



SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 18 OCTOBER 2022

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THE CABINET

(Formed by Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth)

| | |
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| Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth | Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity |
| Hon. Louis Steven Obeegadoo | Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism |
| Hon. Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun, GCSK | Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology |
| Dr. the Hon. Mohammad Anwar Husnood | Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management |
| Hon. Alan Ganoo | Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade |
| Dr. the Hon. Renganaden Padayachy | Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development |
| Hon. Mrs Fazila Jeewa-Daureeawoo, GCSK | Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity |
| Hon. Soomilduth Bholah | Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs |

and Cooperatives

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|---|---|
| Hon. Kavydass Ramano | Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change |
| Hon. Mahen Kumar Seeruttun | Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance |
| Hon. Georges Pierre Lesjongard | Minister of Energy and Public Utilities |
| Hon. Maneesh Gobin | Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security |
| Hon. Jean Christophe Stephan Toussaint | Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation |
| Hon. Mahendranuth Sharma Hurreeram | Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development |
| Hon. Darsanand Balgobin | Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation |
| Hon. Soodesh Satkam Callichurn | Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection |
| Dr. the Hon. Kailesh Kumar Singh Jagutpal | Minister of Health and Wellness |
| Hon. Sudheer Maudhoo | Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping |

Hon. Mrs Kalpana Devi Koonjoo-Shah

Minister of Gender Equality and Family
Welfare

Hon. Avinash Teeluck

Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage

Hon. Teeruthraj Hurdoyal

Minister of Public Service, Administrative
and Institutional Reforms

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

| | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Mr Speaker | Hon. Sooroojdev Phokeer, GCSK, GOSK |
| Deputy Speaker | Hon. Mohammad Zahid Nazurally |
| Deputy Chairperson of Committees | Hon. Sanjit Kumar Nuckcheddy |
| Clerk of the National Assembly | Lotun, Mrs Bibi Safeena |
| Adviser | Dowlutta, Mr Ram Ranjit |
| Deputy Clerk | Ramchurn, Ms Urmeelah Devi |
| Clerk Assistant | Gopall, Mr Navin |
| Clerk Assistant | Seetul, Ms Darshinee |
| Hansard Editor | Jankee, Mrs Chitra |
| Parliamentary Librarian and Information Officer | Jeewoonarain, Ms Prittydevi |
| Serjeant-at-Arms | Bundhoo, Mr Anirood |

MAURITIUS

Seventh National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 25 of 2022

Sitting of Tuesday 18 October 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. Office of the President

- (a) The 48th Annual Report of the Office of the Ombudsman for the period January - December 2021.
- (b) The Representation of the People (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 200 of 2022)

B. Prime Minister's Office

Ministry of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications

Ministry for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity

- (a) The Independent Broadcasting Authority (Administrative Penalties) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 199 of 2022)
- (b) The Information and Communication Technologies (Licensing and Fees) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 201 of 2022)
- (c) The Civil Aviation (Passenger Service Charge) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 272 of 2022)

C. Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology

- (a) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Mauritius Institute of Education for the year ended 30 June 2021.
- (b) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Higher Education Commission for the period ending 30 June 2021.
- (c) The Education (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 207 of 2022)

D. Ministry of Local Government, Disaster and Risk Management

- (a) The District Council of Grand Port (Advertisement) Regulations No. 1 of 2022. (Government Notice No. 189 of 2022)
- (b) The Mauritius Meteorological Services (Charges) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 255 of 2022)
- (c) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Statutory Bodies Family Protection Fund for the year ended 30 June 2021.

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

- (a) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Independent Police Complaints Commission for the year ended 30 June 2021.
- (b) The Road Traffic (Extension of Time for Validity and Renewal of Licence for Petrol Service Station or Private Petrol Station) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 243 of 2022)
- (c) The Road Traffic (Historic Motor Vehicles) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 270 of 2022)

F. Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development

- (a) The Performance Audit Report on the Government Cash Management for the period July 2017 to June 2020 - Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development. (In Original)
- (b) The Performance Audit Report on the Use of Information and Communication Technology in Enhancing Teaching and Learning for the period January 2017 to December 2021 - Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology. (In Original)
- (c) The Performance Audit Report on the Use of Pesticides in Agriculture for the period July 2018 to June 2021 - Ministry of Agro Industry and Food Security. (In Original)
- (d) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Economic Development Board for the year ended 30 June 2021.
- (e) The Accounts and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the COVID-19 Projects Development Fund for the period 28 April 2020 to 30 June 2021.
- (f) The Annual Report 2020/2021 of the Procurement Policy Office.
- (g) The Excise (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 3) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 205 of 2022)
- (h) The Customs Tariff (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 4) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 206 of 2022)
- (i) The Companies (Payment of Fees to Registrar) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 241 of 2022)

- (j) The Business Registration (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 2) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 242 of 2022)
- (k) The Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (Republic of Angola) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 245 of 2022)
- (l) The Public Procurement (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 256 of 2022)
- (m) The Public Procurement (Competitive Negotiations for Procurement of Unfinished and Remaining Works) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 257 of 2022)
- (n) The Sugar Insurance Fund (Prescribed Area and Prescribed Percentage of Total Insurable Sugar) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 261 of 2022)
- (o) The Sugar Insurance Fund (Amendment of Schedules) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 262 of 2022)
- (p) The Customs (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 263 of 2022)
- (q) The Customs Tariff (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 5) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 264 of 2022)
- (r) The Excise (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 265 of 2022)
- (s) The Excise (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 266 of 2022)
- (t) The Excise (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 4) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 267 of 2022)
- (u) The Public Procurement (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 2) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 280 of 2022)
- (v) The Public Procurement (Competitive Negotiations for Procurement of Road Reinstatement for Unfinished and Remaining Works) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 281 of 2022)
- (w) The Public Procurement (Competitive Negotiations for Procurement of Unfinished and Remaining Works) (Revocation) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 282 of 2022)

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

- (a) The Social Integration and Empowerment (Child Allowance Scheme) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 204 of 2022)
- (b) The National Savings Fund (Claims and Payment) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 249 of 2022)

H. Ministry of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives

- (a) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Productivity and Competitiveness Council (NPCC) for the Financial Year 2020-2021.
- (b) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Mauritius Standards Bureau for the year ended 30 June 2021.

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

- (a) The Environment Protection (Environmental Standards for Noise) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 250 of 2022)
- (b) The Environment Protection (Control of Noise) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 251 of 2022)
- (c) The Environment Protection (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 252 of 2022)

J. Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance

- (a) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Integrity Reporting Services Agency for the year ended 30 June 2021.
- (b) The Annual Report of the Insurance Industry Compensation Fund for the year ended 31 December 2021.
- (c) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Financial Intelligence Unit for the year ended June 2019.
- (d) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Financial Intelligence Unit for the year ended June 2020.
- (e) The Virtual Asset and Initial Token Offerings Services (Travel) Rules 2022. (Government Notice No. 226 of 2022)
- (f) The Insurance (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 236 of 2022)

- (g) The Insurance (Structured Investment-Linked Insurance Business) Rules 2022. (Government Notice No. 237 of 2022)
- (h) The Insurance (Long-Term Insurance Business Solvency) (Amendment) Rules 2022. (Government Notice No. 238 of 2022)
- (i) The Insurance (Returns) (Amendment) Rules 2022. (Government Notice No. 239 of 2022)
- (j) The Financial Services (Consolidated Licensing and Fees) (Amendment No. 5) Rules 2022. (Government Notice No. 240 of 2022)
- (k) The Financial Services (Family Office) (Amendment) Rules 2022. (Government Notice No. 268 of 2022)
- (l) The Financial Services (Framework for the Imposition of Administrative Penalties) Rules 2022. (Government Notice No. 269 of 2022)
- (m) The Ombudsperson for Financial Services (Sworn Statement) (Revocation) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 278 of 2022)

K. Attorney General

Ministry of Agro Industry and Food Security

- (a) The Financial Statements and Report of the Director of Audit of the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Botanic Garden for the year ended 30 June 2018.
- (b) 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 2021.
- (c) The Seeds (Registration of Seed Dealer and Seed Producer) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 227 of 2022)
- (d) The Seeds (Registration of Variety) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 228 of 2022)
- (e) The Seeds (Seed Production and Certification) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 229 of 2022)
- (f) The Seeds (Marketing) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 230 of 2022)
- (g) The Seeds (Sampling and Testing) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 231 of 2022)
- (h) The Seeds (Import and Export) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 232 of 2022)

- (i) The Seeds (Appeal Board) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 233 of 2022)
- (j) The Meat (Abattoir) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 234 of 2022)
- (k) The Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Botanic Garden Trust (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 235 of 2022)
- (l) The CITES and Wildlife (Prescribed Species) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 244 of 2022)

L. Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation

The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Youth Council for the year ended 30 June 2021. (In Original)

M. Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development

The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Construction Industry Development Board for the year ended 30 June 2021.

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

- (a) The Annual Report of the Trade Union Trust Fund for the Financial Year 2020-2021.
- (b) The Consumer Protection (Control of Fairs) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 190 of 2022)
- (c) The Consumer Protection (Price and Supplies Control) (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 2) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 191 of 2022)
- (d) The Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 6) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 192 of 2022)
- (e) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 18) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 193 of 2022)
- (f) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 19) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 194 of 2022)

- (g) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 20) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 195 of 2022)
- (h) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 21) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 196 of 2022)
- (i) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 22) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 197 of 2022)
- (j) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 23) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 202 of 2022)
- (k) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 24) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 203 of 2022)
- (l) The Baking Industry (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 209 of 2022)
- (m) The Catering and Tourism Industries (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 210 of 2022)
- (n) The Cinema Employees (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 211 of 2022)
- (o) The Cleaning Enterprises (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 212 of 2022)
- (p) The Distributive Trades (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 213 of 2022)
- (q) The Domestic Workers (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 214 of 2022)
- (r) The Export Enterprises (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 215 of 2022)
- (s) The Factory Employees (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 216 of 2022)
- (t) The Field-crop and Orchard Workers (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 217 of 2022)

- (u) The Livestock Workers (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 218 of 2022)
- (v) The Newspapers and Periodicals Employees (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 219 of 2022)
- (w) The Pre-Primary School Employees (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 220 of 2022)
- (x) The Private Hospitals and Other Related Health Services (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 221 of 2022)
- (y) The Road Haulage Industry (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 222 of 2022)
- (z) The Salt-Manufacturing Industry (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 223 of 2022)
- (aa) The Tea Industry Workers (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 224 of 2022)
- (bb) The Travel Agents and Tour Operators Workers (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 225 of 2022)
- (cc) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 25) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 246 of 2022)
- (dd) The Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Petroleum Products) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 248 of 2022)
- (ee) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 26) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 253 of 2022)
- (ff) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 27) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 254 of 2022)
- (gg) The Prepackaged Food (Revocation) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 258 of 2022)
- (hh) The Consumer Protection (Sale of Pre-Packed Food) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 259 of 2022)

- (ii) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 28) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 279 of 2022)

O. Ministry of Health and Wellness

- (a) The Quarantine (COVID-19 Restrictions) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 198 of 2022)
- (b) The Quarantine (COVID-19 Restrictions) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 277 of 2022)

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

- (a) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Fishermen Welfare Fund for the year ended 30 June 2021.
- (b) The Fisheries and Marine Resources (Marine Protected Areas) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 208 of 2022)
- (c) The Fisheries and Marine Resources (Vessel Monitoring System) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 247 of 2022)
- (d) The Fisheries and Marine Resources (Extension of Net Fishing Season) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 260 of 2022)
- (e) The Maritime Zones (Economic Activities) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 271 of 2022)
- (f) The Fisheries and Marine Resources (Licence and Fees) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 273 of 2022)
- (g) The Fisheries and Marine Resources (Licence and Fees) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 274 of 2022)

Q. Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage

- (a) The Annual Report of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund for the Financial Year ended 30 June 2021.
- (b) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Mauritius Council of Registered Librarians for the 18-month period ended 30 June 2017.
- (c) The Annual Report and Report of Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Mauritius Council of Registered Librarians for the year ended 30 June 2021.

- (d) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Chinese Speaking Union for the year ended 30 June 2020.
- (e) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Mauritius Marathi Cultural Centre Trust for the year ended 30 June 2021.

R. Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms

- (a) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Public Officers' Welfare Council for the year ended 30 June 2021.
- (b) The Civil Establishment Order (No. 2) 2022. (Government Notice No. 275 of 2022)
- (c) The Civil Establishment (Rodrigues Regional Assembly) Order (No. 2) 2022. (Government Notice No. 276 of 2022)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**MR S. K. – MURDER – ENQUIRY**

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to whether the enquiry into the murder of Mr S. K. in October 2020 has now been completed and the findings thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like first of all to once again express my deepest sympathy to the bereaved family of late Mr S. K., whom I knew personally, being a supporter of my Party.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is important to highlight that Police enquiry into the death of Mr S. K. had started as far back as October 2020 at the level of Moka Police Station. The case was subsequently taken over by the Major Crime Investigation Team. Whilst the enquiry was ongoing by the MCIT, in November 2020, at the request of the Director of Public Prosecutions an interim report was sent to his Office.

On 01 December 2020, pursuant to section 111 of the District and Intermediate Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act 1988, a representative of the DPP lodged a case for a Judicial Enquiry into the death of Mr S. K. at the District Court of Moka. The Judicial Enquiry started on 04 December 2020 and after hearings were completed, the District Magistrate submitted her findings to the DPP on 22 November 2021.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, following a Minute from the Director of Public Prosecutions on 26 January 2022, referring to the findings of the Judicial Enquiry, the Office of the DPP instructed the Police to investigate the case and report back to his Office.

I am further informed that, since the start of the Police enquiry in October 2020 until November 2021, statements from 98 persons had been recorded. After the instructions of the DPP dated 26 January 2022, 17 other persons have been questioned by the Major Crime Investigation Team (MCIT) and their statements have been recorded.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as the inquiry is ongoing, it will not be proper for me to provide further information related to the case at this stage as it may cause prejudice to the investigations.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, the Judicial Enquiry into the death of late S. K. was ordered by the DPP pursuant to sections 110 and 111 of the District and Intermediate Court (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act which provides as follows, and I quote –

“Section 110. Investigation in case of violent death

(1) Where a Magistrate is informed that a person –

- (a) has committed suicide;
- (b) has been killed by another, or by an animal or by machinery or an accident;
- (c) has died under circumstances raising a reasonable suspicion that some person has committed an offence; or
- (d) has died in prison or while in custody of the Police,

he shall proceed or order an officer to proceed to the examination of the body and an investigation of the matter with the assistance of a medical practitioner.

(2) The Magistrate may, in any such case, exercise all of his powers under section 50.

(3) The Magistrate shall forward to the Director of Public Prosecutions the reports of the officer and medical practitioner, together with his own report and any further information bearing on the case.

Section 111. Inquiry into violent or suspicious death

(1) In any of the cases specified in section 110, the Director of Public Prosecutions may (whether before or after receiving from the Magistrate the reports referred to) require the Magistrate to hold an inquiry into the cause of the death and circumstances connected with it, and thereupon the Magistrate shall hold such inquiry and shall proceed to take the depositions of those who know the facts and circumstances of the case.

(2) The depositions shall be taken and recorded as depositions are taken at an inquiry under Part II and all witnesses shall be liable to the same penalties for non-attendance when summoned, and for giving false evidence as any witness in such inquiry.

(3) In holding such inquiry the Magistrate may exercise any of the powers referred to in sections 50 and 110.

(4) Such inquiry shall be held in open Court”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it follows, therefore, that the report of the District Magistrate was meant to be submitted to the DPP for appropriate action, as acknowledged by the Office of the DPP in its communiqué issued on 17 October 2022.

However, as the House is also aware, the purported report of the Judicial Enquiry has been leaked out and has become the subject of debate and of all sorts of comments in the media and among Members of the Opposition. It is indeed a matter of great concern that such a document, if genuine, has found its way in the public domain, as the ensuing hue and cry in the media and in the Opposition will certainly undermine any further investigation into the case. Moreover, the trial by the Press will also undermine the course of justice and deny a fair trial to any accused who may later be brought to Court.

It should again be brought out that the leaked document in question is only a purported report of the findings of the District Magistrate. It is not a judgement. Moreover, the leaked report, which has been the subject of so many comments and recriminations in certain sections of the media and the Opposition, is neither signed nor does it bear the official seal of the District Court. The authenticity of the purported report cannot, therefore, be ascertained.

Nevertheless, be it as it may, I, as Prime Minister, am as concerned as the close ones of late Mr S. K. to see a speedy completion of the Police enquiry in this matter. Besides, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the enquiry is being carried out in accordance with the instructions of the DPP.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me make it very clear that we, on this side of the House, are also very keen to see that the perpetrator or perpetrators of such heinous crime, whoever they are, are brought to justice and are made to pay for their acts.

Thank you.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, firstly I would like to congratulate the DPP, the Magistrate and the Avengers for their courage and efforts to establish the truth in an enquiry which was going to establish...

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr X. L. Duval: ...for Mr Kistnen as suicide. That is a fact.

Mr Speaker: Your question first!

Mr X. L. Duval: My question, Mr Speaker, Sir, is this. Of the 17 persons who have been interrogated since the end of January 2022, is Mr Yogida Sawmynaden on that list and, if so, was it under caution and will he also provide the House the full list of the persons interrogated since January 2022?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think everyone would appreciate that it is not proper for me to give information about the enquiry itself, even with regard to the people who have been questioned so far, and to those who are likely to be questioned in the future. I would call it a bit of an exceptional case that maybe, I can exceptionally try to give some information, but I must inform the House that the Police carry out an enquiry in all confidentiality. The Police do not communicate to me the contents of such enquiry, but, again, as I stated, there has been so much hue and cry, and, anyway, I do not want to qualify what has been publicized or said. So, exceptionally, let me say that I have, in fact, asked the Police about Mr Sawmynaden and I have been informed that he has not yet been interrogated amongst the 17 that I mentioned, but he was interrogated earlier and he had given eight statements to the Police in connection with this matter.

Mr X. L. Duval: Would the hon. Prime Minister tell us whether this interrogation was also concerning the Constituency Clerk issue? Of course, Mr Speaker, Sir, you know that he will need to be interrogated under caution. But let me firstly come to this famous report by the Magistrate, which the DPP himself has not contested the veracity thereof. Let that be clear. Now, this report, Mr Speaker, Sir, has concluded in a very strong manner about the incompetence and the cover up of the Police Force in particular...

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I object to what the hon. Member is saying? First of all, on a point of order, I do not mind what he quotes from any report, but if there is a report, it has not been communicated to me; I do not have any cognizance of such a report. Could the hon. Member table the report so that I can have a look at it and, of course, be in a better position to answer his questions?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, he just told us that he was...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition...

Mr X. L. Duval: I can table it at the end of the Question Time certainly.

Mr Speaker: It is a very clear issue. Please table the report.

Mr X. L. Duval: I will refer to it and table it in a moment. There is no rush. He has been waiting a year for it.

Mr Speaker: You cannot...

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

The Prime Minister: I have taken an objection.

Mr X. L. Duval: Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister, given that...

Mr Speaker: Where is the report?

Mr X. L. Duval: ...this report has been so critical of the CID team...

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am taking a point of order. The hon. Leader of the Opposition...

Mr Speaker: I am waiting for the report to be on the Table!

Mr X. L. Duval: You want me to bring it to you yourself? You want me to bring it?

Mr Speaker: Where is the report? The report should be on the Table!

Mr X. L. Duval: You want me to bring it to you?

Mr Speaker: The report should be on the Table!

An hon. Member: *Met li deor!*

Mr Speaker: Please! Don't delay anymore!

Mr X. L. Duval: It is your people who have not come to pick it up, not me! Alright?

Mr Speaker: I am not talking to you; I am talking to the Attendants.

Mr X. L. Duval: Okay, alright, good! Now, the hon. Magistrate has said that she does not want any other case to be dealt with in the same manner. Now, let me ask the hon. Prime Minister...

The Prime Minister: Can I see this report?

Mr Speaker: On a point of order...

Hon. Leader of the Opposition, first of all, let me ask the Prime Minister. Is it a point of order that you are raising?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I want...

Mr Speaker: What is your point of order?

The Prime Minister: The point of order is I need to have a look at the report; whether it is the report...

Mr Speaker: Have a look!

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: You can have a look at it with your own eyes.

The Prime Minister: Yes. This report, Mr Speaker, Sir, first of all, as I have said, bears no seal of the District Court. There is no signature of the Magistrate. I do not see anything to certify the authenticity of this report. So, is it a report?

Mr Speaker: So, let me examine the report. Please bring the report to me.

Mr X. L. Duval: May I continue while you read the report?

Mr Speaker: Wait a minute! Wait a minute, I will give you the floor!

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: May I continue now, Mr Speaker?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: So, the Chair rules that this report does not seem to be to have any authenticity. So, anyone who holds the report or comments on the report bears his own responsibility.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, the original enquiry by CID, MCIT, whatever, concluded suicide. It is clear from the depositions during Moka Court, from the report of the Magistrate that has not been contested by the DPP himself, that there was huge incompetence and even cover up on the part of the Police Officers originally involved in that case. Have these Officers been interdicted? This has nothing to do with the enquiry. Have they been interdicted? Have they been disciplined? Have they been dismissed from the Force or as we understand it, have they, in fact, been promoted to higher ranks?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have also read the Communiqué of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. Maybe with the little English that I know, I do not see anywhere in the Communiqué and perhaps with the help of the hon. Leader of the Opposition, he can enlighten me a bit, where in that very Communiqué the DPP has said that this is the report of the findings of the judicial inquiry into the case of death of Mr S. K. Where is it? Maybe he can just try to pinpoint to me which paragraph says that.

(Interruptions)

Let me answer my friend!

Secondly, I am informed by the Police Station of Moka that this case was reported on 18 October 2020 not as a case of suicide but as a case of dead body. Therefore, the inquiry started. I am informed - and it is unfortunate, I must say - that during the course of the inquiry, one Officer, in his opinion, had said that it could be a case of suicide, but it was never classified as a case of suicide. I am informed by the Police that there was never any communication to the Office of the DPP to say that the conclusion is that this is a case of suicide. Therefore, the inquiry has been ongoing and is still proceeding.

Mr X. L. Duval: This shows that the Prime Minister knows about the case in detail. So, I am going to ask the Prime Minister - if you read the first paragraph of the Communiqué of the Director of Public Prosecutions regarding the disclosure of the findings, it is clear that the report is a genuine report, Mr Speaker, Sir. Therefore, the question here again is: has the original team which has been so criticised during the hearing - forget the report - and public hearings, have these members, instead of being interdicted, been promoted?

The Prime Minister: I am not aware of those who have inquired into the matter. What I know is that the inquiry is proceeding, and I can find out who are the people, whether they are the same people or different people who are enquiring.

Mr X. L. Duval: Apparently, one ASP, Mr S., was, in fact, promoted to SP following the initial inquiry, Mr Speaker, Sir. Now, the second thing is this Police Medical Officer, where again it is recommended that there should be an inquiry into the professional competency. He, in fact, did the autopsy and came to a completely different conclusion as to the cause of death, etc. Is this Medical Officer, Dr. S., still performing autopsies for the Police? Can you tell us?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, the findings of the report of the Magistrate have not been communicated to me. I am informed that, nor have they been communicated to the Police. I do not thus know what are the conclusions with regard to the conduct of Police Officers and the conduct of Police Medical Officers. If I have the report, of course, I shall try to see if any action has to be taken, but I do not have this information.

Mr X. L. Duval: Since Friday the report has been out. Can the hon. Prime Minister tell us if he talked to the Commissioner of Police at all about it or not at all?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I can understand the ignorance of the hon. Leader of the Opposition. He probably does not know what the process is when there is a judicial inquiry. The finding of the judicial inquiry is not communicated to the public; it is not even communicated to Counsels who are appearing in the case. It is communicated only to the Director of Public Prosecutions. As has rightly been pointed out in the Communiqué of the Director of Public Prosecutions, it is he, alone, who decides whether to make that finding public or not. It is good that I quote paragraph 6 –

“As such, it is for the DPP alone to decide in what particular circumstances the findings should be made public taking as sole consideration public (...)”

I do not want to read the whole paragraph. If the DPP decides to make that public, then, of course, I shall take notice and I shall see whatever actions have to be taken.

Mr X. L. Duval: He told us there are so many things on his radar. What I want to know now is that - this has caused such a tremendous concern in the population -, as Minister of Interior, since Friday, did you or did you not communicate at any point in time with the

Commissioner of Police, who may or may not come to see you every morning, and raise this matter with the Commissioner of Police? Will you tell us that as Minister of Interior, you have not raised this issue to the Commissioner of Police yet?

The Prime Minister: Which issue?

Mr X. L. Duval: The issue of -

- the murder of Mr Kistnen;
- the purported report, and
- whether to his knowledge, is or isn't this report a genuine report?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am, of course, concerned, and that is why the Attorney General has also issued a Communiqué to express Government's concern about the fact that there is a document which is in circulation. Now, first of all, the fundamental question is: is it an authentic document? Is it, in fact, the finding of the Magistrate? Therefore, according to law and our regulations, there are only certain people who have access to this document. So far, it has not been made public, and that is why there needs to be an inquiry. In fact, the Police have started an inquiry into this matter. Of course, it is a matter of concern!

He is talking now about radar. Maybe he will tell me that his son has been on my radar.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Please!

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I can talk at length on the children and even on the family of the Prime Minister. If he wants to go into that, let us have a debate. You want to talk about it? Let us talk about it.

The Prime Minister: What radar are you talking about?

Mr X. L. Duval: You want me to talk about your children or your wife? So, do not talk about my son!

The Prime Minister: You assume your responsibility!

Mr X. L. Duval: Okay! Now, Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, my child has not been drinking and driving a car and causing an accident! This is cover up!

Mr Speaker: Please, Prime Minister, please refrain from...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! No hon. Members should bring family inside the House. Please, continue!

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: So, ask him to withdraw it. Ask him to withdraw what he has said!

An hon. Member: Withdraw!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr X. L. Duval: Ask him to withdraw what he has said if he does not want to bring family into this House!

The Prime Minister: This is not family!

Mr X. L. Duval: Ask him to withdraw!

The Prime Minister: This is a criminal case where there is an investigation, my friend! What family?

Mr X. L. Duval: You are tampering!

The Prime Minister: It so happened to be your son!

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, he, therefore, tells us that despite all this concern in the population, he is refusing to say whether he has raised the matter with the Commissioner of Police.

The Prime Minister: I have answered!

Mr X. L. Duval: This is on record now, Mr Speaker, Sir. Let us continue about this murder case. Now, the murder case, Mr Speaker, Sir, reveals widespread corruption in emergency procurement during COVID-19, which he, himself, was the Chairman of that Committee - widespread corruption! Can I ask the Prime Minister whether he will now, after the report of the Magistrate, appoint a Commission of Inquiry? Because there are not hundreds of millions but billions of rupees, and it is clear - the Magistrate says it is clear - that the procurement issue could be the major cause of the murder of late Mr Kistnen.

The Prime Minister: Let me first correct what the hon. Leader of the Opposition has said - maybe he was not paying attention when I was replying to the question as to whether I had raised the matter of the leak of the purported document in public with the Commissioner of Police. I have. I have just said. And as a result, there is an inquiry. And, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not only that I have raised it. I see that the Judiciary has also raised it because the Senior Registrar and Regional Court Administrator at the Supreme Court was instructed by the Master and Registrar to give a declaration concerning the Judicial Inquiry Cause Number 4716/2020 which was held before Moka District Court where the learned Magistrate of Moka District Court gave her findings on 22 November 2021, declaration in relation to an inquiry on possible leakage of the findings and documents of the District Magistrate of Moka. So, you see, I have raised it, the Judiciary also is raising the same concern.

With regard to the second part of his question, again, the hon. Leader of the Opposition is referring to a document which, first of all, he has tabled and which is not acceptable because there is no signature, there is no seal, and we do not know the authenticity; it is not certified to be a copy of the findings. So, how can I answer on documents which he is quoting, which are not authenticated?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, during his meeting with the Commissioner of Police - since 26 January, the Commissioner of Police had been apprised of the findings - did he not ask him whether what has been published corroborates what has been submitted to him? He failed to do that?

The Prime Minister: I do not understand what the Leader of the Opposition himself understands. The findings have not been communicated to the Police. They have, in fact, not been communicated to the Police! They are with the DPP, hon. Leader of the Opposition! Let me

explain what has happened. When the DPP has received the report, the DPP has advised the Police to carry out the investigation. The report has not been communicated to the Police. How many times do I have to repeat that?

Mr X. L. Duval: Exactly! So, the advice must corroborate this particular report. I know that you are trying to hide; you are trying to get away from it. It is very clear what you are trying to do. Nobody is fooled by what you are trying to do.

I would like to say, Mr Speaker, Sir, one last thing to show how the Police are acting in this case. It has been in the Press now that the DPP has, for many weeks now, asked for hon. Yogida Sawmynaden to be formally charged in connection with the case of the Constituency Clerk. Is he going to tell us that the CP, whom he meets every day, has not also informed him that one of his own MPs and ex-Minister has been advised that there should be a formal charge against him? Is he also not aware of that?

The Prime Minister: I am aware that there is an inquiry which is ongoing at the level of the Police, and the Police, in consultation with the DPP, obviously will take a stand.

Mr X. L. Duval: Are you saying that...

Mr Speaker: Okay. Time is over! You are just turning around.

Mr X. L. Duval: No, I am not...

Mr Speaker: Time is over! My ruling! Time is over! Next item - Prime Minister's Question Time!

EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE OF MAURITIUS – PETROLEUM EXPLORATION

(No. B/992) **Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Exclusive Economic Zone of Mauritius, he will state if concessions have been granted for petroleum exploration thereat and, if so, indicate the locations, extent and companies involved therein.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of Mauritius, which extends over an area of approximately 2.3 million km² covering the regions of Mauritius, Rodrigues, Agalega, Tromelin islands, the Cargados Carajos and the Chagos

Archipelago, is our largest natural asset. As its potential for still untapped natural resources may be significantly huge, my Government has continuously been focusing on a prudent, responsible, and sustainable development of such a vast maritime economic zone.

As a matter of fact, in the Government Programme 2020-2024, clear mention is made of a Unified Regulatory Framework, including an Offshore Petroleum Bill and a Seabed Mineral Bill to accelerate the development of our blue economy. And pertinently, the Offshore Petroleum Bill was enacted in December 2021, thereby replacing the outdated Petroleum Act 1970 by a new and modern Offshore Petroleum Act 2021.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Offshore Petroleum Act 2021 opens up new avenues and opportunities for Mauritius as we seek to sustainably develop our Exclusive Economic Zone. It provides more clarity with regard to the processes involved in the regulation of offshore petroleum activities which include the prospection for, the exploration and the production of petroleum. The Act provides for the Department for Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones Administration and Exploration, which falls under the aegis of my Office, to be the regulatory body for petroleum activities in the maritime zones of Mauritius and which shall, *inter alia*, be responsible for the following –

- (i) to regulate, monitor and oversee petroleum activities;
- (ii) to issue prospecting permits, exploration licences, retention licences and production licences;
- (iii) to negotiate, on behalf of the Government, prospecting agreements and petroleum agreements;
- (iv) to facilitate the conduct of petroleum activities;
- (v) to develop strategies and policies to minimise and manage the impacts of petroleum activities in the marine environment;
- (vi) to advise in the formulation, planning and management of policies in relation to petroleum activities, and
- (vii) to do such other things as may be necessary for the proper conduct of petroleum activities.

The Offshore Petroleum Act provides a new regulatory régime and is underpinned by the following principles –

- (i) first, to encourage private sector participation in the exploration for offshore petroleum through the establishment of a modern and stable regulatory environment providing for the transparent and even-handed treatment of investors, and access to and security of tenure over an area of petroleum potential;
- (ii) second, to establish streamlined and effective institutional arrangements for the management of the offshore petroleum activities; and
- (iii) third, to apply the principles of predictability, transparency and accountability for the administration of offshore petroleum activities.

The centrepiece of this new régime is the establishment of a concession-based regulatory system which is commonly applied in both frontier jurisdictions, like ours, and mature jurisdictions. Under such system, rights to engage in the exploration for offshore petroleum would be granted by the Government to investors seeking to carry out petroleum activity in defined areas or blocks during the agreed period.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Act provides for a system of titles for the conduct of petroleum activities similar to other jurisdictions such as Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados and Seychelles. The titles under the Offshore Petroleum Act comprise a prospecting permit, an exploration licence, a retention licence or a production licence.

These four types of titles, as laid out in the Act, shall be granted as follows –

- (i) a prospecting permit confers non-exclusive rights to the permit holder to undertake low impact exploration activities such as seismic surveying and other non-surface disturbing activities to search for petroleum. The permit is valid for a maximum of two years and may be renewed for an additional period of two years by mutual agreement;
- (ii) an exploration licence allows the licensee to search for petroleum and carry out sampling and analysis of deposits to explore whether petroleum is commercially viable as well as to test systems, equipment and processing facilities;
- (iii) a retention licence allows a licensee to recover petroleum in a licenced area for the purpose of an appraisal, other than for commercial purposes, and

- (iv) a production licence allows a licensee to recover petroleum in a licence area for commercial purposes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Department for Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones Administration and Exploration, in consultation with the Attorney General's Office, is still working on the Safety Code of Practice and the Environment Code of Practice. Therefore, as at date, the Act has not yet been proclaimed and no concession or licence has been granted for petroleum exploration in our Exclusive Economic Zone. However, I wish to add that in 2016, Government invited Expressions of Interest for the conduct of multi-client seismic surveys for hydrocarbon exploration in four selected areas of the Exclusive Economic Zone of Mauritius, at no cost to Government. The four areas selected on the basis of their geological formation and thus the potential for hydrocarbon resources were as follows –

- (i) an area of approximately 18,000 km² in the region of Agalega;
- (ii) an area of approximately 108,000 km² in the region of the Northern Mascarene Basin;
- (iii) an area of approximately 20,000 km² in the region of the Northern Saya de Malha, and
- (iv) an area of approximately 228,000 km² in the region of Nazareth and Cargados and Carajos Banks.

Eight companies had submitted their Expressions of Interest by June 2016. The bids were evaluated and in October 2017, the eight companies were invited to submit their Requests for Proposal. In response to that exercise, only three companies submitted their bids. The bids were assessed and CGG Services (UK) Ltd obtained the highest marks in terms of compliance with the technical, environmental and financial criteria. Between June 2018 and April 2019, negotiations were held with CGG Services (UK) Ltd to agree, *inter alia*, on the following provisions to be included in the agreement –

- (i) the multi-client seismic surveys will be carried out by CGG Services (UK) Ltd at no cost to the Government;
- (ii) the geoscientific data collected pursuant to the multi-client seismic surveys shall remain at all times the property of the Government of Mauritius;

- (iii) the surveys will be carried out within a period of 24 months as from the date of the issue of a survey licence. This period may be extended by mutual agreement between the parties for a period of one year;
- (iv) the Government will grant exclusive right to CGG Services (UK) Ltd to license the data to third parties on a non-exclusive multi-client basis, to use the geoscientific data;
- (v) CGG Services (UK) Ltd will have an exclusive period of not more than 9 years to market and license the data as from the end of the seismic data processing. At the end of the exclusive period, the exclusive right shall be exercised by the Government of Mauritius;
- (vi) the cost of the geoscientific survey, inclusive of acquisition, processing, interpretation, marketing and sales will be US \$1,450 per line kilometre, and
- (vii) CGG Services (UK) Ltd will proceed with the survey only if it is able to secure pre-commitment underwriting from potential oil and gas companies.

In October 2019, Government agreed to –

- (i) award the contract for the conduct of multi-client seismic surveys for hydrocarbon exploration covering a total of 46,957 line kilometres in four selected areas of our Exclusive Economic Zone to CGG Services SAS, and
- (ii) sign an Agreement between the Government of Mauritius and CGG Services SAS, for the conduct of the geoscientific survey.

In January 2020, the agreement for the conduct of geoscientific survey was signed between the Government and CGG Services SAS. The agreement provides CGG Services SAS with 18 months of ‘Marketing Period’ so as to secure pre-commitment underwriting, that is, a pre-funding from potential oil and gas companies. However, CGG Services SAS has requested that the ‘Marketing Period’ be extended due to the following reasons –

- (i) the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on global industry, creating an oversupply of hydrocarbons and consequently reducing oil and gas market prices. As a result, international oil companies have had difficulties to raise investment capital for exploration, and

- (ii) there has been a significant reduction in exploration spending in frontier areas.

Following an improvement in the state of affairs regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, CGG Services SAS is pursuing its promotional activities in order to secure pre-commitment underwriting from potential oil and gas companies. Earlier this month, CGG Services SAS were at the Africa Oil Week in Cape Town, South Africa, which is the premier event for Oil and Gas in Africa, as part of its marketing and promotional activities.

Once CGG Services SAS has secured pre-commitment underwriting from oil and gas companies, it will then submit a request for a prospecting permit to the Department for Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones Administration and Exploration, in line with the provisions of the new Offshore Petroleum Act.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Government firmly believes that now with a more appropriate framework which is set out by the Offshore Petroleum Act, it will provide the necessary impetus in accelerating the development of our ocean economy and tapping the latent resources in our vast maritime zones.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Since the Offshore Petroleum Bill, which is yet to be promulgated, is underpinned by the principles of predictability, transparency and accountability for the administration of petroleum activities, would the Prime Minister state whether the agreements entered into for geoscientific surveys will be rendered public?

The Prime Minister: Everything will be done according to the law, Mr Speaker, Sir, and to what is provided in the Act. Of course, we shall have to adhere to all the conditions that the Act provides for.

Dr. Boolell: Now, the Prime Minister has stated very clearly that the principles of predictability, transparency and accountability would be applied. He said it when he made the concluding remarks in relation to debates on the Bill. I have asked a specific question and I want a specific reply. Will it be made public, yes or no?

The Prime Minister: The process is laid down in the law which has been voted by Parliament. We shall go according to that process, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Dr. Boolell: You stated the process, but the question is simple. Could you say loud and clear whether it is going to be made public or not? You cannot simply hide and say that you are going to stick thick and thin to the principles of transparency and accountability. If you do, then it has to be made public.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am saying loud and clear that whatever is going...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Please!

The Prime Minister: ...to be done with regard to any application, I have taken the time of the House to mention the different licences that can be given to a company. The Act provides for a process that is laid down for the grant of a licence to an operator. So, this will be done according to what is prescribed in the law.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Can the hon. Prime Minister state whether there have been attempts in the past from independence to 2015 with regard to petroleum exploration in our Exclusive Economic Zone, and if yes, what has been the outcome?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the last exploration surveys for hydrocarbon within the Exclusive Economic Zone of Mauritius dates back to the 70s.

Seismic surveys were conducted by Texaco to explore the structure and geology of the underlying subsoil. Two exploratory wells were also drilled on the Nazareth and Saya de Malha Banks. Later, the research revealed that the findings from the wells were not conclusive and could not be used to completely condemn the region for further prospection.

I must also add that it is unfortunate that – we have tried to find out –Government is not in possession of the data with regard to the survey that was done. In fact, I have asked my Office to investigate and to try to see whether we could be communicated this data, but, unfortunately, it dates back to the 70s. We are not even able to have proper information from Texaco; we do not know whether Texaco is still there. From memory, I think it was an American company. But we shall try to see whether this matter can be pursued.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. In the Offshore Petroleum Act, Section 74, mention was made about the Petroleum Fund. Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether there has been any development with regard to same? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Petroleum Fund is yet to be set up because there needs to be consultations between the Department for Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones Administration and Exploration, various different Ministries and the Attorney General's Office also on the framework that would be put into place.

As I said, for a transparent fund management and more importantly for each Mauritian to benefit eventually from any revenue that can be generated from any petroleum activity, provision will be made for the raising of funds as follows –

- (i) the setting of a Petroleum Fund into which all monies shall be paid and which shall be administered and managed by the Ministry responsible for the subject of finance;
- (ii) the payment of royalties and taxes in accordance with the amended Income Tax Act as will be specified in the Petroleum Agreement, and
- (iii) the payment of charges and such other fees to Government as may be prescribed.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Tour!

Ms Tour: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. In his answer, the hon. Prime Minister mentioned a Safety Code of Practice and an Environment Code of Practice. Can he inform the House on the intent of those codes of practice?

The Prime Minister: The Safety Code of Practice will definitely ensure a safe, secure and sustainable conduct of petroleum activities while reducing risk factors, maintaining the integrity of the offshore installation, securing the safety of operational personnel and protecting the marine environment.

The Environment Code of Practice will provide further assurance for the sustainable management of the petroleum resources and marine environment of the maritime zones. It will include –

- protecting the marine environment and associated ecosystems;

- taking all appropriate measures to protect and preserve biological diversity and rare or fragile ecosystems as well as species of wild fauna and flora and their habitats;
- sustaining the potential of petroleum resources to meet the needs of future generations;
- safeguarding the life supporting capacity of the environment, and
- avoiding remedying or mitigating any adverse effects of activities on the environment.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Mayotte!

Mrs Mayotte: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Prime Minister mentioned earlier that eight companies submitted their Expression of Interest with regard to the multi-client seismic survey in 2016. Can the hon. Prime Minister provide the names of these eight companies? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: The eight companies are –

- (i) Geo East Co. Ltd of China;
- (ii) Petroleum Geo-Services Asia Pacific Ltd of Malaysia;
- (iii) Spectrum Geo Ltd of the United Kingdom;
- (iv) TGS NOPEC Geophysical Company ASA of Norway;
- (v) WesternGeco Ltd of UK;
- (vi) Fugro Mauritius Ltd of Mauritius;
- (vii) CGG Services SA UK, and
- (viii) Gardline Geosurvey Ltd of Australia.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Bhagwan: B/993. I am lucky!

MR D. B. – APPOINTMENT, SALARY, ALLOWANCE & OTHER BENEFITS

(No. B/993) **Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to Mr D. B., Senior Adviser attached to his Office, he will state the –

- (a) terms and conditions of appointment thereof, indicating the total monthly pay packet including allowances and amount payable as *ex-gratia* bonus, and
- (b) number of boards and public-owned companies on which the latter serves either as member or chairperson, indicating the fees and other benefits drawn, if any, in respect thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the Question, Mr D.B., Senior Adviser in my Office, is paid a monthly salary of Rs119,500 plus a monthly extra duty allowance of Rs25,000. The other terms and conditions of his appointment are in line with the recommendations contained in the 2021 PRB Report. Mr D.B. has not been paid any *ex-gratia* bonus. He has been remunerated only as per the terms and conditions of his contract of employment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the Question, Mr D. B. serves on one parastatal body and five Government-owned companies as follows –

- (i) Gambling Regulatory Authority as Vice-Chairperson;
- (ii) Mauritius Duty Free Paradise Co. Ltd as Chairperson;
- (iii) Rodrigues Duty Free Paradise Co. Ltd as Chairperson;
- (iv) Airport of Rodrigues Ltd as Chairperson;
- (v) Metro Express Ltd as Board Director, and
- (vi) Pointe Coton Resort Hotel Co. Ltd as Chairperson.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as Vice-Chairperson of the Gambling Regulatory Authority, Mr D. B. draws a monthly fee of Rs35,000.

The remuneration of the Chairperson and Directors of Government-owned Companies, as the House is aware, is published in their Annual Reports.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr D.B. is currently drawing same remuneration as his predecessors on the different Government-owned Companies and such remuneration will be reflected in the Annual Reports of these companies, which are currently under preparation.

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

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, I have a supplementary question.

Mr Speaker: Wait! You are more in a hurry than me?

Mr Bhagwan: What?

Mr Speaker: PQ B/997 will be replied, if time permits, by the hon. Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade. PQ B/1003 will be replied, if time permits, by the hon. Minister of Blue Economic, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping. PQ B/1006 will be replied by Dr. the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness. Hon. Members, the Table has also been advised that PQs B/996 and B/1001, B/1007, and B/1004 have been withdrawn.

Supplementary!

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the Prime Minister whether he has received representations with regard to the interference of his Senior Adviser, Mr D.B. in the day-to-day matters, not only at the Gambling Regulatory Authority where he is the Vice-Chairperson, but also in the Government-owned Companies or public-owned Companies where he is Chairperson? And this is causing a lot of stress on the personnel of all these institutions.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Adviser does his duty according to the responsibility that has been bestowed upon him, and I have had no concern with regard to any observation or any communication that he is interfering outside the limits of his responsibility.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the Prime Minister whether he has enquired following representations received, made public - and also representations made to his Office, that Mr D.B. has been meeting the jockeys of the horseracing in private bungalows, the more so that he is the Deputy Chairperson of the Board, which is not compatible to his appointment as Chairperson? So, he is not only interfering; he is interfering in horseracing also, and we all know for whom he is working.

Mr Speaker: No, put your question! You have to limit your question!

Mr Bhagwan: I have asked question. But you are always...

Mr Speaker: You have to limit your question reasonably!

Mr Bhagwan: I am ending.

Mr Speaker: There are three questions in that!

Mr Bhagwan: I am ending.

Mr Speaker: Time is over! Put your question!

Mr Bhagwan: But don't point your finger.

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr Bhagwan: But don't show your finger at me.

Mr Speaker: Put your question! You also don't show your finger!

Mr Bhagwan: No, I am not showing.

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr Bhagwan: I have already put my question; I am waiting for the reply.

Mr Speaker: Okay, let the Prime Minister...

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, these are frivolous allegations that are being made. The hon. Member does not communicate any specific information. He just comes to this House - and he does that regularly - throwing this and that and trying to throw mud at people.

Mr Bhagwan: *Li travay pou Lee Shim...*

The Prime Minister: If you are serious...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Order! Hon. Bhagwan, order! There is a question and there is a reply going on!

The Prime Minister: If you are...

Mr Speaker: Don't obstruct!

Mr X. L. Duval: Don't shout; don't shout!

The Prime Minister: Let me answer. If you are serious, if you have the courage, repeat those allegations outside. Repeat...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, I am gently asking you to withdraw from the Chamber for the rest of the day!

An hon. Member: *Eh pa badine do!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I have already warned you! Please, withdraw from the Chamber!

Mr Bhagwan: I am paid to do my job! I am paid to do that! You are acting as an agent of the MSM, not as Speaker. An agent of the MSM!

Mr Speaker: Serjeant-at-Arms, please!

An hon. Member: *Ki Serjeant-at-Arms? Serjeant-at-Arms...*

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: *Al tir sa boug kin kasiet ...*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am suspending the Sitting!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: *Al tir asasin laba! To lame ena disan!*

(Interruptions)

Pas riss mwa... Eh mo pou retourne ! To pa pou retourne twa ! Koutpie to pou gagne ar lezot ! Koutpie to pou gagne ! Ban voler !

At 12.34 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 12.39 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please be seated! Time was over already. So, we proceed with the PQs.

Hon. Uteem!

MR A. S. – LICENCES – ENQUIRY BY FSC

(No. B/1008) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance whether, in regard to Mr A. S. and his related entities, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Financial Services Commission, information as to if inquiries have been conducted into the circumstances in which licences were issued thereto in each case and, if so, indicate, the outcome thereof and subsequent actions taken, if any, as at to date.

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply made to PQ B/436 on 22 of May 2018 by the former Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance and reiterate that the issues concerning the companies owned by Mr A. S. had been abundantly canvassed in this House, including the procedural aspects of the application, obtention, suspension or revocation of licences by the Financial Services Commission (FSC).

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the FSC that it had received applications for the following licences from companies related to Mr A. S. –

- (a) AS African Asset Management Ltd (formerly known as Alvaro Sobrinho African Asset Management Limited) on 18 August 2015 for a Category 1 Global Business Licence CIS Manager Licence and an Investment Adviser (Unrestricted) Licence on 14 March 2016;
- (b) ASA Fund on 18 August 2015 for a Category 1 Global Business Licence and authorisation to operate as a Collective Investment Scheme and on 17 March 2016, to be converted into a Closed-End Fund;
- (c) PASET Fund on 18 August 2015 for a Category 1 Global Business License and authorisation to operate as a Collective Investment Scheme and on 17 March 2016 to be converted into a Closed-End Fund, and
- (d) Alvaro Sobrinho Africa Ltd on 29 September 2016 for an Investment Banking Licence.

The applications were supported by the necessary documents including constitutive documents, customer due diligence on promoters, beneficial owners, shareholders and directors, prospectus and administration agreement amongst others.

During its assessment, the FSC came across adverse hits on Mr A. S. and an enhanced due diligence was conducted in that respect. In the light of the enhanced due diligence conducted and on being satisfied that the applications were in order, the licences applied for, were issued. In that connection, a communiqué was issued by the FSC on 02 March 2017 and same can still be accessed on the Commission's Website.

I am also informed by the FSC that it did not deem it necessary to conduct an inquiry on the circumstances in which licences were issued to companies related to Mr A. S. inasmuch as all applications were duly processed and scrutinised as per the established procedures and practices at the Commission.

Mr Uteem: Thank you. Is the hon. Minister aware that in answering to a PNQ, the hon. Prime Minister stated that there were ongoing investigations by the FSC and today he is saying that there has not been any investigation by the FSC as to how various licences have been issued to Mr Alvaro Sobrinho and his companies?

Mr Seeruttun: I am informed that there were complaints that were referred to the Commissioner of Police and there were two cases that were investigated by the Commissioner of Police and in one particular case, after the investigations were referred to the Office of the DPP, the Director of Public Prosecutions set aside that case and in the second one, it was sent to the Intermediary Court and then again at the level of the Court, it was set aside.

Mr Uteem: That was in 2017, answering to a PNQ that the hon. Prime Minister said that there was investigation but later on, on 27 March 2018, one year later, again answering to a PNQ, the very same Prime Minister again stated in this House that he had referred a letter to ICAC to enquire on Mr Alvaro Sobrinho, one year later. So, are you telling the House that even after that letter of 2018, the FSC did not conduct any further investigation on the circumstances surrounding the issue of various licences to Mr Sobrinho?

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also aware that there is an investigation being carried out at the level of the ICAC and the FSC is collaborating and have provided all the information requested by the ICAC with regard to Mr A. S.

Mr Uteem: In March 2018, the FSC revoked several licences issued to Mr Alvaro Subrinho and his companies namely, an Investment Banking Licence. May I know from the hon.

Minister whether, he has asked the Financial Services Commission why is it that only three years later, on 29 July 2021, three years later, that the FSC revoked the Management Licence of Taysun Corporate Services Ltd which is wholly owned by Mr Alvaro Sobrinho and the licences were revoked because there were serious breaches of anti-money laundering regulations? So, why did the FSC take three years to revoke the management company licence of Taysun Corporate Services Ltd?

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Speaker, Sir, there have been a lot of allegations against Mr A. S. in different countries and I have been informed that, at the level of the FSC, they have sought information from all those different authorities from overseas and based on that, they carried out their enquiries and that following all the information obtained, they have revoked those licenses.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Juman!

CWA - WATER SUPPLY - MEASURES

(No. B/1009) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to water supply, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to –

- (a) where matters stand as to the proposed provision thereof on a 24/7 basis to the entire population, and
- (b) the measures being taken to address the forthcoming drought season.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Central Water Authority (CWA) that since January 2015, in line with the vision of the Government to provide water on a 24/7 basis to the population, the Authority has increased significantly the supply of water across the island.

I am further informed that, as at date, around 68% of the population, receive an average water supply of 12 to 24 hours daily. 30% of the population received, on an average, 8 to 12 hours daily. 2% of the population received less than 8 hours of water supply per day. These areas have been identified as water-stressed and include Vallée des Prêtres, Mont Roches, Upper & Lower Union Park, Mon Rose, L'Éscalier, La Sourdine, Bambous Virieux, St Joseph (Grand Gaube), Mapou, Leclezio, Goodlands, Grand Sable, Petit Sable and Isidore.

Over the past years, the CWA has been taking the necessary measures to improve the hours of supply through significant investment in the following areas –

- a) increase in water treatment capacity;
- b) increase in storage capacity through service reservoirs;
- c) replacement of old and defective pipes, and
- d) drilling of new boreholes, duplicate boreholes and acquisition of private boreholes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the CWA is currently producing some 888,000 m³ of potable per day through its treatment plants, boreholes and Containerised Pressure Filtration Plants (CPFs) representing an increase of almost 33% compared to 670,000 m³ per day in 2015. This has been made possible mainly through the installation of 42 Mobile Containerised Pressure Filtration Plants, treating around 104,500 m³ per day.

I am informed that an additional 5 pressure filters are expected to be commissioned by April 2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since 2016, 5 service reservoirs have become operational at Mont Blanc, Balisson, Montagne Fayence, Rivière du Rempart and Rivière Dragon representing an additional storage capacity of 12,500m³.

Moreover, the construction of another 4 service reservoirs is ongoing at Salazie, Eau Bouillie, Riche en Eau and Cluny, which would supplement storage capacity with another 9,500 m³. The construction of these service reservoirs is expected to be completed by December 2022.

In order to cater for future demand and to further improve water supply, especially in water-stressed areas, the Water Resources Unit in consultation with the Central Water Authority carries out annual borehole drilling campaigns. On average, 5 new boreholes are drilled every year. To assist in security of supply, 22 duplicate boreholes have already been drilled since 2015, adding some 87,336 m³ per day. These duplicate boreholes help in ensuring security of water supply in the regions concerned. The latest new boreholes drilled by Water Resources Unit are located at Valentina, Côte d'Or and Bambous.

CWA has furthermore acquired a few private boreholes in order to supplement its network in the regions of Eau Bleue, Petit Bois, Caroline, La Marie and Médine.

As part of its regular pipe replacement programme, a total of 443 kms of pipeline have been replaced and added to the CWA distribution network around the island since 2015.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to outline that the island receives an average rainfall of 2,000mm per annum. However, there are often water supply shortages particularly in the dry months before the onset of summer rains. The replenishment of the water resources systems occurs primarily during the summer season, that is from December to April of the following year when about two third of the rainfall is harnessed. According to the Mauritius Meteorological Services, average or below average rainfall, has been witnessed in the months of June, July, August and September of this year. It is likely that the month of October will also be dry.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in preparation of the dry season, I will mention a few projects carried out around the island particularly in the water stressed areas, which have contributed to an immediate improvement of the water services.

In the North, at Goodlands, Roche Terre and Grand Gaube, the installation and commissioning of 2 additional Containerised Pressure Filters at New Goodlands Reservoir was completed in March 2022, thus, increasing the water supply in these regions from 06hrs to 12hrs. Around 13,000 subscribers have benefitted from the project.

At Mosque Road, Lower Vale, the laying of a new pipeline over a stretch of 400m was completed in February 2022, and has brought an improvement in the water supply in the region for some 200 subscribers. Now, CWA is not having recourse to water tankers there.

At CEB Road in Goodlands, the water supply has improved from 2 hours daily to 6 hours daily through the installation and commissioning of three water tanks of 30m³ and a pump in March 2022 benefitting some 100 subscribers along that road.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the East, the installation and commissioning of one additional Containerised Pressure Filtration Plant at Ecroignard River in August 2022 has contributed to improve water supply at Isidore Rose, Bramsthan where around 345 subscribers are concerned.

In the South, following the installation and commissioning of a surface pump at Michael Leal, St Martin, 60 subscribers are now receiving water from 2 a.m. in the morning to 10 p.m. at night. As such, the services of water tankers are no longer required.

At Bambous Virieux, 4 water tanks of 30 m³ of storage capacity and surface pumps have been installed and commissioned. In addition, surface pumps have been installed at State land at Anse Jonchee in June 2022 thus, improving water supply in these regions for around 200 subscribers.

In the Western region, the mobilisation of additional water of around 1,500 m³ daily from Tamarin Falls via Magenta hydropower station, to be treated at Yemen reservoir site, will improve water supply from 08hrs to 10hrs daily in the regions of Petite Rivière Noire, Case Noyale, La Gaulette, Coteau Raffin and Le Morne. Around 1,400 subscribers are concerned by this improvement.

There are several other improvement projects that are currently ongoing, especially in the water stressed regions around the island such as the installation of 3 water tanks of 30 m³ and pump at Merville public beach which is expected to be completed next month, thus, improving the water supply at St Joseph, Grand Gaube for nearly 360 subscribers. Bids for the replacement of 1.2 km of the existing AC pipeline have also been floated and the closing date has been fixed on 03 November 2022.

Another project for the North concerns Goodlands and Grand Gaube where it is proposed to mobilise water from Grand Marais basin with the installation of 2 Containerised Pressure Filter Plants and construction of 7.2 km of pipeline to Old Goodlands Reservoir which will result in improving water supply from 08hrs to 12hrs at Grand Gaube, Rouge Terre and Goodlands. Around 3,000 subscribers will be concerned.

At Mare La Chaux, Belle Mare, it is proposed to install 1 Containerised Pressure Filtration Plant on Rivière Poste de Flacq and works are expected to be completed by mid-November 2022. In Nouvelle France, Union Park, the laying of a 250mm HDPE pipeline from Rivière la Chaux to Balisson reservoir is in progress and the raw water will be treated by the CPF at Ballison reservoir, thus, improving water supply in the region of Mont Rose and Union Park and around 1,800 subscribers will be concerned.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to reassure the House that action is being taken on several fronts, across the different parts of the island to further enhance water services especially with the upcoming dry season.

I take the opportunity to make an appeal to the population to preserve the precious water that we have so that we can face this situation in the best possible manner. The CWA will

continue its water saving campaigns to sensitise the population on a more judicious use of our water resources. At the same time, the population is encouraged to avail of the facilities under the Water Tank Grant Scheme where eligible households can benefit from the grant of Rs8,000 for the purchase of a water tank and domestic water pump.

I have to highlight, Mr Speaker, Sir, that my Ministry together with the Development Bank of Mauritius and the CWA have reached out to the inhabitants of some 51 villages in the water stressed areas on 15 occasions this year during outreach campaigns. Some 6,000 applications under the Water Tank Grant Scheme have been received and processed.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Juman: Thank you, hon. Minister. We have recently heard you putting forward that not only hotels in coastal regions, but the Government should also be looking into desalination. May we know if any feasibility study has been carried out, and if so, may we know the outcome? May we also know if any report has been commissioned on these implementations?

Mr Speaker: This is supplementary question; one by one.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, the question put to me by the hon. Member is with regard to 24/7 water supply in the country and the statement I made with regard to desalination plants in Mauritius in the future was related to a workshop when we were working on the Water Bill. So, I do not have the precise information for the hon. Member. But Mr Speaker, Sir, we are considering all possibilities because we know that we are already being impacted by climate change and that year after year, the drought period is increasing. So, we need to find ways and means in order to supply the population with water.

Mr Juman: Thank you. Hon. Minister, in reply to a PQ in October 2015, the then hon. Minister replied that the non-revenue water was about 58%. Can we know the percentage of non-revenue water actually?

Mr Lesjongard: Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a very specific item, that is, non-revenue water. If the hon. Member will come forward with a question dealing with non-revenue water, I will be very glad to reply to it but unfortunately, today, I do not have the reply with me.

Mr Ramful: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Despite the reassurances given by the hon. Minister and the number of measures mentioned, is he aware that currently, since weekend, the inhabitants of the South, talking about Mare d'Albert, Plaine Magnien and Mahebourg, there is currently a serious shortage of water in those regions. We are in a period where students are

taking part in exams and even in schools we have a shortage of water. Is the Minister aware of this situation and is he going to take necessary measures?

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am aware and I have requested a brief from the CWA. In fact, during the weekend, there was a drastic shortage of water in that region mainly because of a faulty pump at Cluny borehole. I understand that during the weekend they have repaired the pump but unfortunately, because of air lock in the...

(Interruptions)

Are you listening to what I am saying? I have a brief with me.

(Interruptions)

But then, if you have the answer, why do you put the question to me?

Mr Speaker: Be patient! Be patient! Be patient!

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, from the report that I have received from the CWA, I understand that they have already replaced the pump. Unfortunately, because of air lock within the water distribution system, it took them some time to restore back the supply to the subscribers in the region. I understand that needful is being done and in the hours and the days to come, full supply will be restored.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. In his answer, the hon. Minister mentioned about the water-stressed areas, mentioning the area of Vallée des Prêtres. Can I request the hon. Minister to provide further information with regard to the solutions for the inhabitants of Vallée des Prêtres with regard to the water-stressed areas that he mentioned, specifically for Vallée des Prêtres if he has any specific solution that he is proposing? Thank you.

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, because this is also my constituency, Mr Speaker, Sir. We are doing the needful in order to alleviate the problems that subscribers in that region are facing. We are finding solutions and we will implement those solutions, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/1037 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare. PQs B/1064 and B/1067 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change.

The Table has been advised that the following PQs have been withdrawn: B/998, B/1028, B/1030, B/1052, B/1055 and B/1057.

Hon. Members, I suspend the Sitting for one and a half hours!

At 1.03 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.34 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please be seated! Hon. Osman Mahomed!

GRAND BAIE SEWERAGE PROJECT

(No. B/1010) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the implementation of the Grand Baie Sewerage Project, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Wastewater Management Authority, information as to where matters stand.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Wastewater Management Authority (WMA) that the Grand Baie Sewerage Project Phase 1 B consists of the provision of sewerage facilities to some 4500 households within the regions of Pereybere and Cap Malheureux. The project is partly funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and partly by the Government of Mauritius.

Following an international bidding exercise conducted by the Central Procurement Board, the contract was awarded to Joint Venture Henan Water & Power Engineering Consulting Co. Ltd and Anhui Shui'an Construction Group Co. Ltd on 08 July 2019 for a duration of 43 months with the contractual completion date of 19 March 2023. The works are being supervised by Consultant GIBB (Mauritius) Ltd in association with Nihon Suido Consultants (Japan) Co. Ltd and Jacobs Engineering (UK) Ltd.

The project has been heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic with travel restrictions due to closure of borders in China and the lockdown and closure of borders in Mauritius in 2020 and part of 2021.

I had expressed public concern on the delay encountered on the project during the course of a site visit carried out on 26 August 2021. The attention of the Contractor has been constantly drawn to the delays and its contractual obligations. Subsequently, several meetings were held at the Ministry and the Wastewater Management Authority with the Project Consultant to monitor progress and facilitate the process for importation of foreign labour with a view to deploying adequate labour force to catch up on the Programme of Works.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Wastewater Management Authority has informed that on 29 August 2022, the contractor has issued 3 Notices of Termination of the Contract pursuant to clauses 16.2 (Termination by Contractor) and 19.6 (Optional Termination, Payment and Release) of the contract. The effective dates mentioned were 06 and 13 September 2022.

The Notices have been examined by the Project Consultant and the Legal Counsels of Wastewater Management Authority as well as the Attorney General's Office and will be dealt with in accordance with the provisions of the contract between Wastewater Management Authority and the contractor.

I am informed that as at end August 2022, the progress of works on site stood at 23 %.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Wastewater Management Authority is working closely with the Project Consultant so that the contractor completes priority works in the coming weeks. It will be ensured that there is no hazard to the public. Such priority works typically include safety measures on site, reinstatement of trench/road/private premises and addressing of complaints. Both the Project Consultant and the Wastewater Management Authority are following up on the Contractor's Action Plan to complete the said priority works.

In parallel, the Wastewater Management Authority, in consultation with the Project Consultant, has initiated procedures for completing the unfinished and outstanding works within the relevant catchment areas with a view to putting the existing infrastructure to beneficial use. Such works include completion of the construction of pumping stations and wastewater treatment plants, household connections and other civil works. These would require fresh procurement exercises which would be carried out in accordance with the Public Procurement Act 2006.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I also wish to add that discussions have also been held with the representatives of JICA who were on mission to Mauritius from 13 to 14 October 2022. They have been apprised of the status of the project and the way forward. I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can I ask the hon. Minister what the original contract sum was and the revised contract sum, if it has been calculated by the Authority in order to complete the 77 balance of work remaining, because the Minister has said 23% was completed as at now?

Mr Lesjongard: I do not have the revised sum with me but I can give the following information –

- a) the works contract amount was Rs2,088,253,916 excluding VAT; that is –
 - (i) for Lot 1 for sum of Rs1,992,950,181 excluding VAT, and
 - (ii) for Lot 2 for the sum of Rs95,303,735 excluding VAT.

The amount spent to date is as follows –

- a) for contract WW230C, that is Consultancy Contract: Rs99,009,632.99 excluding VAT;
- b) Contract WW302W, that is, Works Contract for an amount of Rs491,388,584.80 excluding VAT, that is, for a total amount of Rs590,398,217.80 excluding VAT.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. The hon. Minister has mentioned that a meeting was recently held with the representatives of JICA. Obviously, the price will go up because the construction cost has gone up tremendously since COVID-19. Has JICA agreed to meet the increased cost in order to complete this project; in terms of loan provision?

Mr Lesjongard: We have discussed a lot of issues with JICA and this also formed part of the discussions but we will have further discussions with JICA in order to finalise those issues, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Osman Mahomed: This project was implemented in the backdrop of environmental concern because this region is known to require such a network. Can I ask the hon. Minister what is the timeframe that his ministry has looked up to in order to complete this project?

Mr Lesjongard: The project is already delayed, Mr Speaker, Sir, and I have explained the reasons. We have with us where the Contractor has been able to complete works; where works are remaining. I understand that the Wastewater Management Authority is working on a new revised programme of work and this has also not yet been finalised, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Lobine!

MAURITIUS/SEYCHELLES – BILATERAL FISHING AGREEMENTS

(No. B/1011) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the existing bilateral fishing agreements between Mauritius and the Seychelles, he will state when were same signed, indicating if new reciprocal fishing agreements are being envisaged.

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the current bilateral fishing agreements between Mauritius and Seychelles were signed on 14 April 2022 for a period of one year.

I wish to inform the House that a delegation from the Republic of Mauritius, led by myself, met the representatives from the Republic of Seychelles in February 2022 in Victoria to discuss the extension of the then existing agreements which were to expire in April 2022 and also to begin negotiations for new fishing agreements. After discussion, it was, *inter alia*, agreed to enter into interim agreements for a period not exceeding one year and negotiate a new agreement once the interim agreements have been signed based on a new fee structure.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry will shortly initiate negotiation with the Seychelles counterparts with regards to the conditions to be attached to the new reciprocal fishing agreements that are expected to start as from April 2023. The negotiations and the new fishing agreements will be hosted and signed in Mauritius.

Mr Lobine: Can the hon. Minister provide or table to this House this new fishing agreement that has been signed? Can same be tabled?

Mr Maudhoo: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Lobine: Can the hon. Minister confirm whether ‘sea cucumber exploratory fishing’ is part and parcel of this new fishing agreement?

Mr Maudhoo: It has not yet been included in the agenda because with regard to the JMA, it is being looked upon by the Prime Minister's Office.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

COVID-19 VACCINES - BOOSTER DOSES - EXPIRY DATES

(No. B/1012) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the second booster dose of COVID-19 vaccines, he will state the number of –

- (a) doses of COVID-19 vaccines available per brand, indicating the expiry date thereof as at to date, and
- (b) persons administered with Pfizer vaccines.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the hon. Member for having addressed this question on COVID-19 vaccination.

Indeed, vaccination has been one of the key factors in our fight against COVID-19 and has enabled our country to resume its economic activities in various sectors such as tourism, education amongst others.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius was among the first African countries to launch COVID-19 vaccination campaigns. The country sourced various types and gave regulatory clearances to accelerate the vaccination roll-out. In fact, Mauritius is among the first African countries to reach a vaccination coverage of more than 70% of the population.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the high vaccination coverage in Mauritius benefited from strong leadership; highest political engagement with the High-Level Committee under the chair of the Prime Minister; strong involvement of the World Health Organisation; collaboration and support of the healthcare staff, private sector and other key stakeholders. Today, we have already achieved 91.8%, that is, the first dose. It means 1,040,511 doses of vaccine. For the second dose, 880,953 meaning 88.8% and the first booster dose being 654,242 meaning 65.4% and the second booster dose being 17,213, that is, 1.7%.

It is also worth to point out that Mauritius is among the few African countries where the second booster dose is being administered. COVID-19 vaccines provided protection for a certain

period of time and it is time to thank the frontliners again and again. It is time to justify additional budget allocated to pay extra time for the vaccination and not like some were saying: ‘flouting government fund’. They deserve public service excellence and that is what was given to them. That is why although there has been a decline in the reported number of COVID-19 cases, Government is engaged to pursue its vaccination campaign in order to safeguard the health of its population.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our vaccination campaign continues to be the backbone in our response against COVID-19. The booster dose campaign is still going on and all persons who have not yet received their booster dose are being encouraged on a daily basis to get their vaccines at their regional hospitals or vaccination centres around the island.

In reply to part (a) of the question, the following COVID-19 vaccines are available for administration as second booster dose –

- (i) 115,150 doses of Johnson & Johnson, and
- (ii) 68,248 doses of Sinopharm.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to part (b) of the question, since the launching of the second booster dose campaign on 13 April to 12 October 2022, 17,213 persons have already been administered a second booster dose of COVID-19 vaccine. The expiry dates of the vaccines administered are as follows –

- (i) Pfizer Vaccine: 15 October 2022;
- (ii) Moderna Vaccine: 13 and 15 August 2022;
- (iii) Johnsons & Johnsons Vaccine: 15 December 2022 and 31 December 2023;
- (iv) Sinopharm Vaccine: 05 June 2022 and 10 August 2022.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (c) of question, I am informed that as at 12 October 2022, 16,807 persons had already been administered the Pfizer vaccines as second booster dose.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister – considering the low uptake of the second booster dose as he just mentioned a figure of 17,000 representing approximately 1.5% of the population – inform the House as to why vaccines with usage well

before expiry dates were not ordered as Rs2 per litre of fuel were already being levied since the last Budget for same?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I want to get the question again, please.

Mr Speaker: Can you repeat your question?

Dr. Aumeer: The question is: can the hon. Minister inform the House as to reasons why vaccines with usage before expiry dates were not ordered as Rs2 per litre of fuel were already levied since the last Budget for the same purpose?

Dr. Jagutpal: I tried to understand the question: why were those vaccines not ordered before the expiry dates? In fact, all the vaccines that were ordered and received – there are many vaccines that we received as donation – were vaccines that were not expired. They were vaccines that had been ordered according to the expiry date. This is very standard. I think it is good to mention here that most of these vaccines have been given an extension of the date of vaccination - just to mention it briefly because I believe this will clear out the confusion.

For the expiry date of some vaccines, there has been a Communiqué, that is, a first extension given by the World Health Organisation. They issued a Communiqué in respect of the extension of the shelf life of unopened Pfizer vaccines from nine months – originally it was nine months – and then, it was extended to 12 months. So, we got some extra time to use the same vaccine again.

There is a second extension being given now that is not yet approved by the Vaccination Committee. On 07 October, approval was received from the manufacturer for a second extension of the expiry date of the Pfizer vaccine for another three months.

We have to understand why did this happen. This happened because in March 2022, around the world, more than 240 million doses of anti-COVID vaccines had pass their expiry dates since the start of the vaccination campaign. So, there was a huge quantity of vaccines that were already expired. This is only in the national stock of rich countries. Out of these, 73% were doses of Pfizer vaccines, the most widely used vaccine in the northern countries, and the second most wasted vaccine was AstraZeneca. So, what happened after that?

In October, when vaccines were being approved at the beginning, at that time during winter of 2020 and 2021, the stability data of the products marketed was limited during that time

and the recourse was the European Medicine Agency. At that time, the stability studies were based only on three batches of clinical trials. There have been limited studies of these vaccines. Given the urgency at that time, these products were nevertheless authorised. With time, they got more information on these vaccines and thus, they were able to extend the shelf life of these vaccines. Obviously, at that time, vaccines were procured based on the shelf life and we are now given the extra shelf life so that we can use these vaccines.

I believe that I have answered your question because your question was meant on why we had this amount of vaccines procured at that time. This is an international scenario; it is not only in Mauritius.

Dr. Aumeer: My second supplementary question is: you just mentioned that 16,000 out of 17,000 persons who had the second booster dose were given Pfizer. Pfizer falls within the remit of those vaccines that had their shelf life extended either by way of Communiqué, either by way of statement, and either by way of scientific data analysis. Has the hon. Minister at least considered the various reports that are coming out over the last couple of weeks with regard to *bona fide* vaccines about the side effects? Has his Ministry considered an automatic recall of recipients should they develop undue symptoms or more importantly, any medically adverse data that may - I say, that may - come up in the future with regard to vaccines whose shelf life have been extended? Thank you.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is already a Pharmacovigilance Committee only for COVID-19 vaccination. Since the very beginning, this Committee has been following all the adverse effects due to COVID-19 vaccines so as to administer more than 3 million doses of vaccines. There was a strict guidance about it even for the consent form and the administration of the vaccines. Even now, the Pharmacovigilance Committee is following all the adverse effects of the vaccination. According to our report, till date, there has been no adverse effect following immunisation so far. The Pharmacovigilance Committee will continue to monitor.

Should such event happen, obviously, there will be an official Communiqué on such and such type of vaccination and we will see the international scenario or the WHO recommendation. No one is saying that there can be adverse effects due to vaccination even if there has been an extension of the shelf life.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Tour!

Ms Tour: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. It has already been canvassed just now.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Being given the fact that there is a low number of people getting the second booster dose and the high number of vaccines that are expiring, may I know from the hon. Minister whether there is any plan for importing more vaccines or is the decision taken now not to import any vaccines for the time being?

Dr. Jagutpal: Obviously, we all agree that the uptake of vaccination especially for the second booster dose has gone very low because of obvious reasons; because the impact of COVID-19 in terms of death has gone down. But yet, we still need to monitor the situation closely because as you may know from the news, there are resurgences of cases; there are different variants of Omicron. We have to be vigilant on what is going to happen next. We are going through summer, but in Europe, they are going through winter and we do not know what is expected at that time.

So, probably, yes, we have to keep on encouraging people to do their second booster dose keeping in mind that we are going through that phase. We have to see what is going on in Europe and in other countries where you may have a mutant or some other kind of variant which can be very infectious as well. We do not know what may happen and it is very important to monitor the vaccination, especially what is happening on the international scenario. Let us just wait for some more time before we can rest assured that this situation is going to be very calm.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. For the reassurance of the general public and the health professionals as well, will the hon. Minister table the WHO note and that of the manufacturer's respective vaccines confirming the safe use of same pass the shelf life dates?

Dr. Jagutpal: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. In fact, I was expecting this question. I already have it to be tabled.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

LALLMAN STREET, CRÈVE COEUR – ROAD CRACKS – REMEDIAL MEASURES

(No. B/1013) Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the road collapse on the main road at the level of the terminus at Lallman Street, in Upper Crève Coeur, he will state the remedial measures being envisaged.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the decision for the construction of a retaining wall at Lallman Street, Crève Coeur emanated from the complaints of the inhabitants after cracks were identified on the road. Subsequently, an investigation was carried out by the Landslide Unit of the National Infrastructure Division which revealed a localised erosion of the road structure, probably seepage of subsurface water from the mountainous area and households, and any landslide issue was immediately ruled out by the experts.

In order to mitigate further deterioration of the road, the NDU issued a Work Order to Square Deal Multi-Purpose Cooperative Society Limited for the construction of a retaining wall over a stretch of 200 metres, following a bidding exercise to the tune of Rs14.2 m.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to invite the hon. Member to refer to the reply I made on 10 May 2022, to her question B/554 in which the description of the project was given in details. I am informed that the contractor, Square Deal Multi-Purpose Cooperative Society Limited, after having prepared the reinforcement works offsite, mobilised on site on 04 October 2022. Excavation works started on 05 October. However, on Thursday 06 October, the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Centre reported a case of road collapse at Royal Road, Crève Coeur.

Consequently, my Ministry conducted an urgent survey at 8.30 p.m. to take cognizance of the nature of the problem and thereby advised the NDRRMC and residents on the precautionary measures required. The affected area which consisted of 3 residential houses was cordoned and the residents were requested not to occupy their houses pending an in-depth assessment of the structural stability of the affected area and the houses concerned.

Subsequently, two site visits on 07 and 11 October 2022 were undertaken in the presence of the representatives from the Special Mobile Force, the National Development Unit, the National Infrastructure Division, the Road Development Authority, the Central Electricity Board, the Central Water Authority, Mauritius Telecom, District Council of Pamplemousses, the

Consultant, Luxconsult, and the contractor, Square Deal. The purpose of the visit was to agree on the urgent remedial measures to be taken for restoring the level of safety on the affected site pending the implementation of appropriate remedial works to reinstate the collapsed road.

Mr Speaker, Sir, after in-depth technical discussions with all the stakeholders, the following measures were taken –

- (1) For the three premises at risk, the Police and the NDRRMC have sensitised the families to evacuate their houses, especially in case of heavy rainfall and seek refuge at the Crève Coeur Social Welfare Centre. However, they refused to do so.
- (2) I am also informed that discussions were held with the local Police for transport facilities on 07 October 2022 and thereafter the contractor is willingly providing transport facilities for the inhabitants who have to cover a longer distance to the bus terminal.
- (3) It is to be noted that the NDU has already secured the site and backfilled the excavated site with boulders and excavated materials.
- (4) Rerouting of overhead CEB cables and 3 CEB poles have been completed. No issue has been reported with regard to the disruption in electricity supply and telecommunications services.
- (5) The contractor is presently working on the recommendations of the Consultant. As such, the construction of the new road structure over a stretch of 50 metres with the integration, all services will be completed by end of November 2022.

However, it is to be noted that the construction of the remaining 150 metres will not be possible under the present Work Order for the following reasons –

- poor ground conditions, which represent a high-risk to the local inhabitants and workers;
- the current design for the retaining wall needs to be reviewed, warranting acquisition of private land whereby resulting in significant increase in scope and cost of the project, and lastly
- the NDU will arrange for a full assessment and photographic survey of all houses within the surrounding of the affected area before engaging in other works.

The National Infrastructure Division will conduct an in-depth survey of the whole area and the Police are providing regular patrol in the area.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the response of the inhabitants so far has been positive to the action initiated so far. Thank you.

Ms Tour: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the Minister inform the House whether there is a close monitoring and follow-up of works currently going on to ensure prompt completion of this project as the Minister will appreciate, this project has been delayed and the inhabitants are facing major predicaments?

Mr Hurreeram: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I agree that there has been a delay in the project as I have already replied in the last Parliamentary Question on 10 May 2022. And as I have already mentioned, there has been a series of different measures that have been taken by the Police, the National Infrastructure Division, the Consultant, and the whole design is being reviewed. And those 50 metres where the road had collapsed will be completed by November 2022. The engineers of the NDU are permanently on site to ensure that these delays are respected.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I would like to ask the Minister – he has mentioned about a survey being carried out – whether he can confirm to the House that it is a geotechnical survey which is being carried out, and if yes, how long is it going to take? Just to ensure that the inhabitants feel safe over there. Thank you.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have said in my reply, there was no need for a geotechnical survey. Before we started the work, the Landslide Unit already did a survey of the region and ruled out any landslide issue. What has happened in Crève Coeur is erosion due to seepage of water. So, in order not to endanger the stretch, we are reviewing the structure of the retaining wall.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Tour, last question!

Ms Tour: In his reply the Minister mentioned an in-depth survey for the whole region of Crève Coeur. Can he give an indication of the expected date of completion of this survey, and

whether this survey is intended to find a holistic approach for the various flood problems within Crève Coeur?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have mentioned that the NDU is arranging for assessment and photographic survey of all the houses concerned. At this stage, we are only concerned with a survey regarding those 200 metres where there is a problem regarding Lallman Road. But, obviously, as a matter of policy, wherever there are water accumulation problems, the LDA is considering a holistic approach to remedy the problems.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

**AGENCE FRANÇAISE DE DÉVELOPPEMENT - CREDIT FACILITY AGREEMENT -
DISBURSED QUANTUM**

(No. B/1014) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Credit Facility Agreement of 300 million Euros contracted with the *Agence Française de Développement* signed on 27 July 2020 for the reduction and management of sanitary and natural disasters in Mauritius, he will state the quantum thereof disbursed as at to date, giving details thereof.

Dr. Padayachy: Je remercie l'honorable membre pour sa question. En 2020, la pandémie de la Covid-19 a frappé le monde entier sans exception. Maurice n'a pas été épargnée et nous avons dû nous confiner à deux reprises.

Cette sombre période a été marquée par de grandes incertitudes tant au niveau national qu'international.

Dans ce contexte, le gouvernement, sous le leadership de notre Premier ministre, a pris les promptes et courageuses décisions pour faire face à cette crise d'une magnitude jamais observée.

Notre première et principale priorité était de protéger les moyens de subsistance de tous les mauriciens, avec une attention particulière pour les personnes les plus vulnérables.

Pour atteindre l'objectif fixé, l'une des actions clés du gouvernement a été l'introduction et la mise en œuvre rapide du *Wage Assistance Scheme*, du *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme* et de la *Self-Employed one-off Grant*.

M. le président, les dépenses totales au titre de ces programmes de soutien ont atteint les R 27 milliards et ont bénéficié à plus de 542,000 salariés et travailleurs indépendants.

Au regard de ces dépenses importantes mais nécessaires, il nous fallut trouver des fonds pour financer la réponse historique du Gouvernement à la pandémie dans le but, je le répète, de protéger et soutenir la population.

C'est dans ce contexte que mon ministère a exploré plusieurs options de financement.

Nous avons ainsi exprimé notre intérêt à l'Agence Française de Développement (AFD) pour un soutien financier sous la forme d'un prêt de contingence de 300 millions d'euros utilisant l'instrument *Catastrophe Deferred Drawdown Option* (CAT-DDO).

M. le président, le contrat de prêt entre la République de Maurice et l'AFD a ainsi été signé le 27 juillet 2020 pour un montant de 300 millions d'euros. Il a été contracté au taux concessionnel de 1,12% pour une durée de 20 ans avec une période de grâce de 10 ans. L'objectif du prêt est de mettre en œuvre un programme consistant à améliorer notre résilience économique et sociale ainsi que la gestion des catastrophes sanitaires et naturelles à Maurice.

Maurice ayant réalisé toutes les actions préalables, le montant total de 300 millions d'euros a été déboursé en une seule tranche, le 30 juillet 2020.

Les actions préalables étaient structurées autour de 3 piliers, à savoir –

- (a) la réponse sanitaire aux crises et le renforcement des systèmes de santé publique;
- (b) la réponse économique et sociale, avec un renforcement de la planification économique et de la résilience, et
- (c) le renforcement de la résilience climatique.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr David: M. le président, L'agence Française de Développement finance et accompagne des milliers de projets dans une centaine de pays et ce prêt exceptionnel accordé à Maurice traduit l'engagement de l'AFD mais cet engagement implique, j'en suis certain, une responsabilité de notre pays de fournir des rapports d'avancement avec des indicateurs de réalisation des différents projets financés. Puis-je demander au ministre combien de rapports de suivi ont été fournis à l'AFD depuis deux ans, avec les moyens mis en œuvre, les entreprises

retenues, les dépenses effectuées et les résultats obtenus et si ces rapports peuvent être déposés à la Chambre ?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, encore une fois je remercie le l'honorable membre de sa question. Il peut comprendre que je n'ai pas toutes ces informations disponibles avec moi mais je serai heureux de déposer à la Chambre les informations concernant les différents rapports proposés et envoyés à l'AFD.

Mr Speaker: Make sure your supplementary question aims at having clarification. Continue!

Mr David: Le ministre a mentionné le taux d'intérêt avec une période de 10 ans, qui est une période de moratoire, si j'ai bien compris. Le remboursement commencera en janvier 2031 jusqu'en décembre 2040 et selon les calculs, il s'agit d'une somme de R 15,5 milliards qui aura à être remboursée en considérant le capital et les intérêts. Puis-je demander au ministre s'il a déjà travaillé un plan de financement, de remboursement de cette dette extérieure ou s'il a signé cet accord en laissant à son successeur d'après, la charge de planifier le remboursement ?

Dr. Padayachy: Il est vrai que cette question est importante parce qu'en tant que ministre des Finances et en tant que gouvernement responsable, à chaque fois qu'on fait des prêts, il y a les deux côtés d'un Contrat ; il y a celui qui emprunte et celui qui aussi débourse les fonds et je peux vous assurer que de ce côté, l'AFD regarde et analyse la situation, les données, la capacité de rembourser avant de venir avec ce genre de Contrat. De notre côté, au niveau de la gestion des finances publiques, Maurice n'a jamais et je le dis bien, jamais, peu importe le gouvernement, raté une seule de ses remboursements. Rien que pour cela, on est classé comme un des meilleurs clients pour les institutions financières. Donc, oui, on a travaillé dessus et ce ne sera pas un problème pour Maurice de rembourser.

Mr Speaker: Next question, Mr Lobine!

VACOAS, ST PAUL AVENUE – TRAFFIC CONGESTION – METRO EXPRESS PROJECT

(No. B/1015) 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 traffic congestions occurring along St Paul Avenue

and proceeding towards the centre of Vacoas and from all other classified roads and lanes converging towards Vacoas, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit, information as to if a study has been conducted to assess the impact of the operation of the metro express proceeding from Phoenix to Curepipe thereat and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to PQ B/1015 and B/1051 together.

At the outset, allow me Mr Speaker, Sir, to remind the House that the St Paul junction and the junction at Savoy were already experiencing heavy congestion prior to the implementation of the Metro Express Project. As these two (2) junctions are located within 100 metres of each other, the traffic condition has always been challenging.

With the construction of the Metro Express Project, the existing traffic network had to be reviewed and reconfigured. In this context, a technical committee consisting of my Ministry including the TMSRU and the National Land Transport Authority, the Metro Express Ltd, the Police, the Road Development Authority and Larsen and Toubro Ltd, RITES, the Consultants, the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning and the Municipalities of Curepipe and Vacoas, worked out a Traffic Masterplan for Vacoas and Curepipe.

This Traffic Masterplan, at the design stage, took into account the complexity of the traffic setup at all junctions, including those at St Paul and at Savoy. This new traffic configuration is based on the results of the traffic analysis as well as the traffic simulation exercises carried out by the contractor, overtime.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as a result, all the road-rail intersections along the alignment have been enhanced and are controlled by Traffic Signal Priority System. A reconfiguration of the overall traffic movement and reduction of conflict points at these junctions as well as providing safe pedestrian crossing phases have been implemented. In addition, traffic signs have been placed at all strategic locations, to guide road users and drivers, namely as regards alternative routes and unauthorised right turnings.

Prior to the launching of Phase 2C of the Metro Express Project, i.e., the launch operation of the Metro Express proceeding from Phoenix to Curepipe, flyers on the new road configuration

were distributed to road users/drivers since the third week of September 2022 and the distribution was intensified on week prior to the official launching. The new road configuration was advertised on the social media as well.

In addition, on Friday 07 October 2022, prior to the launching of Phase 2C of the Metro Express Limited together with the Police communicated this new traffic configuration on the MBC TV.

Mr Speaker, Sir, drivers and road users are taking some time to get used to the new traffic configuration. It has been observed that the traffic congestion in the centre of Vacoas is exacerbated due to the fact that drivers are not complying to the traffic instructions on the information panel and the traffic signs. Some drivers, especially at the CEB Junction and the St Paul junction were engaging into banned right turn movements and in addition, road users/drivers are not fully using the alternative routes/roads as indicated on the information panels.

Mr Speaker, Sir, any new traffic configuration put in place has to be monitored, further assessed and fine-tuned. In view therefor, as from Monday 10 of October 2022, the TMRSU and the Metro Express Ltd. together with the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix, the Police, the TMRSU, Larsen and Toubro Ltd, RITES and CAF conducted several technical meetings, site visits and monitoring of the junctions at St Paul and Savoy from the Vacoas Police Station straight to the Savoy Cinema and from La Caverne to the Vacoas CEB Office, to look into other possible traffic measures to improve the fluidity of the traffic at this location. Drone surveys are also being undertaken by the TMRSU during peak hours.

Micro-Analysis of the junctions in Vacoas namely, St Paul Road-Swami Sivananda Avenue near CEB Office and Swami Sivananda Avenue-Stevenson Road have been undertaken by Larsen and Toubro Limited for Metro Express Limited in view to optimise the capacity of each of the signalised junctions taking into consideration the additional phases to accommodate the Metro and pedestrians.

The following corrective measures would additionally be implemented, in the short term, to alleviate the congestion –

- i. The new traffic signal system is being modified to merge two phases of the Traffic Signal Priority System to reduce the total cycle time and provide additional green time for traffic along St Paul Road coming from La Caverne to Savoy Junction. The total green time would be increased from 12 seconds to 25 seconds.
- ii. Traffic signals are being synchronised at the different junctions, namely Savoy and CEB to allow for more fluidity of traffic;
- iii. All junctions are monitored by the Police who are also enforcing the traffic procedures and instructions. I am advised that additional Police Officers have been deployed along the major junctions and on the road from Curepipe to Vacoas, at strategic locations, to guide drivers on alternative routes/roads to reduce the congestions;
- iv. Double yellow lines have been applied to prevent unjustified parking along the Swami Sivananda Avenue and St Paul Road, and finally
- v. After the launching of the Phase 2C of the Metro Express Project, additional explanatory campaigns and precautionary measures to be taken were disseminated on MBC TV, the public and private radios, “Info Route” and the social media by the Metro Express Limited, Larsen and Toubro Ltd, the Police and the TMRSU since 11 October 2022. Intensive sensitisation and communication on the new traffic schemes would continue during the next few days, as was done for the other previous phases of the Metro Express project, to assist road users in acclimatising themselves with the new traffic scheme. The distribution of informative flyers has been further extended to road users/drivers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, further to the site visit I carried out with all stakeholders at different locations in Vacoas town centre, it has been agreed that further additional measures would be implemented to alleviate the traffic congestion as follows –

- (i) The Avenue de l’Indépendance will be converted as from Savoy Junction up to Vacoas Bus Terminal into a two-way road up to Sivananda Avenue. This new measure would be implemented on Independence Street during morning peak

hours. If this measure is conclusive, it would considerably reduce the traffic load at the junction of Swami Sivananda Avenue and St Paul Road;

- (ii) Avenue de l'Indépendance would be widened near Vacoas Bus Terminal and would then be converted into a two-way traffic and cars would be able to join Sivananda Avenue and in the long run would run towards Palmerstone. The Bus Terminal would be slightly shifted to the right;
- (iii) The CEB Junction would be further modified to increase capacity. Some traffic islands would be removed on St Paul Avenue to improve fluidity of traffic;
- (iv) Additional information panel and traffic signage would be placed to guide road users and drivers on the optimum routes to their destination;
- (v) Parking bays at the New Sivananda Avenue would be eliminated, as 2 park and ride facilities for around 400 vehicles are available at Vacoas, and
- (vi) Road improvement works along St Paul, Floréal Road and Nalletamby Road works would be effected shortly for the widening of the road.

Intensive sensitisation and communication on the new traffic schemes would continue during the next few days, as was done for the other previous phases of the Metro Express project, to assist road users in adjusting themselves with the new traffic scheme.

My Ministry through the TMRSU, in collaboration with Metro Express Ltd, the Police, Road Development Authority and all relevant authorities are monitoring the traffic situation not only in Vacoas, but also in the surrounding areas such as Floréal to observe and understand the road users' adaptation and behaviours in relation to the new traffic setup and implement any required mitigations or improvements.

Mr Lobine: May I ask the hon. Minister if he could table the Traffic Master Plan that he has mentioned in his answer for us to follow up as to the timeframe that will be adopted to alleviate those traffic congestion in Vacoas, please?

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Master Plan, as I have answered, at a design stage, it took into account the complexity of the traffic set up at all junctions and also with time, of course, this Master Plan was reviewed and readjusted. So, it depends at which precise time the

hon. Member would like to have a copy of this document because it evolved, you know, we adjusted it.

Mr Lobine: As it is now for us to follow up.

Mr Ganoo: Yes.

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, M. le président. J'accueille favorablement l'option de rendre la route de l'Indépendance à double sens afin de permettre aux automobilistes de rejoindre directement la gare de Vacoas. M. le ministre, dans les régions rapprochées de Charles Regnaud, D'Epinay, Farquhar et Curepipe Road, il y a cinq établissements scolaires. Depuis l'aménagement du métro, plusieurs routes sont dorénavant à sens unique et la largeur de certaines routes a été réduite rendant la vie des automobilistes et usagers de la route très difficile.

Mr Speaker: This looks like an Adjournment matter. Put your question.

Ms Anquetil: Le ministre pourrait-il indiquer à la Chambre si son ministère pourrait considérer d'organiser un *site visit* en urgence avec tous – je dis bien – tous les députés des circonscriptions numéro 15 and numéro 16 et tous les *stakeholders* afin de trouver des solutions durables vu que nous avons été sollicités par nos mandants. Je vous remercie, M. le président.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have no objection to welcome all Members on both sides of this House to join me in a site visit regarding the traffic difficulties that Curepipe is experiencing at the time, if there are any. But as the hon. Member would realise, my question was focused on the situation in the centre of Vacoas. So, either she comes with a substantive question with regard to Curepipe or we can think about a future visit to Curepipe to have a look at the possible solutions for the congestion to which she made reference.

Traffic congestion finally, Mr Speaker, Sir, is the result of economic prosperity. The amount of new vehicles that are coming on our roads every year and even during the COVID period, we noticed that, more or less, the same number of cars has been imported into the country. That is why Government is investing heavily on the decongestion programme, but as I said, any new traffic configuration, Mr Speaker, Sir, has to be reassessed and monitored constantly.

Mr Speaker: Future Prime Minister!

Mr Bodha: Thank you for your good wishes! In the given circumstances, can the hon. Minister consider the Police presence at all times to be able to monitor the traffic and see to it that there is fluidity at the centre of Vacoas?

Mr Ganoo: I am so sorry, Mr future Prime Minister, can you please repeat your question?

Mr Bodha: Thank you for your good wishes! In the given circumstances, can the Minister consider the presence of the Police to monitor the fluidity of the traffic? Because at all times, this is the best solution until the Master Plan works.

Mr Ganoo: This is a perfectly relevant question, Mr Speaker, Sir, as we have many Police Officers on our roads especially during peak hours and, of course, this will alleviate the difficulties of the travelling public and the drivers. As I just said, Mr Speaker, Sir, I personally organised a site visit in this region and we were accompanied by many Police Officers. In fact, this new measure that we are taking, making the Independance Street a two-way traffic road, as I said, is being done on a pilot basis. Of course, we need the help of the presence of Police Officers in order to be able to monitor this new situation. Of course, we impressed upon the Police when we organise this visit, Mr Speaker, Sir, that their presence is a sine qua non condition of alleviating the traffic problem in this area of the centre of Vacoas.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

MR Y.S. – OFFICIAL MISSION TO RODRIGUES – WORK PROGRESS

(No. B/1016) Mr J. B. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the official mission undertaken by Mr Y. S. in 2019 to Rodrigues concerning the calculation of Gross Domestic Product of Rodrigues, he will state the work progress thereof and the way forward.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, avec votre permission, je répondrai conjointement aux questions B/1016 et B/1060, puisqu'elles portent sur le même sujet et je remercie l'honorable membre pour ces deux questions.

J'ai été informé par *Statistics Mauritius* qu'un protocole d'accord, c'est-à-dire un *MoU*, a été signé entre *Statistics Mauritius* et l'Assemblée régionale de Rodrigues en août 2021.

Ce *MoU* établit un cadre de collaboration entre *Statistics Mauritius* et *Statistics Rodrigues* pour améliorer le système statistique de ce dernier.

Dans ce contexte, *Statistics Mauritius* a retenu les services d'un statisticien à la retraite, M. Y. T, et non M. Y. S, pour, entre autres, évaluer le système statistique de Rodrigues, identifier les besoins des utilisateurs et les questions émergentes qui préoccupent les parties prenantes ainsi que pour faire les recommandations appropriées.

J'ai également été informé que l'amendement du système statistique actuel permettra un calcul précis du PIB de Rodrigues et la détermination de la contribution fiscale de Rodrigues dans l'économie de la République de Maurice.

M. le président, j'ai en outre informé qu'un plan d'action a déjà été élaboré.

À cet égard, le directeur intérimaire des statistiques a prévu une visite à Rodrigues le mois prochain. Il s'entretiendra avec le *Island Chief Executive* et le personnel de la *Rodrigues Statistics Unit* pour assurer la mise en œuvre efficace du plan.

Les recommandations du plan d'action comprennent –

- (1) La fourniture d'un cadre légal au niveau des règlements de l'Assemblée régionale de Rodrigues pour le système statistique de Rodrigues ;
- (2) Etablissement des dispositions institutionnelles et une structure organisationnelle appropriée dans les différents départements pour la collecte de données statistiques pertinentes pour leurs activités ;
- (3) La mise en place et le maintien d'un programme coordonné pour la collecte et le flux efficace d'informations à tous les niveaux du gouvernement ;
- (4) S'assurer de la bonne collecte de données agricoles par la cellule statistique dédiée dans l'unité agricole ;
- (5) La mise en place d'un mécanisme approprié pour la saisie des données commerciales de Rodrigues qui seront utilisées pour la compilation de statistiques commerciales complètes et fiables ;
- (6) Effectuer un investissement approprié en termes de ressources humaines et d'équipement pour la mise en œuvre du plan d'action ;

- (7) La fourniture d'un cours de statistique au personnel de la *Rodrigues Statistics Unit* ainsi qu'aux employés des autres départements s'occupant de la collecte de données statistiques ;
- (8) La formation de la *Rodrigues Statistics Unit* aux logiciels statistiques appropriés pour le traitement et l'analyse statistique des données relatives aux enquêtes ;
- (9) L'assistance et la formation pour la *Rodrigues Statistics Unit* dans le cadre de nouvelles tâches nécessitant des compétences spécialisées, et
- (10) La mise en place d'un mécanisme de *reporting* pour suivre et évaluer l'avancement des travaux deux fois par an.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Léopold: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Could the hon. Minister at the stage of this present project inform the House the time frame for the project to be finalised if possible?

Dr. Padayachy: Je déposerai à la Chambre le *time frame* approprié par rapport aux recommandations du plan d'action.

Mr Léopold: Again at this stage of the project, would the Minister be able to inform the House about the revenue of Rodrigues, the amount of money we contribute in the economy of the Republic of Mauritius and its expenditure?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, c'est le projet qu'on est en train de travailler. C'est réellement de travailler pour voir la contribution de Rodrigues pour la République de Maurice en termes de PIB mais aussi comment à ce moment-là pousser pour l'amélioration du produit intérieur brut de Rodrigues et aussi à ce moment-là pour la République de Maurice.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

LA POINTE, POINTE AUX SABLES – BUS SHELTERS

(No. B/1017) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the region of La Pointe at Pointe aux Sables, he will state if a survey has been carried out to determine the number of bus stops required from the

old Traffic Centre to the new Traffic Centre, indicating if consideration will be given for the installation of bus shelters thereat.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that previously the Traffic Centre of Pointe aux Sables was situated at La Pointe. The locality of La Pointe is served only by buses of Triolet Bus Service Ltd along Route 51 from Immigration Square to Pointe aux Sables.

As from August 2020, following the construction of a new Traffic Centre at Petit Verger which is located at a distance of 2 km from La Pointe, Route 51 has been extended and all buses henceforth operate from the new Traffic Centre.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the PPS, hon. Dr. Mrs Dorine Chukowry raised the same issue with me and made some representations with regard to the siting of the new bus shelters.

I am informed that following a survey carried out by my Ministry in June 2020, two pairs of bus stops have been sited along Petit Verger Road B31 so as to enable the alighting and embarkment of passengers. These bus stops are located between the old Traffic Centre and the new one.

With regard to the construction of four bus shelters at the mentioned bus stopping places, I am apprised that following the survey the land requirement has already been identified. However, in view of budgetary constraints, the bus shelters could not be fixed last year. My Ministry has initiated actions for the construction of these bus shelters during this Financial Year. The bus shelters will be implemented at the locations as soon as the contract is awarded.

Mr Armance: Mr Speaker, Sir, has there been any risk assessment that has been done because actually all the bus stops are in front of a 1 m depth drain and you have only 80 cm of roadside for people standing there, in a road where people drive at a speed of 60 to 80 km/h? Has your Ministry done any assessment before putting these bus stops? I am talking about the two bus stops that the hon. Minister has just mentioned from La Pointe to Petit Verger.

Mr Ganoo: Well, Mr Speaker, Sir, if the hon. Member is suggesting that mitigation measures need to be taken, I will gladly consult the TMRSU and pass on the comments that have been made by the hon. Member with a view to see if any corrective measures will be taken in need of changing the site of these bus stops. It will be up to the experts to finally inform us

whether we should proceed with the bus shelters at these bus stops or change the location of the bus stops.

Mr Armance: In addition to the survey that the hon. Minister just mentioned, can I know whether the survey really determine the requirement of the inhabitants because most of these bus shelters are very far away from the residential buildings and the walking distance from the residential area to the bus shelters is quite far. Will he consider as well to add one additional bus shelter next to London Supermarket?

Mr Ganoo: The suggestion by the hon. Member will be addressed by the TMRSU, Mr Speaker, Sir, and it will be up to the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit to finally take the decision. If what the hon. Member is proposing is reasonable, I see no reason why the authorities would not consider that proposal.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

SCRAP METAL SECTOR – PERMITS

(No. B/1018) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to scrap metals, he will state the names of the companies holding permits to deal therewith.

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, in September 2019, my Ministry came up with the new consolidated Consumer Protection (Scrap Metal) Regulations to make provision for two types of permits and two types of licences in the scrap metal sector, namely –

- (i) the scrap metal collector permit, which is issued to scrap metal collectors for the collection and sale of scrap metal;
- (ii) the scrap metal carrier permit, which is issued to scrap metal carriers for the transportation of same;
- (iii) the Scrap Metal Dealer licence which is issued to scrap metal dealers to allow for the buying and selling of scrap metal, and
- (iv) the Scrap Metal Exporter licence.

As at 13 October 2022, there are 21 scrap metal dealers registered with my Ministry.

I am tabling the list of these companies.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: I thank the hon. Minister for his answer. Would the hon. Minister consider coming forward with a policy decision to regularise everything that is called 'scrap metal' because I am sure we have all witnessed people stealing from houses and carrying scrap metals on the road in trolleys which seems to be quite dangerous as well as it is giving rise to the number of theft as well. So, could the hon. Minister consider regularising this type of business? Thank you.

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, unfortunately, it is for the Government to take such a policy. I cannot take it on myself to regulate the sector.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

UNWFP EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING - MISSION - COST

(No. B/1019) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the UN World Food Programme, he will state if Mauritius is a member of the Executive Board thereof and, if so, indicate if he attended the Executive Board Bureau Meeting of June 2022 in Rome and, if so, give a breakdown of the cost of the mission.

Mr Gobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius is not a member of the Executive Board of the UN World Food Programme. However, in accordance with the rules and regulations, any country member of the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) may attend the UNWFP Executive Board.

The hon. Member is making reference to my mission in Rome in June 2022. The purpose of my mission was to meet the Director General of the FAO as well as the Assistant Executive Director of the World Food Programme, both Headquarters being located in Rome.

With regard to the breakdown of the mission, I am tabling the document thereof.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Ramful: The Minister is confirming that he did attend the Executive Board Meeting of the World Food Programme whereby Mauritius is not a member. Can I know for what reason?

Mr Gobin: We are not a member of that Executive Board. However, whenever there is a meeting of the Executive Board of the WFP, Mauritius is invited because any member of the FAO can attend the meeting and participate but without the right to vote.

Mr Ramful: Can the hon. Minister table the invitation that he has received?

(Interruptions)

Mr Gobin: The invitation was sent to our mission in Paris under cover of a Note Verbale, correspondence from the WFP –

“Please find hereunder an email from the Secretariat of the World Food Programme informing of the annual session of the Executive Board which will be held from 21 to 24 June in Rome, Italy. The provisional agenda of the meeting is attached. It would be appreciated if mission could be kept informed” etc...

And then there are the provisional agenda and there are other correspondences. We can table it. I do not know what the fuss is.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: The question has been sufficiently canvassed.

Mr Gobin: *Kin arrive?*

Mr Speaker: Let's move onto the next question! Hon. Woochit!

Mr Ramful: One last question!

An hon. Member: *Mo p badiné!*

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Secrétaire général!*

Mr Woochit : B/1020 !

Mr Gobin: *Entre Secrétaire général, on peut se parler dehors !*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Next question! Hon. Gobin!

Mr Gobin: Oh, yes. Sorry.

VEGETABLES – WHOLESALE & RETAIL PRICE GAP

(No. B/1020) Mr R. Woochit (Third Member for Pamplémousses & Triolet) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to vegetables, he will state the reasons for the gap in the wholesale and retail prices thereof island-wide, indicating the –

- (a) plan of action, if any, being envisaged to address same and, if so, give details thereof and the timeline for implementation, and
- (b) recent steps, if any, taken to ensure the opening of the Wholesale Market at Wooton.

Mr Gobin: The House will appreciate that the price of agricultural produce is determined by supply and demand, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Crop Production and the volume of supply will vary according to the season and, of course, wholesale price is dependent on available volume at a particular time, grade and quality of produce. There are periods of low and high availability of produce which lead to fluctuations in prices and fluctuations also happen as a result of a higher mark-up charged by the wholesaler/distributor as well as the retailers.

The gap may be attributed to reasons such as transport, labour, allowance for losses due to spoilage and unsold quantum of produce, as well as, the cost of distribution to increasing number of retail outlets. This adds up to the whole distribution chain which is reflected in the retail price.

With respect of part (a) of the question, crop production is planned so as to address the issue of erratic supply. In that respect, a Planned Production Committee (PPC) has been set up and is chaired by the Senior Chief Executive of the Ministry of Agro-Industry. The Extension Services of the Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (FAREI) is responsible to monitor the level of production across the country.

The principle of availability, affordability and sustainability has been adopted by the said Planned Production Committee, and I believe the result is visible. My Ministry is also working extensively to train farmers and SMEs to undertake agro-processing to increase the shelf life and

to add value to their produce. This is clearly visible by the increasing number of SMEs operating in the agro-processing sector.

The House will appreciate the increase in the number of sheltered farms in the country and this has led to better control of pests and diseases, in turn leading to higher yield and quality.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the operation of the National Wholesale Market has been attributed to the Agricultural Marketing Board. The objectives of the National Wholesale Market are –

- (a) the creation of a modern marketing infrastructure for the handling of fruits and vegetables which would be compliant with relevant legislations, agricultural and food norms and standards;
- (b) to improve the financial livelihood of the planters;
- (c) to provide quality produce at an affordable price to the consumers, and
- (d) to ensure more transparency and traceability of the source of agricultural produce traded thereat.

The Building has already been handed over to Agricultural Marketing Board (AMB). There are a few outstanding works to be completed and these are currently underway. The National Wholesale Market would start full operations once these outstanding works are completed. I am hopeful that by the end of this year, the operations will be launched.

Mr Woochit: Is the Government aware that each year the local production of vegetables and fruits is decreasing and, as the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security, what step is being taken to ensure adequate production of these vegetables and at the same time to maintain the price to be affordable to the common people which is not the case today?

Mr Gobin: No, I will not agree with the sweeping statement that production has decreased. For some products, it may have decreased but for others, that is not the case. This is why there is this Planned Production Committee and there is also the balance which is done between local production and imported products so as to fill the gap as and when required.

Mr Woochit: Is the Government aware that an unavailability of market for perishable fruits and vegetables has forced farmers to indulge in distressed sales leading to a reduction in

the price of perishable vegetables and, if so, has the Government formulated any scheme or regulation to prevent distressed sales? Has the Government taken any other step to develop any model market for the sales of the perishable commodities?

Mr Gobin: Yes, there is indeed. This is the very foundation of the creation of the National Wholesale Market. Furthermore, as the House will appreciate, in this year's Budget, guaranteed price has been announced for products of strategic importance such as potatoes and onions. So, this leads to a guaranteed price; the farmer already knows in advance what will be the minimum price which the Agricultural Marketing Board will offer. My advice to farmers is not to engage in distressed sale but to sell to the AMB because they know what the minimum price is and the price now is *sans precedent*. It has been increased once again, precisely with in mind to reduce the distressed sale. I understand what the hon. Member is saying. Distressed sale happens on the farm and I always tell the farmer: 'you only need to organise with the Agricultural Marketing Board and you will get a better price.'

Mr Woochit: As you have just said, whether the Government envisages to open more warehouses to store both imported and local products?

Mr Gobin: We have to understand that the Agricultural Marketing Board is in itself a warehouse with cold rooms. Secondly, we will have the National Wholesale Market; once the operations will start, then we shall reassess the situation to see whether other facilities will be required in other regions of the country.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

LONDON EMBASSY – HIGH COMMISSIONER – RESIDENCE

(No. B/1021) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to our Embassy in London, he will state if the Government of Mauritius owns an official residence for use by the High Commissioner thereof and, if so, indicate if same is being occupied by the present High Commissioner and, if not, why not, and is alternatively renting another residential premise for the High Commissioner and, if so

—

(a) since when, and

(b) the quantum of rent payable therefor.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the official residence for use for by the High Commissioner situated at Bramham Gardens in London is owned by the Government of Mauritius. The property which was purchased in 1984 had several issues relating to the heating system, electrical installations and lately with the piping network dating back to several decades leading to recurrent water leakage.

In 2019, it was decided to proceed with major refurbishment works on the property. The High Commissioner was therefore relocated to a rental accommodation at a monthly rent of £7,735.

Mr Speaker: Done?

Mr Ramful: Is there any report from any surveyor or any expert to suggest that the High Commissioner's residence is not habitable as said by the hon. Minister?

Mr Ganoo: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. In fact, in October 2019, a tender exercise was effected and I can inform the House, unfortunately, only one bid was received and this bid was not retained as it was 155% higher than the cost estimates. Our mission in London and the Ministry have engaged in consultations since that time regarding the upgrading works, but unfortunately because of COVID-19 and unavailability of funds for the years 2020 and 2021, the works have been delayed. I must inform the hon. Member that provisions have been made in this Budget for the launching of tenders for consultancy services for the renovation of the official residence.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. 2019 to 2022 are three years down the road. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he finds it normal for the heating system, electrical installation and piping network to be repaired take so long?

Mr Ganoo: I think I had already anticipated the question of the hon. Member. That is why I said that since October 2019, a tender exercise was effected, but unfortunately, only one bid was received and it was not retained as it was 155% higher than the cost estimate. So, from then, the mission in London and the Ministry were engaged in consultations with regard to the upgrading works, but as we all know, Mr Speaker, Sir, COVID-19 pandemic came and due to the unavailability of funds for 2020 and 2021, the works have been unfortunately delayed. This is

why for this financial year, provisions have been made in the Budget for the launching of tenders for the consultancy services and the renovation of the official residence. I must inform the hon. Member that the documents have already been prepared and the process for re-launching a fresh tender exercise has already been initiated.

Mr Speaker: Question sufficiently canvassed! The Table is advised that PQs B/1022, B/1059, B/1063 have been withdrawn. Next question!

METRO EXPRESS PROJECT – ROSE-HILL TO RÉDUIT – FUNDS DISBURSED

(No. B/1022) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the extension of the Metro Express Project from Rose-Hill to Réduit, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Metro Express Limited, information as to the quantum of funds disbursed as at date, indicating –

- (a) the estimated final cost thereof;
- (b) expected completion date thereof, and
- (c) if the extension thereof to the region of Côte d’Or is being envisaged.

(Withdrawn)

SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS AUTHORITY – MR I. S. – SEXUAL ABUSE

(No. B/1023) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the Special Education Needs Authority, she will state the reasons why it was not informed of the recruitment of Mr I. S., Speech Therapist, who is being accused of sexual abuse on several children in a specialised school.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, one the core functions of the Special Education Needs Authority is to register special education needs institutions, their teaching and non-teaching staff, as well as any other resource persons working thereat.

In this context, a call for registration of all SEN institutions and their staff was launched on 16 December 2021. The Special Education Needs Authority (SENA) also constantly reminds

all SEN institutions that they need to get all their staff duly registered with the authority in accordance with Regulation 3 of the SENA (Registration of Special Education Needs Institutions) Regulations 2021 (GN No 28 of 2021).

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Society for the Welfare of the Deaf had recruited the *orthophoniste* on 02 May 2022, but did not inform SENA about this recruitment. It is only after the occurrence of the deplorable incident which was reported at the School for the Deaf that the authority was made aware of this recruitment. The onus for informing the Special Education Needs Authority of any recruitment and to seek registration thereof rests upon the NGO or institutions as per the regulation referred.

Ms J. Bérenger: Sachant que la *Special Education Needs Authority Act* a été proclamée depuis 2018, l'honorable ministre peut-elle nous dire quand est-ce que le directeur a été recruté et quelle est son expérience dans l'éducation spécialisée ?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The director was recruited in September 2021.

Ms J. Bérenger: Quelle est son expérience s'il-vous plaît dans l'éducation spécialisée ?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: He was a Senior Lecturer at the Mauritius Institute of Education and has a qualification in special education needs.

Ms J. Bérenger: L'honorable ministre peut-elle nous donner la garantie que depuis cet évènement malheureux, elle s'est assurée que tous les professionnels exerçant dans les écoles spécialisées sont effectivement enregistrés aujourd'hui ?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, this has already been done and we have also organised workshops to inform and train all Teachers and Carers in the special education needs school as well as their Managers. So, as soon as we came to know about this sad incident, a number of actions have been taken at the level of the authority to ensure that we enable and empower these NGOs to better cater and help our children.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

CHA CHAMAREL – WASTE WATER DRAINAGE PROJECT

(No. B/1024) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Waste Water Drainage Project

at CHA Chamarel, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Waste Water Management Authority, information as to where matters stand as to the implementation thereof.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Wastewater Management Authority (WMA) that the CHA Chamarel comprises 2 blocks with a total of 9 houses.

I am further informed that complaints have been received regarding the problem of overflow at the site. Under the current system, the domestic wastewater and surface run-off of the residential CHA units drain into an existing septic tank located at the backyard of one of the inhabitants. The overflow of the effluent from the septic tank onto a State land has been the cause of the complaints. Even though the CHA Chamarel site is not managed by the Wastewater Management Authority, the latter has provided assistance through pumping of the septic tank on several occasions to mitigate sanitary and environmental nuisances.

Mr Speaker, Sir, site inspections were carried out by the Wastewater Management Authority in June 2019 and recommendations were submitted on the way forward in July 2019 to the District Council of Black River. One of the recommendations was to identify a plot of land so as to construct a new on-site wastewater disposal system.

In view of complaints received and delay encountered in the implementation of the project, a high level meeting was held on 08 September 2021 at the District Council of Black River, in the presence of hon. Members of the National Assembly of Constituency No. 14, representatives of the Ministry of Health and Wellness, the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning and the Wastewater Management Authority. At the meeting, the Wastewater Management Authority was requested to consider wastewater connection of the concerned houses at CHA Chamarel. Given that the region of Chamarel is remote from existing public sewers under Wastewater Management Authority's operation and maintenance responsibility, it was not considered feasible nor sustainable to maintain a wastewater network for only 9 houses thereat.

It was thus proposed that the Wastewater Management Authority would construct an on-site wastewater disposal system at Cité CHA Chamarel and it would operate and maintain it with the financial contribution of the District Council of Black River and the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Wastewater Management Authority has worked out the details of the sewerage project which will comprise the following –

1. the construction of about 60 m sewers from the existing CHA Estate to the plot of State land proposed by the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning;
2. construction of a septic tank of 15 m³ effective capacity;
3. construction of an absorption pit with plan area of about 50 m² and depth 4 m, and
4. construction of a chain link fence with two chain link gates.

Financial clearance to the tune of Rs3.5 m. for the Wastewater Management Authority to undertake the project has been obtained on 20 April 2022. I am informed that procedures to acquire way leaves have been initiated by the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning whereas procedures for compensation to private land owners have already been initiated by the Valuation Department.

Bids will be launched by the Wastewater Management Authority once clearance for way leaves has been obtained.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Supplementary? Next question!

NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES SURVEY 2021 – FINDINGS

(No. B/1025) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Non-communicable Diseases Survey 2021, he will state the findings thereof, indicating the communication campaign envisaged to address the issue of non-communicable diseases in Mauritius.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, taking into consideration the high prevalence of Non-Communicable Diseases in Mauritius and the toll it takes on the population in terms of comorbidities and deaths, the hon. Prime Minister made the fight against NCDs one of the top priorities of this Government. In fact, our Prime Minister has shown strong commitment during the 77th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York, last September, in combating NCDs and its complications.

The Seventh Mauritius Non-Communicable Diseases Survey was carried out in October and November 2021. The overall objective of the Mauritius NCD Survey 2021 was to determine the prevalence and study the trends of risk factors of cardiovascular diseases and diabetes: hypertension, overweight, obesity, tobacco, alcohol, and physical activity.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the findings of the Mauritius NCD Survey 2021 revealed the following –

- (i) a small decrease in the prevalence of type 2 diabetes in the mauritian population aged 25-74 years from 22.9% in 2015 to 19.9% in 2021;
- (ii) a decrease in the prevalence of pre-diabetes from 19.6% in 2015 to 15.9% in 2021;
- (iii) among those people known to have diabetes, the metabolic control of their diabetes as judged by blood glucose levels was moderately poor, although the proportion has decreased from 35.6% in 2015 to 31.7% in 2021;
- (iv) there was a better diabetic control among the population as the level of hba1c has decreased from 35.6% in 2015 to 31.7% in 2021;
- (v) the prevalence of hypertension has stabilised to 27.2% in 2021, compared to 27.3% in 2015;
- (vi) a decrease in the prevalence of overweight from 39.4% in 2015 to 36% in 2021;
- (vii) a decrease in the prevalence of obesity from 45.5% in 2015 to 36.2% in 2021;
- (viii) a decrease in the prevalence of high cholesterol level from 44.1% in 2015 to 34.8% in 2021;
- (ix) the prevalence of smoking has decreased from 19.3% in 2015 to 18.1% in 2021;
- (x) the prevalence of harmful alcohol consumed was 15.4% in 2021.

It is to be noted that in 2015, prevalence of alcohol consumption was based on any consumption of alcohol which cannot be compared to the current survey. In fact, harmful alcohol consumption is defined as three drinks per day and/or drinking more than 2-3 days per week.

- (xi) the percentage of persons undertaking physical activity during leisure time or more than 30 minutes per day has increased from 23% in 2015 to 40.2% in 2021;

- (xii) the prevalence of albuminuria has remained stable from 6.8% in 2015 to 6.3% in 2021;
- (xiii) the prevalence of asthma in adults has decreased from 8.9% in 2015 to 7.5% in 2021, and
- (xiv) 10.8% out of participants eligible for retinal screening, that is, those with diabetes or newly diagnosed with diabetes, was found to have any grade of retinopathy in one or both eyes. Retinal screening was not undertaken in NCD Survey 2015.

Mr Speaker, Sir, several measures had already been taken such as promotion of physical activity and exercise. The awareness/sensitisation mechanisms have further been reinforced to address the issues mentioned in the NCD report. The planned communication campaign includes the following –

- (a) health promotion campaigns are being organised in the compound of commercial centres, shopping malls, district councils and municipal councils across the island during Saturdays;
- (b) setting up of Health Promotion Clubs in Ministries/Departments in collaboration with the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) to encourage public officers to practice regular physical activity and adopt healthy eating habits;
- (c) screening conducted for early detection of NCDs and their risk factors at worksites, in communities for adults aged 18 years and in secondary schools for students aged between 12-17 years old, and
- (d) sensitisation and health education campaigns throughout TV and Radio Programmes are being organised as follows –
 - (i) TV programme named "*Priorité Santé*" is being broadcast every week for 26 minutes;
 - (ii) special TV programme known as "*Tou Korek*" is being mounted in collaboration with the Prime Minister's Office with the aim to sensitise the population on Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and to decrease the number of people suffering from NCDs;

- (iii) another TV programme named “*Minute Santé*” based on Nutrition and healthy lifestyle will be introduced, and
- (iv) new radio programme named “*Mauricien kone ou la santé*” will be aired in Creole and Bhojpuri Language.

So, these are the measures that have already been taken.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, hon. Minister. Can the hon. Minister inform the House of the different stakeholders which participated in the NCD survey?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. So, this NCD Survey of 2021 was carried out in collaboration with Monash University of Australia, University of Helsinki of Finland, Umea University Hospital of Sweden, Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute of Australia, Imperial College of UK and World Health Organisation, the Stakeholders.

Mr Speaker: The Table is advised that PQ B/1046, B/1054, B/1032, B/1042, B/1062, B/1031, B/1033 and B/1070 have been withdrawn. Time is over!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S. O. 10(2)

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology: Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that all the business on today’s Order Paper be exempted from the provisions of paragraph (2) of Standing Order 10.

Mr Ganoo seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

FATF RECOMMENDATION 15 – MAURITIUS – TECHNICAL COMPLIANCE UPGRADE

The Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance (Mr M. Seeruttun): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I wish to make a Statement apprising the House of the latest developments regarding Mauritius Compliance with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) Recommendations.

The House will recall that, in December 2021, the Virtual Asset and Initial Token Offering Services (VAITOS) Act was enacted. During my intervention in this august Assembly on 10 December 2021, I stated that the VAITOS Act was essential to support the re-rating application of Mauritius for FATF Recommendation 15, which is on “New Technologies”.

Today, 10 months later, I am pleased to announce the House that Mauritius has been successfully upgraded to ‘Largely Compliant’ on this Recommendation at the Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group (ESAAMLG) Meetings held in Livingstone, Zambia, in September last.

With this technical compliance upgrade, Mauritius is now “Compliant” or “Largely Compliant” to all the 40 FATF Recommendations. Mauritius is, in fact, the first country in the ESAAMLG region to have achieved this level of compliance with the FATF Standards.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I also wish to inform the House that, in addition to the technical compliance upgrade, the ESAAMLG Council of Ministers has also adopted a project proposal from Mauritius for the development of an International Co-operation Review Group (ICRG) Toolkit and Methodology. Mauritius had, in fact, with the support of the EU AML/CFT Global Facility, developed and presented a Concept Note for the Task Force to start the project. The project will, in a good spirit of cooperation and collaboration, support countries in the ICRG process by utilising the experience gained by Botswana, Mauritius and Zimbabwe.

With the afore-mentioned progress, Mauritius is now in the top-tier of technically compliant jurisdictions. This demonstrates that Mauritius remains a credible and trustworthy jurisdiction.

In this regard, having set up the necessary frameworks, the Government is pursuing its initiatives to maintain Mauritius as an International Financial Centre of repute.

Mr Speaker, Sir, before I conclude, I would like to thank the hon. Prime Minister, who himself chaired the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Anti-Money Laundering and Combatting the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT), the members of the Core Group for AML/CFT, the members of the National Committee on AML/CFT as well as the staff of my Ministry and other relevant competent authorities for their collective efforts in bringing our framework in line with international standards and best practices.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

PUBLIC BILL

Second Reading

THE MAURITIUS FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY BILL

(NO. XIII OF 2022)

Order for Second Reading read.

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal): Mr Speaker, Sir, it is my honour and privilege to bring to this House, the Mauritius Food Standards Agency Bill 2022.

You will recall that on 5th July, the Food Bill 2022 was enacted to replace and repeal the Food Act of 1998.

The Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, during his speech at the annual gathering of Heads of State and Government Group for the Prevention of Non-Communicable Diseases in New York, last September, reaffirmed the commitment of the Government to introduce the Mauritius Food Standards Agency Bill to promote better food safety and nutrition in Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Food Act 2022 is the legislation which ensures the safety and nutritional quality of food available on the market. The enactment of the Food Act 2022 has paved the way for the introduction of innovative and forthcoming measures regarding safe food of nutritive value. The Food Act 2022 and the Mauritius Food Standards Agency Bill 2022 will complement each other.

In fact, the Mauritius Food Standards Agency will be the think-tank regarding the safety and nutritional quality of food available on the market. The ultimate goal being to ensure that people can trust that the food they buy and eat is safe. The Mauritius Food Standards Agency, the MFSA, will act as a one-stop shop, cutting across the whole food supply chain from production to consumption.

The MFSA will ensure that information regarding food safety and nutritional value of food are available both to Food Business Operators and the population. It will act primarily as an advisory body, assessing and proposing food standards for adoption, as well as, coordinating and

reviewing the food control system. For instance, it can initiate researches to assess the level of pesticide residues, which is known to have an incidence on the development of cancer on human, in fruits and vegetables. Based on the findings, it can provide scientific and technical advice to the Ministry for policy decisions.

The Mauritius Food Standards Agency Bill proposes a regulatory framework using as benchmarks legislative guidelines developed by the Food and Agricultural Organisation and the World Health Organisation especially through the document ‘Assuring food safety and quality; guidelines for strengthening national food control systems.’

The regulatory framework of the MFSA will also consider food standard agencies frameworks established internationally including those of Australia, New Zealand, India, the European Union and Member States.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, announced in the Government Programme 2020-2024 that a Food Standards Agency will be established. A legislative framework to govern this agency was worked out by a technical working group of my Ministry.

Members of the Technical working group consisted of officers of my Ministry well-versed in food safety and nutrition, including officers of the Health Inspectorate Cadre and Nutrition Department. This legislative framework was prepared with the assistance of Dr. Dennis Bittisnich, an Australian Consultant, appointed by the World Health Organisation. He is the same Consultant who was assigned the responsibility of drafting the Food Bill 2022 and was in Mauritius in August.

He acted as resource person in a workshop organised by my Ministry targeting all stakeholders of the food business, be it producers, importers, exporters, representatives of consumers as well as small businesses to give their views on the forthcoming food regulations.

We have already started a communication campaign focusing on the educative aspects to explain the new food law as well as the mandate of the Mauritius Food Standards Agency to all stakeholders.

In the Budget 2022-2023, provisions have been made for the setting up of the MFSA and funds to the tune of Rs1 m. have been provided in relation thereto.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Mauritius Food Standards Agency will develop standards and procedures pertaining to the certification of halaal and vegetarian food.

These certifications will be of interest to Mauritians and tourists and we are making sure that these standards, like the others, are framed according to the guidelines of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and on countries which have already developed such guidelines. There is no universal Food Standards Agency; each country adapts the main principles of the FAO/WHO to better suit the realities of its society.

It should be highlighted that this Bill takes into consideration the applicability within the Mauritian legislative norms and has been prepared after consultation with key stakeholders in Government, Industry and Civil Society to ensure that the adopted framework is appropriate and implementable. The Bill has been aligned with legislative norms in Mauritius after consultation with the Attorney General's Office.

While the enforcement of the Food Act 2022 will remain solely on the Public Health and Food Safety Inspectorate, the MFSA will provide the framework to improve our national food control system with the objective to better protect the health of our population.

Ensuring a healthy population is not only the mandate of the Ministry of Health and Wellness, but also involves other stakeholders at the level of Government like the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security; the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping; the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection; the Ministry of Local Government, Disaster and Risk Management as well as the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development in varying degrees and ways.

However, this sometimes leads to problems such as duplication of regulatory activity, increased bureaucracy and lack of coordination. The Mauritius Food Standards Agency will act as an umbrella, harmonising all activities of the food business.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the objective of the Mauritius Food Standards Agency is primarily to ensure a high degree of consumer confidence in the safety and nutritional quality of food produced, processed, imported, sold in, or exported from Mauritius. It aims at providing appropriate information relating to food to enable the consumer to make informed choices

regarding food safety and nutritional quality. The MFSA also provides information to food businesses of different scales to ensure that they are compliant to the food regulations.

The MFSA will develop or revise standards, having regard to relevant international standards and recommend maximum limits for food additives, microbiological counts, pesticide residues, veterinary drug residues, heavy metals, processing aids, mycotoxins and irradiation of food.

It will also be responsible to develop guidelines for the certification of anybody engaged in audit of food safety management systems. Among the different functions of the MFSA, is to develop regulatory requirements applicable to specific articles imported into or exported from Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the MFSA will be responsible to develop procedures and guidelines for the accreditation of laboratories undertaking food analysis and compliance examination with the Food Act 2022. It shall also develop methods of sampling, analysis and examination for the purpose of enforcing the provisions of the Food Act 2022.

The Mauritius Food Standards Agency shall develop labelling standards for food claims on health, nutrition and special dietary uses. It will also be mandated to carry out surveys relating to food consumption and prevalence of food borne diseases.

The MFSA will be responsible for the introduction of a Rapid Alert System for food borne diseases outbreaks and will also monitor and communicate messages on health, safety and nutritional risks to the Government and any external stakeholder. It shall provide appropriate training programmes related to food safety and standards for every person who is, or intends to be involved in the food business, whether as a Food Business Operator or an employee.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Mauritius Food Standards Agency will be administered under the aegis of the Ministry of Health and Wellness, but will operate independently.

The Bill proposes an organigram for the structure of the MFSA comprising of an Executive and a Board consisting of 12 members. The Board members will comprise of representatives from key Ministries, departments, private sector and consumer protection organisations concerned with food control.

The Chairperson of the Board will be a person with wide experience in the field of Food Safety. The Director will be an officer of my Ministry holding a degree in Food Safety, Food Hygiene, Food Science or an equivalent qualification acceptable to the Ministry and at least 7 years' experience in the field of Food Safety. The Board may co-opt representatives of other bodies to attend the meeting in case their contribution is needed on specific issues.

Furthermore, the Public Health and Food Safety Inspectorate retains core responsibility for inspection, and enforcement of the Food Act and Food Regulations in force. Under this approach, the MFSA will be responsible for standard setting while the Ministry will ensure management functions. This will result in objective food control measures with resultant consumer and industry confidence including trade partners.

This approach encourages transparency and inclusiveness in decision-making processes as well as accountability in implementation. It better equips the Mauritian Government to align with international dimensions of food control, such as Codex Alimentarius and ensures compliance with the World Trade Organisation. Also, this approach is more cost-effective in the long-term.

Along the years, food production, supply, consumption as well as food standards have evolved. Developed countries have devised their own Food Standard Agencies adapted from the Codex Alimentarius of the FAO and the WHO.

The recently published National Non-Communicable Diseases Survey 2021 shows that 19.9% of the population aged 25 to 74 years suffer from diabetes. The high prevalence of diabetes among the population may partly be attributed to unhealthy eating habits. With the advent of the MFSA, the overarching objective is to overturn *les mauvaises habitudes alimentaires des mauriciens*.

This Government, under the Prime Ministership of hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, advocates a healthy population and in line with worldwide best practices, my Ministry is today laying solid foundations for a healthy population through the creation of the Mauritius Food Standards Agency, which I am sure, will inspire many countries who are yet to come up with such a piece of legislation.

I welcome the participation of MPs to open the debate and bring suggestions to this. I seize this opportunity to thank the Attorney General's Office and the Public Health and Food Safety Inspectorate of my Ministry for their valuable assistance in the preparation of this Bill.

I thank you for your attention.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo) seconded.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

(4.34 p.m.)

Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I would just like to make one or two comments regarding the speech of the hon. Minister, particularly regarding the campaign that he mentioned that has now been launched in an attempt for awareness for all stakeholders with regard to the parameters of the Mauritius Food Standards Agency Bill and I wish that had come before the enactment of the Bill so that they could have participated with their suggestions and recommendations for same. I would also like, together with Members from this side of the House, to thank Dr. Dennis, the Australian expert, who has helped to enact the Bill.

Mr Speaker, Sir, thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my views. At the outset, I wish to point out that such a Bill is welcome. Particularly, it is hoped that it will bring clear parameters and regulatory guidelines as to food safety, operators of the food industry, be it domestic or international and setting standards with regard to certification of different types of food consumed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, food safety policies are designed to ensure that food production, processing and distribution system, deliver food which is safe and wholesome. However, complete freedom from risk is an unattainable goal and food safety is related to the level of risk that society regards as reasonable in the context of and in comparison with other risk in daily life.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the notion of risk and food safety. In assessing and managing risk, the Agency needs to take every careful account of the expectations of the consumer, recognising that in many circumstances the public is unlikely to be willing to pay the cost of achieving maximum theoretical level of safety whether that cost is manifested in higher food prices or in restrictions

of freedom of choice. Risk assessment needs to be based on the best available methodology drawing on expert scientific advice and making appropriate allowances for the inevitable uncertainties involved.

Mr Speaker, Sir, where there are uncertainties about the scientific evidence, an element of surely political judgement is inevitably involved in reaching decisions on the best course of action. Where there is a risk of serious damage to public health, lack of full scientific uncertainty should not be used as a reason for delaying or postponing cost-effective measures to reduce the health risk. Where it is not possible to identify a safe threshold of intake in relation to identified hazards, any risk from exposure should be reduced to as low a level as it is reasonably practicable.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in assessing cost and benefits, the Agency will need to take into account the effects of its action on those particularly affected: the food industry, the stakeholders, the consumers, the enforcement authorities, against the background of its essential aim of protecting public health. This is a fine balance and that balance on occasion, will need to balance the cost and benefits to different groups of consumers. For example, a product may carry a significant risk to a particular group such as the people having an allergy, particularly gluten, which can be fatal but little or no risk to the generality of consumers. In such cases, the Agency will need to consider alternative options such as the provision of advice and information.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the expertise as a key role and the right to be informed should be the centre point of this Agency. The Agency will need to be able to call on the industry's own scientific and process expertise and to be trusted with confidential information about the industry's commercial developments so that it has the maximum understanding of developments within its remit.

Confidence is a keyword in the enactment of this Bill, in its purpose and for it to deliver its goods. Confidence will only be achieved if the general public has access to information provided by the Agency on its own activities including the basis of its decisions and actions and the decision-making process itself. The Agency must comply with legislations and code of practice of freedom of information though it must have regard for legitimate commercial and academic confidentiality, but must publish information where there is a clear need for this to be in the public domain.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my intervention of this proposed Bill for the setting up of the Mauritius Food Standard Agency today is pragmatic and with the aim to make constructive proposals to be able to achieve the goal, that is, giving all the stakeholders the necessary trust and confidence which have been lacking in the domain of food safety. The setting up of such an agency is laudable.

However, I sincerely believe that it should have been introduced by the hon. Prime Minister – nothing personal against the hon. Minister of Health – I explain myself. Mr Speaker, Sir, I am of the opinion that the Bill should have been introduced by the hon. Prime Minister so as to give all the impetus to this agency since it involves, as the hon. Minister himself mentioned, so many ministries; from the Ministry of Health to the Ministry of Finance, to the Attorney General to the Ministry of Commerce and that of Agriculture, and as you can note from the number of nominees among the 12 that have been named on the Board.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the independence and the true independence of such an important agency is critical. It is also important that such agency is seen and also perceived to act independently and not tied to any vested interest or ministerial interest. Hence, I believe it should be a non-ministerial department, governed strictly and solely by the Board. I will quote in the United Kingdom the Food Safety Agency was pre-faced by the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair. It is a bit long. I quote it –

“For too long consumers in the United Kingdom have suffered from uncertainty and confusion about the quality and safety of the food they buy. The Government is determined to do away with the old climate of secrecy and suspicion...This fresh approach will help to command the confidence of consumers, industry and our partners in the European Union.”

But he went one step further and that is what is extremely important here. He said –

“The Agency will not be tied to any vested interests. It will have clearly defined priorities. It will be free to publish any of the advice it provides to Government. If Ministers decide not to follow that advice they will have to explain their reasons to the public and to Parliament”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if such approach were to happen here in Mauritius, we will go far in ensuring confidence in all stakeholders, customers being first and foremost. The Mauritius Food Standard Agency should be an independent body which should be powerful, open and dedicated to the interests of consumers. The Government has unfortunately, not widely consulted all stakeholders. It would have found widespread support and above all, added constructive proposals that would have transformed the way food standards issues are handled in this country.

The essential aim of the agency is the protection of public health in relation to food. The Agency's assessment of food standards and safety must be unbiased and based on the best available scientific data and advice provided by experts whether employed, acknowledged or should be invited in their own rights to independently give their opinion.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the actions and decisions of the Agency with regard to risks is very important. The Agency must make decision and take action on the basis that the Agency's decision and action should be proportionate to the risks and pay due regard to costs as well as benefits to those affected by them and avoid overregulation. The Agency should act independently of specific sectorial interest.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Agency should try to ensure that the general public has adequate fair, clear, presented information in order to allow them to make informed choices. In doing this, the Agency shall aim to avoid raising unjustified alarm. *C'est-à-dire, crier au loup quand il n'y a pas de loup*. Therefore, the Agency's decision-making processes must be open, transparent, and consultative in order that interested parties including, representatives of the public have an opportunity to make their views known and can see the basis on which decisions have been made.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will now comment on a few sections of the Bill. Firstly, the functions of the Agency, Section 5(1); I strongly believe the Agency should not limit itself to the Food Act 2022 but instead must encompass all food related legislations available in force in the country so that there is full effect of the powers of the Agency without any ambiguity.

Secondly, with regard to administration of the Agency, Part III Section 7(1)(a); the Chairperson of the Board should be appointed by the Prime Minister in consultation with the Minister of Health as this Agency will deal with a national issue, the national food security of the country. Also, I note a very serious omission of the composition of the Board. The

representatives of the Ministry of Fisheries and its competent authorities are not included to form part of the Board and I strongly recommend that they do have representatives on the Board since we have such a vast maritime exclusive zone and we have a wide local seafood business and export processed seafood enterprises in Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will also make comments on the financial provisions and accounts at Section 14(2): ‘Income from any other source approved by the Minister’. I honestly think that details pertaining to subsequent licence to operate a food outlet and if it were to be imperative to obtain same from the Agency, should have been outlined and details of the licence fee, whether applicable, should have been given in the Bill.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Bill makes mention, in Part II Section 4(f), to develop standards and procedures for the certification of vegetarian, halal food and such other food. I am of the opinion that both the vegetarian and the halal sector should be looked in a very dispassionate manner. I would suggest the creation of separate committees to look into the different aspects. Government should create the legal and administrative framework for halal and vegetarian bodies to function and should not indulge as a halal or vegetarian authority or body. We can seek the advice of the Indian and Singapore Government for vegetarian aspect and the SANHA of South Africa and the Malaysian authority to help in the case of halal sector together with certain well organised certifying agencies that already exist in Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I also recommend that the Agency should have responsibility for coordinating research in the areas of food safety, nutrition and consumer protection. The MFSA should also be made responsible for assessing regulated products such as novel foods, food additives, Genetically Modified Organisms for food and feed uses.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there should be, and I cherish this idea, a National Food Crime Unit to look after all food fraud risks in the country. Food crime is too often sophisticated, serious and always involves dishonesty. It will commonly involve a seller misrepresenting one facet or another, food product to a buyer. This might include its composition, durability, the country of origin, production methods and health properties. This concept has not been defined in the Bill and must be a main function of the Agency.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the types of food crimes that we have are numerous but the main ones regard –

- theft;
- illegal processing on unapproved premises and unauthorised techniques;
- waste diversion, that is, food that is supposed to be disposed of, are back into the consumer and supply chain;
- adulteration: introducing foreign substances in products label;
- substitution: replacing food ingredients and amongst others;
- misrepresentation: marketing a product or labelling it to wrongly portray its quality, and
- document fraud to substandard products.

We should not forget instances that have happened in the past; melamine in milk powder; plastic replacing rice and the latest, horse meat in beef burgers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the agency must be held responsible for the systems that regulate food businesses and be at the forefront of tackling crime. The agency should also review the actual sampling strategy, introduce a mandatory hygiene rating display gaps that exist in enforcement powers and follow the impact, the National Food Crime Unit will have on food fraud.

Mr Speaker, Sir, transparency must be the guiding principle for the MFSA and key to maintaining public confidence. The staffing should not be limited and include statisticians, analysts, researches, enforcement experts, policy professionals, economics and academia. The pace of technology and business change in the food system continues to accelerate. People have changed their methods, people have changed their manners, people have changed their ways of looking at food, people are buying food in different aspects, for example, via online market places and through social media. These changes are affecting the way people purchase food and the way food business operate.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is also a continuing challenge to improve our national diet so the food we eat helps us to live longer and healthier. Research shows that some of the people's biggest concerns about food are health and nutrition. People are very worried about food affordability and insecurity. The agency should consider the impact of these issues across the span of the work.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Food and Agrological Organisation (FAO) under the umbrella of the United Nation is of paramount importance to foreign stakeholders as well as local businesses. I understand that the Ministry of Health has requested technical assistance from the FAO to assist and review the food control system in Mauritius, but as to date, the Ministry has not yet signed the MoU and the said MoU, as I understand it, has been forwarded since June 2022. Such delay can only undermine our credibility and seriousness to work in partnership with reputed international organisations that fall under the umbrella of the United Nations with regard to food security.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to conclude, as well as food safety, the agency should also consider other factors such as animal welfare, environment and economic impact. The advice the Agency must give must come out of risk analysis based on science and evidence and not on wider political and public pressures. Whilst I do commend this Bill, I sincerely hope that the points I have raised will be considered in a very objective spirit and any amendments ensue.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Koonjoo-Shah!

(4.53 p.m.)

The Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare (Mrs K. Koonjoo-Shah): Mr Speaker, Sir, thank you for allowing me to contribute to this very important piece of legislation. We, on this of the House, appreciate hon. Dr. Aumeer's positive remarks that he has made on this Bill and I hope that during my intervention, I will be able to allay some of the qualms that you have raised during your elocution.

It is also good to note that most of the points that hon. Dr. Aumeer has raised during his intervention are already being catered for in the Bill brought to the House by my colleague, hon. Dr. Kailesh Kumar Singh Jagutpal, whom I congratulate and his entire team for the sturdy effort that they have made in the preparation of this Bill.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Mauritius Food Standards Agency Bill is nothing but a logical step forward after the Food Act was passed in July this year and is yet another concrete measure by this Government just three months after so as to ensure that our population benefits from adequate, safe, and healthy food.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the health of the people determines the wealth of a nation. The recent COVID-19 pandemic and independent as well as interdependent external factors prevailing at international level have made governments and Heads of State realise the growing importance of food security. This Government places a lot of emphasis on the health of our population. To guarantee the safety of domestic food supplies as well as food items for regional and worldwide trade, it is essential to build an efficient food safety system.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the agency's functions lie at the very heart of the Bill. The agency will play a significant role as the primary source of policy recommendations made to the Minister. The agency's general role is to ensure that the food regulatory measures are complied with in addition to providing advice and scientific and technical assistance to the Minister. By providing unbiased and evidence-based guidance – here, it is perhaps the reassurance that hon. Dr. Aumeer was seeking – the provision of which will assist people in making well-informed decisions. So, they are going to be scientific and they are going to be research based.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the budget allocated to the health service is enormous and it keeps growing every year. However, it is more judicious, and I am sure we all agree with that, to address the health services from a preventive perspective. We all know that we need to have a healthy lifestyle in order to stay in good health, and this also depends heavily on the quality of food that we consume. Our concern for the health of our population includes food safety...

(Interruptions)

Excuse me, may I carry on?

Mr Speaker: Yes, please.

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Our concern for the health of our population includes food safety as an integral component. Food safety, nutrition and food security are very intimately linked. Food safety, Mr Speaker, Sir, cannot exist without an adequate control system and information sharing.

It is well understood, Mr Speaker, Sir, that gender equity and empowerment of women are essential for lowering the incidence of foodborne illnesses. This Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, will foster strong customer trust in the nutritional value and safety of food that we produce, that we import, or export and most importantly that we consume. The presence of foodborne illnesses as

a result of excessive use of pesticides, chemicals, microorganisms and parasites has affected and will continue to affect us if nothing is done. All stakeholders have an important role to play in educating and training of our citizens to apply all knowledge associated with food safety into our daily lives. We know that we have a good number of women who are still taking care of a balanced diet, the health aspects and the safety of food being purchased and consumed and these women are also very well aware of food safety issues.

Mr Speaker, Sir, what I am aiming to say that in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to provide a better and a more sustainable future for all, food safety, including access to enough safe and nutritious food, is a key component. The Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG2) aims to –

"end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture".

The success of the Sustainable Development Goals rests to a large extent on effective monitoring, review, and follow-up processes. To this end, the Government's recent budgetary measures have been directed towards enhancing our produce, as well as their transformation in their agricultural sectors. Moreover, on several occasions, the Prime Minister himself has laid emphasis on the importance of stepping up our efforts to achieve self-sufficiency when it comes to food.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Prime Minister has time and again acted upon what he believes is right for the country. His first duty has always been to care for the health of his citizens, be it when we were going through the storm of the COVID-19, be it in the recent budget where the focus was on food security and now, today, as we debate this Bill on the Food Standards Agency. The Government's vision has never been limited to immediate gains. This Government's vision is that of long term. We can rest assured that through this Bill, we are laying a strong foundation for a healthier generation ahead.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius has a liberal economy and trade policy with a trade-to-GDP ratio of 95%. In order to promote food trade, the quality of our food needs to be enhanced. It is equally important to ensure that domestic and international food regulations are consistent while maintaining high standards for both consumer and public health protection. For example, if a product is commercialised in Europe according to certain established standards, it can safely be

consumed by our local population. The provisions in the Mauritius Food Standards Agency Bill are intended precisely to bring measures on local and imported food products closer in line with international standards. My point is that we cannot restrict imports. We must rely on the norms established internationally.

Mr Speaker, Sir, from this side of the House, we are of the firm view that our people have a right to clear information so they can choose their food with knowledge and wisdom. Transparency in the food supply equips the consumers to make informed choices about the food they consume and also respects their integrity and autonomy. The Agency is not here – unless not make any mistake about this – to impose upon the people on what to eat, but we are all aware that poor nutrition contributes significantly to bad health. Therefore, the Agency is here to play an active role in nutrition policy. It will also encourage producers and importers to sell more quality products, and automatically generating a conducive environment for trade by enhancing market access for those goods.

Mr Speaker, Sir, according to the World Health Organisation, women's and their children's health and development are significantly influenced by nutrition. I have in my mind right now the nutritional risk factors for vulnerable groups, such as expectant mothers, pregnant women and breast-feeding mummies. The implementation of this Bill's provisions is going to ensure that our women and children have access to healthy, nutritious foods that are safe for their consumption, which obviously we all know affects our children's productivity, their academic achievement, and their cognitive development.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I can only praise my colleague, hon. Dr. Jagutpal for again displaying his unshakable mettle to come up with a Bill for the welfare of our citizens. And I would have hoped that hon. Dr. Aumeer, being a medical practitioner himself, would have been the first to congratulate my colleague and acknowledge the scope of this piece of legislation. I think he did.

Dr. Aumeer: I did.

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: You did. Well done!

Mr Speaker, Sir, we must not see the array of measures taken by this Government in isolation. For example, Clause 11 of the Food Act 2022 stipulates that samples must be analysed and examined in order to help identify potential threats to the food safety, such as

microbiological contamination, heavy metal contamination - as mentioned earlier on by the speaker before me - food adulteration, which was the concern he raised, and incorrect additive use.

Mr Speaker, Sir, through the provisions of this Bill, the Agency may as well develop methods of sampling, analysis and examination for the very purpose of enforcing the provisions of the Food Act. It is evident that this Bill is necessary in order to carry out the objects set out in the Food Act.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius, being a beautiful and multicultural society, has different dietary tendencies. Our food industry and our producers need to take this factor into consideration and never overlook the dietary preferences, requirements, and standards. For example, some people will not consume food of animal origin. Again, going back to what hon. Dr. Aumeer mentioned, some people are gluten intolerant, glucose intolerant; I think celiac disease is what you are referring to. So, people should be able to trust the products being made available to them for consumption. And this will be the Agency's principal mandate to ensure this quality assurance.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the food consumption patterns have evolved and keep evolving, and scientific research into nutrition is of growing importance. This is why the Agency will be working in a field where sound science is crucial and where advancements are constantly being made. The agency has the general responsibility of remaining on top of new scientific and technological breakthroughs as well as any other developments that may be pertinent to its mandate.

Mr Speaker, Sir, referring to the independence of the Agency earlier on, hon. Dr. Aumeer made allusion that the Agency might not be operating independently while adhering to good governance practices. This Bill puts the onus of accountability on the Agency and the Ministry, and thereby the Minister in Parliament, if ever there are Parliamentary Questions. So, I wonder where those vested interests that hon. Dr. Aumeer were making allusions to, I don't know where they come from.

Mr Speaker Sir, allow me to conclude and I wish to say this: that this Government, led by the Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Jugnauth, through a multitude of tangible measures, including but not limited to budgetary measures, is making sure that we have access to food that

complies with food regulatory standards. This Bill displays this Government's dedication and commitment to making a healthy lifestyle our priority. The Government's goals and guiding principles for promoting safe food are now more explicitly stated in the Mauritius Food Standards Agency Bill and we are confident that this Bill will give more strength to the control system for food safety. This in turn demonstrates our willingness to be aligned with the prerequisites of a high-income economy by matching our population's wellness to higher levels.

I once again thank and congratulate my colleague, the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, for the undelayed introduction of this important Bill to the House.

Long live the Republic of Mauritius.

I thank you all for your attention.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I will suspend the Sitting for 45 minutes.

At 5.07 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.52 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Please be seated! Welcome back and I call upon hon. Léopold for his speech.

Mr J. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues): Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. As already mentioned by the mover of the Bill, the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, that very recently in this House, we had repealed our Food Act and replaced it by a new law, to give our law on food safety, the component of a modern food control system.

Therefore, the Food Act is providing elements for a high-level protection of health –

- A law which is consistent.
- A law which provides for tracing of food products.
- A law which meets up with international obligation, especially in relation to trade.

If we refer to the history of food poisoning, there have been so many cases of outbreak well before the existence of recording, with devastating consequences, with loss of a whole community at times and with unexplained causes. Far back in history, the causes of food poisoning, as I mentioned, were unknown due to insufficient knowledge, especially when

humans were consuming raw food and that might be the reason why humans developed the habit of cooking foods.

With time, with the occurrence of countless outbreaks of food poisoning which persist, the causes change from lack of knowledge to accident, to negligence and sometimes on purpose, with an outcome of serious health conditions and sometimes accompanied by death.

There have been a lot of outbreaks of food poisoning since the very start of humanity, but reported incidents were started to be on record only in the beginning of the 19th century. It is only then that the rise in public awareness occurred. And the Food Act in itself, on its own, that is, food law and regulations, will not tackle the issue of food safety. To tackle the issue of food safety, we require a package of measures. For the Food Act to be relevant in modernising and consolidation of food safety, monitoring nutritional quality of food, we need in addition, an effective Food Control System.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Mauritius Food Standards Agency Bill will give this additional effective Food Control System. As I have said earlier, Food Act is only to make sure that food is clean and safe for consumption and by sanctioning, if guidance is not respected. And the Food Standards Agency Bill is to provide a structure into making sure that food safety management procedures are done properly.

So far, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have done so well about food safety in Mauritius. In the history of this country, there has been no known infamous food poisoning, such as for e.g. mad cow disease that some parts of the world did encounter. The reason we had not experienced severe food-borne poisoning outbreak is because we have a rather good monitoring and surveillance through our public health system and because of that, we experience public confidence in our public health service and one example is our high rate of vaccination, not to say at 100%. Infant vaccination in Mauritius is at 100%. Our public health service had never been severely shaken by issues of food safety. To maintain such a good track record, we need to establish new approach to food safety and food standards in this country. The World Health Organisation is of the same view into harmonising food safety regulation in the rapidly changing world, in the time of change, innovation and globalised trade.

I have to thank the mover of this Bill, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for bringing this Bill in this House, to promptly respond to the pressing constant needs to adapt to new challenges, especially

by the changes in food system and climate. It is a timely move. And with COVID-19 pandemic, the world has witnessed the rapidity with which microbes can cross borders and how microbes can be quickly adapting to new environment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, foodborne diseases and zoonotic diseases can be compared to COVID-19 pandemic as they are caused by microbial hazards although food safety is largely linked to physical and chemical hazards as well.

It is the concern of this Government, to set standard to prevent any incidence related to proper handling of food. This is denoted by the participation of two key Ministries, that is, the Ministry of Agriculture and that of Environment, in maintaining food safety for the benefit of all. The participation of the two Ministers on this debate reinforced the pertinence and importance of an update Food Standards Agency Bill.

Food chain and environment are very important in the prevention of foodborne diseases. Therefore, I welcome that holistic and multidisciplinary approach to develop, implement and monitor food standards in the Republic for the safety of the population. The way this Bill is crafted make me believe that the mover of this Bill had made extensive consultation at every stage of its formulation and food safety concerns all of us, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The consequences of getting this type of legislation wrong may lead to serious consequences such as outbreak, which everyone of us know by now, because of the recent experience of COVID-19 pandemic.

I again welcome this Bill as the Bill will maintain the confidence that our people have in food supply chain and the economic well-being that it brings. For my reading of this Bill, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, provision is made to essentially aim to the protection of public health in relation to food safety. Clause 4 of this Bill sets this objective very clearly and the agency and their members need to carry out their function with that in mind all the time.

It is good to see that the objectives of this Bill go beyond food safety. The objective of this Bill will not only provide for food safety, but food standards, that is, something more than just food safety.

By the presence of an officer of the Ministry responsible for the subjects of commerce and consumer, plus a representative from the consumer protection organisation denote that the

Board will also consider on consumer protection. I am sure that will allow to cover area on food labelling matters to provide consumers with information they need to make choices.

There is also the presence of a nutritionist on the Board. This is a significant lead, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as nutrition is a public health matter. Therefore, the agency will have to make sure that the presence of a nutritionist on the Board, play its role into the protection of public health, by taking key and leading role in nutritional policy.

Having said that, the agency will not go to the extent of telling people what they should eat or not, but I believe that the role of the nutritionist will be of providing very clear and accurate information so that consumers can take informed decision on the choices of food. We must bear in mind here that poor nutrition is harmful to health.

I can see that there is a representation from food and agricultural related business. This is fine if the core objectives of the Bill are maintained without any conflict of interest. It is important not to exclude people with relevant experience. This agency needs to be composed of members with relevant skills and experience for it to function properly in aiming and acting on behalf of the Government on food safety and standards matters.

Still on the provisions of this Bill, I also welcome the presence of the representative of central laboratory and other scientists. The agency will have to have members with a proven balance of skills because it is dealing in an area where sound science is important. The work of this agency is strongly related to science, as I have said, and therefore, there must be people on this board who are cognizant to the scientific and technological understanding of development relevant to food safety, food standards and factors that affect the safety of food supply chain.

Now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I turn to Rodrigues. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to my reading of this Bill, I cannot see any provision where representative of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly fit in this Bill. My interpretation to that makes me raise two questions –

1. The first question is: is food safety a devolved subject and power to legislate lies with the devolved legislatures?
2. And my second question is: or is the agency a body serving all parts of the Republic of Mauritius because part of the territory of the Republic of Mauritius operates in devolved functions?

This matter may need clarification so as that the agency is able to promote consistency in the development and implementation of food laws. This is my contribution in the debating stage of this Bill.

I thank you for your kind attention, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Uteem!

(6.07 p.m.)

Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when I intervened during the debates on the Food Bill a weeks ago, I made an appeal to the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness to set up a Food Standard Agency which will be responsible for certification of vegetarian food and halal food. So, I am glad today that we are today debating the setting up of the Mauritius Food Standards Agency which will be responsible among other things for developing standards and procedure for the certification of vegetarian food, halal food and such other food as may be prescribed. This is one of the main functions set out in Section 4 of the Bill.

It is very important for a vegetarian or vegan for that matter to be sure that what he is eating is suitable for vegetarian especially if he is vegetarian by conviction for religious purposes. The same rationale applies to Muslims who will only eat halal products or Jews who will only eat kosher meat.

At the same time, it is important for people to know what they are eating because some of them may be allergic to certain products; they may be intolerant to certain ingredients. Increasingly today, for example, we see a number of gluten free products on the supermarkets.

But today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is very difficult to know what are the ingredients used in the food that we eat, not only because the ingredients are in tiny character and very difficult to read, but also very often the ingredients are coded, for example, E441, that stands for gelatin, a gelling agent made of animal fat. Similarly, E120 - red colour made from the insect cochineal, a product containing such ingredients are not fit for consumption for vegetarians and for Muslims. Yet, we do not know because it is coded; it is E441, E120. But if tomorrow, instead of having these coded ingredients, we have the symbol 'V' which is imposed by the Mauritius Food Standards Agency, people will know that this product is fit for consumption by vegetarians

because it has the green ‘V’ symbol. Similarly, if on a packing we see the word ‘halal’ which is certified by the Mauritius Food Standards Agency, the Muslim will feel safe to be able to consume these products.

Now, how will the Agency comply with its obligation? How will it come up with these standards? Now, obviously, it will be guided by the *Codex Alimentarius* which is the international norm but it will also need to set up sub-committees or at least have consultation sessions with people in the sector who for years have been doing this certification. In Mauritius, for example, there are various Muslim organisations that are responsible for certifying halal products. If you go today to Burger King, you will see a certificate ‘halal product’ so that the Muslims when they are there, they feel confident. So, tomorrow there should be the same level of confidence when the Halal and Vegetarian Certificate will be issued by this Agency.

Now, the Agency will be responsible for developing standards and guidelines for all products so that consumers can make an informed decision about the food safety and nutritional quality. For example, the Agency may require a manufacturer to disclose the fat content or sugar content in a product sold locally so that consumers may know how healthy are the foods that we are consuming. Today, in supermarkets we can see many products which are supposed to be suitable for people who suffer from diabetes, many sugar-free jams, sugar-free biscuits, products with low glycemic index or products with low level of cholesterol which is suitable for heart patients.

But this Agency will be the agency responsible to ensure the accuracy of the information published on the label of each of these products that are supposed to be suitable for diabetes patients or heart patients. Better still, the Agency can recommend the maximum limit for food additives for pesticide residues and microbiological counts that can be present in food that we eat and in the liquid that we drink. This is a very important function of the Agency which is set out in section 5 (3) (c) and it is very relevant in Mauritius especially, because as I had explained when I intervened on the Food Bill, Mauritius unfortunately holds the record of the use of pesticides per hectare of cultivable land in Mauritius. So, tomorrow this Agency can actually provide guidelines, recommendations for the content of the amount of pesticides and microbiological counts that may be present in the food that are sold.

Now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, having regard to our Mauritian culture of eating street food, from our *gato-pima*, *bajia*, *dipin-frir*, *roti*, *dal-pouri*, *boulet*, *griyad*, etc., the question that we have to ask ourselves is how far will this Agency be able to regulate the street food that we consume? How far can the Agency ensure that the food hawkers comply with the food safety standards that the Agency may prescribe? And it is here that education and training is most important. The Agency cannot just come up with food standards, it will also have to properly educate food operators on how to comply with the standards. And I am glad to see that according to section 5 (4) (i) of the Bill, the Agency will –

“provide appropriate training programmes related to food safety and standards for every person who is or intends to be, involved in food business (...)”

This is very laudable but how will that work in practice? Who will run the courses? Will every food hawker be required to follow a course before they are allowed to operate? Will it be a condition of their licence? When they go through a Local Authority, to the MRA to get their licence, will they have to produce a certificate that they have followed such and such courses with the Agency? And what about existing food hawkers who are currently operating without any formal qualification or training? Will they be given a moratorium to comply with any food safety standards prescribed by the Agency? Because clearly the existing food hawkers should not be unduly penalised.

Providing training is necessary but will not be enough. Funding must be made available to the food operators to comply with the food standards which will be published by the Agency. There will be a lot of cost implications. First of all, the testing cost; the cost of food analysis by accredited laboratories to ensure that the products meet the required food safety standards. Then, there will be the cost of packing, labelling and packaging. But the greatest cost is likely to be the expenditure which may be necessary to ensure that the foods are processed and cooked in the most hygienic condition to ensure food safety. Unfortunately, the hon. Minister of Finance is not here, but I hope that the Government, through the Development Bank of Mauritius, through the SME funds and other schemes, will come up with specific schemes to help operators in the food business to enable them to comply with the prescribed food standards.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on this side of the House, we are all in favour of having this Mauritius Food Standards Agency. However, we do have a number of reservations on several

provisions of this Bill. Starting with the composition of the Board of the Agency; this is set out in section 7. Section 7 of the Bill sets out the list of persons who will be on the Board of the Agency, there will be 12 of them. Most of them would be ex officio members but one member shocked me, very odd. Section 7 (1) (j), one of the members of the Board will be -

“the Director of the Mauritius Standards Bureau or his representative;”

Now, according to the Mauritius Standards Bureau Act of 1993, the Director of MSB is the Chief Executive Officer of the MSB duly appointed by the Standards Council with the approval of the Minister. So, by law the Chief Executive of the MSB is the Director, so, it is logical that the Director would have to sit on the Agency. But today, does the Mauritius Standards Bureau have a Director? I went to the website of the Mauritius Standards Bureau and saw under the structure of MSB that MSB does not have a Director, it only has a General Manager. Now, this is very odd because the law clearly states that the Standards Council must appoint a Director. But we don't have a Director; we have a general manager. I am not going to go into details as to why this is the case and how Mrs Boygah had been appointed to the post of General Manager. But the facts remain that we are being called upon to vote a Bill which according to the face of it, provides that the Director of MSB or his representative should sit on the Board and as at today, no one has been appointed as Director of MSB. I would like the hon. Minister to explain to the House how will this person be appointed now that there is no Director and how will these 12 members be appointed to the Agency.

Section 7 of the Bill also provides that there will be on the Board of the Agency a representative from consumer protection organisations. Fair enough! We are all in favour of having a representative of consumer groups on the Board of the Agency but, how will that representative be appointed?

The Bill does not say anything. Is that representative going to be elected? Do we have a list of NGOs, Consumer Protection Organisation? Are they going to conduct an election and elect a representative? Will that person be designated by the hon. Minister? We do not know; it is not provided for in the law as at now and I think this is a major shortcoming because we need to know how will the representative of the Consumer Protection Organisation be appointed or selected or elected.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we also take objection to the apparent *mainmise* of the Minister on the operation of the Agency through his involvement in the appointment of the Director and other staff of the Agency. Section 10 of the Bill provides that the Director of the Agency will be appointed by the Board, which is totally acceptable but, such appointment will be subject to the approval of the Minister. Why should the Minister approve the appointment of the Director? The hon. Minister Koonjoo-Shah was talking about independence; is that Director going to be independent if his appointment does not depend on these *ex officio* members of the Board? It depends on the Minister; it is the Minister who approves. The Director is, after all, responsible to execute policies of the Board, not policies of the Minister. Then why should the Minister have a say in his appointment?

The Bill goes further; Section 10(4) of the Bill provides that –

“The Director shall be an officer of the Ministry – Ministry of Health & Wellness – holding a degree in food safety, food hygiene, food science or an equivalent qualification acceptable to the Ministry and at least 7 years’ experience in the field of food safety”.

Why should the Director be an Officer of the Ministry? Why can’t someone from the private sector become the Director of this Agency? Why can’t someone else from a different department, a different civil servant who is knowledgeable in food, food hygiene or food science; why can’t that person be the Director? Why should the Director be someone from the Ministry of Health? Isn’t that a blatant case of discrimination? I really hope that this provision is not tailor-made for someone who has already been identified in the Ministry of Health. But this Section, as it is, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is discriminatory, irrational and should purely and simply be struck out of this Bill.

So much about the appointment of the Director! What about the appointment of employees and consultants? Section 11 of the Bill provides, and I read –

“The Board may, on such terms and conditions as the Minister may determine, appoint such staff of the Agency and consultants as it considers necessary for the proper discharge of its functions under this Act.”

‘On such terms and conditions as the Minister may determine’, not as the Board may determine, not even as the Director may determine; it is the Minister who is now going to determine the

terms and conditions of the employees. Now, come on, let's be serious! Does the hon. Minister has nothing else to do than become an HR Manager; to substitute himself for the Pay Research Bureau? Leave that to the Board! Leave that to the Directors! Why should the terms and conditions of the employees of the Agency be determined – not even approved, but be determined – by the Minister? So, the Minister is the one who is going to write the scope of work, the job profile. Come on! That's really ridiculous. There is already a Board of 12 people; 12 people who are paid handsomely by the hon. Minister – on such terms as the hon. Minister himself determines of course. And this Board is not even able to determine who it wants to employ, on what terms and the hon. Koonjoo-Shah is talking about independent; an independent Board which does not even have the flexibility of appointing its own staff and consultants! It needs to turn to the Minister.

But that is not all, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The Minister seems to want even more powers. Section 13(1) provides that –

“The Minister may give directions of a general contractor to the Board.”

Now, this is not unusual. We have this power in many other authorities across ministries – the Minister gives general guidance of policy. But what is unusual, is Section 13(1)(b) which reads as follows –

“The Board shall – not may – comply with the directions referred to in paragraph (a)”.

So, the Minister directs; the Board does not have any say, any discretion; the Board must follow whatever directive the Minister gives.

Now, I would like you to name me a single professional *digne de ce nom* with an iota of self-respect who would be prepared to sit on a Board where he will be directed by the Minister and he has to act according to what the Minister tells him. Who would be prepared to give up his independence? Who would want to be a puppet in the hands of the Minister and nearly rubberstamping decisions taken by the Minister? I am not talking about the Minister at present but when we are legislating, we are legislating for the *durée*. What happens if tomorrow you have a Minister who starts directing the Agency: ‘I want you to buy such equipment from such supplier at such price’? And the Board cannot say no because the law says the Board must act in accordance with directives given by the Minister. So, can we see what type of law we are giving;

what type of powers we are giving to the Minister when the Agency is supposed to be independent?

Another controversial provision – Section 13(2) gives the power to the Minister to “require the Board to furnish information in such manner and at such time as he may determine respect of the activities” of the Agency and “the Board shall comply – must provide this information”. Let’s pause here and see what we were doing.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Uteem, I do not want to interrupt you but I think you manage your time usually very well. It is no problem but I have a list before me and I have to go by the list.

Mr Uteem: Sure.

The Deputy Speaker: So, I have been generous. Time is over. If you have two more, I will listen to it.

Mr Uteem: Okay. Give me three minutes only. Three minutes and I’ll finish.

The Deputy Speaker: No, you don’t have three minutes!

Mr Uteem: Three minutes!

An hon. Member: Two lines!

The Deputy Speaker: No, 20 minutes are already done! I am being very nice by allowing you some more time!

Mr Uteem: No, I didn’t know I had 20 minutes. I didn’t know I had 20 minutes.

The Deputy Speaker: It is not for me to decide how long you have.

Mr Uteem: It’s okay but...

The Deputy Speaker: But rather than arguing with me, if you can try to wrap because I’ve been fair, it is over the time. It is over and above what is allocated to you.

Mr Uteem: Yes, I am just going to conclude.

The Deputy Speaker: It is not being fair!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Uteem: Not only does this Section 13(2) give the Minister the right to ask questions and find information which are very sensitive information because he can have very sensitive secret recipes, secret ingredients; he can have all the trade secrets and the Board must comply.

And I will finish by the most ridiculous of all sections which is Section 15 of the Bill which provides that it is the Minister who is going to approve the estimates of income and expenditure of that Agency. So now, he is not just going to be the HR Manager; he is also going to be the Accountant General of this Agency.

So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is a matter of deep regret that even when it comes to a matter of food safety, matters of public interest, this Government is simply unable to let go of this obsession to control everything and anything. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. I gave you two minutes over and above the time. I hope you will appreciate.

Hon. Minister Ramano, please!

(6.30 p.m.)

The Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change (Mr K. Ramano): M. le président, avec votre permission, mon intervention sera axée en premier lieu d'un point de vue environnemental et en second lieu, avec votre permission, en tant que ministre suppléant au développement industriel et aussi des PME et des coopératives.

M. le président, la nourriture est vitale pour tout le monde, tous les jours. Nous avons tous le droit de nous attendre à ce que la nourriture que nous mangeons ne nous rende pas malade bien sûr.

L'accès à des quantités suffisantes d'aliments sains et nutritifs n'est pas seulement une condition de base pour la santé et le bien-être, il contribue également au développement économique. Toute contamination nuit non seulement à notre santé, mais a également de graves conséquences économiques. Investir dans la salubrité des aliments est de l'argent bien dépensé et aura un impact considérable sur la santé et le développement de notre pays ainsi que sur l'augmentation des opportunités commerciales.

Il est rappelé qu'en 2008, certains produits laitiers fabriqués en Chine avaient été frelatés avec de la mélamine. Cette contamination a entraîné la mort de six bébés. Des centaines de milliers d'enfants ont été touchés et plus de 50 000 personnes ont été hospitalisés. On estime que le scandale du lait contaminé à la mélamine a coûté à l'économie mondiale 7,7 milliards de livres sterling.

Aujourd'hui, la pression et les tendances combinées ensemble, modifient la façon dont nous consommons, produisons, transformons et distribuons les aliments. Ces pressions et tendances ont le potentiel de perturber ou d'améliorer la sécurité de nos aliments. Les dangers d'origine alimentaire qui sont nombreux et qui peuvent survenir à n'importe quel maillon de la chaîne alimentaire peuvent entraîner des maladies, des incapacités ou même la mort.

La nourriture a aussi un impact énorme sur l'environnement. Les aliments et les boissons sont responsables d'une grande partie des émissions de gaz à effet de serre et les changements apportés à l'alimentation, par exemple, la réduction des déchets ou les changements alimentaires, sont un élément clé pour atteindre le 'net zero.' Le changement climatique pose de nouveaux défis pour la sécurité alimentaire, et une atténuation efficace comprend la sensibilisation de la communauté ainsi que la promotion et l'encouragement de pratiques durables.

Le changement climatique est une réalité aux implications avérées pour la sécurité alimentaire. Alors que les systèmes de production alimentaire se transforment pour s'adapter, il est nécessaire de faire preuve de vigilance pour évaluer les nouveaux problèmes de sécurité sanitaire des aliments et les stratégies de gestion appropriées des risques potentiels.

Sans une considération appropriée de la sécurité alimentaire, les objectifs de développement durable ne seront pas atteints. Les maladies d'origine alimentaire peuvent ne pas tuer immédiatement mais peuvent avoir des conséquences à long terme et irréversibles sur la santé, et que, par conséquent, il est nécessaire de changer le paradigme sur la façon dont nous percevons la sécurité alimentaire.

M. le président, des normes alimentaires et des systèmes de contrôle efficaces sont donc nécessaires pour protéger la production alimentaire. Les fabricants de produits alimentaires doivent avoir l'obligation de démontrer la conformité de leurs produits aux normes de qualité et de sécurité en faisant régulièrement tester leurs produits. Cela préservera la santé publique et

protégera les intérêts des consommateurs en matière de denrées alimentaires. Ce qui va être le cas avec ce nouveau cadre législatif.

Il convient de noter que l'un des objectifs du *Food Safety Agency*, qui sera créée dans le cadre du nouveau *Bill*, est d'assurer un degré élevé de confiance des consommateurs dans la sécurité et la qualité nutritionnelle des aliments produits, transformés, importés, vendus, ou exportés de Maurice. Cela est hautement souhaitable et compte tenu de la complexité de la sécurité alimentaire des aliments, les consommateurs doivent avoir accès à des informations opportunes, claires et fiables sur les risques nutritionnels et pathologiques associés à leurs choix alimentaires.

Je suis convaincu que la *Food Safety Agency* proposera des *food standards* visant à protéger les produits alimentaires contre les dommages physiques, à minimiser le gaspillage alimentaire, à réduire la quantité de conservateurs utilisés dans les aliments et à fournir un étiquetage pour les informations nutritionnelles et allergènes et le bien sûr le *sell by date* des produits.

Il est important d'établir des limites de pesticides, y compris des polluants organiques persistants (POPs) et les métaux lourds dans les aliments. En raison de leur nature omniprésente, ces produits chimiques sont souvent présents en tant que contaminants dans les aliments, en particulier les aliments d'origine animale tels que la viande ou le poisson. Il s'agit normalement de niveaux insignifiants, mais il est possible qu'ils atteignent des niveaux potentiellement nocifs pour les consommateurs, notamment à la suite d'un incident tel qu'une contamination des aliments pour animaux.

Pour garantir le respect des limites fixées pour les pesticides, y compris pour les POPs, et les métaux lourds dans le cadre des prochaines normes alimentaires mauriciennes, il est essentiel d'effectuer des échantillonnages, des analyses et une surveillance pour s'assurer que les aliments ne sont pas confinés ou contaminés par des produits chimiques et des déchets. Des ressources adéquates doivent être mobilisées en termes de financement, de renforcement des capacités et de technologie pour le suivi des échantillons alimentaires. Une priorité élevée doit donc être accordée à ces composants critiques.

L'échantillonnage, l'analyse et la surveillance doivent être effectués par des professionnels formés conformément à un plan bien conçu et en utilisant des méthodes

internationalement acceptées ou approuvées au niveau national, réalisées en utilisant la même méthode à chaque fois pour s'assurer de la cohérence du protocole établi. La méthodologie doit également être soumise à des mesures rigoureuses d'assurance et de contrôle de la qualité. Je suis heureux de noter que le *Bill* à la Section 5(3) prévoit aussi des pouvoirs d'exécutions confiés à la *Food Safety Agency*.

M. le président, Maurice a ratifié la Convention de Stockholm sur les polluants organiques persistants, communément appelés POPs, le 13 juillet 2004 et la Convention de Minamata sur le mercure le 21 septembre 2017. À ce jour, 30 POPs ont été domestiqués par le biais du *Dangerous Chemicals Control Act (DCCA)* et le *Dangerous Chemical Control Board*.

En vue de réduire la prévalence des produits chimiques et des déchets dangereux à Maurice et de se conformer aux dispositions des deux conventions susmentionnées, mon ministère a commencé la mise en œuvre du “*Indian Ocean Regional Project – Mauritius – Implementing Sustainable Low and Non-Chemical Development in SIDS (ISLANDS)*” dans le cadre d'une subvention à la hauteur de 4,05 millions de dollars du *Global Environment Facility (GEF)*.

Le but du projet *ISLANDS* est de protéger la santé humaine et l'environnement des effets nocifs des produits chimiques et déchets dangereux à travers des deux objectifs suivants –

- (i) Une évaluation du programme actuel de recyclage des contenants de pesticides vides et leurs mesures ;
- (ii) Mettre en œuvre le plan d'action sur le mercure qui a été recommandé dans le cadre du *Initial Assessment Report* préparé par mon ministère en 2018 ;
- (iii) L'acquisition d'équipements pour le National Environmental Laboratory afin de permettre un suivi adéquat des *Persistent Organic Pollutants*.

Par conséquent, ce nouveau projet de loi offre à la *Food Safety Agency* la possibilité de proposer des réglementations pour contrôler les niveaux des POPs dans les aliments produits, transformés, importés, vendus ou exportés de Maurice.

M. le président, depuis des décennies, les pesticides sont largement utilisés dans le secteur agricole pour contrôler ou éliminer les ravageurs, améliorant ainsi la productivité et les rendements des cultures.

Cependant, lorsque les pesticides entrent en contact avec des plans d'eau, ils peuvent interférer avec la chaîne alimentaire et causer de graves problèmes de santé tels que le cancer, l'infertilité, des malformations et des modifications chromosomiques pouvant entraîner des maladies comme la maladie de Parkinson ou la maladie d'Alzheimer.

Dans ce contexte, une *Pesticide Residue Testing Unit* a été mise en place au *National Environmental Laboratory (NEL)* de mon Ministère en 2021 pour un suivi régulier de la qualité des eaux de surface et souterraines pour les pesticides. Le suivi des résultats aidera le gouvernement à assurer le maintien de la qualité de nos ressources en eau et à prendre les mesures préventives appropriées et à formuler des politiques de protection de nos écosystèmes naturels.

La mise en place du *Pesticide Testing Unit* est financée par le *National Environment and Climate Change Fund (NECCF)* à hauteur de R 38 millions sur une période de 2 ans, à compter de 2021.

De plus, un service de conseil sous le nom de *SWITCH Africa Green Project* a été engagé par le *United Nations Environment Programme* en février 2021 pour effectuer une analyse des lacunes et proposer un *framework* pour soutenir l'analyse des résidus de pesticides au *National Environmental Laboratory*.

Un rapport a été soumis à l'UNEP le 29 juin 2021 avec des conclusions et des recommandations émanant du programme de *consultancy*. Une *roadmap* pour le suivi des pesticides a également été élaborée, qui se compose d'échantillons d'eau de 39 sites de rivières et de 52 sites de forages à analyser. Cela se fera de manière progressive sur 3 ans.

En fournissant des limites ou une certification pour les produits sans POP, Maurice peut développer des produits alimentaires de haute qualité pour la consommation locale, protégeant ainsi la population mauricienne, ainsi que pour l'exportation.

M. le président, le *Mauritius Food Standards Agency Bill* complétera le nouveau *Food Act 2022* qui prévoit la modernisation et la consolidation des lois relatives à la sécurité et à la qualité nutritionnelle des aliments, ainsi que pour les questions qui s'y rapportent.

Ce nouveau *Bill* arrive donc à point nommé. Ses principaux objectifs sont l'élaboration de normes et de procédures pour la certification des aliments.

L'Agence sera chargée de fournir des conseils stratégiques aux ministres sur la sécurité sanitaire des aliments, les normes et les aspects de la nutrition, pour élaborer des normes et des directives concernant les articles alimentaires réglementés en vertu du *Food Act 2022* et pour fournir au consommateur des informations et des conseils.

Des procédures et des systèmes seraient également élaborés pour faciliter le respect et l'application du *Food Act 2022*.

M. le président, il est urgent de prendre des mesures audacieuses et ambitieuses pour transformer les systèmes alimentaires au niveau national et pour inverser les modes de consommation et de production non durables tout au long de la chaîne de valeur qui entraînent la détérioration de la santé des personnes et de la planète.

Cela devrait être fait en utilisant une approche holistique pour promouvoir des politiques, des outils et des solutions qui tiennent dûment compte des dimensions sociales, environnementales et économiques des systèmes alimentaires durables pour parvenir à une planète saine.

Le *Bill* est tout à fait conforme à un certain nombre d'initiatives entreprises par le ministère. Premièrement, l'écologisation du secteur agricole et alimentaire par le biais du *SWITCH Africa Green Project* que je viens de mentionner.

Et là, depuis 2014 par le biais de ce programme, *SWITCH Africa Green*, financé par l'Union Européen pour catalyser l'action vers une économie plus verte dans 3 secteurs stratégiques, à savoir le secteur du tourisme, le secteur manufacturier et agricole, y compris la production alimentaire comme secteurs d'intervention clés.

En effet, lors d'un *National Policy Dialogue on Green Economy* organisé par mon Ministère en collaboration avec le *United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)* et l'Union européenne, le 31 mars et le 01 avril 2022, les défis, opportunités et recommandations des différents secteurs économiques ont été identifiés.

Il a été souligné qu'il existe d'énormes opportunités et un potentiel pour renforcer notre sécurité alimentaire grâce à une transition vers un système de production alimentaire durable ainsi que pour améliorer les normes alimentaires grâce au développement de labels et de mécanismes de certification.

En effet, conformément à la résolution sur “*Enhancing circular economy*” adoptée lors du *United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA 5.2)* en mars 2022, une conférence nationale de 3 jours sur l'économie circulaire a été organisée par mon ministère avec l'aide de l'UNEP.

Les principaux secteurs abordés lors de la Conférence nationale étaient notamment le secteur de l'agriculture et de l'alimentation ; le secteur des TIC ; l'Industrie de la construction et de la démolition ; le secteur énergétique; le secteur manufacturier ; et le secteur des déchets solides.

Il y avait un large consensus sur la nécessité de repenser nos secteurs économiques clés du point de vue de l'économie circulaire et de la consommation et de la production durables.

Pour permettre cette transition, il est nécessaire de formuler une *Roadmap* et un *Legislative Framework* sur l'économie circulaire afin de fournir une vision partagée, une orientation stratégique, des politiques saines, ainsi que l'instrument économique et financier approprié.

Ainsi avec l'appui de l'UNEP, un consultant national a été recruté pour élaborer le *Roadmap* et le *Legislative Framework*. Le *consultancy* a un calendrier de 5 mois (d'octobre 2022 au 28 février 2023).

La mise en place d'un système d'information des consommateurs qui vise à fournir des informations accessibles, fiables et vérifiables sur la durabilité aux consommateurs, aux producteurs, à la société civile et au grand public établira la tendance des modes de consommation et de production durables à Maurice.

M. le président, le gouvernement doit donner aux consommateurs l'assurance qu'il a établi et qu'il applique des normes de qualité et de salubrité des aliments.

Ce gouvernement est convaincu qu'une responsabilité partagée public-privé est cruciale pour garantir des systèmes sûrs et efficaces et des améliorations de la protection de la santé des consommateurs et de l'état nutritionnel. Il convient de noter que des dispositions ont été prises dans le *Bill* pour que l'Agence coopère avec toute autre organisation, notamment le secteur privé, ayant des objectifs totalement ou partiellement similaires à ses objectifs.

M. le président, permettez-moi à ce stade d'intervenir en ma qualité de ministre suppléant du Développement industriel, des PME et des Coopératives. Permettez-moi de commencer par

quelques informations générales concernant le sous-secteur de la transformation des aliments à Maurice.

Ce sous-secteur comprend les agro-alimentaires transformés (y compris le sucre), les produits de la mer, les aliments pour animaux, les spiritueux et les boissons. Maurice est active dans la production et l'exportation d'aliments transformés tels que le poisson et les préparations de poisson, le sucre, la farine de blé, les nouilles instantanées et les collations précuites. On estime qu'il y a 18 entreprises engagées dans l'exportation d'aliments transformés tandis que quelque 99 *Mid Market Enterprises (MME)* et grandes entreprises desservent le marché local. 19 PME opèrent dans le sous-secteur agro-alimentaire.

Il convient de noter que Maurice a développé une bonne réputation pour l'exportation de produits alimentaires tels que les préparations de poisson, les décorations de gâteaux, les boissons alcoolisées, les confitures et gelées et les sucreries et confiseries.

Un grand groupe d'entreprises manufacturières approvisionne le marché local avec une large gamme de produits alimentaires comme alternatives aux importations.

Beaucoup de ces produits sont devenus des noms familiers jouissant de la confiance des acheteurs tels que les conserves, les boissons, le poulet, la viande, le beurre, la margarine, les épices, les pâtes, les nouilles, et les boulangeries et les pâtisseries.

M. le président, la *Mauritius Food Standards Agency* proposée agira en tant que chien de garde pour protéger la population contre les aliments nocifs en mettant en œuvre les dispositions du *Food Act 2022* et aidera à coup sûr les institutions existantes à remplir leur mandat.

La plus grande confiance des consommateurs qui serait recueillie par la *Food Standards Agency* aura une incidence positive sur notre politique de substitution des importations. La confiance dans les produits alimentaires fabriqués localement sera encore renforcée, ce qui entraînera une plus grande demande et contribuera ainsi efficacement à notre stratégie « acheter local ».

M. le président, je terminerai, en tant que ministre suppléant, également responsable du secteur coopératif, je tiens à souligner clairement que la coopérative en tant que modèle d'entreprise sert de vecteur de développement et contribue à la croissance économique, à la

démocratisation de l'économie, à la création d'emplois, à la réduction de la pauvreté, *women empowerment*, réduction de l'inégalité des revenus et assurer la sécurité alimentaire.

Une caractéristique très importante des coopératives est qu'elles reposent sur un ensemble de valeurs et de principes. Le modèle d'entreprise coopératif comporte de nombreux éléments attrayants qui le rendent facilement accepté et adopté.

De plus, les coopératives ont un potentiel de contribuer au triple objectif économie, social et environnemental du développement durable. Les coopératives agricoles combinent de manière transparente les fonctions économiques, commerciales, sociales et environnementales qui sont essentielles pour construire des systèmes alimentaires de plus en plus durables.

En conséquence, les sociétés coopératives mauriciennes sont encouragées à concentrer leurs activités sur le développement durable, conformément aux *United Nations Sustainable Development Goals*. Il y a environ 525 planteurs, pêcheurs, coopératives de bétails, de porcs et de *mix farming*. Les coopératives sont des partenaires majeures dans la réalisation de la sécurité alimentaire dans le pays.

The Deputy Speaker: Try to sum up please!

Mr Ramano: Oui, M. le président. Le *Mauritius Food Standard Agency Bill 2022* soutiendra en effet le secteur coopératif à adopter les meilleures pratiques en matière de production alimentaire.

Je termine en félicitant l'honorable ministre de la Santé et du bien-être d'avoir apporté ce nouveau projet de loi qui permettra au gouvernement d'aller vers une transition écologique et qui s'inscrit également bien dans les mesures budgétaires 2022-2023 et la vision du gouvernement pour assurer la sécurité alimentaire, la protection des consommateurs et bien sûr, la consommation durable.

Je vous remercie, M. le président.

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

Mr Dhaliah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move for the adjournment of the debate.

Mr Seeruttun seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Thursday 27 October 2022 at 3.30 p.m.

Mr Toussaint seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: Adjournment matters! Okay, let's start with Mr Nuckcheddy!

MATTERS RAISED

(6.53 p.m.)

BELVÉDÈRE MEDI-CLINIC – YOGA CENTRE

Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My request tonight is addressed to the Minister of Health and Wellness, hon. Dr. Jagutpal. There has been a request from the inhabitants and the personnel of the Medi-Clinic of Belvédère to have a Yoga Centre on the premises. So, I will be grateful if the hon. Minister can kindly look into this matter and have a Yoga Centre on the premises of Belvédère Medi-Clinic. Thank you.

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

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal): Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, tomorrow is the Ayurveda Day. We will be present in Belvédère. So I am sure that we can talk about it and then we will find out how we can do that.

The Deputy Speaker: Very responsive! Hon. Dhunoo!

(6.53 p.m.)

JAMES TOOLS SCHOOL – LAY-BY – CONSTRUCTION

Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête ce soir s'adresse au vice-Premier ministre et ministre des Collectivités locales, à l'honorable Dr. Anwar Husnoo. Cela concerne l'école primaire de James Toolsy à Curepipe où

nous avons une requête de la *PTA* et aussi du Maître d'école pour construire un *lay-by* à côté de l'école pour la sécurité des élèves et aussi pour la fluidité du trafic. Je demanderai au vice-Premier ministre s'il peut demander à la municipalité de Curepipe si elle peut construire ce *lay-by* car nous avons de la place pour le faire. Je vous remercie, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Vice-Prime Minister!

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I will talk to the Municipality of Curepipe to look into the matter.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ms Anquetil!

(6.54 p.m.)

CAMP MAPOU, HENRIETTA - CHILDREN PLAYGROUND - CLEANING

Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal): Je vous remercie, M. le président. Ma requête s'adresse au vice-Premier ministre et ministre des Collectivités locales et de la gestion des catastrophes, des risques. Les jardins d'enfants permettent aux enfants de demeurer actif et en bonne santé. Le jardin d'enfants de la résidence Iris à Camp Mapou, Henrietta est mal entretenue, impraticable, sale et peu accueillant. Je sollicite l'intervention du vice-Premier ministre afin que la municipalité de Vacoas effectue un nettoyage régulier de ce jardin d'enfants pour permettre à ces enfants d'en profiter et de s'épanouir. Je dépose une photo montrant l'état déplorable du jardin d'enfants.

Je vous remercie, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Vice-Prime Minister!

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will speak to the Chief Executive of Vacoas-Phoenix to sort out the issue.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Arianne Navarre-Marie!

(6.55 p.m.)

MORCELLEMENTS BLACK ROCK, RAFFRAY, PAILLES NHDC – TRAFFIC

Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête s'adresse au ministre du Transport et concerne le problème d'embouteillage monstre sur la route principale entre le cimetière de Pailles et l'agence automobile Axess, menant à pas moins de trois morcellements habités dont celui de Black Rock, Morcellement Raffray et la *NHDC* de Pailles, surtout les jours de grandes foires ou de salons commerciaux organisés au centre Swami Vivekananda.

En effet, comme il n'y a qu'un seul accès menant à ce centre, le nombre de visiteurs à ces foires constitue un véritable cauchemar pour les habitants qui ont toutes les peines du monde à rentrer chez eux. Des habitants de la localité ont récemment adressé une lettre à ce sujet au ministre et aux autres autorités concernées proposant des solutions. Je fais donc un pressant appel pour que des actions nécessaires soient prises au plus vite en terme de déviation et éviter de stresser d'avantage les habitants car d'autres foires et salons seront sans nul doute organisés dans les prochains jours à l'instar du salon prêt à partir du 21 au 23 octobre, soit, le prochain week-end.

Je vous remercie.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister, please!

The Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr G. Lesjongard): Je vous remercie, M. le président. J'ai pris note des doléances de l'honorable membre et j'en ferai part à mon collègue ministre responsable. Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy, please!

(6.57 p.m.)

LONG MOUNTAIN HOSPITAL – PARKING SPACE

Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My request this evening is addressed to the Minister of Health and Wellness. The inhabitants of Long Mountain have complained about the parking space in the compound of the Long Mountain Hospital. They shall be grateful if you could make sure that some patients who come for, like minor interventions, can get a parking; else they have to park very far and then walk to the hospital which is quite inconvenient for them. So we rely on your usual cooperation. Thank you so much.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister!

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal): I will look into that because the Long Mountain District Hospital caters for the population around and it is very difficult to get parking spaces, especially when this is in the centre of that village. We will look into the possibility of increasing parking space.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Doolub! You have been raising two hands.

(6.58 p.m.)

TOMBEAU CEMETERY, MAHEBOURG - INCINERATOR

Mr R. Doolub (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My request is also addressed to the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and it concerns the incinerator at Tombeau Cemetery in Mahebourg. Besides, I will be thankful to the Minister, just following my intervention during Adjournment some time back, the incinerator is now operational. It has been successfully tested but however, there is a lack of manpower at the level of Grand Port District Council to find an operator to render this incinerator operational. I would appreciate if you could please look into the matter for a timely solution. Thank you.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as far as manpower is concerned, I know there is a major problem in many different Councils. We have written to LGSC to try and fill this post.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

(6.59 p.m.)

BRADLEY VINCENT - ATHELETE - SUSPENSION

Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête ce soir s'adresse au ministre des Sports et a trait à la suspension du nageur, Bradley Vincent. En effet, dans une lettre en date du 12 octobre 2022, le comité olympique mauricien a informé le nageur qu'il est privé de son droit de représenter la république de Maurice pour une période de trois ans à toute compétition, tombant sous la juridiction du comité

olympique mauricien ; par exemple, les Jeux Olympiques, Jeux des Iles, Jeux du Commonwealth entre autres. Cette sanction, M. le président, du COM, est une première dans l'histoire du sport mauricien d'autant...

The Deputy Speaker: No, No. The request, please. I want...

Mr Quirin: ... d'autant qu'elle n'est assortie d'aucune possibilité pour le nageur de faire appel avant octobre 2025. Cette suspension, M. le président, a provoqué l'indignation...

The Deputy Speaker: No!

Mr Quirin: Je termine. La colère...

The Deputy Speaker: No! I want everybody to get a chance. Do not make a lecture; it is a request. I am very fair about it, Mr Quirin, you know it. Go on the request! You are explaining the whole story behind it. That is not the purpose. It is not what you want to do; it is not what I want to do, it is what the book states. Please, go to the request so that everybody can have a bite at the cherry.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, permettez-moi de terminer. Donc, je fais appel au ministre des Sports afin qu'il prenne toute la question avec le COM car cette sanction/cette suspension en elle-même est disproportionnée par rapport aux reproches qui sont faits à Bradley Vincent. Je compte sur l'honorable ministre de reprendre toute la question avec le COM et qu'on enlève cette sanction au plus vite. Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. I have got your point.

The Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation (Mr S. Toussaint): Merci, M. le président. Je remercie l'honorable membre qui m'a informé qu'il allait soulever ce point. Donc, je rappelle à toute la population que cela a été une sanction du Comité olympique. Evidemment, je suis en contact avec le Comité olympique et toutefois, je dois dire que l'athlète ou les athlètes en général, s'ils se sentent lésés dans quoi que ce soit, ils ont toujours recours à *l'Ombudsperson for Sports*. Jusqu'à présent, ni la fédération ni l'athlète ont fait appel à moi directement. Au cas où ils le font, le conseil que je pourrais donner à l'athlète et à d'autres, aussi plus tard s'ils ont des problèmes, c'est de faire appel à *l'Ombudsperson of Sports* qui va prendre ce dossier en main.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Fabrice David!

(7.02 p.m.)

POINTE AUX SABLES - METRO STATION - INACCESSABILITY

Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête de cette rentrée s'adresse au ministre des Transports terrestres et du métro léger et concerne précisément la difficulté pour les habitants de la Pointe, à Pointe aux Sables, d'accéder à la station de métro se trouvant à Montée S. La station officiellement est libellée comme étant celle de Coromandel. À ce jour, les habitants concernés doivent prendre deux bus ; un premier entre Pointe aux Sables et Grande Rivière, puis un deuxième entre Grande Rivière et Coromandel.

Puis-je demander au ministre d'étudier la possibilité de mettre en place une connexion routière par bus directement entre la Pointe et Montée S en passant par la Tour Koenig. Je me permets de suggérer pour des questions de rentabilité, que je peux comprendre, l'introduction de cette connexion par bus aux heures de pointe dans un premier temps, par exemple, du lundi au vendredi de 7 heures à 9 heures le matin, et de 4 heures à 7 heures le soir. Je remercie le ministre pour la considération qu'il voudra bien donner à ma requête.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister, you take the request.

The Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr G. Lesjongard): Merci, M. le président j'ai pris note des doléances de l'honorable membre et j'en ferai part au ministre responsable afin qu'il puisse agir. Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Lobine!

(7.03 p.m.)

SHREE SHAMBHUNATH ROAD, CAMP FOUQUEREAUX - PLOT OF LAND - RESTORATION

Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Dr. Husnoo, with regard to a plot of land found along Shree Shambhunath Road at Camp Fouquereaux near the Camp Fouquereaux round about. There is a nice embellishment work that has been carried out by the Municipal Council of Vacoas/Phoenix, but unfortunately, there is a contractor, Gamma Civic,

that has parked all their machinery on this beautiful piece of landscaping that has been done by the Municipal Council of Vacoas/Phoenix after so many months.

So, I would request the hon. Vice-Prime Minister to take this matter with the Municipal Council of Vacoas Phoenix to ask the contractor to restore at their own costs this beautiful plot of land that has been embellished by the Municipal Council of Vacoas/Phoenix. I have provided a picture to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much!

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will pass on the message to Vacoas/Phoenix Municipality.

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

(7.04 p.m.)

LE CORNU, SAINTE CROIX - ROAD SAFETY

Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My query is addressed to the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail pertaining road safety in Le Cornu, Sainte Croix. There have been several accidents on Sainte Marie Road in Le Cornu and last week, there has been yet another accident where a 13 year old boy has been severely injured. Would the hon. Minister see with the TMRSU that they attend to the request of the inhabitants and the road users thereof, that is, to place speed breakers and cameras along the road and also to consider to relocate the bus stop currently situated in an awkward location on Avenue Le Cornu, Sainte Croix, a few meters further adjacent to Elsiprel football ground where there is space for a layby making it much safer especially for the school children. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister!

The Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr G. Lesjongard): Yes, thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I have taken note of the request made by the hon. Member and I will convey same to my colleague Minister.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

(7.05 p.m.)

VALLEE PITOT –WATER PROBLEM

Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): La question que je voudrais soulever concerne le ministre des Utilités publique et cela concerne la fourniture d'eau dans la région de Vallée Pitot. Il y a plusieurs jours, il y a eu plusieurs coupures d'eau que les habitants ont dû faire face depuis ces dernières semaines. Après une enquête, on m'a fait comprendre qu'au niveau de la CWA, il y a une pompe défectueuse et que c'est un problème récurrent. Donc, je demanderai à l'honorable ministre de soulever toute la question avec la CWA pour qu'on puisse trouver une solution durable concernant ce problème de pompe à Vallée Pitot.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Minister!

The Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr G. Lesjongard): Oui, j'ai pris note des doléances de l'honorable membre. Je vais passer le message au dynamique directeur de la CWA afin qu'il puisse faire le nécessaire.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Sandra Mayotte!

(7.06 p.m.)

YVES CANTIN HOSPITAL, BLACK RIVER – STAFF & AMBULANCES – SHORTAGE

Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête s'adresse au ministre de la Santé et du bien-être et cela concerne surtout les habitants de la région de Rivière Noire. La population grandit et les hôtels sont maintenant bien ouverts ; il y a beaucoup de touristes dans cette région. Je demanderai humblement au ministre de la Santé de bien vouloir nous soutenir en ce qui concerne les services hospitaliers du centre de santé de l'hôpital Yves Cantin où il y a un manque d'ambulance et aussi de personnel. Si le ministre aurait pu apporter ne serait-ce qu'un peu d'amélioration au service de santé dans ce centre médical. Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister!

The Minister of Health & Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have taken note of the request for ambulance services. But at the same time, we have to look at a feasibility study of having one ambulance there; the number of patients who are going to take the service of the ambulance. We have to look at the whole picture before having these services provided at the district hospital.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Aadil Ameer Meea!

(7.07 p.m.)

CITÉ MARTIAL - IBRAHIM ABDULLAH MARKET FAIR - UNHYGIENIC CONDITIONS

Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The issue I am raising tonight is addressed to the Minister of Local Government. It is in relation to the Ibrahim Abdullah Market Fair which is found in my Constituency - Constituency No.3 in Cité Martial. I have been there on several occasions and my attention has been drawn to numerous issues prevailing there; unhygienic conditions of toilets with foul smell, very often water also is not available, wastes are not removed on time and lastly, very often Police Officers are not present to regulate the traffic and even if they are present, it is only for a few hours. Therefore, I make an appeal to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister if he can liaise with the Municipal Council of Port Louis so that remedial measures are taken for the welfare of both the stallholders and the public at large. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Vice-Prime Minister!

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will talk to the Municipality of Port Louis to sort out these issues.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ittoo!

(7.09 p.m.)

HENRIETTA - AREA HEALTH CENTRE

Mr A. Ittoo (Third Member for Vacoas & Floréal): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My request is also addressed to the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, hon. Dr. Jagutpal.

It concerns the Area Health Centre of Henrietta, a budgetary measure in the last Budget, which the people of Henrietta, La Marie and Glen Park are still awaiting. Maybe if he can use his good office to accelerate the process. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister, please!

The Minister of Health & Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is under the project implementation unit of my Ministry and there is a request to the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning for a plot of land. I believe once we have that plot of land, then we can expedite all the project of Area Health Centre.

The Deputy Speaker: I understand hon. Osman Mahomed will close the questions for today!

(7.09 p.m.)

VALLÉE PITOT - MISS B.A.S. – OVERSEAS TREATMENT

Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you. I would like to address the hon. Minister of Health & Wellness, Dr. Jagutpal, tonight regarding the case of a 19-year-old lady, Miss B.A.S. of Vallée Pitot, a constituent of mine, who sixteen months ago, in June 2021, became bedridden due to a blood clot in the spinal cord. The Overseas Treatment Board of the Ministry had initially approved that she goes to India for surgery. However, she could not go initially because of the prevailing number of COVID cases at the material time. When the time was appropriate for her to go she was told that the approval had lapsed. For more than a week now I have been talking to the Permanent Secretary responsible for overseas treatment at your Ministry and also to Dr. A.G. Jeetoo Hospital personnel but, I think, at this point in time a push from you, hon. Minister, will greatly facilitate matters for her to go to India for treatment because 19 years old and bedridden for so long is not acceptable. I am submitting the pertinent documents to you for follow up at your end. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: You can give it personally, it is a Medical Report.

Mr Osman Mahomed: To the Minister directly?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, pass it.

Mr Osman Mahomed: No, I am not tabling it.

The Deputy Speaker: No tabling!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Answer please!

The Minister of Health & Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal): Mr Deputy, Sir, my information is even during COVID-19, the Overseas Unit has been sending patients throughout, many patients, but there should be some reasons why this patient has not been sent. So, unless I get all the information I will give you the details of what happened. I do not think because of COVID-19 patients have not been sent to India because we have been operating throughout and this patient should have already gone unless there are some other issues. Probably, I will get the information and convey it to you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. It has been a pleasure to be with you today and see you soon.

At 7.11 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Thursday 27 October 2022 at 3.30 p.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

DRUG-RELATED OFFENCES – INQUIRIES

(No. B/994) 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 drug-related offences, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand as to the inquiries initiated into the reported cases thereof since 2014 to date and in the cases mentioned in the Lam Shang Leen Report on drugs, indicating the number of Mauritian nationals arrested in connection therewith.

Reply: The Commissioner of Police has informed that, between January 2014 and 12 October 2022, a total of 26,248 drug-related cases have been established by the Police resulting in the arrest of 22,625 persons inclusive of 22,343 citizens of Mauritius.

The Ministerial Committee under the chair of the Prime Minister, set up in the wake of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Drug Trafficking, submitted in July 2018, constituted a Task Force, under the chair of the Director-General of the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) to enquire into the persons named in the Report for drug trafficking and also to look into the cases of Lawyers, Prison Officers and Police Officers who might be involved with drug traffickers.

The Task Force also comprises the following members –

- (i) the Commissioner of Police;
- (ii) the Deputy Solicitor General;
- (iii) the Director-General of the Mauritius Revenue Authority;
- (iv) the Director of the Financial Intelligence Unit, and
- (v) the Director of the Integrity Reporting Services Agency.

The ICAC and the Commissioner of Police have informed as follows, as a result of the outcome of the investigations –

- (i) out of the 64 cases assigned to the Police Department, 31 are under enquiry, 5 have been referred to the DPP for advice. In 10 cases, the DPP has advised no further and names of persons in the remaining 18 cases have been referred to the ADSU for monitoring;

- (ii) in 8 cases, applicants have succeeded by way of Judicial Review in challenging the findings of the Report of the Commission on Drug Trafficking;
- (iii) out of 53 investigations assigned to the ICAC, 41 have already been completed;
- (iv) 2 persons have been arrested so far by the Police Department and 17 arrests have been effected by ICAC including one person convicted;
- (v) out of 122 tax investigations being conducted by the Mauritius Revenue Authority, 75 have been completed;
- (vi) the IRSA obtained an Unexplained Wealth Order to confiscate cash amounting to Rs11.5 m. suspected to be instrumentality of drug trafficking. A second case of Rs52 m. is currently before the Court and a further case of Rs21 m. is under investigation, and
- (vii) 71 intelligence reports have been provided by the Financial Intelligence Unit to the Police Department regarding the 64 cases.

CANNABIS SEIZURE – 03 OCTOBER 2022 – INQUIRY

(No. B/995) 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 seizure of 100 kilos of cannabis on 03 October 2022, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand as to the inquiry initiated thereinto.

Reply: The Commissioner of Police has informed that, following continuous surveillance operations and intensive intelligence gathering, the Police Headquarters Special Striking Team, under the command of an Assistant Superintendent of Police, has, on Monday 03 October 2022 at 06.15 hours, launched an operation in the region of Petite Rivière Noire. During the operation, the team intercepted three vehicles along the Coastal Road, Black River.

The Commissioner of Police has also informed that, after a search was carried out in the three vehicles, 31 parcels with wrappings containing a significant amount of leaf matter suspected to be cannabis were secured. According to the estimation by the team, the weight of the cannabis was 100 kilograms.

All the three vehicles were seized and the seven suspects who were on board the vehicles were arrested.

After the exhibits securing exercise was completed, the gross weight of the cannabis was found to be 58.05 kilograms.

On Tuesday 04 October 2022, all the seven suspects were provisionally charged before the District Court of Black River for the offence of “Drug Dealing with aggravating circumstances - Possession of Cannabis for the purpose of distribution with an averment of trafficking”.

After court appearance, they were all remanded to Police Cell and they will appear anew before the Black River Court this very day, Tuesday 18 October 2022.

The Commissioner of Police has further informed that, on Wednesday 05 October 2022, the case was handed over to the Anti-Drug Smuggling Unit (ADSU) and a panel of Enquiring Officers from ADSU has been set up to continue the enquiry.

All the seven suspects are detained at different Police Stations. As at now, no written statement has been recorded from them. Counsels have liaised with the Enquiry Officers for the recording of their respective defence statements, which is expected to start in the course of this week.

The enquiry into the case is ongoing.

MRS D. M. RESIDENCE - POLICE RAID - LEAKED VIDEO IMAGES

(No. B/996) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the raid carried out at the residence of Mrs D. M. in the evening of 19 August 2022, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, the Commissioner of the Information and Communication Technologies Authority and the Data Protection Commissioner, respectively, information as to where matters stand as to the inquiries initiated into the –

- (a) leak of the video images taken by the Police of the inside of the residence, and

- (b) access and subsequent leak of an intimate video images found on a phone seized by the Police in the course thereof.

(Withdrawn)

MARINE AREAS BEYOND NATIONAL JURISDICTION

(No. B/997) Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Marine Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ), he will state if Mauritius has clarified its position in relation thereto, indicating who, if any, attended the UN Meeting on ABNJ held in New York, from 15 to 26 August 2022.

Reply (The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade): I am informed by our Mission in New York that the negotiations on an international legally binding instrument under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) started in late 2018, after an intensive 14-year discussion involving an Ad Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group and a Preparatory Committee at the UN.

The discussions led to the conclusion that while UNCLOS provides the overall framework for ocean activities, it divides the ocean into many jurisdiction spaces based solely on distance from the coast. This arrangement disregards the interlinkages between the resources within these spaces.

The international community also acknowledged that UNCLOS requires the cooperation of States for both the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Transfer of Marine Technology, but the treaty does not provide guidelines or frameworks on how States should cooperate to achieve those obligations. In addition, resulting from scientific and technological developments unforeseen at the time UNCLOS was negotiated in 1973, new types of resources have emerged that lack a proper legal framework under UNCLOS, such as Marine Genetic Resources.

Mauritius has always been participating in discussions on this issue since it was first introduced at the UN and has also taken part in all intergovernmental conferences held for the elaboration of the BBNJ treaty.

In 2017, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 72/249 mandating four sessions of intergovernmental negotiations in order to reach a legally binding treaty on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction and appointed Ms Rena Lee of Singapore as the Chair of the Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN). However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a two-year delay and the 4th Session of the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC-4) finally convened in March 2022. Since delegates could not reach an agreement at the IGC-4, a request was made by the General Assembly to convene a fifth session. The fifth session of the Intergovernmental Conference was held on 15-26 August 2022. The meeting was attended by our Mission in New York.

Discussions on the treaty are based on four main thematic areas which are –

- (i) Marine Genetic Resources, including questions on benefit-sharing;
- (ii) Area-based management tools, including Marine Protected Areas;
- (iii) Environmental Impact Assessments, and
- (iv) Capacity building and Technology Transfer

At the 5th Session of the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC-5), on marine genetic resources, including questions of benefits, progress was made on the establishment of an access and benefit-sharing mechanism as well as on non-monetary benefit-sharing and other provisions. On environmental impact assessments, delegates resolved long-standing disagreements on language around planned/proposed activities. On area-based management tools, including marine protected areas, delegates were able to come close to agreement, on most of the provisions, including on the preparation and review of proposals, and decision making. Considerable strides were also made in the section on Capacity Building and Transfer of Marine Technology (CB&TT), including general agreement on the establishment of a CB&TT Committee and provisions on monitoring and review. Further progress was evident on compliance issues and dispute settlement, as well as on cross-cutting issues, including on provisions on general principles, international cooperation and sovereign immunity.

However, all this progress was not enough to produce a sufficiently clean text that would have provided a platform for the final discussions. There are still some major issues to be agreed upon such as the principle of the Common Heritage of Mankind and the fair and equitable benefit-sharing principle.

The position of Mauritius similar to the position of all developing States is- generally coordinated by the G77 and China, which negotiates on behalf of all developing States.

Mauritius, as part of the African Group and Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) is also able to promote and defend its views in these groups. The African Group is committed to effectively participate in the negotiations and to speak with one voice, with a view to preserving African interests in the negotiations. The African Group is united in ensuring an environmentally sound management of biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction based on scientific knowledge, including the adoption of measures for the conservation of biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction and firmly believes that the Common Heritage of Mankind should form the basis of the governance of areas beyond national jurisdiction. The group is also pushing for meaningful engagement on capacity building and the equitable transfer of marine technology. Mauritius has been coordinating the African Group position on Environmental Impacts Assessments.

Mauritius also works with AOSIS to ensure that the special circumstances of Small Island Developing States are well captured in the legally binding instrument. The special circumstances of SIDS must be factored in the instrument due to their high dependency on the ocean for sustainable development, considering the impacts that activities in ABNJ could have within national jurisdictions, due to the ecological connectivity of the ocean.

The group also advocates for the special circumstances of SIDS which arise due to the lack of capacity to fully harness the benefits arising from this instrument as well as the lack of capacity to implement this instrument. The group is unanimously pushing for provisions to enable representation of SIDS in the Meetings of the Conference and its constituted bodies and for consideration to be given to the equitable representation of SIDS in the constituted bodies established under the instrument, as they are often underrepresented. In addition, since SIDS do not possess the technology capacity or resources to effectively partake in the access and benefit sharing regime envisioned under the instrument, the group is advocating that in line with the

principle of equity and fair and equitable sharing of benefits, adequate provisions are available to address the issue.

I am further informed that IGC-5 was suspended for a resumed session which hopefully will be the last one likely to be scheduled early next year in order to wrap up the discussions and agree on outstanding issues as well as on any other issue where individual states or group of states would still be having problems. There are some issues which have been discussed in smaller groups and which have been included in the further revised text of IGC-5 and where there is still no consensus.

DRUG SEIZURE - JANUARY 2022 TO 18 OCT 2022

(No. B/998) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to drugs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the quantity thereof seized since January 2022 to date.

(Withdrawn)

OVERSEAS MISSIONS – MINISTERS & MPs – COST INCURRED

(No. B/999) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to overseas missions undertaken by Honourable Ministers and Honourable Members of Parliament, he will state the cost incurred in relation thereto, including cost of air tickets and *per diem* allowances, since July 2021 to date.

Reply: Since July 2021 to date, the total expenditure, including cost of air tickets and *per diem* allowances incurred with respect to the 94 overseas missions undertaken by hon. Ministers and hon. Members of Parliament is Rs26.1 m.

MAURITIUS POLICE FORCE – OFFICERS - SUSPENSION

(No. B/1000) 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 Mauritius Police Force, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of Officers thereof currently under suspension for suspected involvement in drug-related cases, money laundering or other criminal offences, and
- (b) state if he proposes to come with an in-depth reform thereof.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, the Commissioner of Police has informed that, as at Thursday 13 October 2022, and in accordance with Regulation 28 of the Disciplined Forces Service Commission Regulations, which provides for the interdiction, and not suspension of members of the Disciplined Forces thereof as referred to in the question, 59 Police Officers are interdicted for drug-related cases, 01 Officer is interdicted for money laundering, and 88 Officers are interdicted for other criminal offences.

With regard to part (b) of the question, Government has appointed an Inter-Ministerial Committee chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning and Minister of Tourism to look into the implications of interdicting public officers without salary and to make appropriate recommendations.

The Commissioner of Police has also informed that, in order to assist the Inter-Ministerial Committee, he has, in September 2021, set up a dedicated Committee to streamline enquiry procedures and in a speedy manner processes with a view to reducing bottlenecks and delays in determining cases of Police Officers on interdiction.

WOMEN - SEXUAL ASSAULTS - PROSECUTIONS & CONVICTIONS

(No. B/1001) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to sexual assaults on women, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases thereof over the past five years, indicating the number thereof –

- (a) prosecuted, and
- (b) in which convictions have been secured.

(Withdrawn)

MR S. K. – DEATH - INQUIRY

(No. B/1002) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the death of late Mr S. K. at Moka, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand as to the inquiry carried out thereinto following the findings of the Magistrate of the District Court of Moka, indicating the number of statements recorded by the Central Crime Investigation Division as at to date.

Reply: The Commissioner of Police has informed that, following the findings of the District Court of Moka as a result of the Judicial Enquiry conducted to look into the cause of death of S.K., the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions has, in January 2022, advised the Police to carry out an in-depth investigation.

The hon. Member is referred to my reply to the PNQ at today's Sitting.

SIR GAËTAN TUG - COURT OF INVESTIGATION'S REPORT - RECOMMENDATIONS

(No. B/1003) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the casualty at sea of the Sir Gaëtan tug, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Ports Authority, information as to the actions, if any, taken following the submission of the Report of the Court of Investigation in relation thereto..

Reply (The Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping):

In my reply to PQ B/898 at the Sitting of 19 July 2022, I informed the House that an Inter-Ministerial Committee, chaired by the hon. Prime Minister, had been set up to look into the findings and recommendations of the Court of Investigation and come up with the way forward for the effective implementation of the recommendations.

Subsequently, the Inter-Ministerial Committee agreed to the setting up of two Technical Committees - one at the level of the Prime Minister's Office and one at the level of my Ministry to study the recommendations contained in the Report and come up with an appropriate Action Plan for their implementation, taking into consideration actions already implemented.

I am informed that both Technical Committees have already submitted their respective reports to the Inter-Ministerial Committee.

The Inter-Ministerial Committee would shortly meet to take cognizance of these two reports.

I have been informed by the Mauritius Ports Authority (MPA) that in parallel the Mauritius Ports Authority (MPA) has taken several measures. These include, amongst others –

- (i) undertaking timely maintenance, surveys and renewal of class certificates of tugs;
- (ii) setting up of an Action Plan to refurbish existing small tugs followed by condition surveys by independent surveyor;
- (iii) decommissioning of big tug Mahé de Labourdonnais and small tug Talipot due to excessive investment on repairs;
- (iv) chartering of one big tug of bollard pull 60 tonnes to replace tug Sir Gaëtan;
- (v) chartering of one additional big tug of bollard pull 60 tonnes to replace tug Mahé de Labourdonnais;
- (vi) outsourcing the training plan for towing operation and preparation of Standard Operating Procedures;
- (vii) providing refresher basic safety training course for some 100 marine personnel;
- (viii) strictly limiting towing operation outside the port limits;

- (ix) setting up of a Crisis Committee to manage any emergencies, including major accident at sea of tugs and other floating craft;
- (x) putting in place of safety checklists for deck and engine department of tugs;
- (xi) setting up of procurement plans for the procurement of small tug, and
- (xii) harmonising of the Standard Operating Procedures at the level of the Marine Department.

CHAMP DE MARS RACECOURSE – ALLEGED SABOTAGE – INQUIRY

(No. B/1004) 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 alleged sabotage of the Champ de Mars racecourse on 01 October 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, as at to date and in connection therewith, the number of persons –

- (a) arrested and if they are still in custody or released, and
- (b) interrogated, indicating the professional status thereof.

(Withdrawn)

SUBSTANCES OF ABUSE – ILLICIT TRAFFICKING & CONSUMPTION

(No. B/1005) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to new psychoactive substances and synthetic drugs, he will state if a comprehensive study has been conducted to assess the consumption and illicit trafficking trends thereof in Mauritius and, if so, give details of the findings and recommendations thereof.

Reply: In accordance with World Drug Report 2022, new psychoactive substances are defined as substances of abuse, either in a pure form or in the form of a preparation, that are not

controlled under the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 or under the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971, and that may pose a threat to public health. These substances can be analogues of existing controlled drugs or newly synthesized chemicals designed to mimic the psychoactive effects of controlled drugs.

In the Mauritian context, new psychoactive substances are also referred to as synthetic drugs. Makers of synthetic drugs keep altering their chemical makeup to avoid being detected, caught, and punished by law enforcement authorities. This situation results in the fabrication of highly unstable and potentially dangerous drugs, some of which might also be marketed for other uses to avoid detection. For instance, bath salts are specifically labelled “not suitable for human consumption”. However, this does not stop them from being used.

On Thursday 10 February 2022, I launched the “National Survey among People who use drugs”. The project is an initiative of Government, with the support of the World Health Organization through the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator for Mauritius and Seychelles.

This large-scale national survey was conducted by the National Drug Secretariat, which operates under the aegis of my Office, to provide insights into the following –

- (i) extent and patterns of drug use in Mauritius;
- (ii) socio-demographic, characteristics of drug users;
- (iii) social and health consequences of drug use;
- (iv) accessibility and utilisation of services of drug dependence treatment, and
- (v) impact on families by family members who use drugs.

The survey provides useful information on the different types of drugs prevalent in Mauritius and includes synthetic substances.

The results of the survey aim at providing the baseline information needed for the design and implementation of effective prevention, treatment and care services that are evidence-based

and targeted to reduce the demand for drugs and prevent the morbidity and mortality attributable to drug use in Mauritius.

The survey included a section on the new psychoactive substances or synthetic drugs the findings of which are as follows –

- (i) 65% of People Who Use Drugs have ever used synthetic drugs;
- (ii) among those who ever used synthetic drugs, a much higher percentage concerns male that is 90% and 10% are female;
- (iii) of those who ever used synthetic drugs, most are between the ages of 18-24 which represents 32%; 20% are between 25-29 years old; around 15% are between 30-34 years; 11 % between 35-39 years old and around 22 % above 40 years of age;
- (iv) 44% have completed primary education, 34.1% have not completed primary education level; 15% have some secondary level of education; 2% have studied up to lower secondary level and around 4% have studied up to tertiary level;
- (v) 15.1% of People who Use Drugs have ever overdose as a result of using synthetic drugs;
- (vi) 31% of People who Use Drugs have ever experienced blackouts as a result of using synthetic drugs;
- (vii) while there was no possibility to detect synthetic drugs with the available reagent used for urine testing; the following drugs were found in the urine of those who ever consumed synthetic drugs;
 - Delta9-Tetrahydrocannabinol THC (active psychoactive ingredient in cannabis) - 58%
 - Opiates - 28%
 - Amphetamine - 17%

- Benzodiazepines - 12 %
- (viii) The population size estimation based on the successive sampling-population size estimation (SS-PSE) method found a mean size estimation of 55,000. The total population of those between the ages of 18 and 59 years in Mauritius (excluding Rodrigues) in 2021 is about 740,000. If we apply the mean population size of people who use drugs to this population, people who use drugs make up about 7.4% of the population between the ages of 18 and 59. Considering that females made up 13% of people who use drugs in Mauritius, the number of females who use drugs in Mauritius would be 7,150.

The survey report also contains a series of recommendations which are, *inter alia*, as follows –

- People who use drugs have strong social networks as confirmed by the use of peer-to-peer recruitment. This knowledge is useful in delivering peer driven prevention and intervention modalities.
- Females have different patterns of drug use and needs compared to males; creative treatment modalities are needed to address the needs of females who use drugs. Furthermore, it is recommended that additional and focused in-depth qualitative research be conducted among females who use drugs to better understand their behaviours and harm reduction and treatment needs.
- A scale up of services providing the most effective medications and treatment modalities for specific drug types as well as socio-psychological components to deal with the root causes of problem drug use are needed for anyone who needs help to stop using drugs, including those in prison settings. It is essential to maintain best practices for people who use drugs targeted programs to provide harm reduction education, effective drug treatment and maintenance modalities.
- Education and policy should be enhanced to ensure effective human rights based criminal justice response to drug problems and focus more on harm reduction rather than on punishment.

- Outreach efforts as well as policy changes are needed to reduce stigma and discrimination related to people who use drugs among the community.
- All treatment programs should be accessible, affordable and friendly. There are indications from focus groups with people who use drugs and their families that including family members in a person's treatment of drugs is effective. Programs should continue to involve families in the treatment and recovery of problem drug users.
- People who use drugs start using drugs at young ages. It is important to continue enhancing youth programs to include healthy lifestyle choices and support for young people who may be vulnerable to drug use. Additional efforts are needed to educate young people about drug use and to allow harm reduction and outreach to young people.
- There is an estimated number of 55,000 people who use drugs in Mauritius. This population size estimation should be used to better plan and allocate resources for prevention and intervention programs.
- In an effort to monitor changes in drug use behaviors and to monitor the impact of interventions, future surveys using the same sampling method and eligibility to monitor are warranted.
- Conduct rapid assessments to quickly understand the situation and service need for young populations and conduct research to estimate the cost of these services.

Synthetic drugs are mostly imported through the air routes and they reach our borders through courier services or conveyed by incoming passengers. These drugs mostly originate from a number of East Asian Countries. Such drugs are known to be mixed with local products such as dry tea leaves and are offered for sale by drug dealers.

The Commissioner of Police has also informed that, Anti-Drugs and Smuggling Unit carries out regular analysis on drug trends based on arrests, seizures, profiles of persons arrested and affected regions. The Reports of the Forensic Science Laboratory also provide useful

scientific information on the range of synthetic substances available on the local market. Additionally, information is collected from informers as to the availability of the different types of drugs on the market. The analysis contributes in depicting the current picture of the drug situation in Mauritius, including synthetic drugs.

The National Drug Secretariat of my Office is following up with stakeholders for the implementation of the recommendations contained in the survey report.

SUICIDE – REPORTED CASES – CAUSES

(No. B/1006) Mr R. Wochit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to suicide, he will state if a study on the reported cases thereof over the recent past years in Mauritius has been conducted with a view to finding the causes thereof and address same and, if so, give details of the findings and recommendations thereof.

Reply (The Minister of Health and Wellness): I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since 2018 to-date, 524 cases of suicide have been reported to the Police. According to the World Health Organisation, the world average suicide rate is 9.49 for 100,000 population. In contrast to Mauritius, the rate is 8.75 per 100,000 population.

I wish to inform the House that no formal study has been conducted regarding reported cases of suicides up to now. However, a study on Suicidality among adolescents in Mauritius was published in the Journal of Environmental Research on Public Health in 2021.

The objective of the study was to identify the prevalence of suicide, draw up profiles of related risks and to examine the associations between these profiles and suicides in Mauritius. The common causes of suicide include major psychiatric illness in particular, mood disorders such as depression, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia; substance use disorder, loneliness, familial conflicts, relationship issues and stressors such as financial issues and unemployment.

Studies on suicide is a sensitive and delicate issue. To conduct such studies will involve details on family history, police records, financial situation of the patient, medical and psychiatric history, drug issues and emotional problems, amongst others.

**CHAMPS DE MARS RACE TRACK – ALLEGED SABOTAGE & CÔTE D’OR
INTERNATIONAL RACECOURSE – SECURITY MEASURES**

(No. B/1007) **Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the alleged sabotage of the race track of the Champs de Mars on the eve of the Maiden Cup, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the –

- (a) Commissioner of Police, information as to when same was reported thereto and police inquiry initiated, indicating the number of persons arrested in connection therewith, if any, as at to date, and
- (b) Côte d’Or International Race Course and Entertainment Complex, information as to the measures being envisaged to improve the security of horses, jockeys and the public attending the race courses.

(Withdrawn)

MONKEYPOX - MEDICAL PROTOCOL

(No. B/1026) **Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to Monkeypox, he will state the –

- (a) medical protocol put in place against same, indicating sanitary measures put in place to combat same at the port and airports of Mauritius, and
- (b) details pertaining to the acquisition of vaccines against same.

Reply: Monkeypox is a generally mild disease, which is transmitted by contact with the skin, objects contaminated with soil and by droplets. The symptoms are fever, rash, headache, muscular pains and swollen lymph nodes.

Monkeypox has been present in West and Central African countries for decades. The actual global epidemic has reached 57 different countries mainly in North America and Europe, which could suggest a change in the mode of transmission and, therefore, calls for caution.

This is essentially why confirmed cases, and certain probable and suspected cases will be referred to New ENT Hospital.

Following identification of multiple Monkeypox cases in several non-endemic countries in May 2022 and the declaration of Monkeypox as a public health emergency by the World Health Organisation in July 2022, my Ministry, has, as part of its surveillance, preparedness and outbreak response, devised a protocol in order to detect and prevent any possible transmission of Monkeypox as follows –

1. Upon arrival, all passengers have their temperature checked at the airport and seaport.
2. A passenger suspected with positive Monkeypox disease will be taken by the Public Health Officer into an isolation room at the airport and seaport.
3. The Medical Health Officer will examine the patient and in case of suspected signs and symptoms, he/she will send investigation (swab of the skin lesion) to the Central Health Laboratory.
4. The Medical Health Officer will inform the Regional Public Health Superintendent who will take over and the Rapid Response Team will transfer the patient to his place where he/she should be isolated for 21 days. His/her family members should not be in contact with him/her.
5. The Public Health and Rapid Response Teams of my Ministry will follow up the suspected patients.

I, also, wish to inform the House that the protocol also provides for detection of local cases of Monkeypox (i.e., persons who have not travelled abroad). This is justified by the 2nd case of Monkeypox detected at Reunion Island which was a person having not travelled abroad.

In reply to part (a) of the question, I wish to reassure the House that my Ministry is closely monitoring the situation and to date, there has been no case of Monkeypox in Mauritius. In fact, since May 2022, sanitary control at the port and airport has been strengthened. Strict control is also being exercised by the Mauritius Ports Authority regarding rodents on ship.

Moreover, a flyer containing Monkeypox disease information, including contact numbers in case of emergency or occurrence of any signs and symptoms, is also being handed over to all incoming passengers.

In reply to part (b) of the question, an order for 1,000 units of Imvanex vaccines was placed from the Bavarian Nordic Company so as to inoculate vulnerable groups of our population against the Monkeypox.

On 24 September 2022, officials of my Ministry had a zoom meeting with the Senior Business Manager of the Bavarian Nordic who informed that supply can start as from December 2022.

Accordingly, the supply agreement which has been shared with my Ministry on 05 October 2022 will be signed and transmitted to the company after obtaining all clearances.

VICTORIA URBAN TERMINAL - STALLS - FEES

(No. B/1027) 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 City Municipal Council of Port Louis, information as to –

- (a) the number thereof currently unoccupied, and
- (b) if consideration will be given for the reduction of the fees payable for the occupation thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal City Council of Port Louis that 1,000 stalls have been provided for hawkers at the Victoria Urban Terminal, out of which 700 have been allocated. Out of the 700, 658 stalls are being occupied. The Municipal City Council of Port Louis has launched an expression of interest on 01 October 2022 to the public for the allocation of vacant stalls available at the Victoria Urban Terminal.

As regards part (b) of the question, I held consultations with the Association of street vendors and the Municipal City Council of Port Louis on 07 October 2022, during which the former expressed the wish to go for the purchase of their stalls through a loan from the Development Bank of Mauritius. As such, they would pay monthly instalment as repayment of the amount borrowed instead of monthly rental fees and as such they would become the owner of the stall.

At present, my Ministry is carrying out consultations with the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development to consider new and more favourable conditions which would be applicable to the loan to hawkers of the Victoria Urban Terminal. These conditions

might include a longer repayment period of the loan amount which is at present 7 years, a lower interest rate which is at present 3% and a longer moratorium period which is at present 6 months.

PETROLEUM PRODUCTS – RS2 LEVY – FUNDS COLLECTED

(No. B/1028) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Rs2 levy on the price of petroleum products for the purchase of COVID-19 vaccines, he will state –

- (a) the quantum of funds collected in terms thereof since January 2022 to date, and
- (b) if consideration will be given for the removal of the said levy.

(Withdrawn)

2022 CENSUS OF POPULATION AND HOUSING EXERCISE – TABLETS – PUBLIC OFFICERS

(No. B/1029) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the 2022 Census of Population and Housing Exercise, he will give details of the –

- (a) tablets acquired therefor, indicating the name of the supplier/s thereof and amount of funds disbursed therefor, and
- (b) number of public officers who worked therefor, indicating the quantum of funds disbursed in terms thereof.

Reply: Le recensement de la population a été effectué entre le 19 juin 2022 et le 1^{er} août 2022, tandis que le recensement des logements a été conduit entre le 30 avril 2022 et le 20 juin 2022.

En ce qui concerne la partie (a) de la question, je souhaite informer la Chambre que *Statistics Mauritius* n'a pas acquis de tablettes pour le recensement des logements et de la population de 2022.

En fait, le Bureau national des statistiques du Kenya a prêté gratuitement quelque 8 000 tablettes à *Statistics Mauritius* pour réaliser cet exercice.

La seule dépense encourue en ce qui concerne les tablettes a été de 24 130 roupies pour les frais de courtage liés au dédouanement au niveau des douanes.

En ce qui concerne la partie (b) de la question, quelque 6 750 agents publics ont travaillé pour le recensement de la population et des logements.

A ce jour, 106,5 millions de roupies ont déjà été déboursés, sur un total de 310 millions de roupies à payer aux agents publics au titre des frais de recensement.

Le montant restant de 203,5 millions de roupies est en cours de paiement.

COVID-19 VIRUS – VACCINES – JANUARY 2022 TO 18 OCTOBER 2022

(No. B/1030) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the COVID-19 virus, he will state the number and type of vaccines acquired by his Ministry since 01 January 2022 to date, indicating the –

- (a) number thereof in stock, indicating the brand name, date of purchase and total cost thereof, and
- (b) number of vaccines having expired, indicating the total value and method of disposal thereof.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS & RODRIGUES - HIV/AIDS

(No. B/1031) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to HIV/AIDS, he will state –

- (a) the number of persons living therewith as at date in mainland Mauritius and Rodrigues, respectively, indicating the number –
 - (i) thereof being treated in regional hospitals and health centers, respectively, and the protocol applicable, and
 - (ii) of medical staff trained to work with positive HIV/AIDS persons, and
- (b) if his Ministry has any policy regarding “*la prise en charge*” of HIV/AIDS positive persons and, if so, give details thereof and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

MAUBANK & NATIONAL INSURANCE COMPANY – SALE

(No. B/1032) **Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Maubank and the National Insurance Company, he will state if steps have been initiated for the sale thereof and, if so, give details thereof.

(Withdrawn)

**SUPER LEAGUE MATCH – BASKETBALL PLAYER K. V. – DEATH –
INQUIRY**

(No. B/1033) **Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the death of basketball player K. V. at the Phoenix Gymnasium during a Super League match organized by the Mauritius Basket-Ball Federation on 06 September 2022, he will state if an inquiry has been initiated by his Ministry thereinto and, if so, indicate where matters stand and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

**CENTRAL WATER AUTHORITY – BOARD COMPOSITION –
EXPERIENCES & COMPETENCIES**

(No. B/1034) **Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central)** asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Central Water Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the composition of the Board thereof, indicating the respective experiences and competencies of the Board Members.

Reply: Section 7(2) of the Central Water Authority Act provides for the composition of the Central Water Board as follows –

- (a) A Chairperson to be appointed by the Minister;
- (b) A representative of the Ministry responsible for the subject of finance;
- (c) A representative of the Ministry responsible for the subject of energy;
- (d) A representative of the Ministry responsible for the subject of labour and industrial relations,

- (e) Two members with experience in agricultural, industrial, commercial, financial, scientific or administrative matters, appointed by the Minister.

I am placing a copy of the current composition of the Central Water Board in the Library of the National Assembly.

FOREIGN CURRENCY– FORECASTED SHORTAGES – MEASURES

(No. B/1035) 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 foreign currency notes, he will state if he has been informed of forecasted shortages thereof and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) reasons therefor, and
- (b) measures being envisaged to ensure adequate supply thereof on the market.

Reply: Comme la Chambre le sait, le déclenchement de la pandémie a entraîné la mise en place de mesures sanitaires contraignantes mais nécessaires pour protéger la population.

La fermeture de nos frontières a eu un impact majeur et direct sur le secteur du tourisme, et indirectement aussi sur la quasi-totalité des autres secteurs.

Les deux confinements ont également fortement limité l'activité économique du pays en 2020 et 2021.

Dans le même temps, nous avons dû faire face à une baisse de la demande et à des perturbations de la chaîne d'approvisionnement, ce qui a limité nos exportations vers les principaux marchés.

A cet égard, permettez-moi de vous donner un aperçu de l'ampleur de la façon dont notre économie a été affectée –

- i. Les exportations de biens et services ont chuté de 5,2 milliards USD en 2019 à 3,1 milliards USD en 2020, ce qui ne représentait que 48,7 % de la valeur de 2019. En 2021, les exportations de biens et services s'élèvent à 3,2 milliards USD, soit seulement 60,8 % de la valeur de 2019 ;
- ii. Les recettes touristiques ont drastiquement diminué, passant de 1,8 milliards USD en 2019 à 468 millions USD en 2020 et 355 millions USD en 2021, et
- iii. Les IDE ont eux aussi chuté de 22,3 milliards de roupies en 2019 à 16,9 milliards de roupies en 2020 et 15,4 milliards de roupies en 2021.

Tous ces facteurs ont entraîné une diminution des entrées de devises sur le marché national des changes, ce qui a entraîné une offre inférieure à la demande.

J'ai été informé par la Banque de Maurice, que depuis la réouverture des frontières en octobre 2021, la situation s'est largement améliorée, avec une augmentation du niveau des entrées de devises.

Cette tendance positive devrait se poursuivre à mesure que l'économie poursuit sa reprise, soutenue par les retombées positives du secteur du tourisme et un plus grand dynamisme dans d'autres secteurs clés de l'économie.

Cela étant dit, les données de la Banque de Maurice indiquent que le montant des entrées de devises n'a pas encore atteint les niveaux pré-pandémiques.

Les entrées de devises étrangères ont augmenté pour atteindre une moyenne trimestrielle de 1,020 millions USD en 2022 par rapport aux moyennes trimestrielles de 857,5 millions USD en 2021 et de 996,2 millions USD en 2020, mais restent inférieures au niveau moyen trimestriel de 1 621,0 millions USD enregistré en 2019.

J'ai en outre été informé par la Banque de Maurice qu'afin d'assurer un approvisionnement adéquat du marché en devises étrangères, la Banque est intervenue régulièrement depuis le début de la pandémie.

Depuis mars 2020, la Banque a injecté un montant total de 3,3 milliards USD sur le marché intérieur.

De janvier 2022 à ce jour, la Banque a vendu un montant total de 632 millions USD.

La dernière intervention a eu lieu le 11 octobre 2022, lorsque la Banque a vendu 10 millions USD.

Avec un objectif d'arrivées de touristes de 1,4 million au cours de l'exercice 2022-2023, et une reprise des exportations de biens et de services, les entrées de devises devraient ainsi revenir à leur niveau normal.

La Banque de Maurice continue de surveiller la situation sur le marché intérieur des changes et se tient prête à intervenir pour fournir des devises au marché, en cas de besoin.

Nous devons également nous rappeler que, par l'intermédiaire de la *Mauritius Investment Corporation*, 2 milliards de dollars ont été injectés dans l'économie afin de lever des roupies mauriciennes pour protéger les entreprises en difficulté.

Cela a également contribué à atténuer dans une certaine mesure la pression sur la roupie mauricienne.

Alors que les conditions sur le marché des changes s'améliorent progressivement, il convient d'encourager les participants au marché à jouer leur rôle pour augmenter l'offre de devises sur le marché.

CAP MALHEUREUX - *L'OISEAU DU PARADIS* RELAY CENTRE - CCTV CAMERAS

(No. B/1036) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Cap Malheureux Shelter, also known as *L'Oiseau du Paradis*, she will state the purpose of the installation of CCTV cameras in the resting room of the female caregivers.

Reply: 17 CCTV cameras have been installed in strategic places at *L'oiseau du Paradis* Relay Centre, Cap Malheureux. However, there are none in the resting room of caregivers.

ADOPTION BILL – DRAFTING & INTRODUCTION

(No. B/1037) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the proposed introduction of an Adoption Bill in the Assembly, he will state where matters stand.

Reply by (The Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare): My Ministry is working on the proposed draft Adoption Bill, in line with the provisions of The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption, to which Mauritius is a party.

On 27 June 2022, following consultations held, the State Law Office submitted a draft Adoption Bill. A technical committee was set up at the level of my Ministry to look into the different technicalities and fine tuning of the draft Bill. My Ministry has also worked out the various proposed Schedules to the Bill.

Further working sessions are being held with the State Law Office to look into the proposed amendments and to finalise the draft Bill.

COVID-19 VACCINES – DONATION BY MAURITIUS

(No. B/1038) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the COVID-19 vaccines, he will state the number thereof which have –

- (a) been donated by Mauritius to other countries, and
- (b) expired, respectively, indicating in each case the –
 - (i) brand, and
 - (ii) cost incurred for the acquisition thereof.

Reply: In reply to part (a) of the question, my Ministry has made donation of the COVID-19 vaccines to African Union Member States to contribute to their fight against the pandemic.

I am informed, we have so far, donated 60,000 doses of Sinopharm to Zimbabwe which are due to expire in June 2023.

50,000 doses of Sinopharm vaccines have also been donated to Rwanda which will expire in June 2023 and 21,000 Sputnik V Component I which expired in November 2021 and 21,500 Sputnik V Component II which also expired in February 2022.

We also made a donation of 10,000 and 140,000 Sinopharm vaccines to Tanzania due to expire in June 2023 and August 2023 respectively.

I am further informed that we donated 150,000 doses of Sinopharm vaccines to Uganda and Namibia each, due to expire in August 2023.

In total, we donated 602,500 Covid-19 vaccines.

In reply to parts (b) and (c) of the question, the vaccines donated were Sinopharm and Sputnik V respectively. The unit price of Sinopharm vaccine was at USD 15 whilst USD 9.95 per dose was paid in respect of the Sputnik V vaccine.

**OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN - ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022 -
RECOMMENDATIONS**

(No. B/1039) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the recommendations contained in the last report of the Ombudsperson for Children Office, she will state the measures taken or that will be taken for the implementation thereof.

Reply: The Ombudsperson for Children launched her Annual Report 2021-2022 on Thursday 06 October 2022.

The recommendations made in the report are being examined at the level of my Ministry with a view to coming up with an implementation plan over the short, medium and long-term, depending on funds and resources available.

A series of measures in line with most of the recommendations made is ongoing. The implementation of the remaining ones is being worked out in collaboration with relevant stakeholders.

MOGAS & GAS OIL - SELLING PRICES - REDUCTION

(No. B/1040) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third 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 Mogas and Gas Oil, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if a reduction in the selling prices thereof is being envisaged and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

Reply: The retail prices of petroleum products are worked out in accordance with the provisions in the Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Petroleum Products) Regulations 2011 as subsequently amended. A number of factors have been listed in section 3(2) of the said Regulations which need to be taken into account when calculating the retail prices of Mogas and Gas Oil, *inter alia*, the CIF price, the excise duties, various contributions and funds available in the Price Stabilisation Account. The Regulations also define the criteria which should be used to decrease, maintain, or increase the retail prices of petroleum products.

As stated in the Press release of the State Trading Corporation, following the meeting held on 13 September 2022, the Petroleum Pricing Committee (PPC) had recommended that the retail price of Mogas be maintained at Rs74.10 despite substantial increases in the global price of petroleum products.

In fact, the calculated retail price represented 1.59% decrease. However, as per provisions of the Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Petroleum Products) Regulations 2011, the retail price of Mogas was maintained.

On the other hand, on the same date, the Petroleum Pricing Committee had recommended that the retail price of Gas Oil be increased from Rs54.55 per litre to Rs60 per litre. In fact, the actual retail price should have been Rs70.47 per litre. This represented an increase of Rs15.92 per litre (29.19%). However, since the maximum increase is limited to 10% as per the law, the State Trading Corporation recommended an increase of Rs5.45 (or 9.99%) on the retail price of Gas Oil.

Taking into account the precarious financial situation of many families in Mauritius, Government took the bold decision not to proceed with any increase in the retail prices of Mogas and Gas Oil. Consequently, although an increase in the price of Gas Oil was recommended by the Petroleum Pricing Committee, the retail price was maintained at Rs54.55 per litre.

The evolution of oil prices on the world market is extremely volatile and is being closely monitored. While there was a decrease in oil prices over several weeks from September 2022, the recent decision of the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to cut production by 2 million barrels a day has created huge uncertainties regarding the future prices of petroleum products.

My Ministry and the State Trading Corporation will continue to monitor the evolution of global prices of petroleum products. I am informed that the next Petroleum Pricing Committee should meet at latest 13 January 2023 and a decision will be taken regarding the retail prices of both Mogas and Gas Oil.

COVID-19 – STOCK OF VACCINES – EXPIRY DATES

(No. B/1041) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the COVID-19 vaccines, he will state the number thereof –

- (a) presently available in stock, indicating their respective expiry dates, and
- (b) forecasted to be purchased, indicating the expected delivery dates thereof.

Reply: In reply to part (a) of the question, as at 12 October 2022, there were 566,847 doses of COVID-19 vaccines available as follows –

- 68,240 doses of Sinopharm vaccines, of which 8,240 doses will expire in June 2023 and 60,000 doses in August 2023;
- 115,135 doses of Johnson & Johnson vaccines, of which 4,515 doses will expire in December 2022/January 2023 and 110,620 doses in August 2023;
- 199,902 doses of Pfizer vaccines with expiry date of 12 October 2022, and
- 183,570 doses of Paediatric Pfizer vaccines which will expire in December 2022.

In reply to part (b) of the question, in view of high vaccine coverage already achieved in Mauritius and the adequate stock of COVID-19 vaccines, my Ministry will not be procuring additional COVID Vaccines.

‘SMATCH’ OIL, MILK & BASIC COMMODITIES - DISTRIBUTORS

(No. B/1042) Mr P. Armance (Third 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 importation of oil, milk and other basic commodities under the brand name of Smatch, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, details of the criteria used for the selection of the distributors and table the list thereof.

(Withdrawn)

NORTHERN REGION – WATER SUPPLY - SHORTAGE

(No. B/1043) Mr R. Woochit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to drinking water, he will state if Government is aware of shortages thereof faced by the northerners on several occasions due to breakdown of irrigation water pipes and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the actions taken, if any, to provide clean drinking water to these people during water supply interruptions.

Reply: I am informed by the Central Water Authority (CWA) that it supplies water to the Water Supply Zone (North) from La Nicolière Reservoir, Boreholes and Irrigation Authority pipelines.

I am further informed that an average of 20,500 m³/day is abstracted from Irrigation Authority pipelines and treated via 13 Containerised Pressure Filtration Plants installed at New Goodlands Reservoir, New Plaine des Papayes Reservoir, Rouge Terre Reservoir and Mont Loisir Rouillard Reservoir, which represents about 35% of the total production of these reservoirs. These reservoirs also receive water from La Nicolière Water Treatment Plant as well as other boreholes.

The regions being served from these reservoirs include Triolet, Morcellement St André, Plaine des Papayes, Trou aux Biches, Pointe aux Piments, Mont Choisy, Pointe aux Cannoniers, Goodlands, Grand Gaube, Roche Terre, Grand Baie, Petit Raffray, Vale, Calodyne and vicinities.

The Irrigation Authority has informed my Ministry that in July 2020, it allocated a contract for the replacement of Hydraulic Control Valves, flow meters and ancillaries within the Northern Plains Irrigation Project Network. Due to the nature of the works, closure of the main pipeline M1 of diameter 1200mm is required every time a major valve needs to be replaced.

Closure of the M1 pipeline requires closing of a series of valves, emptying of the whole network, which may take up to 5-6 hours and re-filling and pressurising of the network, which may take another 10-12 hours. In addition, the actual replacement of the valves may take 10-12 hours, depending on the complexity of the work.

Whenever the Irrigation Authority has to carry out valve replacement works on its network, there is no intake for the CWA Containerised Filtration Plants, hence resulting in a shortage of the above-mentioned volume of water. This explains the disruption in water supply in regions like Triolet, Pointe aux Piments, Trou aux Biches, Mont Choisy, Grand Baie and the vicinity.

However, Communiqués are issued by the CWA to inform relevant subscribers of works being carried out and irregular water supply, and provision of water tankers.

The CWA thereby makes the necessary arrangement to deploy water tankers to the specific areas. Priority for supply of water via water tankers is given to schools, Mediclinics, hospitals, emergency services, etc.

Upon completion of repair works on the IA pipeline, I am informed that it takes around 6 hours for the said pipeline to be pressurised and the Containerised Pressure Filtration Plant to start to have the necessary water inflow. The CWA reservoir takes another 6 hours to build up its level in order for the outlets to be opened. The CWA teams are also deployed for the removal of air locks in the CWA pipe network and proper valve operations are entertained. As such, whenever there are interventions to be carried out on IA pipelines where the CWA has a tapping, it may take longer to restore water supply in the CWA's pipe network.

COVID-19 – NUMBER OF DEATHS

(No. B/1044) Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the COVID-19 virus, he will state the number of deaths attributable thereto in Mauritius over the period March 2020 to 01 October 2022.

Reply: I am informed that since March 2020 to 01 October 2022, a total of 1,026 deaths was directly related to COVID-19.

VACOAS URBAN TERMINAL – PROJECT VALUE

(No. B/1045) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the construction of the Vacoas Urban Terminal, he will state the expected start and completion dates thereof, indicating the –

- (a) name of the consortium that has been awarded the contract, and
- (b) project value thereof.

Reply: The Joint Venture Laxmanbhai & Co (Mauritius) Ltd “Manser Saxon Contracting Ltd” has been awarded the contract for the Development and Operation of a Modern Urban Terminal at Vacoas. The Promoter is expected to start the construction works after signature of the Lease Agreement for the rental of the land and the finalisation of the detailed designs of the project.

As at date, the Promoter has not yet signed the Lease Agreement and has raised some issues which the latter has requested to be resolved prior to the signature thereof. The request of the Promoter is under consideration by a Technical Committee under the Chair of my Ministry. As a matter of fact, the date of the start of the construction works has not yet been finalised.

Regarding part (b) of the question, as per the Request for Proposal, the Government of Mauritius will not participate, either directly or indirectly, in the funding or financing of the project at any part or stage of the development.

PUBLIC HEALTHCARE INSTITUTIONS - STAFF - ASSAULT

(No. B/1046) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to verbal or physical assault on healthcare staff in public healthcare institutions, he will state the –

- (a) number of reported cases thereof to his Ministry over the past three years, and
- (b) policy of his Ministry in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

VICTORIA URBAN TERMINAL – STALLS & SURFACE AREA

(No. B/1047) 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 Victoria Urban Terminal, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal City Council of Port Louis, information as to the number of stalls thereat allocated as at to date, excluding for food and beverages, indicating the –

- (a) number of –
 - (i) hawkers having since cancelled their respective agreement;
 - (ii) stalls allocated to hawkers duly registered with the Council since May 2022, and
- (b) surface area per stall.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal City Council of Port Louis that 628 stalls have been allocated to hawkers at the Victoria Urban Terminal excluding precooked and cooked foods. Out of the 628 hawkers, 52 hawkers have cancelled their agreement. No new stalls have been allocated to hawkers since May 2022 by the Municipal City Council of Port Louis.

As regards part (b) of the question, the surface area per stall is around 2.54 square metres.

**CAMBRIDGE ASSESSMENT INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION (CAIE) 2022 –
URDU & TAMIL QUESTIONNAIRES**

(No. B/1048) 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 questionnaires of Urdu and Tamil languages set for the Cambridge Assessment International Education (CAIE) 2022, she will state if she has been made aware that the level thereof do not correspond to the study programmes.

Reply: I am informed by the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate (MES) that representations have been received concerning the level of difficulty of the SC/GCE O Level Tamil and Urdu examinations. These representations were transmitted to Cambridge Assessment International Education (CAIE) on 29 September 2022 by the MES.

CAIE has drawn the attention of the MES that the preparation of question papers is carried out in accordance with the syllabuses offered. A wide range of expertise is deployed in the preparation process involving paper setters, revisers, vetters, proof readers. The Question Paper Evaluation Committee at the level of CAIE scrutinises each question paper and has, as one of its objectives, to ensure that the level of difficulty is appropriate and comparable to those of previous years.

CAIE, in its reply to representations made, has also indicated that the same principles and procedures have been applied for the setting of the Tamil and Urdu papers and that the format for both papers has been consistent with previous years question papers.

Further, CAIE has informed that during the marking exercise, candidates' performance is very closely monitored and items or questions which appear to have posed difficulty to candidates are identified and has also assured that if there is evidence which suggests that candidates' performance have been adversely affected by any issue in the setting of the Question Papers, CAIE will take it into consideration while fixing grades and grade boundaries.

ROAD MAP 2021-2024 – WATER SUPPLY SERVICE – IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/1049) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Road

Map 2021-2024 for Improving Water Supply Service, particularly in Water-Stressed Regions, during the dry seasons, he will state the –

- (a) objectives thereof;
- (b) total number of recommended projects and the corresponding project values thereof, and
- (c) implementation status thereof, including the amount of money spent as at to date.

Reply: My Ministry has, in consultation with the Water Resources Unit and the Central Water Authority, in May 2021, elaborated a Roadmap for 2021-2024 for Improving Water Supply Service containing contingency measures for the Dry Season and addressing water deficit particularly in water stressed regions. This document sought to build up on a Contingency Plan implemented during the severe dry spell which affected Mauritius in year 2020 and catered for short term and medium term measures for dry seasons.

The Roadmap recommended the implementation of 53 projects across the island over period 2021 to 2024, requiring an investment of some Rs5 billion. These projects include *inter alia* mobilisation of water from rivers, construction of new water treatment plants and rehabilitation of existing ones, installation of containerised pressure filters, exploration /optimisation of new/existing boreholes, construction of service reservoirs and pipe replacement.

This document has been further fine-tuned in 2022 based on more in-depth network analysis in the specific water stressed areas, in view of the dry season 2022. The document stands to be revisited regularly based on new developments.

I am informed by the CWA that the status of implementation of projects is as follows –

- (a) installation of Containerised Filtration Plants scheduled for dry seasons 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 has been mostly completed;
- (b) additional Containerised Filtration Plants have been installed at 10 sites;
- (c) in view of technical constraints, inflatable reservoirs will not be installed; instead clusters of water tanks of 3000 m³ with pump rooms have been constructed in identified areas;

- (d) new boreholes have been acquired by the CWA at Beau Plan, Rouillard, Plaine Magnien, Valriche, Medine and Valton,
- (e) action has been initiated regarding construction of service reservoirs at Alma and Salazie, upgrading of water treatment plants and water mobilisation, treatment and pipe works downstream of Ferney and Champagne Power stations.

The amount spent on water related projects in 2020 to date stands approximately at Rs482 m. Works are ongoing at several sites and funds are being mobilised for implementation of relevant projects.

REGISTERED ARTISANAL FISHERS – MEDICAL EXAMINATION

(No. B/1050) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the medical examination to be undergone by registered artisanal fishers to ascertain their fitness to go at sea, he will state the number of fishers having been examined since July 2021 to date, indicating the number thereof found to be medically unfit to work at sea and having surrendered their fisher cards against compensation.

Reply: One of the conditions for registered artisanal fishers to go at sea is that they should be medically fit.

I am informed that since July 2021, arrangement has been made by my Ministry for 66 registered artisanal fishers, aged 65 years and above, to undergo medical check-up at Regional Health Hospitals, in order to ascertain their fitness to work at sea.

I wish to inform the House that out of the 66 registered artisanal fishers who were convened for medical examinations at Regional Health Hospitals, only 32 attended the medical examinations and were found to be unfit to work at sea. 34 did not attend the medical examinations for reasons which are unknown.

Out of the 32 who were found medically unfit, 28 have already surrendered their fisher cards against compensation of Rs52,500, one has passed away and three have not yet surrendered their fisher cards.

Out of 34 fishers who did not attend the medical examinations, four have voluntarily surrendered their fisher cards and have opted for compensation.

The three medically unfit fishers who have not yet surrendered their fisher cards, along with the fishers who did not attend medical examinations, will be convened by my Ministry for another medical examination shortly. If they fail to attend the medical examination, they will automatically be deregistered and no compensation will be paid to them.

Since the implementation of the Budgetary Measures 2021-2022, 298 fishers have opted to surrender their fisher cards against compensation of Rs52,500 to each. As at date, payment to a tune of Rs15, 277,500 has already been made to 291 of them.

VACOAS CENTRE - TRAFFIC CONGESTION - REMEDIAL ACTION

(No. B/1051) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the traffic congestion occurring in the centre of Vacoas, especially, from the Vacoas Police Station straight to the Savoy Cinema and from La Caverne to the Vacoas CEB Office, he will state the measures that the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit proposes to take for the reduction thereof.

(Vide reply to PQ B/1015)

FISHERMAN CARD – RENEWAL

(No. B/1052) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the renewal of fisherman card for those fishermen having reached the age of 60, he will state if there has been any change in government policy in relation thereto and, if so, give details thereof.

(Withdrawn)

BAD WEATHER ALLOWANCE –NEW CONDITIONS – FISHER CARD

(No. B/1053) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the new condition attached to the artisanal fisher card whereby a registered fisher shall be paid bad weather allowance based on attendance at the respective Fisheries Post to clean the assigned Fish Landing Station/shoreline/beach in the locality, he will state the rationale thereof.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that there are presently 1,739 registered fishers who are eligible for Bad Weather Allowance.

Payment of Bad Weather Allowance is based on the official report issued by the Mauritius Meteorological Services at the end of each month on the general state of the sea around the island.

The Director of Audit has, since several years, drawn attention on the weaknesses in the system for the payment of Bad Weather Allowance. There was the need therefore, for a proper monitoring of the system, as many fishers were benefitting of the allowance despite not being involved in fishing activities. Some others were also benefitting from both Social Aid (Basic Retirement Pension and Basic Invalid Pension) and Bad Weather Allowance at the same time.

My Ministry has taken several actions to remedy the situation. As from March 2022, my Ministry has come up with a new policy for the allocation of 500 fisher cards to new applicants. New registered fishers are being paid Bad Weather Allowance based on the new conditions attached to the issue of the fisher card. One of the conditions is that newly registered fishers should be paid Bad Weather Allowance based on their attendance at the Fish Landing Station/shoreline/beach, nearest to their respective localities.

The newly registered fishers are engaged in the cleaning of an extent of approximately 200m at areas assigned by the officers in charge of the Fisheries Post. They are expected to do the cleaning works thereat for a duration of around 2 hours on days which are declared as Bad Weather Days by the Mauritius Meteorological Services.

The newly registered fishers are assigned these tasks in areas near the localities in order to avoid transport costs.

All fishers are provided with protective equipment and tools by my Ministry, free of charge, to perform the cleaning works. Arrangements have also been made with local authorities for collection and disposal of wastes.

I wish to inform the House that this new policy ensures that public funds and resources are being used judiciously and at the same time contributing to the embellishment of our beaches and shorelines.

There is certainly a period of adaptation on part of the fishers regarding this project.

Je tiens à faire ressortir que nous n'avons reçu aucune plainte de la part des nouveaux pêcheurs. Par ailleurs, ils ont accueilli favorablement cette nouvelle politique de nettoyage de leurs plages, rivages et débarquements de poissons.

Ces pêcheurs croient fermement en ce qu'on appelle -

“Peser nou protez nou la mer, nou laplaz, nou debarcadere.”

HOSPITALS - MEDICAL SPECIALISTS

(No. B/1054) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the field of Anaesthesia/Obstetrics & Gynaecology and Paediatrics in each regional hospital, he will state the number of –

- (a) accredited specialists employed thereat as at to date;
- (b) specialists requested per specialty in each regional hospital to ensure smooth and effective onsite 24/7 coverage, and
- (c) specialist degree holders in these specialties who were working as Medical Officers having been upgraded to work as specialist since the introduction of 24 hour onsite cover.

(Withdrawn)

CEB - LNG POWER PLANT PROJECT

(No. B/1055) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Central Electricity Board Request for Information on the Supply of Electricity through Barge-mounted LNG Power Plant Project, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to –

- (a) if the said project will replace or complement the existing generation assets of the CEB;
- (b) the implementation status thereof, and
- (c) the total cost of electricity generation per Kilowatt hour for CEB, including capacity charge and the cost of fuel (LNG).

(Withdrawn)

BOTTOM TRAWLING – ISSUANCE OF LICENCES

(No. B/1056) **Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes)** asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to bottom trawling, he will state if his Ministry is currently negotiating with foreign countries for the issuance of licences therefore within our territorial waters.

Reply: Bottom trawling is an unsustainable method of fishing that involves dragging of a large net with heavy weights across the seafloor in an effort to catch fish. In so doing, the nets scoop up everything in its path and thus, destroy enormous strips of fragile seafloor habitats, including corals and seagrass ecosystems, which take decades or longer to recover.

My Ministry, therefore, does not allow bottom trawling in the territorial waters of Mauritius.

As such, my Ministry is currently not negotiating with any foreign country for the issuance of bottom trawling licences in our territorial waters.

GRA-HRD - JOCKEYS - SANCTIONS & SUSPENSIONS

(No. B/1057) **Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to horse racing, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Gambling Regulatory Authority/Horse Racing Division (GRA-HRD), information as to if sanctions and suspensions taken by the board of the Racing Stewards of the HRD against jockeys in action for the racing season 2022 are applicable by foreign racing authorities and, if so, give the list of jockeys suspended since the beginning of the 2022 Season.

(Withdrawn)

CITE ROMA, RICHE TERRE – FLOOD MITIGATION PROJECT – PHASE 2 IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/1058) Ms S. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the implementation of the second phase of the flood mitigation project at Cité Roma in Riche Terre, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: The flood mitigation project at Cité Roma is being implemented by the NDU under the National Flood Management Programme. Following flooding events which occurred in April 2021, the project has been divided in two phases.

The scope of works for Phase 1 involved the demolition of two existing box culverts and reconstruction of a bridge. The contract was awarded to Sotravic Ltée for an amount of Rs11.5 m. The works which started in May 2021 were completed in February 2022.

As regards Phase 2 of the project, the scope of works includes the following –

- (i) enlargement and construction of a stone masonry wall along Feeder Sèche;
- (ii) construction of a storm water drain network, and
- (iii) relocation of existing services as may be required during execution of the works.

Financial clearance from the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development was obtained on 26 September 2022 and the NDU is in the process of awarding the contract for this phase.

With the implementation of the first phase of the project, it is to be noted that the problem of flooding has been alleviated by 30-40%.

RESIDENCE KENNEDY - FOOT FIVE - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/1059) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the proposed construction of a Foot Five at Residence Kennedy, he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

**STATISTICS MAURITIUS & STATISTICS RODRIGUES - MOU -
RODRIGUES' FISCAL CONTRIBUTION**

(No. B/1060) **Mr J. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Memorandum of Understanding signed between Statistics Mauritius and Statistics Rodrigues on the collaborative work to determine the real fiscal contribution of the Rodrigues Island in the economy of the Republic of Mauritius, he will state where matters stand as to the implementation thereof.

(Vide reply to PQ B/1016)

META - HACKED ACCOUNTS - REPORTED CASES

(No. B/1061) **Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to Meta accounts in Mauritius, he will state, since January 2020 to date, the number thereof having been hacked, indicating the –

- (a) number of reported cases thereof to MAUCORS, and
- (b) average response time to sort out or pull down the hacked accounts.

Reply: The Mauritian Cybercrime Online Reporting System (MAUCORS) is an online platform managed by the Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-MU) of the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation which allows citizens to report cyber related incidents on a singular platform, including social media incidents. This platform also connects the Police Cybercrime Unit, the Data Protection Office and the Information Communication Technologies Authority.

In regard to part (a) of the question, CERT-MU has informed that from 01 January 2020 to 13 October 2022, 1,266 incidents of Facebook accounts being hacked have been reported on MAUCORS.

As of part (b) of the question, when a hacked Facebook profile is being reported through MAUCORS, the person automatically receives an email providing detailed steps of reporting it to Facebook as per the Facebook's reporting procedure of hacked accounts. However, should the person still have difficulty in resolving the incident, CERT-MU escalates the issue to Facebook.

Since 2020, there was no indication regarding the average response time for the resolution of hacked accounts or for the account to be pulled down. In some cases, Facebook, now Meta, could have taken more than one month to respond.

Following discussions between Meta and the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation, it has been noted that there has been an improvement in response time for the last few months varying from 1-14 days.

However, it is to be highlighted that Meta being a private company, Government has no control on such matters.

PETROLEUM PRODUCTS - SUPPLIERS - PERIOD 2020 TO 2022

(No. B/1062) Mr P. Armance (Third 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 petroleum products, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to the name of the supplier/s thereof for period 2020–2022, indicating in each case the –

- (a) prices paid;
- (b) procurement procedures followed, and
- (c) quantities thereof ordered per supplier.

(Withdrawn)

BASIC INVALIDITY PENSIONS - APPLICATIONS – JULY 2021 TO OCT 2022

(No. B/1063) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the Basic Invalidity Pensions, she will state the number of applications received for the granting thereof since July 2021 to date, including the number thereof received from persons suffering from physical and/or mental disabilities, indicating the number thereof benefiting thereunder.

(Withdrawn)

HOUSEHOLD WASTES COLLECTION – SEGREGATION – MEASURES TAKEN

(No. B/1064) **Mr R. Wochit (Third Member for Pamplémousses & Triolet)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to household waste water collection islandwide, he will state the steps taken to support local authorities in terms of equipment and additional labour to start segregation thereof, indicating when same will be implemented.

Reply (The Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change): In line with the new Solid Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan, the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change is proceeding with the implementation of regional composting plants and sorting units on a Public-Private-Partnership basis.

The Ministry has already recruited a Transaction Advisor namely, Kukuza Project Development Company, to prepare the Request For Proposal (RFP) documents to invite potential project proponents to submit their bids for the setting-up and operation of the composting plants and sorting units on a Design-Build-Own-Operate basis.

The RFP documents are expected to be launched by November 2022.

In this context, 3 bins of different colours will be provided to each household in the catchment areas of the composting plants and sorting units for segregation of wastes. The green bin will be used for the storage of organic wastes (food wastes and yard wastes), the blue bin will be used for the storage of dry recyclable materials such as paper, plastics, cartons and metals while the brown bin will be used for the storage of residual wastes.

The organic wastes will then be diverted to the composting plants for production of compost; the dry recyclable wastes to the sorting units for further separation into the individual fractions prior to sale to recyclers while the residual wastes will be sent to the Mare Chicose landfill for disposal.

To ensure the effective operation of the composting plants and sorting units, waste segregation at source will have to be implemented some six to eight months prior to the

operation of these facilities so that the citizens become fully acquainted to this new waste management practice.

In parallel, an intensive education, sensitisation and awareness-raising campaign will be carried out to inform the population of the coming into operation of the composting plants and sorting units and how to properly segregate wastes.

Once the wastes have been segregated at source, the collection and transportation of these segregated wastes will also have to be done separately. It is thus planned to collect the organic wastes once weekly; the dry recyclables and the residual wastes once every two weeks.

The implementation of waste segregation may require additional waste collection vehicles and labour which will be worked out in due course by the relevant authorities.

UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR - CHILDREN TRAFFICKING - REPORT

(No. B/1065) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the recent remarks made by the United Nations Special Rapporteur, Mrs Mama Fatima Singhate, on the sale and trafficking of children in Mauritius, during her visit in June 2022, she will state the actions taken or being envisaged in relation thereto.

Reply: On 30 June 2022, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights published a press release in respect of the visit of Mrs Mama Fatima Singhate, Special Rapporteur on the Sale and Sexual Exploitation of Children, to Mauritius from 21 to 30 June 2022.

The Special Rapporteur will be presenting the findings and key recommendations following her visit in a report to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva in March 2023.

Once the final report is submitted, implementation of the recommendations contained therein will be ensured.

METRO EXPRESS – TRAFFIC DECONGESTION MEASURES

(No. B/1066) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the Metro Express, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the measures being taken to encourage ridership from passengers who normally travel by car thereby reducing traffic congestion rather than depending on commuters who used to travel by buses before.

Reply: In order to encourage ridership from passengers who normally travel by cars, secured Park and Ride facilities have been provided at several locations in the vicinity of the Metro stations just as in Coromandel and Vacoas which each can hold 250 cars and 400 cars, respectively.

My Ministry is working on the reengineering of certain routes for feeder bus services. In addition, my Ministry in collaboration with Metro Express Ltd is also in the process of formulating a policy of shuttle buses for the first and last mile connectivity, especially in locations where the provision of intra-urban buses are not possible in view of the narrowness of the roads. Furthermore, a Park and Ride Master Plan is being developed to create a modal shift from cars to metro.

Metro Express Ltd is also devising incentives for the public through the use of ME Cards, corporate packages, seasonal tickets, amongst others.

Additionally, marketing campaigns through information leaflets, videos, social media, amongst others are being maintained to educate passengers and increase awareness on the benefits of travelling on board of trains at the Metro stations, in the train and along the alignment from Port Louis and Curepipe.

MV WAKASHIO - OIL SPILL - SEDIMENT SAMPLES - ANALYSIS

(No. B/1067) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the oil spill that occurred in 2020, he will state when and where sediment samples were last taken for analysis, indicating the outcome thereof.

Reply (The Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change): Following the grounding of the MV Wakashio on 25 July 2020 and the resulting oil spill on 06 August 2020, an Integrated Environmental Monitoring Programme was established to assess, amongst others, the level of hydrocarbon contamination in marine sediment in the south east coast affected by the oil spill. Baseline values were also established on 01 August 2020 for Total Hydrocarbons, Poly Aromatic Hydrocarbons and Trace Metals at six sites, namely La Cambuse, Pointe Jérôme, two sites at Blue Bay (near the public beach and command post), Mahebourg Waterfront and Pointe d’Esny, including both lagoon and shoreline.

The sediment samples were collected in the lagoon, along the shoreline and at mangroves sites by the Albion Fisheries Research Centre (AFRC) of the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping in collaboration with the Mauritius Oceanography Institute (MOI) and the National Environmental Laboratory (NEL) of my Ministry. Accordingly, these samples were submitted to the SGS (Mauritius) Ltd for analysis of Total Hydrocarbons, Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons and heavy metals.

The last monitoring of sediment quality and the results of analysis revealed that -

- (i) no hydrocarbon contamination was detected in all the sediment samples collected on 22 January 2022, at the five stations in the lagoon at Pointe d’Esny;
- (ii) sediment samples collected at 15 sites along the shoreline from Blue Bay to Bois des Amourettes on 01 April 2022 showed the absence of hydrocarbon contaminations except for traces of Total Hydrocarbons, at a level of less than 0.1 gram per kilogram at the sites located at Rivière des Créoles and Vieux Grand Port, and
- (iii) no hydrocarbon contamination was found in all the sediment samples collected during the period 07 March to 07 April 2022, at mangroves sites at one station at Pointe Canon, two stations at Vieux Grand Port, four stations at Rivière des Créoles, two stations at Ferney and two stations at Bois des Amourettes. However, traces of Total Hydrocarbons were detected in sediment samples collected at Pointe Canon and Vieux Grand Port at a level of less than 0.1 gram

per kilogram and at a level of less than 1.5 gram per kilogram for one station at Rivière des Créoles.

Traces of hydrocarbons are still being detected in the sediment at the affected mangrove site at Rivière des Créoles. In view of the high ecological sensitivity of the mangrove site thereat and as advised by the Independent Expert from the “*Centre de Documentation, de Recherche et d’expérimentation sur les pollutions accidentelles des Eaux*” (CEDRE) who came to Mauritius in the context of establishing end points for clean-up, no further cleaning exercise was carried out at mangrove site at Rivière des Créoles. This would have caused more harm to the mangroves. The traces of hydrocarbon in the sediment have been allowed to be degraded naturally.

It is highlighted that there are no national guidelines to compare the level of hydrocarbons in marine sediment. Necessary amendments would be made to the Environment Protection Act to cater for the development of the appropriate guidelines in this respect.

Monitoring of hydrocarbon contamination in sediment is being continued under the Integrated Environment Monitoring Programme in view to assess the long-term impacts of the oil spill on the marine ecosystems.

LA LOUISE & CENTRAL QUATRE BORNES - TAXI STANDS - RELOCATION

(No. B/1068) Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the taxi stands at La Louise and central Quatre Bornes, respectively, he will state if the relocation thereof is being envisaged and, if so, give details thereof.

Reply: La Louise Taxi Stand is located at the junction of Bassin and Black River Roads at La Louise Quatre Bornes. The taxi stand comprises 20 slots and 92 taxis are licensed to operate therefrom.

I carried out a site visit on 30 June 2022 together with my colleagues the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change and hon. Tania Diolle, Parliamentary Private Secretary in the presence of representatives of my Ministry, including the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit, the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning, the

Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes, the Road Development Authority and the Police regarding the proposed relocation of La Louise Taxi Stand in the context of the Road Decongestion Programme.

It is proposed that the Taxi Stand and the existing Lorry Stand at La Louise and Parking Bays along Jawaharlall Nehru Road be relocated on the land formerly known as Cinema Milan which has frontage on both Candos-Vacoas Road (B3) and Jawaharlall Nehru Road.

As such, it was discussed that apart from the private land at Cinema Milan, two additional plots of land would have to be acquired to set up an integrated project which would include parking spaces, green space, sitting facilities and a cloakroom. This project would be carried out in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change.

I am advised that procedures have already been initiated for the acquisition of land to set up this integrated project.

As regards the Jules Koenig Taxi Stand which is located at the corner of St Jean and Victoria Avenues, Quatre Bornes, I am informed that 48 taxis are licensed to operate therefrom and the taxi stand consists of 12 slots.

With the recent refurbishment of the Jules Koenig Traffic Centre (bus station) and the construction of the Quatre Bornes Metro Station, the taxi stand is still operational at its original location.

VICTORIA URBAN TERMINAL – STALLS – RENT

(No. B/1069) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the Victoria Urban Terminal, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal City Council of Port Louis, information as to the –

- (a) number of stalls –
 - (i) available;
 - (ii) allocated, and
 - (iii) operational, and
- (b) total amount of money –
 - (i) paid, and

- (ii) outstanding as at to date, to the Victoria Urban Terminal Ltd. in terms of rent.

Reply: As indicated in my reply to PQ B/1027 earlier, 1,000 stalls have been provided for hawkers in the Victoria Urban Terminal. 700 stalls out of this number have already been allocated. However, I am informed by the Municipal City Council of Port Louis that 648 out of the 700 stalls are operational and the remaining 52 hawkers have surrendered their stalls to the Council.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Municipal City Council of Port Louis that an amount of Rs7,764,500 has been paid by the Council to the Victoria Station Ltd and an amount of Rs6,235,500 is still outstanding as at 13 October 2022, in terms of rent. The Municipal City Council of Port Louis is making necessary arrangements to settle this amount the soonest possible.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES - ALLOWANCE

(No. B/1070) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to persons living with disabilities, she will state the number of applications rejected by the Medical Board for failing to meet the 60 per cent disability requirement since January 2021 to date, indicating if the CSG Disability Allowance for persons living with 40 to 59 per cent disability, as announced in the Budget Speech 2022-23, has been introduced and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) number of persons currently benefitting therefrom and since when;
- (b) conditions attached thereto, and
- (c) total quantum of funds disbursed per person and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

GROSS OFFICIAL INTERNATIONAL RESERVES - ASSETS

(No. A/11) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the amount of foreign currency included in our Gross Official International Reserves, he will state if this amount includes Foreign Currency Accounts held by –

- (a) Mauritians, including –
 - (i) individuals;
 - (ii) importers; and
 - (iii) exporters;
- (b) Non-residents;
- (c) offshore companies;
- (d) loans received by Government, and
- (e) others and, if so, give a breakdown thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Bank of Mauritius that the Gross Official International Reserves of a country, as defined in the IMF Balance of Payments Manual, comprise those external assets that are readily available to and controlled by its monetary authority for -

- (i) meeting balance of payments financing needs;
- (ii) intervention in exchange market, and
- (iii) for other related purposes, such as maintaining confidence in the currency and the economy.

The Gross Official International Reserves do not include Foreign Currency Accounts held by Mauritians, Non-residents, offshore companies or loans received by the Government.

The Gross Official International Reserves of the country consist of Gross Foreign Assets of the Bank of Mauritius and the Reserve Position of the country in the International Monetary Fund.

The Gross Foreign Assets of the Bank on its part consist of investments in securities issued outside Mauritius, Gold, Special Drawing Rights and foreign currency balances held with central banks abroad.

The breakdown of Gross Official International Reserves as at end of August 2022, information which is also publicly available on the Bank's and the IMF websites, is being placed in the Library of the National Assembly.