
- (iv) Port Mathurin;
- (v) Anse aux Anglais, and
- (vi) Baie du Nord.

With a view to alleviating the flooding issues in Rodrigues, some Rs600 m. have been earmarked under the National Flood Management Programme for the implementation of 17 flood mitigation drain projects, as follows –

- (i) construction of drain at Port Mathurin (Phases I and II);
- (ii) raising of ford at Baie Malgache;
- (iii) drainworks at Rivière Cocos;
- (iv) drainworks at Grande La Fourche Mangles;
- (v) construction of drain at Port Mathurin (Phase III);
- (vi) raising of ford at Port Sud Est;
- (vii) construction of drain at Anse Ally;
- (viii) raising of ford at Mourouck;
- (ix) drainworks at Anse Aux Anglais;
- (x) construction of drain extension at Pas Jerome;
- (xi) drainworks at Quatre Vents-Dans Darisse;
- (xii) raising of ford at Diamant;
- (xiii) raising of ford at Grand Baie;
- (xiv) drainworks at Accasia;

- (xv) raising of ford at Baie Du Nord;
- (xvi) raising of ford at Baie Topaze and Box Culvert Upstream, and
- (xvii) raising of ford at Rivière Cocos.

The status regarding these projects are as follows –

- (i) 6 projects have been completed, namely –
 - construction of drain at Port Mathurin (Phases I and II);
 - raising of ford at Baie Malgache;
 - drainworks at Rivière Cocos;
 - drainworks at Grande La Fourche Mangues;
 - raising of Ford at Port Sud Est, and
 - construction of drains at Anse Ally.
- (ii) 1 project is at construction stage, namely –
 - construction of drain extension at Pas Jerome.
- (iii) 10 projects are at consultancy stage to determine the appropriate solutions to resolve the flooding problems in those localities, namely –
 - construction of drain at Port Mathurin (Phase III);
 - raising of Ford at Mourouck;
 - drainworks at Anse Aux Anglais;
 - drainworks at Quatre Vents-Dans Darisse;
 - raising of Ford at Diamant;
 - raising of Ford at Grand Baie;
 - drainworks at Accasia;
 - raising of Ford at Baie Du Nord;
 - raising of Ford at Baie Topaze and Box Culvert Upstream, and
 - raising of Ford at Rivière Cocos.

The Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development is consulting the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development for financing the elaboration of a Land Drainage Master Plan for Rodrigues.

HOSPITAL- ACQUIRED INFECTIONS - INCIDENCE RATE

(No. B/424) 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 Infections, he will state the current incidence rate thereof, including that for the COVID-19 pandemic, since 2016 to 2021 on a yearly basis and since 01 January 2022 to date, indicating the

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- (a) number of patients having passed away as a result thereof;
- (b) current morbidity rate thereof;
- (c) annual cost thereof, and
- (d) risk factors associated therewith and preventive measures being envisaged.

(Withdrawn)

NATIONAL PENSIONS FUND – ACTUARIAL VALUATION

(No. B/425) 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, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom –

- (a) information as to the quantum of the current deficit thereof, indicating the adjustment made, if any, to secure the future value thereof, and
- (b) copy of the latest actuarial valuation report thereof and table same.

Reply: According to the Report of the last actuarial review of NPF carried out by Riscura Solutions (Mauritius) Ltd, the Fund will start to run into deficit as from the Financial Year 2049/2050 when projected income will not be enough to pay the projected expenses. It was also stated in the Report that by 2067/68 the Fund is projected to run out of money.

The latest actuarial valuation report is being placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

**CONSTITUENCY NO. 5 – ROAD, DRAINS & AMENITIES PROJECTS –
PROJECT VALUE & STATUS**

(No. B/426) Mr R. Wochit (Third Member for Pamplémousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to Constituency No. 5, Triolet and Pamplémousses, he will state the number of projects earmarked for implementation by his Ministry thereat, indicating in each case, the project value thereof and where matters stand.

Reply: The National Development Unit has identified 21 road projects amounting to some Rs44 m. for implementation in Constituency No. 5, out of which 8 road projects have already been completed, as follows –

- (i) Upgrading of Road Network (Mango Lane and Soomaroo Lane), Pointe aux Piments;
- (ii) Upgrading of Oursin Street up to Usine St Malo, near Pont Bruniquel, Baie Du Tombeau;
- (iii) Upgrading of Maharana Pratab Road, Trio Rd, Triolet;
- (iv) Construction of Palmiste Lane, Calebasses;
- (v) Construction of Blue Lane, St Joseph, Terre Rouge;
- (vi) Construction of Neerunjun Lane, 9th Mille, Triolet;
- (vii) Construction of Ramchurn Lane, 9th Mille, Triolet, and
- (viii) Construction of Alamanda Road, Morcellement Saint André.

The remaining 13 road projects are still under construction.

With regard to the implementation of drain projects, 39 projects amounting to some Rs2.5 billion have been earmarked for implementation under the National Flood Management Programme, out of which 4 projects have already been completed, as follows –

- (i) Construction of Drains at Morcellement Ripailles, Calebasses;
- (ii) Upgrading of Existing Narrow Culvert at Mount;

- (iii) Construction of Drains at Independence Street and John Kennedy Street, Pamplemousses, and
- (iv) Upgrading of Narrow Culvert at Jouvance, D'Epinay along Congomah Road.

Regarding the remaining 35 projects, 9 are at construction stage and 26 are either at design or bidding stage.

The following amenities projects have been identified for implementation in Constituency No. 5 to the tune of some Rs47 m. –

- (i) Construction of Football Ground at Mon Gout (completed);
- (ii) Construction of Jogging track along Triolet Bypass Road, Triolet;
- (iii) Construction of Mini Soccer Pitch at Morc Jhuboo, Trou Aux Biches;
- (iv) Construction of Parking Space and Petanque Court near Football Ground at NHDC;
- (v) Construction of an outdoor gym in Morc VRS, D'Epinay;
- (vi) Upgrading of Cremation Ground Pamplemousses (implemented by the District Council of Pamplemousses), and
- (vii) Construction of Covered Pyre, Calebasses (implemented by the District Council of Pamplemousses).

Moreover, the Road Development Authority has implemented 18 road and drain projects in Constituency No. 5 during the current financial year for the amount of some Rs114 m. In addition, 2 drain projects for the amount of some Rs37.5 m. are currently being implemented by the Authority.

Three amenities projects to the tune of some Rs4.5 m. have been completed by the National Infrastructure Division during the previous financial year, as follows –

- (i) Upgrading of Piton and Triolet Fire Stations;
- (ii) Baie du Tombeau Fisheries Post, and
- (iii) Pamplemousses National Infrastructure Sub Office.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS - KREOL MORISIEN - TEACHERS

(No. B/427) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the *Kreol Morisien*, she will state the number of teachers available for the teaching thereof in primary schools, indicating –

- (a) the number of in-service General Purpose Educators seconded for duty therefor since 2012 to date, indicating the conditions of employment thereof;
- (b) the number of Educators therefor recruited since 2013 to date, indicating the conditions of employment thereof, and
- (c) if consideration will be given for the granting of the status of *Kreol Morisien* Educator to the General Purpose Educators seconded for duty therefor since 2012 to date and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

GRADUATES – UNEMPLOYED & UNDEREMPLOYED

(No. B/428) Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the graduates, he will state the present number thereof being –

- (a) unemployed, and
- (b) underemployed.

(Withdrawn)

COVID-19 - REGIONAL HOSPITALS - IMPACT

(No. B/429) Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the regional hospitals, he will state the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the day to day running thereof, indicating if this situation has created a backlog of the number of surgeries to be carried out thereat.

(Withdrawn)

CUREPIPE - NEW MARKET FAIR

(No. B/430) **Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the construction of the new market fair at Curepipe, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: I am informed that the project “Construction of the New Market Fair” at Curepipe has been earmarked as “Project under Preparation” in Budget Estimates 2021/2022.

In view of the major development projects being envisaged for the town of Curepipe, such as Metro Express project and the proposed Urban Terminal, an Inter-Ministerial Committee has been set up to work on the proposed construction of the new market fair at Curepipe.

In this context, the Inter-Ministerial Committee had a first meeting on 20 January 2022 which was chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism, hon. L. S. Obeegadoo, where were present, myself, hon. M. S. Hurreeram, Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development, Parliamentary Private Secretary, hon. S. G. Bablee, the Deputy Chief Government Whip, hon. S. Dhunoo, the Mayor of the Municipal Council of Curepipe and officers from relevant Ministries and Departments.

It was agreed that a need analysis exercise would be conducted under the chairpersonship of the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and the members would be the Deputy Chief Government Whip and the Municipal Council of Curepipe so as to ensure that the proposed project would meet the needs of the inhabitants of Curepipe.

The Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development has been requested to provide technical assistance to the Municipal Council of Curepipe by setting up a Technical Team for the design and supervision of the project on a fast track basis.

As at date, the design of the project is being conceptualised.

"TIME FOR REVIEW" REPORT – ACTIONS TAKEN

(No. B/431) **Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central)** asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Committee set up by Government decision of 29 March 2019 to look into the Report of the Director of Audit for Financial Year 2017-2018, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain and table copy of the report thereof entitled "Time for Review", indicating the actions taken, if any,

on the findings and recommendations contained therein and, if not, why not, indicating the fees paid in connection therewith.

Reply: In March 2019, a Committee was set up by Government to examine the 2017-2018 Audit Report in consultation with Ministries and Departments, and to propose measures to address the weaknesses and shortcomings mentioned therein. The Committee was chaired by the Senior Chief Executive of the former Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms.

With regard to the fees, I am informed that a total amount of Rs489,973 has been paid to members of the Committee.

Following its deliberations, the Committee submitted its report to the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of Civil Service who transmitted the report to the Ministry of Finance for necessary action.

A copy of the report is being placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

With regard to the 2019/20 Audit Report, 45 issues have already been resolved and actions are being taken on the remaining issues.

As regards the issues highlighted in the 2017/18 Director of Audit report as well as the Report of the Committee, various measures and actions have been taken by the Ministry of Finance as well as at the level of other Ministries and Departments.

At the level of the Ministry of Finance, the following actions have been taken to address weaknesses identified across Ministries and Departments with regard to capital projects and procurement. For example –

- (a) a Capital Project Process Manual has been developed in 2017 for the appraisal and approval of capital projects;
- (b) a Project Implementation and Monitoring Agency has been set up in 2021 to ensure smooth and timely implementation of budget measures and capital projects;

- (c) an E-procurement system has been put in place across Ministries and Departments to enable all public bodies and suppliers to electronically conduct procurement proceedings from invitation to bid and up to contract award, and
- (d) various Directives have been issued by the Procurement Policy Office such as Procurement of ICT Projects, Bill of Quantities in the Procurement of Works, Setting Up of Performance Review Committee and Annual Procurement Plan.

The Ministry of Finance has also issued various Circulars and Financial Instructions to improve public financial management, including on cash management, implementation of accrual International Public Sector Accounting Standard (IPSAS) in the Public Sector, establishment of a risk management framework in Ministries and Departments, and the development of a dashboard on the Annual Report of Performance of Ministries and Departments.

CENTRAL HEALTH-CARE WASTES DISPOSAL FACILITY

(No. B/432) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to health-care wastes, he will state the –

- (a) major sources thereof, and
- (b) progress achieved on the proposed implementation of a Central Health-care Wastes Disposal Facility, indicating the –
 - (i) short term measures envisaged to improve management thereof pending the materialisation of the project, and
 - (ii) expected adverse impact of mismanagement thereof on human health.

(Withdrawn)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD - CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

(No. B/433) 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 Chief Executive Officer of the Economic Development Board, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Board, information as to the –

- (a) salary, allowances and other fringe benefits drawn, and
- (b) overseas missions attended since his appointment to date, indicating the cost thereof, including air tickets and *per diem* allowances.

(Withdrawn)