



REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**PARLIAMENTARY****DEBATES****(HANSARD)****FIRST SESSION****TUESDAY 12 JULY 2022**

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Dr. the Hon. Renganaden Padayachy	Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development
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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. 20 of 2022

Sitting of Tuesday 12 July 2022

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

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

The 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) The Certificate of Urgency in respect of the Immigration Bill (No. XII of 2022). (In Original)
- (b) The Certificate of Urgency in respect of the Mauritius Food Standards Agency Bill (No. XIII of 2022). (In Original)
- (c) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation for the year ended 30 June 2018.
- (d) The Reports of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Media Trust for the years ended 30 June 2018 and 30 June 2019.
- (e) The Immigration (Permits) (Prescribed Fees, Guarantees and Application Form) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 171 of 2022)

B. Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning

Ministry of Tourism

- (a) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Town and Country Planning Board for the year ended 30 June 2021.
- (b) The Land Surveyors (Diplomas) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 170 of 2022)

C. Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance

- (a) The Virtual Asset and Initial Token Offerings Services (Capital and Other Financial Requirements) Rules 2022. (Government Notice No. 173 of 2022)
- (b) The Virtual Asset and Initial Token Offerings Services (Client Disclosure) Rules 2022. (Government Notice No. 174 of 2022)
- (c) The Virtual Asset and Initial Token Offerings Services (Custody of Client Assets) Rules 2022. (Government Notice No. 175 of 2022)
- (d) The Virtual Assets and Initial Token Offerings Services (Cybersecurity) Rules 2022. (Government Notice No. 176 of 2022)

- (e) The Virtual Asset and Initial Token Offerings Services (Publication of Advertisements) Rules 2022. (Government Notice No. 177 of 2022)
- (f) The Virtual Assets and Initial Token Offerings Services (Risk Management) Rules 2022. (Government Notice No. 178 of 2022)
- (g) The Virtual Asset and Initial Token Offerings Services (Statutory Returns) Rules 2022. (Government Notice No. 179 of 2022)

D. Attorney General

Ministry of Agro Industry and Food Security

The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority for the year ended 30 June 2020.

E. Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training

Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection

The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 15) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 172 of 2022)

F. Ministry of Health and Wellness

- (a) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Mauritius Institute of Health for the year ended 30 June 2021.
- (b) The Medical Council (Medical Institutions) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 169 of 2022)

G. Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare

The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund for the year ended 30 June 2021.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ B/798 will be replied by the hon. Prime Minister, time permitting.

Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie!

NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION – COMPLAINTS OF TORTURE BY POLICE OFFICERS – DECEMBER 2019 TO DATE

(No. B/769) 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 National Human Rights Commission, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number of complaints of torture by Police Officer/s received thereat since December 2019 to date, indicating the number thereof in which investigations have been completed.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Protection of Human Rights Act was promulgated in 1998, following which, in 2001, a National Human Rights Commission was created to deal with human rights violations, primarily civil and political rights, enshrined in Chapter II of the Constitution, and also with Police complaints.

In 2012, The Protection of Human Rights Act was amended to create three distinct divisions under the National Human Rights Commission, namely the Human Rights Division, the Police Complaints Division, and the National Preventive Mechanism Division.

The Police Complaints Division was mandated to deal with all cases of complaints against Police Officers. With the promulgation of the Independent Police Complaints Commission Act in April 2018, the activities of the Police Complaints Division have been taken over by the Independent Police Complaints Commission. The Independent Police Complaints Commission has also taken over the 277 cases of complaints against Police Officers, which were pending before the former Police Complaints Division.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the National Human Rights Commission has now two divisions, namely

—

- (i) the Human Rights Division, which is governed by the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1998, and
- (ii) the National Preventive Mechanism Division set up under the National Preventive Mechanism Act, 2012.

The main function of the Human Rights Division of the National Human Rights Commission is to enquire into written complaints regarding violations of human rights listed in Chapter II of the Constitution, while the National Preventive Mechanism Division mainly deals with complaints from detainees. The National Human Rights Commission is thus not now mandated to deal with complaints against Police Officers including alleged torture.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the National Human Rights Commission that for the period December 2019 to 07 July 2022, three (3) complaints against Police alleging torture were received by the National Human Rights Commission and the complainants were advised to redirect their complaints to the Independent Police Complaints Commission.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Can the hon. Prime Minister state the number of prison visits and Police visits to cells effected during the last twelve months by the National Preventive Mechanism?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, this question is not related to the substantive question. This question is about the number of complaints of torture by Police Officers.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Will the hon. Prime Minister then state whether, any recommendation has been made by whatever authority to prevent torture in detention?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, again the main Question is specific about how many complaints have been made by Police Officers with regard to torture, and I have answered. There have been three cases and for these cases the complainants have been referred to the IPCC. In fact, there is another question on the IPCC with regard to complaints.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: The hon. Prime Minister referred to the Protection of Human Rights Act. Under this Act, the Human Rights Commission has an overriding duty to supervise any breach of fundamental human rights and to make recommendations. So, may I know whether the hon.

Prime Minister has received any report, any recommendation made by this Human Rights Commission relating to torture?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member must come with a specific question on this issue.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Léopold!

RODRIGUES – POLICE OFFICERS – ALLEGED DRUG TRAFFICKING

(No. B/770) Mr J. B. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the recent allegation of some Police Officers posted in Rodrigues being involved in drug trafficking levelled by the Commissioner of Sports in Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if an inquiry has been initiated thereinto.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, in a report submitted by the Divisional Commander Rodrigues on 27 May 2022, it was stated that the Commissioner for Youth and Sports, Arts and Culture held a meeting on 25 May 2022 at Port Mathurin on “Strategies to combat Drugs in Rodrigues”. Twenty five persons comprising Public Officers, representatives of NGOs as well as Police Officers from Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit (ADSU) and National Coast Guard based in Rodrigues were in attendance.

I am further informed by the Commissioner of Police that, during the meeting, the Commissioner for Youth and Sports, Arts and Culture had, amongst others, stated that –

- (i) 5 kgs of heroin had arrived in Rodrigues;
- (ii) synthetic drugs are manufactured by Police and put on sale through minors;
- (iii) informants are unwilling to give information to Police because of lack of trust in them, and
- (iv) leakage of information by Police.

Shortly after the meeting, a video recording of the meeting was posted on the social media and several articles related to the allegations made by the Commissioner for Youth and Sports, Arts and Culture were published in several newspapers both in Rodrigues and in Mauritius.

Subsequently, the Divisional Commander Rodrigues initiated an enquiry to ascertain the veracity of the allegations.

The Police Officers who attended the meeting confirmed that the Commissioner for Youth and Sports, Arts and Culture had made such allegations.

The Commissioner of Police has further informed that the Commissioner for Youth and Sports, Arts and Culture was approached on 23 June 2022 to give a written statement in relation to the allegations he made on 25 May 2022 but he stated that he would give a statement at a later stage. He was anew contacted on 08 July 2022 and his Secretary informed that the Commissioner would give an appointment by the following week. On 11 July 2022, he was further contacted by the Police and he stated that he did not find it necessary to give a statement on the matter. However, he is expecting the Police to carry out an investigation and take appropriate actions.

The enquiry is ongoing and actions as deemed appropriate in the circumstances will be taken by the Police.

Mr Speaker: Supplementary? Next question!

MR S.S. – ALLEGATIONS – POLICE COMPLAINT

(No. B/771) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the allegations levelled against him by Mr S. S., he will –

- (a) state if he has filed or proposes to file a Police complaint against Mr S. S., and
- (b) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if the latter has initiated an inquiry thereinto.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall reply to both PQ B/771 and PQ B/775 together.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I refer the hon. Members to the reply I made to the PNQ at our Sitting of Tuesday 05 July 2022 wherein I stated in the most unequivocal terms that there has been at no point in time any installation or any attempt by my Office to install whatsoever device and/or

equipment at any of the Submarine Cable Landing Stations to monitor internet traffic to and from Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in normal circumstances, information pertaining to national security is not disclosed. However, I am providing certain information in order to clear the doubts and dissipate the confusion created in the minds of the people by the false allegations made by the CEO of Mauritius Telecom and the hysteria of the Opposition over this issue.

I, therefore, seize this opportunity to provide further clarifications on the matter in order to set the records straight. Indeed, on 21 October 2021, the Security Division of my Office issued a letter to the Chief Executive Officer of Mauritius Telecom Ltd, to request him to provide certain information regarding the South Africa Far East Submarine Landing Station situated at Baie Jacotet, Bel Ombre, in the context of a security survey.

The information sought related to, *inter alia* –

- (i) location of the submarine cable;
- (ii) security measures put up thereat;
- (iii) number of personnel working thereat including any foreign national, and
- (iv) the technical details with respect to the Submarine Cable.

On 22 December 2021, being given that there was no response from the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Mauritius Telecom, a second letter was sent to him asking him again to provide the requested information regarding Baie Jacotet Landing Station.

Thereafter, on 24 December 2021, the CEO of Mauritius Telecom provided the information which was being sought by the Security Division of my Office.

On 12 April 2022, the CEO of Mauritius Telecom was informed that a three-member technical team from India would field a survey mission to Baie Jacotet, Bel Ombre between 13 and 15 April 2022, and he was requested to extend all necessary assistance to the team during the survey visit.

On 14 April 2022, the CEO of Mauritius Telecom met the Head of the delegation during which technical matters concerning the survey were discussed.

In the morning of 15 April 2022, I was informed that Mauritius Telecom had not made necessary arrangements for the team to have access to the Landing Station at Baie Jacotet for the survey.

Subsequently, I telephoned the CEO and asked him to make arrangements for the survey to be carried out. Finally, he agreed to grant access to the team.

On the same day, the CEO asked the Chief Technical Officer of Mauritius Telecom to accompany the delegation to Baie Jacotet for the site survey.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is also apposite to underline that the Chief Technical Officer of Mauritius Telecom accompanied the team to Baie Jacotet Landing Station and he was physically present on site throughout the whole survey. Moreover, the Chief Technical Officer has, in a report, confirmed that no sniffing or other equipment had been installed by the team at any Landing Station, including Baie Jacotet.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to highlight the fact that the survey was carried out as far back as 15 April 2022, and it is only now that the former CEO of Mauritius Telecom is making baseless - I repeat, baseless - allegations that I gave him instructions to allow a third party to install or use equipment to enable sniffing, interception, monitoring or recording of internet traffic to and from Mauritius and/or countries in the region.

Let me restate most emphatically that I have never given any instructions as alleged by the former CEO for the installation of sniffing equipment, and, at all material times, the question, and the only question as regards to Baie Jacotet Landing Station was the conduct of a survey by the Indian team in the interest of national security.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have also been informed that the CEO had, at no point in time, brought, or deemed it necessary to bring this matter to the attention of the Board of Directors of Mauritius Telecom, despite the fact that the request for the survey was communicated to him as far back as October 2021, the more so if he had reservations on the nature of the request.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, following the baseless accusations made by the former CEO, I invited him to make a declaration to the Police. However, he has so far failed to do so.

The false statement, declaration and publication of Mr S. S., have caused and are causing irreparable prejudice to Mauritius, the Government, my Office, and my person as Prime Minister. Since this represents a grave risk to national security, I have deemed it my duty to report the matter to the Police myself. I have accordingly given a statement to the Police on 11 July 2022.

I have requested the Police to initiate an enquiry into the matter forthwith. Therefore, the setting up of another inquiry does not arise.

Mr Juman: M. le Premier ministre, vous avez fait référence à un *survey* - pas les correspondances que vous venez de mentionner - commandité par le gouvernement mauricien. Est-ce que vous pouvez dire à la Chambre si vous avez fait une requête formelle au *Board du Mauritius Telecom* ? Si oui, quand et avec qui ? Et ensuite, est-ce que le câble SAFE qui appartient à un consortium d'opérateurs, est-ce qu'il y a eu une requête officielle envoyée au consortium pour demander l'aval avant de procéder à ce *survey* ?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member, maybe, does not know that the Landing Station at Baie Jacotet is under the control of Mauritius Telecom. That is the first thing.

Secondly, the Security Division of my Office has written and communicated with the ex-CEO of Mauritius Telecom and requested him, first, to provide some technical information, as I said as far back as 21 October 2021, with a view to carrying out a survey. Thereafter, as I have stated in my reply, there have been other communications to the ex-CEO of Mauritius Telecom.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le Premier ministre, vu la gravité de l'accusation portée contre vous en tant que Premier ministre par l'ex-CEO du *Mauritius Telecom*, vous confirmez à la Chambre, aujourd'hui, que vous avez fait un *statement* à la police hier ; cette même police tombant sous vos responsabilités ? Dans ce cas, vu que des précédents cas des membres de votre gouvernement ; l'honorable Collendavelloo, le feu Raj Dayal et l'honorable Yogida Sawmynaden, qui se sont retrouvés dans les mêmes situations que vous, est-ce que vous ne pensez pas que c'est bien pour la transparence, dans l'intérêt du pays que vous présentez votre démission et à la suite de l'enquête, vous revenez ?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: M. le président, sur un point je suis d'accord avec l'honorable membre. Sur un seul point ! C'est une allégation plus que grave, extrêmement grave, qui a été faite contre moi. Et en égard du même raisonnement de cet honorable membre, pourquoi quelqu'un qui m'accuse de lui avoir donné des instructions pour commettre une offense aussi grave que ça et qu'il a des preuves, pourquoi il n'est pas allé aux autorités concernées pour faire une déclaration et fournir ses preuves ? Je lui ai donné quelques temps. Mais étant donné – peut-être à travers son porte-parole – qu'il est allé dire qu'il va venir de l'avant avec d'autres preuves vendredi dernier, j'ai attendu, je n'ai rien entendu et je n'ai rien vu. Et, là, apparemment il va donner d'autres preuves, je ne sais pas si c'est aujourd'hui ou quand. Donc, ma patience a des limites aussi, M. le président. Donc, moi j'ai été à la police et j'ai fait ma déclaration, et je peux vous dire, M. le président, que j'ai fourni à la police tous les documents et toutes les preuves nécessaires pour aider la police à faire son enquête. Maintenant, c'est entre les mains de la police. Et on verra ! On verra, M. le président ! *I do not speak out of thin air. As Prime Minister, I do not speak out of thin air and I stand by what I say.*

But time will tell ! The hysteria of Members of this Opposition, brandishing banners mentioning high treason, and who are talking about high treason, let me ask where is the high treason ? There are so many barristers on the other side of the House. Why do they not go and make a declaration to accuse me of high treason ? Just *soulever les pancartes, venir dire* high treason, *faire le joli. On verra, M. le président !* I am speaking here before this Assembly today. With time, we shall see !

Mr Juman: *Oui, M. le Premier ministre, on verra ! M. le Premier ministre, vous êtes accusés de haute trahison par nul autre qu'un de vos proches collaborateurs,...*

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Lerla ?*

Mr Juman: *... CEO de Mauritius Telecom en poste qui fait cette allégation, accusation et révélation.*

Can you table all the correspondences between your Office and the Mauritius Telecom regarding the survey - not seeking information but regarding the survey - you requested, all the

documents that you exchanged between Mauritius Telecom and your Office, can you table it before the House?

The Prime Minister: M. le président, je viens de dire que, j'ai donné mon *statement* à la police. Toutes les communications qu'il y a eues entre the *Security Division of my Office with Mauritius Telecom have been submitted to the Police.*

An hon. Member: *La deuxième question est pour moi.*

Mr Speaker: It is his question.

An hon. Member: Okay.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le Premier ministre, l'île Maurice entière est au courant que le Monsieur en question, M. Sherry Singh avait l'intention de parler ce soir sur l'Express. Ceci dit, il avait l'intention de parler sur l'Express pour dire toute la vérité, selon lui et aujourd'hui, nous apprenons, à l'heure actuelle alors que nous, nous sommes au Parlement, que votre police est à la troussse de M. Sherry Singh. Est-ce que, pour la transparence, ne pensez-vous pas qu'il était plutôt mieux de laisser M. Sherry Singh parler ce soir et à ce moment-là vous allez à la police ?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! Order!

The Prime Minister: M. le président, je vois que l'honorables membre est mieux informé que moi, comme Premier ministre. Il sait déjà que la police est à la troussse de M. S.S. Deuxièmement, qui l'empêche de parler ? Comme certains avaient évoqué, comme toujours, *fake news*, que je suis en train de mettre un *Gagging Order. Not at all! Not at all!* M. le président, et j'invite M. S.S. à venir dire ce qu'il a à dire publiquement. Je l'invite ! Troisièmement, M. le président,...

An hon. Member: *Fizib soter!*

The Prime Minister: ...l'honorables membre maintenant, m'accuse aujourd'hui

Mr Juman: *Haute trahison, ki to p kozer....*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Juman!

Mr Juman: *Trahison !*

Mr Speaker: Be careful! Be careful with that word!

Mr Juman: Look at the Standing Order!

Mr Speaker: Be careful with that word!

(*Interruptions*)

The Prime Minister: They do not want to hear my answer.

Mr Juman: *Trahison!*

The Prime Minister: *L'honorable membre...*

What *trahison*!

Mr Juman: *Haute trahison!*

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, can this hon. Member be requested to withdraw the words ‘*haute trahison*’?

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! This word is not in order. So, please help the Chamber, help the House. The proceeding has gone very well. Please, in the spirit of democracy, withdraw that word. Withdraw!

Mr Juman: I won’t!

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

An hon. Member: *Pa met li dehors.*

Mr Dhaliyah: *Azenou lamem.*

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: *Amene kestion, apre sorti aler!*

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: Behave yourselves everybody! Everybody!

Mr Dhunoo: *Inspecteur Gadget!*

Mr Speaker: Everybody!

The Prime Minister: *Laryaz!* Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I was answering and the third point I wanted to make with regard to what the hon. Assirvaden has said. He is now taking me to task as to why I have reported the matter to the Police yesterday. Look at the two questions. The first question - I mean I do not want to comment on hon. Juman – is: ‘state if he has filed or proposes to file a Police complaint.’ In this Question he is asking me, this hon. Member is asking me whether I have filed or I propose to file a Police complaint, and, if not, for the benefit of the House, to obtain from the Commissioner of Police whether the latter has, *proprio motu*, started an inquiry by himself. This is the Question.

The Question of hon. Assirvaden is whether an inquiry thereinto will be carried out - I have therefore gone to the Police. Now, if I had not given a statement to the Police yesterday, they would have taken me to task today: ‘Ah, why is it that now you are not going to the Police? Why is it that you are not reporting the matter to the Police?’ Anyway, you will lose with them, but, for me, what is important is that, when those allegations were made – and they are very, very serious allegations - the first thing for me was inviting the one who is making the allegation to go to the Authorities and to make his formal complaint. But nothing happened, and, of course, I will take whatever initiative which needs to be taken, and can you imagine, Mr Speaker, Sir, they are doing a lot of talking about this issue!

This Mr S.S. was aware of this survey since 21 October 2021. 21 October 2021! He does not report to anybody. This hon. Member who has left the House was saying whether I had made a communication to the Board of Mauritius Telecom. The CEO of Mauritius Telecom, who is answerable to the Board, has not, at any time, expressed any concern to the Board. From 21 October 2021 to 30 June 2022, date of his announcement that he is going to resign, that is, the notice that he gives to Mauritius Telecom, there have been four Board meetings –

- (i) on 09 December 2021;
- (ii) on 17 February 2022;
- (iii) on 14 April 2022, and
- (iv) on 20 June 2022.

He does not show, at least, any concern, any worries about somebody who asked him to do an illegal act, he does not intimate, not a word to the Board.

Regarding his notice of resignation - as they have access to all these documents - I shall ask them to go and read his letter, it is a nice letter.

Nowhere is it mentioned therein that he is giving a notice of resignation because there is something which is very serious, which concerns whatever treason or whatever security of the country that the Prime Minister has ... At least, he should have therein mentioned that. Because you are leaving anyway, mention that in your letter! Not a word! In fact, he is saying that he is ever grateful to the Chairman of the Board. Wow! We shall see! *Continié!*

Mr Speaker: Time over! Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

OMICRON 5 & MONKEYPOX - PCR SEQUENTIAL ANALYSIS - INCOMING PASSENGERS

(No. B/781) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the incoming passengers, he will state if –

- (a) they are all being subjected to PCR sequential analysis for the detection of Omicron 5 and Monkeypox since end April 2022 to date and, if so, indicate the number thereof carried out and the number thereof which turned out positive, and
- (b) vaccines against Monkeypox have been pre-ordered.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, based upon the guidelines of the World Health Organisation, a sequencing sampling strategy was established. Accordingly, 2% of the population positive for SARS-CoV-2 was being tested. The people tested were chosen according to a representative panel of infected patients and these comprised –

- patients attending flu clinics;
- incoming passengers;
- patients admitted in hospitals, and
- deceased patients suffering from COVID-19.

The choices were made according to several criteria, including fair geographical distribution, age and clinical severity. As from 01 July 2022 and the easing of sanitary restrictions in the country, the sequencing sampling strategy is no longer being implemented. On

the other hand, PCR sequential analysis is carried out on positive cases, since strain monitoring is still ongoing in the country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as from April 2022 till date, a total of 1,792 samples were selected for sequencing of which there were 39 imported cases for sequencing. The results on the imported cases received so far are as follows –

- BA.1 - 1
- BA.2 - 25
- BA.4 - 3
- BA.5 - 1

There were 2 cases of failed sequencing and we are still awaiting the results for 7. So, only 1 case of BA.5 has been detected among the imported cases.

Mr Speaker, Sir, so far, no case of Monkeypox has been detected in Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, for Monkeypox, there is no routine test upon arrival of incoming passengers as at now. A protocol based on symptoms and surveillance is adopted by the Health Sanitary Officers to screen incoming passengers in regard to Monkeypox.

As at date, the total number of samples tested for Monkeypox stands at 15. The Central Health Laboratory has performed test on samples received for 9 suspected cases. All of these tests were negative. Besides, 6 suspected cases were also sent abroad (National Institute for Communicable Disease, South Africa & Reunion Island). These cases also tested negative.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to part (b) of the question, a request was made to the World Health Organisation to provide us with the contact details and particulars of manufacturers of the Monkeypox vaccine. On 03 June 2022, we were informed of one commercial supplier, Bavarian Nordic GmbH, in respect of the MVA-BN Vaccine (Imnavex) for Monkeypox.

In order to expedite procurement of this vaccine, a request was made on 06 June 2022 to the World Health Organisation to provide us with 200 units of the Imnavax vaccine for Monkeypox.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ B/847 will be replied by hon. Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation. Supplementary!

Mrs Mayotte: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the World Health Organisation is recommending mass vaccination against Monkeypox?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE), the *ad hoc* working group on Smallpox and Monkeypox vaccines provided the first WHO recommendations of vaccines and immunisation for Monkeypox. They concluded that mass vaccination is not required nor recommended for Monkeypox at this time.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

Dr. Aumeer: As per information gathered and the one that you have just mentioned about the number of samples that have been conducted over the last couple of weeks, and noting that over the last 10 days I can say, there are nearly 300 cases with 4 unfortunate deaths, has genetic sequencing been carried out on those cases so that we have exact information as to the prevalence or incidence of the new type of COVID-19 variant circulating in the country?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Health and Wellness, especially the Central Health Laboratory, is guided by the WHO recommendation for the sequencing analysis. Samples have been sent for sequencing for imported cases especially, and patients who have passed away with COVID-19.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the Omicron variant he mentioned in his answer BA.5 resists to COVID-19 vaccines?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the WHO), as yet, there is no scientific data to sustain the idea that the Omicron variant BA.5 is resistant to vaccines. We still have no data from these two centres.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

Dr. Aumeer: We are currently experiencing - I would say in paradox - a new wave across the world and particularly also Mauritius being no exception. Has your Ministry been involved with vaccine manufacturers with regard to what is now called the 'variant-updated vaccine' for protecting the population at large due to new incoming variants particularly BA.4, BA.5 and what may be coming up next in the future?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, in terms of vaccines, the Ministry of Health will stand guided by what would be the recommendation of the World Health Organisation. So far, more than 90% of our adults have already done the vaccine and we are promoting vaccination to be done, especially for the elderly, for those who are above 60 years and those who have comorbidities. And then, obviously, when the time comes, if ever there is another new vaccine and that we should re-vaccinate the whole population, we will go according to that stand.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Woochit!

MAHESHWAR NAGRI ROAD, TRIOLET – DRAINS BLOCKAGES

(No. B/782) Mr R. Woochit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the drains at Maheshwar Nagri Road, at Triolet, he will state the steps taken to address the blockages occurring thereat.

The Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr G. Lesjongard): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the District Council of Pamplemousses that the type of drain at Maheshwar Nagri Road, Triolet is an absorption drain with no outlet.

The drain is being regularly cleaned by the Council's Scavenging Contractor, Norba Ltd, and was last cleaned in April 2022.

During heavy rainfall, whenever the absorption capacity of the said drain reaches its maximum, the surplus surface runoff causes accumulation of water.

Mr Speaker, Sir, unfortunately, the existing absorption drain at Maheshwar Nagri Road, Triolet no longer fits its purpose and therefore, consideration is being given in this financial year to construct a proper drain network accordingly. In this respect, the District Council of Pamplemousses will be carrying out a survey and submit a proposal to the Land Drainage Authority for consideration under the National Management Programme.

Mr Speaker: Supplementary!

Mr Woochit: Is the Minister aware that the drain found at Maheshwar Nagri Road, Triolet, is the only drain that can canalise the excess flood water found on the main road during heavy rainfall, and what measures will the Minister take so that these problems do not occur again and the residents are no longer stressed in the wake of heavy rainfall?

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is what I said in my main reply; we do acknowledge that the absorption drain, first, has no outlet and that during heavy rainfall, it reaches its maximum capacity and it is because of the surplus surface run-off that we have accumulation of water. And it is for this reason, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have said in the reply that it no longer fits its purpose and therefore, we are giving due consideration during this Financial Year to construct a proper drain work in that region.

LA NICOLIERE – WATER TREATMENT FACILITIES – CWA –MODERNISATION

(No. B/783) Mr R. Woohit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the water treatment facilities at La Nicolière, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, details of the modernisation thereof being envisaged.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Central Water Authority that La Nicolière treatment plant was constructed in the years 2000 to 2002 and was commissioned in August 2002. The plant receives raw water from La Nicolière impounding reservoir which is itself fed from rivers within its catchment. During dry season, water is released from Midlands Dam to cater for the shortfall in the level of La Nicolière reservoir. The actual treatment plant treats on an average of around 78,000 to 80,000 m³ per day and uses rapid gravity filter where water is filtered with silica sand as filtering media at La Nicolière water treatment plant.

Mr Speaker, Sir, due to relatively high turbidity of the raw water at La Nicolière reservoir and the reduced effectiveness of the treatment plant caused by high-frequency of backwashing, the Central Water Authority has appointed a Consultant in September 2016 to provide consultancy engineering services for a feasibility study on the rehabilitation and extension of La Nicolière treatment plant. The terms of reference of the Consultant were mainly –

- (i) to carry out a feasibility study for the rehabilitation of La Nicolière treatment plant and the extension of its capacity to 100,000 m³ per day and for the associated works, and
- (ii) to implement a system allowing the raw water quality monitoring at La Nicolière and Midlands Dam level.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Consultant had submitted the inception report, feasibility report, a concept design report and a draft bid document for the rehabilitation and extension of La Nicolière water treatment plant to the central water authority in June 2019. The cost of the rehabilitation and extension of La Nicolière water treatment plant was estimated by the Consultant to be to the tune of Rs1.2 billion excluding VAT. It was then decided to implement for the rehabilitation and extension of La Nicolière treatment plant and associated works under a Built Operate Transfer (BOT) with the assistance of the BOT Projects Unit of the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development. The project was registered as a potential BOT project in September 2019.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the works would consist of –

- (i) the refurbishment of the chemical storage dosage facilities; sludge treatment; SCADA system; regulation of chemical dosage; automatic monitoring of water quality; automatic backwashing of the sand filters, and chlorine neutralisation facilities associated with the chlorination house.
- (ii) Extension works will comprise mainly the following –
 - a) new additional coagulation, flocculation tanks to complete the existing ones;
 - b) a new rapid flotation stage of algae elimination;
 - c) another complementary coagulation flocculation stage with pre-chlorination and powdered activated carbon if presence of cyanotoxins detected in the raw water;
 - d) a new sedimentation stage in new implemented settling tanks;
 - e) new additional rapid gravity sand filters to complete the existing ones;
 - f) a new additional treated water tank to complete the existing one;
 - g) a new additional sludge treatment to complete the existing one, and
 - h) a new additional grind beds to complete the existing ones.

The financial assistance of the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) has been obtained for the appointment of a transaction adviser for the BOT project. The Government of Mauritius for its part has to contribute USD 500,000 towards the development of the project.

Funds have been provided in Budget 2022-2023. A project preparation facility agreement has been signed by the DBSA and the CWA on 24 November 2021. The transaction advisory bid document is being drafted and same is expected to be launched in October 2022 for the recruitment of a transaction adviser who will assist the CWA to prepare the bid documents for construction works. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Woochit: With regard to the multiple water supply problems since several years which have been faced by several promoters, is the Minister aware that there are hundreds of applications pending at the Central Water Authority, in Pamplemousses for the water supply clearances and if yes, state what immediate action is being taken by his Ministry to address this problem?

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, the question put to me is with regard to treatment of water at La Nicolière whereas the supplementary question asked deals with request for water supply in the northern region; this has to be treated separately. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are addressing the water shortage problem in the northern region with several initiatives that have been taken over the past months at the level of the CWA and we are trying to tackle the problem in the short-term and medium-term where we are tapping raw water, Mr Speaker, Sir, and treating it through pressure filters. As at today, we have injected a total of 31,000 m³ per day of water in the system at different regions of the north in view to cope with the increasing demand of water supply in that region. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Woochit: Can the Minister inform the House if clearances have been given to the new Social Living Development Ltd or the National Housing Development Co. Ltd prior to starting construction of the 12,000 housing units?

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, you will agree with me that this is not related; I don't have this information with me but if need be, I will give the answer to the hon. Member at a later stage, Mr Speaker, Sir. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: The Table is advised that PQ B/808, B/810, B/827, B/854, B/835 have been withdrawn.

Next question!

EVICTION EXERCISES – RELOCATION OF FAMILIES

(No. B/784) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to eviction exercises carried out by his Ministry, he will state the number of families having been subject thereto since 2019 to date, indicating –

- (a) the locations concerned therewith;
- (b) reasons therefor, and
- (c) if his Ministry has relocated the said families and, if not, why not.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand that the term ‘eviction’ in the hon. Gentleman’s question refers to action taken by my Ministry to remove illegal occupiers on state lands although the question itself does not refer either to illegal occupation or to state land.

In fact, the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning acts on behalf of the Government of Mauritius to remove illegal structures of whatsoever nature erected on land in the public domain, in pursuance of the State Lands Act. It is to be noted that removal of illegal structures is also carried out by other public authorities such as local government authorities or forestry services, amongst others.

Public land is a scarce resource in Mauritius and it has been the policy of all governments since independence to enforce the rule of law and to ensure the maintenance of law and order including with reference to land occupation. It has also been the policy of the State of Mauritius to provide social housing to families in need as ascertained by relevant services, through the Central Housing Authority, replaced in 1991 by the National Housing Development Co. Ltd, and by the National Social Living Development Co. Ltd since 2019.

No information is available regarding evictions for the year 2019. However, there was one important instance of removal of illegal structures on State Land in 2020 which I gave details thereof in response to PQ B/88 of 09 June 2020, from hon. Mrs Arianne Navarre-Marie and PQ B/976 of 24 November 2020 from hon. Armance. In that year, Mr Speaker, Sir, the country was in lockdown as from 23 March 2020 further to a curfew order providing that only persons performing essential services could leave their homes.

Further to information provided by concerned citizens, my Ministry carried out inspections in early May that revealed that illegal structures had been erected in breach of the curfew order and with total disregard to public safety in times of COVID. Such illegal structures were discovered in the localities of Pointe aux Sables, Riambel, Curepipe, Le Morne and Bras d'Eau National Park. Most of these structures were found to be uninhabited when notices to vacate were served by my Ministry. However, after affixing of such notices, the numbers of illegal structures multiplied and a great number of these structures were occupied, presumably to prevent removal of the structures by officers of my Ministry. Thus, for example, at Pointe aux Sables, the numbers increased from 29 structures, of which only 9 were occupied on 09 and 10 May 2020 to 159, of which 67 were occupied by 27 May, two weeks.

In the circumstances, Government took decisive action to remove some 159 illegal structures in the five abovementioned localities at the end of May and in early June 2020 for the following reasons –

- (i) numbers of illegal structures were increasing exponentially and the situation threatened to get out of hand and the implications that individuals could take advantage of the lockdown to seize whatever land was unoccupied whether private or public around the island was very dangerous. In fact, within two weeks, there had been 170 illegal structures whereas for the whole period 2015-2019, there were less than 300 cases of illegal occupation;
- (ii) in the case of Pointe aux Sables, for example, the site squatted was classified as coastal freshwater marshy land and an environmental sensitive area where no building is allowed for safety reasons;
- (iii) failure to remove illegal structures would have been tantamount to condoning a blatant violation of the curfew order thereby undermining the ability of the State to protect the population as the COVID pandemic spread;
- (iv) failure to remove illegal structures there and then would have caused even greater hardship to occupiers if eviction had been effected at a later stage, and

- (v) allowing illegal occupation constitutes a great injustice to poor people experiencing housing problems and who have abided by the law, registering with either the NHDC or the National Empowerment Foundation and who had been waiting in the queue for allocation of a social housing unit.

It is to be noted that prior to any removal of illegal structures in that year, an inter-Ministerial team including officers from the ministries entrusted with responsibility for Social Integration, Health, Education, Family Welfare, Local Government as well as my Ministry, together with the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, carried out a comprehensive survey to identify genuine hardship cases in need of urgent assistance.

Thereafter, the NHDC collaborated with Non-Governmental Organisations to monitor the situation of these hardship cases and to facilitate their rehousing on private premises. At a later stage, they were considered together with other extreme hardship cases referred to the NHDC or the NEF by various NGOs. The precise number of former squatters having relocated to a private dwelling and having subsequently benefited from social housing is being ascertained from the NHDC. But I know for a fact that several families formally from Pointe aux Sables, Riambel or Curepipe, at a later stage, after they relocated the private premises and fulfilled the requirements, they have been allotted social housing units.

Let me stress that it remains Government's policy that no person in illegal occupation of land in the public domain is entitled to benefit from a social housing unit while he remains in such illegal occupation.

Numbers of evictions of persons in illegal occupation of State land after June 2020 to date are not immediately available and will be ascertained but I wish to inform the House that after the experience of May/June 2020, a special unit has been created at the NHDC to which all cases of illegal residential structures are referred for investigation prior to removal of any such structures. The priority of Government remains to assist families in need and to provide adequate housing to the homeless and distressed while ensuring the essential task of maintaining law and order in the country.

Mr R. Duval: *Thank you.* Au vu que la question de problème de logement ne date pas de hier et que c'est un problème qui ne va pas être résolu en raison de sa complexité, le Premier ministre adjoint peut-il nous dire pourquoi son ministère n'envisage-t-il pas de créer un registre

national afin de mieux gérer ce problème surtout pour les familles qui sont en situation de précarité ?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Alors, plusieurs registres nationaux existent. D'abord la *National Empowerment Foundation* sous la responsabilité de ma collègue, la ministre de l'Intégration sociale, travaille en étroite collaboration avec les services sociaux pour enregistrer les demandes en matière de logement des familles en grande difficulté. D'ailleurs, 10% de tous les projets de construction, de logements sociaux et cela concerne aussi les nouveaux projets. Donc, 10% vont à la *National Empowerment Foundation*.

Le deuxième registre est celui de la NHDC qui récolte toutes les demandes des familles qui voudraient obtenir un logement social. Vous vous souviendrez que pour la première fois l'an dernier, nous avons demandé et obtenu une mise à jour de ce registre qui indique qu'il y avait à ce moment-là dans les 30, 000 demandeurs et ce chiffre ne fait qu'augmenter à mesure que les gens réalisent que le gouvernement entreprends un énorme projet de construction de logement sociaux. Cela incite d'autres familles à venir déposer leur demande auprès de la NHDC. L'objectif du gouvernement avec les 12,000 logements sociaux sera précisément de répondre à une grande partie de cette demande.

Donc, en troisième lieu, le ministère du Logement s'efforce de répertorier tous les cas de structures illégales. Évidemment, ces personnes ne vont pas aller rapporter aux autorités le fait qu'elles soient en occupation illégale d'un terrain d'État. Mais néanmoins, le ministère s'efforce de le faire, cela n'est pas évident. Nous avons des structures résidentielles, c'est-à-dire où habitent des familles, et je ne parle pas de maisons, je parle des structures. Et il y a aussi des structures qui servent à autre chose qu'à loger des familles. Le ministère du Logement - c'est son travail - s'efforce de mettre à jour constamment la liste de ces occupations illégales répertoriées.

Mr R. Duval: Est-ce que le Premier ministre adjoint peut-il nous dire si c'est la politique d'allouer un lopin de terre aux *squatters* qui occupaient les terrains de l'État; existe toujours et dans des cas de précarité?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Non, cela n'a pas été le cas depuis très longtemps. En fait, M. le député se souviendra que le nouveau régime élu en 2014 avait décidé de la régularisation de tous les cas de *squatting* d'avant 2015. Et du nombre répertorié alors, plus des deux tiers ont été relogés; relogés ou attribués le terrain qu'elles occupaient. Les autres cas sont des cas plus

difficiles dont le traitement est toujours en cours. Mais ce n'est pas la politique de l'État d'attribuer un intérêt quelconque à une famille du fait qu'elle soit en situation d'occupation illégale du domaine public.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Ittoo!

HEPATITIS C – TREATMENT & GILEAD SCIENCES DONATION

(No. B/785) Mr A. Ittoo (Third Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to Hepatitis C, he will state –

- (a) the current treatment given therefor, and
- (b) where matters stand as to the donation of medication from UK-based Gilead Sciences, as announced in 2020.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the current treatment for Hepatitis C or Hep C is based on the drug Epclusa, which is a prescription medicine used in chronic hepatitis C genotype 1-6 infection with or without cirrhosis. The treatment regimen is one tablet of Epclusa daily for 12 weeks, with a cure rate of 98%. Patients who fail treatment with Epclusa are administered the drug Vosevi which has the same treatment regimen, but with a cure rate of 100%.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that Gilead Sciences donated 9,000 units of pan genotypic Epclusa and 450 units (with allowance up to 900 Units) of Vosevi, worth Rs3 billion. In October 2019, Gilead Sciences delivered the first consignment of Epclusa and Vosevi and my Ministry kick started the National Hepatitis C Elimination Programme under the umbrella of a National Committee.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since the donation, my Ministry has worked out strategies to meet the expectations of Gilead Sciences in achieving elimination of Hepatitis C in Mauritius. Since 2019, the number of treatment centres for Hepatitis C has increased from 1 to 24, with treatment now being delivered in Rodrigues Island as well.

The number of doctors assigned to the Hepatitis C Elimination Programme has been increased from 1 to 4 and Nursing Staff has been reinforced from 6 to 11 since 2019. With a dedicated team and more treatment centres, there has been an increase uptake of patients in Mauritius as well as in Rodrigues. As at date, 4,403 patients with Hepatitis C have been registered on our database.

From 2005 to 2019, conventional treatment with PEG Interferon and Ribavarin were used for patients with Hepatitis C, with a cure rate of only 30%. In addition, the treatment was limited to those patients who acquired the virus through blood transfusion in our hospitals.

During these 14 years, that is, from 2005 to 2019, prior to the donation of the medications by Gilead Sciences, only 100 patients had been treated. Since the donation, in a span of less than three years, from end of 2019 to now, 1,077 patients have already completed their treatment. An additional 742 patients are currently on treatment in our 24 treatment centres across the island.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as matter stands, my Ministry has already exhausted almost 70% of the Epclusa drug and 30% of the Vosevi drug. Regular meetings are held by the National Committee with Gilead Sciences to report on the progress of the Hepatitis C Elimination Programme. Based on the current rate of treatment, it is expected that Mauritius would be the first country in Africa to achieve Elimination of Hepatitis C.

I would like to remind the House that the donation by Gilead Sciences is the result of a meeting between the hon. Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth and the Directors of this biotech company in January 2020 in the UK.

Mr Ittoo: Can we know from the hon. Minister how many tests are carried out per year for Hepatitis C and can the hon. Minister share how the screening procedures are carried out? Thank you.

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. In year 2021, the Virology Department analysed –

- 32,189 samples of Hepatitis C, using the ELISA method;
- 1,288 samples, using the Western blot method, and
- 1,819 samples, using the Viral Load by GeneXpert.

For the period 2022 to March 2022, the Virology Department carried out –

- 7,726 samples analysis using the ELISA method;
- 230 using the Western blot method, and
- 907 by the GeneXpert.

Concerning the National Blood Transfusion Service, the number of tests for Hepatitis C from January to December 2021 amounted to 46,072. And the number of tests for Hepatitis C carried out, that is, from January to May this year, amounted to 20,056 tests.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister provide details pertaining to the cost of treatment for each patient, please? Thank you.

Dr. Jagutpal: The treatment for one patient with the drug Epclusa costs around £50,000 in the UK, that is approximately Rs2,680,000. Each patient also requires two PCR Tests, which cost around Rs3,000. A course of treatment with Vosevi costs £80,000 in the UK, that is approximately Rs4,289,000.

Mr Ittoo: The hon. Minister has mentioned that around 1,000 patients have been treated already by the donation given by Gilead Sciences. Can the hon. Minister inform the House how many patients will effectively be treated by this donation? Thank you.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the 9,000 bottles of Epclusa and 450 bottles of Vosevi, an allowance of up to 900 bottles were donated by the Gilead Sciences, now, 3 bottles of each drug are used for a treatment regimen. So, in all, 3,000 patients would be treated with Epclusa and 150 to 300 patients eventually, if required, who fail treatment with Epclusa and can be treated with Vosevi. As per the database, we have around 4,000 patients and we already have drugs for 3,000 patients. It means that our campaign to eliminate Hepatitis C in Mauritius is foreseeable and that can happen in the next few years.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much. The numbers are quite alarming. Can I ask the hon. Minister what is the incidence of Hepatitis C and Hepatitis D in the population, if he has this figures or else he can communicate to us at a later stage?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the number is not alarming because we are doing the tests. In fact, we should find a way on how to detect these cases because these cases are not detected by a simple test and there are not symptoms in the beginning of the disease. So, it is very good to have a wide screening as the wide screening will allow us to detect these cases. I have already said in my reply as to how tests and screening are being carried out, what is the volume of tests being carried out; that is how we are going to get all the patients suffering from Hepatitis C. In the way that the campaign is going and according to how the experts are working, that is, Gilead Sciences, they have placed that *confiance* on us that allowed us to work more so that we will be able to achieve this target and be the first country in the African region to be Hepatitis free.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

OLD GRAND RIVER NORTH WEST BRIDGE - RESTORATION & RENOVATION

(No. B/786) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to the Old Grand River North West Bridge, he will state if the restoration and renovation thereof is being envisaged by his Ministry.

Mr Teeluck: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regards to the Old Grand River North West Bridge, I am informed by the National Heritage Fund that the bridge has been designated as a national heritage under section 12 of the National Heritage Fund Act 2003 since June 1989. The Old Grand River North West Bridge is vested in the Road Development Authority (RDA) and the maintenance thereof also rests with the Road Development Authority as per section 3(c) of the Road Development Authority Act.

Moreover, as per section 14 of the NHF Act 2003, the maintenance and repairs of a designated national heritage rests with the owner. Mr Speaker, Sir, the Old Grand River North West Bridge was constructed in the 1960s and given the complexity of the works for its restoration and renovation, the services of a Consultant would be required in the first instance to assess the state of the bridge, and thereafter to make recommendations as appropriate for its restoration. I am informed by the RDA that this project is for the time being not in the pipeline for this financial year.

According to information obtained from both the National Heritage Fund and the RDA, the old bridge is no longer being used by four wheelers since 1985 following constructions of the new bridge as it cannot sustain heavy loads. Presently, the bridge is being used only by pedestrians and two wheelers.

Mr Armance: M. le ministre, nous sommes témoins tous les jours d'actes de vandalisme, passages illégales, occupation illégale sur le vieux pont. Pouvez-vous me dire s'il y a un rapport qui a été fait pour faire un constat du pont ? Il me semble que le pont tombe en ruine de jour en jour.

Mr Teeluck: I am not privy to any report being conducted or assessment that has been recently conducted but I can reassure the hon. Member that the National Heritage Fund will go ahead with a survey exercise just to bring to light if there is any vandalism being conducted.

Mr Armance: M. le ministre, puisque le pont est protégé et considéré comme patrimoine national, savez-vous qu'il y a du *illegal dumping* tous les jours autour du pont et que certains terrains en friche projettent une mauvaise image du pont? Pouvez-vous faire le nécessaire auprès de vos collègues pour remédier la situation ?

Mr Teeluck: Certainly, Mr Speaker, Sir. If there are any issues, we will take it up, but let me reiterate that when it comes to maintenance and repair of a designated National Heritage, same rests with the owner which is the RDA.

Mr Armance: M. le ministre, est-ce que vous allez considérer un projet d'embellissement autour du pont parce que l'image, je répète, l'image que projette le vieux pont actuellement est catastrophique pour ne pas dire dégueulasse ? Donc, je vous demanderai de bien vous entretenir avec vos collègues ministres pour faire de sorte que ce patrimoine national est valorisé, pas laisser en abandon comme c'est le cas actuellement. Merci.

Mr Teeluck: May be considered, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Uteem: Bouncing back on what my hon. colleague just said, is there any project at the level of the National Heritage Fund to make use of that bridge for tourist purposes or to encourage school children to go and visit that bridge which has a long history? So, is there any project by the Ministry with regard to this bridge?

Mr Teeluck: *Pas à ce stade, M. le president.* For this financial year, there is no project in the pipeline as regards the bridge. But again, we take on board the proposal of the hon. Member and same may be considered by National Heritage Fund and principally by the RDA which is the owner of the Bridge.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

NEW CASE NOYALE FISHERIES POST - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/787) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the proposed construction of the new Case Noyale Fisheries Post, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the contract for the construction of the new Case Noyale Fisheries Post was awarded to the contractor New Horizon Builders Ltd by the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development and the contract agreement was signed on 19 September 2019. The handing over of the site to the contractor was effected on 21 November 2019.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Coronavirus pandemic has wreaked havoc on countless industries and construction was no exception. I am informed that the construction of the new Case Noyale Fisheries Post was initially scheduled to be completed on 01 July 2020 and had been delayed due to the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. The contractor was granted extensions as the project could not be completed on time due to the first and second wave of COVID-19 national lockdowns.

Following completion of 100% of the project, the final handing over of the site to my Ministry was done on 03 September 2021. Mr Speaker, Sir, with a view to creating a model Fisheries Post at Case Noyale, additional new facilities have been provided to the fisher community in the region as follows –

- (a) supply and installation of 50 mooring buoys using ecological pins at Case Noyale, which means each fisher will have a dedicated mooring buoy to moor his fishing boat. This eco-friendly project will prevent the fishers from using all sort of gears thus protecting the corals and other marine life on the sea ground;
- (b) supply and installation of two sets of navigational aids with solar light at *La Passe Harmonie*. This has enhanced the security of artisanal fishers in the navigable channel when they set out for fishing outside the lagoon,
- (c) a provision of a dedicated structure for boat owners residing far away from the jetty to keep their outboard motors safe in a secured place in the compound of the Case Noyale Fisheries Post.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in addition to the above mentioned projects, the supply and installation of solar lamps at the jetty at Case Noyale has been awarded and is expected to be completed by end of September 2022. Also the construction of a slipway to ease removal of fishing boats during cyclonic weather is also being contemplated.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a *stèle* in remembrance of late Mr Aimée Lamarque, one of the *doyen* fishers of Case Noyale and the first Chairman of the Fisherman Welfare Fund will also be constructed near the jetty. All going well, the official opening of the Case Noyale Fisheries Post is scheduled for October 2022.

Mrs Mayotte: Can the hon. Minister inform the House what was the contract amount and state if there has been any costs overrun regarding the construction of the New Case Noyale Fisheries Post?

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the contract for the construction of the new Case Noyale Fisheries Post was awarded to the contractor New Horizon Builders Ltd as I mentioned for the sum of Rs16,742,390. I am informed that there was no cost overrun on the project.

Mrs Mayotte: The hon. Minister mentioned the 50 mooring buoys and the ecological pins. Can he give us more information about that and what was the contract amount for the supply and installation of those?

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a first of its kind. I wish to inform the House that the supply and installation of the 50 ecological mooring buoys and the two sets of navigational aids at *La Passe Harmonie* has been funded by the UNDP for a total sum of Rs4,678,200.

Mrs Mayotte: Can the hon. Minister give us more details about the project for the supply and installation of solar lamps at the jetty, at Case Noyale?

Mr Maudhoo: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, as stated in my reply, the supply and installation of six solar lamps at the jetty at Case Noyale has been awarded and is expected to be completed by end of September 2022. We are waiting for the completion of this project for the opening. In fact, I seize this opportunity to inform the House and the fisher community that the project of solar light at the jetties will be replicated around the island also.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

ROADS LEADING TO MAHEBOURG HOSPITAL - DRAINAGE WORKS

(No. B/788) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to drainage works being undertaken along the roads leading to the Mahebourg Hospital, he will state if the completion thereof is being delayed and, if so, indicate the reasons therefor.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the National Development Unit that the contract for the construction of a drain network in the region of Mahebourg, which includes Ramnarain Lane, Gopala Lane, Goordin Lane, Doolar Lane 1, Doolar Lane 2 and Gunputh Lane (commonly known as Chemin L'Hôpital), was awarded to Sotravic Ltée on 12 April 2021.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the start date was on 24 May 2021 and works were expected to be completed by 20 November 2021. The scope of works comprised mainly the demolition of existing absorption drain, the construction of reinforced concrete drain, and the resurfacing of the roads. It is to be pointed out that all clearances from service providers, including the Central Water Authority, had been obtained prior to the start of works.

However, at a meeting held with the CWA on 29 July 2021, the latter indicated that the pipeline network in the whole region of Mahebourg dates back to 50 years and was frequently bursting. Accordingly, as the NDU was undertaking drain projects, including reinstatement works in the region I mentioned earlier, a request was made to explore the possibility to renew the old defective pipelines at relevant locations in that region.

These works, which did not form part in the original scope of works, had to be effected prior to the laying of the storm water drains and the road resurfacing works. The CWA works involved excavation, pipe laying and backfilling along a stretch of 1.7 kilometres, including connection to 416 households.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the completion of the project was, therefore, delayed mainly due to these CWA works, late supply and delivery of pipes and fittings by CWA and the inclement weather.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that as at date, all CWA works and drain works, except for 100 metres of drain along Gopala Lane, have been completed. The remaining drain works and road resurfacing works for the whole network are expected to be completed by 31 July 2022.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Doolub!

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can we know from the hon. Minister what is the contract amount for the drain works carried out along the network he mentioned and if there has been any additional cost incurred as a consequence of works undertaken by CWA as he just mentioned?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, the contract amount was Rs34 m. inclusive of VAT and any additional works will be contained within the project value of Rs34 m. And we have a contribution of Rs7.9 m. from the CWA for the civil work, pipe laying and supply of fittings. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Do you have a question?

Mr Doolub: Yes.

Mr Speaker: Go ahead!

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House if there have been any official complaints by inhabitants of the networks there, Gopala Lane and Doolar Lane pertaining to the delay in the works?

Mr Hurreeram: *Yes! Obviously, Mr Speaker, Sir.* Des travaux de cette envergure causent toujours des inconvénients aux habitants de la région. Mais je dois dire que quand même mes deux collègues et moi-même, nous sommes descendus sur le terrain, nous sommes allés à la rencontre des habitants, nous leur avons expliqué et je dois dire qu'ils sont quand même très coopératifs et ils remercient le gouvernement et le Premier ministre pour ces travaux qui ont été faits.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

EXIM BANK OF INDIA - GOVERNMENT OF MAURITIUS - LOAN - EQUIPMENT

(No. B/789) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the loan of one hundred million dollars advanced to the Government of Mauritius by the Exim Bank of India for the purchase of equipment, he will give the list of equipment purchased as at to date, indicating in each case, the cost thereof.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, lors de la visite de l'honorable Premier ministre en Inde en novembre 2019, des réunions ont eu lieu avec le gouvernement indien pour financer, entre autres, plusieurs projets relatifs à la sécurité et la sûreté maritimes.

En conséquence, le gouvernement indien a mis à disposition une ligne de crédit de 100 millions de dollars pour l'acquisition d'équipements liés à la défense qui comprend un *Passenger Variant Dorner* (PWD) et un *Advanced Light Helicopter* (ALH).

L'accord a été signé le 19 février 2021 entre le gouvernement mauricien et l'Export-Import Bank of India (EXIM Bank) pour l'achat de 32 équipements de défense en Inde. A ce jour, les deux items prioritaires suivants ont déjà été achetés –

- (i) un *Passenger Variant Dorner* au coût de 11,6 millions USD. Le montant a été entièrement payé au fournisseur, *Hindustan Aeronautic Ltd (HAL)*, et l'appareil a été livré à la police mauricienne en avril 2022.
- (ii) un *Advanced Light Helicopter* pour un montant de 17,7 millions de dollars. À ce jour, un montant de 6,2 millions USD a été déboursé à HAL. L'hélicoptère est actuellement en cours de fabrication et sa livraison est prévue vers mars 2023.

Le *Passenger Variant Dorner (PWD)* et un *Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH)* renforceront les capacités opérationnelles de la police mauricienne pour, entre autres, lutter contre le trafic de drogue et la pêche illégale dans nos eaux territoriales, accroître la surveillance aérienne dans et autour des îles de la République de Maurice, ainsi que pour les évacuations médicales d'urgence depuis nos îles extérieures.

M. le président, j'ai été informé que les mesures nécessaires ont déjà été prises pour l'achat des articles de défense restants sur la ligne de crédit mise à notre disposition par le gouvernement de l'Inde par l'intermédiaire de l'EXIM Bank. À cet effet, un comité de suivi du projet présidé par le commissaire de police a été mis en place, afin d'assurer le suivi de l'achat de ces articles dans les délais impartis. Merci, M. le président.

Mr Ameer Meea: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether this loan of – at today's rate – Rs4.5 billion, was negotiated at a preferential rate of interest? Because according to a Press article of l'Express dated 05 May of this year, 75% du loan amount devront être consacrés à l'achat d'équipements de défense auprès des industriels indiens. Donc, il y avait une clause dans le contrat que le loan devrait être utilisé auprès des industriels indiens. Donc, est-ce qu'on a eu ce loan dans un taux préférentiel et avec des termes qui sont avantageux au pays ?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, je tiens à rassurer l'honorable membre que les termes et les conditions liés à ce prêt sont extrêmement favorables. Il y a, par exemple, un moratoire de sept ans dans ce *loan*, qui est très avantageux pour Maurice. Le taux est fixé à 1,8 pour cent par an, ce qui est très raisonnable par rapport au taux qu'il y a actuellement sur le marché.

Mr Ameer Meea: Can I ask the hon. Minister how much has been utilised in the loan amount and consequently the balance left?

Dr. Padayachy: Donc, nous avons déjà utilisé presque 18 millions de dollar, 17,8 précisément. Il nous reste la différence sur 100 millions de dollars.

Mr Uteem: May I know from the hon. Minister of Finance whether the priority today of this Government is to invest in security equipment and indebted us? Already, we have public debt of more than 100% of our GDP. Does the hon. Minister of Finance find it that the priority of this Government should be to incur additional debt to get security equipment?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, sans entrer dans un débat concernant la politique de ce gouvernement, je tiens simplement à rappeler à l'honorable membre que ces équipements sont liés au combat contre la drogue - cher à ce gouvernement. Donc, oui, nous allons continuer à investir. Et je tiens aussi à préciser que le taux d'endettement de ce pays est loin d'être à 100%. Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I suspend the Sitting for one and a half-hour. Enjoy your meal!

At 1.04 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.38 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please be seated. Hon. David!

NON-BIODEGRADABLE SINGLE USE PLASTIC PRODUCTS - MORATORIUM EXTENSION

(No. B/790) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the extension of the moratorium for the banning of some non-biodegradable single use plastic products up to 14 January 2023, he will state the rationale thereof.

Mr Ramano: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Environment Protection (Control of Single Use Plastic Products) Regulations were made on the 15 July 2020 in line with the vision of Government to make Mauritius a plastic free country within the nearest possible delays. These regulations provide for a ban as from 15 January 2021 on the importation, manufacture, possession, sales, and supply of use of non-biodegradable single use plastic products namely plastic cutlery such as forks, knives, spoons, chopsticks, plastic plates, plastic cups/bowls, tray, plastic straws including sealed plastic straws forming an integral part of the packaging of another product, plastic beverage stirrers, plastic hinged containers, plastic lids for single use plastic products and receptacles of any shape with or without lids which are used to contain food intended for immediate consumption, either on the spot or takeaway and supplied for a food service business.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the underlying principle of my Ministry for any model shift from non-biodegradable to biodegradable alternatives rests on to fundamentals, that is, –

- (i) the availability, and
- (ii) affordability of biodegradable alternatives.

Accordingly, to allow manufacturers and importers time to shift to biodegradable alternatives, provision was made for moratorium ranging from 6 to 9 months from the coming into force of the regulations by 15 January 2021 or 15 April 2021 for specific products.

Representations were, however, received from the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry regarding the unpreparedness of the local food industry to shift to biodegradable alternatives by the initial deadline of 15 January 2021 in relation to dairy products such as yoghurt, ice cream, custard tart (flan) and other desserts, and also the repackaging of fresh, precooked and cooked food using the modified atmosphere packaging techniques. The reasons put forth were that on one hand, internationally biodegradable bowls and cups were not available for hot filled products such as jelly and custard tart. On the other hand, although alternatives such as polylactic acid-based packaging were available for cold products like yoghurt and ice cream, foreign manufacturers were unwilling to supply these products to our local companies in view of the small scale of our local market.

Besides the unprecedeted economic environment brought about by the COVID-19 in terms of its negative bearing on global trade, international travel, production networks and access

to raw materials and new technologies posed further hurdles to the shift from non-biodegradable products to biodegradable alternatives.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the MCCI also requested more time to avail of appropriate and affordable biodegradable alternatives with the same proven effectiveness as plastic trays for the packaging of fresh, precooked and cooked food products, particularly meat, using the modified atmosphere packaging technique to extend the shelf life of these products.

I am made to understand that alternatives identified so far have not been found to maintain the seal integrity and shelf life of fresh, precooked and cooked food products. In light of proposals received and further reckoning with the difficult economic environment resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, Government initially agreed to provide a moratorium of up to 14 January in respect of the banning of three types of non-biodegradable single use plastic products in specific circumstances only namely, plastic bowls and cups used solely for the packaging of food products such as dairy products, yoghurt, ice cream and desserts, plastic trays used solely for the modified atmosphere packaging of food such as fresh meat and precooked and cooked food products for the purpose of extended shelf life.

This moratorium was subsequently extended up to 14 January 2023 given that the local food industry deplored still not being fully ready to shift to biodegradable alternatives especially due to constraints imposed by the resurgence of COVID-19 pandemic on the global front.

However, Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is continuously encouraging the local food industry to pursue the shift to biodegradable alternatives. As regards the other non-biodegradable single use products which have been completely banned, enforcement operations are being regularly carried out by officers of my Ministry, the *Police de l'Environnement*, and local authorities.

Mr David: Le ministre a parlé dans sa réponse, que j'ai écouté attentivement, de l'*unpreparedness* dans la fabrication locale de certains produits. La *regulation* dont on parle est la *regulation* numéro 156 du 15 juillet 2020 qui a donc été applicable au 15 janvier 2021 selon la réponse du ministre. Ce qui me frappe, M. le président, c'est que le marchand *d'alouda* ou le vendeur de *halim* aux abords de notre Parlement, n'a eu que six mois en plein confinement pour se mettre en conformité avec cette loi alors que les puissants industriels bénéficient de deux moratoires successifs d'une durée de deux ans et demi pour se mettre en conformité. Puis-je

demander au ministre comment il justifie ce que je considère être une injustice dans le traitement à deux vitesses accordé aux petits commerçants et aux gros industriels ?

Mr Ramano: M. le président, je dois dire qu'avant l'entrée en vigueur de différentes *regulations*, il y a eu plusieurs pourparlers avec plusieurs opérateurs, les importateurs et les fabricants et je dois dire que pour tous les autres articles qui ont été *banned* depuis janvier 2021, nous n'avons reçu aucune représentation valeur du jour pour ces produits qui ont été *banned*.

Donc, comme je l'ai dit, M. le président, dans ma réponse principale, il y a deux critères principaux qu'on considère lorsqu'on vient de l'avant avec une liste de produits à être *banned*, les *plastic products* à être *banned*. Cela concerne l'*availability* et l'*affordability*. C'est-à-dire qu'il existe des produits alternatifs et que ces produits alternatifs soient à un prix abordable.

M. le président, valeur du jour, les seuls produits qui n'ont pas été *banned* jusqu'à présent où il y a eu un moratoire additionnel, cela concerne principalement les *dairy products*. Avec votre permission, je vais répéter ma réponse. *Dairy products such as yoghurt, ice cream, custard tart and other desserts and also the packaging of fresh pre-cooked, cooked food using the modified atmosphere packaging technique.*

Ce n'est pas une question de pratiquer une politique de deux poids deux mesures, pratiqué quoi que ce soit. L'essentiel pour nous, M. le président, c'est d'assurer une politique de non-compromission en ce qui concerne le plastique mais il faut quand même se rendre à l'évidence qu'il y a certains produits qui sont *available* sur le marché, certains produits qui ne sont pas *available* ou qui ne sont pas à un prix abordable.

Mr David: Ces nouveaux produits alternatifs biodégradables qui sont encouragés par la nouvelle loi ne sont valorisables que s'ils sont soumis à des conditions favorables à la biodégradation - la température, l'humidité, le taux d'oxygène - pour notamment pratiquer le compostage ou la fermentation. Si tous ces nouveaux produits qu'on a obligé aux marchands *d'alouda* ou de *halim* d'acheter plus cher, finissent dans les poubelles, dans le même centre d'enfouissement à Mare Chicose, cette loi est inutile. Le ministre peut-il donc nous dire si les produits biodégradables concernés par cette loi sont collectés, triés et biodégradés ? Si oui, quelle en est la quantité et si non, pourquoi ?

Mr Ramano: M. le président, moi aussi j'aime beaucoup *l'alouda*, j'aime beaucoup le *halim* et je peux vous dire que ces produits ne seront pas consommés dans les *single use plastics*. Ce sont des bols en plastique. Ces bols en plastique qui peuvent être utilisés plusieurs dizaine de fois ne sont pas considérés comme des *single use plastic*. Donc, ce qui fait que ce sont des bols qui sont toujours utilisés par les marchands *d'alouda* et les marchands de *halim*.

Donc, M. le président, en ce qui concerne la quantité, le nombre qui a été ramassé, qui a été composté, cela ne fait pas parti du *main question* mais si l'honorable membre vient de l'avant avec une *substantive question*, c'est avec beaucoup de plaisir que je répondrai à la question, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

NEW CANCER HOSPITAL, SOLFERINO - CONSTRUCTION & RENOVATION

(No. B/791) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the construction and renovation of the New Cancer Hospital, at Solferino, he will state the –

- (a) total contract value paid to the contractors;
- (b) amount financed by sources other than the Government of Mauritius, and
- (c) date on which same was handed over to his Ministry.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the contract for the construction of the New Cancer Hospital and the renovation of the existing building at Solferino was awarded to Swadeshi Civil Infrastructure Private Limited in October 2018 of a sum of Rs1,000,043,616 (one billion 43 thousand and six hundred and sixteen rupees).

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) and (b) of the question, the total contract value paid to the contractor as at 7 July 2022 amounts to around Rs888,041,141. The project is being funded under the Saudi Fund for development through a loan agreement.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed that works in the renovated building were completed in October 2020. The renovated building has been operational since 23 October 2020 providing chemotherapy sessions to some 100 patients daily with a 75 bedded in-patient facility. The infrastructural works of the new building have reached

97% and are expected to be completed by 15 September 2022. The New Cancer Hospital equipped with high end technical equipment is expected to be operational in 2023.

Dr. Aumeer: Can the Minister confirm whether there has been a geotechnical assessment carried out for the building of the new Hospital?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not have this information. I believe that before a Contractor will start works with all the building permits, I am sure that this license of the geotechnical aspect will be done but I do not have this information with me.

Dr. Aumeer: During the week of 4 April 2022, officers of the nuclear medicine department of your Ministry, together with one from the EIA, carried out a site visit at the New Solferino Hospital. Can I ask the Minister whether his Ministry or himself has received a report which mentioned serious shortcomings with a very high degree of water ingressions where even the water resources unit are talking about water flow passage beneath the hospital and concerns have been raised concerning the installation and usage and optimal performance of the PET Scan in a basement where there is so much humidity?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is purely a technical aspect in the construction of an infrastructure. Should this question be forwarded to me, I would have of course given all the explanation. I request the Member to come up with a question next week so that I can give all the answers related to this question. I will be glad to give answers on that aspect.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

SUBSIDISATION – 300 BASIC PRODUCTS

(No. B/792) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the 300 basic products, the prices of which rose following the ending of the Government subsidisation thereof recently, he will state if Government proposes to take measures to allow the lowering of the prices thereof and, if not, why not.

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, the subsidy scheme was introduced amidst COVID-19 pandemic in July 2021 when external factors beyond the control of Government resulted in considerable economic slowdown and price hikes on a number of products. This Government

took a novel initiative and initially earmarked an envelope of Rs500 m. to subsidise seven essential commodities of wide consumption by the population so that some 371 different brands of these products be available to the people at the same price as that of January 2021.

The Subsidy Scheme was a temporary measure for an initial period of six months with the expectation that the market would stabilise.

However, since then external factors continued to influence global prices worldwide and the Government decided to extend the subsidy up to 30 June 2022 with an enlarged envelope of Rs1.35 billion.

Unfortunately, with the Russia-Ukraine war and global hikes in food prices, the international supply suffered substantial market imbalances and it is not foreseen that the situation would be back to normal soon. This is the reality of the global market today which is faced by countries worldwide; including Mauritius and people should not be shielded from that stark reality.

Alternatively, measures have also been announced in the Budget Speech 2022-2023 to provide means to the public, particularly those who are most in need of same to access these products. These include, *inter alia* –

- a monthly income allowance of Rs1,000 to those earning a gross income up to Rs50,000, decrease in income tax rate from 15% to 12.5% for those earning more than Rs53,846 and up to Rs75,000 monthly, and those people earning between Rs25,000 to Rs53,846 monthly and the income tax rate has been reduced to 10%;
- subsidies to maintain prices and supply of essential commodities such as rice, flour and cooking gas have been maintained;
- the retail price of the schedule bread has been maintained at Rs2.60;
- provision of Rs500 m. to STC for it to supply essential products such as milk, edible oil and pulses at a subsidised rate,
- increase in the Basic Retirement Pension for retirees, widows, invalids and orphans by Rs1,000 and Rs2,000 are applicable.

As such, it is not economically viable to continue the subsidy mechanism. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government is not insensitive to the plight of the people and has ruled out an open market structure where products are determined by demand and supply. Immediately after the end of the subsidy mechanism, these seven products as well as five additional products, namely pasta, wheat cereal, infant food, baby and adult diapers have been placed under price control with a reasonable mark-up in order to protect consumers from abusive prices.

With the introduction of the maximum mark-up, the average retail prices of the seven essential products are expected to be 23% lower than their real market prices. As regards infant food and diapers, with the maximum mark up, it is expected that the average maximum retail prices will be reduced by 8% and 4% respectively.

Accordingly, the surveillance carried out by the Consumer Affairs of my Ministry, the market is reacting satisfactorily to the new regulations.

Mr Nagalingum: Can the hon. Minister tell the House the number of Inspectors who carried out visits in different places across the island, as cases of abuses have been increasing daily?

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, I can assure the hon. Member that there are regular visits being carried out across the island by officers of my Ministry. I do not have the exact figure, that is, the number of visits carried out at different retail premises, but I undertake to communicate same to the hon. Member.

Mr Nagalingum: Can I know from the Minister how many Inspectors the Ministry has to carry out these duties, that is, the number of Inspectors?

Mr Callichurn: Like I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have several officers across the island. I do not have the exact number but inspections are being carried out.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

LONG MOUNTAIN, VALLÉE DU PARADIS - NEW SYNTHETIC FOOTBALL PITCH

(No. B/793) 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 new synthetic football pitch at Vallée du Paradis, Long Mountain, he will state when same will be open to the public.

The Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr G. Lesjongard): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the District Council of Pamplemousses that the opening of the new synthetic football pitch at Vallée du Paradis, Long Mountain was delayed due to problem with the lighting system. The problem has now been sorted out and electricity has been provided and the floodlights are in good conditions.

The Council is now contemplating to open the facility to the public in the very near future.

Mr Speaker: Supplementary!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister maybe request the District Council to add infrastructures for children as well before the opening of the football pitch?

Mr Lesjongard: Can I request my colleague to repeat the question? I did not follow.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Would the District Council consider including a children's playground next to the football pitch, maybe before the opening of the football pitch? Would the District Council consider this?

Mr Lesjongard: I cannot reply but I will convey the message to the District Council. When I met the officers of the Ministry, it was in regard to the opening of the facility, that is, the football pitch. And, I am also a Member of the constituency where that football pitch is. My request was that they should open that facility in a very near future. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

CATARACT SURGERY – AWAITING PATIENTS

(No. B/794) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the cataract patients, he will state the number thereof awaiting cataract surgery over the past two years, indicating the number thereof having undergone same since January 2022 to date.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the number of patients awaiting cataract surgery as at 30 June 2022 is as follows –

- 3,558 patients at Subramania Bharati, Eye Hospital, and

- 449 patients at Souillac Hospital.

I am informed that there are 44 patients who are still awaiting cataract surgery prior to 2020, that is, for 2 years because of medical problems.

From 01 July 2020 to 30 July 2021, 886 patients are still awaiting for cataract surgery. From 01 July 2021 to 30 June 2022, there are 3,077 patients waiting for cataract surgeries. A total number of cases awaiting cataract surgeries as at 30 June 2022 is therefore 4,007.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regard cataract surgeries, I am informed that 5,742 cases were performed in 2020 and 4,750 in 2021 despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the reason for an increase in the number of patients who are awaiting surgeries is because of the COVID-19 pandemic, where the bed capacity of Subramania Bharati Hospital was reduced from 30 males and 30 females to 15 males and 15 females in order to comply with social distancing measures.

Moreover, the pre-operative procedures became lengthy as thorough investigation had to be carried out, including PCR Test prior to surgery. This resulted in the admission of patients for up to 2 days prior to those surgeries. With the coming of Rapid Tests of COVID-19, up to 45 cataract surgeries are being performed on a daily basis.

Mrs Mayotte: Thank you, hon. Minister. Please, allow me to congratulate you and thank you for the good services given at the Moka Eye Hospital. Can the hon. Minister state the issues in regard to the traffic and parking situation, very difficult situation at Moka Eye Hospital, is there any project on the parking and traffic issues?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, yes I totally agree over you that we have parking issues at Moka Eye Hospital at present and that's why the Prime Minister has already announced the new project of Eye Hospital that is coming up shortly. The contract is already awarded to some company and I believe in the next two years, we are going to have a new project, a new eye hospital in the vicinity of Ebène.

Mr Abbas Mamode: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Given that the number of cases will keep on increasing, can the hon. Minister give details to the House to explain how he plans to address this issue?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. Souillac Hospital has started carrying out cataract surgeries on a full-fledge basis. In addition, for the state of the art equipment for cataract and other ophthalmological surgery that have been donated by Rotary Club of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill recently, the four equipment are endowed with cutting-edge technology and enable to carry out more surgeries. So, extra sessions also will be carried out as well as to reduce the waiting list.

Furthermore, the Ministry is also working out on modalities to enlist the services of Private Clinics through an expression of interest so that's how we will be able to decrease the list of cataracts surgeries.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you. Can the hon. Minister inform the House what is the average waiting time from diagnosis of cataracts until and so forth patients are called for admission for surgery?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, so for the Subramania Bharati Eye Hospital, the waiting time for this year is around 35 weeks and for Souillac Hospital, it is 30 weeks.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

SCHOOL - ILLICIT DRUGS CASES - STUDENTS AND STAFF

(No. B/795) 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 abuse of illicit drugs involving school students and staff, she will state the number of cases thereof registered since January 2015 within and outside school premises, respectively.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, as per established protocol in schools, drug related cases are categorized as criminal offences and are reported to the police. I am informed that since January 2015 to date, the number of reported cases involving students in relation to abuse of illicit drugs within school premises is 81 and the number outside school premises is 182. As regard cases involving staff over the past seven years, I am informed that there are six such cases, all outside school premises; four teachers, two in 2017, one in 2020, one in 2021 and two non-teaching staffs; one in 2020 and one in 2021.

Dr. Gungapersad: Will the hon. Minister inform the House whether any survey or study has been carried out to identify if there is any specific educational zone or region or school

where the prevalence of drug abuse is more acute than elsewhere so that additional support could be given to rectors and educators dealing with those students or staff involved in drug abuse and if yes, to table same?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, no such survey has been carried out. However, the Ministry has a programme and has got all our schools and staff informed. Presently, there is an awareness programme being carried out. We are working with different institutions; La Brigade pour la protection de la famille, the CDU and other institutions, along with the National Education Counselling Services, Psychologists of the Ministry. We are working with the Heads of Schools and the staff so as to raise awareness about such cases and helping them to identify students showing certain signs of distress or of showing signs of addiction.

Dr. Gungapersad: Will the Minister inform the House what rehabilitation measures have been taken so far and to state the number of addicted students and staff who have benefitted from rehabilitation services and support from educational psychologists, working in the Ministry of Education up till now?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Education offers support to the students in the schools. We don't have rehabilitation services. However, our educational psychologists work with the parents, with the teachers, with the students and try to give them the right support. We follow the students, we give them support, we try to build up their self-esteem, we try to give them coping skills and we try to help them to develop their strength and to be aware of their strength and weaknesses but we do not have proper rehabilitation services as such. It's just an accompaniment and we help students with their school work but the students showing these problems are referred to the Ministry of Health and parents are encouraged to carry on the follow up with the Ministry of Health.

Dr. Gungapersad: Will the Minister inform the House whether an appraisal of the work done by Drug Use Prevention Rebound Programme for which Rs4 m. are voted annually has been done or should we review or revamp our drug use prevention inside and outside schools?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, for years now, we have been working with different institutions trying to bring information and trying to give students the support required. However, for the past two years, Mauritius has been working with the United Nations Office for

Crime and Drugs and we have come up with a special programme in the curriculum and we have worked it out along with the MIE and today, we have a programme in schools, the ‘get-connected programme,’ targeting students of grade 8 trying to help them to build resilience and to be able to say no to drugs. Over and above this, in this present Budget, we have got funds available for coming up with a programme known as ‘Rebound’ which will be targeting students of Grade 10 onwards.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

**NATIONAL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT COMPANY LTD. - UNOCCUPIED
HOUSING UNITS**

(No. B/796) Mr R. Uteem (Second 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 unoccupied housing units of the National Housing Development Company Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the current number thereof, indicating the –

- (a) respective location thereof and reasons therefor, and
- (b) actions, if any, taken for the recovery and reallocation thereof.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, if the hon. gentleman is referring to housing units that have been built, that are available but not yet allocated, not yet sold and therefore empty and vacant, my understanding is that there are remaining units at Dagotière and Mare Tabac. These are the last two NHDC projects completed that are still unoccupied because the applications are still being processed. Interviews have been carried out. Eligibility of applicants is being verified by NHDC. So, it's a dynamic picture with the numbers gradually decreasing at Dagotière and Mare Tabac.

If the hon. gentleman is referring to housing units that have already been sold but remain unoccupied, I do not think that the NHDC has a permanent monitoring mechanism on all the NHDC housing complexes built since the early 90s. So, the information I have been provided with, indicates that there are 21 unoccupied units. I thought the number would be higher, given the number of complaints I get from Members of the majority and Members of the Opposition stating there are persons in need of housing and yet there are housing units that are left

unoccupied but the information I got from the NHDC is that from their records, as at present, there are 21 unoccupied housing units at respectively at –

- (i) Résidence Rose - Notre Dame;
- (ii) Résidence Ambre - Mon Goût;
- (iii) Résidence Epiaire - D'Epinay;
- (iv) Résidence Alizée - Petite Julie ;
- (v) Résidence Célestine - Cottage;
- (vi) Résidence Cottage A2 - Cottage;
- (vii) Résidence Marguerite - St Julien D'hotman;
- (viii) Résidence Bougainvilliers - Camp de Masque;
- (ix) Résidence Jade - Camp Ithier;
- (x) Résidence Topaze - Souillac;
- (xi) Résidence Pierre de Soleil - Souillac, and
- (xii) Résidence Lys - at Bassin.

So, this is the information I have. Now, the 21 beneficiaries have informed the NHDC that they have not yet moved in due to lack of finance to complete the furnishing of their apartments.

Now, with regard to part (b) of the question, I have answered this question on several occasions. I am informed that under the present laws it is not possible for the NHDC to take any legal action against the owner of an unoccupied housing unit. Hence, the question of considering the recovery and reallocation of unoccupied housing units to needy beneficiaries does not arise. But let me, just to be very clear, quote what I said in answer to my good friend, hon. Quirin, who put the very same question in December last and I stated in the House –

“I am informed by the NHDC Ltd that the purchaser becomes owner de *plein droit* of his housing unit once the deed of sale is signed before the Notary. Consequently, unless the beneficiary breaches a condition of the sale agreement, the NHDC Ltd is not empowered to intervene irrespective of whether a beneficiary occupies or not the house.”

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not happy with this situation. I have asked the NHDC for some time now to review this situation. It is not morally right at a time when many persons are deprived of adequate housing that persons who have bought a housing unit from the NHDC on the ground that they are eligible to housing unit because they have no proper housing should not occupy. I can understand that certain beneficiaries need to gather money to buy furniture. It might take a couple of months but one would have expected them to move in and then gradually to furnish their apartment.

So, I have, as I said to hon. Quirin in December last, requested and insisted that legal advice be sought anew. We are looking at all options. I am particularly interested in the Singaporean example whereas the hon. gentleman knows some 80% to 85% of the housing stock is owned by the State and they have inserted in the individual contracts conditions that because this is social housing, you cannot leave it unoccupied, you cannot rent it out after buying it and you cannot sell it off within a very short period of time. So, we are looking into it. I wish to assure the hon. gentleman.

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Deputy Prime Minister. I see that you are very much aware of the problem. The hon. Deputy Prime Minister is probably aware that as far back as 2017, five years ago, his predecessor, Mr Soodhun, had stated that State Law Office advice is being sought, precisely to find ways as to how to recover these unoccupied housing units. So, five years later, I hear the same answer from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister. It should not be difficult in my opinion as a lawyer to just include in the deed of sale the conditions that you, yourself, have just mentioned are there in the contract of sale in Singapore. So, why is it taking so long?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I share the hon. gentleman's frustration. In fact, the advice we have obtained up until now is in the negative, that it cannot be done under our Constitution that guarantees as the hon. gentleman is well aware the right to freely enjoy one's private property without any adverse interference from the State or any other party. However, I have not given up and I can assure the hon. gentleman that I will try my utmost to see that the situation is changed.

Mr Uteem: Have I understood correctly the Deputy Prime Minister saying that there are only 21 reported unoccupied units but at the same time there does not seem to be a team at the level of NHDC which monitors and carries out onsite inspection of each of the housing units to

ascertain how many are, in fact, currently unoccupied? And if I understood correctly, then wouldn't the hon. Deputy Prime Minister agree with me that it is necessary that NHDC has this monitoring team so that they can ascertain the extent of unoccupied premises?

The Deputy Prime Minister: As the hon. gentleman is aware, we have a very large number of NHDC housing complexes spread all across the island. I don't have the exact figure but it should be approximately a hundred if not more. And it does not, at this point in time, serve any useful purpose because the figures will not provide a solution in themselves. But both he and I and all Members of this House know that this is a real problem that we must address. The NHDC tells me there are 21. I suspect there are more maybe that have gone unnoticed. And this is again a dynamic picture. A unit that is occupied today may be unoccupied tomorrow and we learn about it when the neighbours begin complaining of drug addicts or whatever breaking in. So, it is a major preoccupation of mine as it is of the hon. gentleman. I would welcome suggestions and ideas. Let us work together and get this sorted out as soon as possible.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

**EXPATRIATES - NATIONAL PENSION SCHEME & *CONTRIBUTION SOCIAL
GENERALISÉE* - REIMBURSEMENT**

(No. B/797) Mr R. Woochit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the expatriates, he will state if their contributions under the National Pension Scheme and the *Contribution Social Generalisée* during their stay in Mauritius are reimbursed thereto when they leave Mauritius at the expiry of their respective contract.

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am replying to this Parliamentary Question on the assumption that the hon. Member is referring to the expatriate workers who work in Mauritius on the strength of work permit issued under the Non-Citizen (Employment Restriction) Act.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that prior to September 2020, contributions to the National Pension Fund in favour of expatriate workers were payable from the first day of employment except for those working in the Export Manufacturing Enterprise where such contributions were payable after a period of two years.

The rates of contributions by expatriate workers up to August 2020 were to the tune of 3% of their basic salary to the National Pension Fund and 1% to the National Savings Fund. The contributions to the NPF have ceased as from September 2020 following the coming into operation of the *Contribution Social Generalisée* Regulation 2020 made under the National Pension Act.

Mr Speaker Sir, I am further informed that all contributions to the National Pension Fund that have been made in favour of expatriate workers as at August 2020 are refunded to them under section 23B (1) of the National Pensions Act at the expiry of their contract of employment or work permit, or on termination of employment.

Mr Speaker Sir, I am also informed that contributions to the National Savings Fund are refundable as lump sum to a non-citizen on ground of expiry of contract of employment or work permit, or termination of employment as provided in the definition of retirement under section 2b(vii) of the National Savings Fund Act.

However, on the basis of the existing legal provisions, an expatriate worker who has been refunded his NPF/NSF contributions and who has not come back to Mauritius for a new contract of employment is not eligible for the refund of his NSF/CSG contributions upon expiry of his contract of employment unless he attains the retirement age, that is, 65 years.

This is, however, considered to be an anomaly which needs to be addressed, especially as the expatriate workers are already abroad when they attain the retirement age. The matter is, therefore, receiving due consideration.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the onus for the timely submission of applications for refund of expatriate workers rests on the employers concerned. My Ministry intervenes whenever expatriate workers are required to leave the country without being refunded.

Mr Woochit: There is an anomaly between the NPF and the CSG as mentioned by the hon. Minister. Can the Minister envisage bringing amendment to the existing regulation on CSG so as these expatriates are reimbursed their contribution before they return to their respective countries?

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, as admitted, there is effectively an anomaly but for any amendment pertaining to the Act, it has to be done by the Ministry of Finance.

Mr Speaker: Next question! You have a question?

Mr Uteem: May I ask the hon. Minister, for the refund of CSG, if consideration will be given for the deduction of the Rs1,000 which is going to be paid to them monthly?

Mr Callichurn: The Rs1,000 which was announced would be payable for those earning under Rs50,000, will also be payable to the expatriates workers and as regards the anomaly, representations will be made to the Ministry of Finance to that effect and a policy decision will have to be taken.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Ms J. Bérenger: B/798.

Mr Speaker: No, this question has been transferred. The question would be for Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha!

ZERO-INTEREST LOAN SCHEME – PRIVATE CLINICS AND BANKS

(No. B/799) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the zero-interest loan scheme for patients undergoing treatment in private clinics, he will state the names of the private clinics and the banks providing same.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, following the Budget Speech 2021-2022, my Ministry had a series of consultative meetings with the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development with banking institutions and with the Association of Private Clinics to define the modalities of a Zero Interest Loan Scheme.

Following the series of meetings, the Association of Private Clinics informed that 13 clinics namely, C-Care Darné, les Mariannes Wellness Clinic, Jyoti's Clinic, Chisty Shifa Clinic, la Clinique Mauricienne, Clinique Ferrière de Bon Secours, Healthscape Forbach Mauritius Clinic, Nouvelle Clinique du Bon Pasteur, Aegle Clinic, Aegle Onco Care Centre Ltd., Medisave Clinic, City Clinic, and Muller Clinic have expressed their intention to sign a Memorandum of Understanding.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards banking institutions, the State Bank of Mauritius Ltd. and the Maubank Ltd. have agreed to participate in the Zero Interest Loan Scheme. A draft

Memorandum of Understanding has been prepared to that effect and the Attorney General's office has been consulted in the matter.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a meeting was held at the seat of the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development on 04 July 2022 to fine tune the modalities relating to the Zero Interest Loan. Given that this new scheme would require changes in the banking system software, banking institutions have requested for 3 to 4 months' time to enable them to bring relevant changes to implement this scheme. The Memorandum of Understanding would be signed in due course. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: L'honorable ministre peut-il nous donner les raisons pour lesquelles certains traitements sont disponibles dans les cliniques privées mais non pas dans les hôpitaux publics et qu'est-ce qui est fait pour remédier à cela ?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would request the hon. Member to give me the list of services that are present in the private sector and not in the public sector to be more clear with a question.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Si je comprends bien, ce *scheme* est pour les traitements qui ne sont pas disponibles dans les hôpitaux publics mais seront disponibles dans les cliniques privées ?

Dr. Jagutpal: No, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is not the Zero Interest Loan Scheme for patients. There are so many patients who are following treatment with a private doctor and that private doctor is not working in the public sector and especially in case, this patient is willing to go for an operation in the private sector, this is meant for that purpose. And, again I will request the hon. Member to give me a list of services available in the private clinics which are not available in the public sector.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: L'honorable ministre peut-il éclairer la Chambre par rapport aux cas des patients qui ne nécessiteront plus d'un traitement, donc deux, voire des multiple traitements, est-ce qu'ils seront éligibles pour ces prêts aussi pour tous leurs traitements ?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, this question is not at all clear for me. In fact, again, I will say this Zero Interest Loan is for patients who are willing to go for any intervention in the private clinic and this patient, he or she does not have that money; he/she will have a loan from a

bank with a zero interest and this is where the Ministry is facilitating that loan because we will need to have a Memorandum of Understanding with the private clinics. So that is the procedure in doing that.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Okay.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

ALLEGED FAKE MORCELLEMENT PERMITS – INQUIRY

(No. B/800) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the alleged fake *morcellement* permits issued by officers of his Ministry, he will state where matters stand as to the inquiry initiated thereinto.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the investigations by the Police and the Independent Commission Against Corruption are ongoing.

Mr Ramful: I hope that the hon. Deputy Prime Minister realises that this investigation has been ongoing since 2019 and there are a lot of those *bona fide* purchasers who are still awaiting for the enquiry to be over. In the meantime, may I propose to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to consider the possibility of seeking advice from the Attorney General's Office to see if those *morcellements* can be regularised so as to enable those purchasers to construct their residential home?

The Deputy Prime Minister: First of all, I understand the concern of the hon. gentleman that these investigations are taking very long indeed and that this causes hardship, to say the least, for those concerned. So, I have instructed my Ministry to seek information from the Police and the ICAC afresh – we have done so on several occasions in the past but to seek the information again as to the status of those investigations.

Now, as regards legal advice; so far, the legal advice obtained would suggest that we cannot do much about it unless and until the investigations are completed. If the hon. gentleman who is a law practitioner has specific suggestions, I am quite willing to take it up with the AGO.

Mr Uteem: May I know from the Deputy Prime Minister, the number of people who have been arrested and interdicted in connection with this enquiry?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I am afraid I do not have the information at hand. If the hon. gentleman will bear with me – no, I would not want to delay matters, maybe I can communicate the information directly to the hon. gentleman.

Mr Ameer Meea: Can I ask the Deputy Prime Minister, *l'ordre de grandeur* de fake *morcellement* permits, how many fake *morcellement* permits are we talking about?

The Deputy Prime Minister: In this case, we are referring to 37 suspected cases of *morcellement* permits, 207 concerned lots that have already been sold but not yet developed; 118 lots that have not yet been sold and 62 lots that have already been sold and developed.

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. In his reply the Deputy Prime Minister mentioned about investigations which are being done by ICAC, can he inform the House how much time it takes when the ICAC has already done the investigation to regularise the case for the people that bought the land under these *morcellements*.

The Deputy Prime Minister: I am being asked how long it would take once ICAC has finished the investigation; I'm afraid, that is very much of a hypothetical question. It is on a case by case basis but obviously, being given the prejudice which would have been caused to the concerned party we would try to expedite matters. But, maybe, Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission to provide more clarity, I could respond to the query by hon. Ramful.

The matter was reported to the Police on 14 March 2019 and to ICAC. My Ministry has requested an update –

- (i) from the Police on 22 April 2019;
- (ii) from ICAC on 02 June 2020;
- (iii) from the Police again on 10 February 2021;
- (iv) from ICAC on 15 February 2021;
- (v) on 15 July 2021 both to ICAC and the Police;
- (vi) in July 2021, we contacted ICAC again;
- (vii) in September 2021, the Police informed my Ministry that the investigation was still on-going. I can go on just to establish that my Ministry has been closely following-up, and

(viii) the last we heard on 04 July, ICAC confirmed that its investigation is still on-going.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs B/836, B/818, B/823, B/812, B/829 and B/832 have been withdrawn.

Next question!

META – MAURITIAN CREOLE – MODERATORS

(No. B/801) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the proposed recruitment of moderators by Meta in order to address problematic contents in Mauritian Creole, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Balgobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply made to PQ B/995 on 09 November 2021 by the then Ag. Prime Minister, wherein he informed the House amongst others, that my Ministry had engaged with Facebook, now Meta, to address the irresponsible online behaviour of certain users of that platform.

The then Ag. Prime Minister also informed the House that following online meetings I had in July and August 2021 with Facebook officials, the latter had announced plans to recruit moderators so that contents in Mauritian Creole could be addressed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, I discussed with high officials of Meta, including the Director of Public Policy for Africa based in the UK and the head of Public Policy for the African region based in South Africa and have expressed my deep concerns with regard to the response time to address cyber incidence reported to it, and over which we unfortunately do not have any control. I also stress on the importance of Meta employing moderators having proficiency in Mauritian Creole language in order to better discern objectionable posts.

Mr Speaker, Sir, accordingly in a correspondence dated 06 August 2021, Meta forwarded an advertisement for filling the position of a full time post of market specialist to be based in the Facebook Dublin office and had one of its requirements to be fluent in writing and conversational Mauritian Creole demonstrable on-going connection with the community in Mauritius and detailed knowledge of its culture and common practices amongst others.

Further, in February 2022, Meta informed that it had refined its reporting process and was in the final stages of enhancing Mauritian Creole language capacity. As of late, Meta confirmed that it was committed to Mauritius and that it now supports content moderation in Mauritian Creole but could not give specific details nor provide any information about its employees as per the company policies and their data protection laws.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is to recon that Meta being a private company, the Government of Mauritius has no control over its activities, lesser still regarding recruitment of its personnel. Thank you.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. In his answer, the hon. Minister mentioned about the commitment of Meta towards Mauritius. Does this imply that ever since this commitment has been agreed on – let us put it that way – the cases reported on Meta, is it taking more time or are we finding solutions as soon as possible? Because so far, as far as I have been putting questions here, we have been reporting so many pages, fake profiles but nothing has been done. But does this commitment guarantee us that as from now on all the reported pages, fake profiles would be taken down?

Mr Balgobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have gather some figures for the last year July 2021 as at date. There has been 2,465 incidents related to Facebook that have been reported on the online platform system, that is, the Mauritian Online Reporting System (MAUCORS) which is overlooked by the Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT) and those complaints and incidents have been reported and referred to Meta for action out of which I am being informed that 2,189 cases, that is, nearly 90% of those cases reported have been resolved compared to June 2020 to June 2021 where only 10% were resolved.

So, it has indeed increased, it has indeed been worked out in a very correct manner. As at now, things are moving quite fast compared to before and I guess, Mr Speaker, Sir, I can confirm probably that there has been recruitment of Mauritian nationals including diaspora to look after these contents and actions have been taken accordingly.

At the same time, Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will recall that the new Cybersecurity and Cybercrime Bill was passed in this august Assembly in November 2021 and the Act came into operation in December of last year and this new legislation – let me remind – criminalises offenses related to cybercrime and cybersecurity such as misuse of fake profiles, cyber bullying,

extortion and so on. The law also is there, Mr Speaker, Sir, to take actions against anybody that goes against the law.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs B/847, B/849 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.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

OBITUARY

JAPAN'S FORMER PRIME MINISTER - MR SHINZO ABE

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is with great shock and profound sadness that I address the House to pay tribute to the late Mr Shinzo Abe, former Prime Minister of Japan, who was assassinated on 08 July 2022 while delivering a campaign speech ahead of the Upper House Election.

Mr Shinzo Abe was a member of a prominent political family. His father, Shintaro Abe, was a leading member of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and he served as Foreign Minister from 1982 to 1986. His grandfather, Nobusuke Kishi, served as Prime Minister from 1957 to 1960 and his great uncle, Eisaku Sato, served as Prime Minister from 1964 to 1972.

Mr Abe was first elected as a Member of Parliament in 1993. In 2003, he was named Secretary General of the Liberal Democratic Party and in 2006, he became the country's first Prime Minister to have been born after the Second World War and its youngest since the war. He was Japan's longest serving Prime Minister, having been in office from 2006 to 2007 and from 2012 to 2020.

Mr Abe will be remembered for his visionary leadership and more particularly, for his reform agenda to stimulate the ailing Japanese economy.

In the context of international relations, Mr Abe strengthened ties with various countries, including the United States and India in particular, and pursued a more assertive foreign policy.

The late Prime Minister, Mr Abe, was a shining example of a visionary world leader who was committed to the universal values of multilateralism and in particular to the emergence of a just and peaceful world order. Indeed, he relentlessly pursued those noble ideals until his last breath.

The enhancement of the relations between Africa and Japan also remained one of his priorities, and during his mandates, the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) evolved into a major global forum promoting international partnership and African development. In Africa, Mr Abe will be remembered for such significant achievements.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would also like to pay tribute to late Mr Abe for his unflinching support in taking the bilateral relations between Mauritius and Japan to new heights. It was under his leadership that Japan decided to establish a diplomatic representation in Mauritius in 2017.

Japan has maintained a continuous support to the promotion of the welfare of the Mauritian people through the financing of projects in various areas.

Our meeting in Yokohama during the TICAD Summit in August 2019 was momentous, and laid the foundations for an enduring cooperation between our two countries for the mutual benefit of our peoples. During this meeting, Mr Abe expressed his interest to collaborate with Mauritius in new areas, including maritime security, and the Government of Japan subsequently provided a grant of Rs100 m. for the acquisition of six high speed boats. Moreover, the Government of Japan also provided assistance for the upgrading of meteorological equipment at the Trou aux Cerfs Radar Station for better resolution imagery.

Our exchanges, I remember with sadness, were warm and touching. I have conveyed the condolences of the Government and People of Mauritius to the Government and the People of Japan, and to the widow, Mrs Akie Abe, and the family of late Mr Abe.

Thank you.

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

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

- (a) *Immigration Bill (No. XII of 2022)*
- (b) *The Mauritius Food Standards Agency Bill (No. XIII of 2022).*

Second Reading

THE ACADEMY OF DESIGN AND INNOVATION BILL (NO. XI OF 2022)

Order for Second Reading read.

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

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am extremely honoured today to present to the House, the Academy of Design and Innovation Bill, which will bring design to new pedestals.

This Bill provides for the establishment of an Academy of Design and Innovation which will take over the functions and powers of the existing Fashion and Design Institute. Consequently, the Fashion and Design Institute Act of 2008 will be repealed.

I have deemed it important to introduce this new piece of legislation to better respond to emerging global permutations in the design field. This new Bill will address recurring challenges by providing for an adequate supply of a new generation of highly skilled, technologically savvy and versatile labour force in the country.

Indeed, we are paving the way for a renaissance in multi-sectorial design fields. The proposed Academy of Design and Innovation will spearhead excellence in several design fields and will provide a new boost to the creative industry in fields such as graphic and multimedia, built-in and architecture, arts and crafts as well as jewellery. Greater exposure to multi-sectorial designs will be conferred upon the whole gamut of the design sector and will counter the common understanding restricted to fashion and design only.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is to be reckoned that the establishment of the existing Fashion and Design Institute, that is, FDI was one of the recommendations made by a former UNDP

Consultant, namely Professor Edward Newton, in 2008. He advised that training programmes should be provided in the fashion and design field with a view to responding to industry needs. Consequently, the FDI became fully operational in 2009 with the merger of the School of Design of the then Industrial and Vocational Training Board (IVTB), the Department of Textile Technology of the University of Mauritius and the Textile and Apparel Development Centre of the then Enterprise Mauritius.

The FDI is currently responsible for the conduct of academic, professional, vocational and training programmes as well as short courses in the field of fashion and design. The FDI has, since its creation, acquired a wide experience of more than a decade in providing training in the fashion and design field, and it is striving hard to become a reference in the field of creativity and design in Mauritius.

The Institute has currently in place four Faculties, namely, Art and Design, Fashion, Media and Communication and Built-In Environment. The Institute offers 13 programmes related to Fashion And Textile, Graphic and Multimedia, Interior Design, Media, and Jewellery Manufacturing and Design at Certificate, Diploma and Undergraduate Levels.

Members of the House would recall that in 2017, the responsibility of providing skills in the jewellery sector was entrusted to the FDI through the Budget 2017-2018, whereby the Jewellery Centre from the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development (MITD) was transferred to the Institute. This policy measure eventually led to the setting up of the Faculty of Jewellery Manufacturing and Design in 2019 and since then, I take pride in mentioning that, as at now, two cohorts of students have been trained in the specific field and are already bringing their expertise to the jewellery sector.

The Institute has also been active in providing short courses to cater for continuous professional development, as well as increase employability of youngsters. In fact, during the past academic year, the Institute introduced new short courses targeting unemployed youth in Photo Media and Advertising Design, Jewellery Design and Manufacturing, Creating Artefacts Using Upcycling Materials and Natural Fibres, and Craft Design and Techniques, in collaboration with the Human Resource and Development Council (HRDC).

During the same year, the Fashion and Design Institute and the Civil Service College collaborated in developing two online courses relating to history of Printmaking Printing and Fundamental of Design.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the institutional experience and knowledge acquired by the FDI during these few past years have enabled the Institute to win international accolades. During the *Salon International du Textile Africain (SITA)*, held in Djibouti, in November last year, the Fashion and Design Institute excelled by winning the prize of Best Stylist 2021 out of 22 participating African countries.

Furthermore, in March 2022, the Fashion and Design Institute organised its first Fashion Show in the Middle East in the margin of the Dubai Expo 2020. This show, I must say, was a resounding success and was attended by dignitaries from UAE as well as high profile fashion designers in the Gulf Region.

Still in Dubai, the Institute successfully organised in March 2022 an International Conference on Sustainable and Innovative Design, regrouping international designers from countries such as Switzerland, Ukraine, Pakistan and Italy to share experiences in the field of design, innovation and sustainability.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the FDI has been pursuing a policy of promoting international networking. On this note, it is worth mentioning that in April this year, a Fashion and Design Institute signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Birmingham City University of United Kingdom with the objective of upgrading its level of education and quality of teaching.

It is gratifying to note that since its inception, the FDI has trained over 2,000 students in the fashion and design fields. More encouragingly, the Institute is known for having a high employability rate of nearly 90%. It is a matter of pride to highlight that the offspring of the Institute has now become renowned designers locally and internationally. The former students have either set up their own enterprises or occupy senior positions in reputed textile and clothing firms.

Mr Speaker, Sir, despite these eloquent achievements, I must confess that the functions of the FDI are no longer attuned to the present and future needs of the economy. There is an urgent

need for the Institute to reinvent itself to be better equipped to address emerging challenges and to support the economy in terms of supply of skilled labour force, promoting innovative practices and the adoption of state-of-the-art technologies in all economic activities. Hence, the setting up of the Academy of Design and Innovation.

The Academy will be called upon to exercise a far wider role in promoting design education in the country, as evidenced by the overarching objects stipulated in Clause 4 of the Bill. These are to –

- (a) promote excellence in the design field of fashion and textile, graphic and multimedia, built-in and architecture, jewellery, and arts and crafts;
- (b) promote multi-sectorial design fields;
- (c) disseminate knowledge of the design fields;
- (d) develop a multi-disciplinary approach in carrying out research and training in the design fields with a view to ensuring a better coordination of the interests of multi-sectors;
- (e) provide educational, research, consultancy and training facilities and services in the design fields;
- (f) promote, with regard to the design fields, the development of incubators and entrepreneurs, and
- (g) promote innovation in the design fields.

I wish to emphasise that one of the inherent limitations of the Fashion and Design Act of 2008 is that the FDI was not conferred awarding powers. However, the Fashion and Design Institute has made recommendations to its main awarding bodies such as the Pearson (UK) and the University of Technology of Mauritius for the award of certificates, diplomas, degrees and other qualifications.

However, in addition to being tedious and time-consuming, this process poses significant cost implications for the FDI as the latter has to incur additional expenses to remunerate the above mentioned institutions for the award of these Certificates and Degree Programmes.

This House will appreciate that Clause 6 of the Bill confers the much-needed power for the Academy to award certificates, diplomas, degrees, honorary degrees and other academic or professional qualifications, whether on its own or jointly with any higher education institutions or international institutions.

As such, the Academy, in its capacity as an Awarding Body, will be able not only to develop its own programmes but to hold examinations independently. The requirement of making recommendations to any University or any other institution for such awards will no longer arise, with the coming into force of this Bill.

Mr Speaker Sir, the importance of the Academy cannot be over-emphasised since it will henceforth, not only promote excellence in the field of fashion and design technology but also explore innovation in other design fields, such as Adaptive and Medical Apparel, Technical and Smart Textiles, Furniture and Ergonomic Design, Eyewear Frame Design, Luxury Jewellery Design as well as Built Environment and Green Architectural Design. This is not an exhaustive list.

New emerging global trends in design fields will be tapped into. For instance, the Academy will introduce new concepts in apparel designed specifically for people with disabilities or with sensory issues, including comfortable wear for medical use and inclusive concepts to design wearable for all communities. Furthermore, Technical and Smart textiles commonly known as functional fabrics and e-textiles will also be promoted for industrial purposes and everyday use.

As for furniture design, ergonomic features in relation to comfort, functionality and the movement of the human body will also be considered. It is worth mentioning that this type of furniture is becoming more popular in modern design schemes. Design items and accessories for eyewear such as frames and eyeglass cases for fashion or adornment and protection against the environment will also be duly taken into consideration.

As a consequence, the Academy will be able to extend its services to other sectors of the economy, contrary to the FDI, which was servicing mainly the textile industry. It is also envisaged that the Academy will contribute to the development of smart cities, which are gaining rapid momentum in Mauritius. Design will be called upon to take on a different dimension through more quality teaching, research and innovation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius as an export manufacturing country has to compete with many countries, especially in the textile and clothing sector. It is noted that many of these countries have developed a competitive advantage through the establishment of their own Design Institutes. These Institutes service this sector with the appropriate skill needs and are able to award their own diplomas and degrees. I can, for instance, cite here the Royal Academy of Arts in England, the World University of Design of India and the Dubai Design Academy, which are well known to be among the pantheon of renowned global education institutions in the design field.

Another point worth mentioning is that the fact and I quote –

“Industrial design, combining innovation and creativity, is essential for attaining the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 9 on infrastructure, innovation, and sustainable industrialization.”

This statement has been made by the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), as an acknowledgement of the key role that design plays in enhancing value addition and overall competitiveness.

In fact, with its revamped mandate, I am confident that the Academy will provide value-based innovative industrial design courses and will contribute to the upgrading of technical and human capabilities in the manufacturing sector. Ultimately, this sector will benefit through the development of unique and competitive industrial designs and innovative product lines, representing higher value-added goods and greater competitiveness.

Another important factor is that with awarding powers, the image and the credibility of the Academy will be enhanced both locally and internationally. This will enable the newly established Academy to foster strong collaborative partnership with local as well as foreign educational institutions. It is expected that the collaboration with international educational institutes will help the Academy to ensure quality education and good business practices as well as strengthen its expertise in specific skills development and research.

The setting-up of the new Academy will also open window of opportunities and will attract a greater number of potential students to develop and fine-tune their skills. It is viewed that the Academy of Design and Innovation will be a dynamic platform for research and design

for a new generation of students and aspiring entrepreneurs. As a matter of fact, the Bill makes provisions at various clauses, namely Clause (4)(f) and Clause (5)(f) for the Academy to promote entrepreneurship, through the creation of incubators which will lead to more economic growth in the future.

The Academy will also set up a User Research Design Development Centre as part of its revamped mandate. I wish to point out that during the “National Policy Dialogue on the Manufacturing Sector” organised by my Ministry in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa in March 2022, an appeal was made by manufacturers for high-skilled training of their workforce. There was a recommendation to set up a dedicated School of Textile to respond to the needs of the Textile and Apparel sector.

The Academy of Design and Innovation will give due effect to this proposal by ensuring a proper restructuring of its actual FDI Apparel Centre, situated at Vallée des Prêtres by converting it into a User Research Design Development Centre. The Centre will house a dedicated unit in textile and material technology to cater for specific industry needs. The Centre will also focus on addressing short-term as well as long-term challenges relating to sustainability, flexibility and reliability for greater resilience in the textile and clothing sector.

One of the rationales for the creation of the Academy is to strengthen its financial sustainability. Since its inception, the FDI has been heavily reliant on grants from the Government, even though it was generating a certain amount of revenue. However, this income has been far from sufficient for the Institute to break even and therefore, it had to continue to rely on state funds.

This new Bill will empower the Academy to be more financially independent, especially with regard to its recurrent expenses. In fact, the new Academy ambitions to increase the current student population from about 350 to some 1500 students by year 2026, including international students. This increase of student enrolment coupled with additional consultancy services to be offered by the Academy will lead to greater income generation for the Academy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the need to promote services in the manufacturing sector is one of the reasons that have inspired us to come up with an Academy with a revamped and more elaborate mandate. Indeed, in the global commodity chain, Research and Development (R&D), design and packaging represent important components in the manufacturing process.

As a matter of fact, the five-year Strategic Plan of my Ministry, namely the Industrial Policy and Strategic Plan (IPSP) (2020-2025), has emphasised the importance of upgrading value chains through process upgrading, product development and product design and use of latest technologies associated with Industry 4.0. Indeed, in the long term, the manufacturing sector has to shift to a more capital and technology-intensive model based on Industry 4.0 technologies.

Allow me to cite some examples where R&D, design and packaging could contribute to transform our manufacturing landscape. Mauritius has over 50 years of experience in the manufacturing of textile and clothing. The exports of this sector, which hover around Rs20 billion represent 48% of exports within the Export Oriented Enterprises (EOE) sector. Many textile enterprises have become global players, exporting to prestigious brands such as Abercrombie & Fitch, Marks & Spencer, Tommy Hilfiger, Woolworths, Asos, Armani and Calvin Klein. Such a performance of the textile sector has been made possible with the maturity acquired by operators in R&D and design, amongst others.

This sector is certainly poised to grow further, calling for more advanced techniques in R&D and design and such a strategic requirement will be fulfilled by the new Academy through the provision of new courses, training programmes and consultancy services.

The jewellery sector is yet another important pillar of the manufacturing sector, driven by enterprises already working with international brands such as Tiffany's, Leo Schachter and Swarovski. The jewellery sector is the third-largest sub-sector within the EOE, with an export value of Rs3.8 billion in 2021. This sector has to achieve its next lap of development through upgrading and modernisation of its production processes. It is viewed that the Academy will have a positive impact on this sub-sector, through the supply of a technically qualified labour force that has long been undermining its growth potential.

As indicated earlier, packaging constitutes a critical stage in the manufacturing value chain. Mauritius has the potential to offer services in packaging design locally as well as within the region. I have no doubt that the Academy of Design and Innovation will leave a significant imprint on the packaging industry, given the success of many past students of the FDI in the graphic field.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is also important that I shed some light on the capacity of the Academy of Design and Innovation to become an Awarding Body. I wish to mention that the new Governance Structure proposed in the Bill together with the maturity acquired by the FDI over the past decades constitute the essential ingredients for the Academy to become a recognised Awarding Body.

As per clause (8) of the Bill, the Academy will be managed by a Board, comprising representatives both from the public and private sectors, including a representative of industry associations. Such a constitution displays a fair representation of all stakeholders involved in the design field. The functions and powers of the Board have been furthermore delineated in clause (9), which is in consonance with the overall principles of good governance and management.

With a view to attaining its enhanced mandate, the Academy will be manned by strategic new positions at managerial level, established under clauses (14) to (16) for Head of Academia and Research, Head of Projects, Business/Industry Development and Consultancy and the Registrar.

Such provisions will provide an added boost to greater professional paid services that the Academy may provide to the business sector. As for the Registrar, he will be the custodian of records, papers and documents of the Academy, as in the case of other established universities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Clause (19) of the Bill provides for the setting up of an Academic Council, comprising key representatives in the education and design field, namely representatives from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, Higher Education Commission, academic staff and persons who have wide experience in the design fields. This membership is highly relevant and is aligned with the vision of the Academy of Design and Innovation to become a recognised Awarding Body. The Council will, *inter alia*, prepare academic, professional and training programmes and will be responsible for the general regulation of teaching, examinations, research and training. It will have the power to recommend to the Board the award of relevant certificates, diplomas and degrees.

Akin to Senates of Universities, the Council will be the Authority overseeing teaching and research as well as academic quality and standards, thereby charting out the overall academic direction of the Academy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as part of its social responsibility and to promote talent, the Academy, under Clause (25), will be empowered to grant fellowships, scholarships and bursaries with a view to ensuring access to high-quality education to one and all. This is in line with Government's objective to promote social inclusiveness and equality.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as Members of the House are aware, a Fashion and Design Institute is currently accommodated in four separate buildings in two different locations, namely, Ebène and Vallée des Prêtres. Such a situation is not conducive for an effective learning environment. In a bid to cater for the upcoming broadened activities of the Academy and to bring all its faculties in one location, the Academy will explore new premises to accommodate its campus for enhanced coordination and optimal performance. The proposed campus will be in line with Government Programme 2020-2024 in terms of innovative, greener, cleaner and sustainable infrastructure as well as providing for high quality education in a conducive environment through modern technologies.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to conclude, I wish to reaffirm that the Academy will confer a multitude of benefits in the educational and continuous professional development fields in Mauritius. Besides offering a better career path to the Academy staff, the Academy is geared to become a centre of excellence and a leading design hub in the region. May I now, Mr Speaker, Sir, commend the Academy of Design and Innovation Bill to the House.

The Deputy Prime Minister seconded.

(4.14 p.m.)

Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, Sir. I do not intend to pick a quarrel with the hon. Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives, but there are some issues which need to be highlighted. I am glad, when he made his concluding remarks; he stated very clearly that there is a rallying call to set up a new campus and to bring under one roof all those dispersed institutions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, what's in a name? The Minister may argue the 12 sections of the Principal Act, the Fashion and Design Institute, were amended on 03 May 2013 and a New Section 17 was inserted with Schedule added to the Principal Act. The Minister rightly pointed out that the Fashion and Design Institute has travelled a long way and to a large extent has

delivered; their output and outcome have been good. Now, the purpose of introducing this new legislation has to meet, and I hope that the Minister will walk the talk, and as we say, the proof of the pudding is always in the eating and I hope so. Now, there is no need to talk of changing the appellation if delivery would not be excellent. And I sincerely hope that all those working in the sector will live up to the expectation and will level up because when we look at the Explanatory Memorandum, I do not think that it justifies the change of appellation simply because of the fast growing technology in the design field.

Now, to me, if the objects are not met, the change in the denomination from Institute of Fashion and Design to Academy of Design and Innovation will simply remain a buzz word. You know, at the beginning, in the good old days, what was the buzz word that was conveyed? Systems; then cluster; paradigm shift; right mindset; out of the box; now it is innovation and state of technology. In the meantime, Minister, the base is eroding and the circle of courses is being widened without a needs analysis and I would have expected the Minister to say that there had been a needs analysis. Now, you may recall, Minister, after an amendment brought to the Institute of Fashion and Design, in May 2013 to date, the Ministry has not deemed it fit to enlist the expertise of a consultant like McKinsey to make an evaluation and turn the school as a centre of repute, a bedrock for design field.

I am sure you have been informed, Minister, that courses are being run in schoolyards. Now, I bow to the commitment of the staff, especially to the good acumen of the teaching staff, but they cannot be expected to have an effortless sense of commitment if, as trainers, their skills are not updated. And who is going to train the trainers? The workplace, to some extent you have conveyed the message that it is not conducive either for the students or for the staff. And the Institute is being run down and lacks necessary infrastructure when there is rallying call to embed, of course, artificial intelligence into business models. I grant you, we are miles away from artificial intelligence. Unfortunately, we are being overtaken by our competitors. Computer-aided design is the software norm to boost productivity and I am sure the students are learning, or if not, they need to learn the basics and be given the opportunity to use it in their respective fields.

Mr Speaker, Sir, where is our fashion industry? What support is being extended to designers to hold a fashion show? And as to artists and craft designers, they are desperate

because they have nowhere to exhibit their artistic work. I attended an exhibition by young artists on Sunday in Curepipe and the place was leased to them by a firm at a concessionary rate, but it is not always easy for them to find a place where they can exhibit their products. Clause 4(b) in the Academy of Design and Innovation Bill makes provision to promote multi-sectorial design. Let us wait and see, and I hope that the Minister will live up to the expectation of the students and the teaching and non-teaching staff.

Like I have stated earlier, I do not intend to pick a quarrel with the Minister – he is a good man, I have known him since a very long time – over the establishment of the Academy of Design and Innovation which, of course, will take over the powers and functions of the Institute of Fashion and Design. But I am the first to say that we have to stay ahead of the curve, add value to our products; constantly reinvent our brands, new paradigms and right mindset; think big and give the young the freedom to be creative and innovative. Break the vicious psychosocial circle. The Academy has to have an artistic and creative culture.

Like all of us, we are strong proponents of cutting-edge policy, but relevant issues have to be addressed; like production room, dignify the name with the state-of-the-art technology; good tutorial rooms; twining with the best like the Institute Marangoni of Milan or Saint Martins School of Fashion and Design. The Minister did mention that there has been a tying up with one of the institutions in Birmingham, but we need to get the best lecturers to deliver lectures and work in close collaboration with the dedicated staff. Technology brings the best lecturers in the lecture theatre and practical teachers in the production room at the touch of the button. Clause 5(g) spells it out, but since 2015, the Institute has to expedite, walk brisker; walk the talk; brisker than Johnny Walker, without the cane, Minister! And you can make it happen; you can do it, Minister, as long as you stay away from the hot stove of the dirty kitchen. And that is a tall order, but I expect you to do it, Minister.

Now, let me come to the award of degrees and diplomas. Certificates call for clarity and certainty, the object is to level up. When the Bill was introduced in May 2008, there were wide discussions with all stakeholders at the bar of public opinion because the core issue remains ‘recognition of qualification’ and the keyword remains ‘prestigious’.

Mr Speaker, Sir, under the Higher Education Act, the Higher Education Commission and Quality Assurance Authority, an assessment report has yet to be submitted to justify the status of

the tertiary institution. When was the last evaluation exercise carried out? The trend, as the Minister has stated, is the linkage between industry and academia and there should be no compromise on levelling up the process. The linkage is clearly spelt out in the Institute of Fashion and Design Bill, reinforced – I agree, I grant the Minister – in the Academy of Design and Innovation Bill and I recall when the Bill was debated in the House, the linkage was clearly spelt out. And, it was Rama Sithanen in his intervention who referred to what Professor Bhattacharya has done at Warwick University. He created a school and the degree awarded by the university brand name but the autonomy to be centre of excellence. Of course, I grant you, Rome was not built in a day but unfortunately set ablaze overnight by Nero.

Let me come to Kellogg School of Management founded in 1908 which is the business school of the Northwestern University, a private research university in a Evanston, Illinois, faculty and the alumni, the students have made significant contributions to fields such as Marketing, Management Sciences and Decision Sciences.

Mr Speaker, Sir, competition is fierce. The Minister has said it, and markets no longer give us the special and differential treatment which we enjoy for export. Our upper middle income status, be in export quality brand products, export or die. Many of our textile and garment factories have relocated their activities to Bangladesh, India, Malagasy Republic to make the most of the most favoured nation status, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have some information which was relayed to me by the MEXA on export of textile and apparel jewellery. From information relayed to me, it seems that we exported 42.6 billion of textile and apparel and jewellery; that the sector of textile and apparel employ 22,091 persons and jewellery, watch, purse and precious employ almost 1,500 persons.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a sector which is growing and it has the potential, but, of course, common things are common. Unfortunately, one of the problems which is besetting us is an ageing workforce and I hope Government will seriously look into this issue because you have no choice but to open up. If you want to attract investment, we need to make sure that we have the workforce, notwithstanding the workforce which is being skilled, upskilled and reskilled in our institutions.

That is why I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is important to protect our brands, our patented products and we have to wage war on dumping and countervailing products. We have to say no

to counterfeits. Design and innovation of textile and garment, jewellery, arts and crafts is the outcome of creative mind. As we say, catch them young and school curriculum needs to be widened. I am not going to specifically highlight what Le Bocage or other schools are doing, but let me say that Le Bocage is a trend-setter and my plea is to widen the circle of opportunities in our primary and secondary schools. Whilst Finland and Scandinavian countries more successful, there are lessons to be learned and drawn; the values of creativity and innovation are inculcated from infancy.

We are doing alright, but inquisitiveness has to be a prominent feature of our culture and against which background, Mr Speaker, Sir, is this Bill being introduced? In defiance of creativity and innovation, what is the crux of creativity and innovation if there is no freedom of information, if there is no protection of rights, impetus, but the inquisitiveness, unfortunately, is being curtailed? And who is looking at you? Kids! The big brother, the big brothers intercepting probably, will sniff, will steal and kill creativity.

Let me look at the definition of design field. To me, it is too wide a spectrum from fashion and textile to building and architecture. Yet, to cluster, you have no choice as we say, Minister, we cannot bite more than we can chew and we have to produce for niche market.

Let us get our act right and not like headless chicken running all over the place to be a recipe for disaster. As of now, Minister, there is a diplomatic row between Egypt and Mauritius over recognition of qualification in architecture despite the qualifications from Egypt are recognised by EU and UK. Will the Council of Architects register graduates from the Academy? The Mauritius Research and Innovation Council has unfortunately suffered a huge set back since the departure of Professor Suddoo, but I must acknowledge the goodwill and commitment of the Minister. Unfortunately, there is a lot of resistance from the current Director of the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if the Board is to deliver, you need people who have a creative mind, who are forward looking, who move with new trends. We cannot have people unfortunately like the Executive Director of the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council to whom I draw your attention. Make sure that this gentleman does not remove the cog from the wheel of progress! I know that my good friend, the Minister, certainly is monitoring the situation but make sure that it does not happen.

Now, when you have an idea, it becomes relevant – as you said Minister – if it is matured through research and development and commercial value is added to it. I am glad that there is provision for patents and intellectual property rights but we have to make sure that those who create, who innovate get their fair share and that has to be seen and simply not treat them as students because if you want to give new thrust, new dynamism, not only you have to widen the circle but you have to take on-board those youngsters with creative minds. The clusters are very important. That is why I asked the question, I said where the outcome of applied, research development and innovation in critical sectors of our economy. The Research Institute, FAREI, University of Mauritius have to cluster. This is the time also to think of food security and make contribution to a second green revolution although it is not directly linked.

But, the other day, I saw a young man using newspapers and banana leaves to make a wedding dress. I do not know who is going to wear it but at least he has a creative and innovative mind. Now, fashion suppliers and brands like other companies are facing significant economic and geo-political challenges. Mckinsey State of Fashion Report 2022 highlights how global trends are disrupting the fashion industry. What companies have to do to adapt and to thrive? I am sure the Minister has come across the relevant analysis and findings of this report. The report covers the concurrent effects of the many challenges facing both suppliers and brand, including the war in Ukraine, the pandemic, the inflation and energy crisis.

Recovery in the fashion industry is relatively fast and it is now on its feet. The Academy needs to have a research unit, mention is made. I am sure it will have a research unit which can deliver and which will work closely with MEXA and other relevant stakeholders. Of course, the Minister has to insist on the best endeavours of the Council, no laid-back Board meetings. The Academy has noble objects and wide powers, and to deliver, it has to be run professionally. It has to safeguard and market the intellectual property rights and products of the Academy, and I expect the Minister later on to elaborate.

Let me come to allocation of resources and budget to all research coordinators. These allocations have to be fair. Do not do what the Executive Director of the Research and Innovation Council has done. Funding has to go to research officers who can deliver because the impact is very important. Bring in the best and make sure that policies which are chalked out are policies which can be implemented, and resources allocated to those who can deliver.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me remind the House, there was a time when Mauritius ranked very high in the Global Innovation Index. We were 52. Now, our ranking has gone down to 82. We were 52 in the Global Innovation Index. Our performance was described as a most notable rank and certainly a positive change for the country at international level. But those who have the potential to raise the profile should not be wiped out. When you prepare your new roadmap or when Government does prepare its new roadmap, bring in the best because at the end of the day, we want Mauritius to be the winner.

Let me come to Clause 15, which provides the human resources for synergistic or harmonious blending between Academia and industry, and as I mentioned earlier, the relevance and importance of adding commercial value to research, development and innovation. And this is relevant to the development of incubators and entrepreneurs.

Clause 4 (a) refers to 5 sectors that are being targeted by the Bill and yet Clause 8 (1) refers to only 3 Board members. Hopefully, all sectors will be aptly represented on a permanent basis and not as co-opted members. These people should come from the industry with at least 5 years of experience, if not more. The Academy has to comply faithfully to Clause 8 (6) and (7) because we have seen too many departures from firm undertaking. And this is a fallacy, whatever is spelt out in the legislation, unfortunately, I am not talking of the legislation which you have brought to the House but sometimes there is no compliance and there is departure from undertaking given.

Let me cite one particular case, the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), it is a Pity Complaints Commission. It is a pity that it has political activists sitting as members of this Commission. And that is what we do not want to see happen because when we look at Clause 8 (6) and (7), it is clearly spelt out that there would be no person who is politically affiliated. Give them the freedom, give the Board the freedom to act at large, to act with a creative mind and to deliver, and there should be no undue pressure being borne on staff or on the registrar in relation to recruitment. Let the Academy Council do its work. We have seen what has happened recently in relation to papers which allegedly have been leaked. The political landscape has to be far away. Let institutions deliver, Minister!

Let me come to Clause 19 (h), this Clause, I expect it to be more explicit and once again, the different sectors, as I said, must be represented. Now, any provision regarding work and

training placement in the industry, I expect the Minister to highlight this pertinent issue in his summing-up, because much has been said on the nexus between industry and Academia but I have nothing in relation to or regarding work and training placement. Provision for the endowment funds, yes, which should finance the studies of the outstanding students to the best institutions, is welcomed because we have to put our best endeavour to bring our best brain. We have to be strong proponents of brain gain for endowment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me conclude by saying who would not love to live in a country whose economy is powered by high business investment, workers with better skills and innovation. The new denomination should not simply be a sound bite or a buzzword. What we want is a strong link in the conveyor belt of development and the Academy can deliver subject that we do not allow people from the dirty kitchen to interfere or to intervene.

Thank you very much.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I suspend the Sitting for half an hour!

At 4.40 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.20 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much for keeping the good habits! Hon. Ittoo, please!

Mr A. Ittoo (Third Member for Vacoas & Floréal): M. le président, merci pour l'opportunité qui m'est donnée pour prêter ma voix à ce projet de loi, un projet de loi qui ne peut émaner que d'un gouvernement avant-gardiste. Et pour reprendre ce que l'Opposition nous brandit souvent: gouverner, c'est prévoir.

M. le président, l'honorable ministre Sunil Bholah a proposé à cette Chambre un projet de loi dont le but ultime serait de mieux équiper, armer et préparer nos jeunes, nos aspirants graphistes et graphistes des outils afin qu'ils puissent non seulement être plus performants mais surtout compétitifs et efficents dans un monde où la compétition n'a jamais été aussi rude.

M. le président, avec l'avènement de la technologie le monde est devenu un village global avec les commerces en ligne, le e-commerce encore plus utilisé par grand nombre d'acheteurs. Mais au-delà de l'élément commercial, transactionnel, la technologie a changé et continue d'influencer les dynamiques de bon nombre d'industries entre autres et surtout l'art.

M. le président, nous ne possédons pas des ressources naturelles telles que l'or ou le pétrole que nous pouvons convertir en richesse sauf nos ressources humaines, voire la créativité et le savoir-faire Mauriciens. Et en parlant de capacité des Mauriciens, permettez-moi avec votre permission, M. le président, d'ouvrir une parenthèse pour saluer le jeune Noah Bibi, le premier Mauricien à couvrir les 200 m sous la barre des 20 secondes, c'était dimanche en France. Comme Noah Bibi, M. le président, nous en avons des milliers de talents à Maurice qu'un gouvernement responsable, jeune comme le nôtre, a le devoir d'accompagner, ou comme dirait l'anglais *d'empower*, afin qu'ils puissent progresser et épanouir dans divers secteurs dont le design.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, technology has not only become a pervasive influence in our society, it has also, especially influenced the way we create and appreciate art. Everyone agrees that design and innovation is the key to success in today's world. A great design is what makes a difference in production and securing certain markets. It is thus essential that we have the right people with the appropriate skill set, trained in institutes like the Academy of Design and Innovation in order to achieve such success.

By merging activities of the School of Design of the IVTB, the Textile and Apparel Development Centre of the Enterprise Mauritius and the Department of Textile Technology of the University of Mauritius, the Fashion and Design Institute (FDI) has surely helped in many ways to rationalise resources in the textile and design sector and helped foster a uniformed and a focused development of the fashion industry.

M. le président, dans son discours, il y a à peine quelques minutes, le ministre nous a rappelé la contribution de l'industrie de textile à Maurice. Qui ne se rappelle pas de ces années glorieuses où quasiment, dans tous les villages de Maurice, opéraient des usines de textile, petits et grands. On a entendu du ministre aussi, des grandes marques comme Tommy, Armani entre autres qui sont produits à Maurice mais M. le président, à force de me le répéter, la compétition a fait qu'il y a eu une migration de certaines grandes groupes dans d'autres lieux avant qu'on a revu durant les récentes années, une renaissance du textile à Maurice.

M. le président, d'après mes informations, les cahiers de commandes des usines de textile sont remplis depuis quelques temps et même pendant la période du Covid-19, M. le président, produire, confectionner n'est qu'une étape, mais ce qui fait vendre, c'est à quel point ce que nous

produisons est distinctive, attrayant, branché ou tout simplement différent. Mais cette différence s'acquiert au niveau du *design* de la conception. Du reste, dans le commerce d'aujourd'hui en 2022, on le dit souvent l'achat se fait avec les yeux.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with the space at which technology is advancing and the huge global competition, it has become essential that we revamp our institutions to make use of latest technologies in design courses. To make available to design students not only technical education but also industrial exposure and not only that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what I believe is most important is that we have such academies that have the potential to attract youngsters or other individuals who have special aptitudes, who have a passion for design, who have that unique creative mind which Mauritians are well-known for. So, yes, there are conventional mainstream educational institutions and there is already a huge competition among educational institutions, so we need such special design and innovation academies in order to unleash the potential of our Mauritian creative minds in order not to lose them in conventional educational streams.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the setting up of an academy of design and innovation will help in supplying enterprises with the right competencies and at the same time, encourage the youth to develop their potential in design and innovation. Hence, it is revamping the current fashion and design institute to respond to current industry needs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this academy intends to bridge the gap between industry requirements and academia and to channel the voice of the industry through working professionals and designing a structured syllabus in an academic environment.

M. le président, Maurice a été classé premier en Afrique dans le *Global Innovation Index* en 2021 et 52ème sur 132 pays. Cela est certainement un score très honorable mais on peut faire mieux et on doit faire mieux. En analysant ce rapport de plus près, je veux dire le rapport de la *Global Innovation Index*, on peut noter que notre force et ce résultat est surtout dû à notre cadre régulatrice, nos institutions, notre *ease of doing business*, notre stabilité politique. Par contre, là où est notre faiblesse ? C'est à l'item *business sophistication*, sous lequel se trouve la collaboration Industrie et Academia entre autres. Je suis d'avis que l'institution de l'académie de Design et d'innovation va certainement dans un proche avenir nous aider à améliorer notre score dans la *Global Innovation Index*.

M. le président, à titre de comparaison dans cette même liste de *Global Innovation Index* se trouve à la première place la Suisse et cela a été le cas pour les neuf dernières années. Question qu'on doit se poser comment se fait-il qu'un pays avec moins de 9 millions habitants arrive à se démarquer comme le pays le plus innovant pendant neuf ans devant des superpuissances comme les USA, la France ou la Chine.

La Suisse, a, comme Maurice, un environnement socio-économique stable, a historiquement adopté une politique de neutralité et a aussi eu une politique de portes ouvertes attirant les meilleurs talents et individus ayant les aptitudes spéciales. Le secret, M. le président, se trouve dans cette relation très étroite entre industrie et les institutions académiques. De nouveaux produits innovants sont développés par des jeunes étudiants, encadrés par des professionnels de l'industrie et l'État donne tout son support aux entrepreneurs pour rentabiliser des produits qui ont la valeur commerciale. Et c'est là où nous devons concentrer nos efforts, M. le président et l'académie de Design et d'Innovation sera un outil indispensable dans cette démarche.

M. le président, parmi les fonctions de l'académie, il y a aussi provision pour assistance technique et de design à des fabricants dont des *SMEs*, des exportateurs de produits et services et aussi le pouvoir des services et structures incubatrices pour dynamiser l'entreprenariat. Cela, M. le président, va définitivement contribuer au développement de produits et services de qualité, aider, encourager nos entrepreneurs en herbe à se lancer avec un support Academia.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the year 2021 was declared the international year of creative economy for sustainable development by the United Nations General Assembly. The implementation of the year is being led by the UNCTAD in consultation with UNESCO and other relevant UN entities focusing on the contribution of culture, creative industry to global economy and to sustainable development.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, researchers have found that creative industries are open to people of all ages and backgrounds and provide a significant contribution to youth employment and careers. According to the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, the UNITAR, the creative economy is the most dynamic sector of the global economy with a powerful transformative force for socio-economic development. Driven by creativity, the sector centers on

products and services that embody creative content, technologies, cultural values and market objectives. These products rely on ideas, knowledge, skills and at times, traditional livelihoods.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the creative industry has the potential to generate valuable dignified jobs in an era of rapid industrial automation and unlocking the full potential of the creative economy will be a challenge for Mauritius and the academy of Design and Innovation comes at the right moment for rising to this challenge.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, today's decision makers are too often trapped in traditional linear thinking or too absorbed by the multiple crises demanding their attention to think strategically about the forces of disruption and innovation that is shaping our future. However, this Government, under the leadership of Prime Minister, Pravind Jugnauth, is working towards shaping a future that works for all of us by putting people first and empowering them to face the upcoming challenges of the future.

Thank you for your attention.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Dhunoo, please!

(5.31 p.m.)

Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Fashion Design Institute Act was enacted in 2008 with the objective of setting up a specialised institute to develop creative skills and professional competences for the textile and garment manufacturing sector. We want just to draw back from where we have come and where this Bill will be important for the youth of this country and for the future. And I wish also to, at this time, when it was enacted in 2008, there was recommendation from the UNDP Consultant who advised that the textile and clothing sector should reorient itself from few assembly of garments to original design manufacturing that training facilities should be integrated under one roof to provide a holistic, seamless and responsive services to the industry.

Consequently, the FDI became operational in 2009 with the integration of the school of design of the IVTB and department of textile of the University of Mauritius and the Textile and Apparel Development Center of the enterprise of Mauritius. And we must say that it has gone a

long way and it was important that we innovate and we wanted to make this body an awarding body like a University.

It was with this objective in 2013 that an amendment was made. But when we go around and see what has been done and we know that, as hon. Dr. Boolell has said, it has made its proof. The Fashion and Design Institute (FDI) has proved for our youth and there is an increase in the number of people who have graduated from this institution in collaboration with the University of Mauritius. Even students have set up retail branches in Madagascar and some are employed in international reputed companies in UK and Australia.

So, what the Minister explained to us and what our Government wants to do is to give our youth and the new one who are coming a panoply of research and new capacity to develop into entrepreneurship and new designs. And this is why this Academy of Design and Innovation Bill, which is very important for our youth who have a creative mind, comes into place.

Hon. Dr. Boolell has mentioned about new designs, creative minds of people who have been using newspapers to make garments. I know he is very well, *comme on dit, très bien entouré de professionnels dans le domaine, son fils étant lui-même un designer et lui qui est tous le temps très bien habillé quand il vient au Parlement. Comme il a l'habitude de dire*: ‘the eating is in the pudding.’ It has been 2.5 years that we are here as new Members of Parliament and we have always been listening to his previous interventions. He always says this connotation, ‘the eating is in the pudding’. I would say to hon. Dr. Boolell that he has to innovate like this Academy of Design and Innovation Bill. Either you innovate or you will evaporate!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have to say that the Academy of Design and Innovation Bill is a very laudable initiative of this Government. I should thank the hon. Minister Sunil Bholah for bringing this Bill to the House, and we see also the leadership of our Prime Minister. Our Government has a programme since 2019 where we want to move to a new era. He has also mentioned there would be a new campus which will be sustainable. They are going to use green energy. They are also going to use new technology, light engineering. We are not only talking about garments here. When we are talking about the Academy of Design and Innovation Bill, we are also talking about the chair that you are sitting on. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *ça doit être ergonomique par rapport à la santé. Il y a d'autres choses encore qu'on dit que l'académie va produire aussi et c'est peut-être des verres. Il y a tellement de choses parce que c'est très, très*

dynamique dans ce secteur-là et la compétition est féroce. Comme l'a annoncé le ministre et a été confirmé par l'honorable Dr. Boolell, on doit innover.

This is why I say that this is a great initiative of this Government more particularly, of the Ministry of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives, as the Academy will be a first in the region. Why I say that is because the African continent with 54 countries and with the young population of African countries - Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, from my past experience, I have been working at the Africa Centre of Excellence of the Board of Investment and I had the opportunity to travel to many other African countries and when for example, you go to Ghana - you see the textile or fashion show that they are doing there, this is where we should be looking at. And I think that we also have the opportunity here when we are talking about an educational hub. There are many Africans who want to learn and are coming to Mauritius and with the scholarships that we give to Africans, this is another attraction that keeps them to come to Mauritius and learn from our country because we have the expertise that we have done in the textile industry. And I think this also will help so that we can market in the continent and bring new students here and also have innovative and creative minds.

The setting up of an Academy will definitely take several sectors to the next level. As we know, there is development taking place in many sectors of the economy, namely the blue economy, information technology, construction and agriculture, design concept and services, will be called upon the market and present in any media the development in these sectors in a more dynamic and trendy way.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, design is the field that permeates all fields. Hence, it will be a stepping stone for a modern and as well as a high-tech Mauritius. Amidst turbulent waters where we have to navigate in order to adapt to the new normal, this call for action at various levels as well as on different fronts. Our Government is deploying its effort in activating *la relance économique*. The setting up of this new academy whilst being a first in the region completes this picture. Actually, we can see that development is taking place at fast pace with the Metro Express and the Smart City. Not to mention other initiatives, the emergence of an Academy is of prime importance in this landscape. We know that we can no longer continue to deliver the course where it is and we need to have the proper structure.

When the Fashion and Design Institute Act was amended in 2013, we wanted to have a registrar. There were many amendments but this was not done, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It is now that this Government is coming to bring these amendments and make this happen. We need to have the proper structure for the Academy to move to a new level. This is why we need to innovate. Actually, we can see that nowadays a lot of emphasis is being laid on design and innovation whereby we need to reinvent ourselves. The course and services offered will be added value to services and products in the manufacturing, creative and design field and other sectors. This spin-off effect will influence the regional as well as the local market in helping Mauritius into an important design education hub. I am sure that the Academy will facilitate the island in positioning itself in its industrialisation and internalisation process. This will help the Institute, as I said earlier, to position itself in Africa.

It is to be noted that following the recruitment of the Director Dr. S. I. in October 2020, whom I know very well as we are alumni of the University of Mauritius, the Institute has been able to demarcate itself by winning laurels in Africa by being the winner for the Best Stylist at the 7th edition of the *Salon International du Textile Africain (SITA)* competition in Djibouti. Having someone who is very competent and qualified at the head of the Institute with a PhD in Tactile Design and Technology and she is very apt - and I would say - with an extensive experience in the academic and design field, we can see how this Director is bringing this institution. And like we say, our Prime Minister has faith in the youth of this country; and is giving the youth the opportunity to make things happen in this country. When we look at the Governor of the Bank of Mauritius who is less than 40 years, the CEO of the SBM who is less than 40 years, the CEO of the Rose Belle Sugar Estate who is less than 35 years; and when we look at this Assembly and our Members here, so many youth have been able to move and to have the chance to bring changes to this country. I would say that this lady also has a strong portfolio in several design research areas and international publication, development of academic new programmes and consultancy. Being herself highly knowledgeable in this field, these are the ground that the Institute is working at present. However, with a new academy, like I said earlier, research, consultancy, teaching and its other scopes of activities will broaden and expand to reach a higher level and professionalise design areas in Mauritius as it is currently the case in other countries such as India, UK, Singapore where they have chartered bodies for designers. We need to have chartered designers. Even hon. Dr. Boolell was saying earlier that we need to

innovate; we need to give our youths the opportunities. If we can have it here in Mauritius, why not? To have chartered designers, maybe we will also have a designer for our clothes – a personal one; not like some people who have one at home.

To gain international visibility, the Institute has been participating in international events such as SITA and the Dubai Expo2020. Much has been said on Dubai Expo 2020, about the Dubai saga but at this international conference, we had the opportunity for our youths to present in the French pavilion to give a *défilé* there. Like Dr. Boolell was saying, he has been in Curepipe to go to the fashion and design that was held in Curepipe. But we had more than 53 students who have been able to present their creation in the Dubai Expo, at the French pavilion and the international conference of the Sustainable Innovative Design which serves as a platform for the participation of designers and researchers from different countries whereby they have been able to share their knowledge and their experience. And the cost has been borne by themselves. This first international event was a way to build a strong international network and showcase the creative and innovative talents of the Institute internationally.

Henceforth, I understand that the Institute is planning to hold such international events on a yearly basis so as to continue to strengthen its position in this sector and encourage more international design students to join the Academy and bring Mauritius in the forefront for areas of design that is a reflection in its economic development. When you are talking about international event, you have to say that the Institute will be unable to be in the limelight both in Africa, Middle East and in other parts of the world. The design sector has lots of potential; hence the creation of such an Academy will be a *bijou*, *M. le président*, to tap on creativity and innovation. When we see what we have in Mauritius; in the past we had hand cufflinks. Enterprise Mauritius *avait créé des boutons avec du basalte, par exemple ; avec les jewelleries qu'ils ont créés, ça a fait une merveille. Si on se rappelle de ce qui a été créé à l'époque avec le* Enterprise Mauritius, *mais pour dire que nous sommes* in the right direction ; going in the right way.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I can say that this Bill is going to create much more opportunities for our young students but I would also like to come to the Bill on some aspects. When I was looking at the Bill, I would like to make a suggestion and, you know I have myself been the President of the Student Union at the University of Mauritius and an elected member of

the University of Mauritius Council and also on the University Court. I am very much at ease with most of the boards and the Senate and also the Council of Universities and I can say that this is very well drafted but I would recommend that we have, for the convocation, I see that because we will be having graduates from this institution and professionals in the industry, we can use their know-how and how they can also contribute to the Academy of Design and Innovation when it will be created. I would request the Minister if he could have a technical committee so that we have alumni and convocation and maybe also when we say convocation, the new word that is trending now is alumni – it should say convocation and alumni. In the University of Mauritius Act, we have the convocation but here we are talking about the convocation, we understand about it but with the students and the youths, the word ‘alumni’ is now trending. And I would say, it would be interesting that there will be procedure that will be done for the convocation when it will be created because it will come after the Academy will be done, when there will be graduates; they will be recognised as the convocation or alumni members so that would take the time to establish it. So, I would request the Minister to consider about the technical committee because for instance, if I take the example of the University of Mauritius, when we were in the textile and design at the University at that time, we had François Woo who was a former alumni of the University of Mauritius, who had done very well in the textile industry. And we had to use him and his know-how in such a way that this could be an experience for our students. And what we are also creating with this Academy of Design and Innovation Bill, we will be collaborating with other institutions and also with the industry which is very interesting, which is going to empower students because they are going to have job placement and we know that the FDI has created employment - more than 90% of the students have got jobs and job placements and everywhere they have been employed.

So, I am saying that it is now time that we move to another level and what is also interesting is that they are going to have other collaborations. Hon. Dr. Boolell was very concerned about training the trainers, but it will be done like at the University of Mauritius or like other universities have been doing. We will be having collaboration with other institutions elsewhere, in Italy, in UK; there will be collaboration where the lecturers at the Academy of Design and Innovation will be going abroad to have exchanges. And why not; when we have exchange programmes, we have also students and academics coming from elsewhere to be lecturing our students here. Sharing of knowledge, this is not new; this is something that is being

done everywhere. And now with globalisation, it is so easy now in communication. We know that with this Academy of Design and why we are changing the appellation also is very important because we are not only talking about design or fashion, we are talking about spectacles, about furniture; we are talking about many things that are also using light engineering.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, just to tell you that where we want to bring this country for our youths and what we are doing is in line with our Government Programme that we have presented. I thank the Minister and our Prime Minister for bringing this Bill to the House and making it a must that we have the necessary infrastructure and the necessary staff that will be running this institution which are very important so that we move to the next level. We hope that in the near future, this will become a reality when we are going to have to go to this new design sustainable building of the Academy of Design and Innovation. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Navarre-Marie!

(5.52 p.m.)

Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Merci, M. le président. L'objet de ce projet de loi, *the Academy of Design and Innovation Bill*, est de créer une académie de design et d'innovation qui reprendra les fonctions de l'institut existant et de créer l'excellence dans les domaines autre que la mode et le design. Et ce sera également un organisme octroyant seul ou en collaboration avec d'autres organismes, les certificats, des diplômes, les degrés comme le prévoit les amendements apportés en 2013 à la législation de 2008. *We have no quarrel with that; c'est une bonne chose.*

M. le président, au moment de la présentation d'amendement à la loi de 2008. Le ministre d'alors avait précisé trois raisons ayant motivé ces amendements. À savoir –

- (i) *to award diplomas;*
- (ii) *to enhance credibility vis-à-vis its counterparts, and*
- (iii) *to strengthen the institution.*

Quand est-il de la crédibilité de l'institut ? En 2019 une centaine d'étudiants du FDI de la cuvée 2017-2019 avaient terminé leurs cours depuis juin. La remise des diplômes aurait dû se faire en octobre mais en décembre leur diplôme ne leur avait toujours pas été octroyé. Personne n'arrivait à les informer de la date précise de la remise des diplômes.

Ces cours, M. le président, coûtent de la tête aux yeux pour beaucoup. Pour beaucoup, pour trouver les R 300,000 nécessaires, certains ont dû travailler sans relâche pendant trois ans. Si pour certains ce diplôme était le seul moyen d'avoir un travail, d'autres l'attendaient pour poursuivre leurs études et ils n'avaient pas d'information – ils n'avaient pas accès aux informations – si l'institut allait offrir des cours pour l'obtention d'un degré ou s'ils devaient continuer leurs études ailleurs. Les étudiants ne savaient où donner de la tête, ils n'avaient pas obtenu de résultat non plus ni un relevé de note, seulement un papier pour attester qu'ils étaient élève de l'institut. Pendant des mois les étudiants ont remué ciel et terre pour chercher des explications mais en vain. Cette situation les a affectés psychologiquement mais aussi au niveau professionnel car ils n'avaient pas de preuves qu'ils avaient réussi leurs examens. Toutes les démarches qu'ils ont entamées pour trouver un emploi tombaient à l'eau faute d'attestation de leur note finale.

Deuxième point, la composition du *Board*. A la clause 8 (f) du projet de loi, *The Board*, mention est faite de –

“(f) 6 other members, to be appointed by the Minister, 3 of whom shall be from the manufacturing sector and one from the industry associations”.

What about the other two? Comment est-ce qu'ils vont être nommés, de quel secteur d'activité viendront-ils ? Il y a aussi – mon collègue l'a mentionné – le fait que le *MES* fer parti du *Board*, qui est une bonne chose mais récemment nous avons constaté que la crédibilité de cet organisme a pris un sale coup, a été quelque peu entaché avec le fait qu'une personne non autorisée a pu avoir accès aux ordinateurs des papiers d'examen. Il faut dire que cette situation a causé pas mal d'inquiétude dans le public. Est-ce que ce ne sera pas là que le sommet de l'iceberg ? Est-ce qu'il y aurait des cas dont nous n'avons pas connaissance ? Il faut que le *MES* se refasse une virginité et revoir tout son protocole concernant les examens.

Mon troisième point, M. le président, concerne le recrutement. Lors de son intervention en 2013, l'honorable Steven Obeegadoo avait exprimé des craintes à l'effet que cette loi qui été

présentée puisse être l'occasion de créer *jobs for the boys and girls*. En effet, M. le président, le troisième député de Curepipe-Midlands à l'époque et aujourd'hui *Deputy Prime Minister*, disait ceci –

« M. le président, ce qui interpelle c'est les *jobs for the boys* ou devrais-je dire *jobs for the boys and the girls* ».

Il ne croyait pas si bien dire.

En effet, en 2018, une personne nommée à la tête de l'institut a été au cœur d'une controverse. On parlait même de traitement de faveur, on parlait de recrutement fait en catimini, des lettres de dénonciation avaient même été circulées. La personne nommée était considérée comme étant proche du ministre de tutelle de l'époque bien sûr, et cette personne était présente dans la circonscription numéro six lors des élections législatives de 2014. Elle avait été nommée présidente du conseil d'administration de l'institut par le ministre; nomination avalisée par le conseil des ministres. Cette personne c'était auto désignée au poste d'*Officer in Charge* de l'institut. Ensuite, elle avait démissionné comme *Chairperson* du *Board* dans les milieux de l'institut on évoque le manque de transparence.

Ce qui me fait arriver à mon quatrième point, les employés. Est-ce que les employés ont été consultés avant la présentation du projet de loi ? Est-ce que leurs appréhensions ont été prises en considération ? Dans la législation de 2008 sous *Transitional Provisions* à la clause 30 sous-section 4, la sous-section mentionne –

“...*unbroken period of service within the institute*”

tout comme la clause 39 du présent projet de loi *under Saving and Transitional Provisions* sous-section 1 (a). Hors, ce qui inquiète les employés c'est le fait que la sous-section 3 de la clause 30 de la législation de 2008 a été supprimée dans le nouveau projet de loi qui est présenté aujourd'hui devant cette Chambre et cette section mentionne –

“...*on terms and conditions which shall not be less favourable than those of his previous employment in the organisation*”.

Cela inquiète et sous-entends que le temps de service des employés ne seront pas touchés alors qu'il pourrait avoir des changements dans les *terms and conditions*. Si c'est une omission, il faut la corriger ou alors le ministre nous doit une explication.

A la présentation du projet de loi, M. le président, le projet de 2008, l'accent avait été mis sur le textile. Par conséquent, le *Fashion and Design Institute* est devenu opérationnel en 2009 avec l'intégration de la *School of Design* de l'*IVTB*, the *Department of Textile Technology* de l'université de Maurice et *the Textile and Apparel Development Centre* de *Enterprise Mauritius*. Maintenant, y a-t-il aujourd'hui encore un avenir pour le textile? Je rends ici hommage à nos pionnières femmes, ces milliers de Mauriciennes qui ont contribué dès les années 70 à faire de ce secteur un pilier de l'économie mauricienne.

M. le président, la tendance aujourd'hui est le *vintage* pour le respect de l'écologie. Il nous faut prendre en considération cette vérité. Les consommateurs sont de plus en plus avertis de l'impact environnemental que suscite la mode, dite rapide. Des millions de vêtements fabriqués finissent à la décharge. La durée de vie moyenne d'un vêtement en Angleterre est seulement de deux ans. C'est un énorme gâchis dû à une société de surconsommation par rapport aux vêtements achetés.

Certaines personnalités très influentes à l'étranger ont commencé à effectuer leurs achats de la façon la plus durable possible et se sont mis à porter des vêtements d'occasion. Selon une étude en 2019, 64% des femmes étaient prêtes à acheter de la seconde main contre seulement 45% en 2016. Et ce chiffre devrait augmenter au vue de la prise de conscience générale par rapport à l'industrie de la mode féminine. Le domaine du *vintage* et de la mode d'occasion devraient atteindre pas loin de 54 milliards de dollars en moins de cinq ans. Il est actuellement à 24 milliards de dollars selon le rapport de *thredUP*.

La créatrice de la fameuse boutique en ligne, *the Stellar Boutique* observe une réelle transition de la mode *vintage*. Elle explique que 20 ans auparavant, il y avait une certaine réticence sur ces habits usagés qui possèdent un vécu et donc certaines fois, des tâches. Maintenant, les gens ont changé de mentalité et trouvent cela *cool* et totalement dans l'ère de la mode actuelle.

La mode *vintage*, M. le président, s'est implanté sur le marché textile dans les années 2000 avec *Peekaboo Vintage* de *Portobello Road* qui se spécialisait dans cette vente avec le fameux magasin de *Topshop* à *Oxford Circus*. ASOS y a aussi fortement contribué en lançant *ASOS Marketplace* permettant la mise en vente en ligne de vêtements d'occasion, *streetwear*.

La popularité des vêtements d’occasion augmente et son marché est en pleine évolution avec l’implantation des magasins traditionnels, des marchés aux puces ou bien des friperies en ligne. Le *vintage* semble revenir au goût du jour non-seulement pour l’industrie de la mode mais également dans tous les domaines. Et il est impérieux de se diriger vers d’autres secteurs tout en considérant la valeur ajoutée mais gare aussi à la contrefaçon qui inonde le marché à travers le monde. Gare aussi à la compétition venant d’autres pays comme l’Inde et la Chine. Il faut donc encourager la haute couture. La haute couture, M. le président, c’est créer, c’est sublimer. Nous avons pas mal de talents à Maurice à l’instar de Lida O’Reilly, Emilien Jubeau, le jeune Boolell et j’en passe. Mais que fait-on pour les encourager ?

Ce projet de loi présenté aujourd’hui, a l’avantage de couvrir une panoplie de secteurs autres que la mode et le textile ; secteurs qui seront couverts par la future Académie. Que fait-on pour sauvegarder les nouvelles créations ? Il serait intéressant ici de connaître le nombre de *industrial design* enregistré annuellement sous le *Patent, Industrial Designs and Trademarks Act* de 2002. Il faut également que les créateurs puissent avoir accès aux incubateurs, aux finances, à un encouragement, à du *seed capital*. Il faut également songer au concept de *crowdfunding*. En France, par exemple, il existe des plates-formes comme Chouette Ulule qui aident à concrétiser tout projet porteur. Créé en 2010, alors pionnier du *crowdfunding*, Chouette Ulule est aujourd’hui le premier incubateur participatif de projet à impact positif en Europe. Sa mission est de donner à chaque personne, créateur, citoyen et entreprise le pouvoir d’agir pour un monde plus divers, plus durable, plus ouvert. Au-delà du financement, il s’agit d’aider les créateurs à passer de l’idée à l’action, a réussi à faire grandir leurs projets. Nous nous devons donc nous en inspirer.

Pour conclure, M. le président, je réitère que les trois points que j’avais mentionnés plus tôt soient pris en considération, c’est-à-dire, qu’il est important que cette Académie soit crédible et transparente, que des créations puissent être encouragées et protégées. Et, *last but not least*, que les droits des employés ne soient pas lésés par cette nouvelle institution.

Je vous remercie.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Ms Jutton, please!

(6.11 p.m.)

Ms T. Jutton (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle): Thank you. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am sure that the House will concur that today's debates are important as it is after a really long time that we are debating on industrial innovation and design.

I would like here to actually thank the hon. Member who intervened just before me, hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie, for welcoming the Bill and for her constructive proposals as well. And just to say, to commence, that I am sure that this Government which has been behind such initiatives like the Workers' Rights Act, working in favour and always ensuring that the rights of workers are protected; that this Government which has also introduced the Negative Income Tax, *le salaire minimum* and a series of other measures as well as the setting up of the Redundancy Board and previously of course the Employment Relations Tribunal, have at heart, the welfare of employees. And I am sure that her concern about *les droits des employés* will be looked into. As concerns credibility and transparency, I believe that the Government has always acted in a transparent manner.

And, about her point on vintage, yes, indeed I agree and I am sure that our talented women and even men, our talented youths out there can actually tap into this. And as mentioned by my colleague earlier, hon. Dhunoo, so many of our youths have even been to the Dubai Expo to have the opportunity to expose their creative designs in Dubai, and I am sure they will come up with even more innovative methods.

Allow me now to commend hon. Bholah, Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives for coming up with the Academy of Design and Innovation Bill today. So, let us directly delve into the rationale of this Bill as hon. Dr. Boolell was questioning earlier - what's in a name? Of course, not Johnnie Walker but the Academy instead of FDI. So, it is a fact that the field of technology and design is ever changing rapidly and we cannot afford to lack behind. Fashion has always been at the forefront of innovation from the invention of a sewing machine to the rise of e-commerce. Our people here in Mauritius, especially our youths are talented and this Government wants to ensure that they are further motivated to develop the skills and pursue their passions and they are being provided with the right knowledge and the adequate competencies to be able to transform their very passion into their vocation.

In line with this vision, a series of incentives has been put in place by Government for encouraging entrepreneurship and the fashion and design industry is no exception. Over the

world today, we can witness the emergence of an entrepreneurial economy which is actually stimulated by a new type of competition in the fashion industry. In this industry, we have people who are simultaneously creators, owners and also managers of their own fashion business firms.

However, as per studies and academic papers on fashion and innovation, it has been stated that despite the high influence of fashion in modern society, the analysis from a management perspective has not been sufficiently conducted and hence, this is why fashion creativity and business intellect have been kept separate. Today, global business of passion requires this integration and sophisticated management techniques so that there can be a high level of creativity and innovation embedded for the rapid development of business strategies that relate to fashion and design management.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with this Bill, the Fashion and Design Institute Act will be repealed and replaced. The Bill promotes, *inter alia*, the dissemination of knowledge of the design fields while promoting multi-sectorial design fields and encouraging research, consultancy and training facilities and services in the design fields. The proposed Academy will also pave the way for the development of incubators and entrepreneurs while also promoting innovation in the design fields. Another of the core functions of the Academy will be to promote excellence for creative industry in other fields such as graphic and multimedia, building and architecture, jewellery, arts and crafts. The Academy will indeed be playing a pivotal role in terms of innovation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, building a constantly adaptive and innovative training system is indeed a long term commitment and this requires political will, right policies and the support of all stakeholders to make it possible. According to one of the young global leaders of the World Economic Forum, it is seen that a job mismatch on the job market tends to exist because existing education providers do not give workers the skills that employers actually are looking for or need. So, this is why there needs to be an educational model which is employer driven and responsive to the demands of the labour market. And this Government has been involved in so many initiatives to help combat unemployment and skills mismatch such as the setting up of a National Skills Development Programme, the National Apprenticeship Programme, the Graduate Scheme Programme and many others, and more recently in this Budget, we have seen *les primes de l'emploi* to encourage youths and women to undertake a job and actually become

entrepreneurs as well as training under Anti-Money Laundering. And hence, this Bill is again one step further to reduce this mismatch.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Academy will be serving to foster a unique design education revolution to inspire, motivate, nurture and empower our young creative minds with relevant transferable skills to be able to become successful design practitioners, creative leaders or design entrepreneurs in the global design industry. The hon. Minister earlier mentioned potential breakthroughs in adaptive and medical apprals, eyewear and also for people with disabilities, hence, ensuing greater inclusion thereby meeting the Sustainable Development Goals which this Government adheres to.

To ensure that students are encouraged to innovate and be creative, I am also given to understand that the Academy will arrange for industry and site visits to enable student interaction with craftsman and site workers. These studies will allow students to enhance their observation skills and also help them in innovating. Our talented students will also be given a lot of opportunities to be able to take part in national and international competitions. I am also pleased to note that the Academy will collaborate with other local and international institutions and engage in exchange programmes and courses which will for sure be a great motivation for the students and also allow them to expand their horizons.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, apart from fashion design, design in itself can be a significant driver of growth. For instance, I have read that Jonathan Ive who had a creative partnership with Steve Jobs made Apple, one of the world's biggest companies and this is a great example of how a business can actually be transformed and revamped by a great designer.

Coming to educating our children and our youth, I can still remember my friends at college who took Design and Technology or Home Economics as a subject and, you know, at that time they were so proud telling me about the things they had designed. I can say with conviction that these provided them with a much greater sense of satisfaction than actually the grades they were getting for the subjects and they can still remember what they created till now. And hence, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, more needs to be done to ensure that the creative and innovative design talent that our children have is properly tapped into and nurtured.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *d'ailleurs* to encourage our children to develop their skills, recently this Government brought about the Institute of Technical Education and Technology

Bill and I remember I said in this very House that we should be breaking set stereotypes, encouraging a child to pursue studies and a career path in a particular field whilst that child actually may not be happy doing so and later on feel demotivated during the studies, which I have seen myself previously as a lecturer or even when they start a job in that field, experience job alienation.

Mauritius is already offering free education up to undergraduate level and ensuring that vocational training and technical skills are not overlooked. Today, this Bill comes to further strengthen the efforts of this Government into the direction of allowing our children to be able to achieve whatever their dreams are.

Earlier the hon. Minister mentioned the financial sustainability of the Fashion and Design Institute which was relying mostly on Government grants. Becoming an awarding body in itself, now the Academy will be empowered as it will be able to provide and award wide ranging courses from short courses, diplomas to undergraduate programmes and even award scholarships. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mauritius has already embarked on the transformational landscape to become the education hub of choice for Africa and other parts of the world and this Bill, through the Academy, will further serve this purpose.

The hon. Minister also mentioned about the amazing contribution of the fashion and design industry to the packaging industry which I will not delve into but let me talk a bit about the ecological impact. Today it is a fact that all countries around the world are talking about the imminent climate change crisis and ways to be able to mitigate same. It is important to highlight that design can have a huge impact in helping to mitigate the disastrous effects of climate change and to protect mother Earth. The fashion industry can indeed become more sustainable by embedding what we call ‘circular innovation’. For instance, all the way from upcycling to recycling and moving away from mechanical and chemical processes to more ecological friendly processes.

I also reckon the Minister mentioning that the new building for the Academy will be based on green principles and indeed, this is a point to be noted. I have also been reading about some initiatives by other companies abroad. For instance, some which have been offering traceable colouring method for textiles which is actually eco-friendly and others which actually use food crop wastes and turn it into fibres that can then be used into textiles and garments.

To be and to function as an Academy, of course, a series of administrative processes have to be undertaken and coming from the world of academia, I have myself been intricately involved in the design of curricula, instructional design and organisation of short courses, portfolios for assessment and exams and I know how much work goes into this. And this Bill does mention about a curriculum design and also about the administrative processes such as the board and the other members who will be recruited to serve the purpose of an Academy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I conclude, I wish to say that to cope with the new world disorder where we have to create the new normal by reimagining businesses, redesigning systems, we need to have fresh visionaries who will be ready to embrace disruption and to pave new paths. The proposed changes in the world of fashion and design will actually be a powerful driving force to web-up the academic sectors and its underlying subsectors. It will help us to move up the value chain. Hence, at this present hour, with the constraints of time and age, design can actually act as an avatar of change for innovation in industry 4.0 and hence, I truly recommend the proposed changes. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Minister Hurdoyal, please!

(6.27 p.m.)

The Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms (Mr T. Hurdoyal): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am extremely pleased and privileged of the opportunity given to me to debate and provide my insights on the Academy of Design and Innovation Bill, which is being brought in this august Assembly by my colleague, hon. Soomilduth Bholah, Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives.

Mon bonheur est tout aussi immense, M. le président, de pouvoir apporter ma contribution aux débats de ce projet de loi, présenté par mon collègue l'honorable Bholah qui, il faut le rappeler, est aussi mon bon ami comme vous, M. le président, et colistier dans la circonscription No. 10.

N'en déplaise, M. le président, nous sommes animés de cet esprit d'équipe. Je n'ai pas de doute que ce Gouvernement, va aplanir les obstacles les plus tenaces et atteindre les objectifs fixés afin d'assurer un meilleur avenir pour notre population et redonner espoir à nos jeunes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the debate being held in this august Assembly in context of the presentation of the Academy of Design and Innovation Bill is an immersion into the future - the future of the young generation.

At the dawn of the 4th industrial revolution, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the global economy and society will be driven by a blend of innovative technologies, creativity and inventiveness. In every sphere of our life, one can already experience the pervasive grip of emerging and innovative technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Augmented and Virtual Reality, Robotics, Internet of Things and 3-D printing, to name a few.

Such dramatic change will undeniably have a big impact on skills and jobs, needed to support the global economy. As a matter of fact, more than 50% of jobs being taken up at the present moment will no longer exist in the next decade. On the other hand, new jobs and occupations that do not exist today will be created as a result of automation and the consumption of transformative and creative products and services.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as pointed out by Matt Bellamy, I quote –

“Artificial intelligence and automation are going to be taking over so much of what gives humans a feeling of purpose.”

The creative industry will not be spared by this tidal wave of technological disruption and the role of Government is to create the right ecosystem to enable our youth to fully unleash their potential and create job opportunities in this key economic sector.

Government’s strategy towards creating the right legal, regulatory and institutional environment in order to put innovation at the centre stage of development has been coherent throughout. May I recall that in 2015, a Ministry dedicated to the subject matter of innovation was created for the first time in history?

In 2018, the Mauritius Research Council Bill was replaced by the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council and recently, I have had the opportunity to intervene on the Emerging Technologies Council Bill brought by my colleague, hon. Deepak Balgobin, Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation.

Today’s debate on the Academy of Design and Innovation Bill is in line with this coherent approach to project our country into the future, built on the bed rock of innovation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would wish to comment on one fundamental aspect of the Bill which provides for the replacement of the Fashion and Design Institute and the setting up of a modern Academy of Design and Innovation.

Indeed, whilst the Fashion and Design Institute has served its purpose, its scope is considered too limited and narrow to adequately serve the dynamic and fast growing creativity sector which now englobes an array of other domains of human craftsmanship, artistry and creativity.

As rightly highlighted in the explanatory memorandum of the Bill, the Academy of Design and Innovation will not only promote excellence in the field of fashion and design technology, but will, in addition, promote excellence for creative industry in other fields such as graphic and multimedia, built-in and architecture, jewellery, arts and crafts.

To put into perspective the tremendous potential of the creative industry, McKinsey which is a credible and respected global consultancy firm, has estimated that compared to 2019, global fashion sales alone, both in luxury and non-luxury segments increased by 101% in 2021 and 108% in 2022 and that the industry generates a global annual revenue of USD2.5 trillion.

Moreover, I consider that the Bill does not only provide for a mere change in the appellation from Fashion and Design Institute into the Academy of Design and Innovation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a fundamental change that is being brought in this Bill is that unlike the Fashion and Design Institute which could not only make recommendations to the University of Mauritius or any other institution for the award and conferring of certificates, diplomas, degrees, honorary degrees and other academic, professional, or vocational qualifications, the Academy of Design and Innovation will be vested with the authority to become an awarding body of its own right. Therefore, the Academy will be able to award degrees, diplomas, and certificates either on its own strength or jointly by other prestigious institutions. This change will give the right signal to students in terms of an identity being put in the limelight in the field of design and innovation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, through this change, the whole creativity industry is being raised to a new level and status that commensurate with an innovation driven world which is poised to establish itself as a major sector of our economic landscape. Such strategy will give trust and

confidence to the students to embrace an exciting career in a sector that is dynamic, attractive and rewarding. As rightly stated by famous Industrial Designer Marc Newson –

“The fashion industry has an enormous amount to offer in what we do in industrial design because fashion is fast, fashion has its finger on the pulse. There are very few creative industries that work on that rhythm”.

The Academy of Design and Innovation therefore comes at an opportune moment, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, which will significantly contribute to support in carving a niche into the huge global fashion and creativity market. Indeed, we are in a unique position as a country that embraces different cultures and traditions and that could be portrayed as a unique brand identity. This facet has to be boldly depicted through innovative artistic creation and design of products and services. Such a positioning will require qualified and competent workforce in the creative industry and the Academy will be of great relevance to support in this endeavour. Moreover, the vibrant and booming tourism sector can be a significant captive market and source of foreign currency on products and services of the creative industry provided that these are of great artistic value and quality.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like now to make some comments on some salient aspects of the Bill. I am pleased to note that sections 5 (b), 5 (i) and 5 (j) give an international dimension to the Academy of Design and Innovation. As a matter of fact, innovative technologies have spawn a new economic model which is termed as the sharing economy and which is extremely relevant in the fashion and creative industry. Imagine the positive impact on the economy and society, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when students and academics of the Design and Innovation Academy of Mauritius are able, in line with the provisions of the Bill, to collaborate, share ideas, techniques and views and connect to the global creative industry. For example, tie ups between the academies can be made with the prestigious National Institute of Design of India or *L'Institut Français de la Mode* in Paris or the joint award of certificates between the Academy and Universities of international repute in this domain.

Students graduating from the Academy of Design and Innovation will have internationally recognised qualifications thus enabling them to unleash their creative acumen and forge a brighter future anywhere in the four corners of the globe. The potential to shape and elaborate creative products and services and a brand identity for Mauritian craftsmanship through

global collaboration is simply boundless. For instance, the untapped potential in augmented and virtual reality, which enables global customers, particularly online shoppers, to the right products and services made by our local creators of the design and creativity industry is mind blowing.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, another key aspect of the Bill is with regards to the Governance framework of the Academy. I am pleased to note that the academic function as a distinctive and key role of the Academy of Design and Innovation is aligned with what is normally found in our publicly funded Universities. This is a fundamental aspect as there is now a clear depiction between the administrative and academic functions of the Academy. Such a framework will clearly define the role and responsibilities of each and every stakeholder of the Academy thus ensuring goal congruence and ensuring the risks of conflicts are minimised.

As a matter of fact, Section 19 of the Bill makes provision for the setting up of an Academic Council akin to the Senate of the University of Mauritius. Under Section 20 of the Bill, clear roles and responsibilities of the Academic Council are defined. Moreover, Sections 20 and 21 of the Bill provide for the setting up of faculties of the Academy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are standing at a time where we need the most creative out-of-the-box thinkers, the most inventive agents of change; people with ambition and big ideas as we transition into a new era of technological innovation and creative destruction – a notion where we build a new, greener, more creative and connected world and leave behind the old paradigm. I have no doubt that this very important legislation will contribute to the recovery phase for renewed prosperity and progress and give hope to the young generation. Thank you for your attention, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much! Hon. Minister Toussaint, please!

Mr Toussaint: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

Mr Seeruttun seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 19 July at 11.30 a.m.

Mr Lesjongard seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned!

Specific matter today; nothing was sent. Have a good trip!

At 6.45 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 19 July 2022 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

POLICE HEADQUARTERS, LINE BARRACKS, PORT LOUIS – FIRE OUTBREAK – DAMAGES

(No. B/772) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the fire outbreak at the Police Headquarters, Line Barracks, in Port Louis, on Monday 04 July 2022, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand as to the inquiry initiated thereinto, indicating if an audit of the structural damages caused has been carried out and if the damaged premises were covered by a fire certificate.

Reply: One reply is made to Parliamentary Questions B/772, B/773 and B/776 together, as they relate to the same subject matter.

The Commissioner of Police has informed that, on Monday 04 July 2022 at about 20.45 hours, a fire broke out within the compound of the Line barracks in a shed made of corrugated iron sheets and situated adjacent to the colonial-style building of the Special Support Unit (SSU) Block No. 4 along Orléan Street, Port Louis.

The Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service (MFRS) was immediately informed of the fire outbreak and the fire fighters called on the spot at about 20.55 hours. The area was cordoned and the fire was subdued at around 22.30 hours. At about 23.45 hours, the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service departed from the site leaving behind a small team of fire fighters to attend to any risk of ignition as the spot was dark and smoke was still coming out from the building. Police sentry was placed at the site. There was no casualty, and, for security reasons, all the new recruits who were found in the adjacent building SSU Block No. 4 were moved to a safe place.

The Commissioner of Police has also informed that a few hours later, at around 01.00 hours on the following day, that is, Tuesday 05 July 2022, the Police sentry raised the alarm that fire had broken out and this time on the first floor of SSU Block No. 4. The standby MFRS fire fighters team immediately intervened. They also solicited support from other Fire Stations as the fire was rapidly spreading over the whole building due to strong wind.

As from 01.10 hours, the Fire Services of Port Louis, Coromandel, Quatre-Bornes, Triolet and Curepipe reached Line Barracks. The fire was finally subdued at around 16.00 hours on the same day. A team of MFRS fire fighters remained on standby at the locus until around 19.00 hours on Wednesday 06 July 2022.

The roof made of corrugated iron sheets, wooden structures, furniture, Police equipment, personal belongings of Police Officers and other items found inside SSU Block No. 4 located along Orléan Street, Port-Louis, and the shed adjoining the said building were completely burnt.

Police has initiated an investigation into the matter and on Tuesday 05 July 2022, the case was referred to the Central Crime Investigation Department (CCID) and a dedicated team under the responsibility of a Superintendent of Police was assigned the task of conducting an in-depth investigation in order to determine the exact cause of the fire. The investigation is ongoing.

As at date, Scene of Crime Officers, Forensic Scientific Officers, Officers from Energy Services Division and Technical Officers of the Central Electricity Board and Officers of the MFRS have examined the scene of fire and their reports are awaited. The services of the Engineers from the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development (MNI) have been solicited for a survey to evaluate the damages caused to the infrastructure. The survey

is in the process of being conducted and in the meantime, the Police is carrying out an inventory of the various items which have been damaged by fire. The total estimated cost of the damages can only be determined thereafter.

The Commissioner of Police has further informed that, since March 2018, Police had already initiated procedures for the obtention of a Fire Certificate to cover the damaged premises. Following consultation with the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service, the following upgrading works were to be effected prior to obtain a Fire Certificate –

- (i) installation of an outdoor emergency staircase;
- (ii) installation of emergency lights;
- (iii) fixing of signage;
- (iv) installation of fire alarm system, and
- (v) installation of fire hose reel.

Necessary upgrading works were accordingly in progress when fire broke out in the building. However, it is to be noted that the structural works to be carried out for the building are sensitive as the building is of colonial type classified as a National Heritage. As such, any infrastructural works or modifications need to be in conformity with the established standards stipulated under the National Heritage Fund Act 2003.

However, though the works to obtain the Fire Certificate were in progress, the building was already equipped with adequate fire extinguishers, an outdoor emergency staircase and necessary emergency signage. The personnel occupying the building were already sensitised on necessary safety precautions. Regular visits were also being carried out by Occupational Safety and Health Officers, and fire drills were conducted at regular intervals.

POLICE HEADQUARTERS, LINE BARRACKS, PORT LOUIS – SECOND FIRE OUTBREAK

(No. B/773) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the second fire outbreak at the Police Headquarters, Line Barracks, in Port Louis at 01.30 hours on Tuesday 05 July 2022,

he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand as to the inquiry initiated thereinto, indicating the –

- (a) arrival time of the Mauritius Fire Rescue Service team thereat, and
- (b) section of the Line Barracks having been damaged.

(Vide Reply to PQ B/772)

MBC – FINANCIAL SITUATION - MEASURES

(No. B/774) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

- (a) present financial situation thereof, and
- (b) measures envisaged to address the anomalies highlighted in the last Report of the Director of Audit.

Reply: As stated in the reply to Parliamentary Question B/1141 on 23 November last, the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation had, by the end of 2014, accumulated a debt of over Rs1 billion, in spite of a 50% increase in TV licence fee in the preceding year. The Corporation also had a bank overdraft of Rs256 m.

However, as from 2015, some bold remedial measures were taken by the MBC, which contributed significantly to the improvement of the financial health of the Corporation, without compromising on the quality of the MBC programmes nor the terms and conditions of its employees. Those measures included cost management initiatives at all levels and rationalisation of staff costs, overseas missions and other operational expenditure. Thanks to those measures the total debt of the MBC has been brought down from Rs1 billion in 2014 to Rs71.94 m. as at 30 June 2022, representing a decrease of 92.8%. Moreover, the bank balance of the Corporation as at 30 June 2022 is Rs386.91 m. In 2014, the bank balance of the Corporation was nil. All these have been achieved without any increase in the TV licence fee.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the Director of Audit has, in his last Report, highlighted the following issues regarding the MBC –

- (i) the quantum of loan written off for the MBC during the period 2016-2017 stands at Rs67,268,268;
- (ii) the pension fund deficits of the Corporation as at 30 June 2020 amount to Rs912,748,343, and
- (iii) the Corporation has not yet laid before the National Assembly its Audited Financial Statements for the period 2017-2018.

The MBC has taken the following measures to address the issues raised by the Director of Audit –

- (i) with regard to writing off of loans from banks, the MBC is now meeting its financial obligations with respect to loans contracted from banks. As a matter of fact, in 2011, the MBC contracted three short term loans from SBM Ltd amounting to a total of Rs110 m. However, the Corporation failed to reimburse the loan, which was rolled over with interest. In May 2018, the new management of the MBC converted the commitment into a long term loan of 10 years with a reduced interest rate of 6.75% per annum. The first capital refund started in 2018 at the rate of Rs11 m. yearly. As of June 2022, the outstanding amount is Rs65.08 m. and is expected to be cleared by 2028. In addition, a lease was contracted by the MBC from MauBank for a total sum of Rs10.8 m. for the purchase of vehicles. As of June 2022, the outstanding amount is Rs6.86 m. and is expected to be repaid by 2027;
- (ii) with regard to the pension fund deficits, this is an issue which has affected the global industry at large. The management and MBC Board are working together with SICOM Ltd towards a solution. Last year, MBC had injected a sum of Rs5 m. in its Pension Fund at SICOM Ltd, and
- (iii) with regard to the Audited Financial Statements for the period 2017-2018, in accordance with section 9(2) of the Statutory Bodies (Accounts and Audit) Act, the said financial statements have already been laid before the National Assembly.

**MAURITIUS TELECOM - INSTALLATION OF DEVICES/EQUIPMENT -
INQUIRY**

(No. B/775) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the allegations levelled against him by Mr S. S. in connection with the installation of devices/equipment at the Mauritius Telecom to monitor internet traffic to and from Mauritius, he will state if he will consider setting up an inquiry thereinto and, if not, why not.

(Vide reply to PQ B/771)

**POLICE HEADQUARTERS, LINE BARRACKS, PORT LOUIS – FIRE
OUTBREAK – INQUIRY**

(No. B/776) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the fire outbreak at the Police Headquarters, Line Barracks, in Port Louis, on Monday 04 July 2022, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) where matters stand as to the inquiry initiated thereinto, and
- (b) the estimated cost of the damages sustained.

(Vide Reply to PQ B/772)

**INDEPENDENT POLICE COMPLAINTS COMMISSION - COMPLAINTS
RECEIVED – DEC 2019 TO JULY 2022**

(No. B/777) 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 Independent Police Complaints Commission, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain

information as to the number and nature of the complaints received thereat since December 2019 to date, indicating the number thereof in which investigations have been completed.

Reply: The hon. Member is referred to the replies to the Private Notice Questions of our Sitting of 15 and 29 June 2022, respectively. As already stated, the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) was setup in April 2018 following the proclamation of the Independent Police Complaints Commission Act. The Commission became operational as from 09 April 2018 and prior to this date, complaints against the Police were handled at the level of the Police Complaints Division of the National Human Rights Commission. As such, 277 cases were transferred from the Police Complaints Division to the IPCC.

The Secretary of the IPCC has informed that since 01 December 2019 and up to 30 June 2022, 1,685 complaints have been registered by the Commission.

These complaints are classified into five categories, namely –

1. Torture;
2. Death in Police Custody;
3. Public Officers using Violence;
4. Verbal Abuse, and
5. Other Complaints, classified as follows –
 - (i) Refusal to record declaration;
 - (ii) Delay in enquiry by Police;
 - (iii) Failing to attend request made by public;
 - (iv) Search warrant not shown before carrying out a search;
 - (v) Damaging private property during Police operation;
 - (vi) Threat by Police;
 - (vii) Harassment by Police;
 - (viii) Abuse of authority, and
 - (ix) Larceny by Police doing search carried out by them.

Out of the 1,685 complaints, 418 cases have been completed while investigation in the other cases is proceeding.

**EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMISSION - COMPLAINTS – JULY 2021 TO
JULY 2022**

(No. B/778) 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 Equal Opportunities Commission, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number of complaints of discrimination received thereat since 01 July 2021 to date, indicating the number thereof in which investigations have been completed.

Reply: The Equal Opportunities Commission was established as an independent statutory body under the Equal Opportunities Act of 2008 to promote non-discrimination and equal opportunity principles and policies throughout the country.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of the Equal Opportunities Act, direct or indirect discrimination is prohibited on grounds of age, caste, colour, creed, ethnic origin, impairment, marital status, place of origin, political opinion, race, sex, sexual orientation and criminal record in relation to employment of persons and persons in employment.

The Secretary of the Equal Opportunities Commission has informed that during the period 01 July 2021 to 08 July 2022, 137 complaints have been registered at the Commission, of which 4 are from Rodrigues.

The Secretary of the Equal Opportunities Commission has also informed that out of the 137 complaints, 06 have been settled or conciliated, 04 investigations have been completed where no further action is required, 08 have been withdrawn, 01 has been set aside, 38 have been listed and are waiting to be heard and, with regard to the remaining cases, additional information is being compiled prior to start of investigation.

POLICE CUSTODY – NUMBER OF DEATH – JAN 2015 TO JULY 2022

(No. B/779) 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 persons found dead whilst in Police custody, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the

Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof since January 2015 to date, indicating in each case, the outcome of the inquiry initiated thereinto.

Reply: The Commissioner of Police has informed that since January 2015 to 07 July 2022, fourteen (14) persons have died whilst being in Police custody.

With regard to the outcome of the inquiry initiated in each case, the requested information is being placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

**CÔTE D'OR INTERNATIONAL RACECOURSE AND ENTERTAINMENT
COMPLEX LTD – BOARD COMPOSITION**

(No. B/780) Mr F. Quirin (Third 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 Côte d'Or International Racecourse and Entertainment Complex Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

- (a) composition of the board thereof, indicating in each case the allowances and other benefits drawn, and
- (b) date of the last board meeting and decisions taken.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, the Board of the Côte d'Or International Racecourse and Entertainment Complex Limited is chaired by Mr Premode Neerunjun and the other Directors are –

- (i) Mr Anandsing Acharuz;
- (ii) Mr Rajkumar Baungally;
- (iii) Mr Goolabchund Goburdhun, GOSK;
- (iv) Mrs Naila Kishani Hanoomanjee;
- (v) Mr Dharamraz Mohabeer;
- (vi) Mr Mohesh Kumar Ramnochane;
- (vii) Mr Ashwin Kumar Seetaram, and

(viii) Ms Hoy Yen Sharon Yong-Tit-Kow.

An all-inclusive monthly allowance of Rs40,000 is payable to the Chairperson whilst the other Directors are entitled to a monthly all-inclusive fee of Rs15,000.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the Board of Directors of the Côte d'Or International Racecourse and Entertainment Complex Limited last met on 07 July 2022, but it would not be proper to disclose the deliberations and the decisions of the Board as the company is a private company governed by the provisions of the Companies Act and the disclosure of any information might cause prejudice to the company.

PROBATION OFFICERS – INCREASE IN NUMBER

(No. B/798) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the posts of Probation Officers, she will state if consideration will be given for an increase in the number thereof following the observations made by the Secretary of Probation Officers Union and, if not, why not.

Reply (The Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity): At no point in time has the Secretary of the Probation Officers Union submitted a request for an increase as such in the number of posts of Probation Officers. However, on 25 January 2022, one day after the proclamation of the Children's Act, a letter was sent by the Secretary of the Probation Officers Union to the Secretary for Public Service, with copy to the Prime Minister's Office, the Commissioner of Probation and Aftercare Service, the Commissioner of Police, the Master and Registrar and the Secretary of the Federation of Public Sector and Other Unions, wherein –

- (i) the Secretary of the Probation Officers Union sought clarifications as to whether it was in order for Probation Officers to perform duties –
 - (a) which are not prescribed in their scheme of service;
 - (b) which can be conflictual with the main duty pertaining to their post, and
 - (c) for which they may not have the necessary competence.

On 04 February 2022, the Prime Minister's Office, whilst acknowledging receipt of the letter dated 25 January 2022, requested the Secretary of the Probation Officers Union –

- (i) to inform how the implementation of the Children's Act is impacting on the services provided by the Probation Officers;
- (ii) to state what additional duties the Probation Officers are being required to perform, and
- (iii) to indicate the number of cases where Probation Officers are required to assist juvenile offenders, child victims and child witnesses for the recording of statements in police enquiries.

No reply to that letter has as to date been received from the Secretary of the Probation Officers Union.

The Government is committed to ensure that the Probation and Aftercare Service is properly manned to face the new challenges with new technologies and new mindsets. Action has already been initiated for the filling of the 7 vacancies during this Financial Year. A request would be made to the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development for the funding of 5 additional posts of Probation Officers during this financial year, an additional provision of Rs10.7 m. has been made available to meet the expenditure in connection with the upgrading of the Probation Institutions and the related running expenses, the acquisition of Notebooks for Probation Officers and the upgrading of Probation Offices. Despite the prevailing economic conditions, the Government is bent on ensuring that the Probation and Aftercare Service does perform to the best of its ability.

CONSUMER GOODS – MARK-UP & PRICE CONTROL

(No. B/802) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the maximum mark up and price control on consumer goods, he will state –

- (a) the measures, if any, taken to ensure compliance therewith, and
- (b) if consideration will be given for the extension thereof to other consumer goods.

Reply: Since 01 July 2022, 12 essential products, namely canned fish, canned tomatoes, cheese, edible oil, margarine, milk powder, pulses, pasta, wheat cereal, infant food/infant food preparation, baby and adult diapers have been placed under the maximum mark-up price control with a mark-up ranging from 20% to 25%.

In reply to part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that since the coming into force of that measure, officers of the Consumer Affairs Unit have visited some 322 retail outlets around the island to ensure that the maximum approved retail prices of these products are being respected. In case of non-compliance, the traders are contravened in accordance with prevailing legislations.

My Ministry is monitoring the evolution of prices of other essential consumer goods and will take necessary action as and when the situation so requires.

GOVERNMENT ADVANCED LOANS - STATUTORY/PRIVATE/OTHER BODIES - ARREARS & RECOVERY

(No. B/803) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the statutory bodies and/or private and other bodies which are in arrears for loans advanced by Government, he will give the list thereof, indicating in each case the quantum of arrears and measures taken, if any, for the recovery thereof.

Reply: Les informations concernant les arriérés à la fin du mois de juin 2022 sont déposées à la Bibliothèque de l'Assemblée nationale.

Selon le rapport du directeur de l'audit pour l'année 2015-2016, les arriérés de remboursement des prêts accordés par le gouvernement s'élevaient à 2,2 milliards de roupies à la fin de juin 2015.

Plusieurs actions ont été prises par le gouvernement pour assurer le recouvrement des arriérés.

Ces actions comprennent, entre autres, les éléments suivants –

- un suivi rigoureux du remboursement des prêts via l'envoi d'avis de remboursement en temps voulu ;
- le rééchelonnement du remboursement des prêts dans les cas où les organismes publics sont confrontés à des difficultés de trésorerie et financières ; et
- l'octroi d'une période de moratoire plus longue pour les prêts afin que les organismes publics puissent rembourser les prêts lorsqu'ils ont commencé à obtenir des retours positifs sur leurs investissements.

Des prêts en cours depuis longtemps, accordés à certains organismes publics par les gouvernements successifs au *Consolidated Fund*, pour un montant de quelque 2,3 milliards de roupies ont été radiés en 2020-2021, comme suit -

- 732,8 millions de roupies pour la *Central Water Authority* ;
- 651,2 millions de roupies pour *Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd* ;
- 385,1 millions de roupies pour la *Wastewater Management Authority* ;
- 291,2 millions de roupies pour l'*Irrigation Authority* ;
- 154,1 millions de roupies pour la *National Transport Corporation* ;
- 67,3 millions de roupies pour la *Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation* ;
- 5,7 millions de roupies pour la *Mauritius Meat Authority* ; et
- 12,7 millions de roupies pour d'autres institutions.

Comme indiqué dans l'annexe du Discours du Budget 2022-2023, une unité centrale de gestion des débiteurs est mise en place au niveau du Trésor public sous l'égide de l'*Accountant General*.

L'objectif de l'Unité sera de minimiser les arriérés de recettes hors taxes.

Le mandat pour l'unité sera de –

- suivre et gérer les débiteurs de tous les ministères et départements, y compris les arriérés sur les soldes des prêts dus par les organismes statutaires et autres organismes publics ; et
- faire des recommandations appropriées sur le recouvrement de ces arriérés.

PRICE OBSERVATORY COMMITTEE - PRICE LISTS - MOBILE APP

(No. B/804) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the Price Observatory Committee, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) the number of price lists published since the coming into operation thereof, and
- (b) if the mobile App in connection therewith is fully operational and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

SMART CITY PROJECT, ROCHE NOIRES – ENVIRONMENT IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(No. B/805) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the Smart City Project of Roches Noires, he will state if the application for the Environment Impact Assessment has been rejected and, if so, indicate the reasons therefor.

Reply: To date, no EIA application with regard to the Smart City project of Roche Noires has been received at the level of the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change. It is to be pointed out that Smart City Project is not a scheduled undertaking requiring a Preliminary Environmental Report or an Environment Impact Assessment. However, it is the components implemented within Smart City Projects, which are listed as scheduled activities in Part A and Part B of the Fifth Schedule of the Environment Protection Act 2002, that warrant a Preliminary Environmental Report Approval or an Environment Impact Assessment licence.

It is to be noted that “Hotel or Integrated Resort Scheme, including extension, with first boundary within one kilometre of high water mark” is a scheduled undertaking that warrants an Environment Impact Assessment under Part B of the Fifth Schedule of the Environment Protection Act 2002.

On 04 April 2022, the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change received an application for an Environment Impact Assessment licence for the Proposed Resort Hotel Development at Roches Noires by PR Capital (Mauritius) Ltd through the National E-Licensing Platform. On 09 April 2022, in line with Section 20 of the Environment Protection Act 2002, a notice for Public Inspection of the Environment Impact Assessment Report was given on the proposed development to gather public comments.

Given the sensitivity of the site and as recommended by the Environment Impact Assessment Committee held on 16 May 2022, the application has been set aside. The overall of the Roches Noires Smart City Project has been declared a scheduled undertaking requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment Licence in line with 'Section 17: Non-listed activity' of the Environment Protection Act 2002 (as amended).

As at date, the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change has not received any application for an Environmental Impact Assessment licence for the whole of the Roches Noires Smart City Project.

HOME OWNERSHIP SCHEME - RODRIGUANS - ELIGIBILITY

(No. B/806) Mr J. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Home Ownership Scheme, as announced in the Budget Speech 2021-2022, he will state if residents of Rodrigues Island are eligible to benefit thereunder and, if so, indicate the number thereof having applied therefor and the number of applications having been approved.

Reply: Le *Home Ownership Scheme* est l'une des mesures introduites dans le Budget 2021-2022 pour rendre l'accès à la propriété abordable pour tous les citoyens de la République de Maurice. Et cela, conformément à la vision du gouvernement d'une société plus inclusive.

Dans le cadre de ce programme, une personne éligible qui achète une maison, un appartement ou un terrain seul pour construire sa résidence bénéficie d'un remboursement de 5 % du coût de la propriété jusqu'à un maximum de 500,000 roupies. Le régime est géré par le *Registrar-General*.

Comme je l'ai annoncé dans le Discours du Budget 2022-2023, le régime est prolongé d'une année supplémentaire, c'est-à-dire jusqu'au 30 juin 2023.

Je tiens à assurer l'honorable Parlementaire que le régime est tout aussi applicable à un citoyen vivant sur l'île Rodrigues et couvre également les biens immobiliers de Rodrigues.

En effet, j'ai été informé par le *Registrar-General* que, à ce jour, 4 demandes dans le cadre du *Home Ownership Scheme* ont été reçues depuis février 2022 de la part de citoyens ayant acquis des propriétés résidentielles à Rodrigues.

Etant donné que le *Registrar-General* n'est pas le dépositaire des documents enregistrés à Rodrigues, des informations ont été demandées à l'*Island Chief Executive* pour déterminer si les demandes sont éligibles au programme.

Le *Registrar-General* m'a également informé que, sur les 4 demandes reçues dans le cadre du *Home Ownership Scheme*, 3 demandes ont été approuvées et une demande a été rejetée.

Le *Registrar-General Department* effectuera sous peu le paiement aux trois bénéficiaires.

**AIR MAURITIUS LTD. – EMPLOYEES – VOLUNTARY ADMINISTRATION –
REINSTATEMENT**

(No. B/807) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the working conditions of the employees of Air Mauritius Ltd., he will state if same have been restored prior to Voluntary Administration and, if so, since when and, if not, why not.

Reply: Air Mauritius Ltd was placed under voluntary administration on 22 April 2020 since the situation of the company had worsened and the airline industry at large found itself in an unprecedented crisis with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Administrators, appointed under sections (215) and (216) of the Insolvency Act, took a series of measures, including the review of the working conditions of the employees with a view to protecting their employment. The change in the conditions of employment was effected in consultation with all the trade unions. 7 out of the 9 recognised trade unions representing the different categories of employees agreed to a variation of their respective collective agreement in accordance with section 58 of the Employment Relations Act, which provides in subsection (1) (b) that a collective agreement may be varied where there is a substantial change of circumstances which warrants such variation. The varied collective agreements are binding on the parties for period 01 July 2020 to 30 June 2024.

The 7 recognised trade unions are as follows –

- (i) Air Mauritius Staff Association (AMSA),
- (ii) Air Mauritius Technical Services Staff Union (AMTSSU);
- (iii) Union of Employees of Air Mauritius Ltd (UEAML);
- (iv) Private Transport Employees Union (PTEU);
- (v) Licensed Aircraft Engineers Association (LAEA);
- (vi) Mauritius Air Line Pilots Association (MALPA), and
- (vii) Airlines Employees Association (AEA - for expatriate Pilots).

However, the Air Mauritius Cabin Crew Association (AMCCA) was not agreeable to sign the variation to its collective agreement on the ground that such variation would be detrimental to the interest of its members. The trade union is contesting before the Employment Relations Tribunal, the unilateral alterations of conditions of work of the cabin crew members brought to

their contract of employment. The other trade union, Air Mauritius Managers Associations (AMMA) had no collective agreement with management at that time. Subsequently, the employees were offered and agreed to new individual contracts of employment by the Administrators.

I am informed that, at the Watershed meeting held on 28 September 2021 after 18 months of Joint Administration, the employees did not submit any claims for the Deed of Company Arrangement (DOCA), although they were invited to do so.

RDA - CLASSIFIED ROADS - CONVERSION CRITERIA

(No. B/808) Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the classified roads, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to the –

- (a) number thereof, and
- (b) criteria for the conversion of a road into a classified one.

(Withdrawn)

PROCUREMENT EXERCISES – RELAUNCHING – BIDDERS’ LIST & NAMES

(No. B/809) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the observations made by the Director of Audit in its last report in relation to the 24 procurement exercises that were cancelled and relaunched at the level of his Ministry, he will state the projects to which they relate, giving in each case the list of the bidders and names of the successful bidder/s.

Reply: The NDU has Framework Agreements with respect to works regarding construction and upgrading of roads, drains and amenities as well as for consultancy services. These Framework Agreements are approved at the level of the Central Procurement Board and are valid for a period of two years.

However, for emergency projects in high risk flood prone areas and projects above Rs50 m., the NDU has recourse to individual bidding exercises in accordance with the Public

Procurement Act. This also applies to projects in cases where the Framework Agreements have expired.

With respect to the 24 procurement exercises mentioned by the National Audit Office for the financial year 2020/2021, the status is as follows –

- (i) two projects were already awarded, namely Supply and Commissioning of Notebook awarded to Softel Computer Services Ltd on 26 October 2021 and Consultancy Services for Land Stabilisation Measures at Coquinbourg, Riviere du Rempart awarded to Mega Design Ltd on 7 December 2021, and
- (ii) 22 bidding exercises were cancelled for the following reasons –
 - (a) prices quoted were higher than the cost estimates for 9 procurement exercises;
 - (b) bids were not responsive for 7 procurement exercises;
 - (c) no bids were received for 2 procurement exercises;
 - (d) major changes in the scope of works for 1 procurement exercise;
 - (e) procurement method from a Restricted Bidding exercise to an Open National Bidding exercise was required in view of a revision in cost estimate for 1 procurement exercise, and
 - (f) technical issues were encountered on the E-Procurement System for 2 procurement exercises.

The Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development operates strictly in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Public Procurement Act and the Regulations promulgated thereunder. Additionally, it is also ensured that the Directives issued by the Procurement Policy Office, amongst which the grounds for cancellation of the bidding exercises are clearly defined, are complied with.

Bids for 11 of the cancelled projects have been re-launched and awarded, 1 project is under evaluation, 6 of them will be implemented under Framework Agreements for which Works Orders are being worked out to be issued shortly, 2 projects will not be implemented at this stage and 1 project namely, the Diversion of Irrigation Services at Cottage project which was handed over to the Irrigation Authority for implementation has been completed.

A list of the 24 projects including the information requested by the hon. Member in his question is being placed in the library of the National Assembly.

CASINO OF MAURITIUS, CUREPIPE - THEFT - INQUIRY

(No. B/810) Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Casino of Mauritius in Curepipe, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Investment Corporation Ltd., information as to if an inquiry has been initiated into the theft that occurred thereat, on or about 06 January 2022 and, if so, indicate where matters stand, indicating the actions taken in relation thereto, if any.

(Withdrawn)

MV WAKASHIO OIL SPILL – PLEASURE CRAFT OWNERS, SKIPPERS & HELPERS – GRANTS

(No. B/811) 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 pleasure craft owners and skippers affected by the MV Wakashio Oil Spill, he will state if allowances have been granted thereto for loss of business during the period of interdiction to venture into the south east sea and, if so, indicate the quantum therefor.

Reply: I am informed by the Tourism Authority that payment of a monthly Wakashio Solidarity Grant of Rs10,200 for the period August 2020 to February 2021 has been effected to –

- i. 319 holders of a Commercial Pleasure Craft Licence, and
- ii. 458 skippers and helpers.

The 319 Commercial Pleasure Craft operators also benefitted from a one-off business continuity grant that was calculated based on the size of the pleasure craft.

A total amount of Rs57 m. approximately has been disbursed from the Wakashio Solidarity Fund as a result of the above payments.

**COVID-19- NATIONAL VACCINATION PROGRAMME – SECOND
BOOSTER DOSES**

(No. B/812) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the COVID-19 National Vaccination Programme, he will state the number of second booster doses administered to the population as at to date, indicating if same is still ongoing and, if so, give details thereof and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

**CAMP FOUQUEREAUX AND HIGHLANDS – CLASSIFIED ROADS –
WORKS**

(No. B/813) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the construction of culvert at Campement lane, Tout Court Road along Camp Fouquereaux and Highlands classified roads, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if works have started and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) name of the contractor;
- (b) sums allocated, and
- (c) completion date thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Road Development Authority (RDA) that the main roads in the region of Camp Fouquereaux and Highlands under its purview are the Camp Fouquereaux Road (B71) and Highlands-Belle Terre Road (B68). Part of the Highlands-Belle Terre Road (B68), from its junction with Camp Fouquereaux Road (B71) up to the football playground at Highlands, is commonly known as Tout Court Road.

I am further informed by the RDA that during heavy rainfall, there is water accumulation at the junction of Camp Fouquereaux Road (B71) and Tout Court Road due to, firstly, the topography of the road which is the lowest point in that region and secondly, the absence of drains in that region. Accordingly, as a short term measure and with a view to mitigating

flooding problem thereat, the RDA is implementing a project which comprises the construction of an absorption drain at the junction of Camp Fouquereaux Road and Tout Court Road over a stretch of 100 metres.

I am informed that the implementation of the project has started last month, that is, in June 2022. With regard to parts (a), (b) and (c) of the question, I am advised that the contract has been awarded to Gamma Construction Ltd to the tune of some Rs4 m. The project is expected to be completed by the end of September 2022.

As regards the construction of a culvert at Campement Lane, I am informed that this is being considered by the Municipal Council of Vacoas Phoenix for implementation. However, the project could not be executed in view of the two lockdown periods due to the COVID-19 pandemic and due to representations received from inhabitants for the proposed closure of the road required to implement the works.

In the meantime, the Land Drainage Authority (LDA) has assessed that the construction of the culvert will not resolve the problem of accumulation of water in the region as the water flows onto private land at several locations. In this respect, the Council is carrying out survey to identify possible solutions, in consultations with the LDA.

CAMP FIRINGA, POINTE AUX SABLES - DRAIN & ROAD RESURFACING PROJECT

(No. B/814) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to Camp Firinga at Pointe Aux Sables, he will state if the implementation of any drain and road resurfacing project thereat is being considered and, if so, indicate if pending same, consideration will be given for the taking of temporary measures to remedy an unfinished drain work started four years ago thereat.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal City Council of Port Louis that it has not earmarked any projects for the construction of drain and road resurfacing at Camp Firinga, Pointe aux Sables.

As temporary measures, during the recent torrential rain and flooding in March 2022, an existing earth drain was cleaned to evacuate water. According to records, there is no unfinished drain work which was started four years ago in that region by the Council.

However, my Ministry is proposing to liaise with the National Development Unit and the Land Drainage Authority with a view to including the construction of an appropriate drain in that area.

BULLYING IN SCHOOLS – MEASURES & PREVENTION

(No. B/815) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to bullying in schools, she will state the reported number thereof since 2019 to date, giving a breakdown as to the number thereof wherein the –

- (a) perpetrator/s is/are –
 - (i) a teacher/teachers;
 - (ii) a pupil/pupils; and
 - (iii) teacher/s and pupil/s, and
- (b) bullying is physical or psychological, indicating the measures taken to avert the occurrence thereof.

Reply: I am informed that since 2019 to date, the number of reported cases of bullying (involving teasing, intimidation and cyber bullying among others) in primary and secondary schools, is as follows –

Number of Cases of Bullying	
Primary Subsector	83
Secondary Subsector	229

As regards part (a) of the question, I am informed that there are nine cases involving teachers and the remaining cases concern students.

In the case of teachers, the complaints related to them being too harsh towards students or humiliating students using at times verbal violence or abusive language.

In reply to part (b) of the question, I wish to highlight that physical bullying refers to the use of physical actions to intimidate or exert power over another person. Physical bullying can entail anything from pushing, kicking, fighting, pinching to snatching and damaging personal belongings. Psychological bullying refers to an intentional mental abuse which can take the form of verbal abuse and forcing a person to act against his will with the intention of humiliating him.

Over the past 4 years, there were 139 cases which were of a physical nature; 141 cases were psychological in nature and it has been noted that there were 32 cases where both the psychological and physical aspects of bullying were involved.

Our Student Behaviour Policy at the level of the Ministry considers bullying to be a very serious offence and cases are dealt with severely.

We have a two-pronged strategy which consists of both supporting the victim as well as working with the perpetrators to bring about a change in their attitudes.

Student Care and Counselling Desks have been set up in secondary schools to provide support to victims. They offer a '*service d'écoute*' to the students and this in order to promote positivity and Educational Psychologists and the Pastoral Care Committees provide victims with support so as to develop their coping skills as well as their abilities to deal with perpetrators. The National Education Counselling Service (NECS) also works with the Head of school and staff to develop strategies to ensure the socio-emotional well-being of students, thereby building their self-esteem and enhancing their resilience to stressful circumstances caused by bullying.

Furthermore, the attendance of the victim is closely monitored at school and any discrepancy is referred to the NECS immediately. Home visits are carried out by the Educational Social Worker in order to provide necessary assistance to the child and the family whenever the need arises.

As for the perpetrators, our psychologists also help them to identify the causes of anger and aggressive behaviour and help them to manage and cope with such emotions. The management of emotions is imperative; this in order to hold them responsible for their actions and help them to develop a sense of empathy. It is important to teach them to cope with their emotions and be conscious of their reactions.

As regards the preventive measures, Head of schools ensure that sensitisation is carried out in the school during assemblies and form periods by the Form Masters and Counsellors on a regular basis to raise awareness and guide students on the issue. Students are encouraged to report cases if ever they are victims of or are witness to cases of bullying. Learners are also sensitised and informed on the misuse of technology and the consequences of cyber-bullying.

The *Brigade pour la Protection de la Famille* and Educational Psychologists from the NECS regularly carry out sensitisation campaigns on the serious impact of bullying on the child's performance at school.

LINE BARRACKS, PORT LOUIS - POLICE HEADQUARTERS HERITAGE CONSERVATION PLAN

(No. B/816) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to the damaged parts of the premises of the Police Headquarters, Line Barracks, in Port Louis, following the recent fire outbreaks, he will state the heritage conservation plan his Ministry is proposing to undertake with the relevant stakeholders.

Reply: As per information gathered from the National Heritage Fund (NHF), the Line Barracks, Port Louis was listed as National Heritage on 01 June 1985 under the National Heritage Fund Act 2003 and is vested under the Police Department.

Following the fire outbreaks on 04 July 2022, officers of the National Heritage Fund carried out a site visit at the Line Barracks, Port Louis on 06 July 2022. They made a preliminary assessment of the building in conjunction with officers from the Police Department and the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Services.

From the preliminary assessment of the National Heritage Fund, the left back wing of the barracks, including the metal roofing and wooden structure have been completely destroyed by the fire. The Police Headquarters which is found in the Line Barracks compound has not been damaged except the building occupied by the Special Support Unit, located along Orleans Street and a shed adjoining the building.

To assist the Police Department in restoring and conserving this National Heritage, the NHF has recommended that –

- (i) a report on the cause of the fire and extent of damage of the building be submitted by the Police Department;
- (ii) a team of professionals, including Civil Engineer, Architect, Electrical Engineer, Heritage Professional, Health and Safety, amongst others, be appointed by the Police Department to conduct a full structural and architectural survey. Besides, the same team should document the whole site and perform the mapping. A Risk Assessment for the whole site together with mitigating measures to prevent the occurrence of such hazard in the future should equally be effected, and
- (iii) a restoration and management plan be devised for the site with the assistance of NHF.

I am further informed by the Commissioner of Police that the services of the Engineers of the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development have already been solicited to conduct a survey and evaluate the extent of the damages. I am apprised that this survey will be carried out shortly.

I wish to reassure the hon. Member and the House that both my Ministry and the National Heritage Fund will extend all assistance and will work closely with the Police Department for the restoration of the left wing of the Line Barracks. On top of that, a Conservation Plan will be put up for the safeguarding of this National Heritage which dates back to the 1700s.

***CONTRIBUTION SOCIALE GÉNÉRALISÉE - SELF-EMPLOYED -
REGISTRATION & ELIGIBILITY***

(No. B/817) 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 proposed grant of Rs1,000 as monthly income allowance to some 350,000 employees and registered self-employed individuals, as announced in the 2022-2023 Budget Speech, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Revenue Authority, information as to the number of self-employed individuals being compliant with their *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* registration and therefore eligible therefor as at 07 June 2022.

Reply: I am informed by the Mauritius Revenue Authority that as at 07 June 2022, there were 34,633 self-employed individuals who were registered under the social contribution/CSG.

Furthermore, out of the 34,633 registered self-employed individuals, 15,309 self-employed individuals have paid their contribution for the month of May 2022 and will, therefore, be eligible to the Rs1,000 CSG income allowance in respect of the month of July 2022.

As regards the remaining 19,324 registered self-employed individuals, no return and appropriate social contribution/CSG were made to the Mauritius Revenue Authority. Once the above conditions are fulfilled, they will be paid their CSG income allowance.

SAINT BARTHOLOMEWS COLLEGE – INCIDENT – INQUIRY

(No. B/818) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the incident which occurred at the Saint Bartholomews College on Tuesday 28 June 2022 wherein a student was severely injured, she will state if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

(Withdrawn)

SEXUAL ABUSE CASES - CRISIS UNIT - SETTING UP

(No. B/819) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to sexual abuse of minors, she will state if a crisis unit has been set up at the level of her Ministry to look thereinto, following the recent reported alleged cases and, if so, give details thereof and, if not, why not.

Reply: The services of my Ministry are already being provided on a 24/7 basis whereby any crisis or emergency situation is dealt with in a timely and effective manner.

There is, at the level of my Ministry, an emergency child protection team comprising Social Workers and Psychologists which is on call on a 24/7 basis to intervene in child abuse and other related cases.

An Integrated Support Service is also operational to provide 24/7 toll-free Hotline Services to children victims of violence that includes first hand intervention and referral to the Police. Moreover, there are 7 Child Development Units [CDU] outstations which are commonly referred to the Child Protection Services in different regions over the island, ensuring accessibility and proximity service delivery in respect of child protection.

As soon as a case is referred to my Ministry, either through the 113 Hotline or at the level of the Child Protection Services Outstations, the emergency protection team intervenes to provide child victims with full emergency child protection support. The team also proceeds with an in-depth enquiry which comprises the following –

- i. first hand assessment and counselling by officers of my Ministry who are Social Workers;
- ii. psychological support inclusive of active listening, psycho-therapy, counselling in respect of gravity of trauma on minor, support to parents if need be, as well as therapy and parental counselling to parents if they are not the perpetrators;
- iii. immediate conveyance to hospital for medical examination and treatment which include pregnancy and HIV tests;
- iv. depending on the mental and physical state of the minor, recording of statement by the Police is considered with prior arrangements and facilitation by the officers of my Ministry;
- v. in cases of incest and sexual abuse occasioned by relatives and next of kin, or even close family friends, the minors are removed to a place of safety which is normally known only to the Ministry;
- vi. referral to stakeholders such as for further supports, as appropriate, the Ministry of Education Tertiary Education, Science and Technology, the Ministry of Health and Wellness, Drop-in-Centre, Police, the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity and NGOs, amongst others, is also undertaken to ensure that minor is not deprived of his rights, and
- vii. in complex cases, case conferences are held with relevant stakeholders to thrash out any issue, in the best interests of the child.

PHOENIX, ROYAL ROAD – SPEED CAMERAS - INSTALLATION

(No. B/820) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and

International Trade whether, in regard to the proposed installation of new speed cameras along Royal Road, in Phoenix, more specifically, near the Phoenix Police Station, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to where matters stand.

Reply: A feasibility study to look into the possibility of installing a fixed speed camera at Phoenix near the Police Station was undertaken by the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit (TMRSU) of my Ministry in January 2021.

However, according to the feasibility study, it is not recommended to place a fixed speed camera thereat because –

- (i) there is no space available in terms of width on either side of the road where the speed camera equipment could be installed. There are covered drains, boundary walls and shops along the road;
- (ii) the speed camera equipment consists of the speed camera and the flashing unit which are spaced around 35 metres apart. The lack of space in terms of length does not allow the installation of the whole speed camera equipment;
- (iii) additionally, the road near the Phoenix Police Station is on a slope and as such, the speed camera cannot be installed since speeding vehicles would not be properly captured;
- (iv) there is already a signalised junction near the Police Station which acts as a traffic calming: a speed camera cannot be placed in a zone near a signalised junction as the traffic lights will automatically cause the vehicles to decelerate; this would impact negatively on the efficient use of fixing a speed camera, and
- (v) the road is often congested during the day at specific hours. A speed camera is therefore not efficient when placed on congested roads because the speed of the vehicle is already reduced. Thus, the number of speed violations that would be recorded would be minimal.

LE HOCHET – DRAINS

(No. B/821) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North &Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the proposed construction of drains along A2 at Le Hochet, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: As part of the National Flood Management Programme to mitigate flooding problem in the region of Le Hochet, the Road Development Authority (RDA) is undertaking a project for the construction of drains along Port Louis-Central Flacq Road A2 at Le Hochet.

The scope of works comprises the construction of approximately 1.5 km of drains from Winner's at Le Hochet up to Rivulet Terre Rouge at St. Croix, which is being implemented in phases as follows –

- (i) Phase 1 starting from Rivulet Terre Rouge, St Croix up to Le Hochet opposite Indian Oil Filling Station, over a length of 550 metres.

The scope of works for Phase 1 comprises, *inter alia*, the construction of about 550 metres of reinforced concrete drain of dimensions one metre wide and one metre deep, provision of metal gratings at junctions with lateral roads/streets, relocation of services and demolition/reconstruction of boundary walls.

The project has been awarded to Gamma Construction Ltd for an amount of Rs23,998,184.32 (VAT inclusive) under the framework agreement of the RDA. The progress of works on site is 10% with excavation and relocation of services in progress. The project is scheduled to be completed by November 2022.

- (ii) Phase 2 starting at Le Hochet opposite Indian Oil Filling Station up to Winner's at Le Hochet, over a distance of 950 metres.

These drain works will be undertaken in a second phase upon finalisation of the drain network by the Land Drainage Authority (LDA). Discussions are still ongoing with the LDA to finalise the scope of works, design and costing thereof.

CONSTITUENCY NO. 3 – ROAD HUMPS – INSTALLATION

(No. B/822) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to road humps, he will state Government policy in relation thereto, indicating the number of requests received for the installation thereof in Constituency No. 3, Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East, indicating where matters stand in relation to each request.

Reply: I am advised that as at date, two requests were received for the installation of road humps in the Constituency No. 3, Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East.

The first request was for the implementation of a raised pedestrian crossing at Abdool Razack Mohammed Street near the Al Huda Wan Noor Mosque, Plaine Verte. The works have already been completed on 20 June 2022.

As regards the second request for a raised platform/speed hump at Marcelin Salimootoo Street (Rue Large), Port-Louis received from the President of the Shan-E-Rassool Mosque on 24 June 2022, I am informed that further to a site visit effected by the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit (TMRSU) of my Ministry, two raised tables would be implemented at the following locations –

- (i) Junction Louis Victor Ducasse Street and Marcelin Savrimootoo Street (Ex Large Street), and
- (ii) at the existing zebra crossing which would be converted into a raised table with pedestrian crossing close to the entrance of Madrassa attached to the Mosque.

The works for the traffic calming measures would include asphalt for raised table, laying of kerbs, drain works and metal grating for adequate stormwater drainage. The cost of the works is estimated at Rs2 m. (VAT Inclusive). Works orders would be issued shortly and the duration of works would be for a period of around three months.

CEB – 20 MW BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEM – TENDER EXERCISE

(No. B/823) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the tender exercise for the Supply, Installation and Commissioning of a 20 MW Battery Energy Storage System, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

CONSTITUENCY NO. 20 – DRAINS – CLEANING & MAINTENANCE

(No. B/824) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in

regard to drains, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Development Unit and the Land Drainage Authority, information as to the present number thereof in Constituency No. 20, Beau-Bassin/Petite Rivière, indicating the frequency of the cleaning thereof, annually, indicating when same was last cleaned.

Reply: The Land Drainage Authority informed that the total stretch of drainage infrastructure in Constituency No.20, Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière, is about 83 kilometres.

The cleaning of some 33 kilometres of drains, along classified roads, falls under the responsibility of the Road Development Authority while the remaining stretch of some 50 kms along non-classified roads, falls under the responsibility of two local authorities, namely the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill and the District Council of Black River.

In an attempt to mitigating the impact of flooding in a proactive and diligent way, the LDA has since long devised a cleaning and maintenance plan for the local authorities. Cleaning of drains is an ongoing process which is carried out prior to, as well as, during the rainy season. In addition, the drains are also cleaned as and when required.

The local authorities have been called upon to strictly adhere to the maintenance plan and to ensure the cleanliness of drains, rivers and water courses prior to the rainy season. Regular inspections are carried out by both the LDA and the RDA to ensure cleanliness of the drains and depending on the degree of siltation or obstruction, actions are initiated for the cleaning of the drains.

The LDA further informed that from January to end of May 2022, the cleaning of some 29 kms of drains along non-classified roads has been completed.

The RDA has, on its part, undertaken cleaning of drains of some 1.1 kilometres at the following locations –

- a) Junction Raymond Rivet Road (B101) and Pope Hennessy Road (B76);
- b) Along Riche Lieu Branch Road (B107);
- c) Junction St Martin Road and Arriane Road;

d) Along Port Louis - St Jean Road (A1) as follows –

- i. near Belle Etoile and Neetoo Industries;
- ii. from KFC to MCB Beau Bassin;
- iii. from Marcel Etang to Gamma Civic, and
- iv. from Dr. Reid up to Vinayak Mandir.

The cleaning of drains in Constituency No. 20, Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière, for the current year will be completed in October 2022 before the start of the rainy season.

ORGAN DONATION - TRANSPLANT UNITS

(No. B/825) 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 proposed implementation of a special unit at his Ministry to deal with organ donation and transplant, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that the Consultant HSCC (India) Ltd has been requested to relaunch the tender for the construction of the renal transplant unit at Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital.

The appeals on this side of the House have always been to start renal transplant in Mauritius.

On 23 May 2022, Government agreed to the making of the four regulations under the Tissue Donation (Removal, Preservation and Transplant) Act 2018, namely –

- (a) The Human Tissue (Removal, Preservation and Transplant) Regulations 2022;
- (b) The Human Tissue (Removal, Preservation and Transplant) (Prescribed Forms) Regulations 2022;
- (c) The Human Tissue (Removal, Preservation and Transplant) (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2022, and
- (d) The Human Tissue (Removal, Preservation and Transplant) (Approved Health Institutions) Regulations 2022.

(The Approved Health Institutions) Regulations 2022 provide for the list of approved health institutions which are authorised for the removal, preservation and transplant of tissue. In the first instance, the removal, preservation and transplant of cornea, kidney and bone would be conducted at our public hospitals.

My Ministry is making all the necessary arrangements for the safe conduct of the tissue donation and transplant procedures at the approved health institutions. The guidelines will be vetted by the Tissue Donation, Removal and Transplant Board.

I wish to inform the House that my Ministry has already initiated actions for the visit of Dr. Rajasekhar Perumalla who is a well-known Organ Transplant Specialist with nearly 25 years of experience as a Renal Transplant and Liver Transplant Specialist.

Moreover, my Ministry is making arrangements for the award of a contract of six months to Dr. Nizam Fatehmamode, Professor of transplantation surgery at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust. Dr. Fatehmamode would be responsible for the setting up of the transplant units and the training of our surgeons.

BAMBOUS NHDC HOUSING ESTATE - WATER SUPPLY PROBLEMS

(No. B/826) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the multiple water supply problems being faced at the Bambous NHDC Housing Estate over the past few weeks, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to where matters stand as to the resolving thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the CWA that the regions of Bambous, Eau Bonne Road, Geoffroy Road, Allée Tamarin, Avenue Boundary, Cité La Ferme, Royal Road Bambous, NHDC Bambous and adjoining areas are supplied by Eau Bonne Reservoir which receives water from Old Eau Bonne pump, New Eau Bonne pump and a borehole.

The average daily water production is about 5,400 m³ and supplies around 4,700 consumers, out of which 700 consumers in the NHDC Bambous. The hours of supply are from 03.00 to 09.00 hours and 15.00 to 21.00 hours, that is, 12 hours. However, a valve operation is performed on a daily basis at Geoffroy road to inject additional water from Beaux Songes

Reservoir into the network of Eau Bonne Reservoir from 08.00 to 14.00 hours in order to maintain a constant water supply and pressure at Cité La Ferme and Allée Tamarin.

The inhabitants of elevated areas of Bambous NHDC Housing Estate were experiencing reduced pressure in the hours of supply due to preferential discharge downstream and air problems.

A hydraulic investigation has been carried out in order to rationalise the system and an improvement in pressure (i.e. from 0.5 bars to 1.5 bars) and water supply have already been observed at Bambous NHDC Housing Estate.

The CWA has also installed additional valves and pipe laying works.

The CWA is presently laying 75m of 90mm HDPE pipe at NHDC Bambous No.2 Flat and 20m of 90mm HDPE at Geoffroy No. 2 Flat in order to improve the water supply and pressure. The works are expected to be completed by mid-July 2022.

The CWA has already embarked in mobilising additional water resources by harnessing water from potential boreholes and rivers within the region of Bambous.

A daily monitoring is effected in order to ascertain that all the consumers of Bambous NHDC Housing Estate have a good water supply.

DIGITAL ELEVATED MODEL – FLOOD PRONE AREAS – CUREPIPE & MIDLANDS

(No. B/827) Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the Digital Elevated Model, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Land Drainage Authority, information as to the number of flood prone areas identified in Curepipe and Midlands, indicating the measures that need to be taken under the National Flood Management Program thereat.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS TELECOM & AFFILIATE COMPANY - DIVIDENDS - 2015 TO JULY 2022

(No. B/828) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the

Mauritius Telecom and its affiliate company, he will state the quantum of the dividends remitted to the Consolidated Fund since 2015 to date, on a financial year basis.

Reply: Je dépose le montant des dividendes remis par *Mauritius Telecom* et ses sociétés affiliées au *Consolidated Fund*, sur la base des exercices financiers depuis 2015, à la Bibliothèque de l'Assemblée nationale.

MAURITIUS SECONDARY SCHOOL SPORTS ASSOCIATION – FINANCIAL SUPPORT – FINANCIAL YEARS 2019-2022

(No. B/829) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the Mauritius Secondary School Sports Association (MSSSA), he will give a breakdown of the financial support allocated thereto by his Ministry for financial years 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-2022, indicating all activities organised therefor.

(Withdrawn)

HANDICAPÉS DE MALHERBES SHELTER – TEENAGE PREGNANCY COMPLAINT

(No. B/830) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Shelter Association pour les Handicapés de Malherbes, at Curepipe, she will state if her Ministry is in presence of complaints about a case of teenage pregnancy.

Reply: My Ministry was made aware of a case of teenage pregnancy regarding a minor placed at shelter *l'Association Pour Les Handicapés de Malherbes* (APLHDM) on 03 June 2022.

On the same day at around 15.30 hrs, officers of the Child Development Unit (CDU) of my Ministry were informed by the Shelter Manager that minor M.T.C.F, aged 16 years, had been admitted in ward 9 of Victoria Hospital.

Following enquiry by officers of my Ministry, the minor stated that she had been sexually abused by one Mr D.L, Maintenance Officer of the said shelter. Further enquiries from other minors revealed that the perpetrator had also made indecent/sexual propositions to other minors residing at the shelter.

Officers of my Ministry provided the necessary assistance and support to the minors so that the *Brigade Pour la Protection de la Famille* could do the recording of their statements, throughout the reconstruction exercise and for the medical examination of the minor by the Police Medical Officer.

The alleged perpetrator had been arrested on 23 June 2022 and on 07 July 2022, he was granted bail and the Police enquiry is ongoing. Psychological support and close follow-up of minors are still being maintained at the level of my Ministry.

GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS & LINE BARRACKS BUILDINGS - FIRE CERTIFICATE

(No. B/831) 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 Government buildings, including, the Line Barracks buildings, in Port Louis, he will state the number thereof complying with the provisions of the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service Act, including, being covered by a fire certificate.

Reply: I am informed by the Chief Fire Officer that there are 1,133 Government-owned buildings housing Public Officers, out of which 408 have valid fire certificates and comply with all fire safety measures in accordance with the Fire Code and the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service Act.

As regards the remaining 725 buildings, Improvement Notices have been served on the respective Ministries and Departments by the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service following surveys and inspections.

I am further informed by the Chief Fire Officer that the Line Barracks, which houses the Police Headquarters, comprises 16 blocks, out of which, two have valid fire certificates. These are the ADSU Headquarters, and the Licensing Road Safety Unit and Traffic Branch. The remaining fourteen (14) blocks have been issued with Improvement Notices after inspections.

SWIMMING CLUBS – LANES – ALLOCATION

(No. B/832) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the swimming

pools, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Sports Council, information as to if there has been a change in the allocation of lanes to swimming clubs and, if so, indicate the terms and conditions thereof.

(Withdrawn)

VICTORIA URBAN TERMINAL – STALLS – RENT

(No. B/833) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the stalls at the Victoria Urban Terminal, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal City Council of Port Louis, information as to –

- (a) the number thereof being presently unoccupied, indicating the reasons therefor, and
- (b) if consideration will be given for a reduction of the amount of rent chargeable therefor.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal City Council of Port Louis that there are 1,000 stalls at the Victoria Urban Terminal, out of which 309 are presently vacant. This is due to the fact that the hawkers who have accepted the stalls through drawing of lots did not turn up for the signature of the Lease Agreement. Consequently, the Council intends to carry out an Expression of Interest for the filling of the vacant stalls in the near future.

Concerning part (b) of the question, there is, so far, no decision for a reduction of the rent payable which is at present Rs4,000 monthly.

DRUG TESTS OPERATIONS - MOTORISTS – STATISTICS

(No. B/834) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to drug tests, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number thereof carried out on motorists since June 2022 to date.

Reply: I am informed by the Police that since 07 June 2022, the Road Safety Unit of the Traffic Branch has conducted special operations in relation to drug and alcohol driving. As at date, thirty such operations have already been conducted.

I am further informed that during the weekend of Saturday 02 July and Sunday 03 July 2022, two cases of driving motor vehicle under the influence of drugs have been established by the Police at Flic en Flac.

CHAMP DE MARS – FOOTBALL PITCH – ALTERNATIVE SPACE

(No. B/835) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the Champ de Mars, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to whether an alternative space has been identified for a football pitch following the A. R. Kurreembokus Stadium being occupied by the People's Turf PLC.

(Withdrawn)

METRO EXPRESS LTD – PASSENGERS, REVENUE & OUTSTANDING LOANS

(No. B/836) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether in regard to the Metro Express, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Metro Express Ltd., information as to the –

- (a) total number of passengers conveyed as at to date;
- (b) total revenue obtained from sales of tickets, and
- (c) quantum of outstanding loans.

(Withdrawn)

COVID-19 VACCINES – STOCK, EXPIRY DATES & FUTURE CONSIGNMENT

(No. B/837) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the COVID-19 vaccines, he will state –

- (a) the number thereof currently in stock, indicating the number thereof due to expire by end July and August 2022, respectively, and
- (b) if any future consignment thereof is expected through the Covax Facility.

(Withdrawn)

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF VACOAS-PHOENIX – LORRIES

(No. B/838) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to lorries acquired by the Municipal Council of Vacoas and Phoenix since 2019 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Vacoas and Phoenix, information as to the –

- (a) costs thereof;
- (b) date of purchase;
- (c) number thereof which are operational, and
- (d) date of last maintenance thereof indicating the cost thereof.

Reply: With regard to parts (a) and (b) of the question, I am informed by the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix that two tipper lorries and one compactor lorry have been procured since 2019.

The tipper lorries were procured in April 2019 for the sum of Rs1,719,250 whereas the compactor lorry was procured in July 2019 for the sum of Rs4,012,870.95.

Concerning parts (c) and (d) of the question, I am further informed by the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix that all three vehicles are operational. These lorries were last maintained in March and April 2022 at the cost of Rs26,865.44, Rs21,864.05, and Rs21,804.00 respectively.

BASIC PRODUCTS – SUBSIDISATION

(No. B/839) Mr M. Yeung Sik Yuen (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the basic products, including milk, edible oil, canned tomatoes and sardines, he will state if the impact of the end of the subsidization thereof as from 01 July 2022 has been assessed.

Reply: Prior to the end of the Subsidy Scheme on the seven essential commodities, its impact on the economy and consumers had been carefully assessed. This is why the Government decided to place these seven essential products, namely edible oil, margarine, canned tomatoes, cheese, milk powder, pulses and canned fish (pilchards and sardines) as well as five additional products such as pasta, wheat cereals, infant food/infant food preparation, baby diapers and adult diapers under price control with a defined mark up with effect from 01 July 2022 in order to protect consumers and ensure that traders are not unjustly fleecing them with high prices.

DRAINS INFRASTRUCTURE CO. LTD – DETAILED PROJECT LIST

(No. B/840) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the projects being implemented by the Drains Infrastructure Co. Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain and give the detailed list thereof.

Reply: As at date, the Land Drainage Authority has entrusted 43 priority drain projects to the Drains Infrastructure Construction Ltd (DICL) for implementation. These projects are located in regions which have been the subject of heavy flooding during the past years.

Following bidding exercises carried out, the DICL has awarded contract for two drains projects namely –

- (a) Construction of Drains, Culverts and Roadworks at Seedattun Aubeeluck Road, Ramsahye Road and Canaye Road (near taxi stand), La Flora to the tune of some Rs85 m., and
- (b) Construction of drain networks and culverts at Cooperative Road, Barathsing Road, near Duval Shop to the tune of some Rs149.2 m.

Five (5) projects are currently at bidding stage and 29 have reached the design stage. As regards the remaining seven (7) projects, surveys are being undertaken. The list of the 43 projects is being placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

PLAINE VERTE SWIMMING POOL – OPERATIONAL DATE

(No. B/841) Mr E. Juman (Fourth 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 Plaine Verte Swimming Pool, he will, for the benefit of

the House, obtain information as to when it will be operational, indicating when it was closed for renovation, indicating the work progress thereof.

(Withdrawn)

**COVID-19 SOLIDARITY FUND - BALANCE & FUNDS COLLECTED –
DEC 2021 TO JULY 2022**

(No. B/842) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the COVID-19 Solidarity Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

- (a) present balance thereof, and
- (b) quantum of funds collected therein since 04 December 2021 to date, indicating the projects earmarked to be financed therefrom.

Reply: J'ai été informé que le *COVID-19 Solidarity Fund* présente un solde de 285,15 millions de roupies au 8 juillet 2022.

En ce qui concerne la partie (b) de la question, j'ai été informé que le quantum des fonds collectés par le *COVID-19 Solidarity Fund* depuis le 4 décembre 2021 à ce jour, à l'exclusion des contributions statutaires reçues, s'élève à 769,146 roupies.

Les projets qui seront financés à partir du solde disponible de 285,1 millions de roupies sont les suivants -

- i. 229 millions de roupies pour le paiement de la subvention gouvernementale sur les produits essentiels pour le mois de juin 2022 ;
- ii. 35,8 millions de roupies pour le paiement lié à l'acquisition d'équipements médicaux liés à Covid-19 par le ministère de la Santé et du Bien-être ;
- iii. Quelque 9 millions de roupies, représentant les seconds décaissements à 3 organisations non gouvernementales (ONG) pour la mise en œuvre de leurs programmes respectifs ; et
- iv. 11,3 millions de roupies pour des projets futurs qui pourraient être approuvés par le Comité de gestion du *COVID-19 Solidarity Fund*.

LE BOUCHON, CAMP CAROL - MINI SOCCER PITCH PROJECT

(No. B/843) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the project for the construction of Foot Five pitch at Le Bouchon, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to where matters stand as to the implementation thereof.

Reply: I am informed that the project “Construction of a Mini Soccer Pitch at Le Bouchon, Camp Carol” to the tune of Rs4 m. was proposed by the District Council of Grand Port on 06 September 2021 to my Ministry for funding consideration under the Economic Recovery Programme.

The Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development had, in its financial clearance conveyed on 24 January 2022, indicated that projects to be funded under the Economic Recovery Programme would have to be implemented by end of the Financial Year 2021-2022.

The identified plot of land on which the project was to be implemented is, however, owned by the SIT Land Holdings Ltd. Given that the plot of land has not been made available to implement the project at Le Bouchon even after four months from the date on which financial clearance was obtained, it has been decided to implement the mini soccer pitch project in another village which is under the same Village Council Area of Camp Carol, namely Carreau Accacia, where land is already vested in the District Council of Grand Port itself.

As such, arrangements are being made with the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development to finance the project under Economic Recovery Programme II. The Council is, therefore, preparing the bidding documents for launching by end of July 2022 for such construction in Carreau Accacia instead of Camp Carol.

MEDICAL SPECIALISTS - VACANCIES

(No. B/844) 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 specialists, he will state the number of vacancies therefor per specialty in his Ministry, indicating if same have been advertised and, if so, indicate when and where matters stand.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that there are currently 20 vacancies for Specialists in various fields, including Anaesthesia, Paediatrics and Dermatology.

I am placing the list of vacancies in the Library of the National Assembly.

INTERNET TRAFFIC MONITORING - FOREIGN REQUEST

(No. B/845) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the monitoring of internet traffic to and from Mauritius, he will state –

- (a) if he has received any request from any foreign company or Government to do so, and
- (b) the agreement, if any, between the –
 - (i) Government of Mauritius and any foreign company, and
 - (ii) Government of Mauritius and any other Government.

Reply: My Ministry has not received any request from any foreign company or Government for the monitoring of internet traffic to and from Mauritius.

With respect to part (b) of the question, there has neither been any agreement signed between the Government and any foreign company nor with any other foreign Government in relation thereto.

POLICE HEADQUARTERS – FIRE OUTBREAKS - COMMUNICATION INFRASTRUCTURE & INSTALLATIONS

(No. B/846) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the communication infrastructure and installations located within the compound of the Police Headquarters, Line Barracks, in Port Louis, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Mauritius Telecom, information as to whether same have been damaged in the recent fire outbreaks thereat and, if so, indicate the extent and repercussions thereof on telecommunications in the Republic, if any.

Reply: The Mauritius Telecom has informed that there has been no damage to the communication infrastructure and installations of the Mauritius Telecom in the recent fire outbreaks within the compound of the Police Headquarters, Line Barracks in Port Louis and, therefore, there have been no repercussions on telecommunications services.

CONTROLLER OF CERTIFYING AUTHORITIES - EMUDHRA
CERTIFICATE PRACTICE STATEMENT

(No. B/847) 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 Controller of Certifying Authorities (CCA) license with the eMudhra Certificate Practice Statement (CPS) India, he will state if measures have been taken in the form of directive or circular to extend Government tenders due to the expiry of the said license.

(Withdrawn)

MOKA - FOOT FIVE FOOTBALL PITCH

(No. B/848) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the Foot Five Football Pitch at Moka, located in the vicinity of the Agricultural Marketing Board, he will state the –

- (a) cost thereof and name of the contractor thereof, and
- (b) number of complaints received from the inhabitants thereof in relation thereto.

Reply: I am informed by the District Council of Moka that the Foot Five Pitch at Moka located in the vicinity of the Agricultural Marketing Board has been constructed in November 2019.

With regard to part (a) of the question, the project has cost Rs1,126,979.75 and the contract was awarded to Proworks Ltd and Nandanee Contracting Ltd.

Regarding part (b) of the question, the Council has received only one complaint so far from an inhabitant regarding the pitch.

Due to normal wear and tear and vandalism, the fencing, gate and nylon net have been damaged. At the request of the Village Council of Moka, the District Council has already repaired the fencing, the gate, and fixed new nylon net and reinforced the back of the goal post with iron pipes.

STC - EDIBLE OIL, PULSES & MILK POWDER

(No. B/849) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or)

asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the proposed procurement of edible oil, pulses and milk powder by the State Trading Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to where matters stand, indicating if the price thereof will be subsidized and, if so, give details thereof.

(Withdrawn)

INFLATION & COST OF LIVING

(No. B/850) Mr R. Woochit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to inflation, he will state the trend thereof, indicating the remedial measures being envisaged by Government for the curtailing thereof.

Reply: Les questions B/850 et B/853 seront répondues ensemble, car elles concernent l'inflation et le coût de la vie, qui sont liés.

Comme la Chambre le sait, depuis 2021, les pays du monde entier sont soumis à des pressions inflationnistes, notamment aux États-Unis, au Royaume-Uni, en France, en Allemagne et dans d'autres pays européens.

Cette inflation s'expliquait principalement en raison de l'augmentation de la demande des consommateurs à mesure que les économies rouvraient après la réduction du nombre de cas de la Covid-19 et le déploiement des programmes de vaccination.

Toutefois, le conflit entre la Russie et l'Ukraine a exercé une pression supplémentaire sur les prix du pétrole et des produits alimentaires de base en raison des contraintes liées à l'offre, au regard de la destruction des infrastructures physiques et de l'imposition de sanctions commerciales sévères.

Selon le FMI, le taux d'inflation mondial suit une tendance à la hausse, passant de 3,2 % en 2020 à 4,7 % en 2021 et devrait encore augmenter pour atteindre 5,7 % en 2022.

L'inflation dans les économies avancées est passée de 0,7 % en 2020 à 3,1 % en 2021 et atteindra 5,7 % en 2022.

En ce qui concerne les économies émergentes, l'inflation est estimée à 5,9 % en 2021 et devrait atteindre 8,7 % cette année.

De nombreux pays sont actuellement confrontés à des niveaux d'inflation record -

- (i) le taux d'inflation moyen sur 12 mois était de 8,6 % aux États-Unis et de 9,1 % au Royaume-Uni en mai 2022 - qui sont les plus élevés depuis quatre décennies ;
- (ii) en Allemagne, le taux d'inflation en glissement annuel a atteint 7,9 % en mai 2022, soit le taux le plus élevé depuis trois décennies ;
- (iii) en Italie, l'inflation en glissement annuel en juin 2022 a atteint son plus haut niveau depuis plus de trois décennies, à 8 % ; et
- (iv) à Singapour, le taux d'inflation en glissement annuel était à son plus haut niveau depuis novembre 2011, à 5,6 %.

En tant qu'économie ouverte, Maurice est particulièrement exposée aux chocs externes.

Nous n'avons pas été épargnés par la tendance mondiale à la hausse de l'inflation, notamment avec le conflit Russie-Ukraine.

Le taux d'inflation global est passé de 2,5 % en 2020 à 4 % en 2021.

La Banque de Maurice a prévu que le taux d'inflation se situe autour de 8,6 % pour l'année 2022.

Selon une étude réalisée par l'*EDB* pour la période allant de décembre 2021 à mars 2022, il a été observé que -

- (i) le principal facteur contribuant à la hausse du taux d'inflation à Maurice est l'augmentation générale des prix internationaux des produits de base ;
- (ii) la moitié de la hausse des prix intérieurs est due à l'augmentation de l'inflation mondiale ; et
- (iii) 10 % de la hausse des prix locaux est due à l'augmentation des prix du pétrole et 10 % à l'augmentation des coûts de transport.

À l'avenir, les pressions inflationnistes devraient s'atténuer.

Selon le *Commodity Markets Outlook Report* de la Banque mondiale publié en avril 2022, nous nous attendons à une baisse des prix du pétrole et des produits alimentaires en 2023.

De plus, les coûts de fret ont tendance à diminuer.

Ces mouvements de prix et de coûts devraient avoir un impact positif sur les prix locaux.

En tant que gouvernement à l'écoute des plus vulnérables, nous avons pris un certain nombre de mesures pour atténuer l'impact de la hausse des prix sur la population.

Ces mesures comprennent les éléments suivants.

Premièrement, malgré la hausse des prix du riz, de la farine et du GPL, les prix de vente aux consommateurs ont été maintenus en augmentant le montant dépensé en subventions sur ces articles.

Deuxièmement, en juillet 2021, des prix de détail maximum ont été fixés pour sept autres produits essentiels, à savoir l'huile comestible, les légumineuses, les tomates en conserve, le lait en poudre, la margarine, le fromage et le poisson en conserve. Le gouvernement a accordé une subvention de 1,5 milliard de roupies pour ces articles jusqu'au 30 juin 2022.

Troisièmement, une compensation salariale mensuelle de 500 roupies est versée à tous les travailleurs à temps plein dont le salaire de base mensuel est inférieur ou égal à 13,000 roupies et de 400 roupies à ceux qui gagnent plus de 13,000 roupies à partir de janvier 2022. Ainsi, les travailleurs du groupe de salaire inférieur sont entièrement compensés pour la hausse des prix en 2021.

Quatrièmement, le gouvernement a maintenu l'allocation spéciale versée aux travailleurs à faible revenu afin qu'ils disposent d'un revenu garanti de 11,075 roupies par mois à partir de janvier 2022.

Cinquièmement, le gouvernement a mis en œuvre la révision des salaires recommandée par le *Pay Research Bureau* avec effet au 1er janvier 2021.

Sixièmement, le gouvernement accorde une subvention variant entre 5 % et 10 % sur les factures d'électricité de plus de 370,000 ménages de janvier 2022 à fin décembre 2022. Le gouvernement fournit environ 280 millions de roupies à cette fin.

Enfin, conformément à son mandat de stabilité des prix et de développement économique ordonné et équilibré, la Banque de Maurice a augmenté le *Key Repo Rate (KRR)* de 15 points de base à 2 % par an en mars 2022 et de 25 points de base supplémentaires à 2,25 % en juin 2022.

Cette augmentation du *KRR* vise à favoriser la stabilité des prix et à ancrer les anticipations d'inflation à moyen terme.

Dans le Budget 2022-2023, nous sommes allés plus loin dans notre lutte pour soutenir le pouvoir d'achat de la population.

Nous avons introduit la CSG *Income Allowance* de 1,000 roupies par mois pour 350,000 employés et indépendants pour un montant total de 4,5 milliards de roupies.

Deuxièmement, nous avons augmenté les pensions de base de 1,000 roupies par mois pour 300,000 bénéficiaires pour un montant de 4 milliards de roupies.

Par ailleurs, nous versons le CSG *Retirement Benefit* de 1,000 roupies par mois à 169,000 retraités âgés de 65 ans et plus, pour un montant de 2,2 milliards de roupies.

De plus, nous accordons une Prime à l'Emploi à 10,000 jeunes et femmes pour un montant de 2 milliards de roupies.

Nous rembourserons également 10,000 bénéficiaires du *Home Ownership Scheme* et du *Home Loan Scheme* pour un montant de 1,2 milliard de roupies.

En outre, nous avons introduit une allocation mensuelle d'invalidité, la CSG *Disability Allowance* de 2,500 roupies pour 10,000 personnes ayant une invalidité de 40 à 59 %, pour un montant de 325 millions de roupies.

Nous avons également augmenté de 20 % l'aide sociale et les allocations au titre du *SRM* pour 18,000 ménages, pour un montant de 200 millions de roupies.

Enfin, nous avons supprimé la taxe municipale pour 110,000 ménages pour un montant de 300 millions de roupies.

Nous fournissons ainsi 15 milliards de roupies à la population pour soutenir immédiatement son pouvoir d'achat.

À l'avenir, les mesures suivantes permettront d'améliorer encore le pouvoir d'achat de la population.

Le gouvernement a placé 12 produits essentiels sous le régime de la majoration maximale à partir du 1er juillet 2022, à savoir le poisson en conserve, les tomates en conserve, le fromage fondu, l'huile comestible, la margarine, le lait en poudre, les légumes secs, les couches pour bébés, les couches pour adultes, les aliments pour bébés, les céréales de blé et les pâtes.

Nous fournissons aussi quelque 500 millions de roupies à la *STC* pour qu'elle puisse fournir des produits essentiels tels que le lait, l'huile comestible et les légumineuses à un taux subventionné.

La marge des produits pharmaceutiques sera réduite grâce à un régime de majoration régressive.

De plus, les produits seront vendus avec un rabais d'au moins 50 % du prix d'origine après leur date de péremption mais avant leur date d'expiration.

Pour terminer, nous abaissons le taux d'imposition sur le revenu de 15 % à 12,5 % pour ceux qui gagnent plus de 53,846 roupies et jusqu'à 75,000 roupies par mois à partir de l'année de revenu 2022-2023.

En plus des mesures que je viens de mentionner, nous tiendrons, comme cela a été le cas les années précédentes, la réunion du Comité tripartite sur la compensation salariale d'ici la fin de l'année pour déterminer le quantum de la compensation salariale à verser aux travailleurs à partir de janvier 2023.

Pour conclure, ce gouvernement continuera à aider les familles mauriciennes à maintenir leur pouvoir d'achat, en particulier celles des groupes vulnérables.

CHILD DAY CARE CENTERS – LACK OF RELEVANT CLEARANCES

(No. B/851) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the numerous Child Day Care Centres operating without fire certificate, health clearance, building & land permit and standard infrastructure, she will state the actions taken by her Ministry to address same.

Reply: According to records available at the level of my Ministry, out of 371 Child Day Care Centres, 86 Child Day Care Centres are operating without a Fire Clearance, 5 Child Day Care Centres are operating without a Health Clearance and 10 Child Day Care Centres are operating without a Building and Land Use Permit.

My Ministry has been maintaining regular follow-up as regards action taken by the relevant authorities with a view to providing reasonable time to these CDCCs. To regularize their situation, my Ministry has provided a moratorium of 6 months, ending September 2022, so that these CDCCs may obtain their relevant clearances and register their institutions with my Ministry.

At the end of the moratorium, my Ministry would direct those CDCCs which would still not have complied with the requirements, to cease operations.

NEW SOCIAL LIVING DEVELOPMENT LTD – FUNDS – 12,000 HOUSING UNITS

(No. B/852) 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 New Social Living Development Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the quantum of funds it has raised since the creation thereof to date to finance the *ad hoc* programme of 12,000 housing units.

Reply: I am informed that an amount of Rs12 billion has been earmarked as subsidy component in the COVID-19 Projects Development Fund. This amount relates, *inter alia*, to –

- (i) Project Management Consultation in Construction (PMCC);
- (ii) Land acquisition, where required, and
- (iv) Government subsidy to the beneficiaries.

COST OF LIVING – IMPACT & CAUSES

(No. B/853) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the cost of living, he will state if any in-depth inquiry and/or study has/have been carried out to -

- (a) examine the causes of the drastic increase thereof, and
- (b) assess –
 - (i) the impact thereof on each and every group of the society, and
 - (ii) how persistent the increase is likely to be and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof and, if not, why not.

(Vide reply to PQ B/850)

NEW WOOTON FLYOVER - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/854) Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the proposed construction of the new Wooton flyover, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to where matters stand?

(Withdrawn)

NON-SUGAR (CROP) SECTOR – GENERAL WORKER – RECRUITMENT PROCESS

(No. B/855) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the 210 posts of General Worker funded for Financial Year 2021-2022 within the Development of Non-Sugar (Crop) Sector of his Ministry, he will state the number thereof that have been filled.

Reply: I am informed that the recruitment process to fill the vacant posts of General Worker within the Development of the Non-Sugar (Crop) Sector of my Ministry is underway and the posts would be filled once the exercise is over.

UNESCO - WORLD HERITAGE SITES - TENTATIVE LIST

(No. A/1) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to UNESCO World Heritage Sites, he will give the updated tentative list of cultural and natural sites submitted by Mauritius for inclusion therein, indicating if any cultural or natural site from the said list submitted by Mauritius has been placed into a ‘at Nomination File’ at UNESCO.

Reply: As per information obtained from the National Heritage Fund, a parastatal body under the aegis of the Ministry, the Black River Gorges National Park, was submitted to UNESCO, World Heritage Centre on 17 May 2006 for inclusion in its tentative list, based on the following criteria –

- (i) it is an outstanding example representing significant ongoing ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals, and
- (ii) the site contains the most important and significant natural habitat for *in situ* conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.

It is to be highlighted that for inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage Sites, as per the UNESCO guidelines, the State Party has to first of all include the proposed cultural or natural site on UNESCO's tentative list.

Once the site is included on the tentative list of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites, the State Party has to prepare the Nomination Dossier for submission to the World Heritage Centre for review and assessment by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

In the case of Black River Gorges National Park, following the decision of the then Government in February 2012 not to go ahead with its listing on the World Heritage List, the Nomination Dossier was not prepared and the matter was set aside.

As at date, the Black River Gorges National Park is still on the tentative list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.