



SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 10 MAY 2022

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THE CABINET

(Formed by Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth)

Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth	Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity
Hon. Louis Steven Obeegadoo	Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism
Hon. Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun, GCSK	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology
Dr. the Hon. Mohammad Anwar Husnoo	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management
Hon. Alan Ganoo	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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MAURITIUS

Seventh National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 06 of 2022

Sitting of Tuesday 10 May 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**OBITUARY****MR LOUIS RAYMOND RIVET, GOSK**

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is with deep regret that we learnt of the demise of Mr Louis Raymond Rivet, GOSK, former Member of Parliament, on Friday 06 May 2022, at the age of 95.

Mr Rivet was born on 23 July 1926 in Beau Bassin. After completing his secondary education at Royal College of Curepipe, Mr Rivet joined the teaching profession in 1948, at the St Esprit College where he taught Chemistry, Physics, and Mathematics.

He then decided to pursue his tertiary education at the University of London. In 1957, he returned to Mauritius with a Bachelor of Science, and resumed his teaching career at the St Esprit College. In the same year, he became the Head of the Physics Department. He was later awarded a Postgraduate Certificate in Education from the University of London.

In 1976, Mr Rivet published a Periodic Table intended for university students studying electronics and spectroscopy. In 1979, he published a simplified version of the Periodic Table for Chemistry students. In 1983, he wrote a 248-page book entitled “Understanding Physics – Part I”. In 1987, Mr Rivet was appointed Rector of the St Esprit College, a post which he held until 1994.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr Rivet had keen interest in politics as well. He was a founding Member of the *Parti Mauricien*. In 1961, he contested the Municipal Council Election for Beau-Bassin/Rose Hill, and was elected. In 1965, he became Chairperson of the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill.

In 1967, Mr Rivet ran for the General Election in Constituency No. 20 – Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière under the banner of the *Parti Mauricien Social Démocrate*, and was elected First Member to serve the then Legislative Assembly. In 1976, he ran for the General Election in the same Constituency under the banner of the *Union Démocratique Mauricienne* but was not elected.

In 1997, the title of honorary citizen of the town of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill was conferred upon Mr Rivet by the Municipal Council. On 12 March 2019, the title of Grand Officer of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean was conferred upon him for his outstanding contribution in the fields of education and science.

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 Louis Raymond Rivet.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, I knew Mr Raymond Rivet well. He was an exceptional person who has greatly contributed in the field of politics and in the education sector, particularly as Rector of Saint Esprit College in Quatre Bornes. He will always be remembered as the inventor of the Periodic Tables. May I associate myself with the tribute paid by the hon. Prime Minister to late Mr Louis Raymond Rivet, and I request the Clerk to convey our condolences to the bereaved family, especially to his children Patrice, Myriam, Denis, and Daryl. Thank you.

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

FOURTH MEMBER FOR PORT LOUIS MARITIME & PORT LOUIS EAST – LETTER OF 27 APRIL 2022

Hon. Members, I have an announcement to make. I have to inform the House that on Wednesday 27 April 2022, I received a letter from the hon. Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East (Mr Juman).

In the said letter, the hon. Member referred to the reply given by the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, in his capacity as Acting Prime Minister, at the Sitting of Tuesday 19 April 2022, to Parliamentary Question B/315, in regard to an overseas mission undertaken by Mr Dick Ng Sui Wa, Chairperson of the Information and Communication Technologies Authority.

Moreover, hon. Juman has, on the basis of copy of a Purchase Order issued by the ICTA which he annexed to the said letter, stated that the hon. Deputy Prime Minister has, I quote –

“misled the House”

I am of the view that, in so doing, the hon. Member formed the opinion that the Purchase Order *de facto* challenges the reply given to the House by the hon. Deputy Prime Minister which was to the effect that, inasmuch as the trip effected by the Chairperson of the ICTA to which the Parliamentary Question referred, was a private trip, neither Government nor the ICTA was responsible for any attended costs.

Hon. Members, on a procedural note, I wish to draw the attention of the House to the following –

- Firstly, hon. Juman addressed to me a letter containing serious allegations against the hon. Deputy Prime Minister in no equivocal terms, which is tantamount to challenging the conduct of the latter and requested me to call him to order.
- Standing Order 40(5) lays down the procedure available to a hon. Member wishing to challenge the conduct of another hon. Member before the House, and which reads as follows, I quote –

“The conduct of the President and the Vice-President of the Republic or the person performing the functions of the President’s Office, the Speaker, Members of the Assembly, Judges, Members of Statutory Commissions or other persons engaged in the administration of Justice shall not be raised except upon a substantive motion moved for that purpose; and in any amendment, question to a Minister, or remarks in a debate dealing with any other subject, reference to the conduct of the persons aforesaid shall be out of order.”

In the light of the aforesaid, the course of action initiated by hon. Juman is, to all intents and purposes, procedurally incorrect.

Moreover, I wish to apprise the House that, by letter dated 29 April 2022, the attention of hon. Juman was drawn to the fact that the procedure that obtains in relation to the subject matter and tenor of his letter dated 27 April 2022, is contained in Standing Order 40(5).

Hon. Members, on another note, however, I have to inform the House that I view with much concern the fact that the letter which hon. Juman addressed to me found its way in the edition of *L’Express* dated 28 April 2022, inasmuch as same is deemed to be of private nature and to which I had not yet replied.

Hon. Members, while, on one hand, hon. Juman acted in complete oblivion of the provisions of Standing Order 40(5), he has, on the other hand, defied elementary and basic principles of parliamentary etiquette and traditions by causing to be published a letter containing serious allegations against another hon. Member, thus bringing Parliament, the temple of democracy, which epitomizes the will of the people into disrepute.

Hon. Members, it has, regrettably, been observed that some hon. Members have taken the habit of bringing procedural issues in the public domain through the media while same can best be dealt with in Parliament, oblivious of the grave consequences that same can have in the mind of the public and on the institution, and what same can entail for themselves.

I can only appeal to hon. Members to stand guided by such a conduct as to glorify the decorum and dignity of this august Assembly, which we have all, humbly, pledged to uphold at all stages, at all times.

I thank you for your attention.

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 following Bills (In Original):

- (i) The Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2019 (Amendment) Bill (No. VI of 2022);and
- (ii) The Supplementary Appropriation (2020-2021) (No. 3) Bill (No. VII of 2022).

(b) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Rodrigues Subsidy Account for the year ended 30 June 2021.

(c) The Annual Report of the Mauritius Ports Authority for the Financial Year 2020-2021.

B. Ministry of Land Transport and Light Rail**Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade**

(a) The Light Rail Fares and Light Rail Tickets (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 99 of 2022)

(b) The Road Traffic (Bus Fares) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 100 of 2022)

C. Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development

Estimates of Supplementary Expenditure (2020-2021) (No. 3) of 2022.

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

(a) The Annual Report 2016-2017 of the Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Board.

(b) The Social Aid (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 96 of 2022)

E. Ministry of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives

The Annual Report of the National Co-operative College for the Financial Year 01 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.

F. Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance

The Financial Services (Consolidated Licensing and Fees) (Amendment No. 2) Rules 2022. (Government Notice No. 98 of 2022)

G. Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation

The Information and Communication Technologies (Clearance to Import ICT Equipment) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 97 of 2022)

H. Ministry of Health and Wellness

The Dangerous Drugs (Prescribed Forms) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 95 of 2022)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**MBC - MAURITIAN SIGN LANGUAGE - LIVE BROADCAST**

(No. B/524) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Mauritian sign language, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, information as to where matters stand regarding the proposed collaboration between the Corporation and the Society for the Welfare of the Deaf for the live broadcast of one news bulletin therein, as suggested by the Society for the Welfare of the Deaf.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in my reply to Parliamentary Question B/387 at the Sitting of 18 May 2021, I explained the various implications and challenges for the introduction of live broadcast of news bulletins in the Mauritian Sign Language.

I also informed that the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation was working in close collaboration with the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity and the Society for the Welfare of the Deaf to examine those implications and challenges, and that they were considering the advisability of implementing the project in a phased manner, that is, in the first instance, increasing the number of weekly news bulletin in the Mauritian Sign Language from one to two and, at a later stage, identifying a specific live news bulletin to include the sign language interpretation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will recall that a news bulletin in the Mauritian Sign Language was first introduced in 2007 and was broadcast on Saturdays on MBC 2 only. The duration of the broadcast in those days was around five minutes. As from November 2015, the bulletin was broadcast on three channels, namely MBC 1, *Senn Kreol* and MBCSat. In December 2020, the duration of the news bulletin was increased from 5 to around 12 minutes. This news bulletin in the Mauritian Sign Language is currently being broadcast every Saturday on MBC 1, MBCSat and *Senn Kreol* at 17.48 hours, 17.15 hours and 19.18 hours respectively. This news bulletin is also rebroadcast on MBC 1 on the next day at 12.25 hours.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that a meeting was convened by the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation on 10 August 2020 with representatives of the Ministry of Social

Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity and the Society for the Welfare of the Deaf to examine ways and means of introducing live news bulletins in the Mauritian Sign Language. The Society for the Welfare of the Deaf had pointed out that competent staff had to be sent to India for training as interpreters and newscasters for the hearing impaired. Further discussions in this line were put on hold in view of the COVID-19 pandemic and travel restrictions.

A second meeting was held at the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation on 26 May 2021 with, among others, the representatives of the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity and the Society for the Welfare of the Deaf for follow-up actions.

During the meeting, the representative of the Society for the Welfare of the Deaf reiterated that, in order to produce a daily live news bulletin, additional human resources would have to be trained as interpreters and newscasters. The cost implications for all stakeholders were also discussed.

In view of the lack of adequately trained personnel at this stage, the Society for the Welfare of the Deaf made a request for a mid-week Mauritian Sign Language news bulletin, in addition to the one being broadcast on Saturdays. It was agreed that the technical facilities would be provided by the MBC while the mode of financing the fees for Mauritian Sign Language interpreters and newscasters would have to be examined.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a follow-up meeting was held at the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation on 28 January 2022 with all stakeholders, including the Chairperson of Society for the Welfare of the Deaf to discuss the matter further and chart a way forward.

The representative of the Society for the Welfare of the Deaf confirmed that live telecast of the news bulletin cannot be entertained for the time being due to lack of interpreters and newscasters. The Society has indicated that for daily live news bulletin in Mauritian Sign Language to become a reality, a pool of interpreters will first have to be trained in the Mauritian Sign Language. The Society has further indicated that such training would take around two years. Presently, there are three hearing interpreters and eight deaf newscasters and they would not be sufficient for the proposed live telecast of news bulletin in the Mauritian Sign Language.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that for two news bulletins in the Mauritian Sign Language, the services of three interpreters and eight deaf newscasters would be required. The

deaf newscasters would work in two batches of four persons; one for the Saturday news bulletin and the second one for the proposed mid-week news bulletin.

I am further informed that the training programme for the Mauritian Sign Language interpreters comprises two phases. The Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity has taken the initiative of mounting locally the first phase of the training programme which will be conducted by the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development, in collaboration with the Society for the Welfare of the Deaf. Phase 1 will be geared towards imparting to participants the basic communication skills in Mauritian Sign Language and will be conducted in four different batches of three months' duration each. Successful participants from the different batches in the first phase will be retained for further training in the second phase, which aims at developing communicative proficiency in Mauritian Sign Language.

The second phase comprises six modules, which is covered over a period of one year. At the end of the course, there will be a two-weeks' visit abroad for exposure and assessment. This second phase of the training programme will be conducted in collaboration with the Indian Sign Language Interpreters Association, which is affiliated with the World Association of Sign Language of Interpreters.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it has been agreed by all parties that the proposed mid-week news bulletin in the Mauritian Sign Language be considered for the time being and for which the MBC is ready to provide all technical facilities and backup for the early kick-start of the project.

Thank you.

Ms J. Bérenger: Thank you. The hon. Prime Minister just said that interpreters still need to be trained in Mauritian Sign Language, but, in 2020, following my PQ B/521 on the same subject, which is live broadcast in Mauritian Sign Language, the Prime Minister said that, in the past, we asked for assistance from South Africa. Can he indicate to the House what kind of assistance was asked and most importantly what was the outcome? Because the years go by and live broadcast in Mauritian Sign Language is still not a reality.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Mauritian Sign Language is not being taught and lectured in many other countries. The most appropriate one – this is what I have been informed by the Society for the Welfare of the Deaf - is in India. They have a

collaboration with India and in the past, I believe that some interpreters have been trained in India.

So, up to now, I am not aware whether South Africa is also another country where we can send people. But as I have replied, the issue of training has, of course, been looked at very carefully. It is unfortunate that during the time when we wanted to move forward, the borders were closed. Then we had restrictions because of the COVID-19 situation, and then India itself, and you will recall that even after we had relaxed in terms of our borders, still had very strict border control. So, it is only now, as I have stated in my answer, that we are looking at how we can at least send some people to be trained in India.

Ms J. Bérenger: L'honorable Premier ministre parle de frontières fermées, mais dans ses réponses précédentes à mes questions parlementaires sur le même sujet, c'est-à-dire sur la retransmission en direct des bulletins télévisés en langages des signes - tout comme la réponse qu'il vient de donner à l'instant - l'honorable Premier ministre met en avant le manque de facilité technique pour permettre aux sourds et malentendants de suivre les bulletins télévisés en direct et surtout il met en avant le coût onéreux. Mais le Premier ministre n'est-il pas d'accord qu'il faudrait revoir les priorités ? Car il s'agit ici d'inclusivité ; il s'agit du respect des droits humains ; il s'agit du respect de la Convention des Nations Unies sur les droits des personnes en situation de handicap, dont Maurice est signataire. Et si son gouvernement peut dépenser des milliards dans les projets d'infrastructure...

Mr Speaker: No! Put your question!

Ms J. Bérenger: J'arrive avec ma question. Et des millions dans des *per diem*, cela devrait être possible...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I will disallow your question if you continue along that line!

Ms J. Bérenger: Est-ce que l'honorable Premier ministre n'est-il pas d'accord que cela devrait être possible d'investir ce qui est nécessaire pour que la communauté des sourds et malentendants ne soit pas discriminée?

The Prime Minister: M. le président, je pense qu'il faut faire l'honorable membre se rappeler que son parti a été au gouvernement de 2000 à 2005. À ce moment, n'y avait-il pas le droit des personnes handicapées et des personnes sourdes ?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: Il y avait 5 ans pour demander à la *MBC* de faire ce qu'on est en train de demander aujourd'hui ! Mais seulement, il faut quand même admettre, comme je l'ai dit dans ma réponse, que le fait qu'on avait commencé avec un *news bulletin* de 4-5 minutes et au fil des années cela a augmenté, je suis d'accord que ce n'est pas suffisant. Je suis d'accord qu'il faut faire encore plus et c'est la raison pour laquelle le côté technique a été revu.

Evidemment, ce que j'ai répondu auparavant c'est la réalité. Il y a toute une organisation à mettre en place au niveau de la *MBC*. Mais après discussion avec la société, avec le ministère de la Sécurité sociale, on est tombé d'accord de bouger par phase et d'essayer d'augmenter le *news bulletin* qui se fait actuellement une fois la semaine et qui est répété le lendemain, c'est-à-dire le même *news bulletin* qui est *recorded* mais qui est rediffusé. Allons essayer de voir comment on peut l'augmenter à deux fois par semaine. Je comprends que la *MBC* a travaillé dans ce sens et la *MBC*, très probablement, dans un proche avenir, va être prête pour pouvoir diffuser ce deuxième bulletin. Mais seulement, il y a aussi les coûts. Donc, au ministère de la Sécurité sociale et dans les autres ministères, on est en train de travailler pour voir comment on peut trouver le financement nécessaire pour faire ce deuxième bulletin devenir une réalité. Et puis, il y a le long terme. Et à long terme, si on arrive à réaliser ce deuxième bulletin, il faut essayer de voir comment on peut non seulement continuer à augmenter le nombre de bulletins mais aussi et éventuellement venir avec le *live broadcast in the Mauritian Sign Language*.

Ms J. Bérenger: The House will recall that India – since the Prime Minister was talking about India – enacted its accessibility standards for persons with disabilities in television programmes. Can the hon. Prime Minister indicate to the House whether Mauritius will enable the enactment of such standards in Mauritius?

The Prime Minister: Sorry? Which standard is the hon. Member talking about?

Ms J. Bérenger: India enacted its accessibility standards for persons with disabilities in television programmes. Since the Prime Minister was talking about India, can he indicate to the House whether we will ask for assistance from India for the enactment of such standards?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, each country has provided different regulations and different laws adapted to its own situation. Of course, we want to improve in Mauritius with regard to accessibility of people who are *autrement capables* and whatever assistance we can get not only from India but also from other countries, we shall, of course, tap such assistance.

Mr Speaker: The Table is advised that PQ B/537 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation, that PQs B/587 and B/614 will be replied by the hon. Prime Minister time permitting, that PQs B/528, B/536, B/540, B/587 have been withdrawn.

Next question!

MR P. U. - FOREIGN CITIZEN - JUDGE'S INJUNCTION

(No. B/525) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to Mr P. U., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to who gave instructions for the removal from Mauritius thereof in breach of an injunction issued by a Judge of the Supreme Court.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will reply to Parliamentary Questions B/525 and B/530 together as they relate to the same subject matter.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr P. U. was never deported from Mauritius. The issue of issuing and executing a deportation order against him do not, therefore, in any way, arise.

There has also been no breach of an injunction issued by a Judge of the Supreme Court as I shall explain later.

Mr Speaker, Sir, at this juncture, let me hasten to say that it is preposterous to even imagine that the Government and the institutions of this country would flout the rule of law at the risk of damaging their credibility over the removal of a foreign citizen whose name was until, a few days ago, unknown to the general public.

It is high time that good sense prevails and that those who are creating sensationalism out of gross misinformation take responsibility for their actions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to take this opportunity to set the record straight.

Mr P. U., a Slovak national born on 28 May 1970 in Slovakia came to Mauritius on 19 February 2019 from Kenya. He was allowed to land for a period of 30 days on a tourist visa.

On 14 March 2019, he submitted an online application through the Economic Development Board for an Occupation Permit to stay and work in Mauritius as professional with Euro-Cola (Mauritius) Ltd. He left the country on 02 April 2019 for Reunion Island. He returned on 03 April 2019 from Reunion Island and was allowed to land for a period of 50 days on a business visa.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that on 05 April 2019, a search on the name “ P. U.” was carried out on the Controversial List of the Passport and Immigration Office, the Interpol Database and World Check and the search returned no result. His application for an Occupation Permit was, therefore, approved for a period of 3 years.

An appointment was scheduled on 19 April 2019 for Mr P. U. to call personally at the Passport and Immigration Office to submit original documents for the issuance of the Occupation Permit.

I am further informed that on 19 April 2019, prior to the issuance of the Occupation Permit, a search on the name “P. U.” was again carried out on the Controversial List of the Passport and Immigration Office, the Interpol Database and World Check and the search revealed nothing adverse against him. On this basis, P. U. was issued with an Occupation Permit to stay and work in Mauritius as professional for the post of Product Director with Euro-Cola (Mauritius) Ltd valid until 18 April 2022.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed that on 05 November 2020, the Attorney General’s Office received a request dated 06 August 2020 from the Slovak Republic for the arrest and extradition of P. U. According to the Slovak Authorities, he was wanted for prosecution in the Slovak Republic for, and I quote –

- (a) “establishing, masterminding and supporting a criminal group for which he was liable to a term of imprisonment of 5 to 10 years, and

- (b) illicit manufacture, possession of trafficking in narcotics and psychotropic substances, poisons or precursors, for which he was liable to a term of imprisonment of 20 to 25 years or life imprisonment altogether.”

It is appropriate to note that, at the time of the receipt of the request, our borders had been closed since 19 March 2020 and were only fully reopened on 01 October 2021, and this, on account of the COVID-19 pandemic.

On 25 January 2021, the Attorney General’s Office wrote to the appropriate authorities in Mauritius to confirm the presence of P. U. in the country. Having confirmed that P. U. was in Mauritius, draft applications for extradition and arrest pending extradition were prepared by the Attorney General’s Office by 22 March 2021. However, the applications were kept in abeyance due to the second lockdown that began on 10 March 2021 and ended on 30 April 2021.

Following the re-opening of the Mauritian borders on 01 October 2021, I am informed that the Attorney General’s Office again wrote to the appropriate authorities to confirm the presence of P. U. in Mauritius and having received such confirmation on 28 October 2021, went on to ascertain whether the Slovakian Authorities were ready, willing, and able to remove P. U. from Mauritius, should an extradition order be made against him. On 15 February 2022, the Attorney General’s Office received confirmation that the Slovakian Authorities were ready, willing, and able to remove P. U. from Mauritius. Applications for the extradition of P. U. and his arrest pending extradition were lodged on 22 February 2022 before the District Court of Port Louis.

He was arrested on 22 February 2022 and granted bail on 09 March 2022.

Extradition proceedings have been ongoing and the hearing has been fixed for 11 May 2022. It is worth noting that, in the meantime, the Occupation Permit of P.U. was to expire on Monday 18 April 2022.

Mr Speaker, Sir, meanwhile, on 23 March 2022, while extradition proceedings were still ongoing, the Registrar of Civil Status informed my Office of the publication of the proposed civil marriage between P. U. and Miss M. J. D. A., a citizen of Mauritius, which had been received, and was requesting a clearance certificate before the date of the wedding. On 28 March 2022, the Secretary for Home Affairs informed the Registrar of Civil Status of an objection to the intended

marriage on the ground that P. U. was trying to marry a Mauritian citizen for the sole purpose of acquiring the status of resident.

On 31 March 2022, P. U. submitted an application for the renewal of his Occupation Permit as Professional with Euro-Cola (Mauritius) Ltd through the Economic Development Board which was due to expire on 18 April 2022.

Mr Speaker, Sir, at this juncture, it became essential to take a decision on the status of resident of P. U., who, let me recall, was wanted in the Republic of Slovakia for establishing, masterminding, and supporting a criminal group, and for illicit manufacture, possession of trafficking in narcotics and psychotropic substances, poisons or precursors. From information received from Slovak Authorities, for the period 2015 to 2018, P. U. and his criminal group provided precursors in the form of pills for the production of approximately 480 kilogrammes of methamphetamine for a value of at least 16.8 million euros, that is, about Rs758.5 m.

Without resorting to expert literature on the subject, a Google search of the word “methamphetamine” returns the following result: “a synthetic drug with more rapid and lasting effects than amphetamine, used illegally as a stimulant.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, everybody is aware of my personal engagement in the fight against this scourge of our society known as substance abuse as well as against the associated trading and trafficking in illegal drugs.

The real treasure of this country is its human resource and it is truly heart breaking to see how substance abuse is ruining the lives of youth with great potential in this country.

I wish that those who are taxing the Government and institutions of this country of having committed an illegal act in connection with the removal of P. U. from Mauritius never experience the heartache of having a child hooked up on methamphetamine. Expert literature describes “methamphetamine” as a powerful and highly addictive substance. It is known to have caused death or serious brain damage in youngsters who had been initiated to the substance.

With this in mind, Mr Speaker, Sir, my only option as the Minister responsible for the subject of immigration was to deprive P. U. of his status of resident by invoking sections 6 and 9A(8) of the Immigration Act.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as much as I am unflinchingly committed against cracking down on substance abuse and illegal drug trade and trafficking in this country, I am a fervent advocate of the rule of law.

It baffles me that persons who have taken the sacred oath to be faithful and bear true allegiance to the Republic of Mauritius according to law and to well and truly discharge the duties of a barrister according to law would use misinformation to manipulate public opinion. The latest that I have heard is that these persons are brandishing a clean Certificate of Character issued by the Director of Public Prosecutions of Mauritius in respect of P. U. on 08 March 2022.

Mr Speaker, Sir, of course, Mr P. U. will have a clean Certificate of Character in Mauritius as he has never committed a criminal offence in our territory. But that does not automatically wipe out his antecedents as a wanted fugitive reported armed and dangerous by Interpol.

I am not the judge of these persons, but I remain convinced that the legal profession remains, at the core, a noble profession and that these people will be appropriately judged by their peers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in dealing with Mr P. U., my Office and myself have ensured that we have scrupulously observed the laws of this land.

I am well aware that this august Assembly is not the forum to ventilate issues of law. There are Courts that have been set up in this land for this purpose. But in view of the misinformation that is circulating around this matter, as is evidenced by the equally misinformed questions B/525 and B/530 being asked, I find myself obliged to expatiate on the legal provisions underpinning the removal of P. U. from this country.

On 15 April 2022, based on sections 6 and 9A(8) of the Immigration Act and in my absolute discretion and in the public interest as the law allows me as Minister responsible for the subject of immigration, I deprived P. U. of his status of resident. I am informed that the notice of deprivation of the status of resident was served by registered post at the last known address of P. U. on 26 April 2022, as required by section 6(6) of the Immigration Act. For good measure, I am quoting these sections. I quote –

“6. Loss of status of resident

(1) Where, in relation to a resident, the Minister is satisfied that it is in the public interest to do so, he may, in his absolute discretion, deprive him of his status of resident.

(6) Where a resident is deprived of his status of resident, a notice to that effect shall be served upon him by post at his last known address.

9A. Occupation permit

(8) Sections 6 and 6A shall apply to a person who has been issued with an occupation permit as they would have applied to a person who has acquired the status of resident.”

As can be noted, these provisions operate independently of any extradition or deportation proceedings. The moment a person is deprived of his status of resident, he has no legal standing to be in the Mauritian territory as can be seen from sections 3 and 4 of the Immigration Act, which provide as follows, and I quote –

“3. “Restriction on admission to Mauritius

Subject to this Act, no person may be admitted to Mauritius or, being within Mauritius, remain there.

4. Entitlement to admission to Mauritius

Subject to this Act, a citizen, a permanent resident, a resident or an exempted person, shall be allowed to enter Mauritius or, being in Mauritius, to remain there so long as he holds his status of citizen, permanent resident, resident or exempted person, as the case may be.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the whole campaign of misinformation and disinformation surrounding this matter, I have heard it said that it was necessary to resort to deportation under the Deportation Act once a person is deprived of his status of resident and becomes a prohibited immigrant.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have, here, to refer this august Assembly to section 6(5) of the Immigration Act, which provides as follows, and I quote –

“(5) Where a person has been deprived of his status of resident under subsection (1) or has ceased to be a resident under subsections (2), (3) or (4), he shall be deemed to be a prohibited immigrant for the purposes of this Act and of the Deportation Act.”

It would seem that the learned people, who are taxing the Government and the institutions of this country of having acted illegally inadvertently, or worse, knowingly, missed the fact that a person who is deprived of his status of resident becomes a prohibited immigrant for the purpose of the Immigration Act.

At this juncture, I find it necessary to quote section 20 of the Immigration Act which provides that, and I quote –

“20. Lawful custody

Any person who is detained by virtue of this Act shall, whilst being detained and whilst being conveyed for the purpose of being removed from Mauritius, be deemed to be in lawful custody.”

Upon being deprived of his status of resident under sections 6(1) and 9A(8) of the Immigration Act, Mr P. U. was on 26 April 2022, lawfully conveyed by the Police under section 20 of the Act for his removal by the Slovakian Authorities. It is to be noted that, at no material time, was the Police the object of a Court Order.

Mr Speaker, Sir, coming to deportation, which is altogether a completely different process in itself, it is appropriate to refer to section 4 of the Deportation Act which provides as follows, and I quote –

“4. Deportation orders

Subject to this Act, the Minister may, if he thinks fit, make a deportation order, in such form as may be prescribed, in respect of –

- (a) a convicted person;
- (b) an undesirable person;
- (c) a destitute person; or
- (d) a prohibited immigrant.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, on the clear express wording of the law, deportation is an option that is open to the Minister. It is not mandatory that a person, who has been declared a prohibited

immigrant, be deported if the authorities of the country of which he is a national are present in Mauritius and ready, willing, and able to take him back to his country.

Here, it has to be stressed that the Republic of Slovakia is a member of the European Union and bound by the European Convention on Human Rights from which Chapter II of our Constitution is inspired. The handing over of P.U. to and his removal by the Slovakian Authorities were perfectly lawful, and the same fundamental human rights guaranteed under our Constitution will continue to apply to him.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now address the erroneous information that is circulating to the effect that an Order of our Supreme Court has been flouted.

The Order was an interim order in the nature of an injunction prohibiting and restraining the State of Mauritius, the Prime Minister, the Passport and Immigration Officer, the Attorney General and the Director of Civil Aviation from, and I quote –

- “(i) deporting the applicant from Mauritius without complying with the provisions of the Deportation Act; and
- (ii) extraditing the applicant and/or removing him from Mauritius prior to the conclusion of the Extradition hearing (cause no. 1670/2022) before the District Court of Port Louis.”

It is clear that P.U. was neither deported nor extradited from Mauritius but was removed from Mauritius by the Slovakian Authorities.

The part played by the Police was mere lawful conveyance under section 20 of the Immigration Act that I have just cited. The Mauritian Authorities, cited in the Order, did not remove Mr P. U. from Mauritius. This would have entailed positive actions like, for example, securing a place on a flight and escorting him to Slovakia, which is not the case here.

The question of flouting a Court Order, therefore, does not arise.

Let me conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir, by saying that even though section 6(1) of the Immigration Act gives me an absolute discretion, my decision to deprive P. U. of his status of resident is still reviewable by the Courts on the authority of *Green v Prime Minister and Minister of Home Affairs* 1993 SCJ at page 389.

I invite anybody, who is aggrieved by my decision and who has sufficient legal standing to do so, to challenge the decision before a Court of Law as civilised people would do in a civilised State governed by the rule of law.

Finally, I am informed of a communication from the Slovakian Authorities as follows, and I quote –

“For completeness, we would like to state that by the judgment of the Specialized Criminal Court, Banská Bystrica, dated 22.04.2022, file no. BB-4T/12/2020, the defendant Mr P.U., was found guilty for the continuing particularly serious crime of the illicit production of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, poisons or precursors, their possession and trafficking with them, whereby the court imposed a sentence of twenty-two years’ imprisonment.”

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! Order! You may continue!

The Prime Minister: For the execution of the imprisonment sentence, the Court placed the defendant, Mr P. U., in a maximum security facility. Further, the Court imposed on him the penalty of forfeiture of property and the State is becoming the owner of the forfeited property. Thank you.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, the communiqué issued by the Prime Minister’s Office on 30 April 2022 and today’s reply in Parliament is in itself a contempt of the decision of a Judge of the Supreme Court to refer this matter to the DPP for prosecution. So, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister, being given that he has stated this Mr P. U. is such a big criminal, how is it that when he was Minister of Finance and EDB was under his responsibility, this person was given an occupation permit for three years? How is it that even in 2020, when the Attorney General’s Office was informed how dangerous this person was, he was still allowed to stay in Mauritius? Even in October 2021, when the borders were reopened, he was still allowed to stay in Mauritius and trade. How is it that, today, after three years, you have the nerve to come and say that it is only now that you have woken up and decided to use your powers under the Immigration Act to deport him? Have you enquired what he has been doing in Mauritius in these three years?

Mr Speaker: You have made your point! Let the Prime Minister reply!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as soon as we were made aware of information of that nature from the Slovakian Authorities, the Authorities in Mauritius, the Attorney General, started to act immediately. I have given extensively, chronologically, the different processes that the Government, the different institutions, the different departments have engaged into in order to try to hand over this Slovakian national to the Slovakian Authorities. I do not need to repeat again if the hon. Member has not been paying attention and listening carefully to what I have been saying.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, listening to the Prime Minister, it stands clear that Government has failed to live up to the expectation of law and justice.

(Interruptions)

And that it has been harbouring a criminal...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Boolell: Harbouring a criminal since more than ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order please!

Dr. Boolell: In the light of the international warrant that was forwarded to the Attorney General's Office and the request for extradition sent by Slovakian Authorities to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, can I ask him, following the warrant and the request for extradition, when was the case referred to the Police, knowing that this country has been harbouring a criminal since 2018? When was the case referred to the Police and whether he was called for questioning by the Police since then?

An hon. Member: *Li pane comprehend narien!*

The Prime Minister: In fact, yes, the hon. Member has not understood anything!

(Interruptions)

He has not understood!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Please!

(Interruptions)

Wait! Wait for the reply!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: Give the answer! Tell us when!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Wait!

(Interruptions)

Okay! If you want to put a few supplementary questions, I can allow, but I am reminding the House that we have already exceeded the time. Time is over already. Don't make an abuse of parliamentary times!

The Prime Minister: Where have I mentioned in my reply that the case has been referred to the Police for investigation? Where? I have tried to answer as slowly as possible so that Members can grasp what I have been saying. Where has it been mentioned that the matter has been referred to the Police for enquiry? I have said that we received the information from the Slovakian Authorities, which have requested extradition procedure to be started, and I have then stated what has happened after that. For sure, the hon. Member is completely lost!

Dr. Boolell: No!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Wait!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Dr. Boolell, don't interrupt! Don't interrupt!

The Prime Minister: Following what I have said, even in the Press he has been reading, nowhere is it mentioned therein that the matter has been referred to the Police for any criminal investigation.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You made your point! You already had your question. Please, don't give replies to other questions!

Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, Sir. As a woman, and as a mother of two children, I can only congratulate the Prime Minister for handing over to the Slovakian Authorities...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order here also!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: ... a criminal involved in drug trafficking. I wish to ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he can specify the nature of the offence for which Mr P. U. was wanted in Slovakia and ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: ... whether he can, therefore, be concluded that the lawyer who defended him has been paid with drug-tainted money? Thank you.

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, Mr P. U. was wanted in Slovakia for establishing, masterminding...

(Interruptions)

... and supporting a criminal group, and also for the illicit manufacture, possession and trafficking in narcotics and psychotropic substances, poisons or precursors. I have also informed the House about the outcome of this case. He was found guilty for all those charges and he was sentenced to 22 years of imprisonment. Now, with regard to how and what amount has been paid

to some people, I am not able to venture on this issue. I trust that the authorities will, of course, closely follow up on the issue, especially on the issue of potential money laundering or payment of fees which have been derived from criminal offences that are related to drugs. I leave it to the authorities to closely monitor and to see whether there has been any offence that has been committed. Let me also say one thing because the hon. Member had been listening, interrupting all the time. If you look at the Affidavit that has been sworn by Mr P. U., you will see how he has lied in his Affidavit, saying that he is not a fugitive in his country. Go and read the bail application, you will see...

(Interruptions)

...you will see...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: You will see that the magistrate himself...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: ...himself or herself states that he is being looked for in the country. So, I do not want...

(Interruptions)

...I do not want...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not want to take the time of the House to refer to those documents but, of course, we will also have plenty of time outside to be able to speak about this case.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I think *le peuple est en train de voir que nous, nous sommes en train de mener un combat!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

On both sides of the House!

(Interruptions)

Order on both sides of the House!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

The Table is advised...

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have not finished with my answer!

Mr Speaker: Please, please, I have exceeded by almost 25 minutes. Bear with me!

The Prime Minister: But I have not finished my reply!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I will give you one minute!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: In one minute. *Le peuple est en train de voir que nous, nous menons un combat contre le trafic de drogue...*

(Interruptions)

...contre les trafiquants. Et voilà...

(Interruptions)

...nous voyons ceux qui sont en train de défendre ces trafiquants !

(Interruptions)

Nous nous sommes du côté de la loi...

(Interruptions)

...et eux ils sont en train de produire et...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Order here!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Gobin! I am pointing at you! Order!

(Interruptions)

Chief Whip, I am pointing at you! Order!

(Interruptions)

Order or you walk out!

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Alle pran de zalimet laba do!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs B/614, B/533, B/529, B/534, B/535 have been withdrawn.

(Interruptions)

Question to Ministers! MP Bodha!

Mr Bodha: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. PQ B/542.

NATIONAL LAND TRANSPORT AUTHORITY – BUS FARES – REVIEW

(No. B/542) 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 passenger bus fares, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Land Transport Authority, information as to if a review thereof is being considered.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, Government has, on 6 May 2022, agreed to the revision of bus fares. The bus fares have accordingly been increased by Rs5 to Rs10 depending on the number of stages travelled, that is, the distance between the origin-destination points.

Mr Speaker, Sir, arrangements have already been made to prescribe the new fares which are effective as from 08 May 2022.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister, my supplementary was for the Prime Minister but I did not have the time...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Please behave yourselves on this side!

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, this being a very harsh decision, may I ask the hon. Minister why an urgent decision to reduce taxes on diesel could have provided a solution not to raise the bus fares in Mauritius?

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the decision to reduce taxes on diesel does not depend on the Ministry of Land and Transport, I will ask the hon. Member to send a Parliamentary Question to the Minister responsible for the structure and for the price of Gasoil and Mogas.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, the decision is a decision of Government involving the Minister of Finance because the bus fares relate to two issues: one is the budget for the free travel and second, the budget for the BCRA, that is the recovery for bus companies. My question is – it is a Government decision – the hon. Minister cannot ask me to refer to another Minister. It is a Government decision. My question is, again, why when he presented the case in Cabinet, why Government did not take the decision to reduce taxes on diesel, saving so much trouble to so many people because 500,000 people...

Mr Speaker: You already made your point!

Mr Bodha: ...travel every day on buses?

Mr Speaker: You already made your point!

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sure that the hon. Member is aware; he has been a previous Minister of Transport, now being a Member of this House and he has been here for years. The transport industry, Mr Speaker, Sir, is heavily subsidised by Government as it is the case in most countries of the world and this level of subsidy which is provided to the industry, Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member knows is co-related to the costs of the operations of the bus industry, that is, the major components of the subsidy relate to the cost of diesel and wages and other benefits.

This subsidy, the hon. Member knows also, is channelled through this Bus Company Recovery Account (BCRA) which was in fact set up in 2004 and this fund is funded through a levy per litre of Rs1.60 per litre from the price structure of Mogas and Gasoil and the revenue obtained in the fund varies of course with the volume of Mogas and Gasoil which has been sold and consumed. The expenses which are to be deducted from the fund and given to the different bus operators vary with the differences in the price of diesel and wages and other related benefits.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member and other Members of the Opposition have complained about this increase but may I remind him and all of his colleagues and friends, Mr Speaker, Sir, that in fact, at the time he himself was Minister for Land and Transport from 2014 to 2019, the revenue contributed to the BCRA was much higher, in fact Rs880 m. were being injected into that fund. The BCRA which was initially set up to compensate the bus operators for increase in price was finally also utilised to compensate operators for the increase in the wages and other related benefits of the workers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member and the House should know that the last time fares were increased were in 2013 and in fact, during that time, during the period of 2008 to 2013, fares were increased in 2008 and then in 2010 and then 2013 but from 2008 to 2013, the quantum of increase during those five years was from Rs4 to Rs9 and today, we have increased from Rs5 to Rs10 but the percentage was 31% at that time just as this time, Mr Speaker, Sir.

From 2008 to 2013 for a period of five years, the increase which intervened after five years was 31% just as today the average increase is 31% although the stretch of time is nine years this time because last time, the last increase was in 2013 and today, nine years after, we have increased the tariff fares by 31% just as it was done for the period of five years from 2008 to 2013.

The more so, Mr Speaker, Sir, to answer the hon. Member, at that time the price of the litre of diesel was Rs37.95 and it had increased in 2013 after five years to Rs43.95. What I am trying to prove, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that the price of diesel was lower even during those five years when we compare what is obtained today.

In fact, from 2008 to 2013, the increase was Rs6.00 per litre, whereas during these past two years, the increase has been, from 2019 to now, Rs14.60. *Depuis 2019, pendant les deux dernières années*, the fuel price has increased à *R 14.60*, when we compare to what happened during those five years, *2008 à 2013, seulement R 6.00*, Mr Speaker, Sir. The average is the same 31%.

So, the hon. Member, I think, should look at the figures of the past before - or any other Member for that matter - coming to challenge. There was no choice after nine years, Mr Speaker. And the hon. Member knows that the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise, when he was Minister, produced a report saying, Mr Speaker, Sir, that tariff fares should be reviewed regularly so that we should not invite such an unaffordable increase after so many years. But we have managed to increase the price by only 31% same as under the Labour Government from 2008 to 2013, although the price of diesel was much lower at this time.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister indicate to the House the number of commuters per day and the amount which are disbursed for paying bus fares out of their own pockets?

Mr Ganoo: In fact, this is a question, Mr Speaker, Sir, which I think the answer should be made known to the public. Every day, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have *465,000 Mauriciens qui voyagent dans nos autobus*. Now, according to our record, 105,000 are senior citizens who do not pay tariff fares. We have *70,000 étudiants* also in the same category. *En plus, 40,000*

fonctionnaires voyagent and they are refunded by Government. In addition, 207,000 employees of the private sector travel and their tariff fares are refunded.

En tout, donc, pour répondre à la question de l'honorable membre, il y a plus de 400,000 personnes qui voyagent et dont les *tariff fares* ne sont pas payés de leurs *own pockets*. Pour répondre à la question, c'est soit le patronat, soit l'État qui rembourse les *tariff fares* des fonctionnaires ou dans la catégorie de nos *senior citizens* et des étudiants, évidemment, ils ne payent rien pour voyager dans nos bus.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs B/545 and B/561 will be replied by the hon. Deputy Prime Minister. Also that PQs B/537, B/598, B/607, B/611 and B/574 have been withdrawn. Also, PQs B/569, B/586, B/581, B/597, B/604, B/566, B/573, B/613 and B/594 have been withdrawn.

Next question!

Mr Abbas Mamode: PQ B/543!

MOTORWAYS & CLASSIFIED ROADS - DIRECTION SIGNAGE

(No. B/543) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the motorways and classified roads, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to if there is a lack of direction signage at different places along same and, if so, indicate if consideration will be given for the placing of conspicuous direction signage thereat.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, all matters pertaining to traffic signs fall under the purview of the Ministry of Land Transport and Light Rail and the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit (TMRSU). The Road Development Authority (RDA), on its part, has the responsibility to implement road signages, road markings, traffic lights and other traffic schemes on classified roads and motorways, after obtaining the required approval from the TMRSU.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the RDA that there is no lack of direction signage on motorways and classified roads and there is no such case reported to it so far. In fact, there are presently more than 10,000 road traffic signs under the responsibility of the RDA on these roads.

These traffic signs are subject to normal wear and tear owing to environmental conditions and are thus maintained and/or replaced as part of the regular maintenance plan of the RDA. As I mentioned in my reply to Parliamentary Question B/1156 on 23 November last, in September 2020, the RDA had procured some 2,700 traffic signs of the latest international standards, that is, using reflective Diamond Grade Sheet, for an amount of Rs4.1 m. and are being installed, whenever and wherever required, by the direct labour of the RDA.

However, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the TMRSU, as the authority responsible for traffic signage, is presently carrying out a road safety inspection on all classified roads, including motorways to identify any hazards, faults and deficiencies in the road signage system, including directional signs that may lead to accidents. Based on the outcome thereof, appropriate actions will be implemented by the TMRSU and the RDA, including installation of additional directional signages, if need be.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I highlighted in my reply to Parliamentary Question B/1156, I reiterate that for any new traffic signage or replacement of existing traffic signage, the RDA will use conspicuous signage of latest standards, as advised by the TMRSU.

Thank you.

Mr Abbas Mamode: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the Minister ensure that for signage in dark spots, sufficient lighting is provided?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, as I mentioned earlier, the strategy of the RDA is to provide Diamond Grade traffic signs, which have highest retroreflectivity and does not necessarily need additional lights to make them visible. Nonetheless, the RDA has embarked on a pilot project to provide solar light at two locations, namely at Petit Camp Branch Road in Quatre Bornes and in Baie du Tombeau. The RDA is enlisting the collaboration of Energy Services Division (ESD) of my Ministry and the University of Mauritius to work out on a specification for solar street lighting. Subject to the successful implementation of these two pilot projects and availability of funds, solar street lighting will be extended to different parts of the island.

Mr Abbas Mamode: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Following recent incidents in certain public areas, can the Minister inform the House of the number of road signage that have been damaged and the cost thereof?

Mr Hurreeram: Unfortunately, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have had quite some damages following the recent occurrences of 22 April 2022. Damages have been noted to various road signages at *Cité Mangalkhan*, *Baie du Tombeau*, *Mer Rouge* roundabout on the motorway, *Grand Rivière Nord Ouest* and *Cité Vallijee*. The damages amount to Rs300,000 that will now have to be paid from public funds. As at to date, all damaged traffic signs have been removed and 40% have been replaced. Complete replacement is scheduled by end of May 2022.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. Can I ask the hon. Minister, in regard to the survey that is being done by the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit that he mentioned in his reply, when are they expected to complete this survey? Thank you.

Mr Hurreeram: As I have already replied, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is an ongoing survey. It is an ongoing survey that keeps happening and as and when required, we keep changing because these signages are subject to normal wear and tear. So, we cannot stop it at one date and start again. So, it is a permanent thing that keeps on going across the island.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House if the Road Development Authority is considering using cat's eyes on the roads?

Mr Hurreeram: As I have mentioned already, Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Hurreeram: Yes, we are...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Hurreeram: I guess he might be quite frustrated to keep putting questions and not replying them. Your turn might come someday. So, Mr Speaker, Sir, yes, in fact the TMRSU and the RDA are working in close collaboration to bring in new technologies in the cat's eyes,

because now they also have, I understand, cat's eyes that operate with solar energy and that get brighter at night. So, yes, we are definitely considering of making our road much safer by, for instance, giving conspicuous, that is, signs that are easily visible in terms of size, borders, illumination, it being clearly visible and comprehensive. And obviously, in all those road furniture that we add to make our roads safer, those cat's eyes are in fact, very important components.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/567 has been withdrawn.

At this stage, I will suspend the Sitting for one and a half hours.

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

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

Mr Speaker: Please remain seated and be seated! MP Lobine!

VACOAS URBAN TERMINAL - CONSTRUCTION - CONTRACT

(No. B/544) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the Vacoas Urban Terminal, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if the contract for the construction thereof has been awarded and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) name of the selected bidder, and
- (b) source of funding thereof.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry had, on 29 October 2020, launched a Request for Proposals from prospective applicants for the Development and Operation of a Modern Urban Terminal at Vacoas. At the closing date on 26 February 2021, two proposals were received.

Following an evaluation exercise, the proposal from Joint Venture Laxmanbhai & Co. (Mauritius) Ltd and Manser Saxon Contracting Ltd was retained. As per the terms and conditions of the RFP document, the successful applicant was notified of the award of the contract on 15 September 2021.

On 29 September 2021, the applicant acknowledged receipt of the letter of notification of the contract award and raised some issues regarding certain provisions of the RFP. In this respect, consultations had to be held with the applicant and the State Law Office to resolve these issues.

My Ministry is now expecting the applicant to submit the required document for consideration.

On 04 March 2022, the joint venture was requested to submit its detailed Design and Business Model for consideration by my Ministry. However, on 31 March 2022, the JV informed that it would require additional time for the submission of the Detailed Design. As regards the Business Model, same is expected in a week's time.

Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the aim of the Request for Proposals for the Urban Terminal project is to induce active Private Sector Participation and mobilise private investment in such national infrastructure development projects with a view to modernising the economy and fuelling creation of employment while promoting social integration in the mainstream economy.

In this respect and as per terms and conditions of the RFP document, the entire cost of the development including design, engineering, relocation, diversion of existing utility services, construction, operations, maintenance and management of the project has to be borne by the selected applicant.

Mr Lobine: May I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, with regard to the public investment component in this project, what is the estimated cost that will be projected for this project?

Dr. Husnoo: The five portions of state land to the extent of 6 *arpents* and 88 perches, and the cost evaluated was Rs21,315,000 per annum – the rental value. But to encourage the promoters – because the promoters are financing the whole construction, the Government has given this land just like the urban terminal at Victoria at a discounted rate of 91.7% and it comes to an actual rental of about Rs1,769,145 annually.

Mr Lobine: The concept of this Vacoas Urban Terminal, has there been prior consultation with the inhabitants and small entrepreneurs of the region, bearing in mind that

where this site is located, it is in a highly residential area whereby now you are having the Metro passing by, you have got the actual terminal but it is a very highly residential concentrated area; has there been prior consultation with the inhabitants and the small entrepreneurs, taking into account that Vacoas has got its own specificity in terms of entrepreneurs living and working there?

Dr. Husnoo: I think that was discussed at the level of the Vacoas-Phoenix Council with the inhabitants. And as far as the area is concerned, as you know, the market fair was there for a long time. So, it is not just residential, it has been commercial as well for a long time.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ittoo!

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can we know from the hon. Minister whether, the metal structure of the market fair, the dismantling of same, is included in the scope of works of selected bidder and what has been planned for these metal structures? Thank you.

Dr. Husnoo: No. When we have to relocate, we naturally have to build other structures to relocate the people working in the fair. So, that has been taken care of by the Council.

Mr Lobine: With regard to this Vacoas Urban Terminal, is the Government having an integral approach to also completely revamp the centre of Vacoas which is a dead place for the time being and with the advent of this new Vacoas Urban Terminal, this will create more havoc for the small entrepreneurs living in this area. Has this been taken into consideration and will you consider revamping the centre of Vacoas, because you are shifting the centre of Vacoas?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You made your point! You are repeating your question!

Dr. Husnoo: I think that is what we are doing with the urban terminal to try to improve the area, be it commercial or residential in that particular area. It is the same that we are trying to do in different cities as well – in Port Louis, Quatre Bornes, Curepipe – to improve that particular area because a lot of these places are rundown places especially if you take some of the markets. That is why we are trying to improve the living facilities and the commercial facilities in these areas.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Speaker, Sir, thank you. I understand from the reply given by the hon. Minister that the same discounted rate as per the Victoria Urban Terminal is being

applied for this project. Bearing in mind that here, in Victoria Urban Terminal, there is a social component whereby street hawkers are being given *étals*. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether in Vacoas, the same facilities are being obtained by Government?

Dr. Husnoo: Yes. We are giving the same facilities at the same rate. And there also, as you know, we have the market fair which is already there and the promoter will have to provide the market fair for about 1,600 stalls. And this is going to be given to the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix. So, we have this social component in it as well.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Ms J. Bérenger: B/545.

HOUSING UNITS - HAZARDOUS ASBESTOS - OWNERS - COMPENSATION

(No. B/545) **Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal)** asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the housing units containing hazardous asbestos and which need to be dismantled, he will state if financial measures or compensation will be considered in respect thereof.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism (Mr S. Obeegadoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to PQ B/545 addressed to Dr. the hon. Minister of Finance.

I am informed that provision has been made under the Solid Waste Management Program of the National Environment and Climate Change Fund for financial year 2021/2022 as follows –

- (i) Rs5 m. for “Asbestos Treatment Program in ex-CHA houses in respect of the removal and carting away of asbestos in these ex-CHA houses also known as EDC houses”, and
- (ii) another Rs5 m. for “expenses in connection with houses containing asbestos under the grant scheme for purchase of building materials and casting of roof slabs”.

I wish to draw the attention of the hon. Lady that in the 2019/2020 Budget, the grant scheme was extended to owners of EDC houses containing asbestos.

Ms J. Bérenger: Merci. Malheureusement ma question a été adressée au ministre des Finances mais j'ose espérer que le ministre du Logement pourra répondre à ma question. Les allocations indiquées, bien évidemment ne suffisent pas pour pouvoir se reloger, surtout qu'on parle ici des propriétaires d'anciennes maisons CHA, EDC comme on dit, qui sont les plus vulnérables, qui sont au bas de l'échelle. Donc, je souhaitais demander au ministre des Finances si une considération spéciale pourrait leur être accordée dans le prochain budget afin que ces propriétaires de maisons contenant de l'amiante, puissent se reloger dans des maisons qui ne soient pas un danger pour leur santé.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Je souhaiterais assurer Madame la députée que sa préoccupation est aussi la nôtre et que le problème est bien plus complexe qu'il ne le semble. Au-delà des fonds nécessaires au relogement de toutes ces familles en attendant que soient reconstruites leurs demeures actuelles, il y a de multiples obstacles qui se posent à nous. C'est un dossier sur lequel je me penche depuis deux ans. Prenons l'exemple des maisons comme c'est souvent le cas de ce qu'on appelait à l'époque, les cités ouvrières, dont les propriétaires ne sont plus mais qu'il y a des multiples héritiers, certains pas au pays, d'autres disséminés à travers la république sans un affidavit de succession, sans les documents nécessaires, déjà les propriétaires n'arrivent pas à remplir les documents nécessaires pour qu'ils puissent obtenir l'aide de l'État.

Ensuite, il y a le fait qu'il y a la réticence des gens à quitter leur maison. Souvent, ces personnes ne sont pas conscientes du danger et parfois le danger, il n'est pas immédiat si ces maisons ont été correctement entretenues. Ensuite, il y a aussi le fait que les responsabilités sont disséminées entre trois ministères au moins: le ministère des Collectivités locales, le ministère de l'Environnement et le ministère du Logement. Mais je souhaiterais rassurer Madame la députée et la Chambre qu'en ce moment même, mon ministère discute avec le ministère des Finances d'une nouvelle initiative que j'avais déjà annoncée ici en 2020 mais qui, à cause de la Covid-19, a été retardée, mais d'une nouvelle initiative correctement pourvue en fond, en financement mais aussi nous permettant de coordonner l'action de l'État tant pour agir dans le meilleur intérêt de ceux qui habitent des maisons avec de l'amiante et au plus vite.

Ms J. Bérenger: J'entends bien les difficultés évoquées par l'honorable ministre mais puisqu'il est responsable du logement, est-ce qu'il pourrait donner la garantie que dans les

12,000 logements qui sont préconisées par *NSLD Ltd*, priorité pourrait être donnée à ces occupants de maisons avec de l'amiante ?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Non, je ne peux pas donner une telle garantie pour la raison très simple que les 12,000 demeures à être construites seront construites à l'intention de ceux qui ne sont pas propriétaires de maisons. Tandis que pour l'amiante, il s'agit de déplacer les habitants de ces maisons pour un temps limité afin que soient reconstruites leurs maisons qu'ils vont par la suite regagnées.

Donc, c'est deux cas de figure différents. Mais oui, l'utilisation de logements sociaux, indépendamment des 12,000 maisons à construire, l'utilisation de logements sociaux disponibles à titre temporaire est une des solutions que nous envisageons.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. When we talk about hazardous asbestos, obviously, we are talking about its main implication on the health of any individual who resides in these particular circumstances, particularly lung disease. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether – I know he is not particular prepared for that answer, it is the Minister of Health and Wellness – whether there has been any audit on the prevalence of lung disease of those residents with regard to an eventual compensation in terms of assisting them for their health care? Thank you.

The Deputy Prime Minister: It is a very relevant question indeed. No, I am not aware of any such survey having been conducted. However, the Addison Report that goes back some 20 years now did point out that there was no immediate danger at the time, and recommended measures to properly maintain these houses so that they would not represent a real threat to the health of the inhabitants as long as the structure, the walls and roofs of these houses containing asbestos were not tampered with. But I do agree that it would have been very helpful if we had such a survey. The priority remains to remove asbestos wherever we can do it and as fast as we can do it from residential buildings.

Mr Speaker: Next question! Next question, hon. Member!

Ms J. Bérenger: PQ B/546.

MANAGEMENT OF COASTAL ZONES – ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREAS MAPPING

(No. B/546) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the Environmentally Sensitive Areas, he will state where matters stand as to the proposed validation thereof by the relevant authorities of the draft Environmentally Sensitive Areas Mapping produced under the Management of Coastal Zones in Mauritius Project.

Mr Ramano: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I mentioned in the reply to PQ B/803 on 27 July 2021, the Mainstreaming Biodiversity into the Management of Coastal Zones in the Republic of Mauritius project which is grant funded by the Global Environment Facility and supported by the United Nations Development Programme is being spearheaded by the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping. However, my Ministry is the executing agency for the updating of data, maps and policy of Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs).

As I also indicated, the first draft of the ESA GIS datasets was submitted by the consultancy firm FCG ANZDEC Ltd in June 2020. In view of discrepancies and inaccuracies noted in the locations of some ESAs in sugarcane fields, roads and buildings, the consultant was requested to review the datasets.

However, it was observed that even the fourth revised draft received in May 2021, had only partially addressed the discrepancies. Considering, amongst others, that the delimitation of the ESAs and the maps did not reflect the actual physical configuration, the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning could not validate the data sets for transcription into the Outline Planning Schemes under the Town and Country Planning Act.

Consequently, Mr Speaker, Sir, in June and July 2021, stakeholders were enjoined to submit their comments and suggestions to enable the finalisation of the datasets. Views received from relevant public bodies such as the Ministry of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management, the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping, the National Parks and Conservation Service were relayed to the consultancy firm through the UNDP in August 2021.

Since then, several unsuccessful attempts were made by my Ministry through the UNDP to hold technical meetings with local representatives of FCG ANZDEC Ltd to clarify and finalise the ESA GIS datasets maps and reports. I am made to understand that, in February 2022, the GIS team of the UNDP Headquarters based in New York confirmed discrepancies in the land-based ESA GIS datasets including those relating to wetlands and sand dunes. In view of the reasons outside the purview of my Ministry, bilateral meetings with key Ministries/Departments including the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning, the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping and the National Parks and Conservation Service resumed only since February this year to address specific concerns.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I should highlight that in view of protracted delays in the completion of the project, mainly on account of the COVID-19 pandemic, the UNDP acceded to the request of my Ministry to extend the completion date of the project to December 2022 to allow sufficient time for the consultancy firm to address all discrepancies and also to conduct the necessary ground truthing exercise to ensure the accuracy of the ESA maps.

Once all the discrepancies are addressed by the consultant, the holding of a workshop would be envisaged to finalise and validate the datasets, maps and report. Upon validation, the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning would be in a position to initiate procedures for the inclusion of the finalised ESA maps in their new Outline Planning Schemes.

Ms J. Bérenger: If I am not mistaken, in the last workshop of the UNDP on 08 March, two key deliverables were the Wetland Bill and the ESA Mapping, *qui se font donc attendre depuis très longtemps maintenant. Par respect pour le projet de UNDP et pour l'argent que nous as confié le Global Environment Facility, le ministre n'est-il pas d'accord qu'il serait plus sage de ne pas accéder aux demandes de permis qui tombent sous la responsabilité de son ministère pour les développements à proximité des zones sensibles en attendant que le ESA mapping soit finalisé et rendu public ?*

Mr Ramano: M. le président, je souhaite que l'honorable membre sache ce qu'elle est en train de dire – donc, qu'on doit *freeze* toutes les applications au niveau des collectivités locales, *freeze* toutes les applications au niveau du ministère de l'Environnement en attendant que les *deliverables* soient faits.

M. le président, je pense qu'à ce jour nous avons une base de travail ; nous avons une base de travail au niveau du ministère de l'Environnement pour la délivrance des permis *EIA*. M. le président, ce que nous souhaitons avant tout, c'est que nous puissions avoir ce *mapping*, que nous puissions avoir des données exactes. Et là, ces *discrepancies* sont des *discrepancies* flagrants et nous ne pouvons pas nous attarder sur ces *discrepancies*. Mais ce sont des *discrepancies* qui sont quand même importants pour nous, M. le président.

C'est la raison pour laquelle nous avons approché le *UNDP* pour que cette facilité soit étendue jusqu'à décembre 2022. Et moi, je suis confiant que maintenant que les contacts bilatéraux ont été initiés entre les différentes autorités avec le consultant, je souhaite que dans les semaines à venir, dans les mois à venir, nous puissions apporter les mesures correctives en ce qui concerne les *discrepancies* qui ont été constatés.

Mr Speaker: Hon. David!

Mr David: M. le président, le *mapping* est effectivement une attente de longue date. Mais au-delà de la cartographie, c'est surtout la politique d'aménagement qui va découler de ces cartographies. Et comme nous le savons, les *ESAs* se trouvent à la fois sur des terrains de l'État et des terrains privés. Puis-je demander au ministre de l'Environnement, la politique qu'il compte suggérer au gouvernement pour préserver les *ESAs* se trouvant sur des terrains privés, s'agira-t-il d'acquérir par l'État des portions de terre écologiquement sensibles ? Ou peut-être trouver un terrain d'entente, sans jeu de mots, avec les propriétaires pour qu'ils ne construisent pas sur les *ESAs* privés, moyennant probablement une compensation qui leur serait alors versée par l'État ?

Mr Ramano: M. le président, je remercie l'honorable membre pour cette question. C'est une question très pertinente. Nous savons pertinemment bien qu'il n'existe pas mal d'*ESAs* sur les terrains privés. Oui, nous sommes en train de voir. Aujourd'hui, M. le président, je dois dire que les remarques qui ont été faites par les différentes autorités, permettez-moi d'énumérer quelques remarques qui ont été faites par les différentes autorités en ce qui concerne les *main discrepancies*. Les *main discrepancies* concernent –

- (i) la définition *of wetland and the criteria used for identification of wet lands*;
- (ii) *the methodology and accuracy of mapping exercise*;

- (iii) *les man-made features such as irrigation ponds, soil pans, dams and reservoirs, etc. and buildings mapped as wetlands;*
- (iv) *cela concerne le* ground truthing of the map ESAs, if any undertaken for the mapping exercise.

C'est pour vous dire, M. le président, oui, nous sommes totalement conscient que les différents *ESAs* concernent les terrains publics et aussi les terrains privés. Lorsque nous viendrons de l'avant avec les nouveaux règlements en ce qui concerne les *ESAs* à travers l'*Environment Protection Act*, et en ce qui concerne les *wetlands* sous le *Wetland Bill*, oui, M. le président, nous prendrons en considération les terrains du domaine public et aussi les terrains du domaine privé.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

**SECONDARY SCHOOLS STUDENTS - SEXUAL ABUSE - JANUARY 2015 TO 10 MAY
2022**

(No. B/547) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the State and private secondary schools in mainland Mauritius and in Rodrigues Island, she will state the reported number of students thereof having allegedly been victims of sexual abuse inside and outside the school premises, respectively, since January 2015 to date.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, cases of alleged sexual abuse reported are immediately referred to the Child Development Unit of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare in accordance with the provisions of the Children's Act and to the Police for investigation as well as to the National Education and Counselling Services of my Ministry, thus with a view to providing psychological support to both victims and perpetrators in case the latter are students.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that since January 2015 to date, there were 16 reported cases of students who allegedly have been victims of sexual abuse with respect to both State and private secondary schools in Mauritius and 2 cases in Rodrigues.

The number of cases of alleged sexual abuse in the community that were reported to the Police over the past 8 years stands at 1,222 in Mauritius, and 176 in Rodrigues.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has a zero tolerance policy in respect of cases occurring on school premises. The assistance and intervention of our institutional partners, namely the CDU, the *Brigade Pour La Protection Des Mineurs*, and the Police, as the case may call for, are solicited for further investigation and any criminal proceedings required. Where school staff have been identified as perpetrators, strict disciplinary actions such as interdiction and dismissal are resorted to.

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, hon. Minister. May I, Mr Speaker, Sir, ask the hon. Minister what measures are taken by the Ministry to provide a secure environment in respect to Section 30 and Section 31 of the Children's Act 2020, when we have victims who come from certain environment, certain families where parents or relatives themselves are the perpetrators of these acts?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, taken any child involved in such cases is referred to us, the National Education Counselling Service Department of the Ministry, and Educational Psychologists intervene at the level of the school to help the student to reintegrate school life and ensure that learning is not disrupted. The NECS works in complementarity with the CDU, the Heads of schools, Senior Educators and the Student Care and Counselling Desk Officers to help the reintegration of the student to occur smoothly without any fear or stigmatisation or intimidation by school friends. At the same time, we do liaise with the Police, with educational social workers and the CDU to ensure that a follow-up is done at the level of the student's house, at home and to see to it that further protection is provided to the child.

Dr. Gungapersad: Will the hon. Minister inform the House, if she has the figures, how many of these victims have had to quit their studies or whether the Ministry has ever gauged the adverse impact the sexual abuses have on the education and well-being of these victims?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: As I have just stated, Mr Speaker, Sir, when the cases are reported to the Ministry and we are aware, the National Education Counselling Services, the Educational Psychologists, the educational social workers do make sure that the child gets the support required. However, we do understand that in certain cases at home, the protection of Police is sought to ensure that the child is, let us say, kept in a well-protected environment. But,

then, as far as schooling is concerned, in the cases that I have just mentioned, the students remain at school except, perhaps, for one who has already passed out of school, meaning to say, that has completed schooling.

Dr. Gungapersad: Hon. Minister, there is often a stigma associated with reporting the cases of sexual abuse and so on, and in respect of Section 34 of Children's Act 2020, where mandatory reporting for child in danger, what mechanisms has the Ministry put in place so that victims can easily have recourse to the support of Police and the authorities?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have just mentioned, we have got the counselling desk in schools and we have got the Educational Psychologists and educational social workers who normally try to give the support required to the students, and then all these cases are treated with strict confidentiality so as not to make other students aware, and so as to avoid having the child going through harassment, intimidation or stigmatisation at the level of the school.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Lobine!

MORCELLEMENT AUREA, COTE D'OR - ADMINISTRATIVE JURISDICTION

(No. B/548) 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 Morcellement Aurea at Côte d'Or, he will state since when same is serviced by any local authority, indicating the local authority under which it falls.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that *Morcellement Aurea* at Côte d'Or falls under the administrative jurisdiction of both the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix and the District Council of Moka.

I am informed by the District Council of Moka that an approximate extent of 179 *arpents* falls under its purview, and same was handed over to it on 21 December 2015. Since then, the Council is maintaining the street lighting network thereat and is also providing scavenging service. The road network is in good condition and does not require any maintenance, at this stage.

I am further informed that the green spaces within the *Morcellement* were being maintained by SIT Property Development Ltd for a period of 5 years up to December 2020. However, due to lack of manpower and financial resources, the District Council of Moka is not in a position to maintain the green spaces and bare lands.

As regards the part under the jurisdiction of the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix, I am informed that the Council is servicing an extent of approximately 36 *arpents* and is providing scavenging service thereat, once weekly, namely on Wednesdays and is maintaining the street lighting network, and the road network and green spaces as well.

I am informed that following an agreement entered into between the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix and SIT Property Development Ltd in 2016, the latter has been maintaining the soft landscaping areas until December 2020. As from the year 2021, the Council is maintaining the 17,000 m² of green spaces and 17,000 m² of soft landscaping despite its limited resources. The last cleaning works were effected in March 2022.

CONSTITUENCY NO. 6 - DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

(No. B/549) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to development projects in Constituency No. 6, Grand'Baie and Poudre d'Or, he will –

- (a) state the –
 - (i) number thereof implemented by the National Development Unit since January 2015 to date;
 - (ii) total budget earmarked therefor for the year 2021-2022, indicating the amount thereof disbursed as at to date, and
- (b) table the list of completed and ongoing projects per locality.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish, in the very first instance, to highlight that development projects for any constituency are identified by the Parliamentary Private Secretaries, that is, the PPSs, in consultation with the local authorities, the *forces vives* and the community leaders, amongst others. Thereafter, the technical officers of my Ministry carry out appropriate surveys on such projects to determine the scope of works, estimated costs, following

which a priority list for implementation is worked out in consultation with the stakeholders I mentioned earlier.

With regard to part (a) (i) of the question, I am informed that the National Development Unit has, since January 2015 to date, implemented 57 roads projects, 23 drains and 14 amenities projects for an amount of some Rs228 m.

As regards part (a) (ii) of the question, I am informed that an amount of Rs30 m. has been earmarked for road projects and Rs17 m. for amenities projects to be implemented by the NDU. In addition, the Land Drainage Authority has identified 73 drain projects in Constituency No. 6 for a total amount of some Rs1.1 billion, to be implemented by different implementing agencies including the NDU, the RDA and the local authorities, over a period of three financial years.

I am further informed that as at end of April 2022, an amount of Rs19 m. altogether for road, drain and amenities projects has already been disbursed in this Financial Year for Constituency No. 6. Eight projects are ongoing for an amount of some Rs155 m. These projects include Phase 1 of the Flood Mitigation Measures at Fond Du Sac, awarded for an amount of Rs104 m. and drainage works at Vale, awarded for an amount of Rs23 m.

Furthermore, 31 projects are at design stage for an estimated cost of around Rs1 billion.

In addition, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that the RDA and the local authorities have also implemented 20 drain projects in the Constituency for an amount of Rs32 m.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am tabling a list of completed and ongoing projects as requested by the hon. Member.

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, hon Minister, for your clear answer. May I ask the hon. Minister if there are any risk-prone areas in Constituency No. 6 which have not been earmarked so far due to unavailability of funds or budgetary constraints?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have said in my reply. Land Drainage Authority has identified 73 drain projects. Obviously, this is a dynamic situation. You can have a flood prone area now, which, tomorrow might no more be a flood- prone area and then not having a flood-prone area in a specific region and then next rainfall, you realise it is flood-prone. So, there are 73 drain projects identified and some Rs1.1 billion has been earmarked.

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you. May I ask the Minister whether, the long-awaited completion of works of the Melville-Goodlands link road, commonly known as Kallee Road, will they be completed any time soon?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I know my two colleagues, Minister Teeluck and PPS Ramdhany have been working very hard on this...

(Interruptions)

True. You like it or not. You want to smile? I am sorry about that. My colleagues are working hard and PPS Ramdhany has made this his *cheval de bataille*, and we have allocated funds and it will happen. Yes, it will happen.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Armance!

Mr Armance: B/550, Mr Speaker, Sir.

CONSTITUENCY NO. 1 - FLOOD-PRONE AREAS - DRAINAGE PROJECTS

(No. B/550) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the flood-prone areas identified in Constituency No. 1, Grand River North West and Port Louis West, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Land Drainage Authority, the list of drainage projects implemented thereat since 2019 to date, indicating –

- (a) in each case, the value and the name of the contractor thereof;
- (b) those earmarked for implementation in the short and long terms, respectively, and
- (c) where matters stand as to the implementation of the Richelieu Drain Project.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Land Drainage Authority that the following regions in Constituency No. 1, Grand River North West and Port Louis West have been declared as flood-prone areas –

- (i) Cité Richelieu;
- (ii) Canal Dayot;
- (iii) Sable Noir;
- (iv) Ruisseau des Créoles Street;

- (v) Pointe aux Sables Road and Golden Road at Pointe aux Sables;
- (vi) Cité Débarcadere, Pointe aux Sables;
- (vii) Pigeon Street and surroundings in Pointe aux Sables;
- (viii) Florinbunda Street and surroundings in Pointe aux Sables;
- (ix) Rivulet St Louis, Pailles;
- (x) Dhalia Street (opposite CWA), Pailles West;
- (xi) Cassis, Canal Perdu;
- (xii) Near Casernes, Port Louis, and
- (xiii) Motorway M2 (near Food Cannery), Bell Village.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that from 2019 to date, the NDU and the RDA have already completed 12 drain projects in these regions for an amount of around Rs56 m. I am tabling a copy of these completed projects, including the amount spent and the names of the contractors.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that 4 projects amounting to some Rs59 m. are currently under construction, as follows –

- (i) Construction of drains at Avenue Crécerelle, Petit Verger, Pointe aux Sables;
- (ii) Construction of drain and resurfacing of Cassis Road, Cassis;
- (iii) Construction of Drain at Narcisse Street, *Morcellement* Rey, Pointe aux Sables near Mr Bonamally's house and construction of drain & resurfacing at 123, Impasse Menagerie, Cassis;
- (iv) Construction of drain at St. Vincent De Paul Street near Church, Pailles, and
- (v) Construction of drain at Aiglons and Challenger Streets, Pointe aux Sables.

Furthermore, 13 projects are at design stage and Consultants will be appointed with respect to the design of 10 projects. I am tabling the list of these 23 projects as well.

Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding part (c) of the question, I wish to highlight that this project is a very complex one and I should thank my colleague, PPS Dorine Chukowry for her unconditional

support into making this happen and it entails land acquisition of over 40 hectares for construction of retention basins, drains and swales. The project consists of the construction of over four kilometres of drains/ swales, two retention basins and the construction of four bridges through main roads, including A1 Road, A3 Road, Avenue Peupliers, and Pointe aux Sables Coastal Road.

The drainworks also cross the metroline through two existing culverts and provide a cut off drain upstream of the metroline up to Grand River North West. Traffic management during working hours would be a challenge too.

Moreover, due to the topography of the region, surface water from the upstream areas of Coromandel/Chebel flows under gravity towards the region of Richelieu and contribute to the flooding of the region of Richelieu, Black River Road, La Tour Koenig and Pointe aux Sables. Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, a holistic catchment-wise approach is required to alleviate flooding problems in all these regions and for which intensive surveys have had to be carried out.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Consultant has had, therefore, to consider all these factors in the preparation of the Detailed Design Report, which he has now completed and I am happy to say, submitted to my Ministry on Wednesday last, that is, on 04 May 2022. These are being examined by the Engineers of my Ministry and a close follow-up is being done thereon to ensure that the bidding exercise is conducted at the earliest. Thank you.

Mr Armance: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to believe that the Minister and his PPSs are working very hard, but if I go through Budget 2020-2021...

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr Armance: It's a question!

Mr Speaker: This is a supplementary question. Put your supplementary question!

Mr Armance: Yes, it is a question! I am referring to the Budget. In the Budget 2020-2021, there was an amount of Rs343 m. for projects that he just listed. And the Minister mentioned to me that he only spent Rs59 m. Can you explain to me now that we are closing the Financial Year, you only spent 1/5 less of your budget, how come you are saying you are working very hard?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will be fair to my hon. Colleague. He is very right; the way he is putting it, the way he is understanding things. Not his fault. I will try to explain again. So, what I said is that 12 drain projects in these regions for an amount of around Rs56 m. have been completed. There are four other projects for an amount of Rs59 m. So, it is Rs56 m. plus Rs59 m. Now, the biggest project in the Constituency for which I have just explained regarding part (c) of the question, I have made him understand. The survey we have had to do. The holistic approach we have had to take to resolve the Richelieu problem for which the bidding exercise will be launched in a matter of days. This project alone will cost around Rs300 m.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQs B/570, B/571, B/591, B/592, and B/616 have been withdrawn. Next question!

Mr Assirvaden: PQ B/551!

CENTRAL ELECTRICITY BOARD (GREEN ENERGY) CO. LTD -OPERATIONS

(No. B/551) 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 (Green Energy) Co. Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if it is fully operational or has been scrapped.

Mr Lesjongard: In a reply to a previous question, I had informed the House that an exercise had been carried out regarding rationalisation of operations of the Central Electricity Board (CEB) subsidiaries keeping in view factors relating to financial sustainability, control of overheads, cost, efficiency and synergy.

Thus, the activities of CEB (Green Energy) Co. Ltd have been integrated in Central Electricity Board between January to May 2021. Staff and assets have also been transferred.

It is worth highlighting that following this rationalisation exercise, a Renewable Energy and Strategic Projects Department has been created at the Central Electricity Board to spearhead and coordinate all renewable energy projects, schemes and activities. The integration of the activities of this subsidiary in the Central Electricity Board has resulted in improved coordination and synergy between the different functions relating to planning, resourcing, procurement,

transmission and distribution. As such, this new department has been delivering results according to set targets.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Central Electricity Board that CEB (Green Energy) Co. Ltd has ceased to trade on 01 May 2021.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le ministre, depuis 2020 à ce jour, vous avez, à tort ou à raison, démantelé toutes les subsidiaires : *CEB Green*, dans le futur, peut-être, *CEB Facilities*, que votre prédécesseur, l'honorable Collendavelloo, avait instituées.

La semaine dernière dans ma question, le 19 avril, vous disiez que R 1.2 milliards ont été investis dans ces subsidiaires créées de 2015 à 2020. Et aujourd'hui, pour *CEB Green*, vous dites que c'est fermé, c'est liquidé. Qu'en est-il des R 250 millions, l'argent des contribuables, qui ont été investis par le CEB dans le *CEB Green*?

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand from the Central Electricity Board that following the integration into CEB on the 01 May 2021 of CEB Green Energy Co. Ltd, all fixed assets were transferred to the Central Electricity Board at a net book value totalling to Rs205.7 m. I understand also the proceeds from this transfer plus the receipts from the sale of electricity have been used to repay part of the loan of the Central Electricity Board, which I understand the amount paid was of the order of some Rs220 m., Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Assirvaden: *CEB Green*, M. le ministre, est liquidé et fermé, ses employés transférés au CEB. Ces employés qui ont été transférés au *CEB* ont perdu leur temps de service qui va à l'encontre du *Workers' Rights Act*. Comment expliquez-vous, M. le ministre, que ces employés ont été intégrés au *CEB*, à tort ou à raison, mais les membres du conseil d'administration du *CEB Green* continuent à siéger sur une compagnie fantôme et à être rémunérés grasement ? Comment est-il possible ?

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is not a correct statement.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. Can I ask the hon. Minister what has become of the then General Manager of the CEB Green Co. Ltd, Mr Dayal, what is his attribute now and what are his achievements so far?

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand that Mr Dayal was integrated from the Central Electricity Board Green Co. Ltd to the CEB as Head of Green Energy and Low Carbon

Initiatives. He is currently drawing a monthly basic salary of Rs120,000 plus salary compensation at approved rates. I also understand that Mr Dayal has recently been assigned actingship at the level of Energy Efficiency Manager, that is, since 20 September 2021. His duties in this capacity - it is a long list of duties, Mr Speaker, Sir, I will just elaborate on a few, that is –

- design, implement and evaluate energy efficiency and energy management programmes in the organisation,
- conduct energy efficiency assessments within the organisation and make recommendations for the installation of energy efficiency equipment, technology and products to reduce energy consumption and improve energy efficiency within the organisation.

Mr Assirvaden: Pendant six ans, votre prédécesseur, M. le ministre, a fait concernant, par exemple, le *CEB Green* - aujourd'hui, vous avez tout démantelé ; les projets, cette transition énergétique - les projets que faisaient *CEB Green* dans le passé ont pris du retard. Et aujourd'hui vous concédez, sûrement vous allez concéder, M. le ministre, que les 8 MW de PV à Henrietta ont pris deux ans de retard à cause de ce démantèlement de *CEB Green* ?

Mr Lesjongard: M. le président, *we all understand why there have been delays in the implementation of a lot of projects in the country, first of all, because of COVID*. Dans ce que l'honorable membre a dit, je ne concède à rien. Il a exprimé son opinion. Je ne suis pas d'accord avec lui mais je respecte son opinion.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: PQ B/552.

TOURISM PROMOTION & DESTINATION MARKETING – PROMOTION CAMPAIGNS

(No. B/552) **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 tourism promotion and destination marketing, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority, information as to –

- (a) the quantum of funds spent in respect thereof since June 2021 to date;
- (b) the target markets, including the quantum of funds spent on each, and
- (c) where relevant, to whom contracts were awarded, indicating the contract cost and duration of contract.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority, that an amount of Rs346.2 m. has been disbursed from June 2021 to date for tourism promotion and destination marketing.

I am further informed by the MTPA that the relevant promotion campaigns have been conducted in respect of 33 target markets. With your permission, Mr Speaker Sir, I shall arrange for the information requested for in parts (b) and (c) of the question to be placed in the Library of the National Assembly, at the earliest.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Merci. J'assume que dans les chiffres fournis par l'honorable ministre, l'accord de parrainage entre la *MTPA* et le *Liverpool Football Club Athletics Ground Ltd.* y figurent aussi. J'aimerais donc demander au ministre, si jusqu'à présent, il y a eu, un bon ou mauvais retour, sur l'investissement de ces R 400 millions et quelles sont les retombées de cet accord jusqu'à présent ?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Je suis désolé, M. le président, mais je parle sous votre contrôle, cette question n'a rien à voir avec les arrangements conclus avec le *Liverpool Football Club*. Si une question m'était posée, je répondrai avec grand plaisir en fournissant tous les éléments d'informations que malheureusement, je n'ai pas sous la main aujourd'hui.

La question se réfère à *tourists promotion* non pas *tourism*, ce qui fait une différence en anglais, et *destination* et *destination marketing*. Donc, c'est pour cela, qu'en toute bonne foi, j'ai communiqué le montant des dépenses et je déposerai à la bibliothèque de l'Assemblée nationale, les renseignements concernant les dépenses sur différents marchés.

Pour Liverpool, comme vous le savez, il y avait eu une décision de suspendre l'accord à cause de la Covid. Malheureusement, je n'ai pas tous les détails sous la main, sinon ce serait avec plaisir que je vous les communiquerai. Donc, je fais la suggestion à madame la députée de reposer une question la semaine prochaine concernant Liverpool.

(Interruptions)

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: I beg to differ. My question is regarding tourism promotion and not tourists. Kindly read the question well.

The Deputy Prime Minister: I do concede the point and I do apologise to the hon. lady and to the House. The question which was reproduced in my answer - and the fault is my Ministry's - referred to tourist promotion. So, I do apologise and once again I would invite the hon. lady to put a separate question or else I would be happy in the course of a statement made to the Assembly to provide all relevant information concerning Liverpool Football Club.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: In that case, can I ask the Minister to provide me with a written answer regarding my question the way I wrote it because it is not every day that my question is being canvassed.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Let me once again explain, Mr Speaker, Sir. The question as we understood it referred to a country's destination marketing. Information has been put up, which will be placed in the National Assembly concerning each country, the contracts that had been awarded and the cost pertaining to each contract for different agencies. I consider that the arrangement with Liverpool Football Club is something very specific that utilises sports infrastructure for publicity to support tourism. So, it will not have been included in the information compiled. But again, I shall be happy to provide that information to the hon. lady.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the Deputy Prime Minister inform us in his reply whether there are funds, money which has been spent in Dubai for tourism promotion and how much has been spent in Dubai?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I will reply in a general manner. I am sure that money has been spent in Dubai and rightly so. Let me explain. In the strategy, the 2022 Tourism Strategy that we did make public and I do intend to hold a special meeting for parliamentarians of both sides of the House to present and discuss this strategy...

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: In Dubai?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Yes, I shall explain. There are two dimensions. One is consolidation of our main markets; our main markets are in Western Europe, within the region in South Africa and in Reunion Island. And then, the next dimension are the opportunity markets

where there now exists, in the new international context, the ability to bring to Mauritius from these markets many more tourists than before.

India is an opportunity market, the Gulf States, including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait and Bahrain. In fact, all the Gulf Cooperation States present a formidable opportunity for Mauritius. We have invested in tourism promotion in Dubai. Right now, if I am not mistaken, the Director of the MTPA is attending the Arab Tourism Fair – I think it is in Dubai – but certainly in the United Arab Emirates and, yes, we will put in more efforts and more funds in promotion of Mauritius as a tourist destination within the Arab world including Dubai.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

CYCLONIC & BAD WEATHER CONDITIONS - EVACUEE CENTRES - FAMILIES

(No. B/553) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to families seeking refuge in centres during cyclonic and bad weather conditions, she will state –

- (a) the number of persons who repetitively resort thereto;
- (b) if her Ministry has identified genuine distressed families in need of urgent help to obtain a social housing unit, and
- (c) the facilities offered to genuine distressed families to improve their current housing condition until they can benefit from a decent house through the National Empowerment Foundation.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that according to the National Disaster Scheme 2015, evacuee centres are opened either when a cyclone warning Class 3 is issued by the Mauritius Meteorological services or following a request of National Disaster Emergency Operation Command in the event of heavy rainfall/flooding.

With respect to part (a) of the question, I am informed that for the year 2022, 126 families had sought refuge in the evacuee centres more than once. However, many spent the night in the centres for security reasons as they did not feel safe in their house. Staying in the evacuee centres does not necessarily mean that the houses of these families have been damaged

and they require housing support. Those who have approached the Ministry with a request for housing support have been attended to.

With respect to part (b) of the question, I wish to highlight that officers of my Ministry and the National Empowerment Foundation in collaboration with the Police Department carried out a survey to assess the extent of damages caused to the houses of 29 families who were still in evacuee centres following cyclone Batsirai and Emnati in February 2022. Upon the survey, I was informed that no damage was caused to the house of one family and one family was living in a rented house.

With respect to part (c) of the question, I am informed that the following appropriate and prompt actions have been taken by my Ministry and National Empowerment Foundation to assist the remaining 27 families –

- (i) the names and details of the 27 families were forwarded to the NHDC out of which five families have already been allocated housing units by the NHDC;
- (ii) the houses of five families have been repaired by NEF;
- (iii) three families are still occupying evacuee centres in Petite Rivière Social Welfare Centre and Nehru Community Centre out of which two families will be allocated housing units by NHDC, and
- (iv) the house of one family is under repair.

The remaining 14 families have already left the evacuee centres.

After the passing of both cyclones, NEF made arrangements for the provision of school materials for the 75 children accommodated at the evacuee centres. Furthermore, it is to be noted that in accordance with the Social Aid Regulation 1984, an allowance of Rs188 is payable per person per night spent at evacuee centres.

In addition, persons whose foodstuffs have been damaged during cyclone and heavy rainfall are also entitled to an allowance of Rs188 per member per day for a maximum of three days upon presentation of a Police memo certifying same.

I am informed that since January 2022 to date, cyclone allowance has been paid to 267 families for an amount of Rs166,568 and flood allowance has been paid to 432 families for an amount of Rs300,800.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, hon. Minister. Will the hon. Minister consider increasing that basic allowance of Rs188 daily which is for a maximum of three days for these distressed families, considering the huge increase and major hike in basic commodities these days?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: I can say that this particular allowance is regularly revised by the Ministry of Finance in line with the rate of inflation and cost of living. It was last visited in January 2020 and we are doing the needful for this sum to be revised.

Dr. Aumeer: Hon. Minister, many of these people, the remaining if I can get your answers right, 14, I think, is left, these people live in extreme poverty and very precarious conditions, having at times virtually no roof for the poorest one. Will the Minister consider temporary housing where land is available on a short term basis for these families?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: First of all, let me say that there are only 3 families in the evacuee centre. What you are saying is policy decision which requires extensive consultations. I do take good note of your suggestions. We will see.

Mr Uteem: The hon. Minister just mentioned that Police Memo is required before any family is entitled to an allowance. Has the attention of the hon. Minister been brought to the fact that the Police has refused to come and inspect the houses of those people in Tranquebar who were subject to flooding during the Batsirai Cyclone and the other heavy rainfalls at the beginning of this year, and as a result, several households were unable to benefit from the social grant for Bad Weather Allowance?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as I know, whenever there are natural calamities, flooding or cyclone, the resources of the Police are, I can say, stretched. I am informed that site visits are being carried out whenever there is a request. I am not aware whether there has not been any visit. If you do have information, let me have it. I will check and revert back to you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Tour!

TERMINUS LALLMAN – UPPER CRÈVE COEUR – MAIN ROAD UPGRADING

(No. B/554) Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the upgrading of the main road at the level of terminus Lallman to Upper Crève Coeur, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for the question which will allow me to clarify on the delay regarding the construction works of the upgrading of the main road at the level of the Terminus Lallman to Upper Crève Coeur. I am informed that on 06 May 2021, a Works Order to the tune of Rs14.2 m., inclusive of VAT, was issued to the Contractor, Square Deal Multipurpose Cooperative Society Ltd for the upgrading works.

The contractual start date was 10 May 2021 and scheduled completion 30 November 2021, that is, the works were expected to be completed within six and a half months.

Subsequently, on 17 May 2021, trial pits were carried out for identifying location of any existing services. It was observed that the relocation of the CWA pipe was required prior to starting the construction of a retaining wall, which formed part of the scope of works for the project.

In line with existing practice, on 27 May 2021, a list of the required water line fittings was submitted to the CWA. Part of these materials was received on 23 June 2021 and the Contractor started the relocation works as from the next day itself, that is, 24 June 2021. The remaining CWA materials have been received at a later stage and I am informed that these location works have now been completed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the reinforcement for the retaining wall structure is being prepared off-site and the construction of the wall is expected to start on site by early June 2022. I am given to understand that the Contractor is facing a shortage of labour. Accordingly, the construction of the retaining wall will be completed; the resurfacing of the road will be undertaken. The project is expected to be completed by the end of November this year.

I have requested the Technical Officers of my Ministry to carry out a very close inspection on the project to ensure that there is no further delay in its implementation.

Thank you.

Ms Tour: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. As the hon. Minister mentioned, the project was supposed to be completed within six months, and next week will mark nearly one year that the project is still ongoing. Can I ask the hon. Minister that the project is completed sooner because the current state of the road is causing a lot of predicaments to the inhabitants of Crève Coeur?

Mr Hurreeram: We are very much aware of the situation, Mr Speaker, Sir, as that matter was also taken in the last session during the last Adjournment Matters. We are pressing upon the Contractor. Now, we will have to apply liquidated damages if need be. And also, decision has been taken at the NDU level not to award any further contract to that same Contractor until this work has been completed. So, we are doing whatever possible at the Ministry's level to make sure that the work is done as soon as possible.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I would request the hon. Minister if he could talk to the Contractor or to the officers looking after this project, if they can put some safety signages there? There some *usagers de la route*, those who go with their lorries because it is a mountainous region, if there could be some signages there to prevent people to access the road so that we keep it safe. Thank you.

Mr Hurreeram: It is well noted, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

CEB EMPLOYEES UNION – DEMONSTRATION – WOMEN HARASSMENT

(No. B/555) **Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether he will state if he has taken cognizance of the recent public peaceful demonstration by the Union of the Employees of the Central Electricity Board (UECEB) in front of the CEB Head Office regarding the issue of harassment of women and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the CEB, information as to if the General Manager proposes to meet representatives of the UECEB to discuss the issue.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Central Electricity Board that a public peaceful demonstration took place in front of its Curepipe Office on Friday 15 April 2022. About ten (10) persons were present at the demonstration, of which four (4) were CEB employees. Of these four (4) employees, there were two (2) women employees and the remaining two (2) male employees were officials of the Union of Employees of the CEB and

Other Energy Sectors (UECEBOES). No other CEB employee had participated in the demonstration.

I am given to understand that the other demonstrators were employees of Casino de Maurice, located near the premises of CEB Curepipe, and could be members of the Federation of Progressive Unions, to which the Union of Employees of the CEB and Other Energy Sectors is affiliated.

It has been gathered that the grievances of the demonstrators pertained mostly to alleged sexist attitude of some male colleagues, the perceived lack of opportunity for female employees to get promoted at the Central Electricity Board and anomalies in salary among others.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed that the Central Electricity Board Gender Cell, headed by the Human Resource Manager of the CEB, had meetings with several employees, including the female employees posted at the Curepipe Office, on 19 April 2022. Formal meetings and interviews were moreover carried out on 21 and 22 April 2022 with six (6) women employees and their official statements were taken. The Central Electricity Board is investigating the matter and necessary action initiated accordingly.

It is to be highlighted that the Central Electricity Board has informed that there has been no formal complaint regarding harassment received from its women employees.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the General Manager of the Central Electricity Board has met with the Union of Employees of the CEB and Other Energy Sectors as well as their Negotiator, Mr Jack Bizlall, on 22 April 2022. Both have been apprised of the situation and actions that the Central Electricity Board intends to take to remedy to the situation and they have agreed to cooperate with the CEB to resolve any gender related issue that may crop up.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Central Electricity Board has dealt with the matter with all the seriousness that it requires. Over the past weeks, the General Manager has been personally involved in awareness and communication campaign to sensitise employees on gender issues. The last one took place at Fort Victoria Power Station last Thursday 05 May 2022.

As a responsible employer, the Central Electricity Board recognises and seeks to protect the rights of all its employees to be treated with respect and dignity irrespective of their position

in the organisational hierarchy. The Central Electricity Board will pursue its efforts to ensure a harmonious working environment for all its employees.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Assirvaden: Peut-on savoir du ministre si les dames qui ont dénoncé ce cas allégué de harcèlement sont toujours à leurs postes ou ont été mutées ?

Mr Lesjongard: I do not have this precise information, Mr Speaker, Sir. I believe that nobody has been transferred after that demonstration. But anyway, I can check the information and revert back to the hon. Member.

Mr Assirvaden: Une dernière précision du ministre, il y a pas mal de dénonciations ces temps-ci au sein du *CEB* concernant les harcèlements, pas que des dames, mais aussi des messieurs. Est-ce que le ministre est au courant que le chef du centre d'appel, un monsieur S. S., a dénoncé un cas de harcèlement à l'encontre du *General Manager* du *CEB* ? Est-ce que le ministre est au courant de cela ?

Mr Lesjongard: No, I am not aware, Mr Speaker, Sir, but I understand that the cases that have been evoked by the hon. Member happen in any other organisation. But I can tell the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, that harassment, bullying or any other sort of degrading treatment in all its form are contrary to the *CEB*'s internal rules and regulations. There is a *CEB* Code of Conduct. In accordance to the *CEB*'s Code of Conduct, all employees must observe the highest standard of conduct at all times within the Central Electricity Board, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Merci. La section 114 (3) du *Workers' Rights Act* stipule que les employeurs sont ceux tenus pour responsables pour toute forme de violence au travail, y compris le harcèlement. Quelle sera donc la position prise du ministère envers l'employeur responsable, dans ce cas le *CEB*, dans ces cas de harcèlement, si avérés envers des femmes employées par cette institution ?

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member has already addressed the problem in the question itself. There is going to be an enquiry, and if after the enquiry has been carried out, it is concluded that the employer has been found responsible, necessary actions will be taken; not at this stage.

Mr Assirvaden: Merci, M. le président. M. le ministre, si le cas de monsieur S. S. s'avère vrai - je dis bien 'si'- et nous parlons ici, M. le ministre, du *General Manager* du CEB ; pas un chef de section mais le *General Manager* du CEB, est-ce que le ministre peut prendre l'engagement de voir ce cas avec la direction du *CEB*, le *Board* et de voir ce qu'on peut faire ?

Mr Lesjongard: M. le président, l'honorable membre sait très bien que sa question est une question hypothétique. *It goes against the rules of this National Assembly and I cannot reply to this question, Mr Speaker, Sir.*

Mr Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: PQ B/556!

CADASTRE UNIT - DIGITAL CADASTRE DATABASE - PARCEL IDENTIFICATION NUMBERS

(No. B/556) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the Cadastre Unit, he will state if it has ceased taking applications for the issue of Parcel Identification Numbers due to technical issues with the Digital Cadastre Database and, if so, indicate the measures being taken in relation thereto and the date on which normal service is expected to resume.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that the Parcel Identification Number, commonly referred to as PIN, is a number, a unique identifier assigned to a land parcel. The PIN is automatically generated by the Digital Cadastre Database of the Land Administration and Valuation Information Management System, referred to as LAVIMS.

PINS are normally required for the following transactions –

1. Transfer of ownership of immovable property;
2. Mortgages on immovable properties, and
3. Drawing up of survey reports or memoranda of survey following land survey or obtention of a *morcellement* permit or development permit.

Application for PINS are registered, processed and issued by the Cadastre Unit of my Ministry.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that due to a technical problem, which occurred on the LAVIMS server on 22 April 2022, applications for PINS could not be registered online.

However, applications were being accepted manually and registered. At no point in time, therefore, according to the information provided to me, did the Cadastre Unit of my Ministry cease to register new applications for PINS.

I am further informed that following the intervention of the LAVIMS maintenance contractor, the system was repaired and was again fully operational on 29 April 2022, that is, applications could once again be registered and processed online.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to reassure the House that the necessary arrangements have reportedly been made at the level of my Ministry to clear at the soonest the backlog of applications pertaining to the down time period of 22 to 29 April 2022.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. I do understand that the hon. Minister has mentioned that according to information provided to him, registration for PINS was being done manually. But the information that I have, as per Notice published at the desk of the Ministry itself, it reads as follows –

“The general public is hereby informed that the Cadastre Unit will not be taking applications for PINS today, 25 April 2022 due to unforeseen technical issues on the digital cadastre database management system.”

So, I beg to differ. Applications were not been taken.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Well, I am grateful to the hon. gentleman for bringing the matter to my attention. In fact, I was not even aware of this. I had received no representations from the public and the question provided me the opportunity of looking into it. If the hon. gentleman has information different from what I have reported, I would be grateful if he would provide same to me and I will look into it.

Mr Osman Mahomed: In the same vein, I am given to understand that the system crashes quite often, again due to technical reasons. Can I ask the hon. Minister to ask the officer why is that so? Because when this is the case, as rightly mentioned by the hon. Minister himself, no transaction on properties can be taken and this creates havoc in the system.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Absolutely, Mr Speaker, Sir. On one hand, we have a duty to provide appropriate service to the public being given the mandatory aspect of the PIN

requirement and on the other hand, there must be standby arrangements so that people are not unduly penalised if there is a technical breakdown. Yes, I undertake to do so.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Dr. Aumeer: PQ B/557, please!

OPHTHALMOLOGY SERVICES - CATARACT SURGERY – 2019 TO 2022

(No. B/557) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Ophthalmology Services, he will state, over the past three years respectively, the number of –

- (a) patients on the waiting list for cataract surgery, indicating the number thereof who passed away before the realisation of the said surgery, and
- (b) cataract surgery performed at the Subramania Bharati Moka Eye Hospital and the New Souillac Hospital, respectively.

Dr. Jagutpal: I am informed that the number of patients on the waiting list for cataract surgery for the past three years were as follows –

- in 2019, 2,508;
- in 2020, 3,718, and
- in 2021, 4,960 patients were on the waiting list.

Mr Speaker Sir, the number of patients on the waiting list escalated mainly due to the first lockdown from 20 March 2020 to 24 May 2020 (approximately 45 working days), time during which only emergency cases were attended to.

Due to the prevailing sanitary conditions at the material time and in view to protect the health of patients suffering from comorbidities as well as the elderly, limited cataract surgeries were restarted on 25 May 2020 and this continued until 09 March 2021.

We again had to face a similar situation as from 10 March 2021 with the imposition of a second confinement. The limited number of surgeries which were being carried out were stopped completely until 15 May 2021. However, emergency surgeries were being attended to at all times. As from 17 May 2021, again, limited cataract surgeries were restarted until 30 August 2021.

On 31 August 2021, PCR tests were warranted for all patients due for surgery. With the prevailing sanitary protocols at that time, cataract surgeries were continued on a limited basis in view of protecting the elderly against COVID-19.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as a result of the above, the number of working days in 2020 and 2021 were drastically reduced thereby leading to a significant increase in the number of patients awaiting cataract surgeries on the waiting list and new cases added to the backlog.

Mr Speaker, Sir, cataract surgeries started on a full-fledged basis in January 2022 with approximately 40 cases being done both at Subramania Bharati and New Souillac Hospital on a daily basis.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards the number of deaths, I am informed that since 2019 to date, a total of 125 patients have passed away before they were called for surgery: 18 in 2019, 59 in 2020 and 46 in 2021.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the number of cataract surgeries carried out at Moka Eye Hospital and New Souillac Hospital are as follows –

- for 2019: 7,212;
- for 2020: 5,742, and
- for 2021: 3,370.

For the period 01 January to 30 April 2022, 4,565 patients at Moka Eye Hospital and New Souillac Hospital are on the waiting list. During the same period, 2,536 cases of cataract surgeries have been performed in both hospitals. It is expected that 5,000 additional cataract cases would be performed by the end of 2022.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, hon. Minister. As you rightly pointed out, there is a sharp increase in the waiting list of patients needing to undergo eye surgery, be it cataract or vitrectomy and considering the high incidence of non-communicable diseases, the list will keep on increasing. Will the hon. Minister advise the relevant Heads of departments that priorities be given to those where there is a threat to independent living and employment, meaning that visual handicap be a more important criteria than visual acuity in the process awaiting?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the threats of individual patients because of their impairment in the daily living, it is up to the doctor to prioritise surgeries in terms of the capacity for daily living. This is already being catered for because cataract surgeries are basically routine surgeries yet a priority list has to be drawn according to urgency. The severe cases will be given the opportunity to be operated on a priority basis followed by less severe ones.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, hon. Minister. Again, with regard to such an exhaustive waiting list, will the Minister or his Ministry consider the option of contracting out cataract or vitrectomy surgery to private entities so as to decrease the waiting time on the list despite the best efforts of ophthalmic surgeons in the Government?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, to decrease the list, the Ministry will first and foremost increase the number of eye surgery in all hospitals and secondly provide extra sessions. Between 7.00 p.m. to 10 p.m., an additional of 10 to 15 surgeries can be done and this will help to shorten the waiting list. Resorting to the services of private institutions to do cataract surgeries has cost implications. We have first, to exploit our own resources before coping in the private sector to do eye surgeries.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ittoo!

Mr Ittoo: Already canvassed, Mr Speaker, Sir. Thank you.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The number of ophthalmic surgeons working as acting specialists in the Department of Eye in the Ministry amounts to approximately 2 to 4, as I understand. Can the hon. Minister inform the House as to why these acting specialists have not been confirmed yet despite having been to interviews since October last year?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, all interviews and the process of appointing specialists is not for the Ministry, it rests on the Public Service Commission. Now, it is the Public Service Commission who conducts interviews and advertises the vacancies. The Ministry only informs the Public Service Commission that there are vacancies and if interviews have already been conducted, the Ministry only has to remind the institution that there exist these posts and have to be selected.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether specific measures will be taken in particular for our senior citizens with regard to those who are suffering from eye problems? Thank you.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact the Ministry is in the process of implementing the ICOPE. What is the ICOPE? It is the Integrated Care for Older people, guidelines and standards developed by the World Health Organisation. These guidelines will include screening programmes for the elderly, for the detection of health issues including the visual acuity and this will ensure that other conditions can be met. The ICOPE will most likely be presenting its Action Plan by the end of this year.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

MAURITIUS HIGH COMMISSION, KUALA LUMPUR - CHANCERY - RELOCATION

(No. B/558) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the relocation of our mission in Kuala Lumpur as reported in the Report 2020-2021 of the Director of Audit, he will state if the relevant parent Ministry had authorised same and, if not, indicate –

- (a) under whose authority same was effected;
- (b) if the High Commissioner had issued a letter to the Malaysian authorities stating that the Government of Mauritius had authorised same, and
- (c) if consideration will be given for the High Commissioner to be requested to step down pending the initiation and conclusion of an inquiry thereinto.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that my Ministry was in principle agreeable to the relocation of our Chancery to a different site upon expiry of the lease agreement and for other reasons, including the high renting cost and deplorable conditions of the building.

I am informed that the Chancery of the Mauritius High Commission in Kuala Lumpur has been relocated to a diplomatic enclave at 36 Jalan Mengkuang, Ampang Hilir, 55000 Kuala Lumpur as from November 2021. The Ministry has subsequently conveyed its approval for the

relocation of the Chancery. Several foreign embassies are located in the diplomatic area, including three nation States of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that in line with the Vienna Convention on diplomatic relations, the mission has informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Malaysia of its intention to relocate and has subsequently obtained a 'no objection' thereof on 06 September 2021.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (c) of the question, an enquiry is being undertaken on the matter and the course of action would be determined following its outcome.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether, in a correspondence dated 20 August, addressed to the Head of Mission, the Ministry directed the Head of Chancery to immediately stay action on the proposal and whether this is the case?

Mr Ganoo: The Ministry directed the High Commission ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: To stay action.

Mr Ganoo: To stay action on what?

Mr Bhagwan: This process of changing the Embassy, of moving the Embassy in a correspondence dated 20 August, reference 1000/11616/2.

Mr Ganoo: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir...

Mr Bhagwan: Do you have this correspondence?

Mr Ganoo: Subsequently, the Ministry gave its approval for the relocation to the mission.

Mr Bhagwan: He has mentioned about an inquiry. Who is conducting that inquiry? When did that inquiry start its work?

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is conducting the inquiry.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House if other diplomatic missions are located in the diplomatic area and if yes, which ones?

Mr Ganoo: I did answer in the reply I gave, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the new location where the mission has now moved, in fact, harbours the three nation states of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and also there is a long list of countries which I do not wish to mention which are located in the same enclave. In fact, there are 31 other countries which have their missions in the same complex, in the enclave, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, just for clarification, may I know from the hon. Minister, is he saying that the High Commissioner of Mauritius in Kuala Lumpur took it onto himself to identify a new place and move to that new place and it is only then that the Ministry was informed and this is the reason why now the Ministry is conducting an inquiry into the same? Did I correctly understand the situation?

Mr Ganoo: In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, since 21 April 2021, the mission had informed the previous landlord that they do not intend to renew the lease agreement upon its expiry on the 31 October 2021. Therefore, the Ministry was informed of the expiry of the lease which was to take place in October 2021 and therefore the High Commissioner had to look for another premises, Mr Speaker, Sir. As I said, all the procedures were abided to. The mission has informed the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Malaysia of its intention to relocate and I will subsequently obtain the 'No Objection' from the part of the Malaysian Authorities. So, all the procedures were respected, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs B/568, B/609 have been withdrawn. Next question!

Mr Abbas Mamode: B/559.

PORT LOUIS - TRAFFIC CONGESTION - REMEDIAL MEASURES

(No. B/559) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the present state of the traffic congestion at junction of Sir Abdool Razack Mohamed Street, Military Road and Bernardin de Saint Pierre Street, at La Croisée Vallée des Prêtres, in Port Louis, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development

Authority, information as to the proposed remedial measures to be implemented in the short and long terms, respectively.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, Vallée des Prêtres is indeed a highly built up area, with its main access and exit being along Bernardin de St Pierre Road (B143) which connects to Abdool Razack Mohamed and Pamplemousses Streets (B32), through a junction. A second major junction in this region is located where Military Road adjoins Abdool Razack Mohamed Street, connecting Quay D to Vallée des Prêtres, Cité Martial and Plaine Verte.

I am informed by the Road Development Authority (RDA) that both these junctions are operating beyond capacity during peak hours, thus causing long queuing along the main roads. The traffic congestion during peak times has reached a saturation point, for which an immediate solution is required to relieve the traffic load thereat.

In this connection, consultations have been held with relevant stakeholders namely, RDA, Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit (TMRSU), the Police Department, Members of the National Assembly, of the Constituency and Parliamentary Private Secretary and Minister Lesjongard with a view to identifying a solution to resolve the problem. And I wish to thank my colleagues of the Constituency for their extensive support in conduct of the consultation exercise.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to inform the House that, as a short term resolution to relieve the traffic congestion, the following measures have been agreed to for implementation as a priority –

- (i) signalisation of existing junctions along the Road (B32);
- (ii) provision of a right turning lane for vehicles heading towards Vallée des Prêtres at the Junction (B32/B143), and
- (iii) construction of a dedicated slip lane which will connect Road (B143) to the Military road and Abdool Razack Mohamed Streets junction, for traffic coming from Vallée des Prêtres, heading towards Plaine Verte.

I am informed that the project will be implemented under the Framework Agreement of the RDA to the tune of around Rs35 m., inclusive of VAT.

With regard to the long term measures, the matter is still under consideration at the level of my Ministry and on which the consultation exercise will be pursued.

Thank you.

Mr Abbas Mamode: I wish to thank the hon. Minister for this project since it is a long overdue one. Can the hon. Minister inform the House when the works will start?

Mr Hurreeram: The work is expected to start in July 2022 and will last for at least six months.

Mr Speaker: Please, go ahead!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to extend my gratitude towards the Minister because this project has been welcomed by the inhabitants of Vallée des Prêtres. My question to the Minister is would he consider to do a communication campaign for those inhabitants and for the users especially to share the project and they can know exactly at what time and when the works are going to start? Thank you.

Mr Hurreeram: I invite the hon. Member to join us in this exercise.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have raised this issue since 2010 and it is a very long, outstanding issue and what I will ask the hon. Minister in the meantime – because it will take some months for this measure to be put in place – but in the meantime, the immediate solution is to have policemen posted every day in the morning and in the evening because the flow of vehicles...

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr Ameer Meea: ...sometimes there are policemen but very often...

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr Ameer Meea: My request to the hon. Minister is to see to it that until the works are done...

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr Ameer Meea: ...is that policemen are placed every day.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: This is a request on Adjournment matters. No, you have no question? I do not think the Minister will answer then.

Mr Hurreeram: We take note.

Mr Speaker: You have no question? In my view...

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: Yes, but let him reply!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No! No!

(Interruptions)

The Minister does not have to reply to that question!

(Interruptions)

Next question!

MAURITIUS & INDIA – CECPA AGREEMENT

(No. B/560) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement between Mauritius and India which came into force on 01 April 2021, he will state the total value of goods and services exported and imported, respectively, by Mauritius thereunder, giving a breakdown thereof.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for giving me an opportunity to reply on the question dealing with our trade and investment relations between the Republic of India and Mauritius which have been thriving over the years.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius and India signed the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA) on 22 February 2021 which entered into force on 1 April 2021. The CECPA provides preferential access to Mauritian exporters on a list of 615 products into the Indian market which are as follows –

- (i) duty free access on 376 products;
- (ii) reduced duties on 127 products;

- (iii) tariff rate quotas on 112 products including *inter alia* 40,000 tons of special sugar at 10% duty compared to 100% applicable to import from all sources;
- (iv) 2 million litres of beer at 25% duty compared to 150% duty;
- (v) 1.5 million litres of rum at 50% duty compared to existing duty of 150%;
- (vi) 5,000 litres of fruit wine at 50% duty compared to duty of 150%;
- (vii) 7.5 million pieces of garments at zero duty,
- (viii) 7,000 tonnes of canned tuna at zero duty.

As regards the Mauritius market access offer, preferential treatment is being provided to the Indian side on a list of 310 products with tariff-rate quotas on 88 products which limit the volume or value of preferential imports from India to protect the domestic industry.

Since the coming into force of the CECPA, exports to India as at January 2022 stood at Rs2 billion, an increase of 58.3% compared to 2020, Mr Speaker, Sir. The main export of products comprise medical devices, articles of apparel, jewellery, rum, alcoholic drinks and spirits, animal feeds, aluminium and copper waste, parts of machinery, sacks and bags, amongst others. The Mauritius Sugar Syndicate has recently finalised an order of one container of special sugars under the CECPA, which is currently being processed for shipment.

It is to be noted that the relevant authorities in India are working on a mechanism to monitor the TRQs under the CECPA. Once this process is finalised and operational, it is expected that exports to India under the CECPA will increase.

With respect to imports, the total value of goods imported from India as at January 2022 amounted to Rs34.8 billion. The main products imported are gas, oil, medicaments, motor spirits, jet fuel and basmati rice. It is to be noted that these products do not fall under the preferential access that Mauritius provides under the CECPA. Imports under the CECPA, per se, amount to Rs48.6 m. for the period of 01 April 2021 to 30 March 2022, comprising essentially of spices and quartz slabs.

The CECPA also contains a comprehensive chapter on services, which is aimed at improving bilateral trade in services. Both Mauritius and India have taken commitments in some 31 subsectors, including insurance, insurance related services, banking and other financial

services, telecommunications, professional services such as accounting, auditing, market research, architectural, engineering, veterinary services, distribution services, tourism and travel related services, translation and interpretation services.

Being the first trade agreement signed by India with an African country, the CECPA, Mr Speaker, Sir, opens up the possibility for Mauritian and Indian businesses to team up together to access the vast African market. Through the CECPA, Indian businesses can also access countries with which Mauritius has concluded trade agreements.

The trade in services statistics are not disaggregated at country level, neither by the Bank of Mauritius nor by the Statistics Mauritius. Hence, statistics on exports and imports of services under the CECPA are not available. However, investment from India which technically is considered as exports amounted to Rs222 m. in the first three quarters of 2021.

Mr Ramful: One more question. There is a lot of good intention from the Minister. But then, the Minister would agree with me that, looking at the figures, we have exported only Rs2 billion and we have imported about Rs34.8 billion from India. The trade deficit with India is quite wide. Now, what is the Minister proposing concretely to make better use of this agreement in order to close the gap?

Mr Ganoo: I hope the hon. Member got the figures right. I said since the coming into force of the CECPA, exports to India stood at Rs2 billion, which constitute an increase of 58.3% compared to 2020. But, I agree with the hon. Member, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is a new trade agreement. We have to fully exploit the opportunities under this partnership agreement and it is crucial to devise and implement an aggressive marketing and trade promotion strategy.

The Economic Development Board (EDB), under the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, I know, Mr Speaker, Sir, is already working on an export plan in that regard. But, I must tell the hon. Member also that we have already organised and participated in a number of sensitisation campaigns virtually on the CECPA with key institutions. I have a list of 20 of them, Mr Speaker, Sir. I can forward a list to the hon. Member and table a list of all the initiatives that my Ministry and the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development have done together.

The House should also be informed, Mr Speaker, Sir, that Government set up an Inter-Ministerial Committee to monitor implementation of our various free-trade agreements. But *l'idéal n'existe pas, M. le président*. I agree we have to muster all the capacity and competence that we have to fully exploit these opportunities under the CECPA. I agree with the hon. Member, more should be done. There is no doubt about that, absolutely right.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members the Table is advised that PQs B/599, B/563, B/582, B/601 and B/602 have been withdrawn. Time over!

MOTION
SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

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

The Deputy Prime Minister seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

(4.26 p.m.)

STATEMENT BY MINISTER
PUBLIC SERVICE VEHICLE LICENCES

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr A. Ganoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I wish to make a short Statement with regard to the extension of delays in respect of Public Service Vehicle Licences.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to further alleviate the problems faced by transport operators during the COVID-19 pandemic, Government has recently agreed that the National Land Transport Authority extends the delay to licensees who have been granted either a taxi or contract car or contract bus licence for the implementation of their Public Service Licence Vehicle, up to 31 December 2022.

Likewise, holders of a Public Service Vehicle Licence have up to 31 December 2022 to replace their vehicles, namely their taxi, contract car or contract bus. This measure would allow transport operators to make suitable arrangements accordingly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in addition, the variation of the contract bus licence of operators involved in the conveyance of tourists to carry employees will continue up to 31 December 2022. This measure was, in fact, implemented in 2020 and was to be effective up to 30 June 2022. However, after taking into consideration the difficult situation of those operators, Government has decided to extend the variation of the licence by a further 6 months pending the full recovery of the tourism industry.

Mr Speaker, Sir, over the past two years, several mitigating measures and facilities have been devised to support transport operators in addressing the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic as regards Public Service Vehicle Licences.

One such example relates to waiving of the public service vehicle licence fees of contract bus operators licensed to carry tourists up to 30 June 2022. Similarly, a one-off allowance of Rs10,000 was provided to taxi operators based at hotels and airport as well as to individual contract bus operators licensed to convey tourists in order to mitigate the incidence of COVID-19 pandemic on their activities.

Government, in its Programme 2020-2024, extended financial support up to the tune of Rs100,000 to holders of taxi licences for them to acquire or renew their vehicle. This measure incentivised taxi operators to purchase better and more comfortable cars. I am informed that more than 700 licensees have availed of this one-off facility.

Likewise, the setting of the Taxi Operators Welfare Fund would also ensure that the social and economic well-being of taxi operators are met as the Fund would provide loan and financial facilities and will set up specific schemes and welfare activities in favour of taxi operators and their families.

Furthermore, the replacement age of a contract car was revised from 5 to 6 years in order to alleviate the situation of contract car operators.

All these measures demonstrate that Government is sympathetic to the plight of the transport operators and the extension of delays would give a breather to holders of Public Service Vehicle Licences amidst the present situation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, once again, I wish to reassure the House, that the stance of this Government is and would always be geared towards enhancing the transport sector.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

PUBLIC BILLS*First Reading*

On motion made and seconded, the following Bills were read a first time –

- (a) *The Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2019 (Amendment) Bill (No. VI of 2022).*
- (b) *The Supplementary Appropriation (2020-2021) (No. 3) Bill (No. VII of 2022).*

ANNOUNCEMENT**MOTION – TIME ALLOCATION**

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I have a short announcement to make before giving the floor to the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

I have to inform the House that, in conformity with the responsibilities bestowed upon the Whips and in which the Speaker has no say, a time allocation has been agreed between the Chief Government Whip and the Opposition Whip. I, therefore, make an appeal to hon. Members whose name appear on the list of orators to bear in mind the time allotted when making their respective speeches.

Moreover, I wish to draw the attention of hon. Members to the provisions of Standing Order 47 in regard to Irrelevance or Repetition which reads as follows, I quote –

“The Speaker or the person presiding, after having called the attention of the Assembly, or of the Committee, to the conduct of a Member, who persists in irrelevance, or tedious repetition either of his or her own argument or of the arguments used by other Members in debate, may direct him or her to discontinue his or her speech.”

I, therefore, invite hon. Members to, accordingly, not indulge in irrelevance and tedious repetition, failing which, I will have no choice than to interrupt them.

Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

MOTION

MOTION OF NO CONFIDENCE IN GOVERNMENT

(4.31 p.m.)

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move the motion standing in my name –

“This Assembly has no confidence in Government.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, just to inform you that if ever I run over the 40 minutes allocated now, it will be deducted from the time at summing-up. Thank you.

M. le président, j’ai l’honneur cet après-midi de vous présenter ma motion de blâme contre le gouvernement qui sera secondée par l’honorable Paul Bérenger. Nous avons devant nous à l’île Maurice, M. le président, une situation inédite. Des dizaines de milliers de familles mauriciennes se trouvent au bord du désespoir. Face à la colère du peuple qui s’est exprimé récemment dans des émeutes à travers l’île, j’ai la responsabilité cet après-midi, M. le président, de porter la voix de la population ici même à l’Assemblée nationale.

Je vais commencer par faire part de trois témoignages qui reflètent pour moi la réalité mauricienne d’aujourd’hui. Le premier témoignage, Monsieur Yousouf que je connais personnellement, habite à Quatre Bornes. Il a travaillé toute sa vie, M. le président. Il est retraité. Malheureusement, maintenant il a le cancer et les médicaments sont tellement chers qu’il est forcé à faire la quête à la fin du mois pour se payer les médicaments qui ne sont bien sûr pas disponibles à l’hôpital.

Je prendrai aussi le cas, M. le président, de Madame Devika qui est une de mes voisines à Melville. Elle ne peut plus envoyer sa fille à l’école par van scolaire car ça coûte trop cher. Elle a besoin de se débrouiller autrement. C’est ça la réalité mauricienne d’aujourd’hui. Et je prendrai aussi le cas de Mario, un habitant de Port-Louis. Il a un petit job et ses salaires ne sont plus suffisants - il touche le salaire minimum - pour nourrir sa femme et ses deux enfants. Il doit aujourd’hui faire un travail d’agent de sécurité le soir pour arrondir les fins de mois. Voilà, M. le président, des témoignages des Mauriciens et des Mauriciennes en 2022.

Ça fait des semaines et des semaines que nous demandons au gouvernement, plus particulièrement au Premier ministre et au ministre des Finances d’agir, sans vraiment qu’il y ait

eu action de la part du gouvernement. Et je suis heureux, M. le président, de voir, cet après-midi même, que le FMI, *of all people*, dans son *concluding statement*, a conclu que le gouvernement devrait venir avec des mesures ciblées pour aider la population. Voilà que le FMI même, M. le président, face à l'inaction du gouvernement, met ça dans son *concluding statement*. Et, M. le président, le ministre de la Culture, - je ne veux pas être méchant - n'a pas honte de venir dire que ce débat aujourd'hui n'est pas nécessaire ? Ce n'est pas nécessaire. On a besoin de faire autre chose. On doit parler du *Beach Authority Bill*, de je ne sais pas quel autre *Bill*. On ne peut pas parler de la misère du peuple dans ce Parlement, M. le président. C'est une honte, M. le président ! Il aurait dû se corriger, j'espère. Je ne le vois pas sur la liste des orateurs. C'est dommage !

M. le président, ce débat démocratique est non seulement nécessaire mais essentiel. Je vous dirai pourquoi. Parce que la population mauricienne a besoin de démocratie. La population mauricienne a soif de démocratie. Si la démocratie parlementaire ne fonctionne pas, si la démocratie au niveau des élections ne fonctionne pas, c'est la rue, M. le président, qui va parler. Aujourd'hui, à Maurice, on est un peu sous l'influence de ce qui se passe au Sri Lanka. Une île amie, pas loin de chez nous. Nous ne voulons pas, M. le président, que les choses se détériorent comme au Sri Lanka. Nous voulons, ici, que la démocratie parlementaire fonctionne, que nous pouvons avoir des débats civilisés. Ce sera civilisé en tout cas de ma part. Mais ce sera conflictuel, même hautement conflictuel ! Nous allons mettre les ministres et le gouvernement devant leurs responsabilités. Bien sûr qu'ils vont attaquer, bien sûr qu'ils vont répondre, peut-être même que ça va faire mal, mais c'est ça la démocratie parlementaire. On a besoin de ça. On ne peut pas avoir un Parlement muselé, M. le président. C'est mauvais pour le pays. Et tout à l'heure, on parlera des élections municipales.

M. le président, pourquoi cette motion de blâme ? Parce que j'ai essayé, avec deux motions que j'ai présentées ici, urgentes, pour le Covid. J'ai essayé de faire les débats de l'Assemblée nationale refléter la situation actuelle dans le pays, la situation sanitaire. Les deux motions, M. le président, dans votre sagesse, *no doubt*, vous les avez refusées. Donc, je suis obligé aujourd'hui de venir, après 26 ans, avec le seul outil qui m'appartient, c'est-à-dire cette motion de blâme qu'on ne peut pas refuser et qu'on doit donner dans les 30 jours de dépôt de la motion. Et voilà, aujourd'hui, pourquoi on se retrouve avec une motion de blâme contre ce gouvernement. *So be it*, M. le président ! Allons faire face à la musique.

Je vais prendre plusieurs sujets, M. le président, mais individuellement même on aurait pu faire une motion de blâme pour chacun de ces sujets. Je prends le coût de la vie, la montée des prix que je peux résumer, M. le président, dans la phrase '*ensam tou pos vid*', pas '*ensam tou posib*' ; ça c'est autre chose. Ça aussi, mais '*ensam tou pos vid*'. M. le président, deuxièmement, il y a le refus du gouvernement à venir en aide aux ménages de manière conséquente. C'est pourquoi ils nous diront, M. le président, qu'effectivement les caisses de l'État sont vides. Pourquoi ? Parce qu'on a tout gaspillé. Ils ont tout gaspillé. Et je viendrai, M. le président, tout à l'heure, avec une liste de R 74 milliards, clair gaspillage de l'argent public. R 74,000 millions de gaspillage de notre argent puisé dans le *Consolidated Fund* et dans les fonds de la vénérable Banque de Maurice, M. le président. Nous parlerons aussi du Covid-19 et de ses séquelles. Le Covid-19 a bon dos ; comme on dit, *never waste a good crisis*. Pourquoi ne pas se servir du Covid-19 pour renvoyer les élections municipales ? Je parlerai aussi, M. le président, des dizaines de cas de corruption alléguée qui n'ont pas eu de suite ni de fin. Bien sûr, M. le président, on finira par la démocratie et le renvoi des élections municipales. Tout cela, M. le président, avec un parfum d'irresponsabilité. Après moi, le déluge ; d'incompétence, on ne sait pas ce qu'il faut faire ; de manque de vision, et carrément aussi de la désinvolture.

Concernant le coût de la vie, M. le président, je vous ai fait part de quelques témoignages tout à l'heure. Maintenant, je vais venir au rapport. Qu'est-ce que disent les rapports ? Il y a le rapport du *National Wage Consultative Council* qui dit clairement qu'il y a 90,000 personnes ; un peu plus, 92,000 personnes qui touchent R 11,000 ou même moins à l'île Maurice. C'est dans un rapport officiel ; presque 20 % de la population active qui touchent le salaire minimum ou moins. Et nous aurons aussi, M. le président, bien sûr, à parler de tous ces pensionnaires – combien ils sont les pensionnaires? 275,000 pensionnaires qui touchent combien ? R 9,000, parce que cela n'a pas augmenté depuis deux ans et demi. R 9,000 par mois, qui fait combien, M. le président? 365,000 personnes qui ont moins de R 11,000 pour vivre, pour faire durer les 30 ou 31 jours du mois, M. le président. Ce sont les nouveaux pauvres de l'île Maurice. Sans oublier bien sûr la classe moyenne de plus en plus dépossédée. Maintenant, vous pourrez dire -

« Ah, c'est Xavier Duval qui dit ça ! »

Mais non, ce n'est pas Xavier Duval qui dit ça !

Voilà le rapport de la Banque mondiale cette fois-ci. *Systematic Country Diagnosis* ; voyez à la page 14, M. le président, ce que ça dit. Ce qu'ils disent, M. le président, c'est qu'à Maurice on a connu un « *rapid reversal of progress against poverty* » ; page 14. Depuis 2012 - j'étais ministre des Finances en 2012 - il y a eu une amélioration dans la pauvreté. Et après, aujourd'hui, une détérioration ! La Banque mondiale parle de 16 % de Mauriciens qui sont sous le seuil de la pauvreté – 16 %, M. le président.

Maintenant, allons parler de ce salaire minimum de R 11,000. Qu'est-ce que ça représente aujourd'hui, M. le président? Nous avons une inflation officielle de 11 %. Le ministre des Finances a parlé de 5 % l'autre jour ; je ne sais pas quels chiffres le ministre des Finances a pris ; le Premier ministre a parlé de 8 % ; le FMI parle aujourd'hui de 11.4 % pour 2022, M. le président. Ça, c'est la vérité! Mais comme on le sait, l'inflation n'affecte pas tout le monde pareil, parce que ceux qui sont affectés par la montée des prix des denrées, ceux qui sont plus affectés par la montée du prix du gaz et du pétrole, ça, ce sont des gens qui vont probablement avoir une inflation à 15 % cette année-ci – 15 % n'est pas exagéré. Mais R 11,000, M. le président, quand vous avez retiré 15 % d'inflation pour cette année-ci, quand vous avez retiré tous les taux d'inflation depuis ces dernières années, mais ça ne vaut pas R 7,000 – ça ne vaut pas les R 7,000 de quelques années de cela. Tout le monde voit cela ! Est-ce que le gouvernement voit cela ou est-ce que le gouvernement est dans un *money illusion* ? Vous savez ce que c'est le *money illusion*, M. le président ? On a de l'argent dans sa poche ; on dirait au Zimbabwe, on peut avoir des milliards dans sa poche, en fin de compte on ne peut pas s'acheter une baguette de pain parce que *that is called money illusion*, c'est-à-dire l'argent, la valeur qui compte ; ce n'est pas le nombre de billets dans sa poche, M. le président.

Voilà donc le premier message que j'ai : on ne peut pas attendre jusqu'en décembre pour avoir la compensation salariale ; on ne pourra pas. Les gens vont se révolter, il y en a qui vont même rester le ventre vide, ils ne vont pas manger, ils ne vont pas nourrir leurs enfants, ils ne vont pas envoyer leurs enfants à l'école, etc., etc. On ne peut pas attendre jusqu'à décembre! Et la première demande de l'opposition – je pense que tout le monde va être d'accord avec moi, M. le président – c'est qu'on augmente immédiatement le salaire minimum dans ce prochain budget qui sera là dans quelques semaines, pour rattraper toute la perte de pouvoir qu'il y aura cette année-ci et qu'il y a eu dans les années précédentes.

M. le président, le gouvernement avait offert, je crois, bien R 400 ou R 500 en janvier comme augmentation – seulement R 400 ou R 500. Mais avec l'essence qui a augmenté, avec tout qui monte, ça ne veut rien dire. Aujourd'hui, il vous faut des milliers de roupies pour compenser la perte de pouvoir d'achat des Mauriciens. Je prendrai, M. le président, quelques exemples.

Je reprends 2014, l'année des grandes élections générales. 1 kilo de poulet, M. le président, je ne vais pas faire de publicité, je ne donnerai pas la marque - R 102 en 2014, R 196.50 aujourd'hui ; presque doublé. Une pochette de ciment – parce que des gens aiment faire des petites constructions, etc. – 25 kilos équivalent aujourd'hui, R 90 à l'époque, R 173 à Grand Gaube aujourd'hui si vous achetez. Une barre de fer, M. le président, 6 mm, en 2014, R 37, aujourd'hui à R 115 ; ça a triplé. Voilà quelques exemples. Et dans tout cela, le gouvernement avait proposé un observatoire des prix. *Kot obzervatwar de pri ! Disparet !* L'observatoire n'existe plus ! Pourquoi ? Ils ne peuvent pas venir dire la vérité ! L'observatoire des prix, avec des fonctionnaires payés, depuis juin 2021, annoncé, je crois que depuis décembre *ça a supposé commencer*, aujourd'hui nous sommes en mai, on arrive à un an bientôt le mois prochain, zéro rapport de l'observatoire des prix ! Vous trouvez que c'est normal une situation pareille pour le pays que l'observatoire des prix n'a jamais soumis de rapport ?

M. le président, je ne vous ai donné que quelques exemples, j'en ai toute une liste si on me *challenge* tout à l'heure. Mais au lieu de venir prendre des mesures concrètes, qu'est-ce qu'on a fait ? On a joué avec quelques subventions. 40,000 items dans un supermarché, on va faire quelques subventions sur 300. Il y a 4,800 médicaments dans les pharmacies à Maurice, on va baisser sur 15 ; 15 sur 4,800 ! Qu'est-ce que c'est ça ? Et M. le président, par cette incompétence, insouciance même peut-être, nous allons vers des pénuries au début du mois prochain. *Marke garde !* Ministre des Finances, écoutez bien – parce que je sais que vous avez des problèmes entre vous – nous allons vers des pénuries le mois prochain, du lait, de l'huile comestible, si vous ne faites pas quelque chose immédiatement. Et ne dites pas qu'on ne vous a pas dit ! Ça, c'est le problème, M. le président. Il faut agir rapidement si nous voulons que les choses s'améliorent. N'oubliez pas, M. le président, à Sri Lanka, là-bas, les étagères étaient vides et le peuple s'est révolté. On ne veut pas arriver à cela. C'est pourquoi j'éreinte ma gorge pour vous dire ce qui se passe dans le pays.

M. le président, pour les pensionnaires, *menmen*, R 9,000 ils ont eu en 2019 après les élections générales. Après, zéro ! Pas un sou ! Après, l'inflation n'a cessé de détruire leur pouvoir d'achat. Ils sont des grands consommateurs de médicaments. Le ministre de la Santé, sans même perdre un brin de cheveux, il vient annoncer ici, quelques semaines de cela, comme si de rien : 'voilà, j'ai checké pour 15 items, et ça augmente 30 % par an, voilà, merci beaucoup' ; il se rassoit comme si de rien. Mais 30 % par an, c'est énorme ! Quand vous calculez que les fonctionnaires n'ont rien eu pendant deux ans et demi ! C'est ça que Yousouf a besoin de faire la quête à la fin du mois ! Et il y a le rapport du *Competition Commission*, il y a le rapport de l'OMS qui dit exactement ce qu'il faut faire. Qu'est-ce qu'il fait ? Il renvoie la balle à son collègue, son collègue lui renvoie la balle, *ping-pong* ! Médicaments, *ping-pong*, M. le président ! Donc, les pensionnaires, la situation est claire et simple. Le ministre des Finances, dans sa sagesse, je suppose, a introduit la Contribution Sociale Généralisée ? Quand ? En septembre 2020 ; plus d'un an et demi de cela. Il a ramassé à ce jour, si on croit ces chiffres dans le *consolidated accounts* et dans le rapport de l'audit, il va ramasser R 15 milliards jusqu'à la fin du mois prochain – R 15 milliards ramassés sous CSG, pas un sou dépensé, M. le président. Vous trouvez ça normal vous alors que les pensionnaires souffrent ? On taxe les gens et on garde l'argent, on garde un *war chest* pour pouvoir annoncer de belles choses à la veille des élections générales alors que les gens souffrent aujourd'hui ? Il a ramassé R 15 milliards, M. le président. R 15 milliards est plus qu'il n'en faut pour donner à chacun des 275,000 pensionnaires R 2,000 d'augmentation par mois. Calculez, M. le président, vous verrez. Comptez 13 mois, vous allez voir qu'il y a de l'argent qui va même rester. Mais pourquoi donc refuser à ces pauvres pensionnaires une augmentation méritée, une augmentation qui est déjà taxée ; l'argent est déjà là. Quel gouvernement sans cœur, M. le président, pourrait refuser cette augmentation aux pensionnaires qui ont travaillé pendant des années, des dizaines, des vingtaines, trentaines, quarantaines dans les champs, dans les usines, dans les cours, dans les maisons ! Les *ti dimouns*, on leur refuse le droit de vivre bien alors que l'argent est là, M. le président !

Maintenant, j'ai parlé des médicaments ; nous avons vu des centaines de millions, même de milliards de roupies de gaspillage. On parlera toute à l'heure de Molnupiravir, etc. Est-ce que vous savez, M. le président, qu'il y avait une chose paraît-il que le gouvernement a bien fait, c'est-à-dire ce *Medical Negligence Standing Committee* ? Ce fameux *Medical Negligence Standing Committee* avec un président, M. Nuckcheddy. Ils ont cessé de fonctionner, M. le

président ! Pourquoi ? Alors qu'il y a des cas de négligence alléguée par milliers tous les mois dans les hôpitaux, le *Medical Negligence Standing Committee* a cessé d'opérer ! Pourquoi ? Parce que le ministère leur a refusé quelques milliers de roupies pour pouvoir fonctionner, leur a refusé des fonctionnaires pour les aider dans leur travail.

Voilà le résultat des efforts de l'honorable Dr. Jagutpal supposément ; zéro ! Vous allez répondre, s'il vous plaît, je compte sur vous. Je suis sûr que vous allez dire que vous allez trouver les fonds pour payer ces personnes-là. Parce que c'est un drame ; j'ai moi-même soulevé beaucoup de cas de négligence médicale ici même.

Venons aujourd'hui maintenant sur la taxe sur l'essence. Tous les pays du monde ont baissé la taxe sur l'essence - tous les pays du monde ! Pourquoi ? Parce que l'augmentation, nous l'espérons, est temporaire. Puisque l'augmentation est temporaire, on essaye de réduire l'effet immédiat d'une augmentation pour après égaliser, pour ne pas créer de choc à l'économie et ne pas créer de choc dans le budget des ménages. C'est pourquoi tous les gouvernements - la France a mis un cap, l'Angleterre a retiré – tous !

Ici, M. le président, est-ce que vous serez choqué – je pense que vous ne serez pas choqué parce que vous allez vous attendre à ce que je dis – qu'au lieu de baisser les taxes sur l'essence, le gouvernement a augmenté la TVA sur l'essence ? Elle était de R 6 en 2015, aujourd'hui elle est à R 9 ! R 3, M. le président, j'arrondis ! Une augmentation parce que la TVA est sur le *ad valorem*. Plus l'essence monte à Maurice, plus la taxe monte ! Ce n'est pas fou ça ? Ce n'est pas fou ? Plus quelque chose monte, plus la taxe monte ! Vous auriez imaginé qu'au contraire, un gouvernement intelligent, compétent aurait réalisé que l'on ne peut pas augmenter la taxe alors que le pays s'étouffe, que le monde entier baisse et nous on augmente. Bravo à ce gouvernement-là !

Maintenant, on continue, M. le président. Il y a un item qui est louche dans ce *price structure*-là ; un item louche. Cet item-là, M. le président, s'appelle *contribution for construction of oil storage*. Vous savez, on a environ plus de 400 millions de litres d'essence et de diesel importés et vendus annuellement à l'île Maurice. 400 millions de litres ! Et ce gouvernement-là, depuis 2015, prend 65 sous sur chaque litre ! C'est où ce *Mer Rouge Oil Storage Terminal (MOST)* ? Ça existe ! Vous savez combien le gouvernement a investi ? R 50 millions. Vous

savez combien d'argent ils ont récolté depuis décembre 2015 ? Plus de R 1 milliard, M. le président. Où est parti cet argent ?

Le *Mer Rouge Oil Storage*, qu'est-ce que c'est là-bas ? C'est un gratte-ciel qu'ils ont construit ? Non ! Ils ont construit, ils ont investi R 50 millions. Peut-être qu'il y a des petites dépenses, peut-être que le ministre des Finances va venir dire tout à l'heure qu'en fin de compte ce n'est pas R 1 milliard qu'on a pris *in excess*, qu'il y a peut-être eu des petites dépenses. Mais en tout cas, c'est exorbitant, c'est exagéré ! C'est presque mettre la main dans la poche des consommateurs alors qu'on n'en a pas besoin de cet argent. Quand cet argent-là rentre, je présume que c'est servi par le ministère des Finances, par le gouvernement pour son gaspillage habituel.

Donc, M. le président, environ R 300 millions est collectée sur cet item ; 65 sous pour le *MOST*, dont le gouvernement a dépensé R 50 millions il y a des années de cela, et cela continue à être collecté. Il nous faut des explications concernant cet item-là, M. le président.

Nous allons maintenant continuer avec l'histoire de l'île Maurice moderne, le style du gouvernement de nos jours, le gouvernement MSM, la Banque de Maurice et la roupie, M. le président. Je suis heureux qu'après ma *PNQ*, quelqu'un a dû comprendre ce qui se passe et que la dépréciation de la roupie a cessé. Alors même que le ministre des Finances avait dit qu'il n'y avait pas de pénurie, le lendemain, le surlendemain, l'équivalent de R 10 milliards a été mis sur le marché en dollars justement pour confirmer qu'il y avait une énorme pénurie de devises à Maurice, que même les denrées alimentaires ne pouvaient plus être commandées.

La *BOM*, autrefois une institution vénérable, a été délestée de R 158 milliards ces dernières années, comme si *it was free money*. Elle a été fragilisée comme jamais avant. Le gouvernement, M. le président, a royalement ignoré non seulement les bons conseils prodigués, ici dans cette Chambre, mais aussi les bons conseils de la Banque mondiale et du FMI. La Banque de Maurice aujourd'hui est hautement fragilisée. Je vous remets encore une fois au *concluding statement* du FMI de midi aujourd'hui. Et voilà ce que ce *concluding statement* dit, M. le président. Il dit au gouvernement mauricien de retourner tout argent qui reste encore, qui n'a pas été gaspillé au *MIC*. Il y en a une partie qui a été bien dépensée, une partie qui a été gaspillée comme on le sait. Tout l'argent qui n'a pas été gaspillé – je suppose qu'il y a 330 milliards – le FMI *puts it black on white : return unspent money to the Bank of Mauritius*. Voilà

les instructions, les conseils que le FMI donne au gouvernement mauricien aujourd'hui, en mai 2022.

Ils vont plus loin, M. le président. Ils disent que les pertes éventuelles de la Banque de Maurice – parce que la Banque de Maurice n'est pas loin de la faillite, avec un mouvement d'échange – devront être couvertes par les contribuables mauriciens. C'est exactement ce qu'on a dit combien de fois ! On a tellement pris qu'il ne reste plus de réserves ! Un mouvement contraire, des dépenses *unexpected*, la Banque de Maurice se trouve en négatif. Et *thank God for IMF* – le ministre des Finances a disparu, je pense qu'il ne peut plus entendre - il vient dire ici : “*consequent with the BOM Act (...), Government needs to cover BOM's losses which may materialize,*” à la page 2 aujourd'hui, M. le président. Ils disent aussi qu'il faut améliorer la bonne gouvernance à la Banque de Maurice.

S'il y a une place où il y aurait dû avoir de la bonne gouvernance, une place à Maurice, ce serait à la Banque de Maurice, qui est en charge de toutes les banques et même les institutions financières. Et voilà que le FMI dit qu'il faut améliorer la bonne gouvernance à la Banque de Maurice, M. le président.

Malheureusement, il y a pire que ça, M. le président. Je vous parlerai de cela. Il y a la fameuse *Mauritius Investment Corporation (MIC)*. La *MIC* a reçu R 80 milliards, a dépensé peut-être R 50 milliards, dont R 23 milliards qu'ils ont donnés à *Airport Holdings*. Il y a de fortes chances, M. le président, que les comptes des états financiers du *MIC* vont être qualifiés par les auditeurs *KPMG*. Il y a de fortes chances. À cause du poids de la *MIC*, 80 milliards dans le *Balance Sheet* de la Banque de Maurice ; on n'aurait jamais dû se retrouver sur le *Balance Sheet* de la Banque de Maurice, mais cela c'était une invention du ministère des Finances. R 80 milliards qualifiés par *KPMG* se retrouvent sur le *Balance Sheet* aussi de la Banque de Maurice.

On va se retrouver, si on ne fait pas quelque chose, avec l'état financier de la Banque de Maurice, elle-même, qualifié par les auditeurs, je crois encore une fois c'est *KPMG*. Allons faire bien attention, on a joué avec le feu ; on a fait on dirait apprenti sorcier. Jamais personne d'autre au monde n'a fait autant que ça. Voilà, on en a fait à Maurice ! Aujourd'hui, on se retrouve avec la possibilité qu'à cause des investissements de la *MIC*, les comptes de la *MIC* soient qualifiés. Et parce que les comptes de la *MIC* soient qualifiés, la Banque de Maurice, elle-même, ses comptes qualifiés. Voilà, un centre financier international, régional, *whatever* ! Et le *Balance*

Sheet de la Banque Centrale n'est même pas fiable aux yeux des auditeurs. C'est ça que « qualifié » veut dire. Nous avons des experts comptables dans la Chambre, ils ne vont pas me démentir dessus ; ils ne vont pas me contredire. 'Qualifié' veut dire ce n'est pas fiable, il y a un problème. On va se retrouver - et j'espère que non, j'espère que j'ai tort - mais c'est l'information que je détiens quand je vous parle aujourd'hui, M. le président.

Et Moody's, M. le président. En 2012, j'étais le ministre des Finances. J'avais déjà fait un an, j'avais remplacé l'honorable Premier ministre. En 2012, Moody's a confiance dans le gouvernement ; Moody's a confiance dans l'institution financière ; Moody's a confiance dans notre vision ; Moody's *upgrade* l'île Maurice, le *credit rating*, pour la première fois dans son histoire, de Baa2 à Baa1. C'était quand j'étais le ministre des Finances. Je n'ai pas besoin de félicitations d'un tel ou un tel. J'ai Moody's déjà, M. le président, qui m'a donné mon certificat de compétence. Je n'ai pas besoin d'autres personnes ; merci beaucoup ! Par contre, M. le président, l'année dernière, en juin encore - je crois - nous avons été *downgraded* de Baa1 à Baa2. Et je ne sais pas ce que Moody's va faire. J'espère qu'ils ne vont pas faire l'irréparable. Mais qu'est-ce que la *Mauritius Bankers Association* dit ? La *Mauritius Bankers Association*, ce ne sont pas des gens qui fument le synthétique et puis qui viennent écrire un rapport. Non, non, non ! *Pas fume synthétique* et puis vient écrire un rapport ! Non, non ! La *Mauritius Bankers Association*, on le respecte, s'il vous plaît. Qu'est-ce qu'ils ont écrit, M. le président ? À la page 4, je vais le lire en anglais –

“On the current trajectory, Mauritius could be further downgraded to Baa3, the last investment grade notation.”

Et quand ça arrive, si ça arrive, automatiquement toutes les banques de Maurice vont se retrouver *junk status* puisqu'elles vont être toujours plus bas que le pays lui-même. Et, M. le président, qu'est-ce que cela veut dire ? Pour les banquiers –

“If this were to happen on this current trajectory...”

Ce qu'ils disent, c'est-à-dire, on va vers ça, -

“...a loss of existing and new business would be highly likely...”

Voilà, maintenant, la poule aux œufs d'or ! *Highly likely to lose new business!* Qu'est-ce qui va rester de l'économie mauricienne ? On va continuer à vendre des terres je suppose. Faites

attention, vous avez un budget, honorable ministre des Finances ; vous avez une autre responsabilité devant vous. Attention que demain on ne vienne pas vous mettre ce Baa3 sur le dos parce que vous n'avez pas écouté ce que la *Mauritius Bankers Association* vous a dit, et ce qu'ici-même on vous répète à la Chambre cet après-midi, M. le président. Nous ne souhaitons pas que ça arrive. Mais pourquoi on en est arrivé là, M. le président ? Parce que nous sommes arrivés ces dernières années à un gaspillage sans précédent, au syndrome Sri Lanka encore, M. le président. On a dévalué les fonds du gouvernement comme s'il n'y avait pas de lendemain. Après moi, le déluge ! Qu'est-ce qu'on a fait ? On a taxé et on a emprunté à outrance. Tout à l'heure, je reviendrai sur ce que le rapport du directeur de l'audit dit. On a taxé et on a emprunté à outrance. On a financé des projets bidon. On a payé des milliards de roupies pour des décisions revanchardes. *Bez sann-la, bez lot-la !* Voilà, c'est le contribuable qui a payé. Voilà, M. le président.

BAI ! Vous m'avez arrêté l'autre jour. Cette fois-ci, je crois que vous m'avez donné l'occasion de dire ce que j'ai à dire. *BAI*, R 20 milliards dépensées alors qu'on aurait pu avoir fait autrement. *Safe City*, R 19 milliards pour je crois 200 contraventions qu'ils ont pris. R 19 milliards ! Et les caméras de *Safe City* ne fonctionnent toujours pas ; *face recognition, traffic control, speeding*, tout ça ne marche pas encore jusqu'à l'heure, quatre ans, cinq ans après ! R 19 milliards ! *Betamax, totally avoidable !* R 6 milliards payées à *Betamax* ! Le fameux stade à Côte d'Or, R 5 milliards ! Je vous raconterai une petite histoire pour le stade, M. le président. J'étais ministre des Finances, la Chine nous avait offert R 1 milliard. On devait mettre cet argent, R 1 milliard, pour financer un centre de formation pour les travailleurs dans les avions ; le personnel des avions. Le nouveau gouvernement a retiré cet argent avec le centre financier régional pour les avions et les a mis dans ce malheureux stade qui a coûté donc R 5 milliards. R 5,000 millions, M. le président ! *Liverpool* : R 400 millions ! *Molnupiravir* : R 79 millions ! *Splash Gate* : on a mis R 400 millions dans un *waterpark* ; *tou kas inn disparet, rest zis larouy !* Et on a, M. le président, bien sûr, le dernier en date, R 23 milliards pour *Air Mauritius*. Tout ça si on ajoute, ça fait R 74 milliards ; R 74,000 millions de gaspillage ! À moins que quelqu'un viendra me dire que je me suis trompé, il y a peut-être quelque chose que j'ai ajouté qu'il ne fallait pas. Mais je persiste que ça fait R 74 milliards pour un stade fantôme, etc., etc. Et j'ai demandé au gouvernement de reconsidérer - ce n'est pas méchamment - les projets qui ne sont pas essentiels, qui ne vont pas ramener les dividendes voulues et qui peuvent être reportés. Je

pense comprendre que peut-être ça se fera. Est-ce que vraiment le *e-passport* est essentiel pour vous, M. le président ? Vous avez besoin d'un *e-passport* ? *Pa kapav debrouye avek* ce qu'on a là ? Ça va nous coûter R 525 millions. *The new ID Card* ! Qu'est-ce qui n'est pas bon avec le *new ID Card* ? Je ne sais pas ! Ça va coûter R 230 millions. La *State House* : - le Président n'habite même pas là-bas - R 271 millions ! Le *Police Academy* ! Est-ce que les policiers ont besoin d'une académie ; c'est ça qu'ils ont besoin ? Ou ils ont besoin d'équipements ? Et on peut parler des équipements. D'ailleurs, je dois parler des équipements tout à l'heure, M. le président ; les équipements de la police. M. le président, donc, on a des projets à venir qui ne sont pas essentiels pour le pays. Et ce que nous aurions fait, si l'opposition était au pouvoir, M. le président, nous aurions augmenté la pension de vieillesse, nous aurions augmenté le salaire minimum...

(Interruptions)

... nous aurions arrêté le gaspillage...

(Interruptions)

... et nous aurions aussi, M. le président, ...

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr X. L. Duval: ...reconsidéré ces projets qui ne sont pas, à notre avis, essentiels pour le pays. Maintenant, M. le président, je vois - je ne vais pas me servir du mot que je me sers d'habitude - qu'il y a du bruit.

Voilà, M. le président, qu'est-ce que le rapport de l'audit dit sur ce fameux gouvernement ? Qu'est-ce que le rapport de l'audit - ce vénérable fonctionnaire - dit ? À la page 38, M. le président, le directeur de l'audit, je crois qu'il est choqué par la dette publique. Il est choqué. Il le dit, M. le président, au premier paragraphe, à la page 39. Vous savez combien le *servicing* de la dette publique a coûté en 2021, l'année dernière, en douze mois ? Combien cela a coûté d'après vous ? Je vous dis, M. le président, que le directeur de l'audit a chiffré le *servicing* de la dette publique à R 110.4 milliards ! Comparez cela, M. le président. Je regarde mon ami, l'honorable Lesjongard. Son budget pour son ministère, tout compris, incluant de l'eau 24/7 : R 3 milliards, M. le président. L'Éducation, je crois un peu plus. La Santé : R 13 milliards. Ici, R 110 milliards ! On a emprunté et on doit repayer ; c'est ce qu'on a repayé. Et c'est R 20 milliards de

plus que l'année précédente. Et peut-être cette année-ci cela va être encore 20 milliards de plus. Où est-ce qu'on va ? Il n'y a personne qui réfléchit ? Il n'y a personne qui dit que 110 milliards de roupies de *debt servicing*, c'est énorme et que cet argent-là aurait pu être servir à faire tellement de belles choses pour le pays ? On a emprunté. On a mis R 74 milliards dans des projets. On ne sait même pas pourquoi on a fait ça aujourd'hui et on paye R 110 milliards de *debt servicing*. Peut-être que le ministre des Finances a oublié. C'est à la page 39 du rapport de l'audit de l'année dernière.

Comme je vous dis, M. le président, R 3 milliards pour le ministère des Utilités publiques et pour la promotion touristique R 308 millions. Voilà, R 308 millions pour la promotion touristique et R 110 milliards la dette publique, M. le président. Ça c'est la vérité des chiffres. Et donc, quand on emprunte, qu'est-ce qu'on fait, M. le président ? On hypothèque l'avenir. On hypothèque les générations à venir. Et ces pays qui ont des problèmes aujourd'hui, le Pakistan, le Sri Lanka, *okay*, ils sont avec la Chine eux. Nous, c'est un peu différent. Mais ces pays-là, pourquoi sont-ils dans des situations comme ça ? Pourquoi ils sont *in default* ? Parce qu'ils n'ont pas pu repayer leurs dettes. Allons imaginer maintenant, M. le président, allons voir l'avenir. Où on en est maintenant, l'avenir ? L'Allemagne est en récession. L'Angleterre est en récession. Je présume toute l'Europe va être en récession avec la guerre en Ukraine et la montée des prix. Toute l'Europe ! C'est notre marché principal. La guerre en Ukraine va affecter le tourisme.

M. le président, nous avons devant nous une situation difficile ; récession en Europe, la guerre, l'après Covid, et la guerre froide aussi. Mais est-ce qu'on pourra continuer à repayer ces R 110 milliards qu'on doit maintenant, annuellement, je présume ? Est-ce qu'on pourra repayer ça ? Est-ce que quelqu'un se demande quel est le *repayment capacity* de Maurice ? Ça, M. le président, c'est quelque chose à voir.

La corruption, M. le président. L'opposition et la presse ; nous n'avons pas cessé de soulever des dizaines de cas de corruption. Moi-même, Molnupiravir, *Splash gate*, *Sugar Insurance Fund Board* à l'époque, l'achat d'un terrain à Quatre Bornes pour R 100 millions, M. le président. Ce qui s'est passé dans la cour de Moka, le ministère du Commerce. La corruption alléguée à outrance, *badine* avec appel d'offres avec ses autres collègues, M. le président. Le ministre d'alors ! L'essence avariée ! On sait ce qui s'est passé avec l'essence avariée ; comment des dizaines de milliers de voitures ont été affectées à Maurice parce que l'essence n'était pas

according to specifications. Pack and Blister, etc. Mais où est la finalité ? Je soulève ça, M. le président, parce qu'on ne peut pas demander à la population de '*serre ceinture*' et de l'autre côté, l'impression est donnée que rien n'est fait pour arrêter et punir les coupables. Les gens ne vont pas accepter ça. Les gens pourront accepter s'ils voient que tout le monde se sacrifie et fait des efforts. Mais ils ne vont pas accepter s'ils pensent que les gens ne font pas des efforts et qu'en fin de compte, il y a une classe de gens qui est au-dessus de la loi et une autre classe qui doit même payer jusqu'à R 2,000 si elle ne porte pas de masque, M. le président.

Donc, M. le président, je viens sur la Covid-19. *Never waste a good crisis!* Ce dimanche-ci, les derniers chiffres que j'ai vus, il y a eu 15 cas de Covid à Maurice. Aucune admission à ENT dimanche. Les chiffres officiels, un peu douteux d'ailleurs tout le temps, mais enfin les chiffres officiels du ministère de la Santé. Aucun cas, M. le président. N'est-il pas l'heure de retourner aux Mauriciens leurs droits fondamentaux ? C'est ne pas 15 cas de Covid dans un pays qui vont nous empêcher de vivre. Le Covid ne peut pas avoir bon dos. Le Covid ne peut pas servir juste pour empêcher des démonstrations, des réunions publiques et politiques de plus de 50 personnes. Ce n'est pas une raison pour garder ce fameux masque. Ce n'est pas une raison ! La raison sanitaire n'existe pas en ce moment. Peut-être que ça existera dans un temps et à ce moment-là, on va remettre comme dans tous les pays. Tous les pays ont retiré le port du masque, au moins à l'extérieur. *Partou sa !*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: What is happening here?

Mr X. L. Duval: He is just supporting me, Mr Speaker, Sir. Don't worry about it!

Donc, ce fameux '*met mask la*', moi je croyais que c'était juste pour empêcher les rassemblements publics, mais on trouve aujourd'hui qu'il y a une autre raison aussi...

An hon. Member: *Paissa.*

Mr X. L. Duval: Oui ! C'est pour soulever des fonds en fin de compte. Il y a un *dual purpose*. On a donné des instructions à chaque pauvre *Trainee Police Constable*. Ils vont *amerder* les passants maintenant pendant leur travail. Chaque personne qui n'a pas bien mis leur masque, *p manz so dalpuri, so pom ek li pa met so mask, bez li R 2,000 lamann*. Cinq par jour ! *Mari rentable sa ! Be si on garde ça pour tout le temps, pa bisin ena income tax ! Mari rentable,*

M. le président, pour aller en harceler les passants. C'est une honte cette lettre-là, M. le président, signée par un *Divisional Commander*. Si vous en avez besoin, je crois que ça a été dans la presse. Je n'ai pas besoin de *table*, sinon je vais le *table*. Voilà donc la situation ! Et ça, on ne parle que des *trainees* ; les autres policiers normaux ont aussi leur rôle pour ramener de l'argent pour le ministère des Finances et pour le gouvernement ; chaque Mauricien qui marche et qui n'a pas mis son masque, M. le président. Et si on ne compte que les *Trainee Police Officers*, ils sont supposés ramener plus d'un milliard de roupies par an s'ils travaillent 7 sur 7. Peut-être un peu moins s'ils font un peu moins de zèle. Voilà, M. le président, c'est inacceptable tout ça !

C'est une grave entorse à une démocratie. Se servir du Covid pour renvoyer les élections municipales, ce n'est pas démocratique, ce n'est pas acceptable. Les gens ont droit d'exprimer leurs opinions dans un vote, M. le président. Ça, c'est la démocratie ! Voyez en Angleterre ! M. Boris Johnson, il y avait des élections quelques jours de cela. Ils ont perdu beaucoup de sièges, mais ils ont fait les élections. Macron a fait ses élections présidentielles. À Rodrigues, *Ti-Rodrigues* avec son petit hôpital là-bas, l'hôpital Victoria, il y avait des milliers de cas, plus de 3,000 cas. Ils ont fait les élections régionales, M. le président. Qu'est-ce qui empêche le gouvernement aujourd'hui de faire les élections municipales ? Rien, sauf le désir de ne pas affronter la population, au moins dans les villes. C'est la seule raison et aucune autre raison. Zéro raison à part cela ! Aucun pays ne renvoie des élections à cause du Covid. Aucun ! Même la Russie probablement fera les élections. Je ne sais pas ce qui se passe en Corée du Nord. Ici à Maurice, M. le président, nous sommes en droit, à l'Assemblée nationale aujourd'hui, de réclamer les élections municipales immédiatement après le budget. Faites-les immédiatement ; on vous donne jusqu'au budget et après, faites les élections municipales. C'est ça, M. le président.

M. le président, la démocratie marche avec transparence. On a tout fait ici pour refuser de répondre aux questions légitimes des membres de l'Opposition. J'avais posé une question sur le *Mauritius Investment Corporation Ltd*. Le même jour, le ministre Ganoo répond sur Métro Express, le ministre des Finances refuse de répondre sur *Mauritius Investment Corporation Ltd*. Pourquoi ? Pourtant les deux sont des compagnies. Il y a de plus en plus de ces compagnies-là. 12,000 maisons qui vont être construites, 12 milliards de roupies ou plus. J'espère que le *Deputy Prime Minister* va répondre à cette Assemblée nationale. Il y a tellement, tellement de ces

compagnies-là aujourd'hui. Et puis aussi, M. le président, nous n'allons pas oublier la période de Covid. Le *High-Level Committee* qui a siégé tous les jours je pense, 300 réunions ou plus. Maintenant ça doit être plus. On veut nous faire croire et aussi au Directeur de l'audit qu'il n'y a aucun procès-verbal de ces 300 réunions du *High-Level Committee*. Un n'existe pas ! *Mari memwar sa* pour se rappeler quelles décisions qu'on a prises 300 réunions de cela.

On veut nous faire croire qu'un gouvernement peut fonctionner, qu'un *High-Level Committee* qui prend une décision, d'après ce que les rapports du *PAC* et de l'audit disent, M. le président, n'a gardé aucun *records* qu'il peut donner au Directeur de l'audit ou bien qu'on peut nous fournir ici, à l'Assemblée nationale. Qui va croire cela ? On ne sait pas, donc, à quel niveau cette opacité va continuer.

Vous avez un rôle à jouer aussi, M. le président. Encouragez la transparence dans cette Assemblée nationale ! Donc, M. le président, nous avons un Parlement muselé, nous avons une situation difficile. M. le président, je vais juste dire que ce genre de débat civilisé, musclé mais civilisé, est nécessaire. Nous avons été témoins depuis quelques semaines de cela à des affrontements qui peuvent déraiser *at any time*, M. le président. Vous savez qu'est-ce que cela aurait pu entamer si ce M. François Gowin était mort ? Pourquoi M. Gowin est aujourd'hui à l'hôpital dans une situation critique avec une balle réelle dans la gorge ? Pourquoi ? Ce n'est pas la faute du policier, parce que le policier, c'est tout ce qu'on lui a donné pour se défendre. Bon, il a essayé de viser sur le genou, il a eu la gorge. Qu'est-ce que c'est que ça ? Ils sont mal entraînés !

Mais il est quand même l'heure aujourd'hui de donner les équipements nécessaires à la force policière pour qu'ils puissent se protéger sans avoir à tuer les membres de la population mauricienne, sans avoir à blesser les membres de la population mauricienne. Et des équipements existent ! Où est le *water canon* qui existait autrefois ? Disparu ! Pourquoi ne prenez-vous pas tous ces milliards pour acheter un *water canon* ? Pourquoi pas ? Où sont les balles en caoutchouc qui existent dans d'autres pays ? Même les *tasers*, peut-être même les balles fanées auraient fait moins de dégâts. Les policiers doivent pouvoir se protéger. Même dans l'Opposition, je vous dis cela.

Mais quand ils se protègent avec des armes inappropriées qui vont après tuer des gens, qui vont après créer des émeutes sans fin et sans contrôle dans le pays, ça c'est dangereux et

irresponsable. C'est irresponsable ! Vous n'avez pas le droit de faire cela. Vous n'avez pas le droit de ne donner que des revolvers à des policiers dans les stations de police. Le seul moyen de se défendre dans une émeute c'est de tuer des gens ? C'est cela 2022 ? Heureusement que ce monsieur-là n'est pas mort ! J'espère qu'il va s'en sortir et j'espère aussi que vous allez l'envoyer à la Réunion pour qu'il puisse se faire soigner, parce qu'il n'est pas encore parti à la Réunion. J'espère que le ministre de la Santé nous écoute. Peut-être qu'il était là au mauvais moment ; peut-être qu'il a fait quelque chose qu'il ne fallait pas, mais ce n'était pas une raison de le tuer. Ce n'était pas une raison de le paralyser à vie. Il y avait d'autres façons.

Quand j'étais au gouvernement, je me rappelle que j'avais moi-même présidé un comité – je ne sais pas si le Premier ministre d'alors était dessus – concernant les équipements de la police. On est venu avec un rapport sérieux qui n'a jamais été implémenté. C'est l'heure aujourd'hui de l'implémenter. On joue avec le feu et ce n'est pas bon de faire cela.

Donc, mon appel, M. le président - je suis sur le point de terminer - c'est qu'on fasse le nécessaire pour que *law and order* règnent dans notre pays mais pas aux dépens de la vie des autres personnes. M. le président, j'ai presque terminé.

J'espère que cette journée va être utile pour le gouvernement. J'espère que les revendications de la population que j'ai amenées aujourd'hui, que j'ai portées aujourd'hui à cette Assemblée nationale soient utilisées pour un budget valable dans les semaines qui viennent. Parce que, M. le président, ce qui est clair, c'est que l'Opposition aurait réagi différemment. Nous aurions écouté la voix de la raison. Nous aurions écouté les bons conseils financiers prodigués de part et d'autre, inclus par des grandes institutions internationales. Nous aurions protégé la Banque de Maurice de toute possibilité de faillite parce que sinon, après, c'est la dégringolade de la roupie et l'inflation sans contrôle.

Nous aurions amené une aide immédiate à tous ceux au bas de l'échelle incluant, pourquoi pas, une aide alimentaire à travers des *supermarket vouchers*. Nous aurions augmenté, M. le président, immédiatement le salaire minimal pour que les gens puissent vivre décemment. Nous aurions donné, M. le président, R 2,000 en plus aux pensionnaires immédiatement parce que l'argent est déjà là. Nous aurions mis un stop au gaspillage au sein du gouvernement, un stop/annulation des projets inutiles. Nous aurions puni sévèrement, M. le président, les cas de

corruption et bien sûr, on aurait enlevé les mesures sanitaires exagérées. Et en finale, nous aurions donné des élections municipales immédiatement pour rétablir la démocratie à Maurice.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Bérenger seconded.

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

At 5.25 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 6.09 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Padayachy!

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

M. le président, c'est dans cette auguste Assemblée et avec la confiance de la population que je me saisis de cette occasion pour faire de ce que certains ont assez justement qualifié de « badinage parlementaire » une mise au point factuelle et éclairée.

Cette motion vient en effet confirmer que l'opposition ne reculera devant rien pour essayer d'obtenir des gains politiques quitte à mettre en péril la stabilité du pays. Nous l'avons vu durant la pandémie de la Covid-19, et maintenant avec les conséquences du conflit entre la Russie et l'Ukraine sur les économies du monde entier. Ce n'est donc qu'une énième tentative pour essayer de créer un climat de tension, de division et de doute dans notre pays.

Ce jeu de dupes n'est pas le nôtre. De ce côté de la Chambre, guidés par la vision du Premier ministre, nous travaillons pour consolider la confiance de la population. Les Mauriciens le voient bien, et le disent même. Pas plus tard que le week-end dernier, les partis d'opposition ont reçu une véritable douche froide avec la publication d'une étude d'opinion plus qu'embarrassante pour eux. Ce sondage, qui les ramène à la réalité, les crédite de seulement 5% des intentions de vote dans l'éventualité qu'ils parviennent à conclure une alliance entre eux. Et le leader de L'opposition a, tenez-vous bien, 2 pourcent. 2 pourcent, M. le président, qui dit mieux.

M. le président, j'en reviens aux sujets de fond. Une fois n'est pas coutume, pour rendre compte de l'action de ce gouvernement, faudrait-il encore que cette dernière soit remise dans son juste contexte. Il y a maintenant deux ans, une crise d'une magnitude jamais observée s'est

abattue sur la planète. A Maurice, une double contraction, un secteur touristique à genou et tout un écosystème socio-économique à préserver.

L'économie mauricienne a ainsi subi deux contractions successives. La première de 6,9% pour l'année fiscale 2019-2020 et la seconde 5,4% pour l'année fiscale 2020-2021. Entre 2019 et 2021, le flux de touristes annuel est passé de 1,383,000 à un peu plus de 179,000, soit une chute vertigineuse de 87%.

Au cours de cette période, le pays a ainsi enregistré un déficit de quelque 122 milliards de roupies en termes d'entrées de devises étrangères. A cela s'est ajouté le conflit russo-ukrainien, une « crise sur une autre crise » pour reprendre l'expression consacrée par la Directrice générale du FMI.

Les disruptions énergétiques et alimentaires de la guerre viennent aujourd'hui s'ajouter aux perturbations économiques toujours en cours, avec à la clef une résurgence forte de l'inflation mondiale qui pèsera encore davantage sur les petits États insulaires comme Maurice.

Ces chocs foudroyants, qui auraient pu nous faire vaciller, nous ont pourtant confortés dans notre philosophie. Celle de placer l'humain, coûte que coûte, au cœur de notre stratégie. Ce n'est pas moi qui congratule l'action gouvernementale, mais bien le FMI lui-même.

M. le président, on parle d'incompétence du gouvernement et le FMI, hasard du calendrier, est venue pour préparer l'article IV à Maurice. Laissez-moi donc reprendre mot pour mot les conclusions de l'institution –

« Mauritius is gradually recovering from the pandemic. Large and comprehensive support measures helped cushion the social and economic impact of the pandemic. Most sectors have returned to pre-pandemic levels of economic activity and the tourism sector is gradually recovering. »

M. le président, a cela, permettez-moi de rajouter que le même FMI anticipe une croissance de 6,1% pour l'année 2022 sur la base de 800,000 touristes, tout en précisant que la performance pourrait être encore meilleure si l'objectif d'un million de touristes est atteint.

En effet, le FMI prévoit, tout comme les institutions locales, que chaque 100,000 touristes supplémentaire rapportera 0,6 point de pourcentage de croissance additionnel. Ainsi, avec un million de touristes, notre économie pourra atteindre près de 7,5% de croissance cette

année, toutes choses égales par ailleurs. Le PIB de 2022 devrait atteindre 520 milliards de roupies, contre 498 milliards de roupies en 2019, dépassant la barre historique des 500 milliards de roupies.

Enfin, et pour brosser un panorama complet de notre reprise économique, permettez-moi de préciser que notre trajectoire fiscale ainsi que le niveau de chômage à 7,8% en 2022 sont tous deux en baisse. Face à ces chiffres, il me semble bien difficile pour l'opposition de faire croire à la population que ce gouvernement ne relève pas le plus grand défi socio-économique de notre histoire.

Nos concitoyens sont conscients des moyens exceptionnels déployés par le gouvernement, à hauteur de 32% du PIB selon la Banque mondiale, pour atténuer autant que possible l'impact de ces crises successives sur le pays. Et on nous parle, M. le président, de gaspillages, alors que nous avons financé à hauteur de –

- 40 milliards de roupies pour les pensions et aides financières aux plus démunis ;
- 28 milliards de roupies d'aides aux travailleurs en payant les salaires pendant la pandémie ;
- 12 milliards de roupies pour les logements sociaux ;
- 9 milliards de roupies pour les drains dans les régions les plus à risque, ou encore
- 8 milliards de roupies en subsides.

La population saura aussi faire la différence entre les réalisations de ce gouvernement – de surcroît, en temps de crise – et celles de l'opposition lorsque celle-ci était aux commandes du pays et avait la possibilité de changer les choses.

Elle se souviendra certainement des pseudos réformes économiques proposées par le gouvernement PTR-PMSD qui n'ont eu que pour objectif et finalité que de creuser les inégalités dans ce pays.

Cette opposition qui mène aujourd'hui une campagne supposément contre la cherté de la vie, avait en 2006 trouvé rien de mieux que de supprimer les subventions sur le prix de vente du riz et de la farine. Une mesure qui avait lourdement pénalisé le pouvoir d'achat des ménages à

faible revenus et ceux de la classe moyenne. Mais ce n'était pas la seule mesure antisociale du régime PTR-PMSD de l'époque. La liste est encore longue. J'y reviendrai.

M. le président, face à tant de démagogie, nous de ce côté, nous parlons le langage de la vérité et de la solidarité. Nous avons été portés aux responsabilités pour défendre les plus vulnérables et la classe moyenne, les grands oubliés de l'ancien régime. Alors qu'ils étaient aux fonctions, dans un contexte mondial pourtant très favorable, ils avaient fait de la politique punitive et antisociale leur leitmotiv.

Dois-je rappeler qu'ils n'avaient eu aucun scrupule à –

- introduire la *National Residential Property Tax* ;
- abolir le mécanisme des tripartites pour le paiement de la compensation salariale ;
- arrêter la distribution de pain aux enfants dans les écoles ;
- faciliter les procédures de licenciements économiques ;
- ôter les subsides sur les frais d'examens de *SC* et de *HSC* ;
- retirer les exemptions fiscales pour les contribuables sur les prêts logements et les personnes à charge ;
- réduire le seuil d'exemption de la TVA de 3 millions de roupies à 2 millions de roupies pour les PME ;
- introduire un impôt sur l'épargne, et enfin
- baisser – là on avait les moyens – de moitié la taxe pour les plus fortunés.

Je souligne que la moitié des ménages à l'époque touchaient moins de R 8,000 par mois et que la pension n'était que de R 3000.

M. le président, ils n'ont eu de cesse que de favoriser les plus aisés et de pénaliser les plus faibles de notre société. Un manque de considération pour les Mauriciens tout comme une aberration socio-économique, alors que nous savons très bien qu'une politique de diminution des inégalités est, *in fine*, une politique de soutien à la croissance. Là encore, les chiffres parlent.

Je l'ai dit et je le redis.

Une augmentation des inégalités de revenus de 0,03 point de Gini entraîne une baisse de la croissance économique de 0,35 point de pourcentage par an.

M. le président, en plaçant ce Gouvernement aux responsabilités en 2014 et 2019, les Mauriciens ont su faire la part des choses pour éviter à tout prix la dégringolade sociale et économique qui s’annonçait. Comme l’avait formulé Albert Einstein –

« *L’avenir est un inconnu, mais un inconnu quelque peu prévisible. Pour deviner le futur, il faut d’abord se tourner vers le passé. C’est là que les graines de l’avenir ont été plantées.* »

Les Mauriciens ont vu juste, dans les rangs du Gouvernement, nous leur disons merci pour cette confiance accordée et renouvelée.

Dans la constance et la résilience, nous serons toujours aux côtés de la population.

La population retiendra que c’est ce Gouvernement sous le leadership du Premier ministre Pravind Jugnauth, qui, au fil des années, a renversé les politiques régressives, les unes après les autres, avec de grandes réformes économiques et sociales.

Je pense notamment à l’avènement du salaire minimum, du *Negative Income Tax* et de la progressivité du barème fiscal, du rétablissement du tripartisme et du renforcement des lois en faveur des droits et surtout de la dignité des travailleurs. Ce n’est pas tout.

Nous avons aussi à notre actif –

- L’augmentation de la pension de retraite de base de 3, 623 roupies à 9,000 roupies; et l’augmentation des autres pensions de base, y compris la pension d’invalidité, représentant presque 40 milliards de roupies;
- L’introduction d’une *Subsistence Allowance Scheme* pour les familles vivant dans la pauvreté absolue ;
- Le paiement d’une compensation salariale intégrale entre 2015 et 2022;
- Le paiement du *PRB* en 2016 et en 2021 ;
- L’éducation tertiaire gratuite pour nos jeunes dans les institutions publiques ;
- Les subventions pour les frais d’examen de *SC* et de *HSC* ;

- La distribution d'eau potable gratuite pour les ménages qui consomment jusqu'à six mètres cubes d'eau par mois ;
- Le maintien, malgré les difficultés, du transport gratuit pour les étudiants et les personnes âgées, et
- L'augmentation des subsides sur le riz, la farine et le gaz ménager.

Durant la pandémie, pour protéger les salariés du secteur privé et les travailleurs indépendants, le gouvernement a financé le *Wage Assistance Scheme* et le *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme* pour plus de 27 milliards de roupies.

Les petits entrepreneurs, eux, ont pu bénéficier de facilités de financement à taux zéro de la *DBM* pour maintenir leurs activités.

Pour restituer le pouvoir d'achat et la dignité des Mauriciens, ce gouvernement a doublé le budget du *Welfare State* par rapport à 2014.

Sans compter, les subventions que nous octroyons depuis juillet de l'année dernière sur les sept produits les plus consommés par les ménages au coût de 1,5 milliard de roupies. Et le leader de l'Opposition nous parle de gaspillage.

Les membres de l'Opposition sont loin d'être les mieux placés pour nous faire la leçon sur le pouvoir d'achat et la justice sociale.

M. le président, lorsque l'Opposition clame sur tous les toits que le gouvernement a abandonné le petit peuple, c'est la même Opposition qui voulait baisser la pension ou encore qui trouvait décent de payer un salarié 1,500 roupies par mois alors que seule, la bonbonne de gaz en coûtait 330 roupies.

Intéressons-nous de plus près à l'auteur de cette motion de censure au temps où il était ministre des Finances. Il a fait du pouvoir d'achat le fondement même de cette motion. Savez-vous pourtant qu'en 2012, il avait l'intention d'injecter 100 millions de dollars sur le marché d'échange dans le but délibéré de dévaluer la roupie. Son souci à l'époque était d'avoir une roupie faible. Il ne se souciait guère des retombées de sa politique sur le portemonnaie des plus vulnérables et de la classe moyenne.

L'inflation cumulée alors qu'il était au pouvoir entre 2005 et 2014 a été de 70%. 70%, et pourtant le salaire minimum était de 1,500 roupies et la pension à 3,623 roupies. Et la compensation, quand il était ministre des Finances, était de 175 roupies alors que l'inflation était à presque 7%.

M. le président, nous, de ce côté de la Chambre, avons proposé une compensation salariale de 500 roupies en 2021 alors que le taux d'inflation était que de 4%. Et cela, dans un contexte économique particulièrement difficile avec seulement 179, 000 touristes.

M. le président, alors qu'il n'y avait ni crise sanitaire, ni guerre en Europe, ni chocs pétroliers et alimentaires et que l'économie mondiale était en pleine expansion, le taux de chômage en 2012 et 2013 était à 8%.

L'investissement s'était contracté pendant trois années de suite et la productivité du capital avait dégringolé.

En 2013, alors que l'industrie du tourisme et le secteur manufacturier d'exportation ne faisaient face à aucune crise mondiale, nous avons seulement 5,2 mois de couverture d'importation en réserve, contre 14,8 mois en avril 2022, soit à un moment où l'économie mondiale est en train de vivre le plus gros choc des prix depuis le choc pétrolier de 1973.

M. le président, j'entends ici les commentaires odieux, concernant le soi-disant cout insoutenable de notre politique de redistribution des richesses au bénéfice des pensionnés ou encore des travailleurs et ménages vulnérables.

Mais rares sont ceux qui osent pointer du doigt l'impact négatif et bien réel de la hausse des inégalités sur la croissance économique.

Dans la lignée des études empiriques de l'OCDE et du FMI que j'ai souvent mentionnées, la corrélation entre hausse des inégalités et baisse de la croissance économique est indiscutable.

M. le président, j'ai la conviction qu'augmenter les salaires pour ceux qui construisent le pays, et accroître la pension pour ceux qui ont bâti notre République est un investissement et non un coût.

C'est précisément pour ces raisons que je rejette la motion de censure.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: MP P. Bérenger!

(6.27 p.m.)

Mr P. Bérenger (First Member for Stanley & Rose Hill): Le pays, nous le savons tous, est en pleine crise, d'où la motion de blâme, le *Motion of No Confidence* qui est devant la Chambre aujourd'hui.

Le gouvernement actuel a mené le pays à une crise généralisée. Une crise avant tout économique et sociale mais aussi morale et démocratique. Le gouvernement actuel hypothèque chaque jour un peu plus l'avenir du pays et de ses enfants. Il faut le dire ; trop de Mauriciens et de Mauriciennes ne sont toujours pas pleinement conscients de la gravité de la crise dans laquelle nous nous enfonçons et de l'avenir plus que sombre qui nous attend si nous continuons sur la voie actuelle. La situation dans laquelle se retrouve aujourd'hui le pays rappelle sous bien des égards celle dont avaient hérité en 1982 le MMM et le PSM.

Oui, comme l'a dit le leader de l'Opposition, dont j'ai secondé la motion, oui la crise aujourd'hui, est avant tout économique. Avec l'inflation à 11% et plus et la dépréciation de la roupie, les retombées du Covid et de la guerre en Ukraine, l'endettement du pays à 100% du GDP, le dangereux dérèglement du Budget et de la Banque de Maurice, le gaspillage effréné des fonds publiques alors que la misère fait des ravages, l'incompétence généralisée, la mort de la démocratie et les bombes à retardement que sont tout le système de pension et de la Contribution Sociale Généralisée, la production d'électricité et le métro.

Ce n'est pas exagéré de dire que si l'île Maurice continue sur la voie économique actuelle, c'est le Sri Lanka qui nous attend.

La crise d'aujourd'hui est avant tout économique, oui. Mais pas seulement, elle est aussi morale. Le *money politics*, l'argent sale de la drogue, de la corruption et des courses sont en train de tout pourrir. Un clientélisme outrancier fait un tort terrible au pays et aux jeunes surtout.

La crise actuelle est aussi démocratique. Le gouvernement actuel détruit toutes les institutions, les unes après les autres. La démocratie est bafouée chaque jour ; un peu plus au niveau des élections et du Parlement lui-même. A la MBC et dans les administrations régionales, le gouvernement actuel s'efforce par tous les moyens de faire peur à la population et aux jeunes

en particulier. Le MSM continue de bloquer toutes réformes électorales dignes de ce nom, et cela alors que nos voisins en Afrique du Sud en débattent activement en ce moment même. Et alors que là-bas, comme ici à l'île Maurice, une bonne réforme électorale est plus que jamais une urgence et permettrait de commencer de sortir de la crise généralisée actuelle.

La crise est avant tout économique et sociale. Le peuple souffre. La crise est avant tout économique et sociale mais il faut le dire aussi, le gouvernement actuel hypothèque toujours plus l'avenir du pays et de ses enfants. La crise est avant tout économique et sociale, le peuple vit cela et souffre de cela mais il faut dire aussi fort et haut que la crise est aussi morale et démocratique. Le gouvernement est déjà à mi-mandat alors que le pays est en pleine crise généralisée. L'évidence même c'est que dans une telle situation, le plus tôt les prochaines élections générales, le mieux pour le pays. Peu importe finalement qui gagnera les prochaines élections générales, c'est le pays qui doit gagner.

Merci.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Callichurn!

(6.33 p.m.)

The Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection (Mr S. Callichurn): Mr Speaker, Sir, at the very outset, I would like to say that on this side of the House, we are strongly against this motion and I shall during the course of my intervention give the reasons why.

Mr Speaker, Sir, even if this Motion of No Confidence perfectly fits our democratic system of parliamentary democracy wherein all voices should have a say in public affairs, still we believe that carrying such a motion to the floor of the House at this particular time and juncture is but a loss of time and energy.

I say so because we know too well that nobody is going to believe what they say. Why? Because none of their arguments holds water.

- Does it make sense to criticise the Government because world price for crude oil or gas is most volatile?

- Does it make sense to criticise the Government because price for domestic oil is volatile?
- Does it make sense to criticise the Government because shipment for cargo has gone up from around 2,000 USD to more than 10, 000 USD on average?
- Does it make sense to criticise the Government because price of wheat and wheat products are on the increase?
- Does it make sense to criticise the Government because the world is facing a situation of global inflation?
- Now, does it make sense to criticise the Government when all these price increases are having cascading effects on retail price almost anywhere in the world?
- Does it make sense to criticise a Government that has taken every possible measure to protect the Mauritian population from price increase of essential food and other items through a costly policy of price subsidisation?

I ask myself, what will this motion presented today achieve if ever it were to go through? *Dans le pire des cas*, Parliament will be dissolved, new general elections will be called, new alliances will be formed. At the end of the day, as rightly pointed out by hon. Bérenger, the population will have to decide on a new Government.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the motion is presented today by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, who is also a member of *l'Alliance de l'Espoir*, and I presume it was done in concertation with all the partners. I also believe that if successful in their attempt, they aspire to form a Government.

Yet, if we refer to the recent opinion poll, I have it with me, the Week-end of last week, I note that the same alliance - actually, the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development made a mistake, he credited *l'Alliance de l'Espoir* 5% intention of vote. Actually, no, Mr Speaker, Sir. *L'Alliance de l'Espoir*, *Mouvement Militant Mauricien*, *PMSD*, Roshi Bhadain, Nando Bodha are worth a mere 1% of the electorate. I was quite surprised myself! I was stunned actually! I always thought they were the next or best alternative. The figures published in the poll speak for themselves, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is now clear that if general elections are called tomorrow, they do not stand a chance to form a new Government.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Callichurn: So,...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Callichurn: So,...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Callichurn: How can the hon. Leader of the Opposition say that he is the *porte parole de la voix du peuple*?

Having said so, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would have thought following the publication of that survey during the week end, the Leader of the Opposition would have come back to his senses and withdraw his motion. Well, since it is still on the agenda, let us debate.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius, just like any other country, is facing the impact of several disruptions since COVID-19. Since 2020, there has been double economic contraction, rising inflation rates and decreasing growth rates. Our Government has done its best to shield the population against these impacts by providing safety nets, where and when it was necessary and we are determined to continue to do so.

Mr Speaker Sir, true it is that we are currently facing external shocks. However, this is not a reason to stop all developments as being proposed by the Opposition. Doing so could seriously impair our economic model, which is premised mainly on public and private sector investments for job creation and income generation. As former Ministers of Finance, hon. Duval and hon. Bérenger should know it better.

Mr Speaker Sir, the actual prevailing economic situation can somehow be compared to the early 1980's - well said, hon. Bérenger - when Mauritius was in recession, although we are not there yet.

Let me take the House back in history, more precisely to the situation prevailing in 1982. The new regime had inherited a country in ruins, international pressure was being exercised on Mauritius to bring drastic reforms and curb down development projects but due to the far-sightedness of the then Prime Minister, Anerood Jugnauth and his Vice-Prime Minister, Sir Gaëtan Duval, the then Government decided not to blindly follow the recommendations of the IMF and rightly so. They chose the path of development over austerity and “*serre ceinture*”. Thereafter, Mauritius experienced its first economic boom fuelled by shrewd investments in different sectors.

Mr Speaker Sir, I draw this parallel to show to the Leader of the Opposition the vision of true patriots over politicians who are simply looking to be in Government at any cost, even if it entails taking the country to ruins by blatantly being economical with the truth.

Mr Speaker Sir, this episode proves that in dire situations, you just do not stop progress, and today again, this Government is not going to jeopardise the future of the Republic by haltering development.

It is regrettable that during such difficult times, where we need to strike the right balance between the economic and social aspects, keeping in mind that the presentation of the national budget is not far ahead, the Opposition and some extra-parliamentary groups tend to believe that simple mathematical solutions can solve the actual difficulties.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are here debating on this motion of no confidence while the Heads of the World Bank Group, IMF, World Food Programme and WTO in a joint statement on 13 April called for an urgent coordinated action on food security. They pressed on the international community to urgently support vulnerable countries through coordinated actions ranging from provision of emergency food supplies, financial support, increased agricultural production and open trade. Let me quote what these institutions stated -

“the world is shaken by compounding crises, sharply higher prices for staples and supply shortages are increasing pressure on households worldwide and pushing millions more into poverty.

There is a call on the international community to urgently support vulnerable countries.”

With your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am tabling this statement.

Mr Speaker Sir, instead of collaborating with the Government on issues of national importance especially in light of the assessment of the situation by the international institutions, here we have an Opposition who prefer to brush aside economic issues and indulge in the blame games. It is more than ever urgent, we, as a nation come together with concrete and realistic solutions to overcome the hurdles standing on our way.

It is high time to stop being demagogical and start preparing the people to face the crude reality. The Opposition should assume their role as a responsible Opposition and enlighten the people on the difficulties the world is facing and not capitalising on the situation to make cheap politics. We need to find solutions and this is exactly what this Government has been doing since last year.

Mr Speaker Sir, allow me now to explain the context in which rising prices are becoming recurrent.

The outburst of the COVID-19 pandemic has brought considerable disruptions in the supply market worldwide and as a Small Island Developing State heavily dependent on importation, Mauritius has not been spared from this supply-driven shock. This unprecedented phenomenon resulted in a surge in the prices of raw materials.

During that period, some shipping companies diminished their activities. Such actions had the effect of causing a major fall in revenue of those shipping line companies.

To cover such losses, shipping line companies had, therefore, increased the cost of freight and as a result, the price of imported goods rose.

Moreover, the appreciation of the major trading currencies, specially the US dollar, had directly impacted on the cost of products imported in the country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the wake of the continuous rise in the price of food commodities, Government could not have remained insensitive to the plight of consumers. It is to the credit of this Government that in spite of the increasingly challenging environment and its impact on public finance we have, in line with our commitment to always act as a caring Government, maintained our policy of providing subsidies in order to keep prices of basic commodities at affordable reach for all and especially for the most vulnerable sections of our population.

This is why last year, we took an unprecedented initiative that is to provide finance in order to fix the price for seven essential commodities widely consumed by our households such as edible oil, pulses, canned tomatoes, milk powder, margarine, cheese and canned fish. The total amount earmarked has now been revised to Rs1.35 billion.

Under this mechanism, the retail prices of 371 different brands of commodities were fixed so that people may have access to these basic products at affordable prices.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to take some examples to demonstrate that some people, who are perfectly aware of the mechanism, are engaging themselves in sheer demagoguery to mislead the population in order to gain political mileage.

Today, consumers are buying canned tomatoes at an average price of Rs26.94. Without the subsidies since July 2021, this same item would have been sold at Rs32.96 and if we include the recent increase in prices, it would have cost around Rs37. The same applies for margarine. It is currently being sold at Rs75. whereas it should have cost Rs95.

For milk, again, currently it is being sold at Rs206, if no subsidy was given, it would have cost consumers Rs258.50.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I can mention many more other examples. Are these examples not clear enough to show that Government is putting in every possible effort to absorb the shocks and protect the purchasing power of the population, and particularly the most vulnerable?

As for the prices of medicines, we are fully conscious that the margin for retailers and distributors are on the high side. I gave the assurance that this Government is fully committed to review the mark-up on these products. The committee which was supposed to review the price structure has already submitted its report to me. They have proposed that we adopt a regressive mark-up as proposed by the Competition Commission. I again reassure the House that same will be presented to Cabinet soon and a decision will be taken.

Mr Speaker, Sir, moreover, in a gesture to alleviate the sufferings of the consumers, the subsidy on flour has been increased by Rs108 m. in order to meet the double objectives of maintaining the price of scheduled bread, that is, '*pain maison*' at Rs2.60 while not penalising bakeries for the increase in their production costs.

It is also worth mentioning that the actual buying price of long grain rice, commonly known as '*riz ration*' by STC is sold at Rs10.80 per kg whereas STC procures it at Rs25.80. The Government therefore subsidises around Rs15 per kg which implies that a subsidy of 58% is provided to consumers representing a sum of Rs354 m. It is also worth noting that the projected amount the Government will be spending on subsidy for the Fiscal Year 2021-2022 will be approximately Rs4 billion.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the philosophy of this Government is to protect its population, as far as possible against any global crisis that could affect its well-being and we have been doing so well before the IMF, the World Bank, World Food Program, and the World Trade Organisation rings the alarm bell. My Ministry is also having regular consultations with the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry and other stakeholders concerned to ensure that there is no shortage of food commodity in Mauritius. Simultaneously, we are looking for alternative sources of imports to ensure continuity of supply in the country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as a caring Government since 2014, this Government has been doing its utmost best to restore the dignity of the population which they had lost under the Labour/PMSD Government to which the Leader of the Opposition was also a member. Under the able stewardship of the Prime Minister, we have brought every single possible measure to alleviate the difficulties faced by our people. The very first measure the Government took after acceding to power was to give an additional remuneration of Rs600 across the Board to compensate for the loss of purchasing power under the Labour-PMSD Government.

Mr Speaker: Try to conclude.

Mr Callichurn: Les pensionnés vivaient dans la misère pendant des années avec une somme ne dépassant pas R 3,623, M. le président. On peut se demander aujourd'hui comment ces personnes faisaient pour manger à leur faim et payer leurs factures. Le leader de l'Opposition et d'autres membres qui étaient au gouvernement à cette époque n'avaient-ils pas de la compassion ? C'est maintenant qu'ils voient qu'une pension de R 9,000 n'est pas suffisante dans le contexte actuel.

M. le président, si nous n'avions pas augmenté la pension, un pensionné percevrait aujourd'hui seulement R 6,608 mensuellement.

I am sure that members on the other side of the House do acknowledge that there has been an unparalleled effort by this Government to assuage the sufferings of the senior citizens, widows, orphans and people living with disabilities. We have not been insensitive to families living in absolute poverty. The Government introduced the Subsistence Allowance Scheme, not to forget the minimum wage.

Mr Speaker, Sir, another break through measure...

Mr Speaker: Try to conclude.

Mr Callichurn: I will conclude, I still have two minutes. Moreover, it should be noted that education was free, access to tertiary education was still outside the reach of the poor families. On average, access to university costed Rs40,000 per year. Government has eliminated this final barrier by providing free access to tertiary education. Hence, implying a saving of an average Rs40,000 per household per child attending university. In addition, the Government has waived the examination fees for SC & HSC, making a saving of Rs11,000 and Rs12,000 respectively for parents with children sitting for SC and HSC.

Let us not forget, this has been canvassed, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is with pride that we shall continue to work restlessly for the benefit of the citizens of the Republic. All that I have mentioned today were measures...

Mr Speaker: Time is over for you.

Mr Callichurn: ...thoughtfully carved to guarantee the population lives better today.

Mr Speaker: Thank you very much!

Mr Callichurn: Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mohamed!

(6.54 p.m.)

Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Since the time is limited, let me try to go straight and dive into the subject.

The hon. Minister of Finance has used some very bizarre terminology in order to defend his *bilan qui est lamentable* and he starts by saying that *c'est enn badinage politik*. He says –

« ...*l'opposition ne reculera devant rien pour des gains politiques. Tentative de créer un climat de tension, de doute.* »

He says that they have a *langage de vérité et de solidarité* and he says that everything is to blame with – as my good friend, hon. Minister of Labour, has just stated – the fault is that of the international situation and it is never the fault of the Government.

What both Ministers and other Members of Government have to understand is that this Motion of No Confidence, I see them on the defensive; I see them trying to defend as though they are taking hits. It is not a Motion of No Confidence personally against anyone of them; it is collectively against Government. So, they do not have to be on the defensive and take it personally whenever we criticise what we believe to be wrong. There is no need to create enmity when we talk about subjects of national importance. There is no need for you to be so much on the defensive and keep on repetitively looking in the rear view mirror because what I have seen the hon. Minister of Finance do, is systematically, together with Minister Callichurn, systematically talk about what they did in the past, but they refuse and fail, once again *lamentablement*, to consider the fact that people outside of this Chamber, in hundreds and thousands, are unhappy - unhappy with the performance of this Government, unhappy with *la légèreté avec laquelle* they run *les affaires du gouvernement*, unhappy because of *la cherté de la vie*, unhappy because people still keep on travelling as Ministers as though they have nothing else as difficult in this world.

When it comes to people having to eat, when it comes to people - good friend hon. Callichurn says Government has subsidised and will be subsidising almost Rs4 billion, but when it comes to travelling for Ministers, then Ministers are not expected to open *bwat sardinn* and to eat in Dubai. Then, Ministers are not expected to economise and subsidise and travel economy. Then, Ministers are not expected to travel and take a taxi but will take a Mercedes to be driven to the pavilion for Dubai World Show and what not. This is what was said; at least the *trottinette*, I bought it with my money, not tax payers', whereas the Ministers travelling for this country, whereas people are suffering out there, what do the Ministers do?

Let us look at this document, 7th National Assembly, First Session, report of the PAC – and I am looking at that document that is part of our history today. And look at the hypocrisy, Mr Speaker, Sir. I do not mean anything personal against Members of Government when I say that,

but, in that Committee, there are four Members from Government's side. Hon. Ms Naveena Ramyad, hon. Rajanah Dhaliah, Dr. the hon. Muhammad Ismael Rawoo, hon. Rameswar Doolub are Members of this Committee. Those are Members of this Committee and when the Committee produces a report of this nature, this means that this Committee, all the Members thereon, collectively adopt that report and the contents of this report.

When this report says, for instance, and I will take one example, at paragraph 2.1.2 –

“Your Committee takes a very serious view of the representation made by the representatives of the Ministries that they were executing instructions from their respective Minister.”

The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, fingers are pointed at him; the former Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection, fingers are pointed at him; when they are blamed for what they have done, those Members of Government, Mr Speaker, Sir, approved this report. Is this not, therefore, a Motion of No Confidence in the acts and doings of this Government voted beforehand? Have they not already given their views when siding with this report? That this Government, mainly the culprit, hon. Minister Dr. Jagutpal, has he not failed lamentably when we look at this report? Those four Members of Government, sitting only in front of him there...

(Interruptions)

Bring your hand down! Do not interrupt me because it hurts!

(Interruptions)

When those Members of Government...

Mr Speaker: What is it?

Mr Mohamed: When those Members of Government...

Mr Speaker: What is it that you want?

Ms Ramyad: I have a point of order.

Mr Mohamed: It is hurting?

Mr Speaker: Point of order!

Mr Mohamed: I know it is hurting!

Ms Ramyad: Yes, I have a point of order. The hon. Member is imputing motives. At no point, can he be of opinion that it was a blame. So, I want him to withdraw the fact that he said that it was a blame. It was not a blame.

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission.

Mr Speaker: No, no!

Mr Mohamed: Yes?

Mr Speaker: There has been a point of order.

Mr Mohamed: Yes.

Mr Speaker: I have listened.

Mr Mohamed: Alright.

Mr Speaker: Now, I have to rule.

Mr Mohamed: Yes.

Mr Speaker: This is debate, and hon. Duval rightly said it may hurt. But the fact that the report has been adopted by the Committee, even you call it that you have adopted or you are against, but this a fact, you have to accept it! Continue!

Mr Mohamed: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Thank you very much.

(Interruptions)

So, what I am saying here, when I look at that report, Mr Speaker, Sir, and when it says –
 “Your Committee notes with concern that hundreds of millions of rupees worth of contract had been awarded during the COVID-19 pandemic without any record being kept as to who took the decision to award those contracts.”

Who were the Ministers on that High-Level Committee that approved such a mess? Why is the Minister of Health and Wellness still in office? Why is the Prime Minister still tolerating such incompetence? Why is the Prime Minister turning a blind eye to the obvious? And why is it that the Members of Government who form part of that Committee, who have sat in that Committee,

who have approved this report, why is it that they, today, will turn their backs against this report and vote with this Government?

If this is not hypocrisy, Mr Speaker, Sir, what is it? If this is not turning a blind eye to one's conscience, what is it? Either you stand for good or you stand for bad. Do not sit on the fence because continuously sitting on the fence, you will get hurt!

(Interruptions)

I will not go that far.

(Interruptions)

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, when I look at this Pack & Blister, the country today has suffered and is in blisters. But the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness still sits there and still pretends that there is no better person than him! His staffs say to the Committee that he gave instructions orally. His staffs say that he violated procurement rules. His staffs say that he kept no records and did not see to it that records were kept. And he smiles! Look at his smirk! Look at his smile!

Mr Speaker: Do not be personal!

(Interruptions)

Do not be personal!

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: I shall, therefore, withdraw the fact that I said 'look at his smile'. Let us not look at his smile! Let us refuse to look at his smile!

Mr Speaker: Do not look at his face!

Mr Mohamed: Do not look at his face, I agree! Mr Speaker, Sir, you are right!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, you know what is the difference between a politician and a leader? A politician is only interested in getting re-elected for the next elections.

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Couma twa!*

Mr Mohamed: I am not!

(Interruptions)

A leader is interested in sacrificing himself for the good of his country! Not the elections!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Mohamed: And this is what we do on this side of the House!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Hon. Dhaliah!

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: We sacrifice for our country!

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dhaliah!

Mr Mohamed: Whereas they are only interested in getting re-elected. *La population mauricienne souffre et le ministre des Finances pense que c'est un badinage.*

An hon. Member: *Li tousel pa politisien !*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Do not interrupt the Member!

Dr. Boolell: *Met ar zot! Met ar zot!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: The Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development - what explanations is he going to give to the people out there? I speak to those members of the PAC; I appeal to their conscience, and I ask them not to be ashamed for what they decided in the Committee, not to turn their backs like chameleons that try to adopt a different colour because the bush therein has changed *feuillage*.

Dr. Boolell: Camouflage!

Mr Mohamed: Do not try to wear camouflage and hide from the obvious. If you have agreed that therein lie problems as regards governance, I put it to you, Mr Speaker, Sir, why is it

that we have to tolerate political and parliamentary hypocrisy in the face of suffering out there? The Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection, and I say, a good friend, just like other friends as well – let us not him feel the thing is pointing at him - good friends on the other side.

(Interruptions)

No, no, he is also a good friend. He is quite a funny one though, but he is a good friend. So, when I look at this, explain to me something. The real price of Mogas, *aujourd'hui*, without any taxes, Rs37.20 per litre. The real price of Gasoil without any taxes, Rs38.96. *Le consommateur, aujourd'hui, paye la TVA sur Mogas R 8.80 par litre. Le consommateur sur Gasoil paye R 6.50 par litre. En plus, le consommateur - le badinage que le ministre des Finances pense qu'on fait - est obligé de payer R 2.00 par litre comme contribution pour les vaccins de Covid-19.*

Mais cela n'a pas empêché les chers ministres, de l'autre côté de la Chambre, de se parader devant la presse, de prendre des photos, que ce soit avec les représentants diplomatiques d'autres pays, pour vanter la capacité de leur cher Premier ministre, de négocier des vaccins et de les obtenir gratuitement. Alors, moi, je me demande, M. le président, si on a pu obtenir des vaccins gratuitement, pourquoi alors ils sont en train de poignarder la population ou de vampiriser la population en suçant le sang jusqu'à la moelle de cette population en nous volant R 2.00 par litre ?

Pourquoi alors, le ministre du Commerce, l'honorable membre, n'a même pas eu l'audace d'expliquer, aujourd'hui, pourquoi le gouvernement ne considère pas comme justifié la réduction des taxes ? Pourquoi est-ce qu'on continue à payer R 2.00 par litre ? Pourquoi est-ce qu'on continue à contribuer autant de taxes, et que le prix a presque même peut-être plus que doublé ? Le vrai prix est la moitié.

In moments like this, you have to show solidarity. *Le type de solidarité dont parle le ministre des Finances est simplement joli à entendre dans son français de Molière. Mais en réalité, ce n'est même pas le véritable enjeu politique, la moralité ou la solidarité. Il nous vend une histoire qui est tout à fait fausse parce que la vérité est qu'aujourd'hui on va en discuter, ils vont défendre l'intérêt du gouvernement et puis ils vont tous dire : ayes, ayes ayes. We are in the interest of Government and Government will win the day. But, out there, people are suffering; out there, people are paying a heavy price.*

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, maybe I will finish on this one sentence. I will ask the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, who says that he is transparent and that he is honest politically, to at least reply how much it did cost Government when the several Ministers went to Dubai. Because to those two questions from hon. Uteem and hon. Juman put on 05 April 2022, he said he would reply; he has still not replied. So, keep hiding, but we will find you.

Thank you.

(7.09 p.m.)

The Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I did want to begin my remark by saying that we have no apprehension at all to face this Motion of No Confidence. The Leader of the Opposition and other Members thought that Government would be taken aback by this particular motion. Not at all, Mr Speaker, Sir. Nothing personal, hon. Mohamed, this is an opportunity for us to set the record right - what we have achieved until now.

In fact, our Prime Minister lost no time in bringing the motion to Parliament. We, on this side of the House, consider it an opportunity to remind the House of all our achievements until now, notwithstanding the difficult situation. First, the adverse impact of the pandemic and second, the recent war between Ukraine and Russia. Should you have faced those uphill battles during the past two years, we have doubts, whether you would have met the challenges the way we have done so far. It is a pity that the Opposition Members are capitalising on the adverse effect of the pandemic and the war for their own - I must say - political gain. The Leader of the Opposition is holding Government accountable for the present situation. It appears that the Opposition does not understand their responsibilities.

On the international front, Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius has always done well on international ranking. The 2020 Development Report shows that Mauritius has made significant progress in three areas of human development; a long and healthy life, access to knowledge, and a decent standard of living. We ranked 13 on the World Bank Doing Business report 2020. We are first on the Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance for the last 10 years.

Let me also remind the Leader of the Opposition that since we were elected in 2014, we have spared no effort in reversing the chaotic situation prevailing in the country under the

previous regime of 2010 to 2014. It is useful to take a look at what we have done. We combine economic, social and infrastructural development to give new impetus to our country.

Furthermore, we have always focused on the well-being and social protection of the most vulnerable. Social security and social integration measures are essential instruments of social and economic justice. Never before have we seen a Government showing political willingness for the welfare of all people. We have so far done the things that need to be done. We have always, Mr Speaker, Sir, put people at the heart of all our efforts. In fact, putting people at the heart of any process makes a lot of sense.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me, at this stage, put some pertinent questions. Who introduced the National Minimum Wage in January 2018? Our Government! Who introduced negative income tax and special allowance to support workers in the informal sector? Our Government! Who brought substantial increase in basic pension in 2014 and 2019? Our Government! I am here, referring to basic pensions such as Basic Retirement Pension, Basic Widow's Pension, Basic Invalidity Pension. You will recall, Mr Speaker, Sir, that our Government increased the Basic Retirement Pension from Rs3,623 to gradually Rs9,000. Can you imagine at that material time in 2014, before election, Basic Invalidity Pension and Basic Widow's Pension were less than the basic retirement pension, only Rs3,267. What have we done, Mr Speaker, Sir? We have aligned these basic pensions to Rs9,000 monthly.

I wonder why the Leader of the Opposition did not think of increasing basic pensions when he served as Minister of Finance from 2012 to 2014.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Please, don't obstruct!

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Of course, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is easy to criticise. He should have done what we have done for our elders long time back.

Moreover, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Basic Orphan's Pension for children under 15 years has got up from Rs3,710 to Rs5,000, and in December 2019, from Rs5,210 to Rs7,000 for students in full-time education up to 20 years of age. Carer's Allowance, Mr Speaker, Sir, was a meagre figure of Rs2,500. Now the Carer's Allowance is Rs3,500. We are brought this increase in December 2019.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, these increases in pension have required major investment by Government. In 2014, the budget of the Ministry of Social Security stood at Rs13.9 billion. This amount has increased gradually to reach no less than Rs38.6 billion in 2021. Who was behind this massive investment for the well-being of our people, Mr Speaker, Sir? Again, our Government! That is the reality. Correct me if I am wrong.

The whole world is aware of the difficult conditions that are prevailing. The life of each and every citizen is being affected by the escalation of prices of basic commodities. As a small island nation, it was difficult for Mauritius to brave the pandemic. Even highly developed nations were brought to their knees in the face of this sanitary crisis. When this sanitary crisis began in 2020, no one knew how long our lives would be disrupted. We are living in a volatile world. We have had to develop resilience. Our Government reacted rapidly, Mr Speaker, Sir. And I think it will be good if we can touch upon a few key measures taken in response to COVID-19.

What have we done, Mr Speaker, Sir? We implemented a Wage Assistance Scheme. We introduced a Self-Employed Assistance Scheme. We established the COVID-19 Solidarity Fund. We distributed food packs to families on the SRM beneficiaries of a Carer's Allowance. We brought a reduction in the electricity tariff to alleviate difficulties faced by poor families. The Central Electricity Board of Mauritius has installed 1000 solar panels on houses of families in the social register without any cost to the household. These families are benefiting from 50 kilowatts of electricity free of charge each month over a period of 20 years. We set up a national database for vulnerable groups for household earning a monthly income between Rs10,501. and Rs14,000. These households received support in kind by the National Social Inclusion Foundation through registered NGOs. My Ministry has also been providing support to homeless persons via the COVID-19 Solidarity Committee through the setting-up of a night shelter and residential rehabilitation centre to support homeless persons.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the war in Ukraine may be happening thousands of kilometres away from us but it still has a very direct impact on our lives. The two countries involved in this war, Russia and Ukraine, are major commodities producers. And disruptions are causing global prices to soar, especially for oil, natural gas and basic food commodities, such as wheat. Allow me to quote Kristalina Georgieva, Managing Director of the IMF, who, in an address, made on 14 April 2022 stated –

“To put it simply: we are facing a crisis on top of a crisis.

First, the pandemic: it turned our lives and economies upside down – and it is not over.

Second, the war: Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, devastating for the Ukrainian economy, is sending shockwaves throughout the globe.

Hundreds of millions of families were already struggling with lower incomes and higher energy and food prices. The war has made this much worse and threatens to further increase inequality”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot understand how can we be blamed about what is happening.

My colleague, hon. Callichurn, has lengthily touched upon the subsidies provided by Government on basic commodities; I will not waste the time of the House by going through the same issue again. However, I can only say that this is no small matter, Mr Speaker, Sir. Had we not been willing to invest so much in subsidies, imagine what prices would be like today.

Allow me to remind the House, in particular, the members of the Opposition, that it was also our Government that developed the Marshall plan against poverty in 2016 which addresses the need of people living in absolute poverty. We developed the Social Register of Mauritius for vulnerable families to register themselves and benefit from empowerment programmes. We also established new absolute poverty threshold for eligible beneficiaries under the said register based on a minimum threshold of Rs2,700 with a maximum threshold of Rs9,520 for a family of two adults and three children. This is higher than the previous flat threshold of Rs6,200 introduced by the previous Government during their reign of 2005 to 2014. And we did not leave it at that, Mr Speaker, Sir. Since July 2021 in an effort to better respond to the pandemic, the poverty threshold for eligibility under the SRM has increased from Rs2,720 to Rs3,000 for an adult and from Rs1,360 to Rs1,500 for a child. The maximum threshold has increased from Rs9,720 to Rs10,500 for a family of two adults and three children.

With the Marshall plan and the Social Register, we are able to provide empowerment schemes based on five pillars –

- financial support;
- educational support;
- training;

- family values, and
- social housing.

Allow me to remind you of the support provided to families on the SRM. For the first time in Mauritian history, we came up with a new scheme under which, every household found to be living in extreme poverty, is entitled to earn monthly income support in the form of a subsistence allowance. Subsistence allowance has been provided to some 9,761 households for a total amount of Rs231,721,425 during the last financial year. A monthly child allowance of Rs957 per child is being paid up to a maximum of three children per household. Funds to the tune of Rs59,178,900 have been disbursed for the year 2020/2021. The School Premium Scheme which was introduced in 2015 is awarded to students who have successfully completed their Grade 9 level, SC/HSC or tertiary level. The School Premium has been provided to some 375 beneficiaries to the tune of Rs7,320,000 for the last financial year. Same for free examination fees, Mr Speaker, Sir; we have been providing free examination fees to some 197 beneficiaries the tune of Rs2,614,584.

As at date, more than Rs200 m. has been disbursed since 2016 on school materials. As at date, some 1,125 students of Grade 9 to 13 classes have already been provided with tablets. This initiative has also been completed with the provision of free access of broadband Internet to some 7,000 eligible SRM households. We now provide free optical glasses to children aged up to 21 years old and free sanitary towels to girls.

The Crèche Scheme was introduced in February 2017 to empower mothers of children aged between three months to 3 years to be placed in registered child day care centres thereby allowing their mothers to take up employment or following a training course for the purpose of their empowerment. Training opportunities are also provided to beneficiaries on the SRM.

Our Government, Mr Speaker, Sir, was determined to find a better system in 2017 with regard to social housing; we came up with the provisions of fully concrete housing units up to 50 m² to families who are already owners a plot of land but do not have the means to build a housing unit. With regard to those who are not owners of land, we have made provisions for reservation of 10% of all new NHDC housing units constructed for our beneficiaries. In both cases Government is subsidising the construction cost at the rate of 80% and beneficiaries are

reimbursing only 20% of the cost of the housing unit over a period of 15 to 25 years. We are trying to the best of our ability to help the beneficiaries who are under the SRM.

Since the implementation of the fully concrete housing unit in 2016, a total of 253 housing units has been constructed and I can say, 43 are ongoing. The NEF intends to contract an additional batch of 50 housing units in 2020. Under the 10% NHDC Housing Scheme, 126 NHDC housing units have already been provided and a batch of 107 housing units will be handed over by May this year. It is worth mentioning that we have gone one step ahead with the upgrading of existing houses to cater for minor renovation works for our beneficiaries.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, by adopting all these measures for families under the SRM, we have considerably improved the quality of life of many families.

Mr Speaker: Try to conclude!

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Yes. All these measures, Mr Speaker, Sir, are concrete examples which confirm the deep commitment and solidarity of this Government with our people. The population can rest assured that as a loving and responsible Government, we have not hesitated and would not hesitate to consider new ways of dealing with the global challenges ahead.

We are realistic, Mr Speaker, Sir, we acknowledge that we are going through difficult times. Of course, there are no easy answers to what is happening. There is no doubt that with the rising prices, families are finding it harder and harder to make ends meet but I can assure the population that we are looking at all the options to provide relief. I do believe that there is reason for optimism. The Budget presentation is just around the corner and I am confident Government will explore options to do more for our people.

To end, Mr Speaker, Sir, I will simply say that this Motion of No Confidence has no basis at all.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

(7.30 p.m.)

Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Merci, M. le président. M. le président, nous avons vécu des moments difficiles ces dernières semaines. La braise est sous la paille et la paille prendra feu si on n'écoute pas et ne prend pas en considération les clameurs et les revendications de la rue. Les clameurs se sont tues, les bottes sont retournées aux casernes mais les plaies sont toujours ouvertes.

M. le président, cet état des choses est dû à une population tant assommée et meurtrie par les augmentations des prix de plusieurs denrées alimentaires, le gaz ménager, le gaspillage des fonds publics, le coût du transport en commun et les arrestations arbitraires.

M. le président, ce sentiment de révolte est aussi palpable parce qu'il y a eu une mauvaise gestion des finances de l'État. Animé à un certain moment par un esprit de vengeance politique telle que le démantèlement du *BAI* à qui on chantait le fameux ponzi mais qui a coûté à l'État R 20 milliards. Le revers du *Betamax* qui a dû forcer la *State Trading Corporation* de ce gouvernement à payer R 5.3 milliards de leur caisse et qui a mis en faillite la *STC* avec un déficit de R 1 milliard. La dette publique qui avoisine les R 426 milliards, le manque de transparence dans le déboursement des fonds du *MIC*, fonds qui a largement bénéficié pas à ceux au bas de l'échelle mais ces compagnies qui brassent même des millions et des milliards et dont j'en suis sûr, les directeurs ne consomment point du saumon *Glenryck* mais que du caviar.

M. le président, ce gouvernement est coupé de la réalité car ils sont trop occupés avec les magnats financiers pour des développements fonciers, par l'exemple, des hippodromes du futur, qui dans l'immédiat ne peut soulager la misère et la douleur de ce peuple mais pire qui entraînera, peut-être, le licenciement de 500 travailleurs dans le domaine hippique.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me mention briefly our pensioners. Most of our old age pensioners spend money on two basic commodities particularly medicine and food. Unfortunately for them, both commodities had major prices increase, making the life of these people extremely difficult to meet ends at the end of the month. And, forget if they have to pay rent!

Mr Speaker, Sir, the elderly have unfortunately been taken on a ride during the last election when they were promised that there will be a rise in their pension. In the meantime, for them, it is just an illusion. *Je le dis et je le redis, le réveil de nos pensionnaires sera brutal pour ce gouvernement et la colère de la population qui gronde.*

M. le président, quand la nation est mise au courant des abus de gouvernance de ce gouvernement tel que le scandale en série au ministère de la Santé, le *Pack & Blister*, qui nous a coûté R 77. 9 millions dont on a jamais vu un respirateur ni au moins un sou qui est retourné à la caisse de l'État et pas d'arrestations à ce jour. Le Molnupiravir saga avec le prix qui change en 24 heures de R 9.30 à R 79, un surplus de R 65 millions et le contrat alloué en 24 heures au *blue eyed boy* du ministère de la Santé. La retraite anticipée et le *golden handshake* du chef de ce département qui a sa part de responsabilité dans l'organigramme des exercices de *procurement*. Pas d'arrestations et *business is as usual* ! Cela fait mal, cela agace, cela fait déjà des troubles dans le pays. L'allocation de R 1.5 milliards à des petits copains par la *State Trading Corporation* pour l'octroi des masques, des *PPEs*, des respirateurs tandis que parmi tant d'autres, ces organisations/compagnies n'ont jamais été des fournisseurs agréées par le ministère de la Santé.

M. le président, ce gaspillage d'achat de médicaments tels que le *Hydroxychloroquine*, 500,000 comprimés pour le soi-disant traitement de ceux atteints de la Covid-19 et en se servant de l'*Emergency Procurement* qui dans quelques semaines ou mois devront tous détruits. *That was panic buying to support friends and cronies*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if COVID-19 is always mentioned as one of the reasons for the state of our economy, then, it was indeed a moment of sacrifice and prayers for most of us. But for some friends and cronies, it was a bumper crop; thanks to the generous purchaser, the Ministry of Health and Wellness, who would never question the quality, the source of supply, the standard of products, the KYC of foreign companies bidding without forgetting the prices quoted well above current prices and sometimes ten times more. Should the population, therefore, stay quiet and not voice out their feelings when tax money is being involved?

Mr Speaker, Sir, the MOH's approach to Emergency Procurement during the pandemic was marked by toxic mix of mispending and cronyism. M. le président, quand le gouvernement refuse de rendre public le rapport du *FFC* sur le décès des 11 patients dialysés positifs à la Covid, c'est révoltant, inacceptable. C'est une insulte à la mémoire des défunts et de leurs familles.

M. le président, ils attendent des explications de pourquoi leur proches ont succombés. Était-ce la non-priorisation des vaccins, le manque de médicaments tels que le *Remdesivir*, une logistique mal inspirée ou tout simplement de la négligence médicale ?

M. le président, quand un membre de la majorité, jadis Premier ministre adjoint, fait savoir ses sentiments, je ne vois pas comment pourrait appeler cette hécatombe autrement qu'un carnage. Le ministre de la Santé ne trouve pas mieux comme façade à ne pas divulguer les conclusions du rapport.

Mr Speaker: Try to conclude!

Dr. Aumeer: Et le ridicule ne tue pas quand le ministre nous dit que dans le passé, les rapports des FFC ne sont pas rendus publics. Quand notre économie est si fragile, n'est-il pas révoltant et provocateur quand tant de ministres se rendent à Dubaï pour le Dubaï *jalsa* qui nous a coûté au moins R 50 millions officiellement ? C'est cette arrogance du gouvernement qui fait mal.

M. le président, pour terminer, la vérité est que la masse silencieuse, elle aussi se trouve entre le marteau et l'enclume. Et celle-ci n'a pas dit son dernier mot que quand le pays sera appelé aux urnes à moins que le vote électronique nous fasse des tours.

Mr Speaker: Thank you very much.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Jagutpal!

(7.37 p.m.)

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal): Mr Speaker, Sir, I will start my intervention by quoting the English poet, John Dryden. It reads as follows –

"What flocks of critics hover here to-day,

As vultures wait on armies for their prey,

All gaping for the carcass of a play!

With croaking notes they bode some dire event."

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Try to be polite!

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, our Prime Minister indeed brilliantly summarised this situation as the deeds of *croque-mort*. Today, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Leader of the Opposition chose to come with a Motion of No Confidence and go to such extremes, only to exist or only to have a sense of purpose. It is a pity. While populations, Governments and even Oppositions are working to address the unprecedented challenges, here, the focus is on how to come back to power by all means.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when the claims of *élections truquées* are falling into pieces, they have embarked on yet another agenda. Mr Speaker, Sir, let me first refute some arguments made by the former speakers. I will start by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. He forgets that in spite of the ongoing challenges, we are sustaining the Welfare State.

Mr Speaker, Sir, more than 75% of our country's patients are having treatment in Government hospitals and in Government healthcare centres, and more than 90% of the elderly have recourse to the public hospitals where services are totally free. Mr Speaker, Sir, for cancer patients, the drugs are available in the public sector.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Leader of the Opposition, I believe, at one point, has to inform the House which medication Mr Yusuf is on instead of making vague statements. Mr Speaker, Sir, even if you consider Xanax, it has an equivalent.

(Interruptions)

The equivalent of Xanax is Valium, and Valium, Mr Speaker, Sir, prevents you from getting stressed and, obviously, it will help keep your hair on. Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, on the Medical Negligence Standing Committee, the statement made again by the hon. Leader of the Opposition...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Jagutpal: ... are false and malicious. In fact, he could have requested me about what happened to the MNSC, I would have informed him that the Chairman was not in Mauritius for the last two weeks. He has already met the relatives of the deceased dialysis patients and I have his text message now. And what he is saying is again totally false and malicious. Mr Speaker, Sir, about the patient he referred to, the one who had a bullet wound in his body, this bullet has already been removed and the patient will be discharged in the coming days. It is not what the Opposition is saying, that this patient has to be transferred elsewhere for further treatment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, again, I will come back with what...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Jagutpal: ...hon. Shakeel Mohamed said earlier. In fact, when he was former Minister of Labour, at that time, sending Mauritians to work abroad, and overnight, the spouse of the latter turns into *un agent recruteur*. Is this not a total moral failure?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Wait!

(Interruptions)

Wait!

Dr. Boolell: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister has no right to impute motives. And what he has done is imputing motives in relation to the wife of a hon. Member who intervened. I think this is uncalled for. He has to withdraw.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Wait! What is happening in this House?

(Interruptions)

Make your point!

Dr. Boolell: I have stated very clearly that the hon. Minister has imputed motives in relation to the wife of a hon. Member. He has no right to say that the wife has taken advantage to set up a company for workers to work overseas. I think this is uncalled for.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Did you say that the hon. Member has set up a company to recruit workers to work overseas?

An hon. Member: The wife!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: Then, we have to find out whether what he has stated is right or not. And I have heard him; he has stated that the wife of a hon. Member has set up a company to send workers to work overseas.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You heard the hon. Member saying...

(Interruptions)

Please, what is happening there, hon. Teeluck? You said that the wife of the hon. Member has set up a company to recruit.

Dr. Boolell: Withdraw!

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I stated a former Minister of Labour approves the sending of Mauritians to work abroad.

Mr Speaker: Okay! You do not have a point of order! Continue!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Jagutpal: So, Mr Speaker, Sir, again, I have no lesson to take from an ex-Minister.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Are you questioning my ruling?

(Interruptions)

You Members, do you think you can question a ruling like this?

(Interruptions)

The hon. Member said: 'a former Minister'. There have been many former Ministers, here and abroad, and everywhere.

(Interruptions)

Oh, he didn't say that!

(Interruptions)

So, listen, if you continue to question my ruling, then...

(Interruptions)

Please, continue!

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me continue with what I have to say. So, I have something which I can share with all Members which reads as follows: 'H. A. could be involved in other cases of fraud. This is indicated by the Central Investigation Division of the Metropolitan Police of the North Division, who arrested him on Monday, February 10 in the wake of a fraud case. She had promised to find a job for someone's son, but H. A. former political agent of S. M. seized money from a resident of Plaine Verte without giving effect to the steps.' Mr Speaker, Sir, let me continue. I have, again, no lesson to take from an ex-Minister involved in Gora Issac, involved in armed dealings.

(Interruptions)

And, Mr Speaker, Sir, I will continue with what ex-Minister, hon. Shakeel Mohamed said on the Public Accounts Committee. Mr Speaker, Sir, he stated that there were five Members on the Government side, but he never stated that the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee is hon. Uteem.

(Interruptions)

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir...

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Jagutpal: ...it is whatever...

Mr Speaker: Excuse me! You are not debating; you are listening to the debate! Please, keep quiet!

(Interruptions)

Please, keep quiet!

(Interruptions)

Please, keep quiet!

(Interruptions)

Keep quiet!

(Interruptions)

Quiet!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning the report of the Public Accounts Committee, as the Prime Minister earlier stated, if he has been listening to the public officers, it is his duty to go to the respective authorities and inform them. And I believe that if he (hon. Uteem) is on the list of orators, he will come and tell us what he is going to do with whatever he has listened from the public officers in the Public Accounts Committee, on the report that he, himself, has submitted to the House.

Mr Speaker, Sir, for some, COVID-19 only affected Mauritius and it was even created by this Government. The same thing happened with Wakashio where, I would not be surprised, if they can even manage, by some means, to impute the Ukraine war on this Government.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Quiet! Order!

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Jagutpal: ...back to COVID-19 management, in fact, we needed strong decisions to shelter our country from the disastrous effects of COVID-19. Bold measures require strong leadership and this is *la marque de fabrique* of our Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth. It is no surprise that renowned institutions like the Singaporean Chandler Institute of Governance ranked our country first in Africa, and in the world, top 40 in its Good Governance Index. This is not my saying; this is the report of that prestigious agency. Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

I listened to you; now, you listen to me.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, Xanax is available in the private sector but in the hospitals, it is available freely. If you don't have it, I will make provision for anybody who requires it in this House or outside this House.

Mr Speaker, Sir, prestigious agencies around the world recognise our work. I am m sure our experts in the Opposition will disagree and deny it. Mr Speaker, Sir, the word "denial phase" in Psychology is a defence mechanism and it is good that I inform the House. It was highlighted by Freud and it involves refusal to accept reality; blocking external events from their awareness. I hope that all Members from this side of the House have already stated what the Government is doing and how the denial phase, the immature defence mechanism is right on track from the other side of the House.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am indeed very proud to serve in a team captained by a modern visionary and hardworking leader. Let me highlight the COVID-19 management. We have met more than 350 times since the beginning of the pandemic, as a result this allowed our country to be back on track to function normally, be it the education sector, the students going to school, the normal activities, and be it tourism.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we again received the recognition of international instances for the sound management of COVID-19. It is important to rely on indicators and not what they say there that we are manipulating figures. UK recorded 259 deaths per 100,000 population; France - 215 deaths; USA - 301 deaths. For us, *chaque décès est un décès de trop*, but what I am saying is that we have outplayed those predictions. In Mauritius, we recorded only 81 deaths per hundred thousand of the population. This is what the High-Level Committee did. This is what the Prime Minister did: save the lives of the population. Again, from the other side of the House, it is denial.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government is working to shield the country from disaster and sail towards normality. Some are only bound on creating sensation. They went to the international press to shamelessly denigrate our country, our motherland. They did not care about the

economy, our reputation, our tourism, our employment. What is their aim? Power! Power; even at the expense of the citizens. They adopted the same approach when it came to procurement of equipment and medication. We all know that the WHO predicted that there would be thousands of deaths in our ICU. So, it is our duty to act. Even if at that time, there were no planes, there were no ships coming to Mauritius.

I will invite hon. Bodha who was with us during that time to tell his new allies the truth about those challenging times; how, at that time, he was there to get all the equipment to Mauritius. And here, what are they saying? They are saying that we have done this just for political reasons, for other reasons. No! Mr Speaker, Sir, I hope hon. Bodha will come and highlight his contribution in this House unless at that time, he was having a good nap. I don't know. If he was having a good nap, then there is no question of him coming to report this. So, I will leave it to him. So, we purchased from all suppliers by all means and at that time of crisis, even for Pack and Blister, he knew how it was difficult for us to get the equipment. Again, I will invite him to come up and tell the House how, at that time, the High-Level Committee was coordinating to get equipment in Mauritius and that the prime objective was to safeguard life.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius is not the only country to have encountered such events, especially when we talk about Pack and Blister and about the ventilators. The Opposition tends to forget. Do you know how many medical equipment have been left unused in the past? I am not going to blame them for that. There were so many equipment like automatic methadone dispensers, and at that time there was no pandemic. All these equipment were bought following specification made by technicians and they thought that this will be used for our population, for those who will require it. But unfortunately, in our case it is another story, they are trying to blame the Government for making provisions of those equipment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there was a PNQ addressed to me for the procurement of medical supplies and equipment. I tabled all the names of the suppliers. I have no problem in tabling the names, and I am again inviting them because, at that time the Opposition said there was *anguille sous roche* because we have been procuring masks and all, from different suppliers. So, I'm waiting for the *anguille*. Is it still there? It is two years now. Where is the *anguille*? The question was addressed to me in 2020 ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Jagutpal: And again, Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Jagutpal: In 2020 I believe there was a question from one Member of the Opposition where they queried why the Ministry had stock piled facemasks and proceeded with purchase of equipment. And finally, what happened? In 2021, when we again had the wave of infection, those equipment were really helpful in saving lives. I am inviting them for questions. They should ask me about the price we paid at that time. Was it reasonable? Did we really pay an expensive price? Come up! Come up and ask me those questions. I will give you the figures and I will make the comparison to other islands, especially the Small Island Developing States. Come up with these questions! I'm inviting them.

They have always, Mr Speaker, Sir, been asking all questions and now I hear that there is no democracy. The Leader of the Opposition said that there is no *débat sur la démocratie*, but those questions that we are having every week, the Parliament is open and not closed. Is it not democracy? You are allowed even like today to have your motion. Is it not democracy? Mr Speaker, Sir, when the Leader of the Opposition came up with PNQ on Molnupiravir, all information was given to the public through this very House. And he said that we have not yet effected one single rupee payment for the purchase of Molnupiravir. I am welcoming him again for any PNQ or PQs on the purchase of drug and for the medical equipment. In fact, I am ready to give all the information. It is purely transparent. I will give you all the information.

Mr Speaker, Sir, some even tried to correlate the minister's involvement in the procurement procedures, but their intention was vile. Mr Speaker, Sir, at that time they pointed fingers on the Ministry of health as if I am the culprit. So, again, I'll invite the Chairman of the PAC as stated earlier to go (now, or even tomorrow) and make a statement. I will take my responsibility. Again, I say it, Mr Speaker, Sir. I will take my responsibility! And I am ready to do so! So, I am inviting you to do so. Having said that, we remain fundamentally different from those on the other side of the House.

I will recall the H1N1 crisis. At that time, tons of Tamiflu were purchased but we did not accuse the then Government. This is a different approach. This is a different attitude; this is a different behaviour from that of squandering public funds. Have you read what has happened in the UK, last week, in the BMJ Report? The Government, there, is being accused of stockpiling one drug called Paxlovid which might eventually go to waste.

So, this is not only for Mauritius. It was there during the time of H1N1 with the Tamiflu, where tons of medications were purchased. But, we did not criticise because we know when it comes to public health, what are the implications. It is not an exact science. We cannot decide exactly what will be the amount of drugs required. This is happening in the UK. This is happening everywhere around the world, where Governments or even authorities have purchased medications, and we cannot afford to do better than them.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the money spent in response was meant, again, to save lives. It cannot be compared with the Rs45 m. squandered in the *'Maurice c'est un plaisir*. Mr Speaker, Sir, that was squandered money! That was money wasted and that was money that you spent lavishly on *'Maurice c'est un plaisir*.'

The fact remains that the resilience of our health system was never put to test. This is undeniable. On the other side of the House, it is deniable. Mr Speaker, Sir, again, regarding the demise of the COVID-positive dialysis patients, it should be noted that they were more vulnerable. Let me tell you the worldwide figures, as at November, in countries like –

- UK had 20% of COVID death among the dialysis patients;
- in Canada: 28%;
- in USA: 26%;
- in Reunion Island: 15%,
- in Mauritius, the death rate is at 13%.

So, again here, our health sector remains resilient.

I congratulate all the frontliners. I congratulate all the healthcare workers who have done their best, be it for the treatment of patients, be it during the time of pandemic when they have worked relentlessly and this is where we stand today.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our frontliners were accused of all crimes and this is why, the Government instituted the Fact-Finding Committee. What is happening now? The Medical Negligence Standing Committee is looking into the allegations of medical negligence on a case to case basis because here, justice has to be done and justice has to be fair, all under the legal framework. Let us wait! Time will tell what would be the report of the Medical Negligence Standing Committee. It is not what is stated by the hon. Leader of the Opposition that the Medical Negligence Standing Committee is not working.

They also accused us of having no compassion for dialysis patients. Let me remind the House –

- it is this Government which set up the new dialysis unit at Long Mountain in 2021;
- it is this Government which upgraded the dialysis unit at Souillac Hospital.
- it is this Government which embarked in replacement of all dialysis machines dating for more than 15 year;
- it is this Government which procured 19 new machines to the tune of Rs25 m.;
- it is this Government which approved the setting up of two water treatment plants at Long Mountain and SSR Hospital tune of Rs11 m.,
- it is this Government which procured haemodiafiltration machine and portable water treatment plant for dialysis patients. All that was done during the pandemic and for the welfare of dialysis patients.

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are expecting 18 new dialysis machines by the end of this year. This Government will start work for a new renal transplant unit at Nehru Hospital and upgrade the dialysis unit at Rose Belle with 15 new machines.

This Government will proceed with upgrading the dialysis unit at the SSR Hospital and the Victoria Hospital. And this Government will again, in the new Flacq Hospital and the Bel Air MediClinic, have new dedicated dialysis units.

Mr Speaker, Sir, all this was done in two years while we were battling with COVID-19 and the fight is still on. Some are wise enough to affirm that our country is *en faillite* in spite of all those investments. They were in power for so many years when there was no pandemic. Now,

I will ask them: there was no global crisis, what did they do for the dialysis patients? Nothing! Today, they have the guts to come up and speak of no confidence!

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government succeeded in offering safe and efficient vaccination for the population. I will have to remind the House while we were all looking for vaccines, finding from where we will get vaccines and arranging to get vaccines, what was happening? Instead of encouraging the population to get vaccinated, they made the population question the consent form. What had happened? They tried to frighten our citizens but these very persons, they went to queue up late at night, *en catimini*, to get themselves vaccinated in private clinics.

However, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are very lucky that our population did not fall into their open trap. Now what, Mr Speaker, Sir? How to create another scandal? Anything that will come to their mind, they will create it and try to make a scandal.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we acknowledge the PAC Report and we are even grateful for the Audit Report as it comes with constructive criticisms. This document has always highlighted things to improve irrespective of the Government of the day. It is as if this is the first time that we are getting critics on the Audit Report and so for them, it means doing politics on the Audit Report.

It is easy to affirm that drugs that have to be discarded are wasted. Imagine, Mr Speaker, Sir, for one moment, if these critical drugs are not available in Mauritius – we are not a country that can produce drugs or medications, we are an island and we are very far, we cannot purchase in bulk, we cannot get it overnight. It takes time and we have to follow procedures. Now imagine, if these drugs are not available. Even if Xanax is not available, do you know how painful it will be? Mr Speaker, Sir, if Xanax is not available, is it not painful? We need to understand. So, we need to have extra amount of Xanax always in stock.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Dr. Jagutpal: We acknowledge the findings of the audit report. We acknowledge that we have to improve and there is room for improvement. For that, Mr Speaker, Sir,...

Mr X. L. Duval: *Enn malelve!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Come on! Parliamentary democracy! This is debate!

Dr. Jagutpal: *Fermal? Fermal?* Take one Xanax!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! I know *que cela fait mal*, but this is parliamentary debate!

(Interruptions)

This is parliamentary democracy!

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: *Ki cuyonade?*

Mr Speaker: No! You have to withdraw it!

Mr X. L. Duval: I withdraw.

Mr Speaker: Thank you. Try to conclude!

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. In three minutes, I will conclude. Mr Speaker, Sir, money spent to ensure the health and wellness of our citizens is never wasted money. Money wasted is in the crumbling Terre Rouge-Verdun link road. Money wasted is in the leaking Bagatelle Dam. Money wasted is when we used to finance Ole Ole holidays in the Swiss Alps. Money wasted is when more than 1,150 acres of prime lands, State owned lands are lavishly handed to *ti copains* and *ti copines!*

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will conclude by the...

Mr Speaker: Rapidly!

Dr. Jagutpal: Rapidly, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is 30 months and 3 days since the election of this democratically elected Government, we are doing a lot of projects. I will have time during the Budget Speech to mention all the achievements of this Government. Mr Speaker, Sir, the list is very long for the accomplishment. I will come back again.

Mr Speaker: No, please!

Dr. Jagutpal: All the above would not...

Mr Speaker: May I stop you there?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes.

Mr Speaker: For the record of the Chief Whip, 12 minutes have gone through the reserve. So, I will now call MP Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

(8.10 p.m.)

Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): *Merci pour l'applaudissement !* Mr Speaker, Sir, on this side of the House, I find the Minister of Health very nervous. I think it time for him to take his pills. We have no lesson to learn from him and we know that he is good at singing. So, I will advise him to go and sing *kukuruku* outside.

M. le président, cette motion de censure que nous débattons aujourd'hui contre le gouvernement à son mi-mandat est totalement justifiée, voire nécessaire. Qu'importe l'issue du vote qui s'en suivra, il est opportun de rappeler à ce gouvernement ses grosses lacunes, ses carences et surtout sa responsabilité première envers la nation et le peuple.

Cette motion est aussi contre sa gouvernance ou plutôt son absence totale de gouvernance. "*Government*", M. le président, n'est pas le synonyme de gouvernance. Faut-il rappeler aux membres de la majorité qu'ils ne sont que des locataires du *Government House* que pour la durée de leur mandat et non les propriétaires du pays et toutes les institutions ?

Comment se porte le navire *Mauritius*, M. le président, depuis les dernières élections? Le capitaine a perdu son second et a dû lui trouver un remplaçant. Son colistier a perdu son portefeuille et son aura dans son fief. Le capitaine doit souvent quitter la passerelle pour descendre dans les cales où se trouve la cuisine pour prendre ses feuilles de route. Son fidèle lieutenant a sérieusement endommagé le gouvernail économique par ses maladresses répétées et certains de ses ministres lui comblent de louanges mais lui fournissent des faux renseignements. La lourde cargaison de dettes a affecté la ligne de flottaison et a ralenti sensiblement le navire et certains en profitent pour piller la cargaison de grande valeur alors que d'autres se tiennent près des canots de sauvetage.

M. le président, s'il fallait établir le bilan du mi-mandat de ce gouvernement, voilà l'image qu'on retiendrait. Quant à Air Mauritius, nul besoin de métaphore pour décrire comment

les administrateurs lui ont méthodiquement coupé les ailes et éjecté sur le tarmac des centaines d'employés qui ont servi loyalement cette compagnie pendant des décennies.

M. le président, un gouvernement qui se respecte doit d'abord respecter la démocratie. Or, les élections municipales ont été renvoyées à deux reprises confisquant ainsi aux citoyens leurs droits civiques. *Zot inn sove, bate bef zot ti pou gagne !* Quant à notre auguste Assemblée, on constate, à chaque séance, comment notre démocratie parlementaire est allègrement piétinée sous les applaudissements des *taper latab*.

Pour la population cependant, la plus grande déception, je dirai même, la plus grande trahison est au niveau du coût de la vie. Le feu couvre sous les cendres, *koltar so pou zot. Miniss pe bizin galoupe !* Messieurs les ministres, allez sur le terrain, *body guard pou bizin vinn gody guard*.

Il y a une profonde colère au sein de la population. Quand un gouvernement joue avec le pouvoir d'achat de la population, il joue dangereusement avec le feu. Les ménagères s'arrachent les cheveux pour faire bouillir la marmite. Allez au supermarché, vous verrez comment les consommateurs se ruent sur les produits en promotion, sur les articles de bas de gamme. Les Mauriciens sont victimes de l'incompétence, de l'insouciance et de l'affairisme de ce gouvernement.

Je disais plutôt que la gouvernance n'est pas le synonyme de "gouvernement". La gouvernance concerne la manière dont un gouvernement et les autres organisations sociétales interagissent, comment ils interagissent avec les citoyens, et comment les décisions sont prises dans un monde de plus en plus complexe. Pour comprendre l'idée de gouvernance dans un cadre public, il est important de comprendre que l'intérêt pour les questions d'intérêt public ne se limite pas au gouvernement. D'autres acteurs, y compris les médias ainsi que les entreprises, la société civile et des ONG partagent un intérêt et parfois un rôle dans la résolution des problèmes publics. Les médias contribuent à relier les secteurs, car ils véhiculent l'information de l'un à l'autre, et peuvent jouer un rôle important dans la responsabilisation en façonnant les perceptions de la politique publique. Ils appartiennent clairement à tout débat sur la gouvernance.

Sur ce chapitre, M. le président, on ne peut que déplorer les tentatives de l'IBA de museler les radios privées tandis que l'ICTA se transforme en gabelous des réseaux sociaux. Les interpellations suite aux postes jugés blasphématoires par le régime sont effectuées à la vitesse

grand V par le *CCID* dans le but d'instaurer un climat de peur et décourager les internautes – surtout les jeunes – à exprimer librement leurs opinions.

La publicité gouvernementale est utilisée pour soutenir certains titres de presse collaborationnistes et asphyxier ceux qui chérissent leur indépendance alors que la *MBC* nous confisque R 150 mensuellement pour nous servir une insidieuse propagande chaque soir. C'est peut-être là que réside maintenant la différence fondamentale entre les deux termes. La gouvernance concerne la manière dont le pouvoir est exercé : qui a de l'influence, qui décide et comment les décideurs sont tenus responsables.

Qui a de l'influence ? Que constatons-nous ? Des conseillers, des membres d'une obscure cuisine, des hommes d'affaires ont aujourd'hui plus de pouvoir que les ministres et exercent une forte influence sur la prise des décisions. Nous n'avons même pas un gouvernement digne de ce nom, nous avons un semi gouvernement et les leviers du pouvoir sont tenus par les non élus et les courtisans véreux et quasiment toutes les institutions du pays ont été prises en otage par un autocrate capricieux et peureux.

M. le président, depuis 2019, le pays a connu pas mal de scandales. Pas mal de scandales ont été découverts, ont été emmenés ici au niveau du Parlement à travers les questions parlementaires dont les réponses ont été rarement données. Aujourd'hui, il y d'autres, on passe devant les cliniques smart métamorphosées en *Two Futures* engrangeant R 235 millions au passage. Des affairistes-piranhas voraces et insatiables attirés par l'odeur de l'argent sale pullulent dans les coulisses du pouvoir.

S'il vaut en rire que d'en pleurer devant cette rapacité sans limites, y compris sur les *ventilators*, le cadavre calciné de Telfair doit constamment nous rappeler que la fin justifie les moyens pour ces prédateurs de l'argent public. Oui, il y la fameuse *ICAC* qui paraît-il maintenant *pe get figir*. Villarosa, l'ancienne ambassadrice des Etats-Unis à Maurice n'avait-elle pas déclaré avant son départ –

“I am bewildered at the ICAC today. There is so much turmoil that it has lost all its credibility.”

M. le président, il existe un degré considérable de corrélation entre les niveaux de la corruption, la gouvernance et la qualité du leadership. Le mercredi 23 octobre 2019, *l'Alliance*

Morisien divulguait les grandes lignes de son manifeste électoral. Voici ce que le Premier ministre disait –

« Nous mènerons une politique de zéro tolérance contre la fraude et la corruption. »

Qu'est-ce que nous constatons aujourd'hui, M. le président ? Beaucoup plus de fraude et de corruption.

La grandeur d'un homme, disait Bob Marley, ne se mesure pas à la richesse qu'il acquiert mais à son intégrité et à sa capacité à affecter positivement les gens autour de lui.

Je ne peux terminer mon intervention, M. le président, sans la question environnementale. M. le président, l'emblématique crécerelle de Maurice sera déclarée « Oiseau national de l'île Maurice ». Le sauvetage de ce rapace est l'une des plus grandes réussites en matière de conservation et non seulement à Maurice mais également dans le monde. La population sauvage actuelle de crécerelles s'élève à 350 mais ce qu'il faut aussi savoir c'est que cette population a été réduite de 700 à 350 en 10 ans. Pourquoi? Principalement en raison de la déforestation entraînant une réduction de l'habitat mais ce qui se préoccupe, M. le président, est-ce qu'il y a quelqu'un au sein de ce gouvernement qui songerait à la personnalité juridique de nos lagons, de nos forêts et de nos rivières ?

Malheureusement, c'est à la destruction de nos *wetlands*, des flancs de montagnes, de nos forêts et de nos lagons qu'on est témoin. Et ce ne sont pas les actions cosmétiques de la *National Environmental Cleaning Authority* qui renverseront cette tendance destructrice.

Il y a un total mépris pour la planification pour le long terme et pour les enjeux qui détermineront la qualité de vie de nos enfants et de notre République. Le populisme, aujourd'hui, est à la base de toute action gouvernementale.

M. le président, pour conclure, nous débattons d'une motion qui a déjà été votée sans débats par la population dans son ensemble. Ceux qui marchent dans les rues en savent. Ceux qui sont dans les grandes voitures ne savent pas, ils sont protégés. Et certains ont goûté, dans le sud-est, cette révolte des habitants.

Et, M. le président, pour cause un pouvoir d'achat en chute libre et une qualité de vie qui ne cesse de se dégrader alors que nous assistons, la population assiste, à la dilapidation des fonds publics qui se poursuit en toute impunité.

M. le président, Confucius avait dit –

« Sous un bon gouvernement, la pauvreté est une honte ; sous un mauvais gouvernement, la richesse est aussi une honte »

Je vous remercie.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Gobin!

(8.20 p.m.)

The Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security (Mr M. Gobin): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I thank the orator who was speaking before me. He was reminding me of what he was saying hardly 2 years back, in 2019. I can distinctly remember hon. Senior Member, Bhagwan, saying that we would be walking with helmets on our heads.

(Interruptions)

I...

Mr Speaker: Wait! Wait!

Mr Gobin: I distinctly remember. It forms part of debate. I remember you saying, hon. Senior Member. I bow to your seniority in this House. But, we have heard that many times from you specially. Allow me, very humbly to say, *vous êtes déconnecté, mon cher ami*.

(Interruptions)

You know, each time I hear my hon. colleague, he is saying: ‘*Koltar so...we will wear helmets and all that.*’

Mr Speaker, Sir, what I want to say is we are not oblivious to what is happening outside. We know very well, just the same way as we knew what was happening outside in 2019 and the elections results proved us to be right and proved you to be wrong. Likewise, even now, we know what is happening, *on ne fait pas la politique de l’autruche*. I will come back to this point a bit later.

Let me first of all say what this Motion of No Confidence is about? I will go straight to the point and I take very few minutes because I think my colleagues who spoke before me have elaborated a lot on the actions of Government. The actions of Government speak volumes of

what Government is doing in favour of the population. I totally understand the hon. Leader of the Opposition proposing a Motion of No Confidence at this specific stage because of the recent events. The hon. Leader of the Opposition is expecting, as any other Leader of the Opposition would have expected, that a Motion of No Confidence at this particular point in time, will bring cracks in the majority of Government. And this is exactly what hon. Mohamed did! *Une fois n'est pas coutume*, I have to say well done hon. Shakeel Mohamed who is not here. He tried to use the PAC report of hon. Uteem to create cracks in the majority of Government. Let me reassure the "1% Opposition."

(Interruptions)

...there will be no cracks in the majority of Government.

(Interruptions)

What is the Leader of Opposition saying? If we were to be in power, we would do this, we would do that. If we were to be in power, we would have done... *Ce ne sont que des suppositions. Avec des 'Si', on mettrait Paris en bouteille ! Qu'est que c'est ? Ce sont des suppositions sans fondements, des spéculations vaines, inutiles.* Totally waste the time of the House!

Let me ask the people of Mauritius a question. Will the people of Mauritius trust the hon. Leader of the Opposition more than they trust Pravind Kumar Jugnauth? This is the question. It is a question of trust. We are all going through hard times, hon. Leader of the Opposition. Even you are going through hard times. We are all going through hard times because of the compounded effects of COVID-19 and the war between Russia and Ukraine.

When Shanghai Harbour is still closed, when that machinery around Shanghai is to a standstill because of COVID, it affects everybody. When I look at the hon. Leader of the Opposition, on your table, you have a flashy red phone; even that phone cover probably has come from Shanghai. With the war in Ukraine and with the standstill in Shanghai, that delivery will be delayed.

When I look at the Secunder of the Motion, hon. Senior Member Bérenger, when I look at that proud pin you are wearing - I salute you for wearing the pin of Mauritius - even that pin probably comes from China. Even the price of that pin has gone up! Why? Because Shanghai is not working because of the COVID pandemic. Did you say that to the people out there? That the

paper clips on hon. Lobine's desk are no longer available probably because of the freight, because of the ships. Are you saying that to the people out there? No, you are not! What are you saying? Government must go. Why? To make place for you? You think you can do better? We are the first ones to say we could have done better. You know why, Mr Speaker, Sir? Because we had a programme in 2019.

The machinery of Government was going at full speed when in March 2020, we had to come to an abrupt stop. We are the ones who are frustrated. We wanted to complete our programme as we had announced in this House. But, could we have done otherwise? Could we have predicted the COVID-19 pandemic? Could we have predicted what Mr Putin would have done? We could not have predicted that. But we have to face it. What are they doing? 1% of the Opposition thinks that they will bring cracks in the majority of Government! They will not!

Let me tell the people what the Opposition is capable of – this Opposition. When we were increasing pensions in 2014, when we had even announced the increase in pension in 2014, they said: '*Non pa pou kapav. Pena cass!*' When we had the money in 2014, they were saying no. This is the denial principle as hon. Dr. Jagutpal, qualified psychiatrist, is saying. When we were buying vaccines or when we were receiving vaccines by donations, they said: 'No, don't go and do the vaccine! You are taking too much risk'. They were discouraging the people. This is the denial. Just to say 'No'. It's the pleasure of saying 'No'. 'No, don't go for vaccination.' And then, today, the paradox is, the hon. Leader of the Opposition says we can remove our masks! Would you be able to remove your mask had you not been vaccinated with the same vaccine that this Government brought to this country?

When the CSG was announced and when the CSG Bill was presented to this House, they were the first ones to vociferously say no. But today, what is the argument? The same CSG has brought forth Rs15 billion in the coffers of the State and we can use those Rs15 billion! *Qu'est-ce que c'est ca?* Blowing hot and cold depending on which day of the week we are. It is this Opposition that the people of Mauritius will believe? There is no way. There is no way. They believe that people will say they can do better.

The people of Mauritius had shown, in the last elections, as in so many elections, in whom they place their trust. And believe me, we are in contact with the people, *avek lepep*. Hon. Bhagwan has left. We will say yes, *koltar so. Bien sur koltar so. So pou tou dimounn*. But we

will face it together. We will face it together! And let me tell the people; yes, there are tough times. We are in tough times. We were the first ones to say we are going to go through tough times. And this tough time will continue for some time, Mr Speaker, Sir. We say it to the people. But we stand together in tough times. We don't do like the 1% Opposition is doing.

And believe me, let me come to that 1%. That *sondage* published on Sunday was not paid for by my Party or Sun Trust. It was by *Le Mauricien*. Yet, they come with the Motion of No Confidence. Never mind. Tough times are here, but as the saying goes: "tough times do not last, tough people do."

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

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

At 8.30 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 10.00 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Remain seated and be seated! Hon. Yeung Sik Yuen!

(10.00 p.m.)

Mr M. Yeung Sik Yuen (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands): M. le président, je tiens à contribuer au débat sur la motion de blâme contre le gouvernement, même si ce soir, on m'accorde que sept minutes.

L'Opposition est là pour écouter à la population et nous sommes, en fait, les porte-paroles du peuple mauricien. Aujourd'hui, la population n'a plus confiance en ce gouvernement, et à travers la motion de blâme déposée par le chef de l'Opposition, on exprime les doléances du peuple.

M. le président, ce gouvernement nous a promis un avenir meilleur, un miracle économique, mais on constate qu'on vit un cauchemar. On a devant nous, un gouvernement sans direction, et les différentes mesures annoncées dans les précédents budgets, n'ont pas résolu les grands soucis de notre économie. Beaucoup d'entreprises ont malheureusement cessé d'opérer. Le taux de chômage a grimpé. La roupie a perdu sa valeur à une vitesse inouïe et la vie à

Maurice est devenue très chère. Les gens et surtout ceux au bas de l'échelle n'arrivent plus à joindre les deux bouts. Il y a un désespoir au sein de la population.

J'avais dit lors de mon discours du budget 2020 que les pauvres deviennent plus pauvres et cela devient beaucoup plus difficile à vivre à Maurice. Certains dorment le ventre vide et les récentes protestations qu'on a eues dans différentes régions de l'île sont des signes que les gens ont faim. Ils souffrent de ce qui se passe à Maurice.

Il faut que ce gouvernement vienne avec de meilleurs sentiments pour le peuple mauricien et avec des vraies mesures pour relancer l'économie. M. le président, le gouvernement n'arrive plus à stabiliser la roupie vis-à-vis les devises étrangères. Le dollar américain coûte aujourd'hui 18 % plus cher qu'en novembre 2019. L'euro coûte 13 % plus cher qu'en novembre 2019.

M. le président, le peuple mauricien est remonté et ils sont en colère et ils blâment ce gouvernement car il a augmenté le prix du gaz par 33 %, soit une augmentation de R 60. Le prix de l'essence : par 33 % depuis décembre 2021. Le prix du transport a augmenté entre une fourchette de 25 % à 42 %. Et aujourd'hui, j'ai une pensée spéciale pour les *self-employed* qui doivent déboursier de l'argent du transport chaque jour pour aller travailler ; j'ai en tête les maçons, charpentiers, peintres, électriciens, plombiers car certains travaillent le matin pour pouvoir manger le soir. *Gramatin travay pou manze aswar !*

Le prix des médicaments a augmenté énormément. Je vais venir qu'avec des exemples. Je vous donne l'exemple pour les médicaments pour les diabétiques. *Forxiga* 10 mg se vend à R 1,807 soit 100% d'augmentation sur le prix de l'année dernière. *NovoMix* et *NovoRapid* se vendent à R 2,077, soit 100% d'augmentation sur le prix de l'année dernière. Aujourd'hui, M. le président, le budget d'un pensionnaire pour les médicaments tourne autour de R 6,000 à 7,000 mensuellement. Certains mauriciens ne savent plus comment payer le loyer et l'électricité et pire encore, on entend que le prix du courant va aussi augmenter.

Il ne faut pas tout mettre sur le compte du Covid-19 et le conflit de la Russie et de l'Ukraine. M. le président, les Mauriciens ne sont pas dupes. On ne va pas accepter que certains légumes soient chers. Aujourd'hui, j'ai payé trois chayottes à R 129. Pour les gens qui ne savent pas c'est quoi chayotte, ce sont chouchous. *3 sousous pou R 129 ! R 129 pour une aubergine !*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Are you going to table it?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: I can table it! I can table it, yes!

(Interruptions)

R 129 pour une aubergine ! *I can table this also!* R 143 pour quatre pommes d'amour, R 125 pour une courgette, R 128 pour quatre carottes !

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: R 240 pour 340 grammes de *piment-cari* !

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen : Aujourd'hui, cela m'a coûté dans les R 1,000 pour ces quelques légumes.

An hon. Member: *Mank zis macaroni la!*

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: *To kapav donn mwa!*

M. le président, je pose la question aux membres du gouvernement à travers vous. Est-ce que ces légumes sont cultivés en Ukraine ou à Maurice ?

M. le président, ce gouvernement nous dit de serrer la ceinture - *okay*, mais il fait que le contraire ! *Sintir dan zot lame zot !* Ils dévalisent les fonds publics, et je vais citer quelques exemples –

- les voyages des 13 ministres à Dubaï ;
- l'achat des *ventilators*,
- le gaspillage sur *Heritage City*.

M. le président, si le gouvernement ne se ressaisit pas, on sera dans la même situation de la crise économique en Sri Lanka et le Liban, où il y a des coupures de courant et de graves pénuries de nourriture, de carburant et des produits pharmaceutiques.

Il faut surtout stabiliser la roupie, M. le président. Il faut baisser la taxe sur l'essence. Il faut conscientiser les gens à consommer plus de produits locaux et il faut aider les pauvres à travers les vouchers.

Mr Speaker: Try to conclude!

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: *Yes, I am finishing.* M. le président, au moment du vote de cette motion, je demande aux membres de la majorité de bien vouloir réfléchir sur les points suivants

—

- Depuis qu'ils sont au gouvernement, M. le président, est-ce que l'économie de Maurice va dans la bonne direction ?
- Est-ce qu'il y a un avenir pour les jeunes à Maurice ?
- Est-ce que les Mauriciens se sont appauvris ?
- Est-ce que la corruption a augmenté ?

M. le président, en tout cas, je les laisse avec leur conscience. Au moment voulu, le peuple jugera.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Thank you. Remove your exhibits from the Chamber!

(10.09 p.m.)

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, *mo sir avek sa ban prix la supermase pe travay bien.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, looking at the wordings of this Motion of No Confidence, I am a bit surprised. The labelling of this motion is: 'this Assembly has no confidence in Government'. In this motion, the Leader of the Opposition does not say that he does not have confidence in this Government. The wording of this motion is rather broad, Mr Speaker, Sir. Do I understand that the Leader of the Opposition does not believe in Government or is it a subliminal warning? If he has no confidence in this Government, does that mean he wants a system of anarchy? Anarchy is a state of disorder due to absence of authorities. Is that why he did not condemn the riots that

took place on April 22, of this year? A riot that was organised by rioters carrying mattresses and old tyres and setting fire at the different junctions across different localities; incidents that have caused many casualties among the public, policemen and members of the Fire Services, not to mention the damage to Government property including the brand-new Metro station at Barkly with infrastructural damages of Rs13 m. just at Barkly Metro station.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this riot reminds me of the situation that prevailed in 1999 and 1968. In 1999 ...

Mr Speaker: Can you give me one minute, please? Hon. Member, I have told you to remove the exhibit and three times I have told you. Do it instantly, if not, you have to withdraw from the Chamber.

(Interruptions)

Then, if everybody brings cows and goats and everything when the price is going up! Everything, the price is going up!

Please continue!

Dr. Husnoo: In 1999, after the death of Kaya, a riot spread to Candos, Goodlands and many other localities causing damage to property and loss of innocent lives. Similarly, the riots in 1968 which I personally witnessed, at that time I was 16 years old and I was residing in Plaine Verte. I experienced at first-hand how innocent people lost their properties, had their houses burnt down and some, eventually, lost their lives. This happened both in Roche Bois and Plaine Verte, Mr Speaker, Sir. It was mainly the innocent people from these regions who lost their lives.

Do I understand that this is what the Leader of the Opposition wants? As far as I remember he has not yet publicly condemned this riot. Do I take it that the Leader of the Opposition condoned what happened three weeks ago?

Nowadays, we have people who are posting on the social media the address of policemen who arrested somebody. What is the message behind publicly putting these posts? Is it to incite people to go and attack the policeman and his family at his residence? But I see the Leader of the Opposition did not have anything to say about this particular policeman.

You would agree, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a first time that we have reached so low. This is from educated individuals who are very much aware of the possible consequences of their

actions. Mr Speaker, Sir, are we going to relive the Azor Adelaïde episode? From what has been happening three weeks ago, it is obvious that the extra parliamentary opposition wants to have a state of anarchy and insurrection. But what has surprised me is the reaction or rather the non-reaction of the Leader of the Opposition. Do I get the impression that the Leader of the Opposition wants such an anarchic situation to develop in Mauritius?

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are living in a democratic society. If the Opposition does not agree with the Government, at the next election they can vote to remove the Government, but you do not try to remove the Government by fuelling riots and violence. In a democratic society, we change the Government through the ballot box but not by the bullet. Mauritius has always had the reputation of being a peaceful and democratic society; let us keep it like this. Let us not change the Government by violent means. Once we go down this lane, we will destroy our beautiful island where *c'est un plaisir de vivre*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since the beginning of 2020, we have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and in the last three months, the war in Ukraine has worsened the situation. In 2019, we had about 1.4 million tourists whereas last year, we had only 183,000 tourists who visited Mauritius. We know how the situation has severely impacted on the financial situation of this country. We all know how the price of petrol has gone up on the world market. The price of crude oil recently reached a peak of USD140, though now it has settled down to around, I think, USD120. As we know, when the price of petrol goes up, it has a cascading effect on the price of transport and eventually on all the commodities that we import. Neither the COVID-19, nor the Ukraine war was the doing of this Government; we all know it except the Opposition Party.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit Mauritius, right from the beginning, the Government, under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister, insisted that we are going to do everything to save the lives of our citizens even though that is going to cost us a lot financially. In fact, well before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government has been trying to improve the financial situation of the population, especially people on the lower rung of the ladder. Have we forgotten that this Government introduced the minimum wage starting from Rs8,000 and is now Rs11,000. And the old age pension which has increased from Rs3,600 to Rs9,000 now; this was well before the COVID-19 pandemic, Mr Speaker, Sir.

We all remember how difficult it was during the period of confinement. In spite of this situation, Government provided food pack to vulnerable groups; Wage Assistance Scheme to workers in different industries and the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme to people working in the informal sector. Government injected around Rs500 m. in national budget twice in order to subsidise the price of basic commodities and essential items due to the soaring prices at the level of the international market.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Members of the Opposition do not realise or do not want to realise that we are among the few countries in the world to come up with such exceptional economic measures to boost up our economy during these two years of pandemic which has caused havoc across the world.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if you would allow me to take one or two points about the points raised by the Leader of Opposition. Firstly, about the postponement of the municipal elections. As you are aware, the elections was due by June 2021, but we all know at that particular time we were still having a large number of COVID cases and even a number of deaths. The number of COVID cases was increasing; was it possible to have elections in this situation? This year also, we have postponed the election to June 2023, at latest – I repeat this is at latest. If the Government feels that we can do the elections before that date, I am sure we will do it.

Mr Speaker, Sir, remember who postponed the general elections in 1972, why was it possible? Who postponed it? Was there any epidemic at that time? Similarly, the municipal elections were due in 2011. Why was it postponed to December 2012? What was the reason? Again, was there any COVID at that particular time? Mr Speaker, Sir, some people have short memories or maybe, let us say, selective amnesia.

Now, coming to COVID cases; the Leader of the Opposition said that we have to stop wearing masks and decrease the precautionary measures that we have been taking against COVID. We know, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we have different strings across the world. We know what happened to Shanghai recently and how Shanghai was completely locked down. If we do have a relapse of COVID-19 in Mauritius, he will be the first person to blame the Government. He is trying to tell us to remove, to decrease the precautionary measures we are taking but in case there is a resurgence, he will be the first person to blame the Government.

According to the Leader of the Opposition, whatever the Government does regarding COVID-19 is wrong. It was the same for COVID-19 vaccination; I think somebody else mentioned it earlier.

Firstly, it was said the vaccine was dangerous; there was a campaign to discourage people from doing the vaccine.

The second reason is that some of the vaccines were not approved by WHO.

Thirdly, they asked the population not to sign the consent form.

Fourthly, the vaccine does not protect you against different variants.

All sorts of excuses were used to discourage the population from taking the necessary precaution, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Another point which was raised by the Leader of the Opposition: in 2012 when he was the Minister of Finance, he was congratulated by Moody's and the World Bank I think. Now, he is coming to say if he was in Government, *nous aurions augmenté la pension de vieillesse et introduit le salaire minimum*. When he was doing so well in 2012, why did he not increase the old age pension? The pension at that time was Rs3,600 and it is this Government that increased it to Rs9,000. Similarly for the minimum wage, some workers at that time were earning, Mr Speaker, Sir, Rs1,500 per month and what did he do for them? He was congratulated by Moody's, I am happy for him but what did he do for the old aged people at that particular time? What did he do about minimum wage at that particular time? Today, when we have increased the minimum wage initially to Rs8,000 and now to Rs11,000, he is complaining that it is not enough. I think he should have done it when the country was doing so well but he did not do it.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I believe that the present Opposition party is running out of steam. They do not realise in what mess they are. An alliance that cannot even decide who is going to lead the Opposition alliance for the next General Election is trying to bring a Motion of No Confidence against this Government.

On the other hand, the population knows that since 2014 when we came in power, we have been working to improve the lot of our population. We have had two major and unprecedented problems which the world has not witnessed in the last 75 years, Mr Speaker, Sir,

that is, the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. But despite all the difficulties, the Government has done and is still trying to do its utmost to improve the lives of our citizens.

We are not out of the woods yet, Mr Speaker, Sir. God knows what is going to happen in Ukraine. If that situation gets worse at it looks like it, if we go into a third World War – it is not farfetched – we just have to realise how catastrophic this is going to be not just for Mauritius, for the whole world.

Before concluding, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to quote a survey that was carried out by *Le Mauricien* and StraConsult and was published two days ago. The first question: “To which political party do you feel closest to?” The *Mouvement Socialiste Mauricien* recorded 18%, that is, 18% of the sample feels closest to MSM and as for PMSD, only 1%. The next question: “Who would you vote as the next PM?” Pravind Jugnauth - 21%, Xavier Duval - 2%. Third question: “Which party alliance would you be willing to vote if there is a general election tomorrow?” Alliance de l’Espoir - MMM, PMSD, Roshi Bhadain, Nando Bodha - 1%, that is, only six people out of 600 of the sample. MMM, Alan Ganoo and Steve Obeegadoo - 11%.

From these results, it is already clear that the population has, without the slightest doubt, already voted a Motion of No Confidence against the Opposition, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

If this is not a Motion of No Confidence against the Opposition, I wonder what it is.

Mr Speaker, Sir, following the results of the survey and the *claque magistrale* that he has received, I think to maintain his credibility, the most decent thing that the Leader of the Opposition should do is to withdraw this Motion of No Confidence without further ado.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Assirvaden!

(10.24 p.m.)

Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Merci, M. le président.

M. le président, j’ai 15 minutes pour mon plaidoyer à l’occasion de cette motion de blâme qui a été présentée par le leader de l’Opposition. Au sein du Parti travailliste, nous soutenons la

motion de blâme contre le gouvernement. Cette motion de blâme, M. le président, est présentée dans un contexte particulier.

Il est un fait qu'en 2022, le peuple souffre énormément. C'est un fait que la population s'appauvrit de jour en jour, que le doute est dans le pays et que le gouvernement n'a plus la confiance de la population. Cette motion de blâme, il faut bien le dire, n'est pas présentée contre un ministre, n'est pas présentée contre le ministre de la Santé, contre le ministre du Commerce, contre le ministre des Finances ou même contre le Premier ministre. Cette motion de blâme est présentée contre l'ensemble du gouvernement parce que l'ensemble du gouvernement mène ce pays vers la déroute.

J'ai écouté 12 orateurs qui m'ont précédé, des ministres, le ministre des Finances, le ministre du Commerce. J'ai écouté le ministre de l'Agriculture disant à l'honorable Bhagwan qu'il est coupé de la réalité. Quand j'ai écouté le ministre de l'Agriculture, l'*Attorney General*, alors que le pays, des gens dans ce pays mangent un repas par jour, alors que certaines familles n'arrivent pas à finir leur fin de mois, alors que tous les prix des alimentations dans nos supermarchés, l'honorable Sik Yuen vient d'en faire la preuve, augmentent. Alors que les médicaments pour les retraités augmentent criminellement, c'est dommage alors que la ménagère attend du ministre de l'Agriculture des solutions, des réponses à leurs interrogations, le ministre de l'Agriculture trouve important le *pin* sur la veste de l'honorable Bérenger. Important pour dire alors que nous attendons des solutions, c'est cela qu'on appelle coupé de la réalité et notre devoir en tant que l'Opposition, ce n'est pas simplement de critiquer mais aussi d'attirer l'attention du gouvernement par ce cri du cœur. C'est pour cela que certains observateurs ont qualifié les désordres de ces dernières semaines des désordres de la faim.

Le coût de la vie dans ce pays, M. le président, la population comprend très bien qu'il y a une guerre entre la Russie et l'Ukraine. La population comprend très bien que le Covid est passé, nous sommes passés par des moments difficiles. Le père de famille comprend très bien que dans le monde entier le prix de l'huile augmente, le prix du charbon augmente, les matières premières augmentent, la population comprend. Ils comprennent. Les Mauriciens, les jeunes et les Mauriciens en général disent, regardent la télé, mais ce qu'ils ne comprennent pas, M. le président, c'est qu'au même moment qu'on demande à cette population qu'il faut qu'ils serrent la ceinture pour payer son carburant plus cher. En un mois, pour payer le gaz ménager plus cher,

pour payer le métro, pour payer le taxi, pour payer le bus, pour payer les médicaments. Alors que le ministre du Transport vient dire « la population comprendra ». Oui, la population comprendra! Mais la population comprendra quand 13 ministres partent à Dubai pour le *jalsa* de Dubai, alors que vous demandez à la population de serrer les ceintures? La population va comprendre quand, au CEB, pendant six ans nous avons créé trois subsidiaires qui ont englouti R 1.2 milliards et ce matin, le ministre de l'Énergie est venu confirmer que deux subsidiaires seront en faillite, seront fermés alors que le gouvernement a investi R 1.2 milliards. Comment la population peut comprendre quand nous savons ce qui est arrivé au stade de Côte d'Or, autour de R 5 milliards - éléphant blanc? Le *Safe City* caméra : R 19 milliards. La population se pose des questions.

J'ai écouté le Vice-premier ministre, Dr. Husnoo. Il disait que la situation est grave. Oui, M. le ministre. L'Opposition, nous sommes responsables, nous comprenons que la situation est grave. Mais, est-ce le moment, Mr le Vice-premier ministre de *launch* un *tender* pour la rénovation du bureau de votre ministère? Est-ce le moment-là ? Actuellement, alors que le pays passe des moments difficiles, la police vient d'acheter 25 berlines neuves pour les *PPS* ou pour les ministres? Est-ce le moment, M. le président? La population passe par des moments difficiles - les milliards de la *MIC* sont dilapidés sans transparence! Servez de cet argent, la population comprendra !

Donc, M. le président, la population est une population intelligente. Mais, la population se pose des questions. La population se pose des questions, M. le président, comment dans notre démocratie, dans ce pays, un député écrit au directeur général de la *Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation* et une journaliste est suspendue - elle perd son emploi. Est-ce possible en 2022 que la population puisse comprendre?

An hon. Member: Incroyable!

Mr Assirvaden: Puisqu'une journaliste n'a pas pris la carte de visite de l'honorable Dhunoo, elle est suspendue ; elle perd son emploi à la *MBC*. C'est cela que le peuple, la population se pose des questions...

An hon. Member: La honte !

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: La honte !

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Please, behave yourself! Don't interrupt the Member!

Mr Assirvaden: La ménagère...

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden: La ménagère...

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden: La ménagère...

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden: Cela fait mal!

Mr Speaker: Who started?

(Interruptions)

You are a mature politician.

Mr Assirvaden: Cela fait mal !

Mr Speaker: Who started this game?

(Interruptions)

Quiet there!

Mr Assirvaden: L'honorable Dhunoo s'excite.

Mr Dhunoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have a point of order.

Mr Speaker: Yes.

Mr Assirvaden: What point of order? I am not going to give way, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Come on! It is point of order. You don't...

Mr Dhunoo: It is a point of order. I am not giving a point of clarification.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member, you should know your Standing Orders.

Mr Assirvaden: I know my Standing Orders.

Mr Speaker: You don't know your Standing Orders!

Mr Assirvaden: *Il est en train de m'interrompre!*

Mr Speaker: No, he has the right of a point of order. There is no way to give! I give the floor! I give the way, please!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I refer to Standing Order 40: to other Members imputing motives. There has been an inquiry; he has mentioned my name. And the Prime Minister gave a reply; and there has been an inquiry. He cannot say that because of me this person has been... He cannot be imputing motives.

Mr Speaker: Yes.

Mr Dhunoo: He cannot put allegations on me.

Mr Speaker: You have a point of order.

Mr Dhunoo: Exactly!

Mr Speaker: Please withdraw this!

Mr Dhunoo: He has to withdraw!

Mr Speaker: You have to withdraw that.

(Interruptions)

You can't! You can't!

(Interruptions)

You can't be a judge! There is an inquiry going on. You can't be a judge!

Mr Assirvaden: L'honorable député a écrit à la *MBC* pour demander de sanctionner la journaliste, oui ou non ?

(Interruptions)

Aujourd'hui, il se dédouane? Je ne porte pas un jugement, M. le président, mais c'est un fait une journaliste a perdu son emploi.

Mr Speaker: Please! Please! I am asking to withdraw that!

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden: Il l'a fait ; je ne vais pas retirer.

Mr Speaker: You have no speech! Next one!

An hon. Member: Shame!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You have no speech!

Mr Assirvaden: Il protège le député !

Mr Speaker: You have no speech!

An hon. Member: You withdraw! You withdraw!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Withdraw from the Chamber!

(Interruptions)

Withdraw from the Chamber!

(Interruptions)

Withdraw from the Chamber!

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Met li deor do!*

Mr Speaker: Hon. Nuckcheddy, you start your speech!

(10.34 p.m.)

Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Let me first thank the Leader of the Opposition that he is back in this House to listen to the debate on his motion. Oh, you are going?

(Interruptions)

The mover is going. Okay. No problem. Yet, again, Mr Speaker, Sir, it gave me a great satisfaction that he was here up to that time, nearly half past ten, because normally, after his PNQ, he disappears from this House, so that does not make any difference.

A Motion of No Confidence on this Government, Mr Speaker, Sir, at this point of time when we should be working together to face the new normal is shameful. As if the census of the Week-End Paper was not enough for the Leader of Opposition to withdraw his motion. So, let me bring my contribution and, Mr Speaker, Sir, I will start from the very beginning.

In November 2019, we went in an election. There were 3 major blocks. I still consider the MMM as one of the major blocks despite the fact that in several Constituencies, the MMM candidates have not been able to recover their deposit, the *tire caution, comme on dit*. There was one in No. 9 and all the three in No. 7, and elsewhere also.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, with 3 blocks it was clear that none of them was going to get more than 50% of the votes. We, the *Alliance Morisien*, we got 37%. The others, they got what they got. So, we all got a minority. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, what makes the difference is that we got the majority of the minority whereas there, they got the minority of the minority.

(Interruptions)

And, they are doing a very simple mathematics, that is, 100% minus the 37% that we got, and they are telling everyone that they have 63% of the population with them but, what you don't tell the population is that there were 22% of the population which did not cast the vote. So, if you remove the 22% from the 63%, it means that you got only 41%, and that all of you together, *et avec ces 4%, vous êtes comme-ci la grenouille qui veut se faire aussi grosse que le bœuf*. And, now, they are behind the *Election Municipale*. *Sa aussi zot pou gagn bate!*

(Interruptions)

This is what we must understand and explain to the people. And since then, they are using all sorts of tactics to tarnish the image of the country. They came with petitions, which one after the other was thrown away. In one instance, they did get a recount. But then, what happened? The country lost money because it was tax payers' money and MMM lost a member!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the Constituency No. 9, the MMM got only 5% of votes more than the *Parti Malin*, as highlighted by hon. Collendavelloo some time back.

During his intervention on the COVID-19 Bill on 13 May 2020, the then Leader of Opposition, hon. Dr. Boolell mentioned -

“Do not forget, electoral petitions are before the Court to contest the legitimacy of this Government.”

What I want you to understand, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that since 08 November 2019, the Opposition’s major concern is to create confusion in the mind of people and have recourse to all sorts of anti-democratic means to contest the legitimacy of this Government. As their attempt of electoral petitions did not work, now they are coming with this motion.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on 23 October 2019, the leader of *Alliance Morisien*, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, presented his manifesto with 15 measures, and we just completed our two years, we are nearly approaching the mid-mandate and here is our bilan. *Malgré le contexte difficile, on a maintenu l’éducation gratuite, on a maintenu la santé gratuite, on a maintenu le transport gratuit. En plus de cela, M. le président, d’après le manifeste électoral -*

- Le rapport du *PRB* a été appliqué comme promis.
- Les manuels scolaires gratuits, cela a été fait.
- La pension de vieillesse à R 9,000, cela a été fait.
- Cette opposition que nous avons en face de nous avait déclaré qu’elle n’avait pas le moyen de payer R 5,000 en 2014.

Le Leader de l’opposition – heureusement qu’il n’est pas là – aurait dit que c’est lui et l’honorable Bodha qui avaient proposé la pension à R 5,000 en 2014 car déjà on voit l’honorable Bodha déclarer le *Urban Terminal* comme son concept).

- L’aide pour les soins à l’étranger qui passe de R 800,000 à R 1 m. avec le proche du patient bénéficiant d’un billet d’avion gratuit.

Le plus important, M. le président, on avait promis la création d’un *Youth Environment Council* pour que les jeunes puissent s’exprimer sur la question environnementale.

In March 2021, the National Youth Environment Council (NYEC) was created and this Council, Mr Speaker, Sir, has a very young and dynamic chairperson, Dr. Zaheer Allam. This Council is already working towards science-based policy recommendations and the chairperson was cited in the latest flagship IPCC report. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which is the United Nations' body for assessing the science related to climate change. Already the United Nations is recognising the contributions of this Council which is the vision of our Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, to provide opportunities to our young people.

Another achievement, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that in the last mandate this Government appointed a lady to the post of Speaker for the first time, a lady as the President of the Republic for the first time. And in this mandate for the first time, we have a Chief Whip who is a lady and doing her job in an excellent manner.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the world is going through a tough time. I won't say that we don't have problem, we have problem with the economy. Yes, we do have. But what would you expect when your major pillars of the economy like the tourism industry is not operating at its optimum and did not work at all for about 18 months? And when it started to pick up, some people who are close to the Opposition - I won't call them *Chatwa de l'Opposition*, don't worry - organise manifestation in front of the Parliament to request tourists not to come to Mauritius. Is that the fault of this caring Government? *Kot noune fauté?*

The hon. Leader of the Opposition mentioned the participant of the riot who was injured this morning when he moved his motion but not a single word for the policemen who were injured while discharging their duty. Not a word on the damages to our infrastructure which we, the taxpayers, are going to pay. Why? Why this Opposition is trying to say that the people who participated in riots are against us? But it was hon. Shakeel Mohamed who was insulted and called to move away when he tried to take a political gain during the riot. Even during this debate, listening to the Members on the other side of the House, we get the feeling that they are praying for Mauritius to become like Sri Lanka. That is the wish that they have for the country.

I heard a lot about MIC. The MIC, Mr Speaker, Sir, is here to ensure an orderly and balanced economic development of the country and the stability and soundness of the financial system by assisting corporations or companies incorporated in Mauritius which are financially distressed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Now, if you compare this to the stimulus package, Mr Speaker, Sir, you will see the difference. Stimulus Package was a mean to give away money to those who were close to the then Government and without any need of reimbursing that money. The MIC financing is a loan which will have to be reimbursed. Once you get the loan, the MIC will have a representative on the board of those companies and follow how the money is used.

The whole world suffered during the pandemic and we will continue to feel its effect up to we don't know when. The effect was global but the measures taken by different Governments across the world were different. A small island, a small economy like ours, despite all the constraints we came up with several such measures which are unique like, for example, the -

1. Wage Assistance Scheme;
2. Self-employed Assistance Scheme, and
3. measures to protect employment are all the characteristics of a caring Government.

We are not abusing public funds, Mr Speaker, Sir. And talking about abuse of public funds, Mr Speaker, Sir, that reminds me of a letter sent to the Press in April 2000 by one Mr Eric Stauffer from Switzerland who explained how public funds were misused by the then Government.

Mr Speaker, Sir, whether you are in the Opposition or on the side of the Government, we all have a duty towards our country. And the duty is to tell the truth. We just saw an example by hon. Yeung Sik Yeun. We understand that *chouchou, aubergine et cotomili*, the prices have gone up. But why they don't explain even these vegetables are grown here, the fertilizers are imported and that has a cost, the cost of producing these vegetables have gone up. This, they won't go and tell the public. They will tell lies. Unfortunately, the hon. Members of the Opposition and even those who are outside are not telling the truth to the people.

You may recall, when we came with the COVID-19 Act, it was said that the Bill infringes upon personal liberty. Today, after two years, we see that there is nothing as such. When we came with the IBA Amendment Act, again, the Opposition left no stone unturned to terrify the population, making them believe that there is no democracy in Mauritius. But that's not the case at all, Mr Speaker Sir, Mauritians have voted for a caring Government with a vision. On this side of the House, we are doing the utmost to face the prevailing situation. We will

continue to be by the side of our population and care for them. Mr Speaker, Sir, we shall not forget the unprecedented measures that this Government has implemented like -

- The Portable Retirement Gratuity Fund;
- Negative Income Tax, and
- Minimum Wage.

We provided our people with dignity; we abolished the salary of Rs1500, not only abolished but made it illegal. We are valorising our people. We are not like others encouraging and using them for their own benefits to walk on the street, to set fires on mattresses by making them believe that it is the Government who is behind the increase in prices.

This is a dangerous game that the Opposition is playing, Mr Speaker, Sir. Some hon. Members in this House even mentioned that the Government was using the COVID-19 Pandemic to bring laws which were against the workers. Hon. Uteem, on 13 May 2020, mentioned the following and I quote -

“Le gouvernement s’apprête à voter une loi anti-travailleurs, une loi qui remet en question leurs droits acquis, une loi qui, au lieu de les protéger contre les licenciements abusifs, les rend plus vulnérables à la merci du patronat. »

But, Mr Speaker, Sir, after he said that in this House, a few months later, on 29 August 2020, we saw very well where the *patronat* was situated. On a vu qui sont ceux qui avaient sponsorisé cette marche de vulgarité.

Talking of *per diem*, Mr Speaker, Sir, let me remind this House that the cost of overseas travel of the leader of PTR, when he was the Prime Minister, amounted to Rs206 m. And for one trip to India in 2014 the *per diem* that was paid to him was Rs2 m. The sister of the ex-Prime Minister was paid Rs3 m. as *per diem* for the year 2007 to 2008. *Sa ki appelle Amizer ! Amizer et abuser !*

M. le président, on voit aujourd’hui une Opposition qui a fixé comme objectif de se rassembler malgré leur divergence d’opinion qu’on voit chaque jour. Leur rassemblement est guidé par la blessure de leurs egos lors des dernières élections législatives. Ce qui les rapproche est cette haine contre le Premier ministre qui, avec cette victoire des élections législatives de 2019, les a fait passer pour des leaders dépassés.

Et c'est cela qui les motivent avec cette haine rassembleur de présenter aujourd'hui cette motion de censure remplie d'antipatriotisme et de malhonnêteté. Une Opposition déraillée et engourdie, dirigée par des forces occultes.

Et cela me fait les accorder cette citation de Daniel Confland, je cite –

« Un homme politique malhonnête, c'est comme un cerf-volant: il est gonflé de vent, il se pare de belles couleurs pour séduire, et lorsqu'il vole, il est en général manipulé par quelqu'un qui tire les ficelles ! »

M. le président, quant à nous de cette côté de la Chambre, nous tendons les ficelles à la population car on est guidé par leur aspiration. On est là pour les servir, pour leur offrir un avenir brillant. On est là par amour pour nos enfants, par amour pour notre pays. On est là car on a confiance qu'il y aura un demain meilleure.

So, before I end, Mr Speaker, Sir, I request that this motion shall not be allowed in this House and I am sure that my friends on this side are not going to vote for it as this motion is just an attempt to mislead the population and the mover only has political motive underhand.

On this note, I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie!

(10.50 p.m.)

Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Merci, M. le président. Nous débattons aujourd'hui sur la *Motion of No Confidence*. Le leader de l'Opposition a donné les raisons d'une telle démarche et il importe que Maurice soit gouverné par un gouvernement responsable ayant un cœur l'intérêt et le bien-être de la population.

J'ai écouté avec attention l'orateur qui m'a précédé et également l'honorable ministre, Dr. Husnoo. S'ils étaient aussi fort, pourquoi refuser de donner les élections municipales? Vos conseils municipaux sont déjà en péremption. Si les élections générales devaient avoir lieu aujourd'hui, ce gouvernement prendrait un mauvais coup. Dans le contexte de scandale pendant la pandémie sur l'achat des médicaments, des grosses dépenses dans des projets de métro et le gaspillage des fonds publics.

M. le président, le 22 avril il y a eu des manifestations dans différentes régions du pays. Les familles sont inquiètes face à la montée du prix de carburant et ses effets cascades sur les produits alimentaires. Il y a aujourd'hui une crise du coût de la vie. Deux ans et demi après les élections législatives, au cœur même de son mandat, il est devenu évident que les promesses n'ont pas été tenues. Et ce gouvernement s'enlise dans des projets qui n'ont rien à voir avec la qualité et le niveau de vie de la population. Ce gouvernement est complètement déconnecté de la réalité du peuple; il est en déphasage complet du quotidien de la famille mauricienne. Les promesses du gouvernement n'ont pas été tenues – la distribution de l'eau 24/7, par exemple ; la pension de vieillesse à R 13,000 ; le *Public Advertisement* pour tous les postes, sur tous les postes de responsabilité, et j'en passe.

Nous faisons face au spectre de l'appauvrissement. La cherté de la vie entraîne une paupérisation de la population dont la classe moyenne qui peine à joindre les deux bouts. Le pouvoir d'achat baisse avec la hausse continue des prix. Du coup, les Mauriciens n'achètent que les produits essentiels et les moins chers, et sont à l'affût des promotions dans les supermarchés. Des commerçants menacent de ne plus importer; des entrepreneurs ferment les boutiques; des travailleurs perdent leur emploi – prétexte, le COVID ou alors ils ne sont pas vaccinés. Des familles peinent à survivre; elles vivent grâce aux dons de certains ONG à l'instar de Caritas et les compagnies du secteur privé se sont mis de la partie en distribuant des *food packs* au plus nécessaires.

Le pays est confronté à plusieurs défis - la flambée des prix, les factures de plus en plus fortes, l'inflation entraînant une forte baisse du niveau de vie et les consommateurs ressentent la pression. L'inégalité croissante entre les riches et les pauvres, les effets des changements climatiques, l'éducation non-inclusive, de nouvelles modalités imposées par le ministère des Finances concernant l'octroi de fauteuils roulants, de lunettes ou d'appareils auditifs aux personnes du troisième âge et les personnes handicapées. Avec un montant de R 5,000, il est impossible de se procurer des appareils auditifs qui ne coûtent pas moins de R 40,000. Et en même temps, elles doivent trouver de l'argent pour s'acheter des médicaments qui coûtent des yeux de la tête.

Ces défis, M. le président, exigent un leadership responsable et intègre. Or ce gouvernement met l'accent sur les projets de prestige et oublie les choses qui sont beaucoup plus

importantes pour la population. Il ignore les besoins de la population telle que l'emploi, le pouvoir d'achat, la lutte contre la corruption dans nos institutions, un service qui laisse à désirer dans les hôpitaux et la situation dans le secteur de l'éducation. Tout en concédant que le COVID et la guerre en Ukraine ont contribué à faire flamber les prix de certains produits, nous ne pouvons occulter le fait que le gaspillage d'argent et l'accaparement des biens publics, l'abus de pouvoir, les passe-droits, le népotisme et le favoritisme sont les maîtres-mots de ce gouvernement. Des projets de prestige ne rempliront pas les *katora* du peuple. Ces projets n'apaiseront pas la faim. Les dépenses exagérées et indécentes en terme de mission ministérielle à Dubaï Expo, le projet métro express, l'hippodrome à Côte d'Or, le scandale des *ventilators* et des médicaments, la liste est longue.

L'exemple devrait venir d'en haut. Nos institutions n'inspirent plus la confiance. Les Mauriciens crient leur indignation dans les rues, sur les ondes des radios privées telles que 'enquête en direct', '*explik ou ka*', '*tempo la so*' pour s'exprimer, pour exprimer leur misère et leurs doléances au lieu de se diriger vers les *CAB*. Des institutions telles que l'*ICAC* n'inspire plus la confiance. Combien de cas ont été référés à l'*ICAC*? Combien de ces cas ont été résolus? La *MBC*, – mon camarade, l'honorable Assirvaden, en a parlé – le cas de la journaliste contrainte de partir parce qu'elle avait refusé de prendre la déclaration d'un élu de la majorité. La *MBC* censurant le message du Cardinale Piat contenant des propos qui ne font pas plaisir aux potentats et mandarins, en l'occurrence, la notoire, *lakwizin*. La *MBC* qui ne passe pas un séga du défunt chanteur, Lin, pour les mêmes raisons et j'en passe.

Où est passé le rapport du *Fact Finding Committee* sur le décès des dialysés, le rapport sur le rapport Lam Shang Leen sur la drogue ? Combien de cas de brutalités policières n'ont pas été résolus à l'heure actuelle? Les institutions ne fonctionnent plus, elles n'ont jamais fonctionné correctement et dans la transparence sous ce gouvernement. Ce gouvernement gouverne dans l'opacité.

D'ailleurs dans son *Annual Audit Report 2019-2020*, le Directeur de l'Audit fait clairement ressortir qu'il n'a pas accès aux documents. À la page 22, il écrit ceci –

"(...)NAO officers either could not have access to records or such access was simply denied. For example, for the audit of the Ministry of Health and Wellness, important files could not be provided."

“Another example is the case of the Police service that invoked a confidentiality clause in a contract to restrict access to records and information to NAO officers.”

Le Directeur de l’Audit mentionne également *the key issues* de ce rapport –

- “(a) Non-compliance with Legislations regulating Reporting Responsibilities.*
- (b) Lapses in Procurement Management.*
- (c) Deficiencies in Contract Management.*
- (d) Non-Compliance with Legislations and Non-Enforcement of Rules.*
- (e) Value for Money not obtained from significant expenditure incurred.*
- (f) Deficiencies in Asset Management”*

Je préfère m’arrêter ici.

Mr Speaker: Merci!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Je n’ai pas terminé.

Mr Speaker: No, time is time!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Il n’y a pas que les institutions...

Mr Speaker: Time!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Pardon?

Mr Speaker: Time is over for you! I said *merci!*

(Interruptions)

Time is over for you!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Une minute ! Je termine !

Mr Speaker: Next orator!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Je termine, M. le président !

Mr Speaker: Next orator would be hon. François! You have the floor!

(11.01 p.m.)

Mr F. François (First Member for Rodrigues): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, Sir, for the opportunity to contribute to today's debate on this Motion of No Confidence in Government.

On 21 November 2019, I took my oath for allegiance in this House after I was democratically elected to serve our Republic and the nation for this mandate 2019-2024. When I was thinking on what to deliver in my speech today on this motion, as a Rodriguan Parliamentarian in Government, it was kind of challenging, principally for me not to depart from the values and principles of OPR Party.

As a binding principle for OPR, we do not interfere in the political partisanship at national level. Though, OPR does share cordial relationships from both sides of the House. We do not have any qualms to support any central Government following any OPR National Assembly election victory. The hon. Prime Minister and Dr. Padayachy regularly reiterated that we are in a period of exceptional times which requires exceptional measures that go beyond the usual constraints by exceptional decision making in the name of crisis resolution.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as a matter of comparison, are we on the same social-economic footings as Sri Lanka today, which was on the brink of bankruptcy, suspended payments of foreign loans, serious shortage of essential goods and so on. Are we in a critical situation to be bailed out by the International Monetary Fund?

Mr Speaker, Sir, Government's Programme 2019-2024 defines this Government's vision for this mandate. Today, one will realise that there is a shift in certain decisions taken as a matter of urgency to reprioritise some of the commitments and represent unexpected and even unprecedented circumstances. We are in a time of inclusive recovery. Our Government's spending must be carefully prioritised on safety nets to curtail social crisis, health, housing and education by targeting the most vulnerable of our society.

Mr Speaker, Sir, having said so, my intervention today, with in mind the ideology to debating constructively on the Motion of No Confidence in Government, is not simply to provide a comfortable majority in support to the Prime Minister and Government to defeat the motion. Rather, it is a great opportunity for me, as an OPR Government member, to reiterate the vision,

commitment, accomplishment and the road ahead for a better future for our Republic as responsible and stable Government.

Mr Speaker, Sir, from crisis COVID-19 to ongoing climate change and now Russian's invasion of Ukraine, Government is responsibly asking and telling people to alter their behaviour and make great sacrifices, yes, *ser sintir*, of short term satisfaction and immediate benefits if they have positive expectations on longer term outcomes of public policies. Let me remind us all that in this difficult period of crisis, Government, the nation and all the population are surely enduring the burden of the consequences and that should not open doors for a negative shift of a societal political intoxication to our detriment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I agree with Government's decision to stay focused on major structural transformations under way. Firstly - very importantly - through green transition for food security, production and nutrition as economics of life. *Nou ena boku later agrikol et nou bizin kapav plante pou nourir nou pays. Bizin plant plis sousous, missie Yeung Sik Yuen!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, you will recall Serge Clair's leitmotiv since 1976 is still valid today. *Pa kont lor manze ki sorti dehor, kont lor manze ki sorti dan ou later*. Otherwise, Mr Speaker, Sir, *larzan pou ena mais manze pa pou ena pou aste*. Secondly, innovation and digital revolution as a new development model rightly avocated by hon. Balgobin during the *Assises de l'innovation* 2022. This is a future model. I note in the Global Innovation Index 2021, tracking innovation from the COVID-19 crisis, Mauritius ranks first in Africa, 52 in the world among 130 countries. This is a meaningful achievement despite all odds.

Mr Speaker, Sir, an important foundation for this motion is trust in Government. Since the pandemic began, there is the perception that trust in Government has fallen despite people recognise the need for Government to help solving fundamental problems in crisis situation. People outside, Mr Speaker, Sir, are tired of political instability. More than ever, the nation requires a reinforcement of social, political 'mauritianism' consciousness instead of factionalism and fragmentation of our society, which is a threat to our collective progress and prosperity. Our nation requires an awakening of this collective responsibility to meet people's expectations for stable governance and not the same anti-patriotic political rhetoric which deepens societal division and divisiveness.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Government recently responded to rises in prices and high cost of living pressures by increasing petrol and groceries for households due to external factors. My question is: Is Government not doing enough despite all its limits? We are in a global situation of painful uncertainty, of painful misunderstandings, public frustration, violent protests which in these cases create the temptation of political scape goat instead of a structured system of national dialogue.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to strengthen our social and economic fabrics, I feel the necessity for an open national dialogue through an indivisible nation by all political parties in this country; private sectors, civil societies and especially our young generation.

Kristalina Georgieva, Director of IMF, recently stated in an article: Facing Crisis upon Crisis: How the World Can Respond, as so referred by hon. Dr. Padayachy, and I quote, she said

—

“The actions we take now, together, will determine our future in fundamental ways. It reminds me of Bretton Woods in 1944 when, in the dark shadow of war, leaders came together to envision a brighter world. It was moment of unprecedented courage and cooperation.

We need that spirit today, as we face bigger challenges and more difficult choices.”

M. le président, j’aime bien la pertinence de sa réflexion qui répond à notre situation actuelle alors que nous débattons sur cette motion de blâme. Elle formule que sur le plan économique, la croissance est en baisse et l’inflation en hausse. Sur le plan humain, ce sont les revenus des populations qui sont en baisse et les difficultés qui sont en hausse. C’est clair que les personnes pauvres seront les plus touchées par ces bouleversements. Peut-on dire que le gouvernement reste insensible et fait la sourde oreille aux pauvres ? Non, M. le président ! R 12 milliards pour les logements, R 8 milliards en subsides mais l’État n’est pas en mesure de satisfaire toutes les attentes.

M. le président, à titre de comparaison et d’exemple ce qui me reconforte au Maroc, plusieurs stratégies d’actions collectives ont été déployées face aux revendications pour freiner la hausse des prix et maintenir le fonds de compensation. Au Ghana, la société civile demande des appuis pour les agricultrices sous forme d’investissement dans le domaine des moyens de

production pour encourager la création d'emplois, la croissance économique et le bien-être de la population. Aux Philippines, un programme de relance devrait donner la priorité à la sécurité alimentaire, à la création d'emplois grâce à la stimulation au soutien des entreprises locales afin d'en faire profiter les travailleurs et à l'investissement dans des projets axés sur des infrastructures vertes et l'allègement de la pauvreté.

M. le président, le gouvernement central Mauricien, pour sa part, a adopté des mesures que certains considèrent insuffisante pour soulager la population. Non pas tant qu'elles sont intrinsèquement souhaitables, mais parce qu'elles permettent d'écarter une menace d'une perpétuelle instabilité dans le pays. Dans ce contexte de crise, nous sommes en face d'une politique de l'urgence et de patience qui repose sur le principe de vérité, de nécessité, de rapidité et de solidarité par une gouvernance cohérente et d'harmonisation. Certes, M. le président, l'Opposition a le devoir de contester l'orientation de certaines politiques gouvernementales. Mais être jugé principalement sur des questions que de compétences ou mauvaise gouvernance plutôt que sur les fins auxquelles l'orientation politique gouvernementale est destinée relève d'une grande faiblesse démocratique pour notre République.

M. le président, je l'ai déjà dit, le Premier ministre a une vision globale et à long terme des actions qui mènent son gouvernement. Il en va de même pour chacun des ministres, des *PPS* et députés de ce côté de la Chambre, chacun dans son domaine de compétence, M. le président.

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, let me say a few words specifically on Rodrigues, and also to put on record that OPR Party is one of the top five parties of our Republic. It is one of the rare parties which constantly scores on its own for the National Assembly elections, more than 50% of votes, and in the last regional elections having obtained a very unfortunate 46% of votes alone against two alliances of six parties, including a national party with a high-risk of instability and disintegration at any moment from now. OPR has never been in alliance with any party be it at local or national level. Mr Speaker, Sir, OPR always works with any Government of the day in the best interests of Rodrigues and for the prosperity and progress of our Republic. My Leader Serge Clair said that the Republic of Mauritius must have a different vision for Rodrigues after the advent of autonomy in 2001. The hon. Prime Minister and the Central Government have understood this very well through an excellent respectful working relationship and understanding as we witnessed with the outgoing OPR Regional Government in the true spirit of our autonomy.

The House will note the Central Government's unflinching support for the transformational development of Rodrigues today in 2022, amounting to Rs4.79 billion as compared to Rs1.7 billion in 2013, and Rs2.7 billion in 2015.

Allow me to quote a few paragraphs of Government Programme 2019-2024, which have been reinforced in various budget speeches as well -

- Paragraph 182, Government stated: 'The sustainable development of Rodrigues with due regard to their fragile ecosystems, will remain at the heart of Government's agenda 2020-2024.'
- Paragraph 184: "A new runway, 2.1 km long by 45 metres wide, at Plaine Corail Airport, requiring Rs4 billion investments will be built. The works are expected to start this year."
- Paragraph 186: "to increase water supply in Rodrigues, Government will support the application of new technologies for desalination and storage."

I note Government meaningful financial commitment of Rs1 billion through the Mauritius Investment Corporation for water distribution solution to increase water production capacity.

Mr Speaker, Sir, other essential Central Government measures towards Rodrigues –

- subsidy on cost of airfare;
- holiday packages to sustain tourism industry;
- financial support under the COVID-19 financial support initiatives for tourism alternative livelihood;
- electricity cost subsidy for tourism industry;
- sales of local meat, handicrafts and agro processed products, and support to local artists;
- financial supports from COVID-19 projects funds and national environment funds - I will not go into the financial quantum - for implementation of various development projects in Rodrigues.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Government, also, is fully supportive to the New Social Housing Scheme, *Enn Fami Enn Bon Lacaz* for vulnerable families in Rodrigues.

Further, as part of its territorial continuity vision within our Republic, an IT sector development, the Central Government provided Rodrigues with high-speed bandwidth through the installation of a Mauritius and Rodrigues Submarine Cable System (MARS). And also the ongoing construction of Technopark with a first smart building to developing businesses and employment for our youths in Rodrigues; fibernet home service is a reality. Government commits also, through the Rodrigues Subsidy Fund, approximately Rs160 m. in 2021 to subsidise petroleum products, namely Mogas, Gasoil, dual purpose kerosene, liquefied petroleum gas and also ration rice, flour and cement to keep these products in Rodrigues at par with their respective retail prices prevailing in Mauritius.

M. le président, le Budget 2022-2023 sera bientôt présenté au Parlement. Comme je l'ai déjà mentionné, le gouvernement central venait de prendre une série de mesures en réponse à la hausse des prix, ici, à Maurice. Dans le même élan, je voudrais au nom de l'OPR, mon collègue l'honorable Léopold, et en mon nom personnel faire une requête pressante au ministère des Finances d'envisager d'ajuster le fret entre Maurice et Rodrigues, qui est actuellement à 20%, à un meilleur taux pour soulager la population de Rodrigues face à l'augmentation du coût de la vie à Rodrigues. Il s'agit d'un appel très urgent.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me also thank the hon. Prime Minister, Pravind Jugnauth, and Government to allow me as Parliamentary Private Secretary for Rodrigues, with regard to implementation of costly major drains projects construction to remedy the flooding problems in many flood prone areas through the National Development Unit. The population of Rodrigues is extremely grateful for the consideration given in this process of saving lives and facilitating them. *Bon travay pe kontinie !*

Mr Speaker, Sir, one last point before concluding, for almost 2 years Rodrigues was COVID free, protected from COVID-19 and Delta variant. A prompt decision of Governments, both local and central, was taken to close our borders and to provide necessary funds to pay Air Mauritius and hotels as quarantine centres. During strict control repatriation, the population of Rodrigues highly values these decisions for the strict sanitary control, to keep Rodrigues COVID free even up to after the dissolution of the Regional Assembly, which allowed regional elections

to be held in Rodrigues. I also note Government's technical, medical - through vaccines - and financial help to Rodrigues during the foot-and-mouth disease pandemic for its control and eradication in the interest of our farmers' community. Mr Speaker, Sir, despite the crisis situation, I sincerely welcome Government's commitments for the transformational development of Rodrigues.

To conclude, and in response to our citizens' expectations, let me put the following questions –

- Is our Government reliable to minimise uncertainty in the economic, social and political environment and is acting in a consistent and predictable manner? Yes, we are.
- Is our Government responsive in the provision of accessible, efficient and citizen-oriented public services that effectively address the needs and expectations of the public? Yes, we are.
- Is our Government open and inclusive in a systematic, comprehensive approach to improve transparency, accountability and engagement? Yes, we are.
- Is our Government fair in the treatment of citizens and businesses in the policy-making and policy implementation processes? Yes, we are.

And I leave it here to the appreciation of one and all.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in this difficult time of global crisis and in the spirit of national solidarity to our population, as a Member of Parliament, I am ready to modestly contribute again a monthly 10% of my salary to the National Solidarity Fund. I think this is my call for all of us in this House, both sides of the House.

M. le président, je termine en faisant un appel solennel à toute la nation, l'heure n'est pas d'encourager la division de notre société mais sa transformation dans la solidarité ; l'heure n'est pas à des grands discours politiques mais un dialogue national constant vers une société républicaine cohésive.

L'avenir de la république ne repose pas dans l'instabilité nationale ou l'instabilité politique mais dans un nouvel engagement patriotique, profond et citoyen de tout un chacun.

Nous devons choisir de faire face ensemble comme une république unie face aux plus grandes crises sanitaire, économique et planétaire actuelle.

M. le président, je termine au nom de l'OPR et les 56 % de votants qui ont voté pour nous à Rodrigues pour ce mandat 2019-2024, mon collègue, l'honorable Léopold, et moi-même en tant que PPS pour Rodrigues, face à cette motion de blâme, nous avons le devoir et la conscience collective de soutenir pleinement l'honorable Premier ministre et le gouvernement central dans l'intérêt de la république et de Rodrigues.

M. le président, sur ce, vivre la république de Maurice. Je vous remercie pour votre attention.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Lobine! 15 minutes!

(11.20 p.m.)

Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a Motion of No Confidence is an important exercise in the functioning of this temple of democracy and should be tackled with all its seriousness. So, as time is of the essence, I will not rebut baseless allegations, character assassinations from certain hon. Members from the other side of the House because debates on a Motion of No Confidence in the Government is a serious matter that should be tackled with all its seriousness. And I would invite most of the hon. Members of this House to ponder as to the first Motion of No Confidence that was debated in this House. It was on 12 July 1979. For the first time ever in post-independence Mauritius, a Motion of No Confidence was presented before this august Assembly by the then Leader of the Opposition, Anerood Jugnauth, as he then was. And from there on, we have had another five Motion of No Confidence, and this seventh motion has all its importance as we face almost the same situation that we were facing in 1979, Mr Speaker, Sir. Growing poverty, high cost of living, depreciation of our rupee, eroding purchasing power, two ministers have resigned. One former Deputy Prime Minister was revoked and the motion in 1979 did not go through as the other motion, but, Mr Speaker, Sir, the aftermath of this motion -the then Government faced the fury of the people and lost all seats in 1982; the first famous 60-0, Mr Speaker, Sir. The writings on the walls now as well, and the best test is election.

As true democrats, I urge Government to bring on the municipal elections, for instance. Bring on the municipal elections! This is the best fall! This is the true survey! Instead of 600 people opining, you will have more than half of the population giving their own opinion. This is the true survey! And our people shall have the chance to give a Motion of Confidence or a Motion of No-Confidence to this Government. This is democracy and municipal elections are due. Mr Speaker, Sir, when we turn on the radio or scroll down our phones and the big headlines belong to COVID-19 but when this latest version of the plague drops off the front pages, another story is set to take its place and this one will hang around for most of the year and the coming year, which will most possibly be deciding the Government's future, Mr Speaker, Sir. The cost of living crisis that our people are facing is about to shape our politics in a way that it has not for decades. Whether certain Members like it or not, this will happen. This will change the politics of this country. That is why this Motion of No Confidence has all its importance.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition has provided in great details facts and figures, Mr Speaker, Sir, as to how our people are suffering and why this Government is being insensible and no immediate actions are being taken to alleviate same. Mr Speaker, Sir, various examples have been provided by various speakers from this side of the House. I would take a few. In Spain, for example, Mr Speaker, Sir, VAT on household energy bills has been lowered from 21% to 10% until June, while taxes on electricity have been cut from 7% to 0.5%, Mr Speaker, Sir. France has from 01 April and that for four months, provided a fuel discount. Germany, Mr Speaker, Sir, passed a raft of measures to help households cope with the cost of living crisis, including a cut to tax on fuel for three months by 30 cents for petrol and 14 cents for diesel, and all taxpayers in Germany, Mr Speaker, Sir, will receive a one-off 300 Euro payment to help with the rising cost of living with a further 100 euros for each child and an additional 100 euros for anybody receiving State benefit. And this is the trend in all major democracies, Mr Speaker, Sir, like Sweden, Belgium, Netherlands, New Zealand, the UK, Ireland, for instance. This is what we, from this side of the House, have been advocating right from the beginning through PNQs and PQs. Bring immediate measures! Mr Speaker, Sir, it is worth here quoting Abraham Lincoln when he said –

“Leave nothing for tomorrow which can be done today.”

And today, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have to reduce tax on petrol and diesel. Today! We can do it. Give an extra allowance to our pensioners today! We can do it. Increase the national minimum wage today! This can be done, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Leader of the Opposition has explained with facts and figures.

And with the regard to democracy and the rule of law, Mr Speaker, Sir, restraining public debates and ignoring the public outcry with regard to the repressive approach being adopted with the use of laws like, recently amended the Police Act, the Public Health Act, the Quarantine Act amongst others, are not acceptable by our people anymore. Mr Speaker, Sir, democracy can no longer continue to take the backseat. In the same vein, with the abuse being made of the provisional charges policy by the Police, yet this Government is keeping silent and condoning this practice. Since 2018, Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government has announced that it will be bringing to this House, the Police and Criminal Justice Bill, and that bill shall contain amongst others, a code of conduct for the Police. This is a bill that should be brought to this House with a Certificate of Urgency and yet, Mr Speaker, Sir, the population continues to succumb and suffer to politics, fear and repression. Breaches to the rights to privacy by snooping on political opponents and their families, the Leader of the Opposition vividly portrayed the directives given to our Police Constables to take at least five contraventions per day for those not wearing protective masks in public. As if, Mr Speaker, Sir, contraventions have become a new pillar of our economy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in these unprecedented times, it is not just economic policy, health policy and social policy that require creativity and innovation. Our democratic structures need to be equally responsive, Mr Speaker, Sir. The spirit of our Constitution should also be upheld. The three pillars of our Constitution: the Legislature, Parliament, the Executive, and the Judiciary should be able to live up when faced with adversity. We need major constitutional reforms, Mr Speaker, Sir. We need to bring systemic changes as rightly pointed out by hon. Bérenger and this can only happen by going back to the people, listen to the voices of our people. *La voix du peuple, c'est la voix de dieu.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, now is the time to bring meaningful change to the system and this motion is a stepping stone for this Government to redress their racks and doings, be less arrogant and overconfident and engage in public consultation. Listen to the cry of our people and do not

jubilate on mere surveys and opinion poll because one week is a long time in politics my friend. So, let us not seize this opportunity to make those constitutional changes that we badly need. Bring same to the House for debates! This is what we should do in this august Assembly. We need a Government for the many, Mr Speaker, Sir, not for the few as it is now.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ramano!

Mr Ramano: Mr Speaker, Sir, I move for the adjournment of the debates.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Friday 13 May at 3.00 p.m.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo) seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

Adjournment Matter! No adjournment matters.

At 11.30 p.m., the Assembly, was, on its rising, adjourned to Friday 13 May 2022 at 3.00 p.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

POLICE OFFICERS – SUSPENSION

(No. B/526) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Police Officers, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the present number thereof under suspension grade-wise.

Reply: The hon. Member is referred to Police Regulation 28 of the Disciplined Forces Service Commission Regulations 1997 which provides for the interdiction of members of the Disciplined Forces and not for suspension as mentioned in the question.

The Commissioner of Police has informed that, as at 05 May 2022, one hundred and forty-two (142) Police Officers are interdicted from duty, as follows –

Superintendent of Police	1
Deputy Assistant Superintendent of Police	1
Chief Inspector	1
Inspector	2
Police Sergeant	9
Police Corporal	4
Police Constable	122
Woman Police Constable	<u>2</u>
	142

SOCIAL UNREST - SUSPECTED INSTIGATORS - ACTIONS TAKEN

(No. B/527) Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the recent social unrest, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if the suspected instigators thereof have been identified and, if so, indicate the actions taken in relation thereto, if any.

Reply: It is presumed that reference is being made to the incidents which occurred during the night of Friday 22 April 2022 until the early morning of Saturday 23 April 2022 in different

localities. It is also presumed that while using the term ‘suspected instigator’, reference is being made to those suspected persons who have given instructions for, or caused the commission of a crime or a misdemeanour, as defined by Section 38 of the Criminal Code Act. Section 38 of this Act which reads as follows, and I quote –

- (1) “Any person who, by gift, promise, abuse of authority or power, machination or culpable artifice instigates, or gives any instruction for, the commission of a crime or misdemeanour shall be punished as an accomplice in the crime or misdemeanour.
- (2) Any person who procures arms, instruments, or any other means used in the commission of a crime or misdemeanour, knowing that they were to be so used, shall be deemed an accomplice.
- (3) Any person who knowingly aids and abets the author of any crime or misdemeanour in the means of preparing, facilitating or perpetrating the crime or misdemeanour, shall be deemed an accomplice, without prejudice to the punishments specially provided by law against the authors of plots or of instigations to offences affecting the internal or external safety of the State, even in cases where the crime which was the object of the conspirators or instigators has not been committed.”

The Commissioner of Police has informed that, so far, there has been no arrest for offences committed under Section 38 of the Criminal Code Act. However, as at date, the Police has arrested 33 persons under other sections of the Criminal Code Act, for their alleged participation in the incidents, as follows –

- (i) rebellion - 22 persons;
- (ii) taking part in a riot - 3 persons;
- (iii) unlawful assembly - 7 persons, and
- (iv) damaging Government property - 1 person.

The enquiry is proceeding.

**VALLÉE DES PRÊTRES - THEFT & VIOLENCE - SAFETY & SECURITY
MEASURES**

(No. B/528) 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 Vallée des Prêtres, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the safety and security measures being envisaged following the recent reported cases of theft and violence thereat.

(Withdrawn)

AIRPORTS OF MAURITIUS LTD - MR P. M. - CHAIRPERSON

(No. B/529) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to Mr P. M. he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Airports of Mauritius Ltd., information as to the –

- (a) date of appointment thereof as Chairperson of the board thereof, and
- (b) terms and conditions of appointment, including, the monthly remuneration drawn and if he is entitled to an official car, indicating the type, date of purchase and total cost thereof.

(Withdrawn)

BET365 CASE – INQUIRY

(No. B/531) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the inquiry in the Bet365 case, 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 enquiry by the CCID into the Bet365 case, which refers to a case of conspiracy, is ongoing.

Being given that investigation is in progress, disclosure of any information pertaining thereto may be prejudicial to the course of justice.

CONSOLIDATED COVID-19 REGULATIONS – CONTRAVENTIONS

(No. B/532) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the offences provided under the Consolidated COVID-19 Regulations, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of contraventions booked therefor in each case since the coming into force thereof to date –

- (a) giving a breakdown thereof, and
- (b) indicating the total quantum of money collected in terms of fines as at to date.

Reply: The Commissioner of Police has informed that, since the Consolidated COVID-19 Regulations 2021 came into force on 01 October 2021 till date, 44,671 persons have been booked for the breach of the regulations as follows –

- (i) failing to wear protective face mask - 44,580 persons;
- (ii) breach of Quarantine Act (Non observation of protocols in Quarantine Centres) - 2 persons;
- (iii) failing to take temperature – 19 persons;
- (iv) failing to sanitize trolley – 2 persons;
- (v) failing to observe social distancing – 16 persons;
- (vi) illegal picnicking – 15 persons;
- (vii) breach of Curfew order (Rodrigues) – 16 persons;
- (viii) allowing more than 50 persons on licensed premises – 3 persons;

- (ix) failing to provide sanitizers – 9 persons;
- (x) remaining outdoor whilst tested positive – 2 persons;
- (xi) failing to close licence premises – 5 persons, and
- (xii) allowing unvaccinated persons to enter into licenced premises – 2 persons.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the total amount of fines collected by the Courts in connection with contraventions relating to the Consolidated COVID-19 Regulations is Rs35,208,810 as at 09 May 2022.

MR R. V. & OTHER LAWYERS - RECENT GATHERINGS

(No. B/533) 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 reported recent gatherings held by Mr R. V. and some other lawyers, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if same have been held in compliance with the existing legislation pertaining to public gatherings and, if not, indicate if any arrest has been effected in connection therewith and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

MR S. K. - DEATH - FINDINGS & STATEMENTS

(No. B/534) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the death of late Mr S. K. at Moka, he will for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand as to the inquiry carried out thereinto following the findings of the Magistrate of the District Court of Moka, indicating the number of statements recorded by the Central Crime Investigation Division, including if Mr Y. S. has been interrogated.

(Withdrawn)

MR P. M., SENIOR ADVISOR - BOARDS - OCTOBER 2021 TO APRIL 2022

(No. B/535) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to Mr P. M., Senior Advisor attached to his Office, he will state, since October 2021 to date, the number of Boards of public bodies and/or State-owned companies on which he is serving, indicating in each case the –

- (a) nomination date, and
- (b) monthly remuneration drawn.

(Withdrawn)

OVERSEAS MISSIONS – MINISTERIAL DELEGATIONS

(No. B/536) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to overseas missions, he will state the number of ministerial delegations and Honourable Members having undertaken same since the reopening of the borders in October 2021, indicating in each case the –

- (a) purpose and outcome thereof, if any, and
- (b) cost incurred, including air tickets and *per diem* allowances.

(Withdrawn)

ICTA – META – ACTIVITIES & WORKSHOPS - AWARENESS

(No. B/537) 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 Meta, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Independent Communication Technologies Authority, information as to where matters stand as to the carrying out in Mauritius of a proposed programme of activities and workshops to build awareness on responsible online behaviour.

(Withdrawn)

VEGETABLES - THEFT – 2019 TO MAY 2022

(No. B/538) 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 vegetables, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the reported number of thefts thereof in 2019, 2020, 2021 and since January 2022 to date, indicating the measures being put in place to prevent same.

Reply: The Commissioner of Police has informed that since January 2019 to date, a total of 2,124 cases of thefts of vegetables have been reported to the Police as follows –

- 413 cases in 2019
- 891 cases in 2020
- 602 cases in 2021
- 218 cases since January 2022 to 04 May 2022

The Commissioner of Police has also informed that with a view to curbing down such cases, a dynamic Community Policy Network has been set up at Divisional and Station levels and a series of measures are being taken in collaboration with the Small Farmers Welfare Fund (SFWF) as follows –

- (i) setting up of road blocks at strategic places and time near plantations;
- (ii) field counselling in the plantations to prevent thefts;
- (iii) community policing forums with planters;
- (iv) integrated and targeted patrols comprising Field Intelligence Officers (FIOs), Central Investigation Division, Emergency Response Service, Divisional Support and station personnel;
- (v) implementation of a WhatsApp Group for timely exchange of information between Police and the Planters Community;

- (vi) optimising the use of Safe City Cameras where available for the surveillance of agricultural blocks;
- (vii) The Crime Prevention Unit is working closely with the Planters Community with a view to sensitizing them on the precautions to be taken to protect themselves and their plantations from theft, and
- (viii) a booklet (*un guide pour votre sécurité*), prepared by the Crime Prevention Unit, has been distributed freely to farmers.

The Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security has informed that a grant of Rs 25,000/- for the purchase of CCTV camera to be installed on farm is being provided to farmers. As at date, 92 farmers have benefitted from this Scheme.

MBC – ONG AFFIRMATIVE ACTION - CORRESPONDENCES

(No. B/539) 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 state if he has taken cognizance of the correspondences addressed to his Office by the Affirmative Action Non-Governmental Organisation on 20 January and 10 February 2022, respectively, and, if so, indicate the actions taken in relation thereto, if any.

Reply: I have taken cognizance of the correspondence addressed to my Office by the ONG Affirmative Action on 20 January and 10 February 2022.

The representations of ONG Affirmative Action have been considered and a reply has already been made to this ONG by my Office on 04 April 2022.

MAURITIUS PORTS AUTHORITY - OIL SPILL

(No. B/540) 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 oil spill that occurred

on or about 29 April 2022 within the waters falling under the control of the Mauritius Ports Authority (MPA), he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the MPA, information as to –

- (a) the causes thereof;
- (b) if an inquiry has been initiated to identify the polluters, and
- (c) the immediate actions taken to mitigate the negative impact thereof on marine environment within the region.

(Withdrawn)

FATAL ROAD ACCIDENTS – JULY 2021-APRIL 2022

(No. B/541) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and 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 fatal road accidents, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof since July 2021 to April 2022, indicating the number of deaths caused.

Reply: The Commissioner of Police has informed that for the period July 2021 to April 2022, eighty (80) cases of fatal road accidents have been reported and a total number of eighty-four (84) persons have regrettably lost their lives during/or in these accidents. I sympathise with the families of the unfortunate victims.

16ÈME MILLE – MULTIPURPOSE HALL CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/562) Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the construction of the Multipurpose Hall of *16ème Mille*, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the District Council of Grand Port, information as to where matters stand.

Reply: I am informed by the District Council of Grand Port that the project ‘Construction of a Multipurpose hall’ at 16ème Milles, at an estimated cost of Rs20 m., has been included in the list of capital projects proposed to the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development in the context of Budget Estimates 2022/2023.

The project will be implemented by the District Council of Grand Port in the event funds are allocated.

**SOCIAL REGISTER OF MAURITIUS - SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCE
INCREASE**

(No. B/563) 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 subsistence allowance payable to persons on the Social Register of Mauritius, she will state if consideration will be given for an increase of the quantum thereof following the recent rise in the cost of living and, if so, give details thereof and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

**CONSOLIDATED COVID-19 REGULATIONS 2021 - RESTRICTIONS -
REVIEW**

(No. B/564) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the COVID-19 pandemic, he will state if consideration will be given for a review of the restrictions imposed under the Consolidated COVID-19 Regulations 2021, in the light of the Ruling of the Supreme Court of India dated 02 May 2022 on a petition filed by Dr. J. P.

Reply: Following the declaration of the COVID-19 outbreak as a public health emergency in 2020, each country adopted its own strategy and devised specific measures to limit the spread of the disease in the community.

Based upon our country's specific characteristics, namely population density, extent to which the virus can be transmitted, amongst others, a series of specific measures were applied in Mauritius which comprised, *inter alia* –

- setting up of the High-Level Committee;
- closing of borders;
- stringent national curfew;
- compulsory quarantine of incoming travellers and contact cases;
- regular surveillance through contact tracing and random testing;
- setting up of COVID testing centres and flu clinics;

- intensive sensitisation on sanitary precautions, and
- setting up of legal frameworks to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

To further enhance our response strategy against the COVID-19, the national vaccination and deployment plan was developed in collaboration with the World Health Organisation.

The sanitary condition prevailing in Mauritius cannot be compared to other countries and especially not with a large country as India. Our strategy has been and will remain the health of our population. This is essentially why emphasis is not being laid on the elimination or reduction of the public and sanitary measures.

We are neither envisaging the review of our regulations pertaining to restriction of access to specified institution, place and premises.

For the time being, Mauritius has decided to maintain most of the sanitary precautions under the Consolidated COVID-19 Regulations 2021 until June 2022 so as to safeguard the health of our population and prevent the morbidity and mortality observed in other countries, whilst awaiting further reduction in the circulation of the virus across the world.

Consideration will be given for review of the restrictions under the said Regulations in due course.

PORT LOUIS CENTRAL MARKET - UPGRADING & RENOVATION – UNESCO CLEARANCE

(No. B/565) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the proposed upgrading and renovation of the Port Louis Central Market, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal City Council of Port Louis, information as to if clearance from the UNESCO has been obtained and, if so, indicate where matters stand as to the implementation thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal City Council of Port Louis (MCCPL) that the Fish, Meat and Poultry section of the Port Louis Central Market has not been renovated since long and is still sheltered under the building which was constructed more than 75 years ago. In this context, the Municipal City Council of Port Louis intends to upgrade and renovate the Fish, Meat and Poultry section of the Port Louis Central Market. It requires a complete renovation and uplifting since it is a place of visit for many tourists and is strategically located.

In this respect, the MCCPL has sought the clearance of the National Heritage Fund as the Port Louis Central Market is listed as National Monument and is also governed by the National Heritage Fund Act. Thus, all aspects statutorily require the consideration and clearance on the National Heritage Fund.

Moreover, given that the Central Market is situated in the buffer zone of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property, the Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage has enlisted the services of EcoAfrica Environmental Consultant Pty Ltd for the preparation of an overarching Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) and Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) report in the context of the Area Action Plan with regard to development in the buffer zone.

The report from UNESCO is still being awaited.

MR G. S., SENIOR ADVISOR – APPOINTMENT

(No. B/566) Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to Mr G. S., he will state the date of appointment thereof as adviser/senior adviser at the then Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, indicating the –

- (a) duration of the appointment and monthly remuneration drawn, and
- (b) board of parastatal bodies on which he served over the period 2015 to 2019, indicating in each case, the monthly remuneration drawn.

(Withdrawn)

MRA - WAGE ASSISTANCE SCHEME

(No. B/567) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Government Wage Assistance Scheme, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Revenue Authority, information as to the –

- (a) number of employers and employees having claimed same as at to date, and
- (b) quantum of funds disbursed thereunder, indicating the quantum thereof recovered.

(Withdrawn)

MEDICAL COUNCIL - MEDICAL SPECIALIST TRAINING

(No. B/568) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Medical Council, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) if *l'Université de la Réunion* has been refused recognition as an awarding body for the dispensation of medical specialist training as at end April 2022, and
- (b) the number of requests made by holders of *Diplome Universitaire* from *l'Université de la Réunion* for recognition of specialist training, indicating the specialty fields.

(Withdrawn)

FIRE STATIONS - FIRE CERTIFICATES - FIRE RISK MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

(No. B/569) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the six fire stations which are operating without valid Fire Certificates, as highlighted in the recent report of the Director of Audit, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Fire and Rescue Service, information as to if remedial measures have been initiated to implement a proper management system for fire risk management thereat.

(Withdrawn)

RDA- WOOTON ROUNDABOUT - ROAD DECONGESTION PROGRAMME

(No. B/570) Mr K. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the Road Decongestion Programme, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to if the Wooton Roundabout is being considered thereunder.

(Withdrawn)

ANDERSON & LEES STREETS, CUREPIPE – REHABILITATION & CONSTRUCTION OF DRAINS

(No. B/571) Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the Anderson and Lees streets, in Curepipe, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Land Drainage Authority, information as to where matters stand as to the rehabilitation and construction of drains thereat.

(Withdrawn)

BASIC INVALIDITY PENSIONS – APPLICATIONS & GRANTS

(No. B/573) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the Basic Invalidity Pensions, she will state the number of applications received for the granting thereof, since July 2021 to date, including the number thereof received from persons suffering from physical and/or mental disability, indicating the number thereof benefitting thereunder.

(Withdrawn)

CASINO DE MAURICE, CUREPIPE – MR D. N., HUMAN RESOURCE DIRECTOR – DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS

(No. B/574) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to Mr D. N., Human Resource Director at the Casino de Maurice, Curepipe, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if disciplinary proceedings have been initiated against him and, if so, give details thereof.

(Withdrawn)

CEB & IPP – COAL & HEAVY FUEL OIL USAGE

(No. B/575) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to electricity production, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to the quantity

of heavy fuel oil and coal utilised by the CEB and the Independent Power Producers on a yearly basis over the past seven years.

Reply: I am placing a copy of the information with regard to the quantity of Heavy Fuel Oil (HFO) utilised by the CEB and coal used from 2015 to 2021 in the Library of the National Assembly.

It is to be highlighted that the HFO is procured through the State Trading Corporation and the IPPs procure coal through a joint agreement and through the Coal Terminal (Management) Company Ltd.

CHINA – BELT & ROAD INITIATIVE

(No. B/576) Mr R. Uteem (Second 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 Belt and Road Initiative by China, he will state if consideration will be given for Mauritius to be part thereof and, if not, why not.

Reply: The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), formerly known as One Belt One Road, is a global infrastructure development strategy launched by H.E. Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China in 2013. The BRI was incorporated into the Constitution of China in 2017. It has since evolved as a guiding principle of the Chinese foreign policy. As of March 2022, it is reported that 146 countries have signed up to the BRI. It is also reported that those countries have subscribed to the BRI with differing level of commitments.

The project has a target completion date of 2049 which will coincide with the centennial of the People's Republic of China (PRC)'s founding.

On 19 March 2018, Mauritius was invited to provide its feedback on a draft MoU submitted by China entitled "Cooperation within the Framework of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road Initiative."

In order to better understand the project, Mauritius was invited to participate in the First and Second Belt and Road Conferences which were convened in Beijing in August 2018 and April 2019 (i.e. prior to the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic in China).

During the same period, Mauritius had reached an advanced stage in its negotiation with China to conclude a Free Trade Area (FTA) which essentially has the same objective of enhancing trade and economic and infrastructure cooperation between the two countries. The FTA was a priority for Government as well as the business community since it was to be the first FTA that China would have signed with an African country. With this agreement, Mauritius aims to position itself as a gateway between China and mainland Africa, while China gains a foothold in the strategic Indian Ocean region.

The Mauritius-China FTA was ultimately signed on 17 October 2019 and entered into force on 01 January 2021, and is reported to be producing very positive fall out in terms of increased exports to China.

The House may wish to know that there are several cooperation instruments and agreements that are being negotiated between our two countries. Therefore, the proposed MoU on cooperation between our two countries on cooperation within the specific framework of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road Initiative, which together constitute what is known as the Belt and Road Initiative, as well as several other bilateral cooperation instruments between our two countries are under consideration by the relevant authorities of Mauritius as well as in China.

Having said that, let me emphasise in a clear manner that Mauritius highly values its special, friendly and cordial relations that it entertains with the People's Republic of China since the establishment of formal diplomatic relations on 15 April 1972. In spite of the challenges, Mauritius has stood steadfastly behind the one China policy during the past 50 years and shall continue to do so.

Under the leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, this Government is working collaboratively with the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Mauritius to enhance our bilateral relations - a relation in which we take pride as we commemorate the 50 years of the establishment of diplomatic relations. In fact, a number of activities and events have already been organised and scheduled to take place for that commemoration which is slated to continue through this year while respecting the sanitary restrictions.

At the regional level, Mauritius has been working very closely with China through the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, including the recently concluded 8th FOCAC meeting

which was held in Dakar, Senegal, and for which I wish to commend H.E. President Xi Jinping and his Government's qualitative improvements that the Chinese side is bringing to its partnership with Africa particularly by focusing on re-balancing Africa-China trade in favour of Africa.

Finally, let me also assure the House that our relation with China is one that is built on trust, mutual respect and mutual benefit. We are deeply committed to enhance relations between Mauritius and China, and we shall continue to engage with the Chinese side on all issues of cooperation between our two countries, including the BRI, on the basis of trust, mutual respect and mutual benefit.

NATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME – IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/578) Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the National Scheme Development Programme, he will state the

–

- (a) date on which same was launched;
- (b) number of persons having benefitted thereunder, indicating in which areas, and
- (c) quantum of funds disbursed thereunder as at to date.

Reply: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the National Skills Development Programme (NSDP) instead of the National Scheme Development Programme which does not exist.

Following announcement made at paragraph 42 of 2016/2017 Budget Speech, the National Skills Development Programme is being implemented with effect from 16 November 2016 with a view to providing training to some 4,000 persons in technical skills that are high in demand. The main objective of the NSDP is to train unemployed individuals to better match skills with the demand of enterprises. This measure comprises two components, namely training and industrial placement, with prospective employment. All costs relating to training and

payment of stipend to trainees are met by the Human Resource Development Council (HRDC) which also manages the programme.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that as at date, some 5,100 unemployed persons have already been trained in more than 15 sectors such as Tourism, Hospitality and Cruise, ICT, Security, Nursing and Paramedics, amongst others. I am placing in the Library of the National Assembly the relevant details regarding the number of persons having benefitted training on a sector wise basis since the start of the programme.

Concerning part (c) of the question, I am informed that so far, an amount of around Rs314 m. has been disbursed by the HRDC to cover training costs as well as the monthly training stipend of Rs6,000 paid to trainees.

I also wish to inform the House that out of the 5,100 trainees who completed their training under NSDP, 3,626 persons have already obtained employment immediately after having followed their training.

DBM - WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS - ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

(No. B/579) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the women entrepreneurs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd., information as to the eligibility criteria to benefit from loans at a concessional rate of 0.5 percent per annum, as announced in the 2020-2021 Budget Speech.

Reply: Ce dispositif a été introduit en 2018 pour permettre aux femmes entrepreneurs d'avoir un accès facilité au financement afin de démarrer ou de consolider leur entreprise.

J'ai été informé par la *Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd* que, suite au budget 2020/2021, les femmes entrepreneurs peuvent bénéficier de facilités de prêt d'un montant maximum de 500,000 roupies sans garantie dans le cadre du *Women Entrepreneur Scheme* à un taux d'intérêt de 0,5% par an.

Le prêt est remboursable sur une période de 7 ans, avec un moratoire d'un an. La *DBM* prend uniquement une charge flottante générale sur les actifs du bénéficiaire.

Je souhaite informer la Chambre que les femmes entrepreneurs engagées dans tous les secteurs d'activité, à l'exception du commerce, du transport, de la construction et des activités connexes, peuvent prétendre à ce programme.

BOM – CURRENCY DIVISION - LARCENY

(No. B/580) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Bank of Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to if the currency division thereof has recently been the subject of a larceny and, if so, indicate –

- (a) the names of the suspects, if any,
- (b) the estimated quantum of funds allegedly stolen, indicating the actions taken by the bank, including if the matter has been referred to the Police.

Reply: La Banque de Maurice est tenue, en vertu de l'article 26 de la *Bank of Mauritius Act* 2004, de préserver la confidentialité des informations recueillies dans l'exercice de ses fonctions.

La Banque de Maurice ne peut donc divulguer aucune des informations demandées par l'honorable Parlementaire.

**TRANSPORT SERVICES CONTRACT(S) – CONTRACTORS –
PROCUREMENT METHODS**

(No. B/581) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to existing transport services contract(s) entered into by his Ministry, he will state the names of the contractors therefor, indicating in each case, the –

- (a) procurement method used;
- (b) date of award of contract;
- (c) name of contractor;
- (d) duration of contract, and
- (e) contractual value thereof.

(Withdrawn)

**MAURITIUS RECREATION COUNCIL – BOARD – COMPOSITION &
ACTIVITIES**

(No. B/582) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the present Board of the Mauritius Recreation Council, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

- (a) composition thereof, indicating the –
 - (i) allowances paid to the Chairperson and other members thereof, and
 - (ii) dates of the meetings held, and
- (b) list of activities organized.

(Withdrawn)

**SHELTERS & CHILD DEVELOPMENT CARE CENTRES – INFORMATION
MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

(No. B/583) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the proposed development and implementation of an Information Management System for the monitoring of the Shelters and Child Development Care Centres, she will state where matters stand.

Reply: My Ministry is responsible for the monitoring of 18 Residential Care Institutions (RCIs) and 357 Child Day Care Centres (CDCCs) and regular monitoring visits are carried out by the Enforcement Officers of my Ministry to ensure compliance with existing legislations.

The project write-up for an “Online Licensing and Enforcement Management Information System (OLEMIS)” is being finalised, in consultation with the Central Informatics Bureau (CIB) and funds for its implementation are being sought from the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development for the Financial Year 2022-2023.

SME MAURITIUS LTD – SUPPORT SCHEMES & ASSISTANCE

(No. B/584) Mr M. Yeung Sik Yuen (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives whether, in regard to the small and medium enterprises, he will for the benefit of the House, obtain from SME Mauritius Ltd., information as to the support schemes and assistance extended thereto since January 2020 to date.

Reply: I am informed by SME Mauritius Ltd that at the very start of COVID-19 in 2020, wary of the unprecedented disruptions, the pandemic was likely to cause, it reviewed and customised its schemes to respond to the emerging challenges and headwinds facing SMEs, especially with regard to their operational sustainability and resilience.

Consequently, a series of 5 new schemes covering 35 components relating to functional areas of SMEs were introduced to improve the endurance of SMEs in the face of more complex environmental dynamics.

The five schemes are as follows –

- (a) the Internal Capability Development Scheme to improve the efficiency of the value chain of small businesses and their responsiveness to customer requirements as well as market dynamics in any sector of economic activity;
- (b) the Technology and Innovation Scheme to encourage SMEs to continuously invest in technology and automated production capabilities and create technology-based integrated and sustainable SMEs;
- (c) the SME Marketing Support Scheme to support SMEs in improving their market accessibility and competitiveness in both local and export markets and respond to more stringent requirements of diverse customer bases;
- (d) the Inclusiveness and Integration Scheme to encourage SMEs to favour inclusiveness, interlinkages and networking as well as collaborate and synergise for mutual benefit, which is a necessary pre-condition for the establishment of clusters in different key sectors, and
- (e) the SME Utility Connection Assistance Scheme to support SMEs connect their places of activity to mains of utility suppliers (CEB or CWA). The Scheme would assist SMEs to benefit from alleviation of upfront costs, ease entry and improve chances of SME survival.

I am further informed that for the period January 2020-30 April 2022, 1,469 SMEs have benefitted from the Schemes in place.

It is worthy to note that these 1,469 SMEs have a joint turnover of Rs5 billion and provide employment to some 6,800 persons.

In terms of scheme distribution by SME classification and Turnover range, 66% of all Schemes went to Micro SMEs, 23% to Small SMEs and 11% went to Medium SMEs.

The 4 main sectors of activity that were supported were Manufacturing with 55%, Services with 23%, Agri-Agro Business with 12% and 10% for Construction and Others.

In a sustained effort to support the adoption of productive Technology among SMEs, 86% of all schemes approved were on Technology and Innovation, 6% to Utility Connections and 4% to Internal Capability Development respectively.

The total amount that was committed on these 1,469 Schemes over the period was approximately Rs75 m., and the sum disbursed to date is Rs56 m.

In order to strengthen the human resource adequacy of SMEs, 586 Degree holders and 246 Diploma holders are in placement in SMEs to support their operations with a constant flow of fresh talents and skills and ease their financial burden.

Additionally, conscious of the importance of capacity building and the imperative of continuously updating and upgrading skills of Entrepreneurs in the face of adverse headwinds and more abrasive market conditions, SME Mauritius Ltd provided training to 3,174 Entrepreneurs, of which 1,716 benefitted from training in Skills and Crafts and 1,458 benefitted from training in Management-related fields.

Therefore, from January 2020 to date, discounting for consultation and advisory services, SME Mauritius has provided direct assistance and support Schemes to some 5,000 SMEs.

**NATIONAL TRANSPORT CORPORATION - CHIEF ENGINEER &
OFFICER-IN-CHARGE**

(No. B/585) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the Engineering Department of the National Transport Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) since when the post of Chief Engineer is vacant, and

- (b) the name and qualifications of the Officer-in-Charge thereof, indicating if the internal auditor has reported any alleged fraud on the sale of the assets of the Corporation, namely office furniture, against the said officer and, if so, if an inquiry has been initiated thereinto and the outcome thereof.

Reply: As to part (a) of the question, the post of Chief Engineer at the National Transport Corporation (NTC) is vacant since 02 March 2021 following the retirement of the substantive holder.

The vacancy was advertised on 07 July 2021. Four applications were received by the closing date of 30 July 2021. However, no candidates were shortlisted as no one satisfied the criteria laid down in the Scheme of Service.

The PRB Report 2021 recommended that the appointment to the grade of Chief Engineer should be made by promotion on the basis of experience and merit of officers in the grade of Mechanical Engineer/Senior Mechanical Engineer of the Corporation reckoning at least 10 years' service in a substantive capacity in the grade. In the absence of qualified serving officers, appointment thereto should be made by selection from registered Engineers in the field of Mechanical Engineering or Mechatronic with the Council of Registered Engineers of Mauritius reckoning at least 10 years' post-registration experience in Mechanical Engineer in the transport industry.

In view thereof, the Scheme of Service for the post of Chief Engineer has been reviewed and has been submitted to the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms for prescription.

Regarding part (b) of the question, I am informed by the NTC that following the departure on leave of the substantive holder on 15 February 2022, the Technical and Mechanical Officer/Senior Technical and Mechanical Officer, Mr Amarnath Prakash Badal, has been assigned the responsibility as Officer-in-Charge of the Engineering Department.

I am apprised that Mr Badal holds the following qualifications –

- (i) a School Certificate, and
- (ii) a Diploma in Automobile Engineering Technology from the Hindustan Institute of Engineers Technology (1979).

I am advised that the Internal Auditor submitted to the Board of the NTC an Internal Audit Report on the disposal of assets at the NTC including issues reported on the sale of assets (office furniture).

One of the observations was that there were no written procedures and assets have been sold without any clear procedures being followed for the disposal of assets as exist in the public service nor any measures have been put in place to safeguard the assets of the Corporation.

The Internal Auditor informed that proper procedures should be put in place for the disposal of assets and a Fixed Assets Register should be introduced and updated with addition and disposal, as appropriate.

The Internal Auditor also recommended the development of a comprehensive set of policies and procedures for the disposal including a periodical review of the assets and the setting up of an inventory system where the movement of assets/unserviceable items are recorded, including a periodical review of the inventory. This inventory should be counter signed by a Senior Officer.

The responsibility of each officer within this procedure for disposal should be clearly defined. I am advised that the Management of the NTC is setting up the procedures as recommended by the Internal Auditor.

ROCHES-NOIRES SMART CITY PROJECT – EIA LICENCE

(No. B/586) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the Roches-Noires Smart City Project, he will state if the requirement for the issue of an Environment Impact Assessment Licence for the construction thereof is being envisaged by his Ministry.

(Withdrawn)

CÔTE D'OR INTERNATIONAL RACECOURSE & ENTERTAINMENT COMPLEX LTD

(No. B/587) 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 Côte d'Or International Racecourse and Entertainment Complex Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to when decision was taken for the setting up thereof, indicating the purpose thereof, giving details of the project.

(Withdrawn)

COVID-19 VACCINE – SECOND BOOSTER DOSE

(No. B/589) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the fourth dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, he will state the number of persons having been administered therewith as at to date, indicating the type of vaccine administered.

Reply: In view to provide further protection from COVID-19 to vulnerable groups in Mauritius against the Omicron variant which can be fatal in certain high risks patients and patients above the age of 60, especially in the wake of the spread of new variants which are highly contagious and the change in season, the National Vaccination Committee recommended the administration of a 2nd booster dose.

The concerned high-risk patients are those having at least one of these comorbidities –

- (i) Diabetes;
- (ii) HBP;
- (iii) Obesity;
- (iv) Renal Insufficiency;
- (v) Chronic Respiratory diseases;
- (vi) Cardiovascular diseases;
- (vii) Immuno-compromised patients,
- (viii) Down syndrome.

The recommended vaccine to be administered as 2nd booster dose is –

- i. the Pfizer vaccine for high-risk patients aged 40 to 59 years old and for persons aged 59 years and above, and
- ii. Moderna vaccine for high-risk patients aged 18 to 39 years old.

Accordingly, our vaccination campaign for 2nd booster dose was launched on 13 April 2022.

I am informed that as at 05 May 2022, 4,508 persons have been administered a 2nd booster dose as follows –

- Pfizer vaccine: 4,433
- Moderna vaccine: 75

GAS WATER HEATERS - TRAGIC INCIDENTS - CASES

(No. B/590) 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 gas water heaters, he will state the number of reported cases wherein same have caused tragic incidents since 2019 to date, indicating if consideration will be given for the imposition of an obligation for gas cylinders used therefor to be installed outdoor.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since 2019 to date, seven cases regarding incidents related to gas water heaters were reported to the Police in which six persons lost their lives.

I am also informed that the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service has developed a Fire Code to establish the minimum requirements for fire safety provisions. It takes into account the function, design, management, operation, and maintenance of buildings to secure the life safety of occupants in the event of a fire.

According to Appendix 12 of the Fire Code, all LPG cylinder installations shall be located outdoors and on the ground level for all commercial and industrial buildings. Installation of LPG cylinders indoor in commercial and industrial buildings is normally not permitted, unless otherwise approved by the Chief Fire Officer under special circumstances. A private dwelling

house is allowed to have a maximum of 36 Kg of LPG cylinders to be installed or stored within the dwelling unit for domestic use.

I shall discuss with my colleague, the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management, the need to –

- (i) regularly educate the public about the safety norms and standards, and
- (ii) legislate in order to prevent the indoor installation of the LPG Cylinders.

**COVID-19 – NEW SOUILLAC HOSPITAL – RENAL DIALYSIS PATIENTS –
DEATH**

(No. B/591) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the renal dialysis patients who died following their admission at the New Souillac Hospital after having contracted the COVID-19 virus, he will, following the referral of the cases thereof to the Medical Negligence Standing Committee, obtain therefrom, information as to the actions taken in relation thereto, giving details thereof.

(Withdrawn)

MOLNUPIRAVIR TABLETS - PURCHASE

(No. B/592) 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)

MEDICAL COUNCIL – DOCTORS – SUSPENSION

(No. B/593) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to doctors, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Public Service Commission and the Medical Council, information as to the number thereof under suspension since 2019 to date.

Reply: I am informed by the Public Service Commission and the Medical Council that since 2019 to date, two doctors have been suspended.

B104, CHAMAREL - CASE NOYALE – SOIL STABILISATION WORKS

(No. B/594) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to soil stabilisation works currently ongoing along road B104, Chamarel - Case Noyale, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

NTC - ELECTRIC BUSES - TENDER

(No. B/595) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the acquisition of electric buses, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Transport Corporation, information as to when tender was launched therefor, indicating the –

- (a) bids received and the names of the successful bidders;
- (b) warranty periods, and
- (c) maintenance plan thereof.

Reply: For part (a) of the question, I am informed by the National Transport Corporation (NTC) that a restricted bidding exercise was launched on 30 September 2021 to request bids from eight potential firms for the procurement of one electric bus with a charging system.

The closing date for this procurement exercise was fixed for 14 October 2021. Only one offer was received.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the warranty period on the vehicle body and chassis is eight years or 500,000 kms, whichever comes first, and eight years for the battery.

Concerning part (c) of the question, the NTC has a maintenance plan for the electric bus up to 60,000 kms with the supplier.

CENTRAL ELECTRICITY BOARD – TARIFF REVIEW

(No. B/596) Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to electricity, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to if an increase of 20 per cent of the tariff thereof is being considered.

Reply: I am informed by the CEB that the issue of tariff review is still being studied at the level of a Technical Committee set up at CEB. No recommendation has been made to my Ministry.

MINISTRY OF FINANCE, ECONOMIC PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT – CLEANING SERVICES - CONTRACTORS

(No. B/597) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the cleaning services in his Ministry, he will state the names of the contractors therefor, indicating in each case, the –

- (a) procurement method used;
- (b) date of award of contract;
- (c) name of contractor;
- (d) duration of contract, and
- (e) contract value.

(Withdrawn)

MR P. U. – OCCUPATION PERMIT

(No. B/598) 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 Mr P. U., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Economic Development Board, information as to when he landed in Mauritius, indicating the date on which he was issued with an Occupation Permit and if a due diligence exercise was carried out prior thereto.

(Withdrawn)

GRADUATES – UNEMPLOYED & UNDEREMPLOYED

(No. B/599) Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the graduates, he will state the present number thereof being –

- (a) unemployed, and
- (b) underemployed.

(Withdrawn)

COASTAL EROSION – RISING SEA LEVEL – MITIGATING ACTIONS

(No. B/600) Mr R. Woochit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the coast, he will state the actions, if any, taken to mitigate rising sea levels and erosion thereof over the past five years and, if so, give details thereof.

Reply: As a Small Island Developing State surrounded by the ocean, Mauritius is at the frontline of the prevailing global climate crisis, namely sea level rise which is further exacerbated by the effects of global warming. According to the Mauritius Meteorological Services, a sea level rise of 5.6 millimetres per year has been recorded in Mauritius and it exceeds the global averages of 3.3 millimetres per year. Sea level rise has serious impacts on our beaches and coastal assets, ultimately impacting on the socio-economic activities.

In order to mitigate the impacts of sea level rise, a holistic approach has been adopted by the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change and in that respect,

following an island-wide survey carried out jointly by the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change in collaboration with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in 2014, some 50 sites had been identified as priority ones for undertaking adaptation works. Since then, substantial resources have been injected in terms of consultancy and coastal works for the rehabilitation of those eroded coastlines and as at date, some 10 km of coastline at 23 sites have been rehabilitated. Currently, coastal protection works are ongoing over a stretch of 5.4 km at vulnerable sites along the south east coast, namely Pointe aux Feuilles to Grand Sable, Providence, Petit Sable to Bambous Virieux, Bambous Virieux to Anse Jonchée and Bois des Amourettes. These works are expected to be completed by September 2022. Additionally, consultancy services for detailed design for coastal protection works of some 1.1 km at Deux Frères are at finalisation stage. Works are expected to start early next year and completed in June 2024.

For the forthcoming five years, the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change is planning to rehabilitate 25 additional eroded sites over a total length of some 20 km across the island. In this respect, actions are underway for the recruitment of consultancy services at 16 sites and for the implementation of coastal protection, landscaping and infrastructural works at Rivière des Créoles and Vieux Grand Port as well as at Flic-en-Flac. These projects would comprise, *inter alia*, the measures for the protection of the shoreline against erosion and coral reef restoration, thereby increasing coastal resilience against the adverse impacts of climate change and the rising sea level thereat.

In addition to coastal rehabilitation works, other measures have been put in place to address beach erosion. In line with the provisions of the Planning Policy Guidance and through the Environment Impact Assessment and Preliminary Environmental Report mechanisms, a minimum setback of 30 metres from the high water mark is being imposed for the construction of structures on the shoreline. Moreover, in 2017, the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Committee, under the Chair of the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change, developed a policy for the replacement of casuarina (filao) trees within the dynamic beach zone by endemic plants which are more adapted to the coastal areas. In the first instance, the public beaches of Flic en Flac, Le Morne and Belle Mare were concerned over a stretch of 200m, 280m and 400m, respectively. Shrubs, namely Sainte Marie, Veloutiers Vert,

and Veloutiers D'argent, amongst others, were planted and the project is presently under maintenance period until September 2023.

In 2019, in order to address the vulnerability of the Port Louis harbour which is exposed to several climate hazards, a “Climate Change Vulnerability and Adaptation Study for Port of Port Louis” was undertaken following the technical assistance of the Climate Technology Centre and Network and funding to the tune of USD325,000 from the Green Climate Fund. One of the main adaptation measures recommended is the construction of a breakwater of about 1.2 km long by 2025 to increase the resilience of Port Louis by decreasing the number of days/hours in terms of stoppage of port operations due to adverse weather conditions. The estimated investment cost for this project varies between USD300 m. and USD350 m. The Mauritius Ports Authority is exploring co-financing to enable implementation of the recommendations of the study.

With the support of the *Agence Française de Développement* under the Adap’Action Programme to the tune of EUR2 m., my Ministry has also undertaken climate change vulnerability assessments for five critical coastal sites namely, Port-Louis (excluding the port area), Flic-en-Flac and Tamarin, Bel Ombre and Riambel, Belle Mare, Péreybère and Grand Baie. These assessments have culminated in the 2019 Mauritius Resilience Strategy which aims at strengthening climate resilience by the mapping, updating and mainstreaming of Environmentally Sensitive Areas in the development planning process. A capacity building of cartographers, planners and surveyors on the mapping of marine and terrestrial Environmentally Sensitive Areas would be organised by my Ministry through funds to the tune of Rs1 m. made available under the National Environment and Climate Change Fund.

Additionally, preliminary vulnerability assessments were carried out for the formulation of a Land Drainage Master Plan which is currently under finalisation and a National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategic Policy Framework and Action Plan, which has been completed and is presently under implementation.

Other initiatives which would help to mitigate the impacts of sea level rise and erosion along our coasts include the formulation of a National Adaptation Plan. On 21 April 2022, a revised project proposal for same to the tune of USD2.5 m. over a span of three years for four sectors, namely disaster risk reduction, infrastructure, coastal zone and fisheries has been

submitted by the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change to the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development for onward transmission to the Green Climate Fund. The National Adaptation Plan would enable effective adaptation planning, leverage cross-sectoral investment opportunities for climate change adaptation and resilience and increase flow of adaptation finance for disproportionately vulnerable groups, namely local communities, fishers, farmers and at-risk infrastructure.

Moreover, in order to address the social and economic challenges of climate change on the maritime borders of Mauritius and Rodrigues, an in-depth study on the hazards of coastal erosion and marine submersion would be carried out with the financial support of the *Agence Française de Développement* to the tune of EUR1 m. for a duration of 2 years. This study would comprise assessment, analysis and mapping of hazards, coastal risks and exposed assets. The project would culminate in the production of 50 maps which would be used as tool for decision-making as well as to respond to crisis on the coastal zone by responders.

CONSTITUENCY NO. 20 – DRAINS

(No. B/601) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the Rs462 m. earmarked in the Budget 2021-2022 for construction and upgrading of drains in Constituency No. 20, Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière, he will state the –

- (a) quantum thereof disbursed, indicating the locations where drains have been constructed as at to date, giving details as to the costs incurred and names of contractors therefor, and
- (b) list of on-going construction, indicating the costs and expected completion dates thereof.

(Withdrawn)

OVERSEAS TREATMENT SCHEME - PRIVATE CLINICS - FRAMEWORK

(No. B/602) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Overseas Treatment Scheme, he will state if the framework to allow patients to undergo treatment in private clinics which is not

available in public hospitals, as announced in Budget Speech 2021-2202 has been established and, if so, indicate –

- (a) since when;
- (b) the number of patients having benefitted thereunder as at to date, and
- (c) the quantum of funds disbursed to each private clinic as at to date.

(Withdrawn)

COVID-19 VACCINES – CHILDREN – DELIVERY DATE

(No. B/603) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the COVID-19 vaccines to be administered to children aged 5 years and above, he will state the number of vaccines ordered, indicating the expected delivery date of the consignments thereof.

Reply: In December 2021, my Ministry placed an order with Pfizer for some 200,000 doses of paediatric vaccines for administration in children aged 5 to 11 years old in Mauritius.

Accordingly, on 17 February of this year, we received the draft Manufacturing and Supply Agreement with details on the quantum and pricing of vaccines to be supplied as well as the delivery terms and conditions from Pfizer for consideration. The unit price of the vaccine was at USD15 with delivery by the end of March 2022.

On 14 March 2022, we received a proposal from the British High Commission regarding donation of paediatric Pfizer vaccines from the UK Government. We were requested to provide details of our requirements and preferred delivery schedules.

We, readily, conveyed our consent to the donation and to that effect, a Memorandum of Understanding was entered with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the UK Government on 02 May 2022 for 211,200 donated doses of the paediatric Pfizer vaccines.

My thanks go to the British High Commission and the UK Government for having facilitated the arrival of the donated doses of the vaccines which reached Mauritius in two identical shipments on 08 and 09 May 2022 respectively. The vaccines are presently being stored at minus 60 degrees Celsius at our Central Warehouse in Castel.

I wish to point out that upon receipt of the donated doses of paediatric vaccines from the UK Government, the order placed with Pfizer B.V for the 200,000 doses was cancelled and the manufacturer has, accordingly, acknowledged our request for cancellation on 03 May 2022.

HORSE RACING DIVISION – BOARD COMPOSITION

(No. B/604) 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)

LA CIGOGNE & LA MARGUERITE SHELTERS – ANNUAL RETURNS

(No. B/605) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to La Cigogne and La Marguerite Shelters managed by the Children’s Foundation, she will state the actions taken, if any, by her Ministry for non-submission of the respective accounts thereof.

Reply: In regard to *La Cigogne* and *La Marguerite* Shelters managed by the Children’s Foundation, the Annual Return for accounting period ending 31 December 2020 was submitted on 08 April 2022 and the Annual Return for accounting period ending 31 December 2021 was submitted on 15 April 2022.

RING ROAD PROJECT - PRIVATE AND/OR PUBLIC PLOTS OF LAND

(No. B/606) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to private and/or public plots of land which were reserved for the subsequent phases of the Ring Road Project, he will state if any of such plots has been released to the owners thereof for the implementation of development projects.

Reply: I am advised that the answer is in the negative.

PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES – DRUGS SHORTAGE

(No. B/607) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the public health services,

he will state if a shortage of certain drugs has occurred over the past six months and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) reasons therefor;
- (b) remedial measures taken, and
- (c) quantity thereof purchased under emergency procurement.

(Withdrawn)

**CONSTITUENCY NO. 5 –CONSTRUCTION OF DRAINS–
BUDGETARY ALLOCATION**

(No. B/608) Mr R. Wochit (Third Member for Pamplémousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to Constituency No. 5, Triolet and Pamplémousses, he will state the budgetary allocation for construction of drains thereat since 2017 to January 2022 to date.

Reply: Some Rs2.7 billion have been allocated for the implementation of 104 drain projects by the National Development Unit in Constituency No. 5, Triolet and Pamplémousses, since 2017 to date, as follows -

- a) For Financial Year 2017-2018, 10 drain projects were implemented to the tune of Rs121.5 m.;
- b) 23 drain projects to the tune of some Rs118 m. were completed in Financial Year 2018-2019;
- c) 33 drain projects were implemented for an amount of Rs688.6 m. during the Financial Year 2019-2020, and
- d) 5 drain projects to the tune of Rs32.4 m. were carried out during the Financial Year 2020-2021.

As regards to the previous financial year, an amount of Rs1.8 billion was earmarked for the implementation of 33 drain projects by the NDU, of which as at January 2022, Rs48 m. was disbursed.

Furthermore, a total of 11 drain projects to the tune of some Rs112.6 m. have been implemented in Constituency No. 5, Triolet and Pamplémousses, by the Road Development Authority as from 2019 to date, as follows –

- a) 4 drain projects during the Financial Year 2019-2020 for an amount of about Rs36 m.;
- b) 4 drain projects to the tune of Rs34.9 m. for the Financial Year 2020-2021, and
- c) 3 drain projects during the Financial Year 2021-2022 for an amount of Rs41.4 m.

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY ON DRUGS - DANGEROUS DRUGS - CONTROL

(No. B/609) 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 Inquiry on Drugs.

(Withdrawn)

LECKRAZ LANE, CONGOMAH - RETAINING WALL - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/610) Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the proposed construction of a retaining wall at Leckraz Lane, in Congomah, and upgrading of the said lane, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: On 28 July 2021, a stretch of 15 metres of the road along Leckraz Lane, Congomah collapsed due to major cracks and poor standard of the existing retaining structures along the road edge thereat.

In this respect, on 03 August 2021, the National Development Unit appointed a Contractor under its Framework Agreement for the construction of a retaining wall along a length of 217 metres of the road, which includes the 15 metres wall which had collapsed. The scope of works also includes the upgrading of the existing road structure, as well as the provision of a drain at the Leckraz Lane.

Works for the carting away of the collapsed stone wall and other debris started on 05 August 2021 and was completed on 08 September 2021. Thereafter, trial pits were carried out to

identify locations of existing services. It was subsequently observed that the relocation of a CWA pipe had to be undertaken prior to starting the construction of the retaining wall. The relocation of the CWA pipe was completed on 22 September 2021 by the Contractor.

On the same day of 22 September 2021, the Contractor started the construction of the new retaining wall at the 15 metres failure zone and works were completed on 24 December 2021. As from early this year, the Contractor has started with the construction of new retaining structures at locations which were prone to collapse.

During the execution of the works, the Contractor drew the attention of the NDU of site constraints namely –

- (a) the foundation of the existing houses on site was exposed and above the existing ground level, and
- (b) the structures, that is, the walls, foundations and the slabs of the existing houses were connected to the existing retaining wall. Consequently, upon demolition of the existing retaining wall, maximum safety measures need to be taken to ensure that the houses are not affected by vibration upon demolition works.

In the circumstances, the Contractor proposed a change in the design. Lux Consult (Mauritius) Ltd was appointed as Consultant on 31 March 2022 to review the design to ensure that the existing houses are not affected.

The Contractor is now working according to the new design.

As at September 2022, 135 metres of the 217 metres of retaining wall had already been completed with associated backfilling works and provision of handrails. After the construction of the retaining wall, the contractor will proceed with the upgrading of the Leckraz Lane. The whole project is expected to be completed by mid-December 2022.

VALLÉE DES PRÊTRES MULTI PURPOSE CENTRE - YARD - UPGRADING
(No. B/611) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the Vallée des Prêtres Multi Purpose Centre, he will state where matters stand as to the upgrading of the yard thereof.

(Withdrawn)

SURINAM - FOOTBALL PLAYGROUND PROJECT

(No. B/613) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the Football Playground Project at Surinam, he will state where matters stand as to the implementation thereof.

(Withdrawn)

LE MORNE VILLAGE - EVICTION EXERCISE - 21 APRIL 2022

(No. B/614) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the eviction exercise carried out by the Police in Le Morne Village on 21 April 2022, he will state the circumstances thereof.

(Withdrawn)

CAMP LABOUE – FOOTBALL PITCH PROJECT – VESTING OF LAND

(No. B/615) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the Camp Laboue Football Pitch Project, he will state where matters stand as to the vesting of a plot of land in the District Council of Pamplemousses for the implementation thereof.

Reply: I am informed that my Ministry did receive a request from the Ministry of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management for the vesting of a plot of State land at Camp La Boue, Long Mountain for the setting up of a mini-soccer pitch.

This plot of land forms part of a larger plot of State land which is already vested in the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development (National Development Unit) for the purpose of construction of a bus terminus.

I am further informed that there is a mini-soccer pitch and a *'boulodrome'* on the very same plot of land.

My Ministry is in consultation with the concerned Ministries and authorities so that optimal use is made of this plot of land in the best interest of local inhabitants.

OBESE/OVERWEIGHT & DIABETIC CHILDREN – PERCENTAGE - 2014 TO

10 MAY 2022

(No. B/616) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to obese and overweight children, he will state the percentages thereof in Mauritius since the year 2014 to date, indicating

—

- (a) the percentages thereof suffering from diabetes, and
- (b) if consideration will be given for the banning of advertising of high fat, salt or sugar (HFSS) food or drink products directed towards children.

(Withdrawn)

BOM - PRINTED BANK NOTES - AMOUNT

(No. B/617) 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 bank notes printed by the Bank of Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Bank, for each of the years 2014 to 2021 and for the period 01 January 2022 to date, information as to the amount thereof, indicating in each case the purpose therefor.

Reply: Comme la Chambre le sait, la Banque de Maurice est tenue, en vertu de l'article 26 de la *Bank of Mauritius Act 2004*, de préserver la confidentialité des informations relatives à ses affaires.

En conséquence, la Banque ne peut divulguer les informations demandées par l'honorable Parlementaire.

INTERSECTORAL GLOBAL ACTION PLAN ON EPILEPSY & OTHER NEUROLOGICAL DISORDERS 2022-2031 - RATIFICATION

(No. B/618) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Intersectoral Global Action Plan on Epilepsy and Other Neurological Disorders 2022-2031, he will state if Government proposes to press for the ratification and domestication thereof and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

Reply: The management of the epilepsy consists of clinical neurology, psychology, social aspects and treatment.

Epilepsy is a chronic disease which concerns children, adults and the elderly, and has very varied and sometimes intricate etiologies associated with genetic, metabolic, malformative, injury and inflammatory factors.

My Ministry has initiated a process to develop a strategic plan to fight against epilepsy and has begun to collect the opinions of local experts.

Depending on the results and contents of the strategic plan, which is a first major step towards the advancement of the treatment of epilepsy, we would be in a position to advance towards our international commitments.

OVERSEAS TREATMENT SCHEME – BENEFICIARIES & FUNDS DISBURSED

(No. B/619) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Overseas Treatment Scheme, he will state the number of patients having benefitted thereunder since December 2021 to date, indicating the amount of funds disbursed thereunder.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that from December 2021 to date, 85 patients have benefitted from the Overseas Treatment Scheme, mainly for treatment in India. The amount of funds disbursed in respect of the 85 patients is to the tune of Rs29,548,216.

ROBINSON GOVERNMENT SCHOOL - INFRASTRUCTURAL WORKS

(No. B/621) Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the implementation of infrastructural works at the Robinson Government School, she will state where matters stand, indicating the completion date thereof.

Reply: I am informed that following a bidding exercise, the contract for the construction of a new building with a number of facilities at Robinson Government School was awarded to Kisten Enterprises Ltd. The project consisted of two phases –

- Phase 1 constituted the construction of a U-shaped ground plus one building, a school canteen, parking facilities, drains, landscaping and site works.
- Phase 2 of the project involved the demolition of the existing old building, and the construction of a Pre-Primary Unit, landscaping and other site works.

Works started on 20 June 2020 and as of 05 March 2021, prior to the announcement of the national lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, around 35% of works had been completed.

This comprises the super structure of the ground floor of the U-shaped building and the block work partitioning of the first floor which have been completed.

After the partial lifting of the lockdown on 01 May 2021, the Contractor had failed to resume works.

In accordance with the conditions of contract, notices for breaches of contract were sent by the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development to the Contractor, with no result. On 10 March 2022, following consultations with and the advice of the State Law Office, the contract was terminated.

The Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development has been requested to prepare the bid documents for the remaining works, following which tenders will have to be launched for the project to be completed.

Necessary action has been taken to forfeit the performance security of the company and the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development has already been requested to prepare the bid documents for the outstanding works.

MEDCO-CLAIRFOND FOOTBALL GROUND – RENOVATION WORKS

(No. B/622) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the ongoing renovation and construction works at the MEDCO-Clairfond Football ground, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Vacoas Phoenix, information as to the –

- (a) contract cost thereof;
- (b) date of award of contract, and

(c) name of contractor.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal Council of Vacoas Phoenix that the contract for the project setting up of a mini soccer pitch at Clairefond had been awarded for an amount of Rs4.1 m. exclusive of VAT on 06 May 2021 to Island Civil and Mechanical Contracting Limited.

I am further informed by the Council that the project start date was 20 May 2021 and the intended completion date was 20 August 2021.

However, due to delays in the implementation of the project, and several correspondences addressed to the contractor and meetings held with the latter, the Council issued a notice of intended termination of contract on 06 September 2021, giving the contractor up to 15 September 2021 to complete all outstanding works.

The Municipal Council of Vacoas Phoenix issued another letter to the contractor on 21 February 2022 and a delay of up to end of February 2022 was given to the latter to complete all works.

In view of the fact that the contractor did not complete the works by end of February 2022, the Council has, at its Executive Committee held on 30 March 2022, decided to terminate the contract on the ground of breach of contractual obligations.

The Municipal Council of Vacoas Phoenix would be launching new bids for completion of the outstanding works in due course.

RENEWABLE ENERGY - IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/623) Mr R. Wochit (Third Member for Pamplémousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to renewable energy, he will state the actions taken to increase the use thereof over the past five years in Mauritius.

Reply: In order to increase the share of renewable energy in Mauritius, a number of actions have been implemented during the last five years.

The CEB has launched a number of Renewable Energy Schemes covering a broad spectrum of the electricity market. These schemes, which will further dynamise the electricity sector include –

- a. the implementation of the Home Solar Project for 10,000 low-income and vulnerable families;
- b. a solar photovoltaic scheme for households consuming on average up to 200 kilowatt hour or units of electricity per month;
- c. a scheme for households willing to invest in a solar photovoltaic system up to 5 kilowatts;
- d. a solar photovoltaic scheme for individual to charge their electric cars;
- e. a solar photovoltaic scheme for religious bodies;
- f. a solar photovoltaic scheme for NGOs and charitable institutions;
- g. a solar photovoltaic scheme for educational institutions;
- h. a solar photovoltaic scheme for the Smart Cities;
- i. a scheme for MSDG enabling corporate entities to produce their own electricity;
- j. another scheme for public sector entities willing to generate electricity to meet their demands;
- k. two solar photovoltaic schemes for corporate entities charging of electric vehicles and for public charging facilities, and
- l. finally, a greenfield renewable energy scheme for public entities.

It is worth mentioning that the CEB has already completed the implementation of the first pilot phase of the Home Solar Project, whereby 1,000 families in the low-income bracket benefitted from a solar photovoltaic kit of 1 kW on their roof and are getting 50 kWh of free electricity on a monthly basis for 20 years. I wish to inform the House that the CEB is currently implementing the second phase of the Home Solar Project. The target is to give another 2,000

families solar PV kits of 1.5 kW each for free. These families will get 75 kWh of electricity for free on a monthly basis for 20 years.

The CEB has also completed the free installation of 1,000 solar PV kits of 2 kW each for small businesses in the electricity Tariff 215 Category. The CEB is planning the installation of another 1,000 solar installations of 2 kW each for the SMEs. These renewable energy schemes alone will account for 218.5 MW of solar photovoltaic installed capacities in the electric grid.

To integrate safely these intermittent sources of renewable energy into the national grid, the CEB has undertaken the following distinct measures -

- a) Installation of 18 megawatts of Battery Energy Storage System for primary frequency regulation;
- b) Review the flexibility of its power generation plants to operate on droop control mode; thus compensating for all frequency excursion and deviations,
- c) The CEB is modernising the grid by gradually shifting away from traditional network operation to smart grid operation. In this process, the installation of Automatic Generation Control to perform secondary frequency regulation, wide area monitoring system to monitor the stability of the network, and an Advanced Distribution Management System for the control and monitoring of the distribution network have been completed.

Furthermore, during the last five years additional major actions have been taken to increase the share of renewable energy in the Mauritius Power System. For instance -

- a) After a successful competitive bidding exercise, in August this year, the CEB has signed two Energy Supply Purchase Agreements for the setting up of two Solar PV Farm of 10 MW_{ac} each. The new solar power plants are expected to be on the grid in 2023.
- b) Following another competitive bidding exercise, the CEB has issued letters of intent for a total capacity of 130 megawatts of solar farms coupled with battery energy storage system. These hybrid solar farms, which will provide stable power to the grid, are expected to be in operation in 2024.

- c) The CEB is currently constructing its second Solar PV Farm of 8 MW at Henrietta after the operation of the first 2 MW farm commissioned in 2019.
- d) Furthermore, the CEB has initiated the development of a pioneer 2 MW floating solar project at the Tamarind Falls Dam.
- e) The Sans Souci Dam capacity has been increased by raising the dam by 3 meters using the state-of-the-art technology known as the fuse gate. This will enable increasing the energy generation of the Champagne Hydro Power Station by additional 3 gigawatts-hour per year.

To promote the renewable energy sector, Government has announced a number of financial incentives/measures such as no VAT on photovoltaic systems and increased the feed-in tariff for a number of schemes. The CEB has introduced a time of use tariff for individuals to charge their electric cars. The night rate of the time of use tariff is as low as MUR 4.00 per kilowatt-hour. A similar time of use tariff is being designed for corporate entities to charge their electric vehicles (cars and buses). In the same vein, in the Budget Speech 2022-2023, it was announced that as from 01 July 2022, all hybrid and electric vehicles will be duty-free and the Government will introduce a negative excise duty scheme of 10 per cent for the purchase of electric vehicles by individuals up to a maximum of Rs200,000. Furthermore, the Development Bank of Mauritius will provide a 0.5 per cent loan of up to Rs3 m. to taxis and van operators over a period of 7 years for the purchase of electric vehicles.

In the last Budget Speech 2022-2023, Government has enunciated the setting up of a Carbon Neutral Industrial Sector whereby individuals and companies will also be allowed to generate renewable energy up to a maximum of 150 per cent of their annual requirement.