



SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 05 APRIL 2022

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(Formed by Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth)

Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth	Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity
Hon. Louis Steven Obeegadoo	Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism
Hon. Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun, GCSK	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology
Dr. the Hon. Mohammad Anwar Husnoo	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management
Hon. Alan Ganoo	Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
Dr. the Hon. Renganaden Padayachy	Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development
Hon. Mrs Fazila Jeewa-Daureeawoo, GCSK	Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity
Hon. Soomilduth Bholah	Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives
Hon. Kavydass Ramano	Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change
Hon. Mahen Kumar Seeruttun	Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance
Hon. Georges Pierre Lesjongard	Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
Hon. Maneesh Gobin	Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security
Hon. Jean Christophe Stephan Toussaint	Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports

	and Recreation
Hon. Mahendranuth Sharma Hurreeram	Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development
Hon. Darsanand Balgobin	Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation
Hon. Soodesh Satkam Callichurn	Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training
	Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection
Dr. the Hon. Kailesh Kumar Singh Jagutpal	Minister of Health and Wellness
Hon. Sudheer Maudhoo	Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping
Hon. Mrs Kalpana Devi Koonjoo-Shah	Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare
Hon. Avinash Teeluck	Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage
Hon. Teeruthraj Hurdoyal	Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

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Deputy Speaker	Hon. Mohammad Zahid Nazurally
Deputy Chairperson of Committees	Hon. Sanjit Kumar Nuckcheddy
Clerk of the National Assembly	Lotun, Mrs Bibi Safeena
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MAURITIUS

Seventh National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 02 of 2022

Sitting of Tuesday 05 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)

ANNOUNCEMENTS**FIRST MEMBER - PORT LOUIS MARITIME & PORT LOUIS EAST –
SUSPENSION - APOLOGIES**

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, before proceeding with the business of the day, I wish to inform the House that I have, in the exercise of the powers vested in me under Standing Order 77, decided that the House will deal with the suspension of hon. First Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East (Mr Shakeel Mohamed) before proceeding with paying tribute to late Mr Espitalier-Noël and to late Mr Yousuf Mohamed.

Hon. Members, following the announcement made by the hon. Deputy Speaker in regard to the suspension of the hon. First Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East for the Sitting of 10 December 2021 and the ensuing 4 Sittings, I have to inform the House that I have now received a proper letter from the hon. Member tendering his unreserved and unconditional apologies to the House.

The hon. Member has also made a request to resume his seat.

The procedure governing such cases places a duty on the Chair to apprise the House of the contents of the letter emanating from the hon. Member.

I am tabling the letter.

Hon. Members, since it was the House which suspended the hon. Member from the service of the Assembly I have no authority in the matter at hand and I leave it to the House to take appropriate action.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

MOTIONS – S.O. 17(3) & S.O.29(1)

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, following your announcement of a receipt of the proper letter of apology from the hon. First Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East (Mr Shakeel Mohamed), tendering his unreserved and unconditional apologies to the House, I beg under Standing Order 17(3) to take the time of the House for urgent business.

The Deputy Prime Minister seconded.

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, having obtained your permission, I beg to move under Standing Order 29(1), to present a motion without notice.

The Deputy Prime Minister seconded.

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of your announcement of a receipt of a proper letter of apology from the hon. First Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East, tendering his unreserved and unconditional apologies to the House, I beg to move that the hon. First Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East be allowed to resume his seat with immediate effect.

The Deputy Prime Minister seconded.

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

At this stage, hon. Shakeel Mohamed was invited to join the Chamber.

OBITUARY

MR ALAIN MAURICE ESPITALIER NOËL

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is with deep regret that we have learnt of the demise of two former Members of Parliament -

- (i) Mr Alain Maurice Espitalier Noël on Monday 28 March 2022 at the age of 90, and
- (ii) Mr Mahamed Yousuf Abdul Razak Hajee MOHAMED, SC, GOSK on Sunday 03 April, at the age of 88.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr Alain Maurice Espitalier Noël was born on 04 August 1931 in Curepipe.

After completion of his secondary education at the St. Esprit College, Mr Espitalier Noël pursued further studies in accounting and became holder of a professional qualification awarded by the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants.

From January 1972 to March 1974, he served the Municipal Council of Vacoas Phoenix as Municipal Commission Chairman.

In 1976, he ran for the General Election in Constituency No.17 – Curepipe and Midlands under the banner of the *Parti Mauricien Social Democrate* and was elected as

Second Member. He was appointed Minister of Local Government, a portfolio which he held until 1979.

In 1982, Mr Espitalier Noël ran for the General Election in the same Constituency under the banner of *Parti de l'Alliance Nationale* but was not elected.

Mr Espitalier Noël was a prominent figure in the business community in Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, may I request you to kindly direct the Clerk of the National Assembly to convey the deep condolences of the Assembly to the members of the bereaved family of late Mr Alain Maurice Espitalier Noël.

Mr Speaker: Leader of the Opposition!

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, I associate myself with the tribute paid by the hon. Prime Minister to late Mr Alain Maurice Espitalier Noël, former Member of the National Assembly. Apart from being a distinguished Minister, Mr Alain Maurice Espitalier Noël was also in charge of one of the biggest industrial and agricultural conglomerates in Mauritius, a task which he performed with brilliance. May I, therefore, also request the Clerk to convey our deepest condolences to the bereaved family.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I associate myself with the tribute paid to the memory of late Mr Alain Maurice Espitalier Noël, former Member of Parliament by the hon. Prime Minister and hon. Leader of the Opposition and I direct the Clerk to convey the deep condolences of the Assembly to the bereaved family.

**MR MAHAMED YOUSUF ABDUL RAZAK HAJEE MOHAMED, SC,
GOSK**

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr Yousuf Mohamed, as he was commonly known, was born on 22 June 1933 in Port Louis. He attended Royal College Curepipe and Royal College Port Louis for his secondary education.

In 1954, he left for the United Kingdom to study law at the University of Bristol. In 1960, he was called to the Bar at the Middle Temple in London. He returned to Mauritius in 1961 to practise as a barrister. Between 1963 and 1965, he specialised in French law at the *Faculté de Droit de Paris*, after which he returned to Mauritius and resumed his practice.

In 1967, Mr Mohamed joined the *Comité d'Action Musulman*, a party founded by his father, Sir Abdool Razack Mohamed. In the same year, he ran for the General Election in Constituency No.8 - Quartier Militaire and Moka under the banner of the Independence

Party, and was elected Third Member. He was elected Deputy Chairman of Committees on 02 December 1969. He was re-elected for the same position in November 1970 after the prorogation of the Legislative Assembly.

In 1976, he ran for the General Election in the same Constituency under the banner of the Independence Party but was not elected. He was allocated a seat under the Best Loser System to serve the Legislative Assembly. He was appointed Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations in December 1976, a position he held until 1979. In November 1979, he resigned as Member of Parliament.

From November 1979 to June 1981, Mr Mohamed served as Ambassador of Mauritius to the Arab Republic of Egypt.

In 1981, he returned to Mauritius and resumed his practice. In the same year, he founded the *Parti Islamique Mauricien*.

Mr Mohamed ran for the 1982 General Election for Constituency No. 3, Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East under the banner of his party, but was not elected. In 1983, he contested the General Election in Constituency No.15, La Caverne and Phoenix under the banner of MSM/Labour Party, and was elected Third Member. He was then elected as Deputy Speaker, a position he held until August 1987. He did not contest the 1987 General Election.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in 1991, Mr Mohamed participated for the last time in the General Election in Constituency No.3, Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East under the banner of the Labour Party/PMSD Alliance but was not returned. Thereafter, he devoted himself to his legal profession.

In July 1995, Mr Mohamed was elevated to the rank of Senior Counsel, and on 12 March 2003, the title of Grand Officer of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean was conferred upon him.

In August 2010, Mr Mohamed was appointed as Honorary Consul General for the People's Republic of Bangladesh, a position which he held until April 2013.

Mr Mohamed has had a long fulfilling career in the legal profession.

Mr Speaker, Sir, may I request you to kindly direct the Clerk of the National Assembly to convey the deep condolences of the Assembly to the members of the bereaved family of late Mr Yousuf Mohamed.

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, I associate myself with the tribute paid by the hon. Prime Minister to late Me Yousuf Mohamed, Senior Counsel.

Indeed, Mr Speaker, Sir, our country is grieving the loss of a great man, a good man, a brilliant lawyer and a true patriot. During his 50 years at the Bar, Me Yousuf Mohamed has successfully defended some of the toughest criminal cases in Mauritius. In particular, Mr Speaker, Sir, members of the PMSD will always be grateful to him and we will never forget his defence of late Sir Gaëtan Duval during the infamous Azor Adelaïde case in 1989.

Me Yousuf Mohamed was also an able and courageous Minister, one of our youngest post-independence Ministers. I also recall that he performed very well as Deputy Speaker of this House. May I, therefore, request the Clerk, on behalf of the whole Opposition, to extend our deepest condolences to his wife, his daughter Nooreenah Lallmohamed, and his sons and my colleague, hon. Shakeel Mohamed and Zakhir Mohamed. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I associate myself with the tribute paid to the memory of late Mr Yousuf Mohamed, former Member of Parliament by the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Leader of the Opposition and direct the Clerk to convey the deep condolences of the Assembly.

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Prime Minister's Office

Ministry of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications

Ministry for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity

- (a) Certificate of Urgency in respect of the Variable Capital Companies Bill (No. III of 2022). (In Original)
- (b) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Chagossian Welfare Fund for the year ended 30 June 2018. (In Original)
- (c) The Declaration of Assets (Mauritius Prisons Service) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 70 of 2022)

B. Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance

The Financial Services (Consolidated Licensing and Fees) (Amendment) Rules 2022.
(Government Notice No 69 of 2022)

C. Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation

The Information and Communication Technologies (Registration of SIM) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 71 of 2022)

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

(a) The Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 66 of 2022)

(b) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 5) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 67 of 2022)

E. Ministry of Health and Wellness

The Consolidated COVID-19 (Amendment No. 8) Regulations 2022.
(Government Notice No. 65 of 2022)

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

The Fisheries and Marine Resources (Fishing Nets) Regulations 2022.
(Government Notice No. 68 of 2022)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**RISING PRICES - DECREASING PURCHASING POWER - LOWER & MIDDLE INCOME HOUSEHOLDS**

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to rising prices decreasing the purchasing power of lower and middle income households, he will state if he will consider applying the following package of measures with immediate effect –

- (a) reducing taxes and levies on petroleum products;
- (b) applying Value Added Tax on the Free On Board price instead of Cost, Insurance and Freight on imported items;
- (c) increasing pensions to re-establish the purchasing power of same since last increase;
- (d) providing cash handouts to families;
- (e) offering savings bonds to pensioners at inflation proof interest rates;
- (f) expanding the existing subsidy regime to other items, and
- (g) reducing profit margins of importers on subsidised products, for instance, on milk powder.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, permettez-moi tout d'abord de remercier l'honorable Leader de l'Opposition pour sa question.

La PNQ d'aujourd'hui me permet en effet de revenir sur l'action décisive de ce gouvernement pour soutenir la population mauricienne dans une situation soumise à de multiples chocs externes.

Pour bien comprendre les enjeux, je m'attarderai dans un premier temps sur le contexte dans lequel nous évoluons.

M. le président, revenons sur les deux dernières années car, suivant l'intuition Churchillienne, pour comprendre le présent et préparer le futur, nous devons analyser le passé.

Nous avons été plongés dans la plus grave crise que le monde moderne n'ait jamais connue. Une crise qui a chamboulé nos modes de vie et a bouleversé notre trajectoire de croissance économique.

Dès Avril 2020, le Fonds Monétaire International n'avait pas mâché ses mots quant à la gravité et la profondeur de la crise.

Face à l'ampleur du choc, il s'agissait, coûte que coûte, de préserver les vies et les moyens de subsistance de la population. Le FMI préconisait l'application d'une politique à trois niveaux pour préserver l'essentiel, à savoir l'emploi. Nous devions –

- prévenir les défauts de paiements ;
- éviter les faillites, et surtout
- maintenir les capacités de production.

M. le président, cette pandémie nous a coûté 15 points de PIB. Rendez-vous compte, nous sommes passés de presque 1,4 millions de touristes en 2019 à –

- 300,000 touristes en 2020, et
- seulement 180,000 touristes en 2021.

Le secteur touristique n'a pas été la seule grande victime de la pandémie, celui des exports de biens et services a lui aussi été lourdement affecté. Le niveau des exports de biens et services est passé de R 192 milliards en 2019 à R 128 milliards en 2020 et à R 132 milliards en 2021. Un manque à gagner cumulé de plus de R 120 milliards, toutes choses égales par ailleurs.

Vous vous rendez compte, 3 milliards de dollars. C'est une chute d'exactly 33% des rentrées de devises, soit 1 tiers de nos recettes en Forex.

Imaginons-nous la pression que cette situation a engendrée sur notre roupie. Du jamais vu pour notre économie.

Malgré les interventions de la Banque de Maurice, et du fait de la forte demande en devises avec une offre diminuée, nous avons connu une dépréciation de notre monnaie.

M. le président, du côté de l'augmentation du coût de la vie, le phénomène d'accélération est mondial. Et pour preuve, l'inflation a été de –

- 7,9% aux États-Unis pour les 12 derniers mois terminant au mois de février 2022, soit le plus fort taux depuis 40 ans;
- 6,2% au Royaume-Uni;
- 7,3% en Allemagne;
- 9,8% en Espagne, et
- 7,5% dans la zone euro, quand la limite est de 2 %.

Selon les derniers chiffres publiés, Maurice a connu une inflation de 5,2% sur les 12 derniers mois terminant au mois de février 2022. La Banque de Maurice estime que l'inflation en 2022 pourrait s'établir à 6,7% ; mais, en prenant en compte l'incertitude entourant la durée du conflit russo-ukrainien et son impact sur nos principaux marchés, il est vraisemblable que le taux d'inflation aille au-delà de ces projections.

M. le président, pour répondre aux parties allant de (a) à (g) de la question, et au regard du contexte que je viens d'explicitier, permettez-moi de rappeler les mesures que ce gouvernement a déjà pris.

En effet, notre Premier ministre et son gouvernement ont toujours privilégié l'humain car c'est le développement humain qui permet un développement économique équilibré. Malgré les pressions, cette philosophie, partie intégrante de notre ADN, continue de nous guider. Ainsi, et entre autres –

- Nous avons maintenu le *Basic Retirement Pension* à R 9,000, ce qui représente une augmentation de 148,4% depuis 2014, année où le *BRP* s'élevait à seulement R 3,623.
- Nous avons versé le *Wage Assistance Scheme* et le *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme* à plus de 550,000 personnes, pour un coût de R 27 milliards, afin de soutenir le pouvoir d'achat des employés car préserver les emplois, c'est avant tout préserver le pouvoir d'achat des Mauriciens.
- Nous avons maintenu la subvention sur le prix du gaz ménager, de la farine et du riz ; un soutien de R 4 milliards.
- Nous avons également introduit une subvention et un prix maximum sur 7 nouveaux produits, à savoir l'huile comestible, les grains secs, les tomates en conserve, le lait en poudre, la margarine, le fromage et le poisson en conserve de juillet à décembre. Cette mesure a été prolongée jusqu'en juin 2022 et représente quelque R 1,2 milliards.
- Nous avons par ailleurs mis en place une campagne de vaccination gratuite contre la COVID-19 pour l'ensemble des Mauriciens et avons maintenu la gratuité des soins. Cette mesure de vaccination a été de l'ordre de R 1,3 milliards.
- Nous avons enfin prévu une compensation salariale de R 500 pour ceux qui gagnent moins de R 13,000 et R 400 pour les autres travailleurs. Cette augmentation est en application depuis le début de l'année 2022.

M. le président, nous irons encore plus loin. A cet égard, je tiens à rassurer la population et le Leader de l'Opposition quant au fait que le gouvernement travaille actuellement sur les différentes options pour continuer à soutenir le pouvoir d'achat des Mauriciens.

Au niveau de mon Ministère et en cette période pré-budgétaire, j'ai mis en place un groupe de travail pour plancher sur des mesures prenant en compte les besoins des plus démunis. En ce sens, les consultations vont bon train.

Suite à la mise en ligne de la plateforme de consultations pré-budgétaires, nous avons d'ores et déjà reçu plus de 700 propositions qui sont actuellement à l'étude.

Par ailleurs, afin que les consultations en présentiel qui ont débuté le 24 mars 2022 soient les plus fructueuses possibles, nous avons mis un point d'honneur à rencontrer l'ensemble des représentants des travailleurs, des opérateurs économiques et de la société civile. Un certain nombre de pistes et propositions discutées au cours de ces échanges ont directement pour objectif de maintenir le niveau du pouvoir d'achat à Maurice, comme l'a suggéré le Leader de l'Opposition.

Je persiste et signe. Notre gouvernement, ce gouvernement sous le leadership du Premier ministre, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, fera tout ce qui est en son pouvoir, en tenant en compte des marges de manœuvre actuelles, pour protéger la population qui lui a accordé sa confiance.

M. le président, pour terminer, j'ai souvent regretté le fait que l'Opposition ne soit jamais une force de proposition. Mais là, je dois dire, le Leader de l'Opposition est venu avec certaines suggestions qui vont dans le sens de notre philosophie. Ces propositions sont nobles et je tiens à confirmer qu'elles vont être étudiées par les équipes de mon ministère qui travaillent d'arrache-pied. Serait-ce le début d'un changement d'attitude du Leader de l'Opposition envers les plus vulnérables? Et je l'espère ...

Mr X. L. Duval: No, come on!

Dr. Padayachy: ... mais je ne voudrais pas non plus être dupe.

Mr X. L. Duval: *Taler mo dres to papie la!*

(Interruptions)

Dr. Padayachy: Quand je regarde dans le rétroviseur et que j'analyse la philosophie et l'historique de certains dans l'Opposition lorsqu'ils étaient au pouvoir, j'émetts de sérieux doutes.

M. le président, cette question me permet de mettre en perspective certaines périodes de notre histoire récente. Et pour cela, il nous faut faire parler les chiffres qui dénoncent les injustices.

Prenons l'année 2008. Ce n'est pas si loin. Le taux d'inflation était de presque 10%, un taux déraisonnable à ce moment précis. Pourtant, malgré ce coup de massue sur le pouvoir d'achat, la compensation salariale n'avait été que de 8,1%. Ce taux peut paraître acceptable, M. le président, mais souvenons-nous qu'à cette période, nombreux salariés ne percevaient que R 1,500 par mois. La hausse salariale n'était que de R 121 pour ces pères et mères de

famille. A vrai dire, plus de 50,000 chefs de famille recevaient un salaire de moins de R 3,500 par mois à cette période.

Les pensionnés, eux, ne touchaient que R 2,802. La hausse accordée, une peau de chagrin, avait été de R 143, faisant donc un total de R 2,945.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

You don't have the floor!

(Interruptions)

You don't have the floor!

Mr X. L. Duval: On a point of order!

Mr Speaker: Yes, if you have one!

Mr X. L. Duval: Yes. This is a serious question. People are suffering...

Dr. Padayachy: La réponse est sérieuse.

Mr X. L. Duval: ...and in reply to my question, the hon. Minister....

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No! No! This is not a point of order!

Mr X. L. Duval: ...of Finance is going by...

Mr Speaker: You know fully well! You know fully well you have no point of order; you are just embarrassing the Minister from replying!

Please, proceed!

Dr. Padayachy: Les pensionnés, eux, - je reviens - ne touchaient que R 2, 802. La hausse accordée - une peau de chagrin, je le redis, j'hallucine quand je vois ces chiffres - avait été de R 143, faisant donc un total de R 2 ,945 – je dis bien R 2, 945. Et là, M. le président, c'est très important, c'est ça qui est important. Et pourtant à cette époque –

- le prix du pain était à R 2.50, contre R 2.60 actuellement,
- la boîte de sardines était à R 22.23, contre R 22.66 actuellement,
- le riz à R 5.40, exactement comme aujourd'hui,

- les lentilles noires, M. le président, étaient à R 24.50, comme aujourd'hui aussi,

(Interruptions)

- les dholl petits pois...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Padayachy: ...les dholl petits pois...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Padayachy: ...à R 19.37, contre R 14.57 aujourd'hui,

- le gaz à R 300, contre R 180 actuellement,
- la farine à R 13.59, contre R 9.70, soit 40% plus cher qu'aujourd'hui...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Padayachy: Le total des subsides...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Padayachy: ...à R 2,2 milliards, contre R 8,2 milliards aujourd'hui. Il était important de donner ces quelques chiffres pour que la population puisse elle-même faire la part des choses, et constater le traitement indigne qu'on avait réservé à ceux qui en avaient le plus besoin.

M. le président, pour terminer, je tiens à souligner que la pension, aujourd'hui à R 9 000, a été multipliée par 3 et le salaire minimum, à R 11, 075, soit plus de 7 fois le salaire d'antan de R 1, 500.

Ce gouvernement se tient aux côtés de ceux qui en ont le plus besoin et sa philosophie s'inscrit dans les faits et dans le progrès.

Merci, M. le president!

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, this subject is far too important for me to go on tit for tat politics with the hon. Minister. Suffice it to say that his boss, the Prime Minister, was Minister of Finance in 2010-2011 and as Minister of Finance, he gave the lowest ever rate of increase on pensions, not even Rs100 and the same to the lower paid Rs90 if my memory serves me well. So, you should also look at yourself in the mirror.

Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir...

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr X. L. Duval: I am putting my question, Mr Speaker, Sir, but you will also allow me to reply to some attacks that have been made, surely?

Mr Speaker: But this is not debate!

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir...

Mr Speaker: I am sorry!

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir...

Mr Speaker: I am sorry! Leader of the Opposition, I am on my feet! You know fully well what is question time!

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am...

Mr Speaker: You have been a Minister, you are Leader of the Opposition, I will not allow any debate! First and foremost, let it be known!

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, nevertheless, attacks that are made must be responded to. I am sure you will agree.

Mr Speaker, Sir, all the previous policies that have been made by this Government have been completely wiped out by the depreciation of the rupee. As you will know, 46% against the Dollar ...

Mr Speaker: What is the question?

Mr X. L. Duval: ...since the MSM came to power in 2014. All have been completely...

Mr Speaker: You have no question?

Mr X. L. Duval: All have been completely wiped out...

Mr Speaker: So, I will pass on to another Member!

Mr X. L. Duval: All have been completely wiped out by general mismanagement of the economy.

Mr Speaker: No question? I will pass on to another Member!

Mr X. L. Duval: Just a moment, Mr Speaker, Sir. Please give me a moment. I am going to come, firstly, to petroleum products and I am going to ask the hon. Minister also whether he is in touch with actually what is happening in the country. Citing a ridiculous 5% of headline inflation which is worked out as you know, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is an average over 24 months, instead of taking the much more relevant year on year inflation of 9%, if not more.

Therefore, I am going to ask the Minister - the situation is critical for the population, we cannot wait until the 01 July for your new Budget - as far as petroleum products are concerned, this Government, the MSM Government, has increased taxes on petroleum products by Rs8 since coming to power in 2014. So, I am going to ask him whether he will not immediately remove these Rs8 per litre of taxes that have been imposed since MSM came to power which would put Rs4 billion back into the pockets of consumers. That is my first question.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, je tiens à rappeler au Leader de l'Opposition, lui qui regarde les prix des produits pétroliers qu'en 2008 – je reviens à 2008, c'est comparable, on peut comparer – le prix du diesel était à R 51.20 quand actuellement c'est à R 45. Et à l'époque, je reviens, le salaire minimum qu'il n'y avait pas, mais les gens touchaient moins de R 3,500 ou R 1,500 et les pensions étaient moins de R 3,000. Je reviens concernant les propositions que vous avez faites et j'ai répondu, j'ai dit qu'on est en train d'analyser chaque proposition et je vous ai dit, je vous remercie pour ces propositions qui vont dans le sens de l'histoire, dans le sens du progrès social. On est en train d'analyser chaque mesure mais, M. le président, le Leader de l'Opposition qui a été ministre des Finances, il sait très bien que pour chaque mesure, nous devons l'analyser, voir le coût et regarder comment on peut procéder parce que nous, notre philosophie reste - et je le redis - de protéger la population mauricienne, en particulier et surtout la partie de la population la plus vulnérable. Quand vous revenez sur les taxes qu'il y a sur les produits pétroliers, vous oubliez de dire que de l'autre

côté, ce sont ces taxes qui ont permis de mettre R 8 milliards sur la table pour les subsides. Presque R 5 milliards de subsides rien que pour le gaz, le riz et la farine.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I remind the hon. Minister that this money has also gone to finance tens of Ministers going to Dubai Expo, the Molnupiravir disaster, the Dhruv helicopter, the *Côte d'Or éléphant blanc*, the Safe City *éléphant blanc*, the Splash Gate of last week and the debacle at the Mauritius Investment Corporation. So, this is where the actual money is going to, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Now, I will come to my next point which is that people all over the world, Mr Speaker, Sir, Governments are acting now because the Minister may be cut off from reality but people in my Constituency and everywhere cannot make two ends meet, cannot eat two decent meals a day. Those sending their children to school by van are now having to walk to school.

Mr Speaker: What is the question?

Mr X. L. Duval: So, the question, Mr Speaker, Sir, is concerning the cost of living and the application of VAT. As you know, VAT increases substantially when you depreciate the rupee and this has depreciated as I said.

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am going to ask the hon. Minister whether it is not now time to charge VAT on Free On Board (FOB) prices rather than on CIF prices? This will have a dramatic effect on bulky items being imported and it should be known now. That is my question.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, encore une fois, je remercie le Leader de l'Opposition pour ces questions mais ce sont les mêmes questions. Je crois que si on relit la PNQ, ce sont les mêmes questions que j'ai déjà répondues en disant qu'il m'a posé ces questions ce matin et je suis en train de les analyser. Il n'a fait que reprendre certaines suggestions et propositions des différents *stakeholders* qui sont en consultation avec le ministère des Finances concernant le prochain budget. Mais je tiens aussi à rappeler qu'il ne faut pas oublier le passé et ça c'est important, un chiffre, M. le président, un seul chiffre.

En 2008, 50% de la population active percevaient moins de R 8000. Et en 2008, cette partie de la population active n'avait reçu comme compensation, malgré une inflation de 10 %, qu'une compensation de moins de R 300.

Donc, M. le président, nous, nous regardons devant, nous travaillons sur les mesures. Nous avons toujours travaillé pour la population, en particulier, plus pour ceux au bas de l'échelle, et nous continuerons à faire ce travail pour lequel la population a voté et nous a donné un mandat.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr X. L. Duval: It is shameful to do tit for tat politics. I remind him again, in 2010/2011, the lowest in recent history, increase in pensions and in minimum salary was through the Prime Minister, Pravind Jugnauth.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, I come now to pensions. Hon. Nando Bodha and myself, wrote the *Lepep* Electoral Manifesto of 2014, which gave the huge rise in pensions. So, I have no lessons to take from the hon. Minister.

(Interruptions)

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir,...

Mr Speaker: Question! Question!

Mr X. L. Duval: ... it can easily be calculated that since the last increase in 2019, pensions have lost purchasing power of more than Rs2,000.

Mr Speaker: What is the question?

Mr X. L. Duval: Well, if you wait, you will get the question!

Mr Speaker: No, no! I do not have to wait!

Mr X. L. Duval: Well, you have to wait!

Mr Speaker: You have to put your question!

Mr X. L. Duval: You have to wait, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: No, I will not wait, you have to put your question!

Mr X. L. Duval: Well, you have to wait! Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am going to ask the hon. Minister that there is an urgent need to *aret kouyone ban vieux* and give them back the loss in purchasing power. This has nothing to do with an increase, it will be the same real value as 2019. The pension has got to move from Rs9,000 to Rs11,000! Nothing else will do!

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, je tiens simplement à dire que la population...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order !

Dr. Padayachy: ... sait qui *kouyone* qui ! Mais je vais, ici, parce que par deux fois, M. le président, l'honorable Leader de l'Opposition a attaqué notre Premier ministre, et je profite de cette occasion pour le remercier de cette remarque parce que j'aimerais, dans cette auguste Assemblée et devant la population entière, rendre hommage à notre Premier ministre ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No! Wait, wait, wait! Wait! You have to wait! You have to wait! Let the Minister reply!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Padayachy: ... rendre hommage...

Mr Speaker: You have to wait!

Dr. Padayachy: ... à notre Premier ministre...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Wait!

Dr. Padayachy : ... pour son courage, sa détermination et son humanisme pour avoir introduit le salaire minimum. Pour rappel, je le redis, en 2008, 50% de la population touchait moins de R 8,000. Malgré les lobbys insistants, M. le président, le Premier ministre avait su résister et à faire de cette mesure historique une réalité pour tous les mauriciens. Je me saisis de cette occasion pour inviter les membres de la Chambre à applaudir l'action de notre Premier ministre.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr X. L. Duval: Hold on! You will *tap la main dans ene minute la !* This country, Mauritius, is dangerously nearing the situation of Sri Lanka; even the World Bank and the IMF are saying so, and you just need to look at the reports *noir sur blanc*, Mr Speaker, Sir. Inflation, Mr Speaker, Sir, has hit the roof like in Sri Lanka and everything else, I will not have time to go into it.

I am going to ask now about cash handouts and/or supermarket vouchers. Now, that would be a way, as suggested rigidly by - I can see you referred to him - hon. Rama Sithanen. Cash handouts, supermarket vouchers would be one way to help the lowest paid workers and

the lower income groups in Mauritius. Now, are we going to see cash handouts given out in a mini Budget which I would invite the hon. Minister to come up with next week; a mini budget with all the items that I am proposing today?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, juste pour rappel, je reviens un petit peu sur - vous savez, l'analyse de l'histoire est très importante - l'année 2008, 10% d'inflation.

(Interruptions)

Vous êtes en train...

Mr Speaker: This is not good!

Dr. Padayachy: Ce n'est pas drôle.

Mr Speaker: You have to respect the House! Do not forget, you are the Leader of the Opposition!

Dr. Padayachy : M. le président, ce n'est pas drôle ! A l'époque, - je le redis - à l'époque, les pensionnés touchaient moins de R 3,000 et il y avait plus de 50 % de la population active qui touchait moins de R 8,000. On ne se moque pas, on ne rigole pas de cette situation ! Il y avait 10% d'inflation. En 2008, les subsides sur le riz, la farine, on avait mis R 1, 300, 000 000. Nous, ce gouvernement, a mis R 4 milliards sur la table, pour le riz, la farine et le gaz. Sur les produits essentiels, *nada* ! Zéro ! Rien en 2008, malgré 10% d'inflation. Et nous, on a mis R 1,2 milliards. Sur la tarification d'électricité, encore une fois, zéro! Zéro! Malgré une hausse du coût de la vie de 10%, nous, on a mis R 140 millions.

Les subsides concernant les frais d'examen pour le *SC/HSC*, nous, on a mis R 290 millions ! À l'époque, R 58 millions! Je ne parle même pas de l'éducation tertiaire gratuite, R 550 millions, à l'époque, on ne savait même pas ce que c'était!

(Interruptions)

Et tous les autres subsides pour les plus vulnérables, en particulier, concernant les planteurs et concernant la distribution d'eau, nous, nous avons mis R 650 millions, et à l'époque que R 150 millions!

Donc, je reviens là-dessus, M. le président, nous sommes en train de travailler, nous viendrons très bientôt avec une liste de mesures pour venir en aide à la population la plus vulnérable.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister continues with 2008 while this country today is heading for a blowout crisis like Sri Lanka, Mr Speaker, Sir, and he goes back all the time to 2008!

Mr Speaker: Put your last question! Time is almost over!

Mr X. L. Duval: So, I will ask the hon. Minister concerning subsidies now, - he has made some efforts, 300 items out of 40,000 items in the supermarket - to extend the subsidies on other basic goods like frozen food, basmati rice, bread, edible oil and medicines, Mr Speaker, Sir, and, at the same time, not repeat the mistake that he made on the milk products whereas he subsidised those products and allowed...

Mr Speaker: Time is over!

Mr X. L. Duval: ... 35% excessive margins by the importers.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, je ne vais pas reprendre tout ce qu'on a dit dans ma réponse. Je dis simplement: les faits parlent et l'histoire nous donne raison par rapport à l'analyse des chiffres.

Nous, de ce côté de la Chambre, nous, au gouvernement, nous avons dans notre ADN ce principe, cette philosophie, de travailler pour l'humain et de nous concentrer pour ceux au plus bas de l'échelle. Nous ne sommes pas comme ceux, qui à l'époque, en 2014, quand le gouvernement *Lepep* avait proposé R 5,000 comme pension, ils avaient dit: oh ! oh ! Ce n'est pas possible! Il nous faudrait au moins cinq ans pour arriver à ce chiffre de R 5,000. Cinq ans! R 4,372 !

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Padayachy: À l'époque, je n'avais pas entendu parler d'augmenter la pension etc. mais non, à l'époque ils étaient au gouvernement et eux, ils ne pouvaient pas le faire mais maintenant, quand on est dans l'Opposition, c'est facile de venir avancer les chiffres, R 8,000, R 10,000 , R 12,000, R 15,000. Qui dit mieux ! Mais nous, je le redis, nous avons travaillé et nous avons fait, grâce à notre Premier ministre qui lui, il dit ce qu'il fait et il fait ce qu'il dit. Merci, M. le président!

Mr Speaker: I will stop you here. Time is over by three minutes.

Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/166 will be replied by the hon. Prime Minister, PQs B/114 and B/116 have been withdrawn.

Hon. Ameer Meea!

AGALÉGA ISLAND - ONGOING PROJECTS - EXPECTED COMPLETION DATES

(No. B/103) 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 Agaléga Island, he will state where matters stand as to the ongoing projects being implemented thereat, indicating the expected completion dates thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, there are currently two main infrastructural development projects that are being implemented for improving sea and air connectivity to Agaléga, namely, the construction of a new airstrip and a jetty, together with the associated infrastructure. These projects are being executed by AFCONS Ltd. and are being entirely financed by the Government of India.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to the new airstrip project, I am informed that 85% of civil works have been completed. The remaining civil works related to the Airstrip are expected to be completed by September 2022. However, the works on associated infrastructure, such as, Air Traffic Control Tower, Passenger Terminal Building, Aircraft Hangar and Electrical Substation were severely affected due to lack of mobilisation of specialised manpower resulting from COVID-19. Building works for the associated infrastructure are expected to be completed by January 2023 while Communication and Air Traffic Control equipment installation and commissioning are expected to be completed by June 2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to the jetty, I am also informed that around 77% of civil works have been completed so far. However, considering the recent cyclonic disturbances and the prevailing harsh sea conditions, there could be a delay in completing the civil works and the expected new completion date is December 2022. Works related to the associated infrastructure for the jetty project have been impacted by delay in movement of workers and are now due to be completed by April/May 2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in my reply to PQ B/76 on 30 March 2021, I informed the House about the following projects which AFCONS Ltd. was implementing, as part of its CSR, for the benefit of all Agaleans –

- (i) a prefab building comprising of two classrooms and a staff room for the Jacques Le Chartier Government School at Village Vingt Cinq, including five additional toilets for the students and staff;
- (ii) all facilities at the Medical Centre of AFCONS Ltd., such as blood tests, X-ray, ECG and ambulance are extended free of cost to the local residents; and
- (iii) repair and maintenance of existing tracks, including the one from the existing jetty at Village Vingt Cinq.

I am informed that these projects have been completed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed that, in addition to those projects implemented as part of its CSR, AFCONS Ltd. has undertaken several other projects under its Community Development and Social Outreach Programme. These projects include the following –

- (i) widening, straightening and leveling of the 7 km road between Village Vingt Cinq and La Pointe – the improved road was inaugurated on 25 December 2021;
- (ii) provision of water supply for washroom and toilets in the primary school situated in North Agalega;
- (iii) employment of 17 local youth by AFCONS Ltd., few of them are also being trained in masonry, electrical and mechanical trades;
- (iv) construction of a football ground, along with changing rooms, at Village Vingt Cinq – the new football ground was inaugurated on Christmas last year;
- (v) renovation of North Agalega Catholic Church – the renovated Church was also opened on the occasion of Christmas last year;
- (vi) cleaning of septic tanks of villagers by AFCONS Ltd. sewerage sucker machine;
- (vii) providing assistance to medical staff for the COVID-19 vaccination programme, including provision of a 40 ft containerised accommodation to be used as COVID isolation facility with external toilet and bathroom;

- (viii) organisation of Summer Workshop for school kids during summer vacation with the participation of around 100 children from the North and South islands;
- (ix) construction of an open gymnasium at Village Vingt Cinq. The gymnasium was inaugurated on 12 March 2022, and
- (x) order already placed for the supply of a coconut extraction unit for Agaléga.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed by the Outer Islands Development Corporation (OIDC) that it is proceeding with the implementation of a Refugee Centre in the South Island for which an amount of Rs40 m. has been provided under the COVID-19 Project Development Fund. The project is currently at tender stage.

One of the main responsibilities of the OIDC is to provide decent accommodation to the inhabitants of Agaléga as well as to the personnel of Ministries/Departments on tour of service there, whilst facilitating access to services such as health, education, water, electricity, telephony and internet services.

In this context, following a request made by the OIDC, the National Housing Development Co. Ltd. (NHDC) is proposing to construct 50 housing units at Agaléga. 36 of these units will be located at the Village Vingt Cinq in the North Island and 14 units at Village Sainte Rita in the South Island. The project will include other associated infrastructure such as individual rainwater harvesting system for each housing unit and a desalination plant and a photovoltaic system for each housing site. It is expected that tenders will be launched by the end of April 2022 and the construction project will be completed by July 2024.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed that a Master Plan 2020-2024 for Agaléga has been prepared by the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning in collaboration with the OIDC. This will set the base for a proper long term strategy to promote the sustainable development of the island and impact positively on the standard of living of the Agaleans.

Thank you.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have three supplementary questions, I shall ask one by one with your permission. Firstly, with the ongoing projects in Agaléga that the Prime Minister has just enumerated, clearly Agaléga will be transformed. And as representative of Agaléga in Parliament, some inhabitants have expressed their fears that in the future they

would be asked to leave the island. It is not my view but some inhabitants have contacted me regarding this issue. The more so, that now for any Mauritian to visit Agaléga, there need to be a deposit of Rs500,000, *une caution de R 500,000*. Therefore, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister if he can reassure the House, the population, and especially the Agaleans that this scenario will not be the case?

The Prime Minister: First of all, I am very happy that the hon. Member, himself, says that he does not believe in the rumour that Agaleans will be asked to leave the island and, of course, this is not going to be the case. In fact, the projects that I have announced go in totally the other direction, that is, we want to provide Agaleans with the necessary infrastructure for the improvement of their standard of living, and also for the provision to them of the required amenities to enable them to have a decent living there.

Mr Ameer Meea: It is good that the Prime Minister has reassured the House, but also the Agaleans. Can I move on to the next supplementary, Mr Speaker, Sir? Again, as representative of Agaléga, the last time that I have visited Agaléga dates back to almost 10 years and I was accompanied by hon. Shakeel Mohamed at that time. And since then, I have made several requests to your Office, in 2015, 2017 for a visit to Agaléga to visit the inhabitants of my Constituency. Therefore, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister if he can do the needful, of course, as soon as possible, for representatives of Agaléga to visit their constituency?

The Prime Minister: I know that Agaleans are free to travel from Agaléga to Mauritius and from Mauritius back to Agaléga. I do not see why it is not possible for Members of Parliament to travel and to go to Agaléga. And also, I am informed that, contrary to what the hon. Member has said, there is no such deposit of Rs500,000 that has to be made. This is not correct.

Mr Speaker: Let us hear from the hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister a very serious question. In these times of heightened hostilities around the world ...

The Prime Minister: Hostilities!

Mr X. L. Duval: Hostilities! War breaking out etcetera - what arrangements have been done to protect the island, the population and the 3 km runway that you have built in case some superpower or anyone would wish to invade that island and take it as a base in the Indian Ocean? It is a very serious question.

Mr Speaker: Okay! Your question stops there.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as usual, I also and always give serious answers. So far, I have no indication that either Mauritius or any island which Mauritius is presently occupying, that is, Agaléga, is being threatened by foreign invasion. I have no such indication, but anyway, probably, should the hon. Leader of the Opposition have any such information, I am sure, as a good patriot, he is going to share such information to me so that we can analyse it. First of all, I can tell the House...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You don't have the floor!

The Prime Minister: ... that I shall analyse such information to see how serious a threat there could be to Agaléga or to Mauritius, and then, of course, consider taking any action.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr X. L. Duval: Send the SMF!

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister state whether sites have been released for the implementation of the 50 housing units project?

The Prime Minister: Sites! Yes. I am informed that the officers of the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning have visited Agaléga. In fact, it was, I think, December last year and they had identified the two sites for the housing projects. If I can recall, I think the Consultant, Lux Consult, of course, will have to survey the land to see whether it is appropriate and then the project will be implemented.

Mr Ameer Meea: Coming back to the issue of 50 housing units, Mr Speaker, Sir, answering a PQ on 16 April 2019, that is, almost three years back, the then Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Local Government, gave the same answer that the hon. Minister just gave to the House, that is, I quote –

“50 housing units by the NHDC ...”

And, that it is in the process of enlisting a Consultant, job description, etcetera. May I ask the Prime Minister why is it that after three years that the project has already been announced, it has not yet even started? It has been three years.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have had a number of problems. I must admit that with the situation that has prevailed in the past, such as the two years that we have been faced with the pandemic, it has been very difficult to have Consultants, people to move there, especially that Agaléga is not next door, and we cannot move people there easily, to put it that way.

And I must also say that regarding what I have stated with regard to the project, it is not going to be easily implemented because, for example, we must have contractors who will eventually bid for the project, and I also think that the number of contractors is, first of all, going to be limited because not everybody will be able to have all the materials to be transported to Agaléga for such project, and then also and hopefully, we expect that the cost of these housing units will not be so high. All this has to be analysed but I must say that we are determined. We are, in fact, looking into ways and means of realising this project, and when the situation will be back to a certain normality, I hope we shall, do our best to move forward as quickly as possible.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Doolub!

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The Prime Minister just mentioned projects being executed by AFCONS Ltd. Can the Prime Minister inform the House whether there is any monitoring being done by relevant authorities regarding the environmental impacts of those projects? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me inform the House that the works on the island of Agaléga are being, right now, supervised by the Consultant RITES Ltd., whose team also comprises an environmental engineer. Moreover, the contractor, on his part, has a dedicated health, safety and environment team comprising 17 members to supervise the environmental aspect of the project. And in addition to the supervision which is exercised by the Consultant RITES Ltd., the environmental impacts are being as well monitored by the relevant Mauritian authorities.

As a matter of fact, a team of officials from the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change, Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning and members of my office also effected a site visit to Agaléga from 29 September to 07 October 2021, and

following the site visit and meetings that were held with AFCONS Ltd. and RITES Ltd., the team had observed that there was good housekeeping in general and that measures were being taken to minimise the impact of the works on the surrounding natural environment. The team has also made a few recommendations and has requested AFCONS to submit quarterly reports to the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change for monitoring purposes.

I am informed that the contractor has taken appropriate mitigating measures following the observations that were made by the environmental monitoring team with respect to risk of flooding in the new residential building and wastewater collection and treatment. The mitigating measures comprise the following -

- All the buildings are on a higher level with respect to the roads and in line with engineering practices, finished floor level of all the buildings has been kept at 450 millimetres above the surrounding ground level.

Mr Speaker: You should have a question?

Dr. Boolell: Yes. Can I ask the Prime Minister whether when all the facilities come on stream - I have in mind, of course, the port facilities – once the projects are implemented, will be co-managed by India and Mauritius?

The Prime Minister: I am really surprised, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Wait, wait! You should understand one thing.

Excuse me, you should understand, after having put your question, you have to wait for a reply.

(Interruptions)

There should be no crosstalking and we should not be fighting!

(Interruptions)

Order!

The Prime Minister: I can understand why he cannot listen silently to my answer.

Mr Speaker: He will, he will!

The Prime Minister: He puts a question, I have listened to him.

Mr Speaker: He promised he will!

The Prime Minister: He promised, good!

Mr Speaker: Carry on!

The Prime Minister: I was saying I am really surprised, Mr Speaker, Sir. Every time that this matter has been debated and discussed in the House, I can recall particularly hon. Dr. Arvin Boolell, having taken strong objection each time, alleging that all sorts of things, and that we have given up, sovereignty, that...

(Interruptions)

Let me answer!

Mr Speaker: We are in the temple of democracy!

The Prime Minister: I am reminding you, you have forgotten - alleging all sorts of things, and that we have even given up sovereignty. Let alone that we have given the island, we have given sovereignty to India and so on. I can recall and I can mention a number of instances where you have made such allegations and I have always said...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: We are in the temple of democracy, please!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: On a point of order...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Make sure...

Dr. Boolell: Yes!

Mr Speaker: I have not given you the floor.

Dr. Boolell: Alright!

Mr Speaker: It is not because you say 'point of order', you have the floor.

(Interruptions)

Learn that I must give you the floor and let me remind you, if your point of order is fraudulent, I will not allow it. Carry on!

Dr. Boolell: Fraudulent! The word used by the Prime Minister is uncalled for non-parliamentary. Where is the allegation? I have put a question, I am simply seeking a simple answer from a responsible Prime Minister.

Mr Speaker: There is no point of order, please!

(Interruptions)

Continue!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Well, Mr Speaker, Sir, I can quote Hansard where you have made such statements to this House.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Please!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: I will! I will!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You are in the temple of democracy!

Dr. Boolell: But you are not....

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You are not respecting the temple of democracy!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: So, Mr Speaker, Sir, I was saying that has always been the stand. I am talking about hon. Dr. Boolell, I am not talking about the Labour Party, but about hon. Dr. Boolell. I have always said that those allegations are false, they are frivolous, and I have always reassured the House that those infrastructural developments, once completed, – I am talking mainly of the airstrip and the jetty – they will be fully under the control of the authorities of the Republic of Mauritius, namely, the department of Civil Aviation for the airstrip and the Mauritius Ports Authority for the jetty.

I am surprised today that hon. Dr. Boolell is making like a 90 degree turn, saying that now we have to co-manage with India. So, I leave it to the people to conclude the different stands that have been taken by the hon. Member but let me say that there is not going to be

any co-management, there is going to be only one management that is, by the authorities of the Republic of Mauritius.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Tour!

Ms Tour: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House of the sanitary protocol currently in place in Agaléga in view of the COVID-19 situation?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, the protocol has, of course, been amended at different times. In fact, any passenger including public officers or anyone crew members travelling from Mauritius to Agaléga have to comply with the latest protocol that is in place, that is a mandatory seven days quarantine if vaccinated or 14 days quarantine if unvaccinated in a quarantine facility which is recognised by the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority and a negative PCR test result on day zero on admission in the quarantine centre and on day four or day 14 prior to boarding of the vessel. And if the PCR tests are negative, the passengers will embark through a corridor from the quarantine centre to the ship under the supervision of the Police and health inspectors, and, in case the departure of the vessel is delayed, the passengers and the local crew members have to stay in quarantine until embarkation.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms J. Bérenger!

Ms J. Bérenger: The hon. Prime Minister was talking about monitoring reports. Can I ask how many monitoring reports have been received till date, whether any damage to the ecosystem has been reported and will he table a copy of those monitoring reports, please?

The Prime Minister: To reply to the last part of the question, let me say that these monitoring reports are not to be tabled. The hon. Member probably has no experience, not having been in Government. Firstly, these are for the internal use. Secondly, I have just replied that the last visit of the monitoring team has made certain observations. First of all, they have seen that there is good adherence to the different conditions that have been specified in the report, and secondly, that they have made a few recommendations. I do not want to waste the time of the House to repeat again what those recommendations have been and these are being adhered to. Concerning how many monitoring reports have we received, I do not have the information right now, but I shall have to check and, then provide it to the House.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/113 addressed to the hon. Prime Minister has been withdrawn. Also, PQs B/145, B/151, B/152, B/159, B/157, B/170, B/171, B/173, B/185, B/194, B/202 and B/205 have been withdrawn.

Last supplementary! Hon. Mrs Mayotte!

Mrs Mayotte: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister state whether Agaleans have made request to develop some Small and Medium Enterprises on the island?

The Prime Minister: Fortunately, I did not close my file! Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that on 17 February 2022, a meeting was held under the Chair of the Acting Permanent Secretary of the Prime Minister's Office regarding the possibility of developing SME sector in Agaléga. This meeting was held in the presence of representatives of SME Mauritius and further to this meeting, on 23 February 2022, discussions were held with a group of 20 Agaleans to assess their views in regard to the development of an SME sector.

The Agaleans have expressed their wish to import cattle to crossbreed the existing 15 animals for stronger breed, to boost the production of meat, fresh milk and manure, to import sheep and goats which are currently not available in Agaléga, breed chickens for self-sufficiency in eggs and poultry, import seeds for plantation. A request has accordingly been made to the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: ...to look into facilities and assistance that could be provided in terms of schemes and training as well as support in veterinarian services.

Additionally, I am informed that the development of an SME sector in Agaléga was further reinforced with a brainstorming organised by the Agaléga Island Council and the SME Mauritius Ltd. on 28 March of this year under the Chair of Mr Gino Alfred, the Chairperson of Agaléga Island Council.

Mr Speaker: Exceptionally, I am giving you the last question since you are the mover of the question.

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes, it must be my birthday today! Coming back to the issue of deposit, when I said that there was a deposit of Rs500,000; in fact there was *une proposition de l'OIDC pour une caution à travers une obligation d'une garantie bancaire de R 403,000*

et non pas R 500,000. But this was suspended through an announcement by the hon. Prime Minister in Parliament which dates back to 15 December 2020. Therefore, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister if this can be lifted indefinitely?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member has already answered the question. Whether it is lifted indefinitely, it is lifted. There is no such condition right now until, of course, the time we shall see in the future.

Mr Speaker: Time over! Hon. Members, I will break here for one and a half hours.

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

On resuming at 2.40 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Remain seated and be seated! Hon. Armance!

INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANISATION REPORT - CORRECTIVE MEASURES

(No. B/119) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the report on the International Maritime Organisation, he will state the main findings and recommendations contained therein, indicating the corrective measure, if any, his Ministry proposes to take in relation thereto and table copy thereof.

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply made by the hon. Prime Minister to PQ B/708 of 20 July 2021 relating to the audit carried out at the Mauritius Ports Authority in 2020, whereby the House was informed that the International Maritime Organization Member State Audit Scheme (IMSAS) has become mandatory since 01 January 2016 and is to be carried out every seven years. The IMSAS audit is applicable to all International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Member States.

The Republic of Mauritius was audited from 08 to 17 February 2020 by three Auditors drawn from Italy, Norway and the IMO Secretariat.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the following Ministries/Departments were involved in the IMSAS audit exercise for year 2020 –

- (i) the Shipping Division of the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping;

- (ii) the Department of Environment of the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change;
- (iii) the Mauritius Hydrographic Service of the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning.

Mr Armance: On a point of order! Mr Speaker, Sir, my question is strictly related to his Ministry only. I do not know why he is going on the answer of the Prime Minister. Can he just stick to what is in the question?

Mr Speaker: Okay. You made your point of order. I do not understand why you call it a point of order. You are a seasoned politician, you should know that I have no control over the reply of the executive, over the reply of a Minister. You put your question, it depends - let me stand up to give you an example - on how you frame your question and how you either tighten your question or enlarge your question. I am not here to give lessons to put question.

Please, continue!

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not a long answer, do not worry. Mr Speaker, Sir, the IMSAS final report for the Republic of Mauritius was submitted on 29 April 2021 by the audit team of the IMO through the Director of Shipping with the IMSAS special point of contact.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Auditors have assessed the extent of implementation of mandatory IMO instruments by the Republic of Mauritius. While acknowledging the efforts deployed by the Ministry and other concerned stakeholders to meet the requirements of IMO Conventions, the report also draws attention to the challenges that the country is facing.

Indeed, Mr Speaker, Sir, the main reason for the limitations noted in the report is the fact that there is an ongoing acute shortage of qualified personnel/maritime experts, whether in the technical or legal cadre, to enable the country to effectively fulfil its legal obligations as a member State of IMO.

The valuable feedback received through the audit is intended to assist Mauritius in improving its own capacity to implement the applicable instruments.

At one point in time, the Shipping Division of my Ministry had in post six surveyors namely, three marine engineering surveyors and three nautical surveyors.

Unfortunately, four of these six surveyors have resigned to join the private sector. So due to the high scarcity factor in this sector, only one recruitment exercise of so many has been successful, with the recruitment of only one nautical surveyor.

The necessary follow-up for the implementation of the Corrective Action Plan, including the target dates, has already been initiated at the level of the Shipping Division of my Ministry under the assistance of the IMO for the implementation of the IMO instruments. The target dates for the implementation of the Action Plan span from 30 June 2021 to 31 December 2022.

With your permission, I am tabling a copy of the IMSAS Audit Report, together with a listing of the main findings, recommendation and status of implementation.

Thank you.

Mr Armance: In the same answer given by the Prime Minister last time, he mentioned that there were root causes and all of a non-compliance that was mentioned. You also mentioned lack of maritime expertise. Can you just give us some more details about what were the root causes and what was mentioned as being non-compliance?

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, being given that it is a technical audit report, I would invite the hon. Member to go through the report and the main findings, recommendations and the status of implementation, and thereafter, come forward with a specific question. In fact, it is all technical, but everything has been put in the recommendations and the status you will see. There are so many items. You can go through it and come later with a specific question.

Mr Armance: Regarding the Action Plan that was mentioned, we know that implementation should be completed by 31 December 2022, have you set up a Committee at the level of your Ministry to look upon the implementation?

Mr Maudhoo: In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Action Plan has already started. So, I will table every detail. It is quite lengthy. So, that's why I have put all; it is in there. You can go through it. You will see all the actions that have already been implemented and some are still pending - I just gave the reason - due to scarcity factor in this sector of maritime expert, but we are looking into that also.

Mr Armance: Is the Minister ensuring the House that he will implement all the recommendations by 31 December 2022?

Mr Maudhoo: Let's come to the bridge because right now it is on-going. I think the Director of Shipping and other stakeholders; everybody has got their part of responsibility with regard to all the obligations under the IMO instrument.

Mr Armance: One last supplementary! He mentioned that there had been a recruitment exercise, but only one was successful. So, what is your plan regarding this lack of maritime expertise?

Mr Maudhoo: In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, our Ministry is also contemplating to recruit foreign expert in case - there are various on-going recruitment exercise right now - if we are unsuccessful, definitely we will go for foreign expert to be able to comply to the IMO instruments.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/196 would be replied by the hon. Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection.

PQ B/204 would be replied by the hon. Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping.

PQs B/145, B/151, B/152, B/159, B/167, B/170, B/171, B/173, B/185, B/194, B/202, and B/205 have been withdrawn.

Hon. Mrs Mayotte!

Mrs Mayotte: B/120!

CENTRAL WATER AUTHORITY - WATER METER CONNECTIVITY - APPLICATIONS

(No. B/120) **Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to water meter connectivity, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the number of applications therefor received since January 2020 to date, indicating the outcome thereof.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Central Water Authority that the fixing of water meters is outsourced to contractors on a zonal basis.

A bidding exercise was initiated by the Central Water Authority in June 2021 for the appointment of fresh Contractors for a period of one year. In January 2022, the Central

Procurement Board approved the award of the new contracts for the fixing of water meters for five zones. No award was made in respect of the water supply zone (South). New contracts for fixing of new water meters thus, started in the months of February and March 2022.

A process of new supply involves several steps such as application, conduct of survey, issue of invoice for payment and connection by contractors after receipt of payment. A number of factors, moreover, are taken into consideration while processing application for new connections, including site conditions, topography of land, grant of wayleaves, presence of existing network, and traffic constraints, among others.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Central Water Authority that the number of applications received for water connection in the six water supply zones from 01 January 2020 to 31 March 2022 stands at 21,148. As at date, 12,808 connections have already been made. The remaining 8,340 applications are either at survey stages or in the process of connection or awaiting payment from applicant.

The delay in the installation of the meters has been mainly caused due to COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions as well as delay in the appointment of Contractors and wayleave issues.

The contractors have been requested to mobilise additional resources in order to catch up on the applications received. Moreover, the Central Water Authority is increasing the availability of resources at inspectorate level to further expedite the processing of applications for installation of new meters.

According to the Central Water Authority's programme of work, it is expected that current applications for new water connection where payment has already been effected, would be completed within 2 months' time.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Mayotte: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have one supplementary question. In the 2021-2022 Budget measures, it is mentioned that someone who would apply for water connection, will be connected within 14 days. Can the hon. Minister state whether this measure is being implemented? Thank you.

Mr Lesjongard: In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, in the Explanatory Notes to the Budget Speech 2021-2022, it is mentioned, and I quote –

“The Central Water Authority would invest in a new front-end and back-end system to enable online application for a new water connection and automatic processing of same. The processes will be streamlined to ensure a new water connection is completed within 14 calendar days. Statistics will be published accordingly”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in this connection, I understand that meetings have been held with the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development and also with the Economic Development Board with a view to implementing this measure with the aim of expediting access to public utilities.

I understand that the CWA is actively looking into the possibility of installing the new front-end and back-end system. Once this is operational, I believe that connections will be able to be done within that 14 calendar days.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he has been informed that there are problems with the new meters that are being fixed; they are faulty insofar as they record, even when there is no water supply when you open the tap, the air that moves inside makes the meter run and consequently, people are having water bills of the order of Rs40,000 accumulated, and when they touch bills with the CWA for a long time, no action is taken?

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am aware that there are some faulty meters on the network and that there is an existing procedure for those who have faulty meters. I understand that in the past few months, the Central Water Authority has replaced some 40,000 defective meters, and that goes years ago. So, this process is ongoing, Mr Speaker, Sir. Where there are faulty meters, the consumers can make a complaint at the level of the CWA and there are established procedures and the authority will do the needful first to check the veracity of what the consumer has stated, and thereby, if this is confirmed, replace the faulty meters.

Dr. Aumeer: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he has information from the Central Water Authority with regard to new applicants on their CWA network, whether they will be serviced by the so-called intelligent distance meters and sensors which has been a pilot project, I understand in Rose Hill, as this will help to counterfeit illegal connections and over-billing? Thank you.

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, of course, Mr Speaker, Sir. New meters that will be installed in the days/months to come, will be smart meters. We are not installing call meters any more at the level of the CWA.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Mr Assirvaden: Pour rebondir sur la question de mon ami, l'honorable Osman Mahomed, est-ce que le ministre peut informer la Chambre quel est le pourcentage de *default meter* dans le dernier *consignment* des *meters* qu'on a reçu ? Est-ce que le pourcentage est assez haut ou c'est normal ?

Mr Lesjongard : Merci, M. le président. Je n'ai pas ces données avec moi. Si l'honorable membre pose une question spécifique, je serai honoré de répondre à la question. Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Next question !

DAMAGED EX-SUPREME COURT COMPOUND – MUNICIPAL CITY COUNCIL OF PORT LOUIS – ACTIONS

(No. B/121) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the vertically cracked masonry boundary wall of the building that once housed the offices of the Supreme Court along George Guibert Street, near its junction with Poudrière Street, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal City Council of Port Louis, information as to the actions being envisaged in relation thereto, if any.

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 following the passage of cyclone Batsirai, the Metropolitan South Police had observed that some stones had detached from a stone wall enclosing the ex-Supreme Court compound at corner George Guibert and Poudrière Streets, Port Louis thereby representing a potential hazard to the general public and vehicular traffic.

The Metropolitan South Police had, in February, referred the matter to the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development. Consequently, the Civil Engineering Section of the latter Ministry effected a site visit on 07 March 2022 and requested the Municipal City Council to have the George Guibert street closed with immediate effect.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed that the issue of cracked walls concerns two sites adjacent to each other along George Guibert Street, Port Louis. During a site visit effected by the Council on 10 March 2022, a few fallen stones were visible on the ground and a few loose rocks were found on the top of a stone wall belonging to Deramann Group. Consequently, warning tapes were immediately placed to secure the site. On 11 March 2022, the loose rocks were removed and kept in the owner's adjacent compound. A further site visit was carried out on 23 March 2022, whereby the Police, as well as the owner were present and the owner was requested to pull down the wall.

I am further informed that in line with section 22 of the Building Control Act, a notice was served to Mr Sunil Purbhoonauth, Property Manager, Deramann Group, on 31 March 2022 for the latter to secure the whole length of the wall and to pull down or repair the whole length of the wall within 7 days from the date of the Notice.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards the vertically cracked masonry boundary wall at the ex-Supreme Court compound, given that the site is vested in the Attorney General's Office, I am informed that the Council has already requested the latter, on 01 April, to take appropriate remedial measures to pull down or repair the whole length of the wall. Moreover, the Council has requested the Police to ensure strict surveillance along Georges Guilbert Street. Additionally, metal barriers have been placed at both ends of the road to prohibit vehicular and pedestrian movement.

Mr Osman Mahomed: On two occasions the Minister has mentioned the words 'pull down'; can I ask him to reconsider because this is one of the last vestige in Port Louis of the *patrimoine* dating the French Colonial days, and help is available in order to assist the Municipality Council of Port Louis. I am in the presence of an email addressed to the Lord Mayor of Port Louis, copied to the Chief Executive of the Municipal Council of Port Louis, from *Nou Patrimoine, Nou Richesse*, also *SOS Patrimoine*, requesting for meeting so as to address the issue of the long-term plan for the City Council to be able to maintain, upgrade, rehabilitate, restore and support all remaining structures of cultural, historical and visual significance within its jurisdiction. For nearly one year now, there has been no response from the Municipal Council of Port Louis.

Mr Speaker: Your question, please! Your question!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Can I table this for the attention of the Minister, for him to take it up with the Lord Mayor on the way forward for this one?

Dr. Husnoo: I have got some notes from the City Council of Port Louis that this building is not registered with the National Heritage.

Mr Speaker: So, there is no question, excuse me! There is no question on that.

Mr Osman Mahomed: There is one thing we can consider, taking up the matter with the Lord Mayor of Port Louis to accept the...

Mr Speaker: You could come with it at adjournment time.

Mr Osman Mahomed: I have put a question! The question is...

Mr Speaker: You should put concrete questions!

Mr Osman Mahomed: This is not a concrete question?

Mr Speaker: No! This is a request!

Mr Osman Mahomed: A letter that has been ...

Mr Speaker: Can you abuse question time to make requests?

Mr Osman Mahomed: No, I don't agree with you that this is an abuse!

Mr Speaker: No!

Another question, please!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Can I table it for the attention of the Minister?

Also, if I ask a question, you will tell me that I am abusing question time. There is an existing *jumelage* between Paris and Port Louis, and it covers this aspect of things. I have spoken to the former Lord Mayor, Mr Bashir Khodabux, yesterday; can this be contemplated as well so that this vestige is not pulled down?

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have checked with the City Council of Port Louis –

- (i) first is the building is not registered with the National Heritage office,
- (ii) but anyway I am going to refer to him for the further correspondence that you have mentioned.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, you are requested for the rest of question time to put concrete questions during supplementary question time!

(Interruptions)

Concrete questions, please!

Okay, next supplementary! Any other supplementary!

Next question!

Mr Ramful: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mine is a concrete question: B/122.

DUBAI EXPO 2020 – COSTS – EVENTS

(No. B/122) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Dubai Expo 2020, he will –

- (a) state the total costs incurred by the Mauritian Government in terms of the setting up and operation of the Mauritian Pavilion, events organised and official visits attended by Mauritian delegates, giving a breakdown thereof, and
- (b) obtain from the Economic Development Board, information as to the number of business events organised thereat, indicating in each case the number of participants attending same and if they have shown investment and/or trade interests.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, c'est la première fois dans l'histoire de l'exposition universelle, organisée sous la bannière du Bureau international des expositions (BIE), que l'exposition se tient dans la région de l'Afrique/Moyen-Orient. Il s'agissait d'ailleurs de la première grande rencontre internationale depuis l'apparition de la pandémie de la COVID-19. Et l'évènement a accueilli 192 pays.

À un moment où tous les pays ont subi les effets brutaux de la COVID-19 sur leur économie, le gouvernement de Dubaï a prouvé au monde entier que nous pouvions sortir plus forts de la crise.

M. le président, l'Expo 2020 a en effet fourni une excellente plateforme pour Maurice afin de montrer ses atouts aux opérateurs internationaux, d'améliorer notre visibilité afin de promouvoir Maurice comme une plateforme régionale d'approvisionnement et d'investissement.

Le pavillon de Maurice a attiré au total 616,781 visiteurs.

De nombreux pays présents à l'exposition universelle ont saisi cette occasion pour présenter leurs offres, organiser des conférences et des réunions d'affaires en marge de

l'exposition. Comme eux, Maurice a ainsi profité de sa participation pour maximiser sa visibilité et se positionner comme une destination de choix pour les investissements et la conduite des affaires.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne la partie (a) de la question, je souhaite informer la Chambre que le gouvernement des Émirats Arabes Unis (EAU) a fourni à Maurice un pavillon sponsorisé de 212 mètres carrés, estimé à 1,5 millions de dollars américains, soit environ R 65 millions.

Le coût supplémentaire pour le gouvernement mauricien pour la mise en place et le fonctionnement du pavillon mauricien, y compris l'organisation des événements, étaient de R 43,9 millions.

Ce montant comprend –

- R 18,8 millions pour le fonctionnement du pavillon pendant la période de six mois,
- R 17,6 millions pour la logistique, le développement des œuvres d'art, la décoration et l'embellissement de notre pavillon, et
- R 7,5 millions pour l'organisation des événements.

Je souhaite informer la Chambre que d'autres pays ont déployé des ressources massives pour leur participation à l'Expo.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne la partie (b) de la question, j'ai été informé par l'*Economic Development Board* que 6 événements d'affaires ont été organisés pendant l'Expo 2020. Ces forums couvraient les opportunités d'investissement et de commerce à Maurice, notamment dans les secteurs des services financiers, de l'immobilier et du développement immobilier, du tourisme, des technologies, de l'information et de la communication, des ports francs, de la logistique et de l'industrie manufacturière. Ces événements, combinés, ont vu la participation de plus de 1,150 professionnels étrangers.

J'ai également été informé par l'*EDB* que 18 pistes importantes ont été générées dans le secteur bancaire, l'hôtellerie et l'immobilier, les ports francs et la logistique et les TIC. 8 projets sont déjà dans le *pipeline* de l'*EDB* pour s'installer à Maurice ou s'approvisionner à Maurice avec un montant d'investissement estimé à R 4,5 milliards.

En outre, plus de 15,000 visiteurs du pavillon de Maurice se sont inscrits pour visiter l'île en tant que touristes. Ce ne sont là que les résultats immédiats de notre participation à l'Expo 2020 de Dubaï.

Je dois également informer l'Assemblée que lors de ma visite à Dubaï, j'ai discuté et obtenu un bureau gratuit pour deux ans pour abriter le bureau de représentation de l'*EDB* dans les locaux de la Chambre de commerce et d'industrie de Dubaï à Deira. Ce bureau a été inauguré en marge des célébrations de la fête nationale.

En outre, l'*EDB* a signé des protocoles d'accord avec la Chambre de commerce et d'industrie de Dubaï, la Chambre de commerce et d'industrie d'Abu Dhabi ainsi que la Fédération des Chambres de Commerce et d'Industrie des Émirats Arabes Unis afin de soutenir les initiatives de promotion du commerce et des investissements dans les Emirats.

M. le président, au milieu des géants de l'Expo 2020 de Dubaï, Maurice à maximiser ses efforts pour s'assurer que sa participation soit pertinente, significative et produise des résultats tangibles.

À la veille des célébrations de notre fête nationale à l'Expo 2020 de Dubaï, son Altesse Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, dirigeant de Dubaï, Vice-président et Premier ministre des Émirats Arabes Unis, a visité le pavillon de Maurice. Plusieurs autres dignitaires des Émirats Arabes Unis et d'autres pays ont également visité le pavillon Maurice.

Nous sommes convaincus que la visibilité que nous avons créée pour notre pays, au milieu de cette pandémie mondiale, portera ses fruits.

Merci.

Mr Ramful: I have asked one specific question, Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the expenses in relation to the ministerial delegation, specifically the expenses incurred by the ministerial delegations. I am given to understand there were 13 ministerial delegations. What were the expenses in relation to these ministerial delegations?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, je vais vérifier. Ici, j'ai demandé les informations à l'*Economic Development Board*. On m'a donné des informations...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Padayachy: Je peux répondre ?

(Interruptions)

J'ai eu des informations concernant...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Let the Minister reply!

Dr. Padayachy: ...six forums organisés par l'*EDB*. Donc, j'ai répondu par rapport à ces six forums. M. le président, la question était portée sur si je le relis -

“(a) state the total costs incurred by the Mauritian Government in terms of the setting up and operation of the Mauritian Pavilion, events organised and official visits attended by Mauritian delegates.”

J'ai dit, il y a six forums et il y a eu 1,150 personnes qui sont venues pendant ces forums.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Ramful: Well, I will come back to the same question. If you look at the question, I have asked the costs incurred by the ministerial delegation.

Dr. Padayachy: Non, M. le président...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Now, you are changing your question.

Dr. Padayachy: Je peux relire la question? Je relis?

Mr Speaker: You said 13 delegations and the Minister replied he does not have the figure. Okay. This is quite in order. Now, if you are asking the cost in general, then the Minister...

Dr. Padayachy: Oui, on m'a demandé - *state the total costs incurred by the Mauritian Government*. J'ai dit dans ma réponse...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Okay. So, I am satisfied.

Let me give hon. Juman the floor.

Mr Juman: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister mentioned Rs109 m. for the rental and setting up of the Mauritian Pavilion for the promotion of Mauritius, Mauritian products, Mauritian *savoir-faire*. So, why, hon. Minister, on 17 March 2022, students from Fashion and Design Institute of Mauritius were compelled to display their product at the France pavilion instead of Mauritian pavilion in the presence of Minister Bholah and his *attaché de presse* who was part of the delegation?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, j'aimerais déjà rectifier peut-être mais j'ai parlé d'une dépense, le coût pour le gouvernement mauricien de R 43,9 millions et non de R 100 millions ou R 110 millions.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Please!

Dr. Padayachy: C'est ça que j'aimerais préciser R 43,9 millions...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: We are in the temple of

Dr. Padayachy:...et deuxième...

Mr Speaker: Excuse me Minister. We are in the temple of democracy.

(Interruptions)

You have to respect the temple. The Minister is replying and re-replying. What is this?

(Interruptions)

Please!

Dr. Padayachy: Et j'ajoute, je ne suis pas au courant de ce que vous venez de dire mais je pense que si jamais on a eu parfois à bouger et à ne pas pouvoir exposer dans le pavillon national parce que déjà, si on avait pris un pavillon plus grand, ça nous aurait coûté plus cher mais surtout parce qu'il y avait beaucoup de personnes qui visitaient notre pavillon et donc peut-être qu'il y avait un problème de place.

Pour cela, M. le président, je souhaiterais demander à l'honorable membre de poser une question spécifique à l'honorable Bholah.

Mr Speaker: Good! Now, hon. Assirvaden !

Mr Assirvaden: Merci, M. le président. M. le ministre parle de R 43 millions dépensées par le gouvernement mauricien pour l'Expo Dubaï 2020. Est-ce qu'on peut confirmer - puisque c'est le ministère des Finances qui approuve les voyages des ministres - le nombre de ministres qui ont visité l'Expo Dubaï 2020?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, dans la liste des *PQs* aujourd'hui j'ai une question concernant les différentes délégations ministérielles et leur composition etc. Malheureusement, je ne vais pas répondre à cette question maintenant parce qu'elle ne correspond pas à celle demandée par l'honorable membre.

(Interruptions)

Mais je vais répondre. Bien sûr, je vais répondre.

Mr Speaker: I have told you, hon. Members, your question should be specific. Your question should be related to the main question.

(Interruptions)

It may be your opinion. It is not my opinion.

Dr. Boolell: It is the opinion shared by the ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No, but you do not have the floor! To start with you do not have the floor!

(Interruptions)

You do not have the floor! You do not have the floor! You are not having the floor!

(Interruptions)

Okay, I am satisfied with the reply and the question. Please!

Mr Ramful: Among those expenses that the hon. Minister has stated, there were 13 missions for Ministers that were approved by the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development. Does the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development think that it was a good utilisation of public funds, in those difficult circumstances when we have a public debt of *R 419 milliards* and we are advised to cut costs to approve those missions?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, quand vous êtes en train de gérer un pays, quand vous êtes des décideurs publiques, vous devez faire des choix. Faire un choix et dépenser R

43.9 millions pour générer un minimum – je dis bien un minimum – de R4.5 milliards d'investissements directes et surtout en devises étrangères, je pense que c'était une bonne opportunité. Merci.

Mr Speaker: The question has been sufficiently canvassed. The Table has been advised that question B/154, B/168, B/201, B/188, B/181, B/148, B/177, B/191, B/199, B/200 have been withdrawn. Next question!

PHARMACEUTICAL PRODUCTS - PRICE INCREASE SINCE 2015

(No. B/123) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the private retail pharmacies, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Pharmacy Board, information as to the 15 pharmaceutical products that are mostly purchased thereat, indicating the average percentage increase in the retail prices thereof since 2015 and the factors accounting therefor.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the 15 pharmaceutical products that are mostly purchased thereat are as follows –

1. Diamicron;
2. Galvus;
3. Glipmevia;
4. Fervex;
5. Panadol;
6. Doliprane;
7. Revitalose;
8. Voltaren;
9. Zentel;
10. Glucophage;
11. Ventolin (mauritus);
12. Telma;
13. Candid B cream;
14. Olfen, and

15. Gaviscon.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the average percentage increase in the retail...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, both sides of the House!

Dr. Jagutpal: ...prices thereof since 2015, I am informed by the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection that the Price Fixing Information System became operational in 2017. As such, the records available on the System date back to that year.

I am also informed that the average percentage increase in the retail prices of the above-mentioned pharmaceutical products is 25 - 30% on a yearly basis since 2017. The main factors that account for this increase include a rise in cost, insurance and freight. The rate of exchange has also impacted on the retail price.

Mr Speaker, Sir, another factor for the increase in prices is the increase in the price of the Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API) therefore increasing the cost of manufacturing of the products.

Mr Assirvaden: Peut-être que je n'ai pas retenu, est-ce que le ministre peut préciser quelle est la marge prescrite aux pharmacies pour ces quelques médicaments ? Quelle est la marge ?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, a mark-up of 35%, that is, 11% for wholesale and 24% for retail and a special allowance of 2% is applicable on all pharmaceutical products.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can I ask the hon. Minister - maybe slightly related to the question - whether the drug Misoprostol also known as Cytotec, which is used illegally for the termination of pregnancy is on the increase, and whether his Ministry has taken any measures or can take any measures to curtail its off-counter sale?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, this medication is not on that 15 medications listed. If the hon. Member will come up with a specific question, definitely I will give the reply.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister has just mentioned the price increase in pharmaceutical products. Is he aware of the recommendations made by the Competition Commission that the law be amended to enable parallel import in

pharmaceutical products so that we can have generic medicines and, therefore, reduce the price of drugs, especially those 15 products that are commonly used?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the recommendations of the Competition Commission is under the mandate of the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection and I believe it is working on the application of those recommendations.

Mr Speaker: You have a question?

Dr. Boolell: Though the Minister agree that the massive increase in the price of pharmaceutical products is largely due to the inability of the Government to address fundamental problems like inflation, I would have expected his Ministry to liaise with the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development to address this problem because availability of drugs is of paramount importance to all those patients who suffer from acute and chronic disorders?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not agree with the observation made by the hon. Member. Nevertheless, today in the PNQ session, the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development has already given details of all the working sessions that he is having with the different stakeholders for the price mechanism and other issues.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary question!

Mr Assirvaden: Le ministre est certainement d'accord que la plupart des 15 médicaments cités sont utilisés par les diabétiques et les personnes âgées et cela pose énormément de pression sur le budget familiale de ces personnes. Est-ce que le ministre ne considère-t-il pas que le règlement qu'il a adopté au Cabinet en décembre 2021, qui permet aux pharmaciens de facturer jusqu'à R 300 par ordonnances, est-ce que ce règlement, M. le ministre, n'est pas grossièrement abusif et injuste envers la population et surtout envers les retraités et les diabétiques ?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, among those 15 medications, three are anti-diabetic drugs. It is not the majority of the drugs that are being cited here among the 15 drugs. Now, concerning the regulations, the hon. Member should have also pointed out that these regulations have come into play after the recommendations made by the Drug Commission where the pharmacists have to abide by a Code of Practice.

It is the Council's decision to prepare the Code of Practice for the pharmacists. Obviously, what has been reported in the Press, I have already given an official statement.

The Pharmacy Council too has already given its official statement. I believe this chapter is closed. There is no additional fee that the consumer has to pay for medication.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

AUDIT REPORT 2020-2021 - PUBLIC FUNDS WASTE - MEASURES

(No. B/124) 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 waste of public funds as highlighted again in the Audit Report 2020-2021, he will state the measures being taken by his Ministry to address same.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, faisant suite au dépôt du rapport du directeur de l'audit à l'Assemblée nationale, le ministère des Finances a sollicité les autres ministères afin d'analyser toutes les questions soulevées par le directeur de l'audit en vue de remédier à quelque faiblesses et lacunes.

En outre, permettez-moi d'informer l'Assemblée que la circulaire budgétaire 2022-2023 publiée par le ministère des finances pour le prochain exercice budgétaire formule expressément la demande à tous les ministères/départements d'éliminer les dépenses non-productives et de traiter les questions soulevées par le directeur de l'audit dans ses rapports lors de la formulation de leurs prévisions budgétaires.

Afin d'améliorer la gestion des dépenses, la responsabilité et la transparence, la *Finance and Audit Act* a été amendée pour obliger les ministères et les départements à inclure un plan de mise en œuvre dans leur rapport annuel. Et cela, afin d'éviter la répétition des lacunes signalées par le directeur de l'audit.

Je souhaite également souligner que l'*Office of Public Sector Governance (OPSG)*, sous l'égide du ministère des Services financiers et de la bonne gouvernance, est chargé de contrôler et de suivre les recommandations du directeur de l'audit ainsi que de rendre compte de leur mise en œuvre réussie.

En outre, le rapport annuel des ministères/départements comprend désormais une déclaration indiquant un plan de mise en œuvre des mesures correctives et de prévention de la récurrence des lacunes, en ce qui concerne la gestion des fonds publics, mentionnés dans le rapport du directeur de l'audit.

Le directeur du contrôle interne du ministère des Finances a été chargé de mettre en place une équipe dédiée pour analyser les gaspillages des fonds publics, mentionnés dans le rapport d'audit et le rapport du comité des comptes publics. Cette unité devra également préparer un plan de travail pour traiter ces questions en collaboration avec les comités d'audit des ministères et départements.

Il convient de noter que des mesures sont prises pour 190 des 201 problèmes/constatations mis en évidence dans le rapport d'audit de l'exercice 2019/2020. Un exercice similaire sera entrepris pour le rapport de l'exercice 2020/2021. Merci.

Mr Juman: M. le ministre, y a-t-il un mécanisme mis en place pour assurer un suivi ? Si oui, pourquoi n'a-t-on pas eu des retombées positives jusqu'ici d'autant que ce sont plus ou moins les mêmes ministères, les mêmes départements qui sont à chaque fois pointés du doigt?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, je rappelle à l'honorable membre que par rapport au rapport 2019/2020 sur les 201 problèmes et constatations qui a été mis en évidence, nous avons travaillé pour améliorer et donner des réponses pour 190 problèmes et constatations. Donc, nous allons répéter cet exercice. C'est sûr que c'est un exercice qui prend du temps mais en même temps, il nous faut des organes de contrôle. Il y a le directeur du contrôle interne au niveau du ministère des Finances qui travaille dessus et à chaque fois il vient avec les rapports pour améliorer le processus concernant l'audit.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much. Minister, I think, you are game for a laugh. Am I to understand and you should know better that the Office for Sector of Governance has been in operation since more than a decade? Year in, year out, you are taken to task by the Director of Audit. What concrete measures have been taken to address this issue upfront?

Dr. Padayachy: Je répète, M. le président, parce que je crois que...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Please!

Dr. Padayachy: ... l'honorable membre – et en plus, il a cette mauvaise habitude de commenter en même temps qu'on fait la réponse. S'il vous plaît, écoutez la réponse.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Please!

Dr. Padayachy: Je viens de le dire. Le directeur de l'audit fait son rapport et nous, au niveau de ce gouvernement, nous avons mis en place des contrôles et nous travaillons pour améliorer cette gestion avec la bonne gouvernance. Donc, nous travaillons. Il y a eu des résultats et on les a publiés dans le dernier budget.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Will the hon. Minister agree with me that it is high time to amend the law for those who are responsible for wastage of public funds, are prosecuted?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, c'est une noble suggestion de la part de l'honorable membre et ce sera pris en considération. Je vais débattre de cela avec le ministère et puis on va travailler dessus. Mais je le redis et j'aimerais que ce soit entendu ici. Au niveau de chaque ministère - et ça j'aimerais qu'on comprenne - les fonctionnaires font un travail formidable pour essayer d'améliorer la vie de la population en entier. Et c'est sûr que de temps à autre vous avez des problèmes dans la gestion et le but, c'est ça le garde-fou. On a un garde-fou avec le bureau...

Mr Speaker: Social distancing!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Padayachy: ...le bureau de l'audit qui nous dit comment améliorer la gestion des finances publiques. Et cela est un formidable outil de démocratie car ce directeur, en toute indépendance, il nous dit où il faut améliorer et nous faisons en sorte d'améliorer la gestion de la finance publique. Mais c'est sûr qu'une gestion parfaite des finances publiques est très difficilement atteignable. Merci.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary. MP Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister is aware that the report of the Director of Audit came out last week and he highlighted that only 20% of his recommendations was implemented. So, is the hon. Minister satisfied with this figure and will he also take a commitment on behalf of the Government and the nation that henceforth Ministers will not give verbal instructions to civil servants to carry out procurement exercise?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, 20%, 10%, 30%, nous travaillons pour améliorer la gestion des finances publiques et il n'est pas du ressort du ministère des Finances de prendre ce genre d'engagement. Nous travaillons de concert avec les autres ministères et nous faisons

en sorte d'améliorer la gestion des finances publiques pour le bien-être de toute la population.
Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Ms Tour: B/125!

DANGEROUS DRUGS - INJECTABLE & NON-INJECTABLE USERS

(No. B/125) 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 –

- (a) estimated number of injectable and non-injectable users thereof, district-wise, and
- (b) substitution, therapies and support programmes being proposed thereto, indicating the eligibility criteria to benefit thereunder.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will be replying to both PQs B/125 and B/137 together as they relate to the same subject matter.

Mr Speaker, Sir, dangerous drugs are drugs like opioids, cannabinoids, stimulants, narcotics and psychotropics.

People Who Inject Drugs (PWIDs) are injecting drug users, while People Who Use Drugs (PWUDs) are non-injecting drug users who use illicit drugs.

According to the Integrated Biological and Behavioural Surveillance Survey (IBBS) 2020, the estimated population size of People Who Inject Drugs in 2020, in the island of Mauritius, was 6,600.

Furthermore, it is estimated that there are around 55,000 non-injecting drug users according to the National Survey among People Who Use Drugs carried out in September 2021 by the National Drug Secretariat under the Prime Minister's Office.

As regards the estimated number of People Who Inject Drugs and those who use non-injectable drugs district-wise, no such information is available.

Mr Speaker Sir, with regard to part (b) of question B/125 and PQ B/137, you may wish to note that my Ministry offers the following substitution therapies, support programmes and rehabilitation services –

(a) Needle Exchange Programme

This programme is a Government-led outreach programme targeting People Who Inject Drugs with a view to curb the trend of HIV and Hepatitis B and C infection in this vulnerable population.

The programme is jointly implemented by the Ministry of Health & Wellness and by the Non-Governmental Organisation CUT (*Collectif Urgence Toxicida*) and, recently, the NGO *AILES*. There is a total of forty-five (45) Needle Exchange Programme sites.

Sterile needles, syringes, alcohol swabs and condoms are distributed to beneficiaries of the programme run both by my Ministry and the NGOs.

(b) Methadone Substitution Therapy

As at date, around 6,500 beneficiaries are on the maintenance programme and accessing their daily doses at 48 dispensing points throughout the country, including the four sites within the prisons.

The four Methadone Day Care Centres are operational at –

1. Sainte Croix;
2. Cassis;
3. Mahebourg, and
4. Frangipane Drug Treatment & Rehabilitation Centre (FTRC) at Brown Sequard Mental Health Care Centre Beau Bassin.

(c) The third programme is the Addiction Units.

The Drug Addiction Units are found at Long Mountain Hospital, Dr. B. Cheong Hospital, Flacq, Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital, Victoria Hospital and Mahebourg Hospital.

All the services provided are based on a combination of psychosocial and pharmacotherapies, including detoxification, after-care and involve family, friends and social workers.

(d) The fourth programme is the Suboxone/Naltrexone Treatment

People who inject Drugs are also offered a detoxification programme. The Opioid Detoxification Centre at Mahebourg has, as its main objective, to conduct heroin detoxification using reduced doses of Suboxone and Naltrexone in a protected ward

environment over a period of 2 weeks to help people with heroin dependence achieve a drug free lifestyle.

(e) The fifth programme is the Residential Rehabilitation Centres

With regard to people who use drugs, there are currently three residential drug treatment and rehabilitation centres operational under my Ministry as follows –

- Nénuphar Centre at Long Mountain with a capacity of 12 beds, for rehabilitation mainly of minors and young people under the age of 23, and
- Frangipane Centre at Beau Bassin with a capacity of 12 beds, for rehabilitation of male adults aged 18 and above.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the therapies are offered at the rehabilitation centres mentioned above are as follows –

- general counselling;
- relapse prevention strategies;
- family therapy;
- motivational therapy;
- group and individual counselling, and
- cognitive behavioural therapy.

All the services provided are based on a combination of psychosocial and pharmacotherapies including detoxification, after-care and with family, friends and social workers involved.

The service is offered in full confidentiality to all people who use drugs and tailor-made with respect to the type of drug of concern.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the eligibility criteria to benefit from substitution therapies and support programmes, the following factors are taken into consideration –

- (i) outcome of previous abstinence-based treatments;
- (ii) age of patient;
- (iii) duration of opioid use;
- (iv) patient preference;

(v) type of opioid used, and

(vi) amount of opioid used.

Thank you.

Ms Tour: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether his Ministry has worked out any specific programme for the rehabilitation of female drug users?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, yes. In fact, my Ministry is making separate special wards for the rehabilitation of female drug users and that dedicated centre will be at Brown Sequard Hospital. This new detoxification and rehabilitation centre will be operational in some weeks' time. It will offer patients treatment using Suboxone and Naltrexone as well as another option for patients who do not wish to be induced on these treatments, that is, the methadone. This Centre will be led by a psychiatrist supported by Medical Officer, Psychologists, trained Nursing Staff as well as Social Worker. It will offer family motivational and cognitive therapy. Patients will also be empowered with appropriate life skills for this move reintegration into the society.

Mr Abbas Mamode: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the Minister inform the House on progress made regarding the setting up of a Drug Offenders Administrative Panel?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the setting up of a DOAP (Drug Offenders Administrative Panel), is, in fact, a recommendation of the Commission of Enquiry on Drugs. The House will note that Cabinet has already given its approval for the setting up of this panel which will be completely detached from the criminal justice system. The DOAP will ensure that victims of substance abuse are given a chance to go on rehabilitation. The Ministry of Finance has already given approval for its financing which amounts to some Rs15 m. yearly. A proposed location for the setting up of the DOAP has already been identified at Brown Sequard Hospital. I am informed that we should now bring amendments to the Dangerous Drugs Act and also draft a new Bill. The first meeting regrouping representatives of the Police, the Director of Public Prosecution and the Forensic Science Laboratory for their respective inputs with regard to the drafting of the new Bill has already been conducted.

Mr Abbas Mamode: Can the Minister inform the House if Codeine is still being used for rehabilitation of drug victims?

Dr. Jagutpal: No, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am informed that Codeine-based treatment is no longer used in Mauritius. In fact, the decision was unanimously taken following a working session with Dr. Mete, Chief Addictology Services at the *Centre Hospitalier et Universitaire de la Réunion*, representatives of nine NGOs working for the rehabilitation of drug victims and officers of my Ministry. Codeine-based treatment is an old treatment which is no longer in use in other countries as the success rate is very low. The same tendency was noted in Mauritius and the low success rate was detrimental to victims who wanted to rehabilitate themselves as it gave them a sense of failure and low self-esteem.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. In view of the increasing number of drug users in the country and the expectation that is approximately 500 to 700 yearly, will his Ministry consider as part of substitution therapy, the take-home dose which is widely used in Europe now, particularly in a different formulation, considering the overcrowding of methadone at dispensing sites?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Member is perfectly right. Even the Commission has recommended take-home doses but the methadone that we dispense to patients cannot be kept for more than 24 hours. So, we have to work out another formula for take-home doses. We have, so far, been able to introduce take-home doses especially on Saturdays, for those who are attending the substitution therapy on methadone so that they can have it till Monday, but we have to change the method before implementing this.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

CENTRAL WATER AUTHORITY – WATER TANK ACQUISITION

(No. B/126) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the acquisition of 10 water tankers by the Central Water Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to the –

- (a) cost thereof;
- (b) make and country of origin thereof, and
- (c) name of the supplier thereof.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Central Water Authority that bids were launched in November 2020 for the supply of ten (10) Water Tanker Trucks of

capacity 10 m³ and fitted with Global Positioning System (GPS) in order to supplement its existing fleet and reduce its dependence on private water tankers. The services of these private water tankers were costly to the Authority and in many cases, were not satisfactory in view of the numerous representations received from several quarters. This project was funded under the Economic Recovery Programme.

The contract was subsequently awarded on 18 June 2021, to ABC Motors Co Ltd in the sum of Rs40,273,650 (Forty million two hundred and seventy-three thousand six hundred fifty Rupees) inclusive of a contingency sum of Rs3 m. and exclusive of VAT.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to parts (b) and (c) of the question, I am informed by the Central Water Authority that the make of the Water Tanker Truck is Eicher, Model Eicher PRO 6025, and the country of origin is India. As already indicated, the name of the supplier is ABC Motors Co Ltd.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you hon. Minister. Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister confirm to the House whether one of the water tankers broke down in Goodlands only a few days after becoming operational and obviously impacting negatively on the consumers? The hon. Minister had a ride on one of the lorries from Rouillard to Pamplémousses, will he confirm whether the speed limiter and water pump of these water tankers are already showing signs of being defective?

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, I had a ride in one of the trucks; specifically to verify a few issues which were brought to my attention. It is not that we had problems with only one water tanker. We had problems with five water tankers and four out of those five were located in the northern zone of the country and I know why. And, Mr Speaker, Sir, the problems were related to auxiliary equipment of the lorry, not with the engine of the lorry.

Dr. Gungapersad: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister to inform the House whether, further to the acquisition of these water tankers, if proper training has been provided to the 30 drivers as specified in the tender document and to explain why an additional item, that is a contingency cost of Rs3 m. has been added in the price schedule of the tender for the purchase of the ten water tankers?

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I believe that the heavy vehicle drivers at the CWA have been trained properly to drive those ten water tankers and I understand also that there

are drivers with long experience in driving those types of heavy trucks. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have in the fleet a total of 25 trucks now and that is why I said that the drivers have been trained to drive these vehicles.

With regard to the Rs3 m. contingency plan, I do not have the reply with me, Mr Speaker, Sir, but I can provide same to the hon. Member.

Dr. Gungapersad: Hon. Minister, may we know how successfully the problem of water shortage has been addressed after the acquisition of these ten water tankers?

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is clear that with the addition of these additional water trucks, we have been able to provide additional water to the water-stressed regions, especially in the northern, eastern and western part of the country. That is the first issue. And secondly, I said in my main reply that we have bought additional water tankers because it was costing a lot of money to the Central Water Authority to hire private tankers. The annual payment to private water tankers were of the order of Rs50 m. We bought ten trucks for Rs40 m. That is, we have saved also, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs B/153, B/175 have been withdrawn. Next question!

ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION ACT – PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

(No. B/127) **Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal)** asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the Environment Protection Act, he will state where matters stand as to the consideration for proposed amendments to be brought thereto, indicating –

- (a) if the draft proposed amendments have been circulated to stakeholders and Non-Governmental Organisations and, if so, indicate the names and denominations thereof and, if not, why not, and
- (b) when those amendments are expected to be presented to the National Assembly.

Mr Ramano: M. le président, face aux défis environnementaux émergents, une révision en profondeur de l'*Environment Protection Act 2002* a été vivement préconisée et recommandée lors des Assises de l'Environnement organisées par mon ministère en décembre 2019. Cette proposition a ensuite été retenue par mon ministère comme l'une des principales

recommandations du forum national et le financement du projet a été obtenu de l'*United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Country Office* en septembre 2020.

En novembre 2020, l'*UNDP Country Office* a fait appel aux services des consultants juridiques tant internationales que nationales, pour un examen complet du cadre législatif en vigueur régissant la gestion de l'environnement.

Les propositions finales, comprenant une série de recommandations d'amendements à l'EPA ainsi qu'un *draft Environment Protection (Amendment) Bill* sous la forme d'un document de travail, ont été soumis par le consultant le 20 mars 2022. L'approbation du gouvernement à mon ministère pour émettre des instructions de rédaction au bureau de l'*Attorney General* sur les modifications proposées à l'EPA, a été obtenue le 01 avril 2022.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne les parties (a) et (b) de la question, je dois souligner que des consultations approfondies ont été menées avec toutes les parties prenantes, y compris les ministères et départements, les autorités locales, les universités, les organisations du secteur privé, les organisations non gouvernementales (ONG) et même des membres du public.

Je dois aussi souligner, M. le président, que suite aux « Assises de l'Environnement », un Atelier Consultatif de deux jours sur la « Politique Nationale de l'Environnement » a été organisé par mon Ministère en collaboration avec l'*UNDP Country Office* en décembre 2020 où des consultations publiques relatives à la révision de l'EPA ont été poursuivies. Ce forum a regroupé un large éventail de parties prenantes et comprenant quelque 130 participants d'organisations du secteur privé; la Commission de l'environnement, la *forestry*, le tourisme, les parcs marins et de la pêche de Rodrigues et aussi le milieu universitaire et les ONG ainsi que la société civile.

Pour garantir un processus de consultation inclusif, les commentaires du public ont été invités par le biais d'un communiqué de presse, publié par mon ministère en février 2021. Les commentaires reçus dans le cadre de ce processus ont été dûment transmis aux consultants.

Plusieurs discussions ciblées avec les organismes chargés de l'application de l'EPA ont également été organisées par le département de l'Environnement de mon ministère sur des domaines thématiques spécifiques l'année dernière.

M. le président, avant la clôture de l'exercice de conseil, le document de travail contenant les amendements proposés par les consultants à l'EPA ont été largement diffusés

aux principales parties prenantes, y compris les ministères, des différents départements et des organisations du secteur privé, le (MACOSS) qui est la plate-forme nationale reconnue des ONG, les organisations de la société civile pour la promotion du développement durable, le 16 février et le 10 mars 2022, sollicitant leurs points de vue et commentaires avant une réunion consultative. En deux occasions, le MACOSS a fait circuler les propositions auprès de ses membres.

Les amendements proposés à l'EPA ont ensuite été discutés avec les parties prenantes lors d'une réunion consultative de 3 jours, tenue virtuellement avec le consultant juridique international du 14 au 16 mars 2022.

M. le président, avec votre permission, je dépose la liste des intervenants qui ont été sollicités pour participer aux consultations.

En ce qui concerne la partie (c) de la question, M. le président, étant donné que des amendements majeurs sont proposés à l'EPA face aux complexités et urgences environnementales locales et mondiales, la finalisation du projet de loi sur la protection de l'environnement (modification) par le bureau de l'*Attorney General* entraînerait vraisemblablement de nouvelles discussions avec mon ministère et d'autres organismes publics et privés. Le projet de loi devrait néanmoins être déposé à l'Assemblée nationale avant la fin de l'année.

Ms J. Bérenger: Merci. Je n'ai malheureusement pas reçu la liste de ceux qui ont reçu les amendements, j'aimerais bien la recevoir si c'est possible. Est-ce que le ministre peut nous expliquer pourquoi certaines entités ayant participé aux assises de l'environnement et au *National Consultative Workshop* ont reçu une copie de ces amendements notamment, comme il a mentionné, la *MACOSS* et *Business Mauritius*, pour que soit soumis leurs commentaires ; alors que d'autres entités, notamment certaines ONG qui ont participé elles aussi à ces deux événements n'ont pas été consultées avant que le *draft* soit envoyé au *State Law Office* ? Pourquoi cette discrimination ?

Mr Ramano: M. le président, tout le parcours qui a été mentionné en termes de consultation, les différents *stakeholders*, les organismes publics/privés, les ONG, je pense avoir été suffisamment explicite dans ma réponse en ce qui concerne toutes les consultations qui ont été faites, M. le président.

Ms J. Bérenger: Can the hon. Minister give the guarantee that with those amendments, preliminary environmental reports, additional information submitted during the

environmental process and the reason for granting and rejecting an environmental impact assessment will be compulsory and will be made public?

Mr Ramano : M. le président, les amendements à *l'Environment Protection Act* seront très détaillés. Je dois dire que c'est un document très travaillé avec toutes les parties prenantes. Les amendements proposés toucheront plusieurs thèmes. Permettez-moi de citer quelques thèmes –

- il y a toute la question en ce qui concerne le *Environmental Management and Sustainable Development* ;
- il y aura toute la question ce qui concerne le *renaming* du *National Environment Commission* sous l'appellation du *National Sustainable Development Commission* ;
- il y aura l'établissement de l'observatoire de l'environnement ;
- nous viendrons de l'avant aussi, M. le président, avec le *Environmentally Sensitive Areas* ;
- la proposition de venir de l'avant avec un *Hearsay Coordination Committee Advisory* ;
- je dois dire aussi, M. le président, que nous viendrons de l'avant avec un *Coordination Framework* en ce qui concerne le *National Oil Spill Contingency Plan* ;
- nous viendrons de l'avant aussi, M. le président, en ce qui concerne l'*enforcement and compliance mechanism* pour qu'on puisse venir de l'avant avec un *legal framework* pour donner plus de pouvoir pour qu'on puisse implémenter les mesures touchant à toute infraction concernant la protection de l'environnement,
- et aussi, M. le président, nous allons considérer toute la question en ce qui concerne le *management*, aussi toute la question de production, de consommation du plastique ; toute la question relevant de la pollution plastique, et
- en ce qui concerne *l'Environment Impact Assessment*, nous sommes totalement conscients des demandes qui ont été faites par différentes parties prenantes concernant la question de transparence en ce qui concerne l'application qui est faite pour *l'Environment Impact Assessment*, en ce qui concerne les *additional information* qui sont des fois soumis par les différents *applicants*.

Je peux à ce stade des choses, M. le président, réassurer la Chambre que nous sommes en train de prendre tout cela en considération.

Ms J. Bérenger: One last supplementary, please. Can I ask the hon. Minister to give the assurance that the strategic environment assessment will be reinstated in the Environment Protection Act?

Mr Ramano : Oui, M. le président, comme je l'ai bien mentionné - parce que pour nous, il convient de s'assurer avant tout que nous puissions avoir le *framework* nécessaire pour considérer tout ce qui touche à *l'Environment Impact Assessment*. Nous viendrons de l'avant aussi avec toute la question en ce qui concerne le *strategic environmental assessment* parce que nous considérons qu'il est important pour nous de donner tous les renseignements nécessaires aux membres du public, aux différents *stakeholders*, *at the very inception stage of a plan* et que tout un chacun puisse prendre connaissance de tout projet y relatif.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that it is PQs B/153 and B/211 which have been withdrawn instead of PQ B/175. Next question!

NEW CANCER CENTRE

(No. B/128) Ms N. Ramyad (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the New Cancer Centre, he will state –

- (a) if the Radiology, Immunotherapy, Chemotherapy departments and the casualty wards therefor are available under the same roof and, if not, why not, and
- (b) the expected date of coming into full operation thereof.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to thank the hon. Member for giving me the opportunity to inform the House of development on this major infrastructural work currently underway. With the growing number of cancer patients in Mauritius, as a responsible and caring Government and the personal dedication of our Prime Minister, we embarked on the implementation of a specialised hospital for cancer treatment at Solferino.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will note that the Radiology, Radiotherapy and Immunotherapy departments will be available in the new building of the New Cancer Centre equipped with PET SCAN /SPECT SCAN and three-dimension linear accelerator.

In addition, a day-care ward as well as several wards to accommodate 150 in-patients would be available in the new building. Immuno Compromised Patient Room, Stem Cell Laboratory, Endoscopy, UGI Endoscopy & recovery rooms, operation theatres will also be

accommodated within the new building. In addition, an outpatient department (OPD) will also be operational in the new cancer centre.

Let me also inform the House, that works in the Renovated Building was completed in October 2020 and the Cancer Centre is operational since 23 October 2020. Around 100 patients visit the hospital on a daily basis for chemotherapy sessions, and some 70 patients are given intravenous chemotherapy. With regard to in-patients, 67 beds (29 male and 38 females) are available which cater for in-patients with complications, those requiring long sessions of chemotherapy and palliative care.

Mr Speaker: Supplementary!

Ms Ramyad: From what I gather from the answer is that in the New Cancer Hospital only chemotherapy is right now available? All the other facilities will be available in time. Can I know from the Minister when will the linear accelerators, the HDR brachytherapy, the PET SCAN /SPECT SCAN which have already been acquired will be operational and the full operation of the hospital will be possible?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the PET SCAN, it is a donation from the International Atomic Energy Association and partly it is financed by the Ministry. They are doing the exercise for the procurement of this PET SCAN. Yesterday, we had a meeting with the representatives who are in Mauritius at present, and we have been informed that the equipment will be ready by end of this year.

With regard to the other equipment, the three-dimensional linear accelerators, these procedures are being undertaken by the HSCC India for the procurement of these specialised apparatus. Hopefully, if there are no other major issues, we will be receiving these equipment by mid of next year.

Mr Léopold: Has your Ministry already made provision for the surplus specialised staff that will be needed to work in such specialised place?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes. Mr Speaker, Sir, recently we have approved the National Cancer Control Program and some measures in this Action Plan are being implemented by the Ministry, especially in terms of staffing, screening program as well for cancer. So, the implementation will be in due course and we hopefully will have the trained staff, especially for these specialised equipment as well.

Ms Ramyad: Since the Chemotherapy and Radiology departments are in different hospitals, some patients have to undergo chemo in the morning and they have to undergo radiology in the afternoon and most of the time there is an overlap in the appointment times, and they miss one of the sessions and have to wait for another one, the treatment being very long. So, would the Minister review a protocol to provide transport from one hospital to another or even review the timing for the radiology and the chemo and offer it on a 24/7 basis as other services are offered in the hospitals?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me explain properly. The equipment used for radiotherapy are namely called ‘cobalt’ and the other one is the linear accelerator. They are both at the Radiotherapy Department at Victoria Hospital. Now, over here we have extended the facilities, because I believe in the past, the hon. Bérenger did raise this question, especially as to why there are so many patients attending Victoria Hospital when we don’t have that much space over there, and that was catered for at the New Cancer Centre. Now, obviously there are some overlapping in appointments or we have to accommodate transport facilities. The Ministry will look and try to make it possible to facilitate these patients.

Mr Speaker: MP Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. One of the criticisms in the treatment of cancer at Victoria Hospital is the long hours of waiting time for cancer patients. Therefore, can I ask the hon. Minister if needful can be done for the New Cancer Centre to reduce the waiting time for cancer patients as they are already suffering?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. So, if we have two or three equipment involved, especially for those coming for radiotherapy, that builds up in terms of the waiting time. But with the coming into operation of the New Cancer Centre, the waiting time will remarkably be reduced.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Quirin: B/129!

COVID-19 VACCINES – PURCHASE/DONATION

(No. B/129) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Covaxin, Covishield/AstraZeneca, Sinopharm and Sputnik Vaccines, he will state the number of doses

thereof purchased and/or obtained as donation since January 2020 to date, indicating the number thereof in each case –

- (a) administered to the population as at date, and
- (b) in stock as at date, indicating the –
 - (i) storage conditions thereof, and
 - (ii) respective expiry date thereof.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, as at date, the respective number of Covaxin, Covishield/AstraZeneca, Sinopharm and Sputnik vaccines that have been procured is as follows –

- 100,000 doses of Covishield vaccines from the Serum Institute of India and 100,800 doses of AstraZeneca through the COVAX Facility;
- 200,000 doses of Covaxin vaccines from Bharat Biotech Ltd of India;
- 1,500,000 doses of Sinopharm vaccines from Sinopharm International HongKong Ltd of China, and
- 60,000 doses of Component I and 60,000 doses of Component II of Sputnik V vaccines from the Russian Development Investment Fund.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed that the respective number of COVID-19 vaccines that has been donated by friendly countries are as follows –

- 100,000 doses of Covishield vaccines from the Government of India;
- 100,000 doses of Sinopharm vaccines from the Government of the People's Republic of China, and
- 5,000 doses of Sinopharm vaccines (Hyatt Vax) from the United Arab Emirates.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to part (a) of the question, I am informed that 100,119 persons have been administered a first dose of Covaxin and 99,062 persons have received a second dose of the same vaccine.

As regards Covishield/AstraZeneca vaccines, 161,289 persons have received a first dose and 156,294 persons have been administered a second dose, and 2,825 persons have received a booster dose of this vaccine, that is, Covishield/AstraZeneca vaccines. Now, 483,032 persons have received a first dose of the Sinopharm vaccines, while 471,750 persons

have received a second dose of the vaccine. On the other hand, 10,744 persons have received a booster dose of the Sinopharm vaccines.

Moreover, 36,956 persons were administered Component I of the Sputnik vaccine and the number of persons who have received the Component II of this vaccine is 33,302.

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to part (b) (i) and (b)(ii) of the question, I wish to inform the House that out of these 4 vaccines stated therein, only Sinopharm vaccines are still available and the stock as at 31 March 2022 was 68,800, out of which 8,800 doses will expire in June 2023 and 60,000 doses will expire in August 2023. These vaccines are being stored at 2° to 8° at Plaine Lauzun Warehouse and in the 5 regional hospitals.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, peut-on savoir de l'honorable ministre, si j'ai bien compris sa réponse, qu'il n'y a que du Sinopharm qui est actuellement en stock? Peut-on savoir aussi si son ministère compte utiliser à nouveau le vaccin Sinopharm dans son programme de vaccination ?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, this will be decided by the Vaccination Committee. So far, we do not know what is going to happen in the future; so, obviously, if ever there is the need to use this vaccine but for the time being, we are administering the Pfizer and the Moderna vaccines as booster dose.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, il était question...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Merci, M. le président. Suite à la suspension en approvisionnement du vaccin Covaxin par l'OMS il y a quelques jours de cela à cause des lacunes trouvées dans les pratiques de fabrication et malgré que pour l'instant ils n'ont pas trouvé de problèmes par rapport à l'efficacité et la sûreté de ce vaccin, mais dans l'intérêt de la santé des 100,000 personnes ayant reçu ce vaccin, le ministre a-t-il l'intention d'être prévoyant et de demander à ce segment de la population de communiquer leur état de santé et de faciliter et permettre qu'ils fassent un bilan de santé ?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, these vaccines were administered more than a year now and so far, there is no complaint on this vaccination. Should the WHO issue guidelines on what has to be done for those who have received these vaccines; obviously, the Ministry will abide by those guidelines. But, so far, there is nothing in this respect on how to, again, we should contact those persons who have received these vaccines, and it is already one year.

The Pharmacovigilance Committee, set up under my Ministry, is following up on what is happening. It has been doing all the observations on any of these vaccines. Had there been any complaint, we would definitely have reported it to the public.

Ms Ramyad: The Minister has informed the House that the total dose of AstraZeneca, both procured and donated, stand at around 300,800. Yet, you informed the House that the total dose of AstraZeneca administered stands to around 320,408. So, there seems to be a surplus of 19,608. Can the Minister inform the House as to why there may have been such a disparity?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact we received 300,800 doses of AstraZeneca and we administered 320,408 doses of this same vaccine. Why this happened is because in many of the vials, we have extra doses, and instead of having only 10 doses per vial we were able to secure 11 and 12 doses from one vial; that is why we have been able to vaccinate more than what there was in the number of vaccines that we received.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Mr Quirin: M. le président, l'honorable ministre a informé la Chambre qu'il y a un certain nombre de vaccins qui seront bientôt expirés. Peut-on savoir à combien ce chiffre, ce stock de vaccins qui seront expirés bientôt ?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, in my reply, I have given the number of doses of vaccine that will expire next year 2023 in August and in June in the Sinopharm vaccine is 68,800 that will expire in one year. So, that is the vaccines.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

CONSTITUENCY NO. 15 – RESURFACING OF ROADS – CONTRACTORS & COST

(No.B/130) **Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to Constituency No. 15, La Caverne and Phoenix, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain the list of the roads and lanes falling under the aegis of the Municipal Council of Vacoas/Phoenix that are being resurfaced and asphalted since February 2022 to date, indicating the –

- (a) names of the contractors therefor, and
- (b) total costs thereof.

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Municipal Council of Vacoas/Phoenix that an amount of Rs7 m. was earmarked under the Local Development Project 2021/2022 and Rs25 m. under the Economic Recovery Program No. 2 for the resurfacing of road in constituency Nos. 15 and 16.

With regard to part (a) of the question, the Municipal Council of Vacoas/Phoenix has, following a procurement exercise, awarded the contract to Transinvest Construction Ltd. for the project of resurfacing of roads.

Regarding part (b) of the question, as at date, work for a total amount of Rs14 m. has been undertaken. I am tabling a list of roads which have already been resurfaced in constituency No.15 by the Municipal Council of Vacoas/Phoenix, including those which are scheduled to be resurfaced in due course.

Mr Lobine: May I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister what are the criteria that are used to select the priority being given to the roads and the lanes that should be asphalted in the coming weeks or that have already been asphalted?

Dr. Husnoo: Actually, this is going to be decided by the Council and not by me. But I can assure the hon. gentleman there has been a long list of roads that have been earmarked for resurfacing.

Mr Lobine: Can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister with regard to the long list that he has received from the Council; will all those lanes and roads be resurfaced or asphalted in this financial year?

Dr. Husnoo: That is what we are planning to do.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

MAURITIAN RUPEE – DEPRECIATION – BANK OF MAURITIUS

(No.B/131) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Mauritian rupee, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Bank of Mauritius, for each of the years 2014 to 2021 and for the period 01 January 2022 to date, information as to the –

- (a) average exchange rate thereof to the United States Dollar, the Pound Sterling and the Euro, respectively, and

- (b) quantum of money spent by the Bank of Mauritius to prevent the depreciation thereof.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, en ce qui concerne la partie (a) de la question, je dépose les informations demandées sur les taux de vente indicatifs moyens du dollar américain, de la livre sterling et de l'euro pour chacune des années 2014 à 2021 ainsi que pour la période allant du 01 janvier 2022 au 31 mars 2022, telles que fournies par la Banque de Maurice. C'est une moyenne des taux de change que je suis en train de donner.

En ce qui concerne la partie (b) de la question, depuis mars 2020 à ce jour, la Banque a vendu 2,8 milliards de dollars américains sur le marché.

L'approvisionnement régulier du marché en devises étrangères par la Banque de Maurice a limité les perturbations du fonctionnement normal du marché des changes. Merci.

Mr Uteem: Regarding question (b), why is the hon. Minister giving the figures only for this year? The figures I requested were for each of the year 2014 to 2021, the amount, so that we can see a trend; how much money does the Bank of Mauritius intervene in the market to support the rupee.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, je tiens à m'excuser auprès de l'honorable membre, c'est sûr que c'est la question qu'il avait posée, c'est sûr qu'il manque cet élément dans la réponse; je vais faire le nécessaire pour déposer cette réponse à la Chambre.

Mr Uteem: Is the hon. Minister aware, based on the figures he has provided himself that the exchange rate of rupee to dollar has depreciated by 40% since 2014 to date? Doesn't he agree that one of the reasons for this depreciation is the fact that Government has depleted the Bank of Mauritius of Rs158 billion – Rs78 billion as grant and Rs80 billion to MIC – and today the Bank of Mauritius does not have sufficient money to intervene in the market to support the Mauritian rupee?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, de tout temps, Maurice est considérée comme ayant un régime flottant – *floating regime* – au lieu d'un régime fixe par le FMI. Cela nous aide concernant notre centre international financier.

Pour répondre à la question de l'honorable membre, de tout temps, le FMI nous dit que notre roupie est surévaluée, c'est pour cela que vous aviez dans le passé des interventions régulières de la banque de Maurice pour essayer d'équilibrer la valeur de la roupie. Ainsi,

vous avez une dépréciation continue de la roupie par le fait qu'il y a des entrées en devises concernant le marché financier.

Pour revenir à la question concernant est-ce qu'on a *deplete* ou pas, c'est pour cela qu'il y a eu une dépréciation de 40%, je tiens à rappeler à l'honorable membre – j'ai dit ça ce matin – qu'entre la période 2020 et 2022 nous avons un manque à gagner au minimum d'environ 3 milliards de dollars. Cela a impacté sur le marché des devises et sur la valeur de notre roupie. Le fait de la forte demande en devises étrangères et aussi le fait d'une offre restreinte, c'est sûr que cela a provoqué une dépréciation de notre roupie. Et d'un autre côté, la banque de Maurice, pour respecter le fait qu'on soit un régime flottant il ne pouvait pas intervenir massivement pour maintenir la valeur de la roupie. Et il fallait aussi avoir une pro activité et aussi regarder vers le futur si cette pandémie resterait avec nous pendant des années, nous devons faire en sorte d'avoir suffisamment de réserves pour maintenir une valeur équilibrée de la roupie. Merci, M. le président.

Mr Uteem: The hon. Minister of Finance knows that as a result of the depreciation of the rupee, all our imports are going up including the price of petroleum products, the price of pharmaceutical products. So, would the hon. Minister of Finance consider discussing with the Central Bank in order to support the rupee and also to cure – there is a problem I get to understand that there is a shortage of foreign currency today on the market?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, c'est sûr que nous sommes passés, comme je l'ai dit ce matin, de 1,4 millions de touristes à 176,000 touristes pour l'année 2021. C'est sûr qu'avec l'objectif fixé par le DPM de 1 million de touristes pour l'année 2022, cela va rapporter plus de devises étrangères au pays et à ce moment-là, la banque de Maurice aura plus de marge de manœuvre pour faire en sorte de retrouver une valeur plus élevée de notre roupie. Et il va travailler dans ce sens et je vais faire le nécessaire pour parler avec le gouverneur. Mais de toute façon la banque de Maurice a de tout temps travaillé pour maintenir une roupie équilibrée. Merci.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

EASTERN HIGHWAY PROJECT (M4) – IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/132) Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the Eastern Highway Project (M4) he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road

Development Authority, information as to where matters stand as to the implementation thereof.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Motorway M4 project is, in fact, the forthcoming fourth Motorway of the country which will link the North to the Airport through the East, namely from Forbach to Plaine Magnien. I am informed by the Road Development Authority (RDA) that the M4 will consist of a dual carriageway of approximately 50km starting from Forbach on the Motorway M2, passing through villages such as, Poudre d'Or Hamlet, Plaines des Roches, Laventure, Pont Blanc, Bonne Mere, Queen Victoria, Clemencia, Bel Air, Olivia and Ferney to end up on the Motorway M1 at Plaine Magnien.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the estimated cost of the project is Rs10 billion and comprises three different segments as follows –

- (i) from Bel Air (B27) to Pont Blanc (A2);
- (ii) from Pont Blanc (A2) to Forbach (M2), and
- (iii) from SSR Airport to Bel Air (B27).

Mr Speaker, Sir, financial provision is available for the implementation of the first two segments of the project, namely from Bel Air to Forbach, over a length of 30 km.

I am informed by the RDA that in view of the extent and specialised nature of the works, the services of a Consultant, namely, Luxconsult (Mauritius) Ltd, in association with LEA Associates South Asia PVT LTD and P D Naidoo & Associates, have been enlisted to review the design of the project, prepare the bidding documents and supervise the construction works.

With respect to the construction works, I am informed by the RDA that the procurement for the construction of the dual carriageway from Bel Air to Forbach will be carried out on an Open International Advertised Bidding exercise during this financial year. The works are expected to start around November 2022 and will last for a period of 24 months.

As regards the segment SSR Airport to Bel Air, the RDA is initiating action with respect to the appropriate alignment, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders. Thank you.

Mr Nuckcheddy: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister in his reply mentioned that Consultants have been appointed to review the design. May we know from the hon. Minister why there has been the need to review the design?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, the project in respect to phase 1, that is, from Bel Air B27 to Pont Blanc A2, was initiated in Financial Year 2020-2021 as a single carriageway and upon availability of funds, the bidding documents were launched on 05 January 2021. In the meantime, during consultation in the context of the Budget 2021-2022 with the RDA and the Ministry Finance, Economic Planning and Development, it was discussed that given the highly expanding business activities in the east of the island, the single carriage could soon be saturated with the estimated traffic volume once the whole stretch linking the airport to the north would be made operational. Besides, adding on lanes in the future phases, would imply much higher costs and other teething issues such as inconveniences to the public and road users.

Furthermore, according to paragraph 97 of the Government Programme 2020-2024, the policy is to eliminate roundabouts on the motorways and to construct flyovers with a view to improving traffic. All these issues have made that we review the design and re-launch the tenders. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Doolub!

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister just mentioned that consultations are on the way with regard to the segment from Plaine Magnien to Bel Air. Can we know if that proposed motorway will go through la Vallée de Ferney? Thank you.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, discussion is ongoing with all the relevant stakeholders. Last week itself, the RDA, myself and the Ministry, we have had consultations. We went on site, we went to visit the forest itself and obviously everything will be done to avoid this forest and in this period of *Ram Nawmi*, let us pray *Jay Shri Ram* so that he shows us the way for the Valley of Ferney also. We will do what needs to be done with all relevant stakeholders and once we have the plan, we will come to Cabinet for an approval and then we will inform accordingly.

This is why fund has been made for phase 1 and phase 2. Phase 3 is on hold. We are discussing with all the relevant stakeholders before a decision is taken. Thank you.

Ms Ramyad: Can the Minister inform the House if provision will be made for the construction of cycle lanes along the M4?

Mr Hurreeram: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is now a policy of Government to include cycle lanes wherever it is physically possible. Obviously, on this new dual carriageway, provision for cycle lane is being made. Even if for instance because of financial, budget issues, we cannot do it immediately, during the acquisition, during the planning, provision is already being made for the cycle lanes. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Mr Nuckcheddy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May we know from the hon. Minister the total number of interchanges, at-grade junctions, bridges and culverts that will be constructed from the stretch from Bel Air to l'Aventure?

Mr Hurreeram: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, the construction of approximately 30 km long dual carriageway with 1.5 meter shoulders on both side, there will be the construction of three interchanges and eight at-grade junctions, construction of nine bridges, drainage network over 50 culverts and obviously as I just replied provision for a cycle lane, provision for road furniture for all the safety of road users.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

NTC – 16-SEATER MICROBUSES

(No. B/133) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second 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 16-seaters introduced by the National Transport Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to –

- (a) the number thereof acquired as at to date;
- (b) the cost thereof;
- (c) the routes on which same are operated;
- (d) if additional ones will be acquired and operated on other routes, and (e) if passengers thereof will be charged extra fees.

The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Mr M. Hurreeram): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to PQ B/133.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the introduction of the 16-seater minibuses by the National Transport Corporation on its route network form part of its strategy to mitigate rising

operating cost. The minibuses are used primarily for short services during off-peak hours on routes where ridership is low and where the operation of high seat capacity buses is not cost-effective.

Regarding part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that as at 31 March 2022, the NTC has acquired a total of 19 16-seater minibuses.

Regarding part (b) of the question, the cost per bus is Rs1,461,667.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with respect to part (c) of the question, I am informed that the minibuses are operating short services on the following routes –

- (i) Route 6 that is, Chemin Grenier to Rivière des Anguilles;
- (ii) Route 14 from Curepipe to Rose Belle;
- (iii) Route 34, Curepipe to Bois Chéri;
- (iv) Route 37, Buckingham via Quatre Bornes to Victoria Hospital;
- (v) Route 79, Rose Belle to Bois Chéri via wireless road;
- (vi) Route 87, Curepipe Ian Palach South to St Hubert Terminus;
- (vii) Route 133, Choisy via Baie du Cap to Chemin Grenier;
- (viii) Route 137, Curepipe to Carreau Acacia, Camp Carol, Kenya, Carreau Esnouf;
- (ix) Route 197, Chamouny via Chemin Grenier to Port Louis;
- (x) Route 122, Camp Levieux via Quatre Bornes to Victoria Hospital.

Concerning part (d) of the question, the NTC is currently reviewing its operational plan following which a decision will be taken regarding the acquisition of additional 16-seater minibuses and the routes on which they would operate.

Finally, regarding part (e) of the question, I am informed by the NTC that no extra fares are levied on passengers travelling on board of the minibuses at present. Thank you.

Mr Abbas Mamode: Can we obtain from the hon. Minister the number of passengers that travel on minibuses on a daily basis?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am told that on average, one 16-seater bus carries 150 passengers on a daily basis.

Mr Abbas Mamode: Can the Minister inform the House of the implication in terms of cost of the NTC on operating the 15-seater bus instead of the normal 50-seater bus?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that for the 15-seater bus, there is a saving on diesel cost of almost 60%. Micro buses consume Rs5.30 per km while the 50-seater bus consumes approximately Rs13 per km. For three vans, for 1,300 kms, the diesel consumption is Rs7,000 for one day instead of Rs17,000 for a 50-seater bus. Also, the 50-seater bus uses four wheels instead of six and wheels for smaller buses cost Rs24,000 while for a 50-seater, the cost is Rs78,000 per bus. So, the difference is Rs54,000. The maintenance cost for micro buses, they have three years warranty. On average, a considerable reduction in cost....

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: What is happening there?

Mr Hurreeram: *Malelvé comme d'habitude!*

(Interruptions)

It is a question of education, unfortunately!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You do not have the floor, hon. Juman!

Mr Juman: *Ki problem? Ki problem?*

Mr Speaker: You do not have the floor! How can you intervene?

Mr Hurreeram: *L'edikasion mal fer!*

Mr Speaker: We are in the temple of democracy!

(Interruptions)

Please continue!

Mr Hurreeram: So, on an average, a considerable reduction in cost has been observed for the operation of the 15-seater buses especially on routes which are less profitable at off-peak hours.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. In reply to PQ B/608 which I addressed to the hon. Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail regarding micro buses, can I ask the hon.

Minister whether he has any information as to whether the route 256 linking Cité Rosemond in Vallée Pitôt to Plaine Verte will be considered and eligible for micro buses now?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member will appreciate that this question does not pertain to that issue he is raising here. I think that should be addressed to the substantive Minister. Thank you. But anyway, I will pass on the message.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs B/164, B/135, B/146, B/169, B/207 have been withdrawn. Next question!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. PQ B/134!

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT BOARD – AGGREGATES & CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS

(No. B/134) 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 latest report of the consultancy study on the depletion of Aggregates and other Construction Materials in Mauritius commissioned by the Construction Industry Development Board, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Board, details of the main findings and table copy thereof.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, at the very outset, I wish to inform the House that the study on aggregates and other construction materials in Mauritius was commissioned in July 2020 following a request obtained for the exportation of aggregates. Accordingly, the results of the study are to serve as a working document to Government, in particular my Ministry and the Construction Industry Development Board, to formulate appropriate strategies for informed policy decisions regarding the management of aggregates and other construction materials in Mauritius.

The study, Mr Speaker, Sir, was conducted by a local Consultant whose services were hired by the Construction Industry Development Board, after a procurement exercise. The Consultant, amongst other things, undertook a study to determine the volume of suitable rocks and stones available in Mauritius for the production of aggregates and the requirements of the local construction industry. It also covered the requirements in terms of other construction materials, namely cement, reinforcement bars, concrete blocks, ready-mix concrete, and bitumen.

Mr Speaker Sir, for the purpose of the study, the Consultant surveyed the stone crusher plants, the producers of ready-mix concrete, block work and asphaltic concrete as well as the suppliers of cement, iron bars and bitumen. In this process, therefore, the Consultant had recourse to sensitive commercial information from private sector operators of the construction industry to make its recommendations. In this respect, the hon. Member will agree that it would not be ethical to reveal such information at this stage.

In fact, the Consultant has submitted its report in January 2022 and Government has agreed to the setting up of a High Level Committee to consider its findings and recommendations of the report and prepare a draft Master Plan on the management of aggregates and other construction materials in Mauritius.

My Ministry will thereafter have wider consultations on the draft Master Plan prior to its implementation. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Time Over!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

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

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

(4.40 p.m.)

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

DELISTING OF MAURITIUS FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION'S LIST OF HIGH-RISK THIRD COUNTRIES

The Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance (Mr M. Seeruttun): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I wish on a good note to make a statement apprising the House on the latest developments regarding the delisting of Mauritius from the European Union's List of High-Risk Third Countries.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg for the indulgence of the House in view of the fact that the statement is unusually lengthy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in its Official Journal dated 21 February 2022, the European Commission concluded that Mauritius has strengthened the effectiveness of its Anti-Money Laundering/Combating the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) framework and no longer presents strategic deficiencies as initially identified by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Accordingly, Mauritius was officially removed from the European Union's List of High-Risk Third Countries as from 13 March 2022.

This is indeed another important achievement following the delisting of Mauritius from the FATF List of Jurisdictions under Increased Monitoring in October 2021, and from the United Kingdom's List of High-Risk Third Countries in November 2021.

Mr Speaker, Sir, all along this process, Mauritius has demonstrated a strong political will and commitment to adhere to and to effectively implement the FATF global standards. This also signifies our commitment to reinforce the position of Mauritius as a reputed and trusted International Financial Centre. The delisting of Mauritius from the 'Grey and now Black List' bears testimony to our robust legal, regulatory, institutional and operational framework to effectively comply with the AML/CFT obligations, and to our ability to protect and enhance the resilience of the financial services sector.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will take a few minutes of the House to reflect on what we, as a country, as a Government, have achieved together in strengthening and building a robust AML/CFT regime. It is important to highlight and enumerate some of the key measures behind this achievement within such a short time span.

The House will recall that this Government embarked on an extremely ambitious exercise to overhaul the AML/CFT framework and address all the identified deficiencies following the Mutual Evaluation of Mauritius in 2018, both at the level of technical compliance and effectiveness of the regime. This exercise, under the patronage of the hon. Prime Minister, resulted in the adoption of new laws and regulations, the reinforcement of the collaboration amongst institutions, the intensive training and outreach activities to develop technical capacity across the relevant institutions in the fight against financial crimes, money laundering and terrorism financing.

It is also noteworthy that around 47 pieces of legislation were either introduced or amended since 2018. On the basis of these reforms, Mauritius is now compliant or largely compliant with 39 out of 40 FATF Recommendations. The application for the technical compliance re-rating for the only remaining Recommendation, namely, Recommendation 15

on New Technologies, has already been made to the Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group (ESAAMLG) Secretariat.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a significant achievement as, at the time of the adoption of the Mutual Evaluation Report in 2018, Mauritius was rated compliant or largely compliant with only 14 of the 40 FATF recommendations. The progress made in improving the technical requirements within this timeframe has also been recognised and endorsed by the FATF and its global network. This has not been an easy task and is evidence of the firm commitment of the Government and the hard work of our officers in ensuring compliance with international standards at all times.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will surely agree that it is not enough to pass laws but we must also have the capacity to effectively implement them. Apart from these important legislative changes, we also focused our efforts on the development of human capabilities within the AML/CFT agencies in order to enable them in carrying out their functions efficiently. In this context, from July 2020 to March 2022, a total of 115 training sessions have been organised for the benefit of some 2,400 participants from supervisory authorities, law enforcement agencies and other relevant competent authorities in Mauritius.

With regard to the strategic deficiencies identified by the FATF in relation to the effectiveness of our system, Government adopted numerous measures and put in place strong and sustainable mechanisms to address those deficiencies. The measures taken include –

- robust supervision of the global business and non-bank financial services sector;
- reinforcement of the regulatory landscape for supervising the activities of the Designated Non-Financial Businesses and Professions (DNFBPs);
- better control and regulation of beneficial ownership information, which includes a range of controls devised to ensure that beneficial ownership information remains accurate and up to date at all times;
- stronger monitoring of non-profit organisations, and
- enforcement actions at the level of investigation, prosecution, and sanctioning.

All the measures which have been put in place by Mauritius are effectively contributing towards the protection of our economy, increasing our competitiveness, attracting foreign direct investment and reinforcing our reputation as a sound place to do business.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have mentioned this previously in this august Assembly and would do it again today, as it is important to recognise and put on record that this achievement would not have been possible without the sustained efforts of our people and institutions. I have to start with the hon. Prime Minister himself, who has provided his unflinching and unwavering support in this overhaul of our systems. I wish to also acknowledge colleagues from the Inter-Ministerial Committee, who have been instrumental in ensuring that AML/CFT policies were promptly adopted and implemented to adequately address the strategic deficiencies. I also need to underscore the crucial role and efforts put into by the members of the Core Group in closely monitoring the implementation of the FATF Action Plan and providing strategic guidance to our AML/CFT agencies.

Mr Speaker, Sir, again, these positive outcomes would not have been possible without the hard work of the officers from various institutions, namely, my Ministry, the National Sanctions Secretariat under the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, the Attorney-General's Office, the Bank of Mauritius, the Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Financial Services Commission, the Financial Intelligence Unit, the Gambling Regulatory Authority, the Integrity Reporting Services Agency, the Mauritius Institute of Professional Accountants, the Mauritius Police Force, the Mauritius Revenue Authority, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Registrar of Associations, and the Registrar of Companies.

They have worked diligently and tirelessly round the clock to honour the high-level commitment given to the FATF to implement the Action Plan. The private sector remains a key partner in this national effort to fight against money laundering and terrorism financing. In this respect, we engaged with the private sector on a regular basis to enlist their support in this process. I stress, our agencies and the private sector have displayed an unprecedented spirit of teamwork and collaboration.

I would also like to place on records the assistance extended by the international community, namely, the ESAAMLG Secretariat, the EU Global AML/CFT Facility, the German Development Agency, the United Kingdom, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to support Mauritius in its endeavour to fight money laundering and terrorism financing.

I am pleased to inform the House that Mauritius is now partnering with the EU AML/CFT Global Facility to deliver technical assistance to countries having strategic

AML/CFT deficiencies based on the Mauritian experience. This bears testimony to what we have achieved in such a short period of time, and gives credence to the proficiency we have built, much to the satisfaction of the international community, that we are now a reference in the region.

Mr Speaker, Sir, now that this overhaul is done, now that we have completed the strengthening of our systems, now that we have laid the foundations of good governance in a holistic and systemic way for decades to come, and now that we have ensured that the reputation of our International Financial Centre (IFC) is not blemished, it is imperative that we look ahead. It is essential that we translate all the work accomplished into business opportunities.

We are therefore, working towards a leapfrogging of our financial services sector to its next generation of growth and sophistication, as defined by late Sir Anerood Jugnauth in the Government's Vision 2030. The target is to double the size of the financial sector and grow its contribution to GDP in real terms. Such a growth would increase employment for our people, including our young graduates, and increase our tax revenue significantly. As such, our strategy is threefold –

- Reposition our global business sector internationally, with a particular focus on the image and branding;
- Increase the depth and breadth of services we offer as a jurisdiction, and
- Ensure that the products we have are avant-gardist and investor-friendly.

We have successfully navigated through a number of thorough assessments of our jurisdiction, including on tax matters by organisations such as the Forum on Harmful Tax Practices (FHTP) of the OECD and the Code of Conduct Group of the EU, and AML-CFT matters by organisations such as the ESAAMLG, FATF and the EU. And we have fared remarkably well. It is now high time that we ventilate these achievements in a concerted manner internationally, *afin de redorer le blason de notre centre financier*. My Ministry will, therefore, coordinate efforts with relevant institutions and agencies to work towards enlisting services of global media and PR firms, as is so determined, as well as building capacities institutionally, to make our jurisdiction's image visible in an assertive way. We are also re-activating all our synergies in the repositioning and marketing of our jurisdiction internationally so as to consolidate our existing markets such as India, Europe and Africa, and to access new markets.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to emphasize that the most noted systemic overhaul of our financial services products landscape was accomplished by the hon. Prime Minister in his 2016-2017 Budget Speech, which saw the introduction of investment banking, family offices, headquarter and treasury management schemes, amongst others. The corresponding laws were enacted in the Finance Act which followed, and rules were subsequently made by the Financial Services Commission (FSC). The laws were avant-gardist and provided the right foundations, and over the years since then, and in line with global financial complexity and structuring, the rules and regulations have to be updated or re-written to satisfy the aspirations of the operators and investors alike. Time has also allowed us to understand better about what most appropriate operational modalities are expected from the jurisdiction. Therefore, my Ministry, together with the FSC, will embark on a complete assessment of all the regulatory framework, and I will seek the support of the technical expertise of the Financial Services Consultative Council in this task. And, I hasten to add: since our operators are at the forefront of the use of such products, I will ensure that there are industry consultations, either individually or collectively as are so needed, when this exercise happens. I will also ensure that such an exercise is sustainable, so that a mechanism is well-entrenched for amending products whenever needed to maintain competitiveness in a timely manner, and to also ensure the same rigour is applied for the introduction of new products.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I must further add that these delistings, ahead of the set timeframe despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, indeed demonstrate the resilience of our financial system, the efforts of our officers and the perseverance of the whole nation to get our country's name cleared. Government is maintaining this momentum by gearing its effort towards sustaining the reforms and ensuring the effectiveness of the measures undertaken. In this regard, the commitment of Mauritius to pursue the implementation of its reforms is clear and robust.

I wish to also point out that as part of our preparedness plan, we are already working on updating our National Risk Assessment and devising a new national AML/CFT Action Plan for the coming 3 years. In addition, Mauritius will continue to conduct intensive training and outreach activities to develop technical capacity across the relevant institutions in our fight against money laundering, terrorism and proliferation financing.

I wish to assure the House that, at the level of the Inter-Ministerial Committee, which is chaired by the hon. Prime Minister himself, the Core Group under the chairmanship of the Financial Secretary and the National AML/CFT Committee chaired by the Permanent

Secretary of my Ministry, we are sparing no efforts in investing in our people and infrastructure as well as in the development of innovative skills, methods and processes to achieve this goal. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

On motion made and seconded the Variable Capital Companies Bill (No. III of 2022) was read a first time.

Second Reading

THE REVISION OF LAWS (AMENDMENT) BILL

(NO. XX OF 2021)

Order for Second Reading read

The Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security (Mr M. Gobin): Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that the Revision of Laws (Amendment) Bill (No. XX of 2021) be read a second time.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as the Explanatory Memorandum sets out, the main object of this Bill is to amend the Revision of Laws Act to provide that an electronic revised edition of all Acts, including Regulations, shall be published on the web portal of the Attorney General's Office and such electronic revised edition shall be regarded as equivalent to the enactments included in a revised edition and shall be deemed to be the official text of the enactments so published and be taken to be the laws of Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to properly understand the context in which the Revision of Laws Act was passed by the legislature in 1974, it is important that we look at the legal framework and especially it is important to look at the historical development of publication of our laws in this country.

First things first, Mr Speaker, Sir: the power to make laws rests with Parliament; that is provided for in our Constitution, namely in section 45. The power to make laws rests with Parliament and in section 46, it is also provided in the Constitution in subsection (3), and I quote –

“(3) Where the President assents to a Bill that has been submitted to him in accordance with this Constitution, the Bill shall become law and the President shall thereupon cause it to be published in the *Gazette* as a law.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Laws of Mauritius do not constitute of only Acts of Parliament but also subsidiary legislations which are made under delegated powers of Parliament. And in order to understand Acts of Parliament or subsidiary legislations, one needs also to have access to proclamations which give effect to Acts of Parliament. So, therefore, a person wishing to have access to the body of Laws of Mauritius needs to search in the *Gazette* for the main Act, in the subsidiary legislations, to find out where is the proclamation to know whether a particular Act has come into force or not. So, this begs the question of access to legislations *et a fortiori* access to justice.

If we look at the history of this country, in the colonial days, where the Laws of Mauritius were scattered, the first time that the Laws of Mauritius were consolidated, was in the year 1866; that was when the first edition of the Laws of Mauritius was edited and that edition contained the Statutes passed up to the year 1866. That first revision exercise was carried out in 1897.

Following that, we also know of the revised edition of the Laws of Mauritius which was published in 1920.

Subsequently, there was the famous publication in 1945 by Sir Charlton Lane, the then Chief Justice. That 1945 edition, Mr Speaker, Sir, was printed and bound in England in 1946. Practitioners know of the existence of this edition which is commonly known as Lane and it is still available in certain libraries including the Supreme Court library. The difficulty with the publication which was in England in 1946 only became effective in Mauritius in 1952. There was already then a difference from 1945 to 1952.

As time went by, other legislations were passed amending or repealing previous ones thus leading to the confusion as to what was the state of the Law at a particular point in time. That led the legislature, with time, to enact the Revision of Laws Act in 1974. The Revision of Laws Act 1974 which was introduced in the House by the then Attorney General, hon. Bussier, was introduced in the House to provide that the Law Revision Unit of the Attorney General's Office shall prepare revised editions and supplements under Section 3 of that Act periodically and publish what is known as the Revised Laws of Mauritius which shall be printed and which shall come into operation on a particular day and which shall be taken to

be the sole official text of the enactments included in it and be taken to be the Law of Mauritius. This is provided for in Section 4 Subsection (5) of the Revision of Laws Act 1974.

It is important to bear in mind that when the Revision of Laws Bill was introduced in the House, the then Attorney General, hon. Bussier, had already informed the House that the Law Revision Unit had already existed since 1971 on an *ad hoc* basis. The work had already started and with the Revision of Laws Act 1974, there was therefore a statutory basis for the Law Revision Unit to consolidate laws and to publish laws which are in force in Mauritius at a particular date, that is, which is called the cut-off date.

From 1974, historically therefore, if we look at the publication of the Revised Laws of Mauritius, we have after the Revision of Laws Act 1974, the first publication, that is, in 1981. At the time of publication, hon. Paul Chong Leung was the Attorney General and the Laws of Mauritius were published in a series of volumes and we commonly see it in libraries including in the National Assembly's Library in colour blue.

That edition in 1981 of the Revised Laws of Mauritius was published with the assistance and collaboration in those days of the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Corporation and the New Zealand Government together with their financial assistance. In those days, the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Corporation made available the services of Mr Angelo of the Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand for that exercise. The printing then was done by a company called Précigraph Ltd. After the 1981 edition, we had other editions in 1996, I believe, but they were – I hasten to add – unofficial editions. The official edition of the Laws of Mauritius is published under the Revision of Laws Act.

The 1981 is an official edition. The next one after the 1981 came only in the 2000 edition of the Revised Laws of Mauritius in the days of the then Attorney General hon. Emmanuel Leung Shing. Again, the services of Professor Angelo were retained and the publication was done by Best Graphics Law Publishers Ltd. In fact, *pour la petite histoire*, Best Graphics Law Publishers Ltd had published the unofficial editions in 1996 and there was a previous one also in 1990 but I again say the official publication is through the Law Revision Unit of the Attorney General's Office under the Revision of Laws Act.

After the 2000 official edition of the Revised Laws of Mauritius, came the other edition in 2008 when the services of publishers LexisNexis Butterworths Ltd, a publisher based in South Africa were retained for the printing in loose leaf format in 2008 and that was in the days of hon. Valayden who was then the Attorney General. Since the edition of the

2008, no official publication of Revised Laws has been published. The loose format of publication in 2008 was obviously done for purposes of updating.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my office and this Government, we have decided that we need to take a step ahead and the only way to take a step ahead to provide access to legislation, access to subsidiary legislation, access to proclamations is through the use of technology. Therefore, in the year 2020, my office launched an open international bidding so that we could retain the services of a service provider with the appropriate software and the software that has been retained is called LegisPro. LegisPro is a software made by the company in the United States called Xcential and this software has been used for a number of years by the office of the Law Revision Counsel of the US House of Representatives in the United States. Xcential together with their local representative were retained for the electronic revised edition of the Laws of Mauritius and this is the background behind the Bill today. The intention is to publish the electronic revised edition of the Laws of Mauritius on the web page and the publication of that electronic version will have the same equivalent value in law as a printed hardcopy of the revised Laws of Mauritius.

Let me now, therefore, come to the features of the forthcoming electronic revised edition. What will it contain? Once published on the web portal, the electronic revised edition will consist of the updated Acts of Parliament, updated subsidiary legislations, the proclamations as well as the reprints.

What will be the features of the electronic revised edition? A QR code, Mr Speaker, Sir, will be provided on every page of every legislation and a digital signature will be provided. The legislation published will be updated, consolidated and revised. They will not be overwritten when there is an amendment. Any amendment brought to legislation will be uploaded as a new version. This will be therefore enable the user to view every previous version of a specific legislation and compare with the amended version.

Hyperlinks will be provided to enable user to view the provision of a legislation that amends a particular legislation. Hyperlink will link the user from a parent Act to a subsidiary legislation made. It will be possible to compare different legislations.

In so far as printing is concerned, a user will be able to print the whole or an extract of a legislation in case of need. The user will be able to also download the legislation. It will be possible to search; whether simple search with the title of the legislation, or advanced search by applying different filters such as the year, the date of coming into operation, or search with

the use of keywords. Legislations can be viewed on multiple devices such as mobile phones, tablets, laptops, iPads, etc. Access to legislation will not only be available to local users but also to users in any part of the world.

This is a major breakthrough, Mr Speaker, Sir. With a view to providing that this publication of the electronic revised edition shall have the same force of law as a printed hard copy, we are bringing the Revision of Laws Amendment Bill to take that one fundamental step ahead to provide access to comprehensive revised edition of the laws of Mauritius, including subsidiary laws of Mauritius.

In short, Mr Speaker, Sir, and to conclude, once the electronic revised edition will be on the website, it will provide access to lawyers, to public officers, to administrators and to the citizens to –

- (1) updated legislation;
- (2) at the click of a button, and
- (3) free of charge.

I now commend the Bill to the House.

The Deputy Prime Minister seconded.

(5.18 p.m.)

Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Mr Speaker, Sir, we are debating a very important amendment. This Bill will give power to the Attorney General to cause to be prepared and published on the web portal of his Office, an electronic edition of enactments. From the date of publication on the web portal, those electronic enactments shall be deemed to be the laws of Mauritius.

This is a very important amendment because it will enable the population to have better access to the law of the land. How many times have we not heard a person argue that he did not know what he was doing was an offence? How many times have we not heard that they did not know that they needed a permit before undertaking such and such business? They did not know they needed a permit in order to construct something or even make an extension to their houses. But as hon. Members are aware, ignorance of the law, saving a few exceptional circumstances, is not a defence. Even if you honestly and genuinely did not know that you were breaking the law, you are still liable under the law. So, it is very important then for every citizen to know the law. But how do we know what is the law of Mauritius? As

the hon. Attorney General stated, the process of enactment, how the law is passed, then approved and then gazetted and then proclaimed. But today, if anyone wants to have access to the laws of Mauritius, he needs to buy a set of revised laws of Mauritius. This revised set of laws of Mauritius is published in 13 volumes and costs Rs139,325.

On top of that, you would need to buy a collection of subsidiary legislation, where you have all the regulations, it comes in seven volumes and it costs Rs80,000. All law practitioners know as soon as these enactments are published, they are already out of date. Because in the meantime, Parliament has passed new legislation, Ministers have made new regulations, and then you have to buy updates and an update will cost you around Rs10,000 every year. So, it is very costly for practitioners to today have laws of Mauritius.

We are talking of practitioners, so if for practitioners it is so expensive; now imagine, for a lay person, how expensive it is to know the laws of Mauritius. We are grateful that with this legislation, the law will be accessible on the internet at a click.

As a law practitioner, Mr Speaker, Sir, I recall how difficult it was when I started as a Barrister to know what are the laws, how we had to go to the Supreme Court's Library and then we had to subscribe for our own copies of Government gazette with Government printers, and we had to physically update the compilation of laws; very time-consuming and very often, our laws were not updated. So today, we will be able, thanks to this law, to have access to the internet and to the laws and to their updates. This is why, on this side of the House, we are in favour of this enactment.

Now, the Supreme Court had made an attempt to publish legislation on its website and that helped enormously all practitioners who had to register with the Supreme Court, but then, we had access to all the laws. But unfortunately, the version of the law that appears on the website of the Supreme Court is not an official version. Therefore, it does not have any force of law; we cannot print it, we cannot download it and present it in Court because it is not an authoritative official copy of the law.

So, an electronic format of the law is also very important because you can easily amend it. For a printed version, as the hon. Attorney General mentioned, sometimes we had to wait for a decade, 10 years or more, before you had another official publication of the revised laws of Mauritius to come out and have effect. In the meantime, you had unauthorised publications, but for the official revised edition, usually it would take 10 years.

Now, with the internet version, the hon. Attorney General did not say how often it will be updated, but I trust he will update it as soon as possible.

The Law Revision Unit will do that because the moment it is uploaded and appear on the website, it will become the authoritative laws of Mauritius.

Having said that, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to raise a few issues and highlight, perhaps, some unintended consequences of the proposed amendment, which I am sure the hon. Attorney General can address in his summing up. The first issue is what happens if there is an inconsistency between the electronic edition of an enactment and the printed edition of the law. This may happen because electronic edition is likely to be more up-to-date and because of a delay in publishing printed version of the revised laws or supplement. Which version takes precedence? Now, if we look at Section 4 (5) (a) of the Revision of Law Act 1974, it reads and I quote –

“Notwithstanding sections 12(1) and 13 of the Interpretation and General Clauses Act, a revised edition shall, for all purposes, from the day prescribed under subsection (4) and with effect from the day immediately following the cut-off date be the sole official text of the enactments included in it and be taken to be the laws of Mauritius on the cut-off date.”

Now, unfortunately, today we are not amending this section. So, the section will still read that the printed version will be the sole official text of the enactment. So, I think the hon. Attorney General should address this issue or at least change the definition of revised laws to include the electronic version, because right now according to Section 4 (5) (a), only the printed edition would be the sole official text.

Now, the second issue I would like to raise relates to the proposed Section 4B (2) of the Bill which reads –

“Except for sections 4(2)(b), (3), (4), (5), (6) and (7), 4A and 6, the provisions of this Act shall apply to an electronic revised edition as they would apply to a revised edition.”

So, the purpose of this section in the Bill is to exclude certain existing provisions of the law, which apply to printed version of revised laws. These sections will no longer apply to electronic version. Now, some of these sections, I agree, are not applicable because they relate to the printed format. But, by deleting reference to these, we are also, unfortunately,

having some unintended consequences. For example, if we take a section 4 (2) (b), which is being amended. At the moment section 4 (2)(b) require and I quote –

“A statement indicating which enactments have been omitted from a revised edition version pursuant to paragraph (a) or section 6 (1), shall be embodied in the revised edition.”

So, right now for the printed revised edition, there is a section which sets out all the laws that have been omitted from the official revised laws. So, people can know what laws have been omitted and if there is any aggrieved party, they can make representation and argue why this has been deleted. And this is very important. I will give you an example, just recently in one of the cases of the election petitions before the Supreme Court, one of the lawyers from the State Law Office had argued that the election petition rules 1948 were no longer applicable because that election petition rules 1948 was not in the updated revised edition of subsidiary legislations published by the Law Revision Unit. So, why is it then that for electronic version we don't have a similar place where we can click and find out what are the laws that are no longer applicable in Mauritius so that, any person who is aggrieved will be able to make representation if that law no longer appears in the website? And some of the law will not appear because they are out-dated or disused but at least, I think we need to have a similar provision for the electronic version of revised laws as we have for the printed version.

The other provision that I would like to draw the attention of the House to, is the omission of Section 6 (2). So, under the proposed Bill, Section 6 of the Act will no longer apply to electronic revised edition. Now, what does Section 6 say –

“The Attorney General may authorise the Law Revision Unit to make a change in the substance of an enactment for the purpose of a revised edition.”

So, the power is given to the Attorney General to make a change in substance. However, there is a set safeguard –

“Where a change in the substance of an enactment has been made under subsection (1), that enactment shall be laid before the Assembly and shall have effect as part of the revised edition only from such day as is fixed by the Assembly.”

So, if today the Attorney General, through the Law Revision Unit, wants to change in substance a provision of the law, he cannot do that without depositing a copy before the House and then this would take into force on the date the House decides. And this is very important,

because again, I was involved in a case wherein the hon. Minister of Social Security who is not here was my instructing attorney. It was the famous *Azaan* case where the Law Revision Unit made a change of substance by lumping in the definition of public gathering, both public meetings and public procession, and the Supreme Court held that this was a change in substance which the Law Revision Unit did not have the power to do unless it was sanctioned by the National Assembly. So, this Section 6 is extremely important. The Attorney General, the Law Revision Unit cannot make change in substance unless it is approved by Parliament.

Now, why is this Section 6 not applicable to revised edition? So, either the whole Section 6 should not apply; that is, it does not apply to revised edition electronically, it does not apply to printed version, or it applies to both. But you cannot have a section which says that in the printed version, the Attorney General, can, through the Law Revision Unit, make substantive change in enactment, but in an electronic version he cannot do that. So, I don't see why there is a reason for treating the different types of revised edition differently, whether they are printed or not.

The last point I would like to make, Mr Speaker, Sir, is in relation to cost. In paragraph 3 of the Explanatory Memorandum, it is stated and I read –

“This electronic revised edition will be free of charge and any user will, over and above of viewing the laws of Mauritius on the web portal, be able to print a copy thereof.”

And the hon. Attorney General also mentioned in his intervention that, not only practitioners but members of the public also will have access to the web portal and will be able to download and print enactments. But where is it in the law? Where is it in the Bill? It is in the Explanatory Memorandum. Fair enough. But should there not have been a substantive provision in the revised laws of Mauritius? Because, as I said, at the moment, it costs more than Rs139,000 to get one of these printed copies and Rs80,000 to get subsidiary legislation. We are all in favour of getting free access to the laws of Mauritius, including the subsidiary legislation but, I think, in my humble opinion, there ought to have been a section giving the power at least to the Attorney General by regulation to decide if there are any fees chargeable or whether it is going to be free or not. But, unfortunately at the moment, there is nothing in the proposed legislation, which would make access to the electronic revised edition free.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(5.43 p.m.)

Mr I. Collendavelloo (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill): Mr Speaker, Sir, let me start by thanking and congratulating the hon. Attorney General for introducing this Bill to the House. That is a phrase that I hardly use when intervening on Bills but today I really mean it.

Let me also say my words of appreciation to the speech of hon. Uteem, the intervener before me, who certainly is going to contribute to the debates and I am thinking I shall be taking some of the points as I go along on this and I am sure the Attorney General will be taking up these points.

This Bill seeks to amend the Revision of Laws Act. It is going to introduce in our law a new concept, the revised electronic edition – not too sure whether it is a revised electronic edition or an electronic revised edition because both terms are used in this very short Bill. Up to now, as both interveners before me have said, we had printed versions which, as both have said, were outdated as soon as they were published. And this was under the Revision of Laws Act of 1974 which established in law an official Law Revision Unit and its task was to prepare revised editions and supplements. These editions were published in volumes and the enactments to be contained in these volumes were decided by the Attorney General. Obviously, this was to allow the Attorney General to purge from our Statute book, stale and antiquated legislation such as legislation which used to prohibit persons from being in possession of a *camaron* or a shrimp. Obviously, the Law Revision Unit had no difficulty in purging our Statute book of such antiquated laws probably dating back to the French times when *camarons* and shrimps ought to have been the sole privilege of certain elites.

In 2011, the legislator, the Attorney General, sought to cure the problem of outdated by introducing the notion of supplements which cost a fair amount of money to buy and to put in your volumes, but these supplements were equally outdated by the time you purchase them. So, there are two problems –

- (i) first of all, as pointed out by hon. Uteem, the ordinary citizen cannot afford to buy these printed copies;
- (ii) secondly, he has no access to the National Assembly Library or to the Supreme Court Library

so that he has to turn to lawyers and pay them – perhaps it is more costly to pay lawyers than to buy these books in the first instance – but he has to turn to lawyers in order to know what the law contains. This is why – and the Attorney General has alluded to this – the Supreme

Court and the Attorney General have separately published their own versions of legislations in force in Mauritius. But these are unofficial versions so that finally when there are problems such as in the Azan case alluded to by hon. Uteem. Finally, you have to go back to the Government Gazette and we shall come to the situation of conflict between versions, which is indeed a very topical situation. Let me take two examples -

- (i) the Optical Council Act, and
- (ii) the Mauritius Emerging Technologies Act.

They were passed on 30 June 2021. They are published on the website of the Supreme Court but they do not appear on the website of the Attorney General's Office. Whether they were removed on purpose or was it an accident by the Law Revision Unit; we hope that with the new setup, all these little but very important omissions will be cured.

There is a problem of the cut-off date; this will change now because now, as soon as legislation is passed – well, we hope – the state of our law will be available to all the world and in real-time and free of charge. But there are certain dangers, because with haste comes errors so that the Law Revision Unit will have to be extremely careful that in trying to update as fast as possible, no errors are committed. There are three principles on which I would like to dwell, Mr Speaker, Sir -

- (i) the first one is that no one can be heard to say that he ignored the law;
- (ii) secondly, and both interveners have mentioned that, laws should be freely accessible – which they are not up to now, and
- (iii) thirdly, laws should be intelligible.

In 1997 the *Conseil Constitutionnel* made these remarks which are still very live for us. The first principle if you want to be pompous *nemo censetur ignorare legem*, you cannot ignore the law. There have been examples; there was that Mauritian citizen who had lived and worked a long time in Europe, he decided at retirement age to come back to Mauritius and he transferred a fair amount of money from his bank in Europe to a bank in Mauritius. That was a perfectly normal and legal transaction. Then when he came to Mauritius after a certain time, he was told that another bank could get him a better rate of interest. So, what did he do, he went to his first bank, he withdrew – it was an account in euros – about Rs1 m. in Euro from his own bank account and transported that to the other bank which was not very far away and deposited it in a new account in order to get 0.25% interest more. The second

bank reported this as a money-laundering offence, and he said: ‘but I did not know this could be a money-laundering offence. This is my money, I can prove that it is clean, so why do you...’

Ah, it is an interpretation of the law.

And he says: ‘I did not know of that law and of that particular interpretation’.

Unfortunately, he was found guilty in the Intermediate Court. His conviction was confirmed in the Supreme Court and he went to the Privy Council.

The Lordships of the Privy Council had considerable sympathy with the gentleman but their Lordships said the Law is the Law even if you ignored the existence of that Law, the only thing we can do for you is to recommend that the punishment be the least possible. That is going to be cured now with what the Attorney General is doing because at a click of your mouse or whatever you call it, you will be able to know what the Law says and you will no longer have a new excuse.

The second principle I want to talk of is accessibility. What has happened is that traditionally, in order to show that you knew the Law, that the Law had to be published in the Government Gazette, but, of course, who reads the Gazette? And even amongst us who receive the Gazette and its legal supplement every time it is printed, I am tempted to say: “raise your hands if you read the Gazette from cover to cover” and, of course, if you remember or take notes in your booklet for this. The greatest achievement of this Bill will be certainly accessibility. The Attorney General has talked at some length with the history of the legislation. I would like to put in my personal note if only to be on the record on that matter.

I shall start with Lane, Sir Charlton Lane who was commissioned to write the Lane Edition and which, by the time it was printed, was already out of date. He was the Chief Justice of Mauritius. His task was huge. Legal provisions were scattered everywhere and he had to identify which laws were in force and he put all this in several volumes which still exist. When I started at the Bar, this was still the authoritative source of law and you would have to quote for instance the Employment and Labour Ordinance 214 because its volumes were divided into chapters, *capitulum* and you also had Lane Subsidiary Edition. There was no provision for a regular update of Lane.

When I joined the Bar, Lane was the lawyer's nightmare. Sir Ivor Richardson, a great lawyer who wrote a little bit about drafting of legislation in Mauritius. He wrote on the state of our law in the 60s, and I quote –

“The legislative materials were a scattered mess. Some missing, others were subject of further amendments made without awareness of earlier changes.”

In 1959, the Governor then had made an attempt to revive Lane. Of course, Lane had gone. He looked for a commissioner to do that task, nobody agreed and it remained like this, a dead piece of legislation, the revised edition of the Laws Ordinance of 1959.

The Bar Council, Members of the National Assembly protested and urged Government to do something about it. Nothing was done until 1966 and the hon. Attorney General has mentioned him, Anthony Angelo. It is strange how little coincidences can affect the history of a country. Anthony Angelo was a very young student. He left New Zealand. He went to Europe to study comparative law. He studied principally in Italy and on his way back, the ship stopped him in Mauritius and he had to wait for the next Qantas flight to Perth which, in those days, was an expedition. Not knowing what to do in Mauritius, he went to the races and ongoing to the races, he met Mr Edwin Venchard who was a passionate member of the Turf Club as it was called then.

Angelo started talking to him. Angelo had studied languages and had studied law and he was a good ballet dancer. He was member of the National Ballet of New Zealand. So, conversations were extremely interesting with such a man and Venchard took a liking to him and he started Angelo studying our system of law which is, of course, the epitome of comparative law, French, English and Indian law. Venchard told him about the parlous state of our legislation. We owe a lot to Angelo who with the support of Paul Hein, the then Attorney General; I am saying all this in order that these names be on record. He set up a Law Revision Unit which trained junior officials not necessarily lawyers and he trained them in legal drafting. Among them, there were André Pompon who ended his career as the Clerk of this Assembly and there was a young Clerk who finally became the Chief Justice of Mauritius, KP Matadeen.

When I came back to Mauritius in 1978, I was fortunate to join the State Law Office and I was assigned junior menial tasks in that Law Revision Unit and Matadeen was also a lawyer. By that time, he had taken charge because he knew the work and Venchard and Angelo were the leaders in that unit.

The purpose of that unit, in the words of Paul Hein was “to get rid of the mass of cumbrous and obsolete legislation” which still existed in our Statute Book and so, in 1972 or was it 1971, this unofficial consolidated version of the Laws of Mauritius was published setting out the Laws in force in Mauritius as at 31 December 1971. It contained and still contains a preface under the signature of Paul Hein, then Attorney General. It did not have the force of law and no lawyer was authorised to cite from this new version in Court and you had to cite from Lane. The Judges were then very conservative and they would not allow you to do things which were out of their traditional ways. Then Angelo with the assistance of the CFTC, started preparing the official version.

That is how in 1974, Emanuel Bussier moved for the Second Reading of the Revision of Laws Bill. Wide powers were given to the Law Revision Unit including changes of substance, provided they were placed before the Assembly. We shall come to that later. Because the Act said that the list of enactments containing the changes of substance had to be placed before the Assembly. But what is a change of substance? Up to now, judges and lawyers struggle with one another as to know what is that change of substance?

I pass on to 1981 when Mr Chong Leung, then Attorney General, presented another amendment to the Act. That was a time when I was still in the Law Revision Unit and assisting Matadeen. Matadeen, has over the years, amassed a considerable experience in legislative drafting, I am sure his talents could be put to better use than what they are being used to today.

Let me come to principle number three. The law must be intelligible. There are still a number of texts to be corrected. I went through the Medical Council Act a few weeks ago. There are sections which are just unintelligible. You look at the New York Convention Act, which says that an award which is made in English or French language shall be deemed to have been made in an official language of Mauritius and yet, there is no such thing as an official language in Mauritius. The only reference to language in our Constitution is for the use of English in this House and alternatively French. The revision of laws will be able to correct it. We have it in the new Copyright Act, a multitude of gibberish which needs to be corrected.

I will conclude now. The points taken by hon. Uteem need serious and careful consideration. He alluded to the conflicts between the versions. But not only between the electronic and the printed version, what about conflicts with the Government Gazette? The

Courts will decide. There is no solution to it. You cannot say one version will prevail over another. When there is a serious issue, the Courts, as they have done - I remember the Judge, Robert Ahnee, dealing with a matter of conflict between the Government Gazette and the revised edition saying: *ça, c'est une 'venchardise'*, in the manner that Robert Ahnee used to speak. And he had to deliver a judgment, and he resolved the conflict not in the best way possible, but he did resolve it.

The possibilities of downloading and printing, yes, I do not think we need to insert a provision in the law for this. The Attorney General will give suitable directives as to how to download. This new company, I do not know what it is, LegisPro will find ways and means, I am sure they must be very clever at doing this, to allow downloading. This is very important that we be allowed to make a copy of a part of a text in order to put it in a submission, in work or any other paper we are preparing, or in fact, could copy the whole of this Act. So, I am sure the Attorney General will take care of this without having to make an amendment to the law.

We should not underestimate the magnitude of the task. I am happy to note that it is what appears to be a reputable company which will do the software, but doing the software is not the end of the world, one has got to operate it. That is where the devil will be because that is where omissions will be made through inattention and through carelessness. So, we will have to be careful that the structure of the Law Revision Unit is such that it does meet the requirements of the law. The problem is that with that new system, you won't have time to proofread, correct, alter, see the commas and the punctuation, and that will be the challenge.

The members of the Unit, I think, members of the Parquet, the Attorney General must organise, through some form of formal training, in legislative drafting. New Zealand is probably the best in the world in legislative drafting. If we have adequate training, then we can avoid a lot of problems with our legislation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sorry if I abused of the time of the House but there are certain matters which I wanted to place on record. I am thankful to the Attorney General for that great opportunity that he provides to the country in the matter of our democratic institutions.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Ignorance of Standing Order is no excuse. I will suspend for forty-five minutes.

At 6.01 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 6.47 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please be seated. Whose turn is it? Hon. Ramchurrun, you take the floor.

Mr P. Ramchurrun (Third Member for Savanne & Black River): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, it gives me immense pleasure to be able to address this august Assembly on this short but important piece of legislation. Our Government made a solemn pact with the population to improve the judicial administration and this piece of legislation is another tangible example of how we are honouring our promises. Indeed, our Governmental legal services face numerous challenges and undoubtedly, the amendments being proposed in this Bill will have a direct impact in improving its day-to-day running. I congratulate the Attorney General for bringing forward the Revision of Laws (Amendment) Bill.

Mr Speaker, Sir, following the Cabinet meeting of 19 November, the Revision of Laws (Amendment) Bill was approved for presentation to the National Assembly. The very essence of law is based on the pillars of accessibility and modernity. Through this proposed Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, all updated legislations passed by the Parliament as well as any other regulations or statutes will be now published on the webpage of the Attorney General. Henceforth, the version of this legislation on the Attorney General's website will be given legal status equivalent to the official content of the enactments.

Previously, any citizen who needed a copy of a revised legislation would either buy the revised laws of Mauritius at a high cost or make photocopies at a still higher cost. Now, it will be possible to view on screen or if need be, it can be printed without any cost implication. It can even be downloaded, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Hence, through the Revision of Laws (Amendment) Bill, the Attorney General's Office will accentuate its Governmental legal digitalisation initiative by stepping fully into the digital age to render legal services more accessible at a click of a mouse and free of charge for the benefit of all citizens, and to the delight of all legal professionals, law students and any legal enthusiast.

Indeed, Mr Speaker, Sir, we live in a global digital world which has created limitless opportunities of global interaction by also bringing a number of Governmental services to the people through various digital services. Hence, the Revision of Laws (Amendment) Bill flows in the same line and is another welcomed initiative to modernise the Government legal

services by making them more accessible. The proposed amendment though short, marks the historic change of a system which has been operating for 47 years, that is, since 1974.

In fact, a short dive in history would be most welcome to understand the origins of the Revision of Laws Act of 1974. In his academic paper published in October 1976 in the *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, Prof. Anthony Angelo, a New Zealander and a renowned contributor in legal drafting and reforms throughout the Commonwealth, produced an insightful paper on the origins of the Revision of Law Act 1974 and the Law Revision Unit which falls under the purview of the Attorney General's Office.

The Revision of Law Act of 1974 sees its origin to the late 1971 where the then newly independent Mauritius took the initiative to undertake the immense task to consolidate, edit and render more accessible all pre-independence legislations. The primary aim was to ensure that all laws were relevant by factoring in the post-independence constitutional and administrative state of affairs.

This exercise mobilised a big team within the then Attorney General's office which included compilers, collators, typists and proof-readers. The end product of the hard work of those civil servants was that by mid-1972, nearly 9000 pages of the laws had been collated and proof-read. This major task was indeed the first comprehensive exercise of law reviews conducted by Mauritius since 1945. Hence, through this review, the country had built a solid foundation on which future legislations would be amended or reformed to consolidate the administration of law within the country.

It is to be noted that Mauritius was back in 1974 one of the pioneers within its recent independent peers in setting up a Law Revision Unit. Professor Angelo stated in his academic article that even back in 1974 the Law Revision Unit was, though small in number of staff headcounts, but very efficient in churning out complex review tasks to meet the priorities of the day. Indeed, we need to thank the officers of the Law Revision Unit who are still working with the dedicated sense of professionalism and efficacy to meet the new challenges of the legal world.

We were one of the first countries to set up a Law Revision Unit in 1974 even if we gained independence after our Commonwealth peers such as Jamaica, Barbados and Singapore. By ensuring that our revised laws are now officially available online, we are now at par with the same countries who adopted online an official access to revised laws a few

years ago. Singapore, for instance, has a different system of appointed commissioners who are responsible for revising laws and making them accessible online.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our Government has an unprecedented track record in modernising and making more accessible the government legal system as well as the Judiciary.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Attorney General has in the near past presented a series of initiatives to improve and modernise our judicial administration for the two judicial and legal provisions Acts passed in this august Assembly on 03 April 2018 and 30 October 2018, respectively. Another landmark Act was passed last year, namely the Courts (Amendment) Act of 2020 which further streamlined and modernised the provision of judicial services by introducing a Land Division and a Financial Crimes Division.

Moreover, legislations indeed introduced in the National Assembly have also been reviewed to include an explanatory memorandum which summarises the purpose and aims of the proposed legislation. Hence, such efforts in simplifying the language and terminologies used by the legislations contribute in providing more clarity and understanding the non-legal persons which ultimately incentivises them to voice out their views on the legislations.

Mr Speaker, Sir, accessibility has been another cornerstone of the initiatives to modernise our government legal services and our judicial administration. The new Supreme Court building is a new state-of-the-art building which blends a perfect mix of technology and high quality facilities to enable more modern and accessible courtrooms to people with physical disabilities but also streamline services which render procedural matters less time-consuming. Thus, through our Government, the Judiciary is being provided with technological opportunities offered by digitalisation to simplify and modernise procedures across the Courts and Tribunals to create a more modern and digital system that works better not just for professionals like lawyers but also for all citizens of this country and even abroad.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the challenges within our governmental legal services and Judiciary find their roots, as explained by the Revision of Laws Act 1974, in deeply historic origins. However, our Government has shown its determination in embracing change by undertaking the necessary reforms in the system. There are definitely more challenges to be addressed with the aim of upholding the international reputation of independence and the unmatched quality of our legal professionals and of our justice system. All the reforms undertaken have been undertaken with the uttermost respect of our legal tradition but with the enablement of technology.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our Government has proven its determination in enhancing modern technology to transform our daily lives and the economy of our country. For instance, the digital government has revolutionised the government services provided by our citizens by bringing the same services to their homes and smartphones. Insurance and banking sectors are equally being digitally transformed by the regulators. We are equally ahead of the curve in terms of protection of our citizens against the dangers of the technological misuse through the recently passed Cyber Security and Cybercrime Act of 2021.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government, our Government, under the Prime Ministership of hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, has accelerated our country's phase of socio-economic transformation. This Bill is a concrete example of this Government's unflinching commitment in meeting the challenges being faced by our country in the path of its transformational journey. Once again, let me congratulate the Minister of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms for leveraging his rich experience of a magistrate in bringing forward this Bill and I trust he will be proposing more legislations in the future to help create robust, efficient and modern legal and judicial administration system which works for everyone for the betterment of this country.

I am done, Mr Speaker, Sir. Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. Mr Lobine!

(7.01 p.m.)

Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, for giving me the opportunity to address the House on this very important Bill but also very valuable piece of legislation that is being introduced in this House. I will not be long, Mr Speaker, Sir, because hon. Members from both sides of the House have canvassed quite lengthily on the importance of this Bill and as to the applicability of this Bill. And I welcome this amendment to the Revision of Laws Act which dates back to 1974.

Hon. Uteem has made valuable suggestions; hon. Collendavelloo also has made valuable suggestions; the hon. Attorney General has explained the purpose of this Bill, and hon. Ramchurrun has taken us also back in history with regard to this Bill, but, Mr Speaker, Sir, this House should also be very thankful to hon. Collendavelloo for this lesson of history as he has vividly related same to this august Assembly, sharing his experience as a young lawyer as he then was at the Law Revision Unit and now as a seasoned and Senior Counsel.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with the advent of technology, it was high time to bring those amendments. And as mentioned in the explanatory memorandum, those electronic revised editions of old Acts including regulations that shall be published on the web portal of the Attorney General's Office will be free of charge, and any user will, over and above of viewing the laws of Mauritius on the web portal, be able to print a copy thereof.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a commendable step for the citizens of this country to have free access to the laws of their country and subsequently access to justice as the Attorney General has rightly pointed out.

Mr Speaker, Sir, being a lawyer, you will appreciate that as at date even the laws of Mauritius that are found on the web portal of the Supreme Court are not the official version. And if reference is to be made to the official version of the laws of Mauritius, then one should be in possession of a set of books that are published over the years, as pointed out by the Attorney General, by various authorised publishers and at present, to purchase a complete set of those statutes and subsidiary legislations, Mr Speaker, Sir, you need around Rs200,000 or so to do.

As it stands, Mr Speaker, Sir, for a lawyer to provide legal opinion and for any citizen to that effect to refer to the Laws of Mauritius as per the existing Law, reference should only be made to those present set of statutes published in those very costly books. With this amendment being able to now have an electronic revised edition and the more so being able to have it free of charge and be able to print a copy of same is much welcomed by the legal profession and other entities that used to refer to those Laws of Mauritius on a regular basis.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall nevertheless make some suggestions. Firstly, there should be a proper dissemination of this new Law so that the public at large will come to know that now access to the official version of the Laws of Mauritius will be free and can be printed and used as the official version of our Laws. There are many instances in Mauritius where people do not know their rights and they are ignorant of the Law and ignorance of the Law is no excuse but same should be disseminated to the population at large, Mr Speaker, Sir.

In the same vein, the Constitution also should be disseminated amongst our citizens together with all those access to the official website of the Attorney General's office. I will invite the hon. Attorney General to consider a proper campaign in informing the public at large with regard to accessibility for free with regard to the Laws of Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall also invite the hon. Attorney General to also consider that the Law Revision Unit, as rightly pointed by hon. Collendavelloo and hon. Uteem. They should be provided with sufficient resources in terms of manpower, software, equipment with the advent of this amendment to the main Act so that they can deliver diligently and in a timely manner as per the powers vested upon this unit by Sections 5 and 6 of the main Act.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I say so with regard to the Law Revision Unit as this unit is called upon to play an import role as per the powers vested upon them by those two sections and for the sake of the record, Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall quote Sections 5 and 6. With regard to Section 6, Mr Speaker, Sir, of the main Act –

“6. Change of substance

(1) The Attorney General may authorise the Law Revision Unit to make a change in the substance of an enactment for the purpose of a revised edition.

(2) Where a change in the substance of an enactment has been made under subsection (1), that enactment shall be laid before the Assembly and shall have effect as part of the revised edition only from such day as it is fixed by the Assembly.”

Taking into account, Mr Speaker, Sir, what has been stated in a now landmark judgement of *Swan General Insurance v New India Assurance Co Ltd & anor* 2016 SCJ 333 whereby the learned Judges pointed out that there was a material change in substance too. In this particular case, Mr Speaker, Sir, it concerns the interpretation of Section 62 of the Road Traffic Act which was brought by the Law Revision Unit in 1981 without complying with Section 6 of the Revision of Laws Act. The judgement went on to opine that and I quote, Mr Speaker, Sir

“...there is no indication that the Attorney General authorised the Law Revision Unit to make any change in the substance of the Law and in this case Section 62 as it presently stands was never laid before or approved by the Assembly. As a result of the above, Section 62 (2) was wrongly revised and redrafted.”

As indicated, Mr Speaker, Sir, such revision of Laws under the Revision of Laws Act cannot affect the substance of an enactment without complying with Section 6 of the Act and the learned Judges went on to conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir –

“we hold therefore that the new version of Section 62 (2) of the Road Traffic Act which was brought about by the revision exercise carried out by the Law Revision Unit is null and void as it changes the substance of the legislation as enacted by Parliament without the approval of the Assembly as required by Section 6 of the Law Revision Act.”

This is what has been pointed out by hon. Collendavelloo in his exposé and by hon. Uteem with regard to the importance that this unit is called upon to work, to operate and in that context, as hon. Uteem has invited the hon. Attorney General to consider that Section 6 of the main Act should also apply to the electronic version, I would also invite the hon. Attorney General to take into account what hon. Collendavelloo has suggested with regard to proper training, with regard to legal drafting be given to the Law Revision Unit and if possible take the advice or expertise from New Zealand for example as quoted by hon. Collendavelloo to beef up the Law Revision Unit.

This will be an important component of the Attorney General's Office because being now free on the Web, people will instantly look for it and as hon. Collendavelloo pointed out, there are certain legislations that we see on the website of the Supreme Court but not yet on the website of the Attorney General's Office. With the enactment of this piece of legislation, people, lawyers, other entities that work with the laws, that need to provide legal opinion, that need to provide certain various documents that contain the Laws of Mauritius, they will have access instantly and directly to that website.

The Law Revision Unit should be a very important component with competent people and I know there are loads of them at the Attorney General's Office and I know that they will do a marvellous job but nevertheless we need to have more resources and manpower and beef up that unit because they will be called upon to make it happen because this will be a driving force for the legal profession and for all other professions that use the Laws of Mauritius every day.

I congratulate the office of the Attorney General for bringing this legislation and the Attorney General for presenting this Bill today and I just hope that we go very fast with this Bill to become an Act and we put it into practice because we, at the legal profession, we are much eager to save some Rs200,000 and get access to that piece of legislation, electronic version, for us to do our job in a very diligent and timely manner.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Teeluck!

(7.12 p.m.)

The Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage (Mr A. Teeluck): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, *je partage l'avis de l'honorable Lobine* that previous speakers have extensively debated and provided very meaningful input on this Bill and I was still young, I would say *l'honorable Collendavelloo nous a même fasciné par cette belle leçon d'histoire* and we thank him for that.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will be very brief. Living in a digital age undoubtedly there has been a significant change in the way we now access information and the same applies to access to Law. For the purpose of these debates, I have myself used the electronic version, though not official, of the Revision of Law Act as published on the website of the Attorney General's Office. We do reckon that publication of laws, rules and regulations are widely available online and over the recent years, reference and use of these electronic versions of our legislations whether published on the website of the Attorney General's office or the Supreme Court of Mauritius website, have developed into a very common feature amongst lawyers, students, law officers and so on. Though not official but the ease of access to these documents have very often made these electronic versions a point of reference. But, of course, despite being widely accessible and used, those published laws are for information purpose only.

Previous speakers have rightly mentioned even after having consulted an online version of those laws, one has to go back and consult the official version of the enactment for more precision and accuracy and most importantly, for the purpose of admissibility and for it to have authoritative value in a Court of law. Who are those lawyers and legal professionals and those seeking legal information who have had to visit libraries, *surtout* when you have not or are not able to purchase the revised version of the laws in Mauritius.

Hon. Uteem rightly stated, as at now, access to law is costly, nearly *R 200,000* for the set of volumes of primary legislation and set of volumes of subsidiary legislations. *R 200,000!* I fully concur with hon. Uteem. As fast as a car would depreciate once it leaves the showroom of a *concessionaire*, the revised laws of Mauritius is already out-dated as soon as you purchase them; given the number of primary or subsidiary legislations being passed, being promulgated, being proclaimed.

Then comes the tedious exercise of updating page by page, those voluminous editions of the revised laws of Mauritius. I remember myself, I was a law graduate and I joined a law firm, that was 15 years ago, and hon. Uteem was in the same building where I was. He was on the fourth floor, I was on the third floor. The first week in that law firm as a law graduate, was to update actually the paper version of the revised laws of Mauritius, to go page by page and to chip in the loose page of any amendments being brought to any piece of legislation or to strike off the existing law being amended or being repealed.

So, hopefully, with these amendments being brought in this Bill, comes the cure of spending days of updating page by page *les textes de loi*, talking about amendments, another incidence that I recall having faced a full research paper on an unrevised version of the Companies Act with obviously the resulting paper being flawed to the core. So again, I think, this Bill with these amendments and with the formula being proposed of having access to electronic version more easily can only bring certain ease to the practice of law.

In a democracy, Mr Speaker, Sir, citizens must have robust access to the law to understand their rights and responsibilities under the law. Undeniably, in this digital world where we are aiming towards a digital economy and going paperless, the introduction of the Revision of Laws (Amendment) Bill is only natural, accessible and most importantly, given the costs being practiced for the purchase of the paper version of the laws of Mauritius, what is more important is that this electronic version will be free of charge.

As the Explanatory Memorandum states, the electronic revised edition will be free of charge and will allow users not only to view the revised laws of Mauritius but also print a copy thereof. The need to have a specific section in the Bill to reemphasise on the free access to the electronic version, I believe, is irrelevant. The Explanatory Memorandum is part and parcel of the Bill. Therefore, it is already in the Bill *et éventuellement* will form part of the Act. In any event, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is an administrative matter to be dealt administratively and *au plus aller par voie de* subsidiary legislation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with these words, I commend my colleague, the Attorney General, for coming forward with this Bill and for introducing in the House the proposed amendments therein.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(7.19 p.m.)

Mr Gobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank hon. Members on both sides of the House. I propose to be quite short in summing up.

The issues raised by hon. Uteem and hon. Lobine as well, I think arise also in the minds of lawyers outside the House as to the inconsistencies, if any, between whichever edition; whether it is the printed, the electronic as compared to the Gazette. Time and again, this question has cropped up and the short answer, Mr Speaker, Sir, to this is that in case of the unlikely event of an inconsistency, obviously, it will be for the Courts to resolve such an issue.

As indeed has been the case in the past and I have been able during the break to find that there are indeed decided cases in the past highlighting inconsistencies and where the Courts have given judgment and resolving the matter. I can refer to two cases namely –

- *Khodabacus v/s the Electoral Commissioner & Ors.* That is a judgment of the Supreme Court, reference being 1992, Mauritius Reports 118, and
- the more recent one being the judgment of the Supreme Court in the case of *Ng Kuet Leong v/s the Medical Council of Mauritius* in 2019. SCJ 1.

I cannot, now, prescriptively say what will happen in case of inconsistency. That is indeed a matter for the Courts.

Now, what will happen with the electronic version? In fact, in case of an inconsistency, it will be more noticeable. Why do I say this? Because I refer to what I stated in the course of my speech on the features of the electronic version, let me reiterate. The features of the electronic version will include the fact that updates and amendments will not be overwritten on the previous version. Any amendment brought to a legislation will be uploaded as a new version so that it will be visible as compared to what the legislation was before.

Furthermore, hyperlinks will enable users to view the provision of a legislation that has amended a particular legislation. It will be easier to see the amendments, the changes as they happen in time. There will be a tracking.

Let me come to Section 6 of the Revision of Laws Act as to the “change of substance”. I will draw the attention of the House to Section 7 which comes right after section 6. Emphasis has been laid on section 6 which empowers the Attorney General to

authorise the Law Revision Unit to make a change in substance of an enactment for the purpose of a revised edition. And in subsection 2 of Section 6, it provides –

“...where a change in the substance has been made under subsection 1, that enactment shall be laid before the Assembly.”

And it goes on. That section should be read together with section 7 thereafter. Section 7 provides, I quote –

“No enactment omitted from a revised edition or Supplement, other than enactment omitted under section 5, shall be deemed to be without force and validity by reason only of the fact that it is so omitted.”

What had happened, Mr Speaker, Sir, was that, section 7 of the Act was introduced by way of an amendment in 2011, because that question arose in a case where a change of substance had been noticed in a particular case and then the question was how to resolve it. Of course, once again, it would be for the Courts to resolve and in that case, the Courts had resolved it and it was a judgement of the Privy Council in the case of *Simon Ah Tong & Others against the Mauritius Sugar Terminal Corporation, Privy Council*, appeal number 41 of 1986.

I refer to the second speech of the then Attorney General, hon. Varma, when in 2011, he introduced the *Revision of Laws (Amendment) Bill (No. III of 2011)*, and this is what he had to say, and I quote –

“Mr Speaker, Sir, under clause 7, any Act which has been accidentally omitted from a revised edition or supplement will not be deemed to be without force or validity by reason only of this omission. This is in line with the judgement of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, *Simon Ah Tong & Others against the Mauritius Sugar Terminal Corporation, Privy Council*, appeal number 41 of 1986, where it was stated that an enactment could still be read in its original form where the Law Revision Unit has omitted it from the revised edition, but had no authority to do so.”

This explains why section 7 was enacted in *Revision of Laws Act* by way of an amendment in 2011.

To sum up on the question of inconsistencies or unauthorised changes in case, in the unlikely event they happen, it will be invariably, Mr Speaker, Sir, for the Courts to resolve.

I have two final points to make. With this digitalisation, with this step that we take to make use of the latest available software, namely, LegisPro, this opens for future other possibilities, Mr Speaker, Sir. I seize this opportunity to draw the attention of the House at the vision that we have in digitalisation. With a software like LegisPro, we can even explore workflow links with the e-Parliament project, so that when the Bill is enacted even from this House, it can be linked with the same software so that it is updated as we go along. This is an option; we are not there yet, but it is possible because it has happened in other countries.

This digitalisation means something and it can be linked between institutions; my Office, the e-Parliament, the Gazette. Everything can be linked if we work hand-in-hand, and I am sure we will be able to do so for the benefit of the people of this country. This is the vision. With time we will be able to do it, and it has happened, it has been done in other countries.

Let me before ending, clarify one thing and I thank hon. Collendavelloo for drawing my attention to this. There appears to be an ambiguity in the Bill as to the definition in Clause 3, where we see the words “revised electronic edition,” whereas in clause 5 and thereafter, we see the words “electronic revised edition”. If that causes an ambiguity, I will cure it at Committee Stage. What we mean is the “electronic revised edition” and I will therefore cure it at Committee Stage to avoid any ambiguity.

Avant de terminer, Mr Speaker, Sir, I think I will make myself the mouthpiece of one and all in this House to thank hon. Collendavelloo *pour ce cours magistral*. I am sure officers of the Law Revision Unit are also clapping in the office after having heard *ce cours magistral sur l’histoire, de l’évolution du Law Revision Unit de 1971 jusqu’à present, et je vous en remercie mon cher ami*.

I thank all hon. Members and I wish also to place on record the fantastic work of the officers of my office, including the officers of the Law Revision Unit.

With these words, I commend the Bill the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

Committee Stage

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

THE REVISION OF LAWS (AMENDMENT) BILL

(No. XX of 2021)

Clauses 1 and 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 3 (Section 2 of principal Act amended).

Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stands part of the Bill.”

Mr Gobin: Mr Chairperson, I move for the following amendment in clause 3 –

“in Clause 3, by deleting the words “revised electronic edition” and replacing them by the words “electronic revised edition.”

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 3, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 4 to 6 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

The title and enacting clause were agreed to.

The Bill, as amended, was agreed to.

On the Assembly resuming with Mr Speaker in the Chair, Mr Speaker reported accordingly.

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Revision of Laws (Amendment) Bill (No. XX of 2021) was read a third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 12 April 2022 at 11.30 a.m.

Mr Seeruttun seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned!

At 7.33 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 12 April 2022 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

ILLEGAL MOTORCYCLE RACING - ADDITIONAL MEASURES

(No. B/104) 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 illegal motorcycle racing, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the additional measures he proposes to take to address same, if any.

Reply: Regarding illegal motor vehicles racing, Section 125 of the Road Traffic Act provides, to quote it, as follows –

“Any person who, except with the consent of, and in accordance with any conditions imposed by, the Commissioner of Police –

- (a) Promotes; or
- (b) takes part in,

any race or trial of speed between motor vehicles on a road shall commit an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding 1,000 rupees.”

The Commissioner of Police has informed that additional measures have been taken in order to curb down illegal racing including motorcycle racing, and they include –

- (a) targeted crackdown operations and preventive patrols which have been increased in the regions concerned;
- (b) sensitisation campaigns have been intensified through the Facebook page of the Mauritius Police Force to raise public awareness on this problem;
- (c) re-activation of the Highway Patrol Scheme to ensure permanent and visible Police presence along motorways, particularly in the regions where such activities are being organised, and
- (d) Police checks on mechanical workshops where the parts of motor vehicles are being modified and close monitoring of the conduct of their owners/drivers/riders.

The Commissioner of Police has also informed that the Police is continuously monitoring the situation and is gathering information on sites other than the common sites where illegal rallies are being organised. This will assist Police to react effectively to such illegal activities. The Safe City Cameras will also be used to obtain real time images of the rallies. With regard to places which are not covered by Safe City Cameras, Police will make

use of Remotely Piloted Aircraft, that is, drones, to maintain surveillance on these sites and take actions accordingly.

In addition, mobile patrols will be maintained throughout the island at suspected places where illegal rallies are organised.

MBC - INQUIRY REPORT - FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

(No. B/105) 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 the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain and table copy of the report of the Committee chaired by Ms Sandrine Valère, Permanent Secretary, indicating if any action has been taken in relation to the findings and recommendations of the report and, if not, why not, indicating the fees paid in connection therewith.

Reply: Following an alleged incident involving Mr Moonendra Nudhi Sharma Ramsurrin, then Acting Director-General, Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, the Board of the MBC, at its meeting held on Thursday 17 September 2020, decided to appoint Ms Sandrine Valère, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, to investigate into the matter.

The Chairperson of the MBC Board has informed that the report of Ms Valère, which was submitted to the MBC Board on Thursday 19 November 2020, was only meant for internal use, and, as such, it cannot be tabled.

The Chairperson of the MBC Board has also informed that the report of Ms Valère was examined by the MBC Board on Thursday 19 November 2020, and, in the light of the findings of the inquiry, the Board recommended that Mr Ramsurrin be given a severe reprimand. Mr Ramsurrin was accordingly severely reprimanded on Wednesday 25 November 2020.

Moreover, the Code of Ethics and Human Resource Manual at the MBC are being updated and the Human Resource Manager at the MBC is acting as Workplace Ombudsperson, as recommended in the Inquiry Report.

In regard to fees payable for the inquiry, the Chairperson of the MBC Board has also informed that a total sum of Rs152,800 was paid to the Chairperson and officers who were involved with the inquiry. The amount paid is based on the Circular letter dated Thursday 02 February 2017, issued by the then Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms on

fees payable to Chairperson, Members and Secretary of Committees and the recommendations of the 2021 PRB Report.

OMBUDSPERSON - POST – COMPLAINTS RECEIVED

(No. B/106) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the post of Ombudsman, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if same has now been filled, indicating the number of complaints received since the retirement of the former incumbent thereof.

Reply: The contractual term of office of the former Ombudsman expired on 25 February 2022 and the post is currently vacant.

In accordance with section 96(2) of the Constitution, the Ombudsman is appointed by the President, acting after consultation with the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and such other persons, if any, as appear to the President, acting in his own deliberate judgement, to be Leaders of parties in the Assembly.

It is expected that the post will be filled shortly, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution.

Since the departure of the former Ombudsman, the Ombudsman's Office has, according to available information, received 59 complaints.

SAFE CITY PROJECT – CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS

(No. B/107) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Safe City Project, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) when same is expected to become fully operational, indicating the impact of the delay, if any, in terms of cost overrun and quantifying same, and
- (b) the actions that will be taken in the light of the findings of the Audit Report 2020-2021 to the effect that deliverables were not met as per contractual obligations.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, the Commissioner of Police has informed that the Safe City Project is expected to be completed by the end of 2022. The contract for the Safe City Project is for fixed amounts which are disbursed as and when a

component is completed and fully operational. The issue of cost overrun therefore does not arise.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the Commissioner of Police has also informed that a Project Monitoring Team, which was set up at the initial stages of implementation, is responsible for ensuring that every deliverable of the contract is completed. The Project Monitoring Team comprises the following members –

- (i) a Deputy Commissioner of Police, as the Head of the Team;
- (ii) representatives from different units of the Police such as Police Headquarters, IT Unit, Traffic Unit and Communications Branch;
- (iii) a representative from the Prime Minister's Office;
- (iv) a representative from the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development;
- (v) a representative from the Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation;
- (vi) a representative from the Ministry of Land Transport and Light Rail;
- (vii) a representative from the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities;
- (viii) a representative from the Central Informatics Bureau;
- (ix) a representative from the IT Security Unit;
- (x) a representative from the Central Electricity Board;
- (xi) a representative from the Road Development Authority, and
- (xii) a representative from the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit.

The Project Monitoring Team is having several working sessions, on a weekly basis, to ensure the completion of the Safe City Project within the shortest delay.

AIR MAURITIUS – NEW FLEET

(No. B/108) Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the fleet of Air

Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Airport Holdings Ltd., information as to the planes which are currently being used, indicating if the company intends to purchase new planes in its bid to recapture its market share.

Reply: It is not the practice to disclose commercially sensitive information pertaining to Government-Owned companies as such disclosure may cause prejudice to the company.

Air Mauritius Ltd. is a private company governed by the Companies Act and its Articles of Association and it is managed by a Board of Directors. Information pertaining to the activities of the company is published in its Annual Report, as required by law. The company has already, by way of a public Communiqué, informed that it will publish its account by October 2022.

In any case, the information sought by the hon. Member on the fleet of Air Mauritius is already available in the public domain.

Whether the company intends to purchase new planes, is a matter for the Board of the company to decide on.

RODRIGUAN PRISON OFFICERS – TRANSFER TO RODRIGUES – PROCEDURE

(No. B/109) 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 Rodriguan Prison Officers presently working in mainland Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Prison, information as to if they may request to be transferred onto the Rodrigues establishment to work in Rodrigues and, if so, give details of the procedure applicable therefor.

Reply: The Acting Commissioner of Prisons has informed that, upon appointment as Temporary Prisons Officer/Senior Prisons Officer or confirmation in any rank, Prisons Officers are informed in writing that they will be posted on the establishment of the Mauritius Prisons Service and will be called upon to perform duties in mainland Mauritius only.

Postings and transfers within the Mauritius Prisons Service in Mauritius are the prerogative of the Commissioner of Prisons and such exercises are conducted on a regular

basis or on an as-and-when required basis to meet the changing operational requirements of the Prisons Department.

Prisons Officers willing to be posted to a specific prison across the island may, on acceptable and reasonable grounds, apply to the Commissioner of Prisons through their respective Officer-in-Charge for a transfer. These requests for transfer are considered on a case-to-case basis.

The Acting Commissioner of Prisons has further informed that Prisons Officers are recruited by the Disciplined Forces Service Commission following request from the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. These officers are under the responsibility of the Chief Commissioner.

Any vacancy arising from the establishment of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly is reported to the Disciplined Forces Service Commission and is subsequently advertised among Rodriguan candidates.

A request was made by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly on 11 December 2015, for nineteen Prisons Officers/Senior Prisons Officers to work with inmates at the newly established Rehabilitation Youth Centre in Rodrigues.

To facilitate the operation of this Centre, ten Rodriguan Officers in the grade of Prisons Officers/Senior Prisons Officers were exceptionally deployed to Rodrigues for an initial period of six months on 13 June and on 14 July 2016. This arrangement was further extended till to date.

Seven of these ten Officers are still in post in Rodrigues and their salary is being met by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly as from December 2018. The remaining three Officers resumed their service in Mauritius since November 2016.

The Island Chief Executive has informed that a request would be made to the Disciplined Forces Service Commission for consideration of the permanent transfer of these seven Officers on the establishment of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, in line with existing legal provisions.

**CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO - PULLING DOWN OF MAURITIAN FLAG -
OBJECTION**

(No. B/110) 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, following the pulling down of the Mauritian Flag on the Chagos Archipelago, he will state if his Office has had recourse to –

- (a) the International Court of Justice, and
- (b) diplomatic protest.

Reply: To remind, Mauritius carried out a scientific survey of Blenheim Reef in the Chagos Archipelago from 08 to 22 February 2022 in the context of the maritime delimitation case which it has brought against Maldives under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Apart from the survey of Blenheim Reef, the Mauritius delegation also visited Salomon Islands and Peros Banhos where they raised the flag of Mauritius on the basis of its undisputed sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, as confirmed by the International Court of Justice in its Advisory Opinion of 25 February 2019 and the Special Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea in its Judgment of 28 January 2021. The flag of Mauritius was also hoisted on Blenheim Reef.

On 08 March 2022, in reply to a question in the UK House of Commons, the British Minister of State for Asia and the Middle East at the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office stated that the United Kingdom had removed the flags raised by Mauritius in the Chagos Archipelago, claiming that Mauritius had turned a scientific survey mission into a political stunt.

Government considers that the United Kingdom's removal of the flags of Mauritius from the Chagos Archipelago constitutes a blatant violation of its international law obligations.

The Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice of 25 February 2019, United Nations General Assembly Resolution 73/295 of 22 May 2019 and the Judgment of the Special Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea of 28 January 2021 have made it clear that as a matter of international law, the Chagos Archipelago forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius. Mauritius is accordingly the sole State lawfully entitled to exercise sovereignty and sovereign rights over the Chagos Archipelago and its maritime zones, including the territorial sea.

The removal of the flags also implies that the United Kingdom illegally entered the territorial sea of Mauritius around Peros Banhos, Salomon Islands and Blenheim Reef without authorisation from Mauritius for the purpose of reaching land in order to remove those flags. Passage through the territorial sea of Mauritius in such circumstances is not permissible under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Following the United Kingdom's removal of the flags of Mauritius from the Chagos Archipelago, Mauritius has not had recourse to the International Court of Justice.

However, on 11 March 2022, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade addressed a note of protest to the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to convey the strong objection of the Government of Mauritius to the removal of the flags of Mauritius from the Chagos Archipelago.

On 15 March 2022, in a Note Verbale addressed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office reiterated the assertion made in the Parliamentary reply namely, and, I quote, "the Government of Mauritius turned a scientific survey into a political stunt", and that, I quote, "The raising of Mauritian flags was an unhelpful way to approach a bilateral dispute."

On 31 March 2022, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade has responded to the Note Verbale of the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office in the following terms –

- (a) the Government of Mauritius deeply regrets and categorically rejects the assertion of the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office;
- (b) the survey of Blenheim Reef was carried out by Mauritius in a part of its territory which has been so recognised by authoritative determinations of the International Court of Justice, United Nations General Assembly Resolution 73/295 and more recently, the Special Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea;
- (c) the actions taken by Mauritius during the survey, including the raising of its flags in the Chagos Archipelago, are fully compatible with the exercise of its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago;
- (d) far from being a political stunt, the visit organised by Government to the Chagos Archipelago has allowed the international media to report on the untruths and disinformation spread by the former officials of the United Kingdom regarding the status of the former inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago at the time of its illegal excision from Mauritius;

- (e) the visit also enabled the Chagossian members of the delegation to visit the graves of their ancestors which were in a lamentable state, and they were cleaned and given the dignity such places deserve, and
- (f) Mauritius also considers that those graves as well as what used to be the place of worship of Mauritians of Chagossian origin ought to have been kept clean and in a decent condition by the United Kingdom even as an illegal occupier, and that the United Kingdom manifestly failed in its duty to protect and preserve these sites.

SYNTHETIC DRUGS - TREATMENT & REHABILITATION PROGRAMME

(No. B/111) 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 synthetic drugs, he will state if he will consider impressing upon the Commissioner of Police the need for the carrying out of a survey in relation thereto to make an assessment of the –

- (a) age group mostly affected therewith, and
- (b) remedies for the rehabilitation of victims thereof.

Reply: A National Survey Among People Who Use Drugs (PWUD) was carried out in September/October 2021 by the National Drug Secretariat (NDS) of my Office, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Wellness, the UN Resident Coordinator's Office and the World Health Organisation. The survey report was launched on 10 February 2022.

The survey was conducted among PWUDs aged 18 years and above and the findings have, *inter alia*, revealed that –

- (i) sixty-five percent of PWUDs have used synthetic drugs, among which more than 60% have ever used *Batte dans la tete*, strawberry, wasabi and *La poussière tombe*. However, there are indications that all synthetic drugs are commonly referred to as “*simik*” nowadays;
- (ii) among those who ever used synthetic drugs, a much higher percentage is male (90%) compared to females (10%);

- (iii) of the 81% who used synthetic drugs in the week prior to the survey, 28% used them 2 to 3 times a day. Almost three quarters of PWUDs who used synthetic drugs in the week prior to the survey, did so once a day or more;
- (iv) of those who ever used synthetic drugs, most are between the ages of 18 and 24 (32%), followed by those between the ages of 25 and 29 (20%);
- (v) of those who ever used synthetic drugs, most live in Port Louis (61%), followed by Pamplemousses (15%) and Plaines Wilhems (13%);
- (vi) of those who ever used synthetic drugs, most have completed primary school (44%) or less (34.2%). Seven percent have no formal training and few have completed some level of secondary school;
- (vii) of those who ever used synthetic drugs, almost half are single and never married and 21% are married, living with a spouse;
- (viii) only over one quarter of synthetic drug users have been arrested. A much higher percentage compared to those who only use Cannabis. (almost 10 times more compared to cannabis);
- (ix) fifteen percent of PWUDs have ever overdosed and 31% have experienced blackouts or flashbacks as a result of using synthetic drugs, and
- (x) among those who ever used synthetic drugs, the majority had cannabis (THC) in their systems based on a urine test. Just over one quarter had basic opiates and 17% had amphetamines in their systems.

With regard to part (a) of the question, in view of the results of the survey report which includes valuable information regarding synthetic drugs, the question of the Commissioner of Police carrying out another survey does not arise.

Concerning part (b) of the question, the Ministry of Health and Wellness has informed that the Nenuphar Centre situated in Long Mountain Hospital is dispensing treatment to rehabilitate victims of synthetic drugs aged less than 23 years. The following counselling activities and psychosocial support are carried out by a multi-disciplinary team consisting of psychiatrists, psychologists, doctors, nursing officers and visiting NGOs –

- motivational-enhancement interviewing;

- group and individual counselling;
- cognitive behaviour therapy;
- anxiety management;
- anger management;
- yoga and meditation;
- general knowledge classes;
- role playing and psychodrama;
- music therapy;
- art therapy, and
- family education and support.

Therapies are conducted both on an individual basis as well as in a group setting. Treatment is tailored to suit the patient's individual needs.

A "journal club" whereby the youngsters review daily newspapers every morning and later, in a group setting, give their critical opinion on the different subjects that make the media headlines.

Family therapy is conducted usually on Wednesdays and involve participation of family members who are taught how to relate with the patient. They are also taught how to recognise symptoms indicative of relapse quite early so that they can inform the multi-disciplinary team early and timely interventions can be made.

Indoor recreational activities include games like Carom, Domino, Scrabble, Monopoly, Playing Cards and Chest games. There is also a treadmill and a bicycle for exercising for patients to use in the centre.

Outdoor recreational activities such as football and table-tennis amongst other games. Gardening sessions are conducted in the green space.

Regarding post-discharge care, patients are initially followed up in an outpatient setting at the centre and eventually followed up in the Addictology Unit nearest to their place of residence.

A Drug Addiction Unit has been set up in each Health Region to provide assistance, medico-psychosocial support, as well as referral services for people who misuse drugs. The Drug Addiction Units are found at Long Mountain Hospital, Dr. B. C. Hospital - Flacq, Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital, Victoria Hospital, and Mahebourg Hospital. All the services provided are based on a combination of psychosocial and pharmaco-therapies including detoxification, after-care and involve family, friends and social workers.

Also, the Frangipane Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre (FTRC) was launched on 14 June 2021 to fight against substance abuse including synthetic drug abuse. It is well located in the premises of the Brown Sequard Mental Health Care Centre so as to facilitate access of patients of the regions of Plaine Wilhems otherwise they had to travel to either Mahebourg Methadone Day Care Centre (MDCC) or Bouloux MDCC.

Furthermore, the Government has decided to proceed with the setting up of the Drug Offenders Administrative Panel which has, as main objective, to divert people who use drug from the criminal justice system towards a treatment and rehabilitation programme.

MAURITIUS DUTY FREE PARADISE – REPORTED INCIDENT- INQUIRY

(No. B/112) Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the recent reported incident, wherein a driver allegedly fell asleep while driving a van commuting employees of the Mauritius Duty Free Paradise (MDFP), he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the MDFP, information as to if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

Reply: The Mauritius Duty Free Paradise Company Ltd. is a private company governed by the Companies Act and by its constitution. This being the case, it would certainly not be proper to provide the information requested by the hon. Member, inasmuch as the Mauritius Duty Free Paradise Company Ltd. has its own degree of autonomy by virtue of its constitution and its governing structure comprising a Board of Directors and an executive management.

**ELECTORAL LAWS - CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE –APPOINTMENT
POWERS & REGISTRATION OF ELECTORS**

(No. B/113) **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) the 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)

**POLICE BRUTALITY - ALLEGED CASES - INQUIRIES & SUSPENSION-
JAN 2020 TO APRIL 2022**

(No. B/114) **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 outcome thereof.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS POLICE FORCE – NATIONAL SURVEY – DRUGS

(No. B/115) **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 Survey Among People Who Use Drugs carried out by the Mauritius Police Force, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the –

- (a) groups of people having participated therein;
- (b) method used for data collection therefor, and
- (c) recommendations made on the basis of the outcome thereof.

Reply: The National Survey Among People Who Use Drugs (PWUD) was carried out in September/October 2021 by the National Drug Secretariat (NDS) of the Prime Minister's Office, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Wellness, the UN Resident Coordinator's Office and the World Health Organisation.

With regard to part (a) of the question, based on a sample size, 602 PWUDs were enrolled in the quantitative survey. The population comprised male and female candidates above 18 years residing across the island and who used any illicit psychoactive substances (not including alcohol) but including new psychoactive substances, prescription medications, cannabis and amphetamine type stimulants consumed orally by inhaling or by swallowing or by sniffing.

Concerning part (b) of the question, the Respondent Driven Sampling (RDS) methodology was used to collect numeric data for the survey. The same methodology was used by the Ministry of Health and Wellness for its surveys on PWID. The RDS is a probability-based sampling method and is based on a chain referral process designed especially for studies among hard-to-reach people, for instance, people who use drugs. Qualitative contextual and descriptive data were obtained through focus groups and key informant interviews.

The exercise for data collection was conducted by nine (9) officers from the Nursing Cadre of the Ministry of Health and Wellness at six sites namely Dr. Idrice Goomany Treatment Centre at Plaine Verte; Centre D'accueil de Terre Rouge; Centre De Solidarité Pour Une Nouvelle Vie at Rose Hill; Methadone Centre at Mahebourg; Chrysalide Centre at Bambous, and NOUBAZ at Curepipe. The survey was conducted in strict compliance with the COVID-19 sanitary measures and protocol.

With regard to part (c) of the question, the Survey Report, which was launched on 10 February 2022, contained the following recommendations –

- (i) PWUDs have strong social networks as confirmed by the use of peer-to-peer recruitment. This knowledge is useful in delivering peer driven prevention and intervention modalities;
- (ii) females have different patterns of drug use and needs compared to males; creative treatment modalities are needed to respond to females who use drugs. Additional and focused in-depth qualitative research will have to be conducted among females who use drugs to better understand their behaviors and harm reduction and treatment needs;
- (iii) a scale up of services providing the most effective medications and treatment modalities for specific drug types as well as socio-psychological components to deal with the root causes of problem drug use are needed for anyone who needs help to stop using drugs, including those in prison settings. It is essential to maintain best practices for PWUD targeted programmes to provide harm reduction education, effective drug treatment and maintenance modalities;
- (iv) education and policy should be enhanced to ensure an effective human right based criminal justice response to drug problems and focus more on harm reduction rather than on punishment;
- (v) outreach efforts as well as policy changes are needed to reduce stigma and discrimination related to PWUD among the community;
- (vi) all treatment programmes should be accessible, affordable, and friendly. There are indications from focus groups with PWUD and their families that including family members in a person's treatment of drugs is effective. Programmes should continue to involve families in the treatment and recovery of problem drug users;
- (vii) PWUDs start using drugs at young ages. It is thus important to continue enhancing youth programmes to include healthy lifestyle choices and support for young people who may be vulnerable to drug use. Additional efforts are needed to educate young people about drug use and to allow harm reduction and outreach to young people;

- (viii) in an effort to monitor changes in drug use behaviours and to monitor the impact of interventions, future surveys using the same sampling method and eligibility to monitor are warranted;
- (ix) to conduct rapid assessments to quickly understand the situation and service need for young populations and conduct research to estimate the cost of these services, and
- (x) the population size estimation should be used to better plan and allocate resources for prevention and intervention programmes.

The NDS is currently disseminating the findings of the survey among stakeholders through workshops and working sessions, namely with NGOs, the staff of the Ministry of Health and Wellness and the civil society.

MBC - DIRECTOR GENERAL – QUALIFICATIONS, SALARY & FRINGE BENEFITS

(No. B/116) 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 present Director General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to –

- (a) the qualifications held, and
- (b) salary and fringe benefits being drawn.

(Withdrawn)

AGALEGA ISLAND - VESSEL SEIZED - INQUIRY

(No. B/117) 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 the vessel seized in our territorial waters near Agalega Island on 14 January 2022 by the CGS Barracuda, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to where matters stand as to the inquiry carried out thereinto.

Reply: The Commissioner of Police has informed that on 10 January 2022 at 15.00 hours, whilst the CGS Barracuda was on patrol, it intercepted a suspicious fishing vessel in

our Mauritius Economic Exclusive Zone. This said fishing vessel was an Iranian dhow and was not flying any flag to disclose its nationality contrary to Article 94 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

On noticing the CGS Barracuda, the dhow altered its course in an easterly direction at an increasing speed. The vessel did not need several radio calls, and maintained its course. However, the CGS Barracuda managed to compel the dhow to stop. A team of the CGS Barracuda boarded the vessel for checking purposes.

The Commissioner of Police has also informed that, whilst checking the said dhow, the National Coast Guard Officers found nine (9) persons on board. Their identity could not be verified as they were not in possession of any document.

The master of the dhow was questioned about the presence of the vessel in the Mauritius Economic Exclusive Zone. He explained that the crew had left Cha Bahar, Iran, on or about 05 January 2022 for a fishing expedition. Some days after, the owner of the dhow telephoned them through satellite telephone and asked them to look for a missing dhow at sea.

During the search, the dhow got a breakdown and started drifting. After six days, the engine was repaired and they sailed again, but only a few hours later, they noticed that their dhow was being tailed by another ship, which they thought was one of Somalian pirates, and increased their speed for safety. As they found that the ship was not from Somalia, they stopped and complied with all the instructions given.

The Commissioner of Police has further informed that the master of the dhow could not justify the presence and activity of the dhow by any Fishing Licence or related document to carry out such fishing activity in the Mauritius Economic Exclusive Zone. The dhow was therefore brought to Port Louis Harbour, escorted by the CGS Barracuda.

On 14 January 2022, the dhow berthed Port Louis Harbour. On the same day, the personnel from the Ministry of Health and Wellness carried out PCR tests on the nine (9) crew members. Four (4) of them were tested positive to COVID-19 and they were escorted to Le Chaland Detention Centre where they have been lodged.

The dhow is presently still berthed at Trou Fanfaron, Port Louis Harbour under the National Coast Guard control.

The Commissioner of Police has also informed that the following actions have been initiated –

- (i) statements have been recorded from the personnel of the National Coast Guard and the crew members of the CGS Barracuda;
- (ii) on 26 January 2022, the Iranian dhow was searched at Quay F6, Trou Fanfaron by Officers of the Central CID assisted by other Police agencies, such as the Scene of Crime Office, the Police Dog Unit, the National Coast Guard as well as officials from the Mauritius Revenue Authority and the Forensic Science Laboratory. Nothing incriminating has been found and secured;
- (iii) as the native language of the Iranians is “Farsi”, the services of an Interpreter were solicited for the recording of statements from the Iranians, and
- (iv) on 15 March 2022, an Interim Report was forwarded to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice.

On 17 March 2022, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions has advised action under Section 16 of the Maritime Zones Act.

On completion of the enquiry, the case will be forwarded anew to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions for further advice.

VALLÉE DES PRÊTRES - NEW POLICE STATION

(No. B/118) Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the proposed setting up of a new police station in Vallée des Prêtres, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand.

Reply: The Commissioner of Police has informed that the Mauritius Police Force has initiated action for the construction of a Police Station at Vallée des Prêtres. In this connection, a plot of state land of an extent of 500 m² along Marjolin Road, Cité La Cure, has been vested in my office in February 2020.

The proposed Police Station will be a one-storey building of a ground floor area of 135 m² and first floor area of 123 m². The design is currently being carried out in-house by the Police Drawing Office. The estimated project value is Rs5 m., and necessary budgetary provisions have accordingly been made. The construction is expected to start by June 2022 and to be completed by the end of December of this year.

The Commissioner of Police has also informed that, pending the construction of the Police Station, a Police Post, made of pre-fabricated modular structure, was set up on the said plot of land and has been operational since December 2021. It is being manned by two Police Officers round the clock and is providing a '*service de proximité*' to the inhabitants. As the regions of Vallée des Prêtres and Cité La Cure fall under the jurisdiction of Abercrombie Police Station Area, complainants in the event of serious cases are referred thereto for action as appropriate.

The existing pre-fabricated modular structure at Vallée des Prêtres will be removed once the construction of the Police Station is completed.

COMMISSION OF ENQUIRY ON DRUGS – MEASURES & RECOMMENDATIONS

(No. B/135) 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)

BANK OF MAURITIUS – CASHLESS PAYMENT SYSTEM

(No. B/136) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to a cashless payment system, he will state if his Ministry is considering the introduction thereof under the supervision of the Bank of Mauritius and, if so, give details thereof and, if not, why not.

Reply: Les *cashless payment systems*, sont depuis longtemps en opération à Maurice et ont évolué avec les besoins de l'économie et de la société.

En effet, en 2018, la *National Payment Systems Act* a été adoptée pour réglementer davantage les systèmes de paiements nationaux et des pouvoirs supplémentaires ont été accordés à la Banque de Maurice pour superviser et contrôler les systèmes de paiement nationaux.

Les systèmes de paiement scripturaux actuels à Maurice permettent déjà d'effectuer des paiements via les éléments suivants –

- (i) cartes de crédit et de débit;
- (ii) chèques;
- (iii) débit direct;
- (iv) les téléphones mobiles, et
- (v) services bancaires par Internet.

La Banque de Maurice m'a informé qu'elle continue de moderniser l'infrastructure de paiement, notamment pour promouvoir l'utilisation de *cashless payment systems*, comme suit

–

- 1) Le *Mauritius Automated Clearing and Settlement System* (MACSS), un système de règlement brut multidevises en temps réel pour les paiements interbancaires.
- 2) La *Port Louis Automated Clearing House* qui permet la compensation des chèques par voie électronique sur une base T+1, les paiements par lots de faible valeur et les paiements par prélèvement automatique.

- 3) Le *Mauritius Central Automated Switch*, qui a deux composantes, à savoir –
 - a) Le *Card Payment System*, qui traite et règle les paiements nationaux par carte, et
 - b) L'*Instant Payment System*, qui s'appuie sur l'accès direct aux comptes bancaires pour permettre les paiements de détail par le biais de canaux tels que les téléphones mobiles et les services bancaires par Internet, et permet ainsi d'effectuer des paiements en 30 secondes. Ce système est disponible 24 heures sur 24 et 7 jours sur 7.

En outre, en septembre 2021, la Banque de Maurice a introduit le *MauCAS QR code* pour faciliter davantage les *cashless payments*.

Aujourd'hui, grâce à cela, les consommateurs mauriciens disposent d'un large éventail d'instruments pour effectuer des *cashless payments*.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD – DUBAI EXPO 2020 – REPORT

(No. B/138) Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Dubai Expo 2020, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Economic Development Board, information as to if it will consider submitting a report on the outcome of its participation thereat.

Reply: L'Expo 2020 de Dubaï a officiellement fermé ses portes le jeudi 31 mars 2022 après six mois d'activités.

Le processus de démantèlement est en cours et devrait être achevé dans les deux prochaines semaines.

J'ai été informé par l'*Economic Development Board* qu'un rapport est actuellement en cours de préparation par l'*EDB* et sera soumis à son Conseil d'administration en conséquence.

MOLNUPIRAVIR TABLETS

(No. B/140) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to Molnupiravir tablets, he will state the –

- (a) total number thereof bought by his Ministry and already supplied as at to date;
- (b) names of the suppliers thereof, indicating the contract value in each case;
- (c) total number thereof provided to patients as at to date, and
- (d) indication for the use and provision thereof by his Ministry.

Reply: With regard to parts (a) and (b) of the question, I am informed that my Ministry has awarded contracts for the procurement of Molnupiravir tablets 200mg as follows

–

- 1,200,000 tablets to Dr. Reddy's Laboratories on 19 November 2021 for the total amount of Rs67,392,000, delivered on 05 January 2022.
- 800,000 tablets to Mauritius Pharmacy (Seegobin) Ltd on 06 December 2021 for the total amount of Rs7,446,000, delivered on 31 December 2021.

I am further informed that, on 14 March 2022, Mauritius Pharmacy (Seegobin) Ltd was awarded another contract for the procurement of 4,950,400 tablets of Molnupiravir in two instalments for the total amount of Rs30,741,984.

The supplier has already delivered the first instalment of 3,000,000 tablets on 29 March 2022. The second instalment of 1,950,400 tablets is expected to be delivered by mid of April 2022.

A contract for the procurement of 999,000 Molnupiravir tablets was awarded to CPN Distributors Ltd on 07 December 2021 for the total amount of Rs79,840,080. This procurement exercise is currently being investigated by the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC).

As for parts (c) and (d) of the question, I am informed that as at Monday 04 April 2022, around 54,560 patients, including in Rodrigues, have been provided with Molnupiravir tablets.

The indications for use of Molnupiravir are –

- (a) for the treatment of COVID-19 positive patients with mild to moderate symptoms;
- (b) if asymptomatic, but at risk, and

- (c) above 60 years of age.

At risk means having at least one of these comorbidities –

- (i) Diabetes
- (ii) HBP
- (iii) Obesity
- (iv) Renal impairment and patients following dialysis
- (v) Chronic Respiratory diseases
- (vi) Cardiovascular diseases
- (vii) Immuno-compromised patients
- (viii) Down Syndrome

The recommended dosage of Molnupiravir is 800mg twice daily for 5 days. The capsules should be taken as outpatients or inpatients (if admitted for other medical problems) to be started with maximum 5 days of starting of symptoms or within 5 days of a COVID-19 positive test in asymptomatic patients at risk.

LAND DRAINAGE MASTER PLAN - IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/141) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the Land Drainage Master Plan, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Land Drainage Authority, information as to where matters stand as to the implementation thereof.

Reply: The hon. Member is referred to the reply made to Parliamentary Question B/570 on 15 June 2021 regarding the same subject.

The first report of the Land Drainage Master Plan was submitted by the Consultant, Suez Consulting, to the Land Drainage Authority on 18 February 2021. This comprises mainly a set of new guidelines for the construction of drains and measures to be adopted with regard to construction in vulnerable areas.

The second and final Report of the Land Drainage Master Plan was submitted by the Consultant to the LDA on 28 March 2022. This document consists of an Action Plan, more precisely, the structural measures to be adopted for vulnerable sites with a view to mitigating flooding in those areas.

The Land Drainage Master Plan has been worked out through regular consultations with all relevant stakeholders and the findings thereof have been the basis for the elaboration of the National Flood Management Programme.

The Land Drainage Master Plan makes provision on the way forward for the implementation of priority projects in the short term, the medium term and in the long term. The LDA has accordingly requested the relevant authorities to implement the flood mitigation measures in order of priority. Even before the submission of the final Report of the Land Drainage Master Plan, the relevant Authorities have already carried out multiple drainage works in flood-prone areas upon the recommendation of the LDA.

Government has been informed of the proposals made in the Master Plan and the way forward for its implementation.

FOOD SECURITY – SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEM

(No. B/143) Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to food security, he will state if specific measures are being envisaged to encourage small planters grow all the crops that can be sustained in different regions country-wide.

Reply: As the House is aware, since the COVID-19 pandemic, the global economy is operating in an environment with a high degree of uncertainty.

With the recent Ukraine-Russia conflict, the situation has worsened. Mauritius, being a net food importer as well as being highly dependent on imported inputs, has not been spared from negative impacts of both the pandemic and the conflict.

These negative impacts range from disruption in the supply chain to escalating cost of imports.

My Ministry has been implementing several measures in order to ensure food security in the country. These measures are geared towards ensuring accessibility, affordability and continuous supply of food items, and more particularly to encouraging local production of food crops.

I shall mention a few of these measures as the list is quite long –

- Incentive to the farming community in terms of grants for the setting up of sheltered structures, purchase of agricultural equipment, CCTV camera systems, rainwater harvesting units, beekeeping equipment, etc.
- Assistance to planters in respect of land mechanisation, purchase of seeds, fertilisers and organic inputs.
- Special assistance following adverse climatic conditions (flooding and cyclones).
- Provision of land for production of food crops.

Our vision is for a more resilient, fair and sustainable food system so that we produce more of what we consume and we consume what we produce.

In order to achieve this vision, planters are being encouraged by the Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (FAREI) through on-field visits, regional meetings and trainings to adopt planned production of crops so that there is sustained supply throughout the year. The training and extension services to the planters' community will be strengthened to assist farmers to shift towards ecological production systems, to diversify the crop base, use new and adapted technology as well as environment friendly pest control measures such as the use of local bio fertilisers and pesticides and Zero Budget Natural Farming (Jivamitram).

In an endeavour to address the issue of climate change, planters would be further sensitised in adaptation and mitigation strategies at farm level. In this respect, new crop varieties that are heat tolerant and resistant to pest and diseases have been introduced and research will be further strengthened. Efficient irrigation techniques have been developed and will be widely disseminated.

I have no doubt on the commitment of all stakeholders engaged with the agricultural sector, especially that of the planters, to whom my Ministry will spare no effort to give the support required so that together, we achieve the vision set for our country.

RODRIGUES – COVID-19 – INFECTION & DEATHS

(No. B/144) Mr J. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to COVID-19 virus, he will state when the first case thereof was detected in Rodrigues, indicating the –

- (a) percentage of people infected therewith, giving details in terms of –
- (i) age group, and
- (ii) type thereof, and
- (b) number of deaths –
- (i) directly caused by same, if any, and
- (ii) caused by other reasons although the persons had contracted same, respectively, as at 28 February 2022.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that the first case of COVID-19 was detected in Rodrigues on 26 January 2022.

In reply to part (a) and (a) (i) of the question, 8,502 (19.23%) persons in Rodrigues were tested positive with SARS COV2 as at 28 February 2022 and the respective percentage in each age group is as follows –

- 0 – 11 Years: 1,674 (19.69%);
- 12 – 17 Years: 828 (9.74%);
- 18 – 60 Years: 5,373 (63.20%), and
- Above 60 Years: 627 (7.37%).

As regards part (a) (ii) of the question, I am informed that only the Omicron variant B1 was detected from sequencing carried out on samples taken from COVID-19 positive patients.

In reply to part (b) (i) and (ii) of the question, 17 persons infected with SARS COV2 have passed away as a consequence of other pathologies and no death has been directly attributed to COVID-19.

HORSE RACING DIVISION - BOARD COMPOSITION

(No. B/145) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Horse Racing Division, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Gambling Regulatory Authority, information as to the composition of the Board thereof,

indicating the date of appointment and terms and conditions of appointment of the Chairperson and members thereof.

(Withdrawn)

MOLNUPIRAVIR TABLETS

(No. B/146) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Molnupiravir tablets, he will state the –

- (a) indications for use thereof;
- (b) quantity thereof purchased as at to date, indicating the total cost thereof;
- (c) current stock thereof, indicating where they are stocked, and
- (d) number of patients treated therewith as at to date.

(Withdrawn)

ANIMAL WELFARE UNIT – ANIMAL CRUELTY – COMPLAINTS

(No. B/147) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the Animal Welfare Unit, he will state the number of –

- (a) officers posted thereat, and
- (b) complaints of cruelty to animals received thereat since January 2019 to date, including the number thereof having been attended to and the outcome thereof.

Reply: I am informed that there are nine officers posted at the Animal Welfare Unit of my Ministry. This Unit is headed by a Veterinary Officer.

Since January 2019 till date, 2,119 cases of cruelty/abuses to dogs have been reported, out of which, 1,909 have been attended to. More than 90% of reported cases of cruelty to animal do not prove to be genuine. For instance, in year 2021, out of 917 cases attended, 837 did not breach the Animal Welfare Act 2013. A notice of non-compliance is issued to offenders who are provided with a time-frame to abide by the existing legislation. If offenders still do not comply, then the matter is reported to the Police for prosecution.

However, among the cases attended to, most were found to be owned-dogs allowed to stray. These are proven by the fact that they had collars or had broken their chains. These dogs had no shelter and no food. Other types of cruelty were also reported.

On 31 March 2022, the Senior Chief Executive of my Ministry chaired a meeting with the Officers of the Animal Welfare Unit to look into the difficulties faced in meeting the targets of the Unit, which is a recently created institution in 2017.

In view of the increasing number of cruelties being reported, my Ministry will make a request to the MOFEPD to provide funds to increase the number of officers and facilities required for rapid interventions.

HIGH-RISK FLOODING - ZONES IDENTIFIED

(No. B/148) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to high-risk flooding, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Land Drainage Authority, information as to the number of zones island-wide having been identified as such.

(Withdrawn)

MSAW – STRAY DOGS & ANIMAL ABUSE CASE

(No. B/149) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to stray dogs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Society for Animals Welfare, information as to the –

- (a) number thereof being sheltered thereat, and
- (b) reported number of cases of animal abuse thereat, if any, indicating if inquiries have been initiated thereinto and the outcome thereof.

Reply: I am informed that 100 dogs are sheltered at the MSAW. 7 are at the Animal Home Port Louis, 33 are at the Headquarters, Rose Hill and 60 are at Plaine Magnien Sub Office. 86 dogs have already been vaccinated, sterilised and microchipped and ready for adoption.

The MSAW has always adhered to the Animal Welfare Act and thus no case of animal abuse at the MSAW has been reported except one.

MSAW is currently carrying a campaign for adoption of dogs. The rate of adoption is at around 5 per week. I take this opportunity to request my colleagues to adopt dogs from the MSAW.

**MAURITIUS FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION - VALIDITY OF IMPOSED
SANCTIONS**

(No. B/150) Mr. F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the Mauritius Football Association, he will state if the sanctions imposed thereon by his Ministry by virtue of letter dated 27 August 2021 are still valid and, if so, give reasons therefor and, if not, why not.

Reply: To recall, I would like to inform the House that on 27 August 2021, the Mauritius Football Association (MFA) was sanctioned, following grievances received at my Ministry regarding governance issues at its level.

In 02 September 2021, I had a meeting with representatives of the MFA regarding the present situation prevailing thereat. During the meeting, the MFA was requested to come up with a long term development plan for football.

A Strategic Plan 2021-2028 was presented by the acting General Secretary of the MFA on 17 November 2021. After the presentation, the MFA was requested to provide further clarifications to my Ministry and submit same at latest by the end of November 2021. The MFA was also requested to hold workshops with different stakeholders to present its Strategic Plan for extensive consultation.

Following the workshops, my Ministry requested the MFA to indicate the timeline for submission of the amended Strategic Plan.

As at date, the MFA has neither replied nor submitted the amended Strategic Plan to my Ministry. Being given that its governance issues are yet to be sorted out, the sanctions imposed on the MFA are, therefore, maintained.

MEDICAL CANNABIS - CONSIDERATION FOR USE

(No. B/151) 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)

CEB - RESERVES & ACCUMULATED SURPLUSES

(No. B/152) 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.

(Withdrawn)

COVID-19 PANDEMIC - EXPIRED VACINES - DISPOSAL

(No. B/153) Ms N. Ramyad (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the COVID-19 pandemic, he will state the number of vaccines purchased as at to date having reached expiry date before usage, indicating the manner in which same have been disposed of and if there is any established protocol for disposal of vaccines.

(Withdrawn)

PROTECTION FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT – PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

(No. B/154) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Protection from Domestic Violence Act, she will state if consideration will be given for proposed amendments to be introduced thereto to ensure better prevention from and protection of victims of domestic violence and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

POINTE AUX SABLES-PORT LOUIS & GRAND RIVIERE-PAILLES - ROAD DECONGESTION PROGRAMME

(B/155) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the axes Pointe aux Sables to Port Louis and Grand Rivière to Pailles, he will, for the benefit

of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to if there is any project related to the decongestion thereof under the Road Decongestion Programme.

Reply: The Road Development Authority (RDA) is in the process of developing a National Road Strategic Network to support the sustainable development of Mauritius by providing a safe and fast connectivity to all parts of the island.

As regards the region of Pointe aux Sables to Port Louis and Grande Rivière to Pailles, I am informed by the RDA that an assessment of the existing road network has been carried out with a view to improving connectivity, reducing traffic congestion and ensuring road safety thereat.

I am further informed that the axes Pointe aux Sables to Port Louis and Grande Rivière to Pailles are located in the midst of highly built up areas. Accordingly, the scope for upgrading the existing road networks thereat is quite limited.

However, with a view to alleviating the road congestion problems in these regions, the RDA has implemented the following projects –

- (a) upgrading of Pointe aux Sables (B1) Road which was completed in December 2019, starting from its junction with Albion Road (B78) to the Bus terminus at Petit Verger, Pointe aux Sables over a length of 2.5 kilometres. This provides an alternative route to La Tour Koenig Industrial Zone, and
- (b) the construction of the A1 A3 Link Road of a length of 3.3 kilometres which has been completed last year and connects the Port Louis-St Jean Road (A1) to the Black River Road (A3). With the upcoming development in the region, this provides a rapid connection between the Western region and Port Louis/Northern region and vice versa, thereby decreasing the traffic pressure at Monté S, Coromandel and Pointe aux Sables.

Furthermore, under the Road Decongestion Programme (RDP), the RDA has embarked on the construction of the A1 M1 Link Road, which will be around one kilometre long dual carriageway, connecting Port Louis-St Jean Road (A1) at Chebel through an approximately 330 metres long bridge spanning over the Grand River North West Valley to the Motorway M1 and to the existing Ring Road Phase I at Sorèze.

The A1 M1 Link Road will improve the distribution of traffic within the network of the A1 Road, Pailles Branch Road and M1 Motorway, thereby considerably reducing traffic congestions in the region of Pailles, Grande Rivière, Pointe aux Sables, Réduit and Ebène. This project will provide a direct link to Motorway M1 for vehicles coming from the western regions of the island, that is, Petite Rivière, Coromandel and Albion through the A1 A3 Link

Road. I am informed by the RDA that works are scheduled to be completed in April 2023.

FISCAL YEARS 2019-2022 – FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENTS

(No. B/156) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to Foreign Direct Investments, he will state the figures for fiscal years 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22 as at to date.

Reply: L'apparition de la pandémie de la COVID-19 et les incertitudes en résultant sur l'économie mondiale ont gravement affecté les flux mondiaux d'investissements directs étrangers (IDE).

Selon le *UN World Investment Report 2021*, les flux mondiaux d'IDE ont chuté de 35 % en 2020.

La contraction a été encore plus prononcée pour les petits États insulaires en développement, où les flux d'IDE ont en moyenne chuté de 40 %.

Maurice a également été touchée par cette tendance mondiale.

Les flux bruts d'IDE se sont élevés à 17,3 milliards de roupies pour l'année fiscale 2019-2020 et à 11,7 milliards de roupies pour l'année fiscale 2020-2021.

Les données pour l'année fiscale 2021-2022 ne sont pas encore connues à ce jour l'année fiscale étant toujours en cours. Les chiffres estimés des IDE disponibles pour le trimestre se terminant en septembre 2021 s'élèvent à 3,1 milliards de roupies.

Les mesures prises par le gouvernement pour améliorer encore la facilité de faire des affaires à Maurice vont attirer des niveaux plus élevés d'entrées d'IDE.

En outre, le *High Level Committee on Private Investment Projects*, présidé par l'honorable Premier ministre, a examiné, lors de sa réunion de février 2022, 52 projets dans le but de faciliter et de rationaliser les différents processus d'investissement et de supprimer les goulots d'étranglement qui entravent la mise en œuvre des projets.

Ces projets représentent une valeur d'investissement d'environ 80 milliards de roupies et seront mis en œuvre sur trois ans.

Selon l'*Economic Development Board*, les entrées d'IDE pour l'année civile 2022 devraient s'élever à environ 20 milliards de roupies.

FISCAL YEAR 2021/2022 - RECURRENT & CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

(No. B/157) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the estimated total revenue for fiscal year 2021/2022 as stated in the last budget, he will state if same will be reached and, if not, indicate the –

- (a) estimated shortfall and the estimated fiscal deficit thereof, and
- (b) total Government recurrent and capital expenditure for fiscal year 2021/2022, indicating how they were financed.

(Withdrawn)

KAPMAYEU ROAD, MONT MASCAL, CAP MALHEUREUX - WATER SUPPLY

(No. B/158) Mr R. Woochit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to water supply, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the adequacy of the capacity thereof to the applications for construction of new housing units at Kapmayeu Road, Mont Mascal, Cap Malheureux.

Reply: I am informed by the CWA that Kapmayeu Road, located at Mont Mascal, Cap Malheureux is supplied with water from Mont Loisir Rouillard Reservoir.

I am informed that presently, CWA subscribers at Kapmayeu Road are supplied through two pipelines, one HDPE of 90mm and one HDPE of 63mm.

Future new supply application, however, would be connected to the existing HDPE Pipe 90mm which has an adequate carrying capacity.

I am further informed that the CWA has received one application for water connection in respect of a villa project at Kapmayeu Road, Mont Mascal, Cap Malheureux. Same is under process.

MAHEBOURG HOSPITAL – RENOVATION

(No. B/159) Mr R. Doolub (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the renovation of the Mahebourg Hospital, he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

COVID-19 VACCINES – DONATIONS & PURCHASE

(No. B/160) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the COVID-19 vaccines, he will state –

- (a) since January 2021 to date, the number thereof –
 - (i) received as donation, and
 - (ii) purchased, and
- (b) the related price forecasts for the purchase of vaccines up to end 2022, if available, indicating the brand of vaccine the Ministry proposes to purchase.

Reply: In reply to part (a) (i) of the question, I wish to inform the House that my Ministry received donations of COVID-19 vaccines from friendly countries namely, the Government of India, the Government of the People's Republic of China, the United Arab Emirates, the Republic of South Africa and the U.S Government as follows. Since January 2021 to date, the different COVID-19 vaccines received are as follows –

- 100,000 doses of Covishield vaccines from the Government of India;
- 100,000 doses of Sinopharm vaccines from the Government of the People's Republic of China;
- 5,000 doses of Sinopharm vaccines (Hyatt Vax) from the United Arab Emirates;
- 387,270 doses of Pfizer from the US Government;
- 50,400 doses of Johnson & Johnson from the Government of South Africa and 151,200 doses of the vaccines from the Mastercard Foundation and its Saving Lives and Livelihoods initiative in partnership with the Africa CDC, and
- 200,000 doses of Moderna Vaccines from the French Ministry of Health.

In reply to part (a) (ii) of the question, I am informed that a total of 2,708,840 doses of COVID-19 vaccines has been procured as follows –

- (i) 100,800 doses of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines manufactured by the British-Swedish multinational pharmaceutical and biotechnology company in England through the COVAX Facility;
- (ii) 100,000 doses of Covishield vaccines from the Serum Institute of India;
- (iii) 200,000 doses of Covaxin vaccines from Bharat Biotech Ltd of India;
- (iv) 1,500,000 doses of Sinopharm vaccines from Sinopharm International Hong Kong Ltd. of China;
- (v) 60,000 doses of Component I and 60,000 doses of Component II of Sputnik V vaccines from the Russian Development Investment Fund;
- (vi) 288,000 doses of Johnson & Johnson vaccines from the Janssen Pharmaceuticals in Belgium through the African Vaccine Acquisition Task Team, and
- (vii) 400,040 doses of Pfizer vaccines from Pfizer, USA.

Under the National Deployment and Vaccination Plan, provision is made for the setting up of a National Vaccination Committee to advise my Ministry on vaccination against the COVID-19. The objectives of the Committee are to –

- recommend on choice of vaccines, safety and effectiveness of data, immunogenicity data on vaccines, candidates and constantly review and update on vaccines, and
- to oversee on priority groups to receive on vaccination.

The National Vaccination Committee has advised that only mRNA vaccines would be administered as booster doses and these include Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. Moreover, the Committee has also recommended the use of the paediatric doses of the Pfizer vaccines to be administered to children aged 5 to 11 years old. These recommendations were approved by the High Level Committee.

In reply to part (b) of the question, my Ministry placed orders for the Pfizer vaccines for 999,180 doses of Pfizer vaccines, out of which 400,140 doses have already been received on 31 December 2021 and the remaining consignment of 599,040 doses is awaited in Q3 of Year 2022. Based upon the invoice submitted by the supplier, the National COVID-19 Vaccination Fund would be requested to provide funds for the purchase of these vaccines, accordingly. This will comprise not only the cost of the vaccines, unit price of which is USD12 but also the handling and custom charges as well as freight, insurance and inspection costs.

As regards Moderna vaccines, we have availed of a donation of 200,000 doses in February 2022 from the French Ministry of Health and we will, now, be receiving a donation of 210,000 paediatric doses of Pfizer from the Government of UK in April 2022.

PUBLIC SECTOR DEBT – REDUCTION MEASURES

(No. B/161) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to Public Sector Debt, he will state the –

- (a) current quantum thereof, indicating the quantum thereof –
 - (i) denominated in Mauritian rupees and foreign currencies, respectively;
 - (ii) as a ratio of the Gross Domestic Product, and
- (b) measures that will be taken for the reduction thereof.

Reply: La dette du secteur public s'élevait à 413,5 milliards de roupies à la fin du mois de décembre 2021.

Cela comprend 318 milliards de roupies en monnaie nationale et 95,5 milliards de roupies en devises étrangères.

En ce qui concerne la partie (a) (ii), la dette du secteur public représente 89,5 % du produit intérieur brut.

En ce qui concerne la partie (b) de la question, je souhaite informer l'Assemblée que le montant nominal de la dette du secteur public a déjà été ramené d'environ 419 milliards de

roupies à la fin du mois de juin 2021 à R 413.5 milliards à la fin décembre 2021, ce qui représente une réduction de 96.2 % à 89.5 % du PIB.

La dette du secteur public par rapport au PIB est viable en raison de son profil et de sa structure.

En fait, le coût et le risque de la dette publique ont été encore améliorés au cours de la période allant de juin 2019 à décembre 2021, comme suit –

- (i) La majorité de la dette publique provient de sources nationales (78 %, la part de la dette extérieure ne constituant que 22 % à la fin décembre 2021);
- (ii) Tous les prêts extérieurs du gouvernement proviennent de sources bilatérales et multilatérales et la plupart d'entre eux sont à des conditions concessionnelles. Le gouvernement n'a pas eu recours à des sources commerciales pour les prêts extérieurs;
- (iii) Le paiement des intérêts de la dette publique en pourcentage du PIB a été maintenu à 2,7 %, alors que l'objectif est de 3,5 %;
- (iv) La durée moyenne jusqu'à l'échéance a été allongée de 4,8 à 5,8 ans;
- (vi) La composition de la dette extérieure libellée en USD a été réduite de 32 % à 6 %;
- (vi) Le risque de taux d'intérêt sur la dette extérieure a été minimisé. La part des prêts à taux d'intérêt fixe a été portée de 35 % à 65 % tandis que celle des prêts à taux d'intérêt variable a été réduite de 63 % à 34 %. En ce qui concerne la dette intérieure, près de 97 % sont à taux d'intérêt fixe.

Le gouvernement garde le cap quant à l'objectif annoncé dans le discours du budget 2021/2022 de réduire davantage la dette du secteur public à 80 % du PIB d'ici fin juin 2025 et à 70 % du PIB d'ici fin juin 2030. La stratégie et les mesures pour atteindre cet objectif seront exposées dans le prochain budget.

MAURITIUS SOCIETY OF AUTHORS (MASA) – COPYRIGHT FEES

(No. B/162) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to the exemption of copyright

fees payable to the Mauritius Society of Authors (MASA) as decided by Cabinet on 23 July 2021, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the MASA, information as to –

- (a) the resulting loss of earnings therefor as at to date, and
- (b) if the exemption will be waived and, if so, when.

Reply: As regards part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the Copyright (Fees) Regulations 2020 were promulgated on 10 October 2020 to take effect as from 01 July 2021.

In June 2021, in view of technical issues related to collection of copyright fees, consultations were held with the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, the Economic Development Board and the Mauritius Society of Authors (MASA) regarding the copyright fees. Consequently, on 23 July 2021, Government agreed to the promulgation of the Copyright (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 to take effect as from 01 July 2021, except for the tourism sector which would take effect on 01 July 2022.

Though the tourism sector and certain businesses are presently being exempted from the payment of Copyright Fees, copyright owners and MASA still benefit from the increase in tariff rates, since the tariff base has been extended, to new economic operators such as internet service providers, subscription television and mobile network operators, therefore, avoiding any shortfall in collection.

However, the House would agree with me that the COVID-19 pandemic had brought the world and the global economy to a standstill which severely impacted on the tourism and the creative sectors. In normal circumstances where the economy would have functioned at full capacity and the regulations would have been implemented *in toto* on 01 July 2021, the estimated collection of copyright fees by MASA would have been Rs50 m. as compared to an estimate of Rs37 m. prior to 2020 with previous tariffs. However, in view of such unforeseen, unprecedented and uncertain situation, it is difficult to estimate the loss of earnings.

In respect of part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that when the Copyright (Fees) Regulations 2020 were reviewed to defer the date of application for the tourism sector until 01 July 2022, it was further proposed that the situation would be

reviewed in consultation with all stakeholders for copyright fees to be applied to other sectors which were currently relieved hereto.

Accordingly, further to discussions held with the Ministry of Tourism which consulted the Tourism Authority and the *Association des Hôteliers et Restaurateurs de l'île Maurice* (AHRIM) and the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development on the Copyright (Fees) Regulations 2020, it was commonly agreed that the date of application of the regulations in respect of the tourism sector would be 01 July 2022.

UKRAINE & RUSSIA – GOODS & COMMODITIES – IMPORTATION

(No. B/163) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the goods and commodities imported directly from Ukraine and Russia and those in relation to the production of which depend on availability of primary products sourced from Ukraine and Russia, he will give the lists thereof.

Reply: According to information obtained from the Mauritius Revenue Authority, the main products sourced directly from Ukraine for the years 2020 and 2021 are as follows –

Imports from Ukraine	
Year 2020	Year 2021
crude and refined sunflower oil	crude and refined sunflower oil
crude soya bean oil	crude soya bean oil
split peas	split peas
lima beans	lima beans
soya beans pellets	soya beans pellets
red lentils	red lentils
meal pellets for animals	meal pellets for animals
steel bar in coils	steel bar in coils

Regarding direct importation from Russia, the main products sourced for the years 2020 and 2021 are as follows –

Imports from Russia	
Year 2020	Year 2021
	Covid-19 Vaccines

Timber	Timber
Lentils	
Fertilizers	Fertilizers
Coriander Seeds	Coriander Seeds

**MAURITIUS JUDO FEDERATION – 18 JUDO CLUBS - RECOGNITION
REQUEST**

(No. B/164) **Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière (Mr Quirin))** asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the judo discipline, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Judo Federation, information as to where matters stand pertaining to the request for recognition from 18 Judo clubs since 2019, indicating the actions taken by his Ministry to facilitate the affiliation process with the Mauritius Judo Federation and, if not, why not?

(Withdrawn)

METRO EXPRESS - TICKET PRICE - INCREASE

(No. B/165) **Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central)** asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the Metro Express, he will state if an increase in the price of the ticket thereof is being envisaged.

Reply: The Metro Express, as a landmark infrastructural project in Mauritius, constitutes a reliable and rapid mode of commute. More importantly, the light rail transit system makes provision for an accessible, inclusive and affordable means of transport to all citizens of this country.

With this in mind, Government, in line with the recommendations of the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise in its Report on Fare Pricing Framework and Funding Model, agreed in December 2019, to align the light rail fares with the prevailing bus fares in respect of Phase 1 of the Metro Express Project, that is, from Port Louis to Rose Hill. This allowed passengers to familiarise themselves with the light rail transit system while also prompting a modal shift from private cars to the public transport.

Likewise, the determination of the fares for Phase 2A, that is, Port Louis to Quatre Bornes, hinged on maintaining an affordable fare structure while at the same time allowing

the light rail operator to recoup its operational expenditures. In that regard, the minimum light rail fare is Rs20 while the highest fare is Rs40 in respect of the Port Louis to Quatre Bornes leg.

However, unforeseen situations such as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian-Ukrainian conflict have had significant bearings on the operating model of transport companies. There is also need to acknowledge that fare revenue is one of the major sources of income of transport operators. Against this backdrop, any review in the light rail fares would have to be worked out in a scientific manner and this also entails a balancing exercise with regard to the interests of the commuters and the light rail operator.

The Ministry is, therefore, currently assessing the rationale for a review in the fares. However, I need to add that in accordance with section 14 of the National Land Transport Authority Act, any revision in the fares would need to be gauged by the Fare Review Committee. In line with its mandate, the Fare Review Committee would have to ensure that any adjustment in the fares reconciles the affordability thereof with the financial sustainability of the operator while ensuring that the fares, if reviewed, are devised in an efficient and transparent manner.

As the light rail has been in operation for more than two years, the Fare Review Committee would have to consider as to whether a revision in the fares is warranted or otherwise. In fact, as recommended by the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise, there is need for the review mechanism to be carried out periodically so as to track any changes in the operating costs of transport operators. However, this does not necessarily imply that the fares are to be revised on each occasion.

The objective of Government is to manage congestion to a reasonable level so as to improve traffic fluidity, modernise the transport system and promoting mass public transportation. In that regard, in addition to the provision of a satisfactory level of service, the fares should be reasonable and affordable so that the mobility of our citizens, especially those in the lower strata of society is not negatively impacted upon.

It is for this very reason that, as a caring Government, the decision was taken back in 2019 to extend the Free Travel Scheme to the light rail transit system so that our senior citizens, disabled persons and students proceeding to or from their educational institutions could travel freely onboard the light rail vehicles.

Any revision in the light rail fares would strive to reconcile the affordability of the fares along with the sustainability of light rail operations so that the fares remain reasonable and accessible to our citizens while allowing the light rail operator to meet its costs of

operations. With a view to further inducing an uptake in the light rail ridership, MEL would assess the possibility of introducing fare packages (season pass) for those using ME Cards.

Let us, therefore, wait for the outcome of the discussions of the Fare Review Committee on the matter and then a decision will be taken accordingly.

FIU - MR K. T. - TERMINATION OF CONTRACT

(No. B/166) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance whether, in regard to the termination of the contract of employment of Mr K. T. as Chairman of the Financial Intelligence Unit, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the said Unit, information as to the –

- (a) reasons therefor, and
- (b) amount of compensation –
 - (i) claimed, and
 - (ii) paid in connection therewith.

Reply (The Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity): Section 12(2) of the Financial Intelligence and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2002 provides for the Chairperson of the Financial Intelligence Unit to be appointed by the President on the recommendation of the Prime Minister in consultation with the Leader of the Opposition. Accordingly, the President of the Republic appointed Mr K. T. as Chairperson of the Financial Intelligence Unit on 22 April 2015 for a period of three years.

The appointment of Mr K. T. was terminated by the President on 27 August 2016, pursuant to section 28 of the Interpretation and General Clauses Act.

Following the termination of his contract of employment, Mr K. T. entered a case seeking compensation to the tune of Rs1,092,000 in the Intermediate Court for breach of contract. The Court ruled in his favour and ordered the Defendants to pay Mr. K. T. a sum of Rs1,092,000 as compensation.

However, the Attorney General's Office considered the judgement to be wrong in law and has, subsequently, lodged an appeal on 10 March 2022.

(No. B/167) 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 the public beaches, he will state where matters stand as to the implementation of projects earmarked for the easing of access thereto of persons with disabilities.

(Withdrawn)

**NATIONAL OCEAN COUNCIL – COMPOSITION – MEETINGS - 2019 TO
05 APRIL 2022**

(No. B/168) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the National Ocean Council, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

- (a) composition thereof, and
- (b) number of meetings thereof held since 2019 to date, indicating the quantum of fees paid to members thereof over the said period.

(Withdrawn)

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE – REPORTED CASES

(No. B/169) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to domestic violence, she will state –

- (a) the number of reported cases thereof since 2019 to date, indicating the number thereof -
 - (i) where the victims have been women, and
 - (ii) which have been fatal and wherein there has been case history and/or protection orders, and
- (b) if consideration will be given for further amendments to be brought to the existing legislation for enhanced prevention and protection against same.

(Withdrawn)

**SME MAURITIUS LTD – 10 YEARS MASTER PLAN – FINANCIAL
YEARS 2017/2018 TO 2021/2022**

(No. B/170) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives whether, in regard to the 10 years Master Plan for the small and medium enterprise sector, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from SME Mauritius Ltd., information as to the quantum of funds budgeted for each financial year since 2017/2018 to 2021/2022 in relation to each scheme implemented thereunder, indicating the quantum thereof disbursed and number of small and medium enterprises having benefitted thereunder.

(Withdrawn)

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS SHOW – DELEGATION

(No. B/171) 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 held in Dubai 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)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD – DUBAI EXPO 2020 – FUNDS

(No. B/172) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Dubai Expo 2020, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Economic Development Board, information as to the aggregate quantum of funds spent to date in relation thereto.

Reply: *L'Economic Development Board* m'a informé que les dépenses totales encourues à ce jour, qui comprennent la conceptualisation, la planification, la coordination et l'exécution de la participation de Maurice à l'Expo 2020 de Dubaï ainsi que l'accueil de divers

événements pendant l'Expo, s'élèvent à 61,1 millions de roupies, dont un montant 17,2 millions de roupies sponsorisé par le secteur privé.

Les événements organisés au cours des 6 mois étaient destinés à assurer la mise en valeur et la visibilité des secteurs clés de l'économie, tels que les services financiers, les TIC/BPO, l'immobilier, l'hôtellerie et le tourisme, l'industrie, la logistique et les ports francs, entre autres.

L'honorable Parlementaire a lui-même assisté à l'un des événements commerciaux organisés par l'*EDB*, à savoir la semaine de la finance et de l'investissement qui s'est tenue du 5 au 9 décembre 2021. Elle comprenait des forums d'affaires ciblés sur Maurice en tant que centre d'investissement pour l'Afrique, la banque privée et la gestion de patrimoine, le capital-investissement et la gestion de fonds, et les fintechs, ainsi que des rencontres individuelles et des tables rondes très ciblées.

Les objectifs étaient de présenter Maurice comme un centre financier international de choix et de renom à Dubaï, de renforcer les relations d'affaires avec les opérateurs basés aux Émirats arabes unis et de générer des pistes potentielles d'investissement, notamment dans les segments des services financiers.

Le secteur privé a participé et soutenu activement ces événements. Il ne s'agit que d'un seul événement commercial et je dois dire que notre participation active et les événements organisés en marge de l'Expo de Dubaï donnent déjà des résultats tangibles.

BANNED HAZARDOUS PESTICIDES – CONTROLS

(No. B/173) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to banned hazardous pesticides, he will state, since 2018 to date, the number of controls effected in relation to the use thereof, indicating the –

- (a) number of contraventions booked;
- (b) quantity thereof seized, and
- (c) estimated quantity thereof that illegally entered the local market.

(Withdrawn)

**ROUTE BAIE DU TOMBEAU & PORT LOUIS – COMPLAINTS &
DELAYS - NLTA**

(No. B/174) Mr R. Wochit (Third Member for Pamplémousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the bus route to and from Baie du Tombeau and Port Louis, he will state if his Ministry or the National Land Transport Authority is in presence of complaints regarding delays in transporting passengers by buses operated by individual bus owners and requests to increase the number of buses along same and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the National Land Transport Authority (NLTA) that the corridor Baie du Tombeau to Port Louis is served by buses operating along the following routes –

- 42;
- 77;
- 152, and
- 253.

While route 77 is served by individual bus operators, buses of the United Bus Service Ltd (UBS) operate along the other three routes.

I am further informed that regular complaints are being received from commuters regarding buses operating to and from Baie du Tombeau and Port Louis which are not adhering to the established time table. This irregular service is indeed causing hardship to these commuters such that they have to wait for a long time at intermediate bus stops.

I am advised that as soon as the complaints were received, regular checks have been undertaken by the NLTA with a view to closely monitor the bus service.

In addition, an urgent meeting was held at the level of the NLTA on 22 March 2022 in the presence of both bus operators, namely, the United Bus Service Ltd and Bus Owners' Cooperative Society (Port Louis) whereby they were apprised of the complaints. The operators have been urged to take remedial actions promptly.

Concurrently, the existing time table is being reviewed by the NLTA in order to improve the level of bus service along the leg Baie du Tombeau and Port Louis. Close monitoring is being maintained by the NLTA Inspectorate.

As regards increase in the number of buses along this leg, the NLTA is not contemplating same for the time being. However, due consideration could be given in due course.

FLOOD PRONE AREAS – PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION & PROGRESS

(No. B/175) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the Rs343 million provided to address the issue of high-risk flood prone areas in Pailles, Plaine Lauzun, Cité Richelieu, Pointe aux Sables and La Tour Koenig, in line with paragraph 40(a) of the Budget Speech 2021-2022, he will state the quantum thereof disbursed as at to-date, indicating the works progress achieved in relation to each project implemented thereunder.

Reply: The Land Drainage Authority has identified 51 drain projects in Constituency No. 1 for the total amount of some Rs1.2 billion, to be implemented over a period of three financial years.

These 51 projects comprise 28 projects in Pailles, 20 in Pointe aux Sables and La Tour Koenig, two in Cité Richelieu and one in Plaine Lauzun.

The status regarding the 51 projects are as follows –

- a) six projects to the tune of Rs25 m. have already been completed, namely –
 - (i) Provision of Covered Drain along existing open drain at James Mercier Street, GRNW;
 - (ii) Construction of Drain at Avenue Rolando & Laterals, GRNW;
 - (iii) Construction of Drains at Strauss/Bach Lane, Résidence Vallijee;
 - (iv) Upgrading Works at Canal Dayot;
 - (v) Drain and Resurfacing at John Kenneth Nelson Street, Terrasson, and

- (vi) Construction of Drain and Resurfacing of Catelyas Street, Pointe aux Sables.
- b) six projects for the sum of Rs97 m. are under construction, as follows –
- (i) Construction of Drain and Resurfacing of Cassis Road, Cassis;
 - (ii) Construction of Drain at St. Vincent De Paul Street near Church, Pailles;
 - (iii) Construction of Drain at Avenue Crecerelle, Petit Verger;
 - (iv) Drain Work at Coqueluche/Cactus/Alamandas/Tecoma Avenue, Morc. Rey, Pointe aux Sables;
 - (v) Construction of Drain and Resurfacing at Aiglons Street, Pointe aux Sables, and
 - (vi) Construction of Drain along Challenger Street, Verger Les Bains, Pointe aux Sables.
- c) two projects are at bidding stage, namely –
- (i) Construction of Drain and Resurfacing at 123, Impasse Menagerie, Cassis, and
 - (ii) Construction of Drain at Narcisse Street, Morc Rey, Pointe aux Sables.
- d) nine projects are at design stage, and
- e) surveys are being carried out by the LDA for 28 projects to determine the causes of the flooding and the potential remedial measures to be taken.

A total amount of some Rs35 m. have already been disbursed for the implementation of the projects, out of which some Rs11.7 m. have been disbursed during the current financial year.

BASIC FOOD PRODUCTS – STOCKS – MONITORING

(No. B/176) Mr M. Yeung Sik Yuen (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the basic food products that are subject to price controls, he will state if his Ministry is monitoring the available stocks thereof to avoid shortages on the local market.

Reply: Mauritius has suffered from supply-driven shock as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict. It is an undeniable fact that, due to global supply chain disruptions, demand will exceed supply internationally. It is inevitable that prices of food commodities will rise and as a Small Island Developing State far from the major markets, Mauritius is vulnerable to the repercussions of these factors which are beyond our control.

Apart from the strategic products imported centrally by the State Trading Corporation, that is rice and flour, most of the other products are privately imported. The STC has an inbuilt stock control mechanism and is in close contact with suppliers for replenishment.

As regards the private importers, my Ministry is in close contact with them through the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry and stock levels as well as replenishment are fully monitored.

My Ministry is constantly monitoring the evolution of international indices and prices with the stakeholders concerned and appropriate measures will be taken as and when the need arises.

FISHER COMMUNITY – FISHERMEN CARDS

(No. B/177) 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 fisher community, he will state –

- (a) where matters stand as to the allocation of 500 fishermen cards, as announced in the Budget Speech 2021/2022, and
- (b) the number of fishermen having benefitted from the retirement scheme as at to date.

(Withdrawn)

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD – DEPUTY DIRECTOR –
ADVERTISEMENT**

(No. B/178) Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the post of Deputy Director of the Economic Development Board (EDB), he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the EDB, information as to if same will be advertised and, if so, when.

Reply: J'ai été informé par l'EDB qu'il n'y a pas de poste de directeur adjoint à l'EDB à pourvoir et que l'institution est en train de revoir sa structure organisationnelle.

DUBAI EXPO 2020 – MINISTERIAL DELEGATIONS – OUTCOME

(No. B/179) 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 Dubai Expo 2020, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the composition of the ministerial delegations having attended same, indicating in each case the outcome thereof, if any.

Reply: A copy of the information requested by the hon. Member is being placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

2022 ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS

(No. B/180) Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the proposed hosting of the 2022 Athletics Championships, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: Government agreed to the hosting of the 22nd African Senior Championships and its elective congress scheduled from 8 to 12 June 2022 at the Cote d'Or National Sports Complex.

Following the submission of a bid by the Mauritius Athletics Association, the African Athletics Confederation retained its bid for the organisation of the above event in Mauritius.

The Mauritius Athletics Association, thereafter, set the ball rolling and informed my Ministry that an Organising Committee for the Championships chaired by Mr Giandev Moteea has been set up. The following thirteen (13) Commissions have been set up to look into all technical aspects and logistics in connection with the Championships –

- (1) Finance;
- (2) Technical;
- (3) Board/Lodging;
- (4) Transport;
- (5) Press/Communication;
- (6) Protocol;
- (7) Accreditation;
- (8) Medical;
- (9) Anti-Doping;
- (10) Infrastructure/Equipment;
- (11) Security;
- (12) Marketing/Sponsoring, and
- (13) COVID-19 protocol.

A delegation led by Mr Hamad Kalkaba Malboum, President of the African Athletics Confederation, visited Mauritius from 16 to 19 January 2022 to take cognizance of the progress achieved in the preparations of the Championships. He expressed great satisfaction regarding the state of the available infrastructural facilities and the works achieved by the various Commissions so far.

Besides, the logo of the Championships, the official song and the website of these Championships have already been officially launched at the Cote d'Or National Sports Complex in March 2022.

The Mauritius Athletics Association informed my Ministry that as at date, 47 out of 54 African countries have already signified their intention to participate in these Championships.

The Mauritius Athletics Association has confirmed the presence to the Championships of Lord Sebastian COE, four-time Olympic Champion as a middle-distance runner in athletics.

DRAINS & ABSORPTION PITS – CLEANING & MAINTENANCE

(No. B/181) 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 existing drains and absorption pits, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the local authorities, information as to if they are fully equipped with dedicated professional teams for the cleaning and maintenance thereof.

(Withdrawn)

CYCLONES BATSIRAI & EMNATI - REFUGEE CENTRES - SOCIAL INQUIRY

(No. B/182) 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 recent cyclones Batsirai and Emnati, she will state the outcome of the social inquiry carried out by her Ministry pertaining to the presence of refugees in the Refugee Centres and table copy of the report thereof, indicating the actions taken in relation thereto as at to date.

Reply: A survey on families in evacuee centres following the passage of cyclones Batsirai and Emnati was conducted by officers of my Ministry and the National Empowerment Foundation in collaboration with the Police Department.

The following actions have been taken to provide support to these families –

- (i) with regard to cyclone Batsirai, cyclone allowance of Rs188, per person per night spent in the evacuee centres was paid to 84 families comprising 280 members, amounting to a total of Rs62,980;
- (ii) with regard to cyclone Emnati, cyclone allowance was paid to 183 families, comprising of 551 members, amounting to a total of Rs103,588;
- (iii) my Ministry in collaboration with the National Social Inclusion Foundation have arranged for hot meals to be distributed at the evacuee centres, and
- (iv) school materials have also been provided by the National Empowerment Foundation to children accommodated at the evacuee centres.

My Ministry is not in a position to table the social enquiry reports as these documents contain personal and confidential information which cannot be disclosed without the consent of the families.

CONTRIBUTION SOCIALE GÉNÉRALISÉE - QUANTUM COLLECTED

(No. B/183) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the *Contribution Sociale Generalisée*, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Revenue Authority, information as to the quantum thereof collected since 23 July 2021 to date.

Reply: La *Mauritius Revenue Authority* m'a informé que, durant la période allant du 23 juillet 2021 au 30 mars 2022, un montant de 5,1 milliards de roupies a été perçu au titre de la contribution sociale dans le cadre de la *Social Contribution and Social Benefits Act 2021* (Contribution Sociale Généralisée).

AFED SHELTER - MINORS - ALLEGED ILL-TREATMENT

(No. B/184) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the AFED Shelter located in Rose Hill, she will state the findings and sanctions taken by her Ministry in recent cases of alleged ill-treatment on minors thereat.

Reply: Following cases of allegations made against the *Association pour l'accueil des femmes et des enfants en difficulté* (AFED) regarding two caregivers in post thereat, my Ministry carried out an enquiry and submitted a report with the main recommendation to suspend them from duty.

My Ministry was informed that Mrs C.B., child caregiver was suspended on 10 December 2021, following the decision taken by the Board members of AFED and as regards Mrs M.N.F., the second caregiver, she was suspended on 18 February 2022.

In addition, Enforcement Officers of my Ministry effected surprise visits on Friday 04 March 2022, Saturday 05 March 2022 and Sunday 06 March 2022 at AFED and several shortcomings were identified.

A follow-up meeting was held on 17 March 2022 at my Ministry, with the Management of AFED and it was decided that minors placed thereat had to be relocated to other Residential Care Institutions, pending report of Police inquiry. On 25 March 2022, the minors placed at AFED were relocated to different RCIs.

**MARE TABAC, FLOOD MITIGATION PROJECT PHASE 1 – DELAY &
COST**

(No. B/185) Mr R. Doolub (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the implementation of Phase 1 of the Flood Mitigation Project in Mare Tabac, he will state the –

- (a) reasons for the delay for the completion thereof over the period April to December 2021, and
- (b) cost thereof.

(Withdrawn)

**CENTRAL WATER AUTHORITY – WATER SUPPLY – 24/7 BASIS –
FUNDS – 2015-MAY 2022**

(No. B/186) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to water supply on a 24/7 basis, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to -
 - (i) on a yearly basis, since 2015 to date, the quantum of funds collected from the levy imposed on petroleum products therefor, and
 - (ii) the percentage of households not presently receiving same, and
- (b) state if consideration is being given for the privatisation of the Central Water Authority and to have a strategic partner therefor and, if so, why.

Reply: With regard to part (a)(i) of the question, I am informed that levy from petroleum products is managed at the level of State Trading Corporation. I understand that part of the fund is used to finance the water sector projects and is managed by the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development.

As for part (a)(ii) of the question, I am informed by the CWA that presently 33% of its subscribers are receiving water on a 24/7 basis while around 1% on less than 8 hours basis. The remaining subscribers benefit from a water supply ranging from 9 to 20 hours daily.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the House has been informed on several occasions previously that there is no project for the privatisation of the CWA. My Ministry is, however, working closely with international institutions and friendly countries to address the water services problem.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC –OMICRON VARIANT – CONTROL MEASURES

(No. B/187) Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Omicron variant of the COVID-19 pandemic, he will state if a rapid spread thereof has recently been noted and, if so, indicate the measures that are being taken to control same.

Reply: As the House will recall, Mauritius registered its first cases of Omicron variant in November 2021. Initially, there was the Omicron variant B1, followed by the detection of Omicron variant B2, which is relatively more contagious than Omicron B1 variant and has infected more persons.

Subsequently, a daily increase in the reported number of cases was observed during the month of November with the peak time of the current wave in February of this year. We have, now, started to observe a decreasing trend in the reported number of cases during the month of March 2022.

Since the detection of the first cases of Omicron in Mauritius, preventive measures were strengthened in order to curb the transmission of the virus. These measures took effect on 12 November 2021 and include, amongst others –

- lowering the number of authorised persons for public gathering, weddings and funerals from 100 to 50;
- places of worship to accommodate a maximum of 50 persons;
- public beaches open only for physical activities and picnics prohibited,
- work from home to be encouraged in both public and private organisations.

Moreover, existing public health and social measures namely, physical distancing, wearing of face masks, hand hygiene and proper ventilation of areas were continuously being encouraged in order to limit the spread of the disease in the local community.

Other measures were also taken to contain the spread of the Omicron variant which comprise testing of –

- (i) all symptomatic patients in the centres;
- (ii) high risk patients above the age of 60;
- (iii) non vaccinated persons, and
- (iv) all incoming passengers to detect any case of COVID-19.

The isolation period for positive patients was also reviewed from 10 days to 7 days.

Additionally, our vaccination campaign continues to be the backbone in our response against the COVID-19. Our booster dose campaign is still on-going and all persons who have not yet received their booster dose are being encouraged on a daily basis to get their vaccine at the regional hospitals or vaccination centres around the island. In view of the crucial importance of getting administered the booster dose to achieve the maximum protection against the Omicron variant, the public is regularly being sensitised on getting their booster dose at the earliest.

In light of the evolution of the sanitary situation across the world with the resurgence of COVID-19 cases in countries where all public and sanitary measures have been eliminated and the relatively reduced number of reported cases in Mauritius, as a result of the above implemented measures, it has been decided to maintain the main restrictive measures, in force since November 2021, until June 2022.

PHARMACISTS – PROPOSED COUNSELLING FEES

(No. B/188) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the pharmacies, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to where matters stand as to the proposition for or the decision taken for the pharmacists working thereat to claim fees of up to Rs100 as counselling fees when dispensing medicines.

(Withdrawn)

FLACQ NEW TEACHING HOSPITAL – CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/189) Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the construction of the New Teaching Hospital in Flacq, he will state the scope of works thereof, indicating the –

- (a) estimated cost thereof;
- (b) name of the bidders;
- (c) start and completion dates thereof, and
- (d) work progress thereof.

Reply: I am informed that the tender for the construction of the new Flacq Teaching Hospital was launched in October 2019 with closing date of 12 December 2019.

The scope of the project consists of the construction of a Y-shaped building of extent of 56,655 sqm², comprising a basement and seven floors. The new hospital shall have a 520 bed capacity and will consist of the following departments/facilities –

- Medical
- Haemodialysis Unit
- Surgical (including neurosurgery)
- Orthopaedic
- Gynecology and Obstetrics
- Operation Theatre
- Pediatric
- Cardiac
- Psychiatry
- Dental Unit
- Day care

Additionally, 655 parking slots would be provided.

The project is being supervised by Hospital Services Consultancy Corporation (India) Ltd (HSCC) consultant.

Following an open international bidding exercise, bids for the project were received from the following three bidders –

- (i) M/s Larsen & Toubro Limited;
- (ii) M/s Sharpoorji Pallonji Mideast LLC; and
- (iii) M/s Redcon construction Company.

Following a bid evaluation, the contract for the construction of the hospital has been awarded to the contractor Larsen & Toubro Ltd. on 10 August 2020 with the contract price of

MUR2,638,900,000.00. The project duration is 22 calendar months with the contractual start and completion dates of 02 September 2020 and 01 July 2022 respectively.

I am also informed the project completion date has been extended to 28 February 2023, mainly due to the national lockdown imposed by the Government and the restrictions of movement (labour and goods) due to closing of borders as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As at 21 March 2022, the physical progress of the work is 21%.

NEW SHIPPING CARGO VESSEL – PROCUREMENT

(No. B/190) Mr J. B. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the proposed purchase of a new cargo vessel to be used for the interconnection of islands of the Republic of Mauritius, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: The hon. Member will recall that at our Sitting on 20 July 2021, I had replied to the Parliamentary Question B/737 wherein the hon. Member had requested to state where matters stand with regard to the proposed procurement of a new shipping cargo vessel to serve the outer islands of Mauritius.

As I stated in my previous reply, a 3D model review meeting was carried out on 15 and 16 April 2021. Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, the presentation was attended by MSCL Consultants on virtual mode following which the space limitation of the engine room was identified by the technical team of MSCL.

Consequently, the MSCL strongly disagreed to proceed with the original compacted engine room layout which was noticeable only after the visualisation of 3D presentation.

This led to severe delays in the design process, added to the inability of Mr Josip Srpak, aged 75 years, Naval Architect, to travel because of the COVID-19 situation.

The service of Architect, Mr Josip Srpak had to be discontinued in December 2020. In this regard, Mastermind Ship Management Ltd (Capt. Eugen Adami) was appointed as replacement to Mr Josip Srpak to provide Naval Architect Services.

The Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd also appointed Mr Mario Genevieve, Marine Engineer, as Technical Consultant to provide technical services and follow-up as from January 2021.

As China was under lockdown, the newly appointed Consultant, Mr Mario Genevieve and Marine Engineer, Mr Imran Dowlut could not travel to China and all consultations were being done on a virtual basis for necessary amendments to the ship plan, which caused further

delay to the project. This is why steel cutting started on 21 December 2021 once all technical issues were resolved.

As such, the appointed supervision Consultant team, Schulte Marine Concept, involved at the shipyard premises was in February 2022 on a full-time basis. Schulte Marine Concept is monitoring and reporting activities carried out by the shipyard and a weekly report is being submitted to the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd.

I have to inform the House that the remaining stages for the construction and delivery of the new cargo vessel are as follows -

- the keel-laying, i.e. the physical starting of construction of the vessel structures will be on 10 June 2022;
- the block on slipway relating to the assembly of hull components in block and setting the vessel structure on a ramp that connect land to water for ease of launching is scheduled for 15 July 2022, and
- Completion of the hull construction and the process of transferring the vessel into water, i.e. afloat to continue with other components installations is expected around 25 November 2022.

All going well, the vessel is now expected to be delivered in China on or before September 2023.

The coming into operation of the new multipurpose cargo vessel next year will enable the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd to ensure efficient service for both the inter-islands traffic and for regional shipping as well.

The new vessel is a multipurpose cargo vessel with capacity of 380 containers with adequate tank capacities which makes it appropriate for the regional shipping routes. In addition, the vessel has the ability to accommodate 88 Forty-foot (40) reefer containers. The vessel is being built respecting all the international norms which make it fully compliant to call at foreign ports, hence adding value to regional shipping trade vision.

DELTA &OMICRON VARIANT - CASES - 01 OCTOBER 2021 TO 05 APRIL 2022 - SEQUENTIAL STUDIES

(No. B/191) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the COVID-19 pandemic, he will state –

- (a) the number of positive Delta variant and Omicron variant cases recorded in public and private medical institutions on a monthly basis since 01 October 2021 to date, indicating the number of the said patients having passed away after having contracted same, and
- (b) if sequential studies are being carried out on every positive case admitted in public or private hospital with a view to identifying current or emerging new subtypes.

(Withdrawn)

PURCHASING POWER - INFLATION - MEASURES

(No. B/192) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the rise in the cost of living and decreasing purchasing power in Mauritius, he will state the immediate measures being taken to address same.

Reply: L'inflation a gagné du terrain dans l'ensemble des régions du monde, reflétant principalement des goulots d'étranglement du côté de l'offre.

Selon le FMI, l'inflation dans les économies avancées s'élevait à 0,7 % en 2020 et atteindra 3,1 % en 2021. L'inflation dans les économies émergentes est estimée à 5,7 % en 2021, contre 5,1 % en 2020.

En tant qu'économie ouverte, Maurice est particulièrement exposée aux chocs externes.

Lorsque les prévisions ont été établies en janvier par le FMI, le conflit entre la Russie et l'Ukraine n'était même pas considéré comme une variable dans l'équation macroéconomique.

Dans le contexte des tensions géopolitiques actuelles, l'*Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)* a revu à la baisse ses prévisions de croissance pour l'Europe, à environ 2 % en 2022 par rapport à sa précédente projection de 3,9 %. L'*EIU* prévoit en outre que la croissance mondiale diminuera de 0,5 point de pourcentage pour s'établir à environ 3,4 %, contre 3,9 % précédemment estimés.

L'effet le plus grave du conflit russo-ukrainien pour l'économie mondiale devrait être la hausse des prix des matières premières, qui augmenterait en raison des contraintes liées à l'offre, de la destruction des infrastructures physiques et des sanctions imposées.

L'*Economist Intelligence Unit* prévoit en outre que le prix du pétrole restera supérieur à 100 dollars le baril, tandis que le prix du gaz augmentera d'au moins 50 % cette année, après avoir été multiplié par cinq l'année dernière.

Le prix de plusieurs métaux de base tels que l'aluminium, le titane, le palladium et le nickel devrait également augmenter, ce qui aura un impact considérable sur les secteurs industriels du monde entier, tandis que les prix des produits agricoles de base tels que le blé, le maïs, l'orge et le colza augmenteront également de manière significative, l'Ukraine et la Russie représentant plus d'un quart du commerce mondial du blé.

Les perturbations des routes commerciales dans la mer Noire augmenteraient la pression sur les prix des céréales.

Au total, il est prévu que l'inflation mondiale dépasse les 6 % cette année et peut-être en 2023. Maurice ne sera pas épargnée et l'impact du conflit se fait déjà sentir avec une hausse de l'inflation que la Banque de Maurice a estimée à environ 6,7 % en 2022.

En tant que gouvernement bienveillant, nous avons pris un certain nombre de mesures pour atténuer l'impact de la hausse des prix sur la population.

Les principales mesures prises jusqu'à présent par le gouvernement sont les suivantes

—

- (a) Premièrement, malgré la hausse des prix du riz, de la farine et du GPL, les prix de vente aux consommateurs ont été maintenus en augmentant le montant des subventions pour ces articles.
- (b) Deuxièmement, en juillet 2021, des prix de détail maximum ont été fixés pour sept autres produits essentiels, à savoir l'huile comestible, les légumineuses, les tomates en conserve, le lait en poudre, la margarine, le fromage et le poisson en conserve. Le gouvernement accorde une subvention de 1,2 milliard de roupies pour ces articles. La subvention, qui devait initialement être effective du 12 juillet 2021 au 31 décembre 2021, a été prolongée jusqu'au 30 juin 2022.
- (c) Troisièmement, une compensation salariale mensuelle de 500 roupies est versée à tous les travailleurs à temps plein dont le salaire de base mensuel est inférieur ou égal à 13,000 roupies et de 400 roupies à ceux qui gagnent plus de 13,000 roupies à partir de janvier 2022. Ainsi, les travailleurs du groupe de salaire inférieur ont été entièrement compensés pour la hausse des prix en 2021.
- (d) Quatrièmement, le gouvernement a maintenu l'allocation spéciale versée aux travailleurs à faible revenu afin qu'ils disposent d'un revenu garanti de 11,075 roupies par mois à partir de janvier 2022.

- (e) Cinquièmement, le gouvernement a mis en œuvre la révision des salaires recommandée par le *Pay Research Bureau* à compter du 1er janvier 2021.
- (f) Sixièmement, le gouvernement accorde une subvention variant entre 5 % et 10 % sur les factures d'électricité de plus de 370 000 ménages de janvier 2022 à fin décembre 2022. Le gouvernement fournit environ 280 millions de roupies à cette fin.
- (g) Septièmement, conformément à son mandat de stabilité des prix et de développement économique ordonné et équilibré, la Banque de Maurice a augmenté le *Key Repo Rate (KRR)* de 15 points de base pour le porter à 2 % par an en mars 2022. Cette augmentation du KRR vise à favoriser la stabilité des prix et à ancrer les anticipations d'inflation à moyen terme.

Nous suivons de près la situation et nous proposerons d'autres mesures pour protéger davantage le pouvoir d'achat de la population, en particulier des ménages appartenant aux groupes vulnérables.

CONSTITUENCY NO. 6 - WATER PIPES - ASBESTOS CEMENT

(No. B/193) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the water pipes, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to if those made of Asbestos Cement still exist in different regions of Constituency No. 6, Grand Baie and Poudre d'Or and, if so, indicate the locations and extent thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the CWA that there are at present around 37kms of Asbestos Cement (AC) Pipeline, which are still in use in the Northern Water Supply Zone.

These pipes are mostly located in the regions of St Joseph Street and St Michel Road (Grand Gaube), Poudre d'Or Village, Beau Plateau Road, (Cottage), Reservoir Road and Morc Boucan (Grand Baie), Mascall Road (Petit Raffray), Royal Road (Upper Vale), Coastal Road (Mon Choisy), and Cité St Claire and Morc St Antoine (Goodlands).

I am informed that the CWA has a yearly programme to renew the AC pipelines by HDPE/DI Pipes. Provision is being made in the next financial year for the renewal of 37 km under minor and major works contract.

CHILDREN - FOSTER CARE – NUMBER

(No. B/194) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to children in foster care, she will state the number thereof over the past five years.

(Withdrawn)

BUDGET 2022-2023 – AERIAL DRONES – FUNDS

(No. B/195) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the forthcoming Budget 2022-2023, he will state if his Ministry will consider requesting for funds for the procurement of aerial drones with thermal imaging camera to be used by the Special Operations Division of the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service.

Reply: Emergency preparedness and response with the goal of a secure, healthy, wealthy and resilient nation has always been at the top of the agenda of this Government. In fact, it is in this that a Disaster Risk Management Portfolio, regrouping the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service, National Disaster and Risk Reduction Centre and the Mauritius Meteorological Services has been created under my Ministry.

This Government has left no stone unturned in the modernisation of the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service. In fact since 2015, more than five hundred and sixty million rupees have been disbursed on the acquisition of essential tools, equipment and firefighting vehicles accordingly.

I am informed by the Chief Fire Officer that, through the use of these latest tools, technologies, and equipment, the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service is continuously adapting its response to emergencies that are increasing in both severity and complexity. Moreover, the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service is also availing of latest techniques in emergency operations.

Indeed, latest technologies and equipment assist to improving response efforts in complex natural disasters. Moreover, new technologies provide responders with enhanced situational awareness and response capabilities.

It is in this context that the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service has undertaken a feasibility study on the probable use of drones for emergency operations. A decision will be

taken on the appropriate drones that should be acquired depending on the outcome of the study.

ECOLE HÔTELIÈRE SIR GAËTAN DUVAL - COURSES & SERVICES - REVIEW

(No. B/196) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the *Ecole Hôtelière Sir Gaëtan Duval*, she will, for the benefit of the House obtain from the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development, information as to if there is any ongoing action plan to revisit the courses and services provided thereat.

Reply (The Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection): The *Ecole Hôtelière Sir Gaëtan Duval* formerly known as the Hotel School of Mauritius, was founded in 1971 as a joint venture between the United Nations Development Programme, International Labour Organisation and the French Government to train employees of the Hotel and Tourism Industry.

I am informed that, the *Ecole Hôtelière Sir Gaëtan Duval* which was formerly operating under the aegis of the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development (MITD), is now operating under the purview of the Ministry of Tourism since November 2019. However, pending finalisation of the procedures for a complete taking over of the *Ecole Hôtelière Sir Gaëtan Duval* by the Ministry of Tourism, the day-to-day management of the Hotel School is still with the MITD, while policy issues are being looked into by the Ministry of Tourism.

Presently, the Hotel School offers courses under different modes, namely -

- I) Full time
- II) National Apprenticeship Scheme, and
- III) Part Time

I am also informed that some twenty (20) award courses are being offered at the Hotel School.

Over the years, the *Ecole Hôtelière Sir Gaëtan Duval* has developed partnerships with foreign institutions to bring quality training for the Mauritian public at affordable costs as follows -

- (i) *Convention de Coopération entre Ecole Hôtelière Sir Gaëtan Duval et Le Cercle Germano-Malagasy Goethe Zentrum dans l'enseignement de l'Allemand et la tenue des examens de Goethe Institute;*
- (ii) *Convention Tripartite entre Ecole Hôtelière Sir Gaëtan Duval, l'Université d'Angers et Le Lycée d'Hôtellerie et de Tourisme de Saint Quentin-en-Yvelines pour l'Echanges des Enseignants et des étudiants pour des missions de formation, de recherche et de conseil et l'Accréditation du cours de 'Diploma In Tourism Management' et l'évaluation externe des examens de tourisme;*
- (iii) *Protocole d'Accord entre Le Gouvernement de son Altesse Sérénissime Le Prince de Monaco et Le Gouvernement de la République de Maurice - Programme d'échange d'étudiants dans le domaine de la cuisine et le service restaurant et Formation de formateur;*
- (iv) *Jumelage entre le Lycée Évariste de Parny (Académie de la Réunion) et Ecole Hôtelière Sir Gaëtan Duval - Coopération et échanges en matière d'enseignement professionnel et technologique et d'expérience;*
- (v) Pearson Education Ltd, UK - UK accreditation by OFQUAL of BTEC Level 5 HND Hospitality Mgt courses. Yearly visit by external verifier;

The Hotel School also works in close collaboration with the private sector, in particular, with AHRIM to better support the Hotel and Tourism Industry. The following actions are being taken by the MITD in this regard –

- i) Review of Curriculum to meet the requirements of the industry.
- ii) A more aggressive marketing campaign to attract more trainees.
- iii) Increase in enrolment on the National Apprenticeship Programme.
- iv) Increase courses under the National Training & Reskilling Scheme.
- v) Design of new courses namely –
 - a) Diploma in Leisure & Entertainment;
 - b) Event Management;
 - c) Diploma in Culinary Arts, and
 - d) Diploma in Food & Beverage Management.

**METRO EXPRESS PROJECT – SHUTTLES, FEEDER TRANSPORT &
PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS**

(No. B/197) Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the implementation of the Metro Express Project between Curepipe and Quatre Bornes through Vacoas, he will state if consideration will be given for the provision of shuttles, feeder transport and pedestrian crossings to ease out pedestrian access and vehicular traffic on both sides of the tracks.

Reply: I am informed that as regards Curepipe, private bus operators are already servicing its peripheries, namely Malherbes, Eau Coulée, Les Casernes, Camp Levieux, Cité L'Oiseau, Iseeree (Forest Side) and Allée Brillant. 32 seaters to 45 seaters are used depending on the location.

As regards Quatre Bornes, the Metro Express Ltd is in the process of implementing shuttle services to enhance the first and last mile connectivity of the passengers to and from the light rail stations. A bidding exercise was carried out to this effect. Provision has also been made for these shuttle services to be continually improved and optimised. With regards to emergency lay-bys along St. Jean Road, a provision of 8 lay-bys has been made. 6 out of 8 have already been constructed and the remaining 2 would be constructed after acquisition of the land. Additionally, along St. Jean Road, my Ministry has implemented 5 new parking lots namely near old Manjoo, Surat, Tulipes, Pussy Cat, Goliva Court.

As to Vacoas and Floreal, the Metro Express Ltd is also working with the National Transport Corporation and the NLTA to provide shuttle services /feeder transport as necessary.

I am advised that there are pedestrian crossings at all road-rail intersections to facilitate pedestrians movement. Furthermore, footpaths are being provided adjacent to the roads falling within the Metro corridor. This would ensure that pedestrians can walk comfortably and safely without interfering with vehicular traffic.

Moreover, I am informed that all existing designated crossings, whether signalised or not, along the Metro corridor from Quatre Bornes, through Vacoas to Curepipe, would be reinstated and converted to signalised crossings to enable proper and safe access for the pedestrians.

As the hon. Member is aware, the existing traffic network in Curepipe, Vacoas and Quatre Bornes has been reconfigured in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders. Ancillary works have also been identified and are being implemented, in a collaborative approach, in the vicinity of the LRT corridor to improve the fluidity of traffic along the Metro corridor.

The development of the traffic Master Plan is also providing several additional mitigating measures to address the issue of vehicular congestion not only along the metro corridor but also on the secondary roads to facilitate the daily life of the inhabitants.

Additionally, the Metro Express Project has also facilitated the implementation and upgrading of the Palmerston Road network. The Palmerston flyover and other road upgrading project in that vicinity would improve the traffic and pedestrian movements in that region and integrate seamlessly with the LRT network.

ONLINE TEACHING – EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE

(No. B/198) Dr. M.Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to online teaching carried out by educators since April to June 2020, she will state the terms and conditions thereof

- (a) indicating the –
 - (i) number of educators involved, and
 - (ii) grades of students having participated therein, and
- (b) table copy of the official survey/report prepared regarding the implementation and outcome thereof and, if not, why not.

Reply: In my reply to Parliamentary Question B/1162 dated 23 November 2021, I had informed the House that the educators engaged in online teaching for Grades 10 to 13 had been provided with logins and have access to Microsoft Teams for them to connect online to ensure continuity in teaching and learning, and also used other platforms such as WhatsApp, Zoom, and Google Classroom.

I had also informed the House that lower secondary students in Grades 7 to 9, have access to educational resources available on the Student Support Portal and the MBC channels.

With regard to the terms and conditions, the House would wish to note that educators who were engaged in online teaching in 2021 are receiving internet allowance of Rs300 and cellphone allowance of Rs300 for the period served. This was in line with the provisions of the Circular No. 32 of 2020 of the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms. In light of same, a recommendation has thus been made to the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms to extend these facilities as well to those educators who were actively engaged in the delivery of online programmes in 2020.

I am informed that about 8,500 educators (that is, about 4,200 educators from State Secondary Schools and 4,300 educators from Private Aided Secondary Schools) were engaged in online teaching and learning for that period.

As explained earlier, online teaching and learning focused on students in Grades 10 to 13 while lower secondary students, from Grades 7 to 9, had access to educational resources available on the Student Support Portal.

As regards part (b) of the question, I also wish to inform the House that, in my reply to Parliamentary Question B/1162, I stated that a monitoring unit had been set up at the level of the Ministry, involving the Quality Assurance and Inspection Division to follow up on the online exercise as well as on the coverage of the curriculum.

As explained, this monitoring exercise was meant for in-house analysis and remedial action, as and when necessary, by my Ministry.

According to feedback obtained, online teaching had been carried out and students benefitted from this mode of learning. I would here seize the opportunity to thank again the Heads of Schools and educators who were responsible for and engaged in the teaching exercise.

May I also inform the House that the performance of students having participated in the School Certificate and Higher School Certificate examinations for this cohort of students

who took the examinations in April to June 2021, was extremely encouraging (and beyond expected levels), especially in a pandemic-induced situation.

Our experience in online teaching was shared with a number of international organisations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO); Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA); African Union (AU) and World Bank and this initiative, to ensure continuity in teaching and learning while schools were shuttered, was highly commended.

**PUMPING OF WATER PROJECT - NEW PLAINE LAUZUN TO UPPER
MONNERON**

(No. B/199) 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 m., he will state the –

- (a) name of the 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.

(Withdrawn)

**NEW SUPREME COURT OF MAURITIUS - WATER INGRESS &
LEAKAGES – EXTENT, CAUSES & COST OF REPAIRS**

(No. B/200) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the building housing the New Supreme Court of Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Master and Registrar, information as to if it has been the subject of water ingress and leakages during the recent downpours and, if so, give details as to the –

- (a) extent and causes thereof, and
- (b) cost of repairs, if any, and party bearing the said costs.

(Withdrawn)

COVID-19 - DROP-OUTS CASES - EDUCATION SYSTEM

(No. B/201) 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 the education system, she will state if consideration will be given for the carrying out of a survey to assess the number of children at primary and secondary levels having dropped out therefrom since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

(Withdrawn)

FOREIGN WORKERS - RECRUITMENT

(No. B/202) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the employment of foreign workers, he will state the number thereof recorded compared to the local workforce over the period 2020-2022.

(Withdrawn)

CONSTITUENCY NO.16 - HIGH-RISK FLOOD PRONE AREAS – QUANTUM DISBURSED

(No. B/203) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the Rs461 million provided to address the issue of high-risk flood prone areas in Glen Park, Henrietta, La Marie, Malakoff, in line with paragraph 40(p) of the Budget Speech 2021-2022, he will state the quantum thereof disbursed as at to-date.

Reply: The Land Drainage Authority has identified 62 drain projects amounting to some Rs575 m. for implementation under the National Flood Management Programme for Constituency No.16.

For the regions of Glen Park, Henrietta, La Marie and Malakoff, 25 drain projects for an estimated amount of some Rs 320 m. have been identified for implementation, out of which there are 12 projects in Glen Park, 6 in Henrietta, 6 in La Marie and 1 in Malakoff.

The status of these 25 projects is as follows –

- (a) 1 project for an amount of Rs4.4 m. has been completed namely, Drain and Resurfacing works of 2 laterals roads at Diamant 6 Lane (Off Desvergues Street), Glen Park;

- (b) 1 project for an amount of Rs52.5 m. has been awarded namely: Malakoff Phase 1. Works started on 24 August 2022 and is expected to be completed by 8 February 2023;
- (c) 1 project for a sum of Rs6 m. is at design stage namely:
 - (i) Drain network at Off Caverne Road and Delphis Lane, Henrietta;
- (d) Seven projects for an amount of Rs107 m. are at design stage as follows:
 - (i) Cut-Off drain upstream of Malakoff;
 - (ii) Extension of absorption drain at Mumbai II, Glen-Park;
 - (iii) Drain works at Diamant 6, Camp Tickfine, Glen-Park;
 - (iv) Drain at Camp Tickfine, Glen-Park;
 - (v) Drain at Cyprus Lane and surroundings, La Marie;
 - (vi) La Marie (before Royal Plaza Snack), and
 - (vii) Drain network at Kheerodhur Lane, Camp Roches, Henrietta, and
- (e) The scope of works is being prepared for the remaining 15 projects.

As at date, a total amount of some Rs7.8 m. has been disbursed under the National Flood Management Programme.

SIR GAËTAN TUG - COURT OF INVESTIGATION

(No. B/204) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the Court of Investigation set up to probe into the casualty at sea of the Sir Gaëtan tug, on 31 August 2020, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Master and Registrar, information as to where matters stand as to the investigation initiated.

Reply (The Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping): As per the General Notice No. 1289 of 2020, on 18 September 2020, by virtue of the powers conferred upon the Minister responsible for shipping matters under section 10(2) of the Merchant Shipping Act 2007, the hon. Attorney General and Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security who had been assigned the responsibility for Shipping Development and Merchant Shipping had, after consultation with the hon. Prime Minister, appointed a Court of Investigation to investigate into the casualty at sea of the tug Sir Gaëtan on 31 August 2020.

The composition of the Court of Investigation was as follows -

Chairperson: Mr Joseph Gerard ANGOH, former Puisne Judge

- Members: (i) Captain Mahendra Babooa, Master Mariner
(ii) Mr Iran Mohamad Dowlut, Marine Engineer

However, I am informed that the member, Mr Iran Mohamad Dowlut was replaced by Captain Andre Jacques Goulot, Master Mariner.

The Terms of Reference of the Court of Investigation were as follows -

- (a) to investigate into, and report on, the circumstances surrounding the shipping casualty which occurred on or about 31 August 2020 involving the tug Sir Gaëtan and the barge L'Ami Constant including -
- (i) the collision between the tug Sir Gaëtan and the barge L'Ami Constant;
 - (ii) the loss of life of Mr Addisson Jimmy Sylvain, Mr Seewoo Sujit Kumar, and Mr Plassan Laval Lindsay;
 - (iii) the presumed loss of life of Mr Moswadeck Bheenick;
 - (iv) the injury (if any) sustained by other persons resulting from the said shipping casualty, and
 - (v) damage caused to and by the tug Sir Gaëtan and the barge L'Ami Constant;
- (b) to situate responsibility for the acts done, at each stage, leading to the shipping casualty, and
- (c) any other matter connected with, or relevant or incidental to, paragraphs (a) and (b) above, and make recommendations as appropriate.

The Report of the Court of Investigation into the casualty at sea of the tug Sir Gaëtan was submitted to my Ministry on 22 March 2022.

An Inter-Ministerial Committee would be set up to analyse the recommendations made in the Report of the Court of Investigation and come up with the way forward for the effective implementation of the recommendations as appropriate.

(No. B/205) Mr R. Doolub (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the consumer goods in respect of which, Government provided a subsidy of Rs500 m., he will state if consideration will be given for the said products to be further subsidised after June 2022.

(Withdrawn)

HOME OWNERSHIP REFUND SCHEME - FUNDS DISBURSED

(No. B/206) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Home Ownership Refund Scheme announced in the Budget Speech 2021-2022, he will state the number of applications received thereunder, indicating the quantum of funds disbursed therefor as at to date.

Reply: *Le Home Ownership Scheme* est l'une des mesures introduites dans le dernier budget pour soutenir la vision du gouvernement d'une société plus inclusive en rendant l'accession à la propriété abordable pour tous.

Dans le cadre de ce programme, une personne éligible qui achète une maison, un appartement ou un terrain pour construire sa résidence au cours de l'exercice 2021/2022 bénéficie d'un remboursement de 5% du coût de la propriété jusqu'à un maximum de 500,000 roupies.

Le Registrar-General's Department m'a informé qu'au 30 mars 2022, 4,871 demandes ont été reçues dans le cadre du *Home Ownership Scheme* et que le montant déboursé s'élève à 524,6 millions de roupies.

MAURITIUS TOURISM AUTHORITY - TOURIST ACCOMODATION - CERTIFICATE HOLDERS

(No. B/207) 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 tourist accommodations, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Tourism Authority, information as to the number of certificate holders thereof, categorized as hotels, guest houses and other residences, indicating in each case the respective –

- (a) room capacity and total bed capacity thereof, including the maximum number of tourists that can be accommodated thereat, and

- (b) room occupancy and bed occupancy rates of hotels since the reopening of the borders this year to date.

(Withdrawn)

TROU AUX BICHES - COASTAL FLOODING & BEACH EROSION

(No. B/208) Mr R. Wochit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to coastal flooding and beach erosion at Trou aux Biches, he will state if a study has been carried out by his Ministry to identify the best available means of countering same and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

Reply: Beach erosion and accretion is a natural process that occurs on every beach. However, the degree of erosion is often being exacerbated by natural causes such as cyclones, storms and heavy swells as well as impacts of climate change, namely global warming and sea level rise. Anthropogenic actions such as construction of inappropriate hard structures within the dynamic beach zone may contribute to beach erosion as well.

The Trou aux Biches coast (near ex-aquarium) is known to suffer from beach erosion. It is exposed to relatively strong waves due to the presence of a pass in the reef. The coastline is also heavily developed and marked by the presence of hard structures such as vertical boundary walls and other construction within the dynamic beach zone.

Following the passage of Cyclone Gamede in 2007, the Trou-aux-Biches public beach was severely eroded. In 2008, following funds to the tune of Rs7.8 m. made available by the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change, the Beach Authority constructed a rock revetment thereat to address the erosion problem and to protect the existing beach infrastructure, namely, fish landing station and children's playground which were at risk. A slipway was also provided to facilitate removal of boats by fishers and other users of the region.

The Trou aux Biches beach was one of the sites studied by experts from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) from 2012 to 2015 on capacity development for coastal protection and rehabilitation for the Republic of Mauritius. Site observations and analysis of long-term data had shown that, on the one hand, this part of the coast was overall accreting but, on the other hand, it was suffering from localised erosion mainly at the

northern end of the public beach, in front of the leased sites. The JICA experts attributed the possible causes of the localised erosion to the impacts of –

- i. existing vertical walls and hard structures in the dynamic beach zone which interfere with sediment transport and deposition along the coast;
- ii. deepening of the reef pass;
- iii. coral degradation in the lagoon, and
- iv. climate change impacts and sea level rise.

The Trou aux Biches site had been included among 16 priority sites to be rehabilitated by the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change under the forthcoming coastal rehabilitation programme for 2022-2026 under the National Environment and Climate Change Fund. Following a bidding exercise at the level of the Central Procurement Board, the contract for the four-year consultancy services for designing the most appropriate measures on the site specificities to abate the erosion issues and supervision works along with the preparation of tender documents was expected to be awarded in the first week of April 2022. The detailed designs for the 16 sites were expected to be completed by April 2023. The contract for works at Trou aux Biches and other sites was expected to be awarded by end of next financial year and works to start in July 2023.

Additionally, as regards coastal inundation, the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change would soon embark on the implementation of a two-year study on coastal flooding and beach erosion in Mauritius and Rodrigues with the assistance of the *Agence Française de Développement (AFD)*. The objective of the study was to undertake a risk study on coastal erosion and marine submersion due to the likely effects of climate change such as sea level rise. The study would include assessment and mapping of coastal hazards, analysis and mapping of exposed assets and analysis, assessment and mapping of coastal risks. The *Bureau de Recherches Géologiques et Minières (BRGM)* was being hired by AFD to provide the technical support. The Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change was in the process of recruiting the project staff to start implementation of the project by end of May 2022. The project would be implemented in three phases –

- i. collection of existing data and studies for the needs of the project;
- ii. detailed study of the hazards and risks of the Mauritian coastal areas by mapping of key sites in terms of both hazards, stakes exposure and risks, and

- iii. capacity building resulting in knowledge acquired for an operational use of the maps as well as recommendations for an extended use of the deliverables for other needs such as crisis management.

The main outputs would result in 50 hazard maps which would be used for decision making and response to crisis management all across the island in Mauritius and also Rodrigues mitigation measures would be devised accordingly.

***"L'ASSOCIATION DES PROPRIETAIRES DE BOULANGERIE" –
COMPLAINTS***

(No. B/209) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection, Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training whether, in regard to the flour being commercialised by the State Trading Corporation on the local market, he will state if he is in presence of complaints from *"l'Association des propriétaires de boulangeries"* as to the quality thereof since February 2021 and, if so, indicate the measures taken by his Ministry in relation thereto, if any.

Reply: I am informed by the State Trading Corporation (STC) that it received a verbal complaint from the *Association des propriétaires de boulangerie* (APB) on 04 February 2021, regarding the lower quality of 'pain maison' of 100g which was attributed to an alleged inferior quality of wheat flour. A baking test was done using the same batch of flour at another bakery, in the presence of officers of my Ministry, the STC, the Mauritius Standards Bureau (MSB), the APB, and *Les Moulins de la Concorde Ltée* (LMLC). Test results from MSB depicts that the bread tested on 11 February 2021 was fully compliant with the MS 37 Bread Standards and was not of inferior quality. Notwithstanding this, the APB still made statements from time to time on public radio channels.

In December 2021, the STC held a meeting with the LMLC and it was noted that one of the possible causes of complaints from bakers might have been due to the change in humidity level at the bakeries. The LMLC undertook to make an analysis of the prevailing humidity level and make necessary adjustment to the flour to suit the bakeries. LMLC informed that it will also carry out regular baking tests at its in-house bakery in the presence

of representatives of my Ministry, the STC, MSB, and APB. LMLC also proposed to provide free bakery training sessions to two machine operators per bakery.

On 10 February 2022, another formal complaint was made by APB to STC and LMLC stating that bakeries were producing poor quality of bread which, according to them, was due again to an alleged inferior quality of wheat flour. On 15 February 2022, baking tests were carried out in the presence of representatives of my Ministry, the STC, LMLC, MSB, APB and the complainant. During the test, it was noted that the bakery in question did not follow the STC's formula for mixing the dough but instead used its own formula.

Consequently, the dough made with the bakery's formula leaked water during the mixing exercise, following which additional flour and improver had to be added. This resulted a baguette with a weight of 194g, when the minimum weight according to the MS 37 Standards should be 200g. A second batch was made with the STC's formula and the bread weighed 214g which is above the minimum weight of 200g. This exercise showed that some bakeries use their own formula to bake bread and this may lead to lower quality of bread.

***BORD CASCADE NHDC ESTATE, HENRIETTA – NEW RELAY
ANTENNA***

(No. B/210) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to mobile broadband and internet connectivity, he will state if consideration has been given for the installation of a new relay antenna to serve the Bord Cascade NHDC Estate, in Henrietta.

Reply: Consideration for installation of any new relay antenna depends on private telecom operators offering mobile broadband and internet connectivity. The Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation is not responsible for consideration of installation of any such relay antenna.

Three mobile operators are duly licensed by the Information and Communication Technologies Authority (ICTA) to deploy and operate their mobile networks and provide internet network coverage island-wide. Any operator wishing to set up a relay antenna for broadband and internet connectivity has to make an application with the ICTA as well as with the local authority of the region where the proposed antenna is to be set up.

There are currently six base stations in the region of Henrietta to ensure broadband and internet connectivity. However, when there is a coverage issue in a particular region, the matter may be reported to the ICTA so that the latter may take up the same with the operators accordingly.

As this matter has been flagged, the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation would formally report the same to the ICTA for any necessary action at its end.

BAMBOUS VIRIEUX – WATER SUPPLY

(No. B/211) Ms N. Ramyad (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the water supply issues in the Bambous Virieux area, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to if solutions are being brought thereto and table the short and long term plans respectively being envisaged to address the water supply in the region extending from Vieux Grand Port to Quatre-Soeurs.

(Withdrawn)

RODRIGUES – FOOT & MOUTH DISEASE

(No. B/212) Mr J. B. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the Foot and Mouth Disease, he will state the present status of the outbreak thereof in Rodrigues.

Reply: I am informed that no clinical case of Foot and Mouth Disease has been reported by the Veterinary Services of Rodrigues to the Livestock and Veterinary Division of my Ministry since July 2021.

Samples of blood from bovines, caprine and ovine were collected by the Veterinary Services of Rodrigues during its ongoing sero-surveillance programme and were sent to Mauritius. The Livestock and Veterinary Division of my Ministry performed a serological testing on the blood samples which revealed a prevalence of 4% of the Foot and Mouth Disease virus in Rodrigues. The last test was done in December 2021. The next test is expected to be carried out after the third vaccination exercise. Request for vaccines has been made to FAO and same is expected anytime.

On the basis of the fact that no clinical cases were observed, decision was taken to resume the movement of bovines, caprine and ovine from Rodrigues in January 2022. Two consignments of 255 goats/sheep and 28 cattle were imported by Mauritius Meat Authority (MMA) in January and February 2022 under a strict protocol. Blood samples taken from the animals slaughtered at the MMA have shown a prevalence of 25% of the FMD virus. Thus, the Livestock and Veterinary Division has recommended that movement of animals be halted for a while and resumed after the third vaccination programme is completed in Rodrigues and Mauritius.