



SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 17 MAY 2022

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

Hon. Kavydass Ramano	Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change
Hon. Mahen Kumar Seeruttun	Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance
Hon. Georges Pierre Lesjongard	Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
Hon. Maneesh Gobin	Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security
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

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MAURITIUS

Seventh National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 08 of 2022

Sitting of Tuesday 17 May 2022

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

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

ANNOUNCEMENT**RODRIGUES REGIONAL ASSEMBLY – CHAIRPERSON’S OFFICIAL VISIT**

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, we have in our midst today, the presence of Mr Joseph Christian Léopold, Chairperson of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

The Chairperson, accompanied by the Clerk and two other staff members are presently on official visit in Mauritius for benchmarking of the implementation of e-Parliament for the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

On behalf of hon. Members and in my own name, I extend a warm welcome to the Chairperson and members of his delegation and I wish them a fruitful mission and a pleasant stay in Mauritius.

I thank you.

(Applause)

PAPERS LAID

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

- A. Prime Minister's Office**
Ministry of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications
Ministry for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity

Certificate of Urgency in respect of the Supplementary Appropriation (2021-2022) Bill (No. VIII of 2022). (In Original)

- B. Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development**

Estimates of Supplementary Expenditure (2021-2022) of 2022.

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

The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 10) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 101 of 2022)

- D. Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage**

The National Heritage Fund (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 102 of 2022)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

ELECTORAL COMMISSION - ELECTORS - QUALIFICATIONS & REGISTRATION

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, in regard to registration of electors by the Electoral Commission, he will state if consideration will be given for the introduction of proposed amendments to the existing legislation aiming at –

- (a) restricting the right to registration to those Commonwealth citizens having resided in Mauritius for a minimum of five years;
- (b) moving to a continuous register of voters and keeping same open for registration until two weeks prior to election date and enabling online registration;
- (c) codifying the circumstances whereby a person may be removed from the electoral register, and
- (d) securing a state-of-the-art Information Technology system and audit trail to maintain the integrity of the computerised database of electors.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, the Constitution guarantees the voting right of every eligible citizen, provided he or she is duly registered as an elector in a particular Constituency. The qualifications and registration of electors are governed by the provisions of sections 42, 43 and 44 of the Constitution and Part II of the Representation of the People Act.

The qualifications of electors are laid down in section 42 of the Constitution as follows, and I quote –

“(1) a person shall be entitled to be registered as an elector if, and shall not be so entitled unless –

- (a) he is a Commonwealth citizen of not less than the age of 18 years; and
- (b) either he has resided in Mauritius for a period of not less than 2 years immediately before such date as may be prescribed by Parliament or he is domiciled in Mauritius and is resident there on the prescribed date.

- (2) No person shall be entitled to be registered as an elector -
- (a) in more than one constituency; or
 - (b) in any constituency in which he is not resident on the prescribed date.”

Mr Speaker, Sir the prescribed date is the 1st of January in any year and this is provided for in section 4A of the Representation of the People Act. The prescribed date is, therefore, the qualifying date for the purpose of determining the residence of any person in respect of the register to be compiled in any year.

Section 4 of the Representation of the People Act provides the following with regard to compilation of registers of electors, and I quote –

“(1) Every year there shall be compiled for every electoral area a register of persons entitled to be registered as electors for that electoral area.

(2) No person shall be registered as an elector in any year unless he has attained or will have attained the age of 18 on 15 August in that year.

(3) Every register compiled in a year shall, subject to section 39, come into force on 16 August in that year and shall remain in force until the register next compiled comes into force.”

It should also be brought out that section 44(2) of the Constitution provides that, and I quote –

“no person shall vote at any election for any Constituency who is not registered as an elector in that Constituency.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, in order to give effect to the provisions of the Constitution and the Representation of the People Act, every year, the Office of the Electoral Commissioner compiles a new Register of Electors, in accordance with the provisions of Part II of the Representation of the People Act. The exercise for the registration of electors is carried out in two distinct phases. First, a house to house inquiry is carried out in the beginning of the year, and second, a country-wide registration of electors is carried out in various registration centres in the month of May.

For the First Phase, that is, the house to house inquiry, the Office of the Electoral Commissioner invites, by way of a circular letter, applications from serving public officers who

are willing to work as Assistant Registration Officers. The appointment of these Assistant Registration Officers is published in the Government Gazette.

Prior to the start of the house to house inquiry, the Registration Officers prepare lists of Assistant Registration Officers, for each Constituency, generally referred to as Canvassers, who would assist them during the said inquiry. Canvassers are usually allocated around 200 households and work under the supervision of Principal Canvassers, who in turn are monitored by the Chief Canvassers. Officers who worked for the previous exercise are selected only if the inquiry was carried out to the satisfaction of the Registration Officer.

The lists of selected Assistant Registration Officers, for each constituency, are submitted to the Electoral Supervisory Commission for approval by the Electoral Commissioner and subsequently to the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service who issues the appointment letters.

During the house to house inquiry, each householder is required by law to furnish to the canvasser the names of all adult citizens and persons who would have attained the age of 18 on 15 August of the year residing in his/her household.

The Registration Officer, thereafter, prepares a list of all persons, who appear to him or her, to be qualified to be registered as electors in his/her constituency, based on the elector's residence as at that prescribed date, and the age qualification. The qualification of such electors is determined by the Registration Officer on the basis of information obtained during the house to house inquiry and/or any other information in his possession. That list would constitute the 'Electors List' for that particular Constituency.

The electors' lists of all the 21...

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: On a point of order. The Prime Minister is not answering any of the questions that I have asked; completely beside the point, and it is a very serious matter. Can the Prime Minister perhaps deal with the question? Time is going.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir...

Mr Speaker: Let me rule, Prime Minister. I have repeatedly told you that the Chair has no control over a reply from the Executive and you keep on making points of order on that point.

Mr X. L. Duval: *Le problème perdure !*

Mr Speaker: No, no, there is no problem. This is the problem; the problem is with you. Please, continue!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is with regard to the registration of electors by the Electoral Commission. So, I must at least say...

Mr Speaker: Continue! I have already ruled.

The Prime Minister: ...a few words about this process of the registration of the electors and then, obviously, I will be answering your question. But you raised a point of order; I must also be able to explain!

Mr X. L. Duval: Look at the time!

The Prime Minister: You should have looked at the time yourself before raising the point of order ...

Mr Speaker: Now, this is why ...

The Prime Minister: ... instead of wasting the time!

Mr Speaker: Please, on both sides of the House. This is why I intervened so that there is no debate on this point. Prime Minister, continue!

The Prime Minister: So, I was saying that the list would constitute the 'Electors' List' for that particular Constituency.

The electors' lists of all the 21 Constituencies are then published and made available for inspection by the general public at the Office of the Electoral Commissioner and in Registration Centres between 16 and 30 May every year. The list of the Registration Centres is published in the Gazette and is also posted on the website of the Office of the Electoral Commissioner.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the publication of the electors' lists leads to the second phase of the registration exercise during which a wide sensitisation programme is carried out in all media outlets, including television and radios, to encourage citizens to verify whether their names appear on the electors' list. In the event that their names do not appear on the said list, they have the possibility to present a claim to the Assistant Registration Officer to be registered as an elector.

The Office of the Electoral Commissioner also reaches out to the general public through its Facebook page and its website.

Moreover, a search engine is available on the website of the Office of the Electoral Commissioner whereby a person can, through his National Identity Card number, verify whether his or her name is on the electors' list.

In collaboration with mobile phone operators, a Short Message Service (SMS) with similar facilities is also made available on cell phones.

A list of persons, known as List of Claimants, having submitted claims to the Assistant Registration Officer to be registered as electors, is published by the Registration Officer not later than 10 June.

After the publication of the lists, any person may object to the registration of a person as an elector by sending a notice of objection to the Registration Officer.

The Registration Officer, after considering the objections, if any, must then make necessary corrections to the lists so as to compile the final register of electors, which comes into force on 16 August every year.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, as I stated earlier, the Constitution confers voting rights upon Commonwealth citizens who satisfy the age and residence criteria laid down in section 42(1) of the Constitution. Accordingly, the practice of registering qualified Commonwealth citizens as electors has existed since independence. Similar practice of granting voting rights exists in other Commonwealth countries, including the United Kingdom.

For the 2019 General Elections, 838 citizens from 22 Commonwealth countries were registered as electors. For the 2014 General Elections, the number of Commonwealth citizens registered as electors was 766. These voting rights to qualified Commonwealth nationals are enshrined in our Constitution and are based on the principle of reciprocity. Any attempt at amending these rights should, therefore, be carefully examined.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in December 2015, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, who was then Deputy Prime Minister, was himself chairing the Ministerial Committee on Electoral Reform. He even presented a first report on 01 April 2016 with recommendations on several aspects of our electoral system. He could have seized the opportunity to make recommendations on this particular aspect of registration of Commonwealth citizens residing in Mauritius as electors.

Moreover, there is no record of any suggestion or counter proposal having ever been made by the current Leader of the Opposition, following the public consultation exercise on the electoral reform proposals of the Government in 2018.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (b) of the question, the present system of Registration of Electors provides that any person attaining the age of 18 after 15 August will not be entitled to vote in case elections are held after 16 August, as his/her name will not appear on the register until the next registration exercise is completed and takes effect on 15 August of the following year. Moreover, the absence of some householders at the time of the canvass, and their non-response despite several attempts by the canvassers thereafter, may result in their names being deleted from the register. In order to overcome these difficulties, consideration may be given to registration of electors being made a continuous process until the date the writ of elections is issued, as recommended by the Sachs Commission. However, we do not consider it advisable to address such issues in a piecemeal and isolated manner. We would prefer a more holistic approach that would encompass other fundamental changes needed to our electoral system and to which the Government stands committed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (c) of the question, sections 42 and 43 of the Constitution make express provisions for qualifications and disqualifications of electors.

In addition, the Representation of the People Act comprehensively codifies in Part II thereof, the registration of electors, thereby providing that if any person does not qualify to be registered, his name will be deleted accordingly. Provision is also made under section 10 of the Representation of the People Act, that any person who claims to be entitled to be registered as an elector and his name is not already entered on the Electors' List for the electoral area in which he claims to be registered, may appear before the Registration Officer of the Constituency in which he claims to be registered and presents his claim to be registered. If the Registration Officer does not register the person as an elector, that person has a right of appeal under section 36(1) of the Representation of the People Act before a Judge in Chambers against such decision of the Registration Officer.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (d) of the question, I am informed that the State Informatics Ltd has been the IT solution provider of the Office of the Electoral Commissioner since 1993. SIL had developed an oracle-based computerised system for the Office of the Electoral Commissioner. In 1993, a contract was awarded to SIL for the design and development of an oracle-based application software.

However, as from year 2014, when the new PCs with Windows 7 were installed on the said operating software, it was observed that the application was not working properly.

In these circumstances, the Office of the Electoral Commissioner had requested a business solution from SIL. An updated business proposal dated 16 February 2016 was submitted by SIL for the upgrading of the applications to Java J2EE technology; to build and deploy a web-based application and use new technologies for an enhanced experience. In a letter dated 29 February 2016, the Central Informatics Bureau strongly supported the need to invest in latest technologies so as to improve end user operations and to take advantage of new features and services.

Following a due diligence report dated 18 May 2016, involving various stakeholders, namely the Office of the Electoral Commissioner, the Central Informatics Bureau, the IT Security Unit and the Central Informatics Systems Division of the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation, the Due Diligence Committee determined that the business proposal of SIL be retained for the Upgrading of the Office of the Electoral Commissioner application using J2EE Technologies and that the computerised system be redesigned “as is”. Presently, the Office of the Electoral Commissioner is still using the application J2EE Technologies which already has an in-built security system. In fact, the software is installed on a secured local area network. The system can only be accessed through a dedicated login and password. The access is based on the individual role of the user. The system is not accessible online. Moreover, an audit trail is available to keep track of any amendments.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the present constitutional and legal provisions relating to General Elections, including the provisions for the registration of electors, have stood the test of time and served the country well by guaranteeing political and social stability. Since independence, the present electoral system has consistently delivered credible and free and fair elections acknowledged internationally and contributed significantly to Mauritius being recognised as a “full democracy”. However, any suggestion or proposal could be looked into in the context of broader electoral reform.

Mr X. L. Duval: M. le président, suite aux vives inquiétudes de la population et aux anomalies qu'on a découvertes lors des dernières élections, je constate qu'il n'y a aucune volonté politique d'amener des améliorations. Je voudrais, M. le président, parler premièrement des travailleurs étrangers, qui est une situation relativement nouvelle pour l'île Maurice. Donc, nous avons 30,000 à monter de travailleurs du *Commonwealth* à Maurice pour l'instant. Des pays comme l'Inde, les Seychelles, l'Afrique du Sud, les Maldives, le Sri Lanka, tous, M. le président,

ils ne laissent pas les étrangers voter dans leurs élections générales. Puisque nous avons des majorités quelquefois très, très restreintes dans chaque circonscription, pourquoi, à l'île Maurice, nous ne suivons pas l'exemple de l'Inde et de ces autres pays ?

The Prime Minister: M. le président, tout d'abord laissez-moi dire que les inquiétudes sont plutôt de la part de l'Opposition et non pas de la part de la population. Concernant les anomalies, ce sont les partis de l'Opposition qui ont d'ailleurs entré des pétitions en Cour suprême pour aller contester et pour aller faire toutes sortes d'allégations. Et je dirais même, pour aller faire des allégations contre une institution indépendante comme la Commission Électorale et contre le *Electoral Supervisory Commission* qui sont des institutions qui ont d'ailleurs énormément contribué à ce que l'île Maurice soit reconnue, non seulement comme un pays démocratique, mais aussi à ce que le processus électoral qui est adopté soit reconnu largement dans le monde et surtout le fait qu'il y a pas mal de pays qui veulent s'inspirer de notre système. Donc, ne venez pas dire les inquiétudes, les anomalies. D'ailleurs, nous avons eu la preuve ; combien de pétitions ont été purement rejetées par la Cour, parce que les allégations sont frivoles.

Mais l'honorable leader de l'Opposition parle des pays qui ont maintenant - allons dire - légiféré pour que les citoyens du *Commonwealth* ne puissent pas voter. Ils font souvent référence à l'Angleterre. Mais l'Angleterre, actuellement, laisse et donne la possibilité aux citoyens du *Commonwealth* de pouvoir voter. Et laissez-moi vous dire, M. le président, moi-même j'ai fait l'expérience lorsque j'étais étudiant. Il n'y avait même pas de qualification concernant la période de résidence en Angleterre. Le jour que vous atterrissez, le jour que vous êtes là pour les élections - et non seulement les élections générales - les *local council elections also, we are able to vote, and I have voted in both elections.*

Mr X. L. Duval: M. le président, *time is almost up and I hope you will give us additional time.*

Je veux dire ceci, M. le président. Nous avons des travailleurs étrangers pauvres qui sont donc sujets à être influencés, sujets à être achetés, sujets à être peut-être même menacés. C'est pour cette raison, pour les 30,000 à 40,000 travailleurs étrangers du *Commonwealth* qui sont à Maurice, qui sont vulnérables, c'est à cause de cela que je demande au Premier Ministre. Ce n'est pas l'Angleterre ici avec 60 millions ; vous prenez l'Angleterre et l'Inde quand cela vous convient. Je dis au Premier ministre, M. le président, ces travailleurs-là sont vulnérables ; ils

peuvent être achetés et vendus, ils sont souvent dans les *meetings*. Et c'est pour cette raison-là, M. le président, que je demande au gouvernement de faire comme moi j'ai mis dans le *Local Government Act*, que ce soit que les Mauriciens qui puissent voter ou des étrangers avec 5 ans de résidence à Maurice.

The Prime Minister: M. le président, je note aussi que lorsque le leader de l'Opposition pose des questions, à ce moment-là, il n'y a pas de problème de temps. Il fait des discours de long en large.

Mr X. L. Duval: *In donn mwa zis 30 minit!*

The Prime Minister: So, why you do not apply it yourself and restrain yourself so that we...

Mr Speaker: No debate!

The Prime Minister: Yes. So, let me answer.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No conversation! No debate!

The Prime Minister: *So, Mr Speaker, Sir*, il est en train de faire aujourd'hui, encore une fois, toutes sortes d'allégations, disant que les citoyens du *Commonwealth* qui viennent ici pour travailler ; ils sont des gens pauvres qui peuvent être achetés.

Mr X. L. Duval: Of course!

The Prime Minister: Combien ont été achetés et prouvés par l'Opposition ? Je vais le redire encore une fois ; ils ont fait toutes sortes d'allégations dans leurs pétitions ! Vous savez, ici ils peuvent dire n'importe quoi ; sur une caisse de savon, ils peuvent dire n'importe quoi. Mais en Cour suprême, ils ne peuvent pas dire n'importe quoi, parce qu'il y a quelqu'un qui est indépendant. Il y a un juge de la Cour suprême qui va écouter les arguments et analyser les preuves.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have a point of order. There are still two election petitions which are being debated in Court, where there are serious allegations that have been made about the role of the Electoral Supervisory Commissioner in the organisation.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Uteem: I find it most improper for the Prime Minister today to discuss on a matter which is *sub judice*. So, the Prime Minister cannot make comments about the conduct of ...

Mr Speaker: You made your point of order, I think. Okay? So, let me rule. He is not discussing any case. Please continue!

The Prime Minister: L'honorable Uteem, comme toujours, prend des points qui sont sans fondement, parce que je suis en train de...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: Je suis en train de parler des...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order on both sides of the House! Please!

The Prime Minister: Laissez-moi répéter, parce qu'il est en train de m'interrompre quand je parle. Il faut qu'il écoute bien. Comme je le dis toujours, soit l'honorable Uteem ne comprend rien, ou bien il fait des commentaires que pour interrompre. Je suis en train de parler des cas où la Cour a rejeté les pétitions. Ces cas ont déjà été jugés ; sans mentionner les cas où ils ont retiré les pétitions, la queue entre les jambes ! Ils se sont sauvés, ;ils ont retiré les pétitions.

Mr Speaker: Prime Minister, you continue with your reply first.

The Prime Minister: Indeed, to reply to the hon. Leader of the Opposition, let us consider the number of Commonwealth citizens who have been in the country for years now –

- 2012, there were 643;
- 2013, there were 640,
- 2014, the date of election, there were 766.

And the Government was the Government of the Labour Party. On the date of the election, the PMSD was kicked out from that alliance.

Mr X. L. Duval: Je n'ai pas quitté.

The Prime Minister: Or you left, I do not know. Maybe you left.

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Okay.

Mr Speaker: Leader of the Opposition!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You cannot do that, Leader of the Opposition!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You have been an acting Prime Minister. Is this the way to behave? Question Time, PNQ; is this the way to behave? Please continue!

The Prime Minister: *Bon, mais peut-être qu'il n'y avait pas de place pour le PMSD dans cette alliance!* Anyway, *donc*, 766. What I want to say, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that, throughout the years since independence, there were at that time probably less Commonwealth citizens, or there could have been more also. But, each time, the people who had registered themselves, and who were eligible to register themselves as electors, have been voting. I have said it in my answer. I am open to any suggestion and any proposal. It has to be looked at, as I said, in the global context of electoral reform.

Mr X. L. Duval: *Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr Soopramanien Kistnen, unfortunately, is no longer here, but he had a different story to tell about Bangladeshi voters. Let me ask the hon. Prime Minister concerning the door-to-door canvassing.* Dans presque tous les pays du monde maintenant, ce système est aboli. Avec la technologie - parce qu'on se repose sur une loi de 1958, M. le président - il est important et urgent de regarder et moderniser notre loi, et faire en sorte qu'un Mauricien qui aurait dû avoir le droit de voter en servant de la technologie, puisse voter dans les élections. Et c'est pour cette raison que je demande au Premier ministre d'appliquer le rapport du *Sachs Commission* de 2002 - il était lui-même présent au gouvernement ; 20 ans après, d'appliquer ce rapport-là.

The Prime Minister: M. le président, moi je dis, au contraire, le *door-to-door canvassing* donne plus de possibilités pour qu'on essaye d'atteindre le maximum de personnes qui sont éligibles pour être enregistrées sur la liste des électeurs parce que comme je viens de le dire, les *canvassers* auront à peu près 200 *households to check, whether the names of those people who live in each household are already on the list of electors, and, if not, to register those who are, of course, eligible and can be registered.*

I think, if I can call it that way, it is like a personal attention that is being given to each household for the registration of electors. But, of course, with time, we also need to look at all the other new technologies that are available to enable us to continue to facilitate the registration of electors. I am also informed that the canvassers, in fact, visit about 300,000 households every year.

Mr X. L. Duval: M. le président, ce système de *canvassing* a été aboli presque partout. Est-ce que le Premier ministre est au courant que la liste qu'on s'est servi pour 2019 comprend

de graves anomalies ? Entre 2014 et 2019, il n'y avait que 4,700 nouveaux électeurs, alors qu'une simple référence au nombre des personnes qui sont nées 18 ans avant et le nombre de décès va vous montrer clairement qu'il y a environ 43,000 personnes qui manquent sur cette liste. Et d'ailleurs, la liste de 2020 comprend 20,000 noms additionnels qu'il n'y avait pas sur la liste de 2019 pour les élections.

C'est pour cela, M. le président, que je demande au Premier ministre de revoir, *to keep an open mind*, de s'élever au-dessus du débat politique. Et même si le Premier ministre décide qu'il y ait un *Select Committee*, M. le président, je peux vous assurer que l'Opposition participera à un *Select Committee* pour revoir toute cette question qui doit être au-dessus de la politique politicienne. *Answer, 2019-2020! Reponn ! 20,000 personnes en 2020 en plus ! 40,000 personnes qui manquent.*

Mr Speaker: What is this style? This is parliamentary democracy?

The Prime Minister: Le leader de l'Opposition fait référence au nombre d'électeurs de 2019 qui est de 941,719 et de 2020 qui est 961,062.

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: Be serious...

Mr Speaker: What is this Leader of the Opposition? Behave yourself! Everything is serious; not only what you say is serious. A reply is even more serious.

The Prime Minister: Au fait, en 2020 le nombre est plus que celui de 2019. On est d'accord.

Mr X. L. Duval: Oui.

The Prime Minister: Maintenant, si le leader de l'Opposition peut aussi consulter sa liste. En 1997, nous avons 742,115 électeurs. En 1998, une année après...

Mr X. L. Duval: Non, non !

The Prime Minister: Une année après, on fait le même procédé pour enregistrer les électeurs. Le nombre est 739,739. C'est moins, pas plus ! C'est moins ! Et si on regarde l'année 2006 : 822,406 électeurs ; en 2007 : 819,179. Encore une fois, c'est moins d'électeurs, une année après. L'année 2009 : 879,897 ; l'année 2010 où il y a les élections générales : 875,799. Une année après, il y a moins d'électeurs que l'année précédente.

Mr X. L. Duval: Exactement !

The Prime Minister: Oui! Mais qui était au pouvoir ? Qui était là ? Qui était là comme gouvernement ? Toutes ces années, qui était là comme gouvernement ? Et on n'avait rien vu ! Toutes ces années on a rien vu!

Maintenant, c'est le contraire qui se passe ici. En 2019-2020, il y a une augmentation en termes du nombre d'électeurs, ils trouvent ça anormal!

(Interruptions)

Comme je dis, c'est le monde à l'envers, M. le président!

(Interruptions)

Anyway ! Moi, bien au contraire, comme Premier ministre, lorsque j'ai regardé le nombre au fil des années - bien sûr cela me concerne - comment se fait-il qu'il y ait eu une diminution en termes d'électeurs les années précédentes ? Donc, il faut voir s'il y a des gens qui ne se sont pas inscrits et quelles sont les raisons pour lesquelles on a eu une baisse en termes du nombre d'électeurs.

Mr X. L. Duval: Exactement!

Mr Speaker: Time over by 7 minutes!

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

Mr Speaker: Time over by 7 minutes! Prime Minister's Question Time! Let me announce that PQs B/626 and B/628 have been withdrawn. Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

DRUG SEIZURES & ARRESTS – JANUARY 2015 TO 12 MAY 2022

(No. B/624) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the arrests and seizure of drugs carried out since January 2015 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, the list thereof, indicating the number of financial audit trails carried out in each case and the outcome thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that cases which fall under Section 39 of the Dangerous Drugs Act and Section 3 of the Financial

Intelligence and Anti-Money Laundering Act (FIAMLA) are also referred to the following Institutions for audit trails in parallel to the enquiry by ADSU –

- (i) Assets Recovery Investigation Division (ARID);
- (ii) Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC);
- (iii) Central Crime Investigation Department (CCID), and
- (iv) Integrity Reporting Services Agency (IRSA).

Concurrently, major cases are referred to the Mauritius Revenue Authority for income tax purposes or any other actions, as appropriate.

To ensure better coordination in these audit trails, the Commissioner of Police has issued updated guidelines to be followed by investigators as laid down in Administrative Order No. 36 of 2021 dated 09 September 2021.

The Commissioner of Police has also informed that the referral of drug cases is based on the following criteria –

- (i) in drug cases where the street value of drugs is Rs100,000 or more, referral is made to ARID;
- (ii) where the street value of drugs is Rs500,000 or more, the cases are referred to ICAC and IRSA for parallel financial investigation, and
- (iii) where the street value of the drugs secured is less than Rs500,000, the parallel financial investigation is carried out either by ADSU or CCID as decided by the Commissioner of Police.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed by the Commissioner of Police that from the year 2015 to 12 May 2022, the number of reported drug cases is as follows –

- (i) for the year 2015, 2,410 drug cases have been detected and 1,771 persons have been arrested. Out of these cases, audit trails have been conducted in 5 cases by the ADSU and 73 cases have been referred to ARID;

- (ii) for the year 2016, 2,395 drug cases have been detected and 1,863 persons have been arrested. Out of these cases, audit trails have been conducted in 6 cases by the ADSU and 58 cases have been referred to ARID;
- (iii) for the year 2017, 2,587 drug cases have been detected and 2,294 persons have been arrested. Out of these cases, audit trails have been conducted in 14 cases by the ADSU and 80 cases have been referred to ARID;
- (iv) for the year 2018, 3,065 drug cases have been detected and 2,774 persons have been arrested. Out of these cases, audit trails have been conducted in 7 cases by the ADSU. 2 cases have been referred to ICAC, and 110 cases have been referred to ARID;
- (v) for the year 2019, 3,307 drug cases have been detected and 3,064 persons have been arrested. Out of these cases, audit trails have been conducted in 15 cases by the ADSU, 3 cases have been referred to ICAC and 102 cases have been referred to ARID;
- (vi) for the year 2020, 3,737 drug cases have been detected and 3,387 persons have been arrested. Out of these cases, audit trails have been conducted in 126 cases by the ADSU. 14 cases have been referred to ICAC, 6 cases have been referred to IRSA and 128 cases have been referred to ARID;
- (vii) for the year 2021, 3,623 drug cases have been detected and 3,284 persons have been arrested. Out of these cases, audit trails have been conducted in 8 cases by the ADSU. 14 cases were referred to ICAC, 4 cases have been referred to CCID, 3 cases have been referred to IRSA and 91 cases have been referred to ARID, and
- (viii) for the period January to 12 May 2022, 1,237 drug cases have been detected and 1,168 persons have been arrested. Out of these cases, audit trails have been conducted in 3 cases by the ADSU. 10 cases have been referred to ICAC, 3 cases have been referred to IRSA, 2 cases have been referred to CCID and 9 cases have been referred to ARID.

I am further informed by the Commissioner of Police that out of the 190 cases referred to ADSU and CCID for audit trails, convictions have been secured in 2 cases, in 6 cases advice of

the Director of Public Prosecutions has been sought and enquiry in the remaining 182 cases is proceeding.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the ARID that from the year 2015 to 12 May 2022, out of the 651 drug cases referred to the Police, 104 drug cases have been subjected to seizures, namely restraining, restriction, confiscation and recovery of assets.

I am further informed that enquiry into 485 cases is ongoing. 9 cases are before Court and are awaiting decision. Regarding the remaining 157 cases, the assets have been either confiscated or the relevant orders have been discharged depending on the outcome of the criminal cases by the Police.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the ICAC that from 01 January 2015 to 12 May 2022, the Commission instituted money laundering investigations into 150 drug related cases. This figure includes 43 Police referrals and 53 investigations instituted by the Commission following recommendations made in the report of the Commission of Enquiry on Drug Trafficking. The remaining 54 investigations were instituted at the Commission's own initiative, following intelligence gathering. These investigations have involved the arrest of 87 suspects. Financial audit trails have been conducted in all these cases.

Movable and immovable assets have been seized or attached during this period in 51 cases as follows –

- (i) assets to the value of Rs3,400,000 have been seized in 3 cases, and
- (ii) assets to the value of Rs253,684,165 have been attached in 48 cases. Five among these cases have already been disposed by the Court, and assets to the value of Rs1,487,500 have been forfeited.

As at date, the status of investigation where assets have been seized or attached is as follows –

- (i) 4 cases are before the Financial Crimes Division, and
- (ii) investigation is ongoing in 42 cases.

Regarding the cases referred to IRSA, the status is as follows –

- (i) an amount of Rs12,801,255 has been confiscated;
- (ii) cases for a total amount of Rs7,678,957 are before the Court for confiscation, and

- (iii) cases for a total amount of Rs48,770,325 are under investigation for confiscation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the nation is fully aware of the unflinching commitment and non-stop war of this Government against the drug scourge. A zero-tolerance approach adopted in this war against drug trafficking is yielding positive results. Huge seizures of dangerous drugs by the ADSU have proven our determination in this relentless fight.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the light of the figures and details mentioned by the hon. Prime Minister, it is clear that law enforcement agencies have made a number of significant drug seizures.

However, the absence of a formal intelligence sharing platform amongst the law enforcement agencies and those involved in the financial enforcement and regulatory sector has been an impediment to the effective running of interdiction and separation operations. I am not saying this. This is an extract from page 30 of National Drug Control Master Plan 2019-2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Prime Minister inform the House about the impediments which hamper the relevant financial enforcement authorities and the regulatory sector to carry out fruitful financial audit trails where drugs worth billions of rupees continue to get into our territory?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say that, with time, there has been better coordination amongst the different agencies in combating drug trafficking, and I know because I have been very closely following the actions that some of the agencies are performing. I can say that, nowadays, a lot of information is being exchanged, that we also have understanding with foreign institutions because, as we know, drugs come from abroad; as we have seen. Because of this collaboration that has existed amongst the different agencies and also with foreign institutions in the combat of drugs, we have, in fact, been able to make record seizures, as everyone knows.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House of this sharing of information mechanism between the agencies concerned, which he mentioned in his answer regarding the financial audit trail?

The Prime Minister: As I say, nowadays, a lot of information which is being shared between Police and the FIU is done via the GoAML platform which has been set up in 2017 by the FIU. Before 2017, the exchange of information was, in fact, taking place via meetings. In fact, for information to be exchanged, it had to be requested. Now it is becoming more automatic, and the exchange and sharing of information between Police, ADSU, ICAC, FIU, IRSA, MRA take place in the following manner –

- (i) following major drug cases, there are regular coordinating meetings that are held by the Police and ADSU for the sharing of intelligence and for the follow-up of previous cases;
- (ii) there are bilateral meetings between Police, ADSU and other concerned agencies that are held, obviously, as and when required;
- (iii) the AML/CFT Coordinating Task Force meetings that are chaired by the Director of Public Prosecutions are held in respect of progress of inquiries into the major drug cases and other crimes;
- (iv) the AML/CFT meetings are attended by Police, ADSU, ICAC, FIU, MRA and IRSA.

Mr Juman: Thank you. Since the transfer of funds is also involved in the trafficking cases, hon. Prime Minister, can you inform the House whether your Government intends to review the money trail mechanism? I will give you two examples where serious flaws have been noted in our system –

1. A Nigerian international with a student Visa, Mr A. O. depositing daily sums between Rs15,000 and Rs40,000 since January 2022 to date, and to date already transferred through telegraphic transfer, Rs2 m.
2. A Nigerian student, Mrs M., transferred within a period of one year, Rs5 m. through telegraphic transfer again, and yet, they are still in Mauritius. And as per my information, hon. Prime Minister, these are not isolated cases.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, first of all, I do not know which cases the hon. Member is referring to. Obviously, he has all the information. He can provide me with this information; I shall definitely undertake to do the needful with regard to those institutions that are concerned. But let me say one thing. All the financial institutions, banking and other

institutions dealing with money, have a duty to raise a suspicious transaction whenever they feel that there is a case of money laundering or whether there is a case involving a criminal activity. So, it is, of course, for those institutions to report such kind of transactions which the hon. Member has mentioned, where huge sums of money are being transferred.

But, anyway, as I say, I am open; if there are cases of criminal activities to the knowledge of people, I will, of course, definitely refer those cases to the relevant authorities for investigation. So, I rely on the hon. Member, if he is serious, to confidentially share with me those cases that he has mentioned in Parliament and with some details, at least for investigation.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Further to the cases mentioned by hon. Juman and with the unpleasant episodes of Álvaro Sobrinho, Peter Uricek and Glenn Agliotti, the perception - I am saying the perception - outside the House is that Mauritius has become a safe haven for drug lords.

Mr Speaker: No, put your question, please!

Dr. Gungapersad: My question to the hon. Prime Minister is: what are the actions taken by him or the agencies to find out if there are other Sobrinhos, Agliottis and Uriceks safely harboured within our territory?

Mr Speaker: Please!

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member is saying perception; his own perception probably. But, of course, whenever there is any case which requires an investigation, the authorities will investigate. The hon. Member is mentioning the Uriceks. We know who has been defending Peter Uricek in this House and outside!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: Who are the people who are now criticising Government for having taken such an action? And I repeat again, when this gentleman came to Mauritius, there was nothing adverse known to our authorities against him. It was only later on.

(Interruptions)

Well, you are talking...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: Hon. Dr. Boolell is always interrupting.

Mr Speaker: What are you doing? The Prime Minister is replying to a question! What is your right to intervene? Just let me know what is your right?

Dr. Boolell: It is my right to...

Mr Speaker: You have no right! Quiet! Continue!

(Interruptions)

What is that? What did you say?

Dr. Boolell: I do not like being threatened.

Mr Speaker: No, you are intervening! You are interrupting the proceeding of the House. There is no point of order! You have no right! Quiet!

Please, continue!

The Prime Minister: As I was saying, Mr Speaker, Sir, there are only...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Patrick Assirvaden, please be quiet!

(Interruptions)

No, no! If you cannot listen to these things...

(Interruptions)

Please, this is an instruction that I am giving you! This is my ruling! You do not discuss my ruling! You have no right to discuss the Speaker's ruling!

(Interruptions)

That is not my problem! Please, continue!

The Prime Minister: As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, the usual thing is that the hon. Members come with unfounded allegations. They are not even able to prove what they are saying. Prove it when you say that when this gentleman came, it was already known that he was a criminal by our institutions! Prove it! We have proved that, at that time, it was not known. But then, when we found out, of course, we acted. And when we acted, then they start to criticise. I do not want to go into that again. But, as I say again, Mr Speaker, Sir, you are talking about perception? The population will judge and will be able to know who are the people who are fighting those drug traffickers, those criminals, those international criminals who have been involved in drug trafficking for the sum of nearly Rs700 m. and who are the people who are defending those criminals!

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ittoo!

Mr Ittoo: Merci, M. le président. On entend souvent les suppositions, les allégations, les *frivolous statements* des membres de l'opposition. Je voudrais, que l'honorable Premier ministre *enlighten the House and the population at large as to what is the street value of drugs seized from 2010 to 2014 compared to the street value of drugs seized from period 2015 to date?* Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The Prime Minister: Again, maybe perception wise, that will also make people...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Please, hon. Juman! You do not have the right to stop the Prime Minister or any Member! Any Member here has the right to put a supplementary question, not only you! You had your supplementary question already! Please!

The Prime Minister: So, Mr Speaker, Sir, I was saying again that people will see. What I am going to say is not perception; people will be able to judge. For the period 2010 to 2014, the total street value of different drugs seized stood at Rs996.3 m. For the period 2015 to 11 May 2022, the total street value of different drugs seized stood at Rs13.7 billion. That proves, Mr Speaker, Sir, the successful crusade that we have been leading against drugs since we assumed office in December 2014.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. It has already been canvassed. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Tour!

Ms Tour: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House on the status of the implementation of the recommendations made in the Commission of Enquiry on Drug Trafficking Report 2018?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a regular monitoring of the implementation of the recommendations of the report that is conducted by the National Drugs Secretariat of my Office. As at March 2022, the status of the 390 recommendations of the report was –

- 258 have already been implemented or have adequate measures in place;
- actions have been initiated on 75 recommendations;

- 23 recommendations, of course, will require legislative amendments or are under consideration at the level of different Ministries and Departments;
- 31 are considered not feasible by different Ministries and Departments concerned, and
- necessary actions will be taken in respect of 3 recommendations at the level of the Judiciary in relation to the Drug Offenders Administrative Panel.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Some time back, unless I am wrong, the Prime Minister, himself, publicly stated that it is the drug mafia which has financed the recent riots which broke out in the country. I will ask the Prime Minister, if he holds sensitive information regarding the identity of the drug mafia which financed the riots, will he initiate a Police investigation to find out the source of funds of these people? If he has asked the relevant authorities to initiate financial audit trails to track down the mafia financing riots in Mauritius?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, from that very day, Police has started to investigate, and then the hon. Member will have to wait and see. He will see what action is being taken and the result at the end of the day.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Does the Prime Minister have any information, whether the financial audit trail includes overseas financial trade, particularly in tax-free haven countries, for example, Jersey Island?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me say that I do not seek information with regard to individual cases. It would not be proper for me to require information and, of course, the agencies also will not provide me with the details of each case. But I can reassure the hon. Member that when the financial audit trail is being carried out, obviously, it is not only locally, but, as we have numerous understanding with different international agencies, those agencies also are requested to provide the required information in order to help us to establish cases against any suspect.

Mr Speaker: The Table is advised that PQs B/635, B/636, B/637, B/638, and B/625 have been withdrawn. Time is over!

Hon. Osman Mahomed!

HADJ PILGRIMAGE 2022

(No. B/641) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to the Hajj Pilgrimage 2022, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Islamic Cultural Centre, information as to the reasons for the almost doubling of the expected cost thereof compared to the last edition, indicating the mitigating measures being envisaged, if any, in relation thereto.

Mr Teeluck: Mr Speaker, Sir, since there are three questions on Hajj Pilgrimage 2022 which have been addressed to me, with your permission, I will reply to all the questions together.

Mr Speaker, Sir, at the very outset, allow me to state that this year's Hajj Pilgrimage is being organised as per very particular conditions imposed by the Saudi authorities and that there is no comparison whatsoever which can be made between this year's Hajj Pilgrimage with pilgrimages of previous years. And one of the most significant changes this year is that only one million pilgrims would be authorised to perform Hajj as opposed to five million pilgrims, which were granted visa.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the Hajj Pilgrimage 2022, I am informed by the Islamic Cultural Centre (ICC) that following various correspondences from the Saudi Authorities through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade and the pre-hajj mission of the Chairperson of the ICC in Saudi Arabia from 19 to 25 April 2022, the following information have been obtained –

- (a) for this year's pilgrimage, the Motawafoun Foundation has been designated by the Saudi Authorities as the body responsible for the organisation of the Hajj. Mauritius has been allocated 679 visas by the Foundation. However, Government has initiated negotiations with the Saudi Authorities to increase the number of visas to 1,000. The negotiations are still ongoing and a reply is awaited
- (b) compared to previous years, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, only those aged above 18 years old and under 65 years will be eligible to participate in the pilgrimage, provided, of course, that they are fully vaccinated as per the approved list of vaccines of the Saudi Ministry of Health, and

- (c) pilgrims will have to submit a negative PCR test performed 72 hours before arrival in Saudi Arabia as well as an insurance policy covering full treatment costs in case of infection with COVID-19 and valid for the whole duration of the pilgrimage.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the number of persons who have applied to perform Hajj this year, I am informed that registration for Hajj Pilgrimage is an ongoing exercise. As at date, there are around 29,700 registered pilgrims on the Hajj Registration List. In view of the reduced number of visas and the new conditions imposed regarding age and vaccination, the ICC has already started an exercise with those eligible on the list to confirm their interest. According to latest information, 679 persons on the registered list have confirmed their participation in the pilgrimage with an additional 60 on a waiting list. In case of withdrawal of a person prior to the pilgrimage, replacement will be made from the waiting list.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed that arrangements will be made as in previous years for the transportation of pilgrims. To that effect, the ICC has launched on 21 April 2022 a tender exercise for the transportation of pilgrims and the deadline for the submission of the bids is 20 May 2022.

As regards accommodation of the pilgrims, I am informed that a meeting was held on 05 May 2022 between the ICC and the Hajj Operators, whereby the latter were informed that the same hotels for which deposits were made in 2020 can be used for the 2022 pilgrimage. To that effect, eight Hajj Operators have travelled to Saudi Arabia to finalise the list of hotels for the approval of the Motawafoun Foundation. Once approval is obtained, the list of the hotels and the costs thereof to accommodate the pilgrims will be communicated.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let us be clear and this is well known by Members, the cost of the Hajj Pilgrimage is not determined by the Government but depends mostly on the Saudi Authorities and is beyond our control. At this stage, it is difficult to estimate the cost of the Hajj Pilgrimage 2022. Hon. Osman Mahomed has requested for a comparison with the 2021 Hajj Pilgrimage but due to COVID-19 pandemic, only citizens and residents of Saudi Arabia were allowed to perform Hajj in 2021. Thus, 2021 is not a year of reference and rather we can refer to 2019. Compared to Hajj Pilgrimage 2019, there are indications based on current market figures that the cost would definitely be higher due to several factors beyond our control. These are, *inter alia* –

- (a) the increase in Value Added Tax in Saudi Arabia from 5% to 15% since July 2020;
- (b) the increase in transportation tax from 1,571 Saudi Riyal in 2019 to 1,750 Saudi Riyal in 2022;
- (c) increase in *Qurbani* fees from 400 Saudi Riyal in 2019 to 1,000 Saudi Riyal in 2022, more than 100% increase;
- (d) the introduction as from this year of a mandatory *Makkah* Catering Service of around 60 Saudi Riyal per day per Haji;
- (e) increase in the cost of special services for the five-day Hajj in Mina, Arafat and Muzdalifah to around 7,000 Saudi Riyal instead of 2,232 Saudi Riyal in 2019, more than 300% increase;
- (f) general increase in cost of airfares and accommodation, and finally
- (g) introduction of a hajj visa fees amounting to 410 Saudi Riyal by the Saudi Authorities.

However, Mr Speaker, Sir, as at now, all these costs are subject to confirmation by the Saudi Authorities. I personally chaired a meeting yesterday with the Chairperson and Board members of the ICC to discuss on the pilgrimage and the possible cost implications.

A Hajj Committee has been set up which will be co-chaired by myself and my colleague the Vice-Prime Minister, Dr. Husnoo, with the participation of the Senior Adviser to the Prime Minister's Office, Dr. Joomaye. The Committee will meet this Friday to take stock of the airfares and accommodation and to discuss on other cost implications. Ambassador Soodun will also intervene via *visioconférence* during the meetings of the Hajj Committee and he will ensure coordination was the Saudi authorities and the Motawafoun foundation.

I wish to inform the House that I had a phone conversation with the Ambassador Soodhun yesterday, who assured me that necessary follow-up was being made with the Saudi authorities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, finally I wish to reassure the House that given the importance that Hajj represents to the Muslim community, as it is one of the five pillars of Islam, the Government,

more particularly the Prime Minister, is not sparing any effort to ensure a better package for our pilgrims. Negotiations will be maintained with the Saudi authorities *et tout cela*, in the best interest of all the pilgrims and to ensure that all our pilgrims complete their sacred duty in the best possible conditions.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I will invite the hon. Minister to read my question again. Nowhere in the question was mentioned 2019. My question pertains to the last edition where Mauritian attended, which is 2019, the year of reference which he has mentioned in his question.

Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he has taken cognizance of several religious leaders – one of them being Maulana Khodadin? In an article dated 13 May entitled “*L’ICC a failli dans l’organisation du Hadj 2022*”, wherein it is mentioned that –

« une personne doit déboursier Rs300,000 au minimum pour accomplir le Hadj cette année ».

Can I ask the hon. Minister, being given that according to information that I have – and I do reconcile with the fact that costs have increased, no doubt about that – and across the world an increase of 40% is being...

Mr Speaker: Put your question! You have been too long now. Put your question!

Mr Osman Mahomed: An increase of 40% is being felt all over the place...

Mr Speaker: I told you to put your question!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Can I ask the hon. Minister – yes, I am coming to it – whether, the 40% increment if you apply it to 2019 version which is Rs150,000, that the package be finalised to around Rs200,000 or Rs210,000 instead of Rs300,000 to facilitate people going for this pillar of Islam?

Mr Teeluck: I have just mentioned, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the cost of the Hajj pilgrimage is not determined by the Government. So, we can speculate for hours and days and weeks; I have just given in my reply all the factors that when you add up, determine the cost. There has been increase in airfares, there has been increase in the value added tax. I have set out all the increases that today, will definitely impact on the cost but we cannot speculate, we cannot just come up with figures and say Rs300,000; this is not responsible. We are working today. There is a bid

which is going to be opened on Friday in relation to transportation, airfares. There are operators presently and some of them or already back from Saudi Arabia; we will get the cost of accommodation from them.

So, let's wait until we have *plus de visibilité sur les coûts*. And in a certain manner, we can come up with a package where we have certainty in terms of cost rather than just speculating or coming up with figures which can create misinformation in the community.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: The hon. Minister just mentioned that we are going to have only 679 visas. Will the hon. Minister take the matter up with the Chairman and representative of the ICC to see to it if this year, priority can be given to those pilgrims who are between 60 and 65 because people above 65 cannot perform Hajj, for the time being. So, people who are 64 or 63, perhaps this year is their last opportunity to do the Hajj. So, if priority could be given to these pilgrims and those who have never performed Hajj before?

Mr Teeluck: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a process established in terms of how to determine and work out the registration and whom to contact or not for each Hajj pilgrimage for each year. But I take good note of the proposal of hon. Uteem and I will convey the request if same can be entertained by ICC.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Juman!

Mr Juman: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Hon. Minister, you have mentioned clearly in your answer that it is difficult to give an estimate now. Are you aware, hon. Minister, that officers from the ICC called future hajjis asking them if they are agreeable to go ahead as the minimum tariff will be Rs300,000? Can you inform the House who gave them instruction to call the hajjis and give them the tariff of Rs300,000 and can we know how many of them declined because of the tariff of Rs300,000? Out of the 679, you mentioned, how many of them you contacted? How many of them confirmed and how many declined because of the tariff?

Mr Teeluck: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are 50 days from Hajj and once we get an indication on the number of visas that has been allocated to the country, there is the initiation of a process of contacting all pilgrims who are on the registration list to see whether they are interested to perform Hajj or not this year. And as soon as we got the figure, this exercise was initiated by the

ICC as for any previous edition. Now in terms of whether officers stated that Rs300,000 or more, I fail to understand again, Mr Speaker, Sir.

In my reply I did mention that we don't have a clear indication of the package and these information have been provided by the ICC. There was a Hajj mission that went to Saudi Arabia to collect information, to garner all information for us to be able to prepare the Hajj exercise this year. So, I do not agree with the hon. Member that there is a figure that has been put to pilgrims or people who are on the registration list or even the famous Rs300,000 that everyone, not everyone, but I have heard Members talking about. I am very sorry but we are conducting the registration and seeking interest from registered persons as it has been done previous years; the same processes being followed.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. One of the new conditions for the performance of Hajj ritual this year by the Saudi authorities is to have a COVID-19 Insurance which adds to the cost. Can the hon. Minister, in an attempt to mitigate the price, ask the Government whether SICOM Insurance in Mauritius will offer a preferential package to all hajjis in an attempt to bring down the cost? Secondly, can he also check with the State Bank of Mauritius, whether, it can give a preferential rate of buying riyals, so that the cost can be mitigated in the context where prices have gone up? Thank you.

Mr Teeluck: Mr Speaker, Sir, I can reassure the hon. Member that the Government, and I say particularly the Prime Minister, we are doing everything in our capacity, not only to ensure that we maintain our negotiation forcefully with the authorities to get a better deal in terms of the package, in terms of cost, but also there are certain measures to be taken here. We have to, of course, in the Hajj Committee discuss and see the possibilities and the leeway that we have. But be reassured, hon. Member, that we are doing our utmost best to ensure as I said to get the best package in the best interest of all the pilgrims.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Mr Ameer Meea: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister stated that the cost is not determined by Government which is true, and I agree to that. But can I appeal to the hon.

Minister that Government make a request to the Saudi authorities to lower, to reduce certain fixed fees, *bien sûr dans la limite du possible?*

Mr Teeluck: I did state in my reply, hon. Member, that Ambassador Soodhun is in constant contact with the Saudi authorities, with the Moutawafoun Foundation to see if potentially there can be reduction inserted fixed costs that are being imposed this year. But unfortunately, we will not be able to commit in any way because as I said these are negotiations and we have a new institution, the Moutawafoun Foundation which is a private institution that is involved in the organisation of Hajj this year. We are doing, as I said, our utmost best to get the best package.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs B/669, B/670, B/666, B/681, B/687, B/677, B/690, B/708, B/703, B/706 have been withdrawn.

I will suspend the Sitting for one and a half hours.

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

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

ANNOUNCEMENT

L'EXPRESS ARTICLE – MR P. ASSIRVADEN – EXPULSION

Mr Speaker: Please be seated!

Hon. Members, I have an announcement to make. My attention has been drawn to an article in today's daily L'Express under the caption "*L'expulsion de Patrick Assirvaden intrigue l'opposition,*" in which it is mentioned, I quote –

"L'opposition ne comprend pas pour quelle raison l'honorable Assirvaden a été expulsé."

For the benefit of hon. Members, I wish to set the record straight. During his intervention of the sitting of Tuesday last, in the course of the debate on the Motion of No Confidence in Government, the hon. Assirvaden made reference to the case of a journalist at the MBC who lost her job, I quote –

"Puisqu'une journaliste n'a pas pris la carte de visite d'honorable Dhunoo, elle est suspendue; elle perd son emploi à la MBC..."

After some interruptions, the hon. Dhunoo asked to raise a point of order to which the hon. Assirvaden replied he was not giving way.

In fact, according to the provisions of Standing Order 39(13)(a), it is obvious that when any Member raises a point of order, the Member intervening should allow the Member to do so and cannot state he is not giving way.

The hon. Assirvaden insisted that he was not giving way on the ground that the hon. Dhunoo, I quote –

“Il est en train de m’interrompre!”

Wherefore, I had to intervene to give the floor to hon. Dhunoo who raised his point of order to the effect that the hon. Assirvaden was imputing motives on him in breach of Standing Order 40(5), the more so, that there has been an enquiry.

At that stage, on no less than 3 occasions, I requested the hon. Assirvaden to withdraw what he said but he categorically refused. Unsatisfied, the hon. Assirvaden uttered the following, I quote –

“Il protège le député!”

As this was tantamount to casting aspersion on the Chair and to challenging the authority of the Chair, I ordered the hon. Assirvaden to withdraw from the Chamber.

I hope that this announcement clears this matter. I thank you.

Hon. Bodha!

Mr Bodha: PQ B/642, Mr Speaker, Sir.

IMPORTED FOOD ITEMS – LIST & COSTS – 2020 TO MAY 2022

(No. B/642) **Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal)** asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to imported food items, he will give the list thereof, for the years 2020, 2021 and since January 2022 to date, indicating the corresponding cost thereof.

The Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives (Mr S. Bholah): Mr Speaker, Sir, there are several thousands of imported food items. The question is not clear as to which items the hon. Member is referring to.

However, for the purpose of data collection and analysis, Statistics Mauritius classifies food items in nine categories and I am informed that the CIF cost for food imports was around Rs35 billion in 2020, Rs39 billion for 2021 and approximately Rs7 billion as at February 2022.

Mr Bodha: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have two questions. The first one is what is being done at the level of the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection to reduce this huge import bill, I am thinking in terms of what role the STC could play in the import of food items?

Mr Bholah: Well, this question is limited for the Minister to provide the list of imported items for the three different periods and the corresponding costs. As to the policy of the Ministry, I would request the hon. Member to come with a different question in the following sessions.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask a second question? More than a billion rupees has been used to subsidise the price of imported food items recently. Can the Government consider the subsidy on the price of food items produced locally to encourage planters and producers here so that we can achieve food security?

Mr Bholah: Yes, this can be considered.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

MEDICINES - LOCAL MARKET - SHORTAGES

(No. B/643) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to medicines, he will state if he has been informed of the shortages thereof on the local market and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) causes thereof, and
- (b) remedial measures being envisaged, if any.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has not received any complaint regarding any disruption in the supply of medication on the local market. Although there have been articles

in the Press, no mention has been made regarding any specific medication which is out of stock. The disruption may be attributed to a specific brand.

It is worth to note that, as at 13 May 2022, there were 7,384 drugs registered with the Pharmacy Board to be sold on the local market. The list of drugs comprises both branded and generic versions of the pharmaceutical molecules. The list is available on the website of my Ministry and is regularly updated.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to further inform the House that medicines are classified in around 40 different pharmacological categories including –

- (a) Cardiovascular, (anti-coagulants, ACE inhibitors, anti-hypertensive etc.);
- (b) Cytotoxic drugs;
- (c) Anti-epileptic drugs;
- (d) Anaesthetic Products;
- (e) Anti-diabetic drugs;
- (f) Anti-infective drugs, amongst others.

These pharmacological categories are further sub-classified into subgroups as per their mechanism of actions. Each category has both the branded and generic versions, and a brand may have several generics. For example, paracetamol which is an analgesic has around 190 registered brands on the local market. It may be possible that 1 or 2 brands of this analgesic may not be available but there are several substitutes on the market. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am very much surprised to hear from the hon. Minister, that there is no shortage of medicines on the local market. I shall table copies of Press cuttings from *Le Défi* and *L'Express*; and let me quote only two of the main headings, one from *Defimedia* which states -

« Dans nos pharmacies : une cinquantaine de médicaments pour enfants en rupture de stock. »

Et aussi, même affaire –

« Dans des pharmacies : le manque de certains médicaments inquiète des Mauriciens. »

I will table the Press cuttings and maybe the hon. Minister can have a look at it.

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, some two weeks back, I raised the issue of clopidogrel, which is not available in the public hospitals. You will recall at adjournment time, I raise this issue, a medicine which is used for heart problems. So, can I ask the hon. Minister, in this context, if his Ministry will consider introducing the option of a voucher system to help those who do not have the means to buy the same medication in the private pharmacies; that is, the medicine which is not available in the hospitals, if they can have a voucher to buy it in the private pharmacies? And I give the example of clopidogrel.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will reply to the first part of the question about *une cinquantaine de médicaments pour enfants en rupture de stock*. I will invite the hon. Member to give me the list of those drugs. That is why I have informed the House that for one drug there is one brand which is not available. And for one particular drug in Mauritius, there are several brands. You may not have this particular brand but you will have other generic of the same medication. So, it is a question of whether this brand is not available or this molecule is not available. For every molecule, you have several brands, that is why the pharmacy has registered more than 7,000 drugs. It means that there are not 7,000 different drugs, they are the same drug having different companies bringing them to Mauritius. One brand may not be available but others are.

Now, for the second part of the question, in fact, I have PQ, B/657, that I will reply at a later stage, on the medications not available in the public sector. For clopidogrel, similarly, if we consider how many different generic names of clopidogrel are available, as per my list, this is a medication given in cardiac cases and there are 27 registered products of this molecule. So, if somebody used to take one brand and if it is not available, he can always have recourse to other brands. So, later on, I will give all the details about this clopidogrel in the forthcoming question, B/657.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are many factors for shortage of medicines, one being the increase in price whereby importers themselves, they do not import specific medicines because of the increase in price being the result of the depreciation of the rupee. Can I ask the hon. Minister if he is aware that small and medium-size importers of medicines have complained on the difficulties of having permits to import medicines? That is, it takes too long for them to

get the permit and this has a direct impact causing a shortage of medicines which is detrimental to patients.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, again, I will invite the Member to give me the specific medication where an importer is having difficulties to get the different licences, the different provisions that are made so that I can give it one by one. Broadly saying so, we do not know what the importers have omitted in terms of criteria, Only then can we definitely give specific answers to this question.

Now, if medication is not available in the private sector, all the range of medications is available in our hospitals. For one reason or another, it is not the first time that one medication is not available in the private sector, but it is available in the public sector. So, this is for the population of Mauritius. In case you do not have it in the private sector, that patient can always have the medication in the hospitals. This is not a new phenomenon that medicines are not available in both private sector and in our public hospitals.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Tour!

Ms Tour: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House of the procedures, if any, applicable for the purchase of non-registered drugs by patients in the private and in the public sector?

Dr. Jagutpal: For example, somebody having treatment abroad and coming back to Mauritius with one set of drugs, and it happens that this drug is not available in Mauritius. Regarding the purchase of these non-registered drugs in the private sector, the patients have to submit a request to the Ministry along with the medical prescription justifying the purchase of these drugs. Then, it is up to the Ministry to give a special permit so that pharmacies can import these drugs which are not available in Mauritius.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, by the way the hon. Minister did not reply to my appeal of introducing a voucher system wherever medicines are not available in public hospital. Mr Speaker, Sir, presently importation of medicines is restricted to some countries. This is due to a law which has been passed. It's in the article that I have tabled. Can I ask the hon. Minister why not liberalise the importation of medicines to several countries in order to reduce the price of the same product?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will come back with the voucher system. Mr Speaker, Sir, how will the Ministry have a control on the voucher system? So far you have two different service providers in the health sector; whether it is in the public or in the private sector. The population can either purchase in private pharmacies or go to our public hospitals. It is not possible for the Ministry to have a voucher system to give patients so that they can buy these. Either we provide the drugs. But you know what would be the cost of these medications? This system has been working for years. It is only that we cannot, at the same time, provide vouchers to patients following treatment in the public. I don't think that it is appropriate to do so at this point in time.

Mr Speaker, Sir, at the same time it is good to highlight that I have a Press article from UK dated 25 April 2022 titled: "Pharmacists in England face abuse from patients due to short drug shortages". So, the shortage of drug is real. In fact, in Mauritius we don't face such situations because as I said earlier in my reply, for one product, you have various generics. And this is why in Mauritius you are not faced with the same problem as in UK.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether, the drug which is called "Leuprolide", often used for cancer patients, is currently used in public sector? Thank you.

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. Let me remind the House that the hon. Member is making reference to the cancer drug...

An hon. Member: *To nek rent ladan. To enpes dimoun (...)*

Mr Speaker: What is happening? What is happening?

(Interruptions)

No, you cannot...

(Interruptions)

Please! Please! Please! Please! I am on my feet. I want to address the House.

Both sides of the House you have to put your questions through the Speaker.

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: ...rent ladan...

Mr Speaker: Please! Any point of order should be through the Speaker. Even if you are right, you cannot just cross-talk or have cross-conversation. You cannot do that!

Mr Ameer Meea: He also...

Mr Speaker: You see what you are doing now? You see what you are doing?

Mr Ameer Meea: He started it!

Mr Speaker: You see what you are doing, my friend? Please, now...

(Interruptions)

You think you are right? You are losing the time of Parliament. You had the floor.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. I asked a question with regard to the medication called “Leuprolide” often used for cancer patients. Do we use this? Is it currently available in the public sector? Thank you.

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Member is making reference to the cancer drug mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition last week during the summing up on the Motion of No Confidence.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that “Leuprorelin” also known as “Leuprolide” is a manufactured version of a hormone used in the treatment of hormone-sensitive cancers, like breast and prostate cancers. Currently, the public hospitals are using “Goserelin” commercialised under the brand name “Zoladex”, which is once again, a manufactured version of a hormone used for the same treatment. Both Leuprorelin and Zoladex have the same effects. Leuprorelin is however not listed for our public hospital use, and here, we should bear in mind that drugs in the public sector are procured following requests made by Specialists and Consultants in the respective fields. So, then the Ministry will make provision for procurement of this drug. In the event if Leuprolide is not available in the private sector, the prescribing Doctor still has a possibility to avail to another substitute. So, this is a question of whether the particular drug, if you have a substitute, you have different classes of different drugs out of the same class, they can be used for the treatment of cancer patients.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

**REGIONAL HOSPITALS - NEONATAL INTENSIVE CARE UNITS - EQUIPMENT
AUDITING**

(No. B/644) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Neonatal Intensive Care Units of the five regional hospitals, he will state if they are adequately equipped, indicating if consideration will be given for the carrying out of audits of the said equipment.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that all Neonatal Intensive Care Units of our hospitals consist of the following main equipment –

- (a) Ventilators;
- (b) Incubators;
- (c) Monitors, and
- (d) Syringe pumps.

These are the main equipment that we need to have in our Intensive Care Unit.

Now, the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) of Victoria Hospital operates as a Third Level NICU, as per the American Academy of Paediatrics, and it has advanced equipment such as the nitric oxide therapy system which can provide lifesaving treatment to babies with a life-threatening medical condition known as Persistent Pulmonary Hypertension. The Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Victoria Hospital is in the process of being further upgraded to a Level 4 NICU where premature babies as from 24 weeks of gestation would be provided with respiratory support and treated with high level care.

All the other regional hospitals have Level 3 Neonatal Intensive Care Units as per the American Academy of Paediatrics.

As such, Neonatal Intensive Care Units are adequately equipped for delivery of neonatal services. As far as carrying out an audit of the said equipment, right from the beginning, there is already a provision in the bidding document to ensure that medical and surgical equipment used in NICU meet quality standards.

At time of delivery, the equipment procured are commissioned to ensure that they meet the set technical requirements, prior to acceptance. Provision is also made in the bidding

document to require the supplier to maintain the equipment post-warranty for a duration of five years.

Once in use, the said equipment is under regular monitoring by a team of officers from Biomedical Engineering Unit and the Surgical Technology Department of my Ministry, whereby periodical inspections are carried out to ensure that they are operational at all times.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Mayotte!

You have to raise your hand! Now I have already given the floor to hon. Mrs Mayotte.

Mrs Mayotte: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister table a list of all the equipment that are used in Neonatal Intensive Care Units in the different regional hospitals?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I will table the list of equipment, the make, the duration, when they were purchased, the warranty period as well as the price at which we have purchased these equipment. Mr Speaker, Sir, I will, at a later stage, table all these documents.

Mr Abbas Mamode: Can the hon. Minister inform the House of the measures taken for the treatment of neonates with Persistent Pulmonary Hypertension?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, the treatment for Persistent Pulmonary Hypertension is Nitric Oxide Therapy and this is a life-saving treatment offered to critically ill babies with a very low chance of survival. The system will be operational in Victoria Hospital in the first instance and includes several installations, such as blood gas machine with Methemoglobin and lactate level, separate air extractors for this machine. The training of this surgical technology has already started. In regard to calibration and checking of purity of the nitric oxide and nitrogen cylinders, Mauritius will be among the first African countries which will offer this high technology Nitric Oxide Therapy in its new Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Ms Anquetil: PQ B/645, please.

NATIONAL EMPOWERMENT FOUNDATION – CEO

(No. B/645) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the

post of Chief Executive Officer of the National Empowerment Foundation, she will state why same has not been filled since the vacancy therefor occurred in December 2021.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I wish to inform the House that we are in the process of filling the post of Chief Executive Officer of the National Empowerment Foundation.

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, M. le président. M. le président, avec la misère qui ne cesse d'augmenter, des milliers de Mauriciennes et de Mauriciens cherchent désespérément de l'aide auprès de la NEF. *Could the Minister inform the House how long it will take to find l'oiseau rare de la NEF?*

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: The former CEO left only in January this year. I think we need to understand that we have not left the NEF without any supervision. So, there is an Officer in Charge in the name of Mrs L. H. P. to ensure the smooth running of NEF. In fact, she is an officer with wide experience in the running of NEF.

Mr Speaker: Hon. David!

Mr David: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I know from the hon. Minister, in the absence of a CEO for the NEF, what is the actual role of her Ministry in the day-to-day running of the Foundation?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Well, as I have said, Mrs L. H. P. is ensuring continuity in the day-to-day running of NEF, and we do have a Board and a Chairman who are doing the needful. If I can add, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is not the first time that a CEO has not been appointed when the post is declared vacant; it has been the practice. I can even recall that at one particular time, Mr Suren Dayal, who was then Minister, appointed someone as CEO.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Merci, M. le président. L'honorable ministre peut-elle confirmer à la Chambre que le départ de l'ex-CEO de la NEF fut motivé principalement par son désaccord sur l'allocation de certains contrats de la NEF à une entreprise de Triolet, fournisseur de matériels scolaires ?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: I will humbly request the hon. Member to come with a substantive question. Your question is very far from the main question. So, if you come with a proper question, of course, I will answer.

Mr Speaker: Subsidiary questions, hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Along the same vein, can I ask the hon. Minister what provoked the departure of the CEO? Was he kicked upstairs or was he deliberately made to go down?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: No, he resigned from the post. So, we received a letter from ...

Dr. Boolell: No, but there was a provoking factor. Was there, Madam?

Mr Speaker: No! Come on!

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Hon. Dr. Boolell, I have just answered that the former CEO resigned and he sent a letter. So, what more can I tell the House? There is a letter from the CEO, he resigned. That is it.

Mr Speaker: Ms J. Bérenger!

Ms J. Bérenger: PQ B/646.

INDIAN OCEAN CORAL REEF – INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE STUDY – RISK & MEASURES

(No. B/646) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the coral reefs in the Indian Ocean, he will state if he has taken cognizance of the last study co-signed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature stating the catastrophic state thereof and the risk of collapse of the marine ecosystem and, if so, indicate the measures that will be implemented, if any, to urgently release pressure on same.

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has indeed taken cognizance of the study vulnerability to collapse of coral reefs ecosystems in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO), which is predicting many negative impacts of global warming and climate change affecting the fragile ecosystem like coral reef in the WIO region including the Small Island States like Mauritius and Seychelles.

The state of marine ecosystem including the plight of the reef in the Western Indian Ocean is not something new. For almost more than two decades now, the coral reefs of Mauritius have been experiencing negative impacts of climate change due to global warming. Let me inform the Members of the House that the WIO was severely affected by the first major global bleaching episode in 1998, which resulted in extensive and high seawater temperatures with coral mortality and unfortunately, Mauritius was not spared.

Luckily, in Mauritius we are proud that we have a population which is conscious about the environment, and I take this opportunity, once again, to thank one and all who have been standing united to protect nature. We have all witnessed the patriotism of the Mauritian nation during the Wakashio oil spill. I wish to applaud all those who engaged in the protection of nature, be it in land or in the ocean.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as a Small Island Developing States, Mauritius depends heavily on its marine resources. The extent and frequency of the events during the years have increased and the Government has always been very conscious of the threats to the coral reef ecosystem and the increasingly occurring adverse impacts due to climate change. Three Ministries are directly involved in the protection and restoration in coral reefs in Mauritius, many projects are being carried out by my Ministry to enhance the resilience of our marine environment and the coral reefs.

I would like to name just a few –

- a) At the national level, long-term monitoring of the coral reefs a system is regularly undertaken by the Ministry at selected permanent monitoring stations around the island and in the marine parks to acquire the status on the cover reefs and associated ecosystems.
- b) Corals are a protected species under Fisheries and Marine Resources Act. 18 Marine Protected Areas (MPA) have been proclaimed and the Ministry is working towards the creation of new MPAs and for increasing the surface areas of existing MPAs.

Mr Speaker: I am just making the remark that this is not a PNQ!

Mr Maudhoo: Yes, but I have been asked...

Mr Speaker: Yes, I understand but you cannot take so much time.

Mr Maudhoo: But I have been asked to indicate the measures, it is a long list, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Table it!

Mr Maudhoo: You want me to table it? Okay. So, anyway, Mr Speaker, Sir, I do understand, it is a long list. In fact, I am just naming a few. But what we have to recognise is that it is not only the Government, but, we have the University of Mauritius and several NGOs, through approval, obviously, guidance and follow-up from my Ministry, are actively involved in reef restoration in the lagoons around Mauritius. In fact, the IUCN is already working with one NGO to support reef restoration in Mauritius on a larger scale while private sector is also coming up with innovative restoration methodologies commonly known as micro fragmentation.

Ms J. Bérenger: Comme le Ministre le sait surement, les *wetlands* et les dunes de sables filtrent l'eau et limitent la propagation des polluants et autres sédiments dans la mer et permettent, au finale, aux coraux d'être en bonne santé et de pousser. Est-ce que l'honorable ministre peut nous dire comment est-ce qu'il compte régler le problème de la dégradation des coraux en amont étant donné que le gouvernement continue de permettre de construire sur les *wetlands*, comme en ce moment à Bel Ombre ?

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to construction on wetlands, obviously, this comes under the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change. But protection of corals, and Environmentally Sensitive Areas such as wetlands, are also ensured in the EIA licencing mechanism. So, the coastal water quality regulation has been promulgated to ensure the conservation of marine ecosystems through the EIA also.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: May I ask the hon. Minister whether Government intends to set up a coral farm?

Mr Maudhoo: Yes, indeed. We already have so many coral nurseries which are already functioning. Actually, we have seven coral nurseries which have already been set up. Now, four more are coming in the weeks to come.

Ms J. Bérenger: Toutes les études récentes nous disent que les coraux de l'île sont dans un état hautement critique et récemment nous avons vu le désastre avec la marée noire du Wakashio. L'honorable ministre peut-il nous dire comment est-ce qu'il compte réconcilier l'engagement pour la protection de nos coraux, d'un côté, et de l'autre côté, l'ambition du gouvernement de faire du *oil bunkering*, un axe de développement économique malgré nos engagements à la COP26 et malgré les désastres qu'on a vu avec le Wakashio?

Mr Maudhoo: No, Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to oil bunkering, this is not relevant to my question. So, I prefer not to venture on that.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Dr. Aumeer!

MR D. J., VICE CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF MAURITIUS – PRE-RETIREMENT PACKAGE

(No. B/647) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the early voluntary retirement of Mr D. J. as Vice Chancellor of the University of Mauritius, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the University of Mauritius, information as to the pre-retirement package thereof, including, any benefits to which he is eligible.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the University of Mauritius that Professor D. J. retired in accordance with paragraph 13.29(1) of the 2021 Pay Research Bureau Report on 9 March 2022 after having served as Vice Chancellor for a period of five years.

I am also informed that the retiring benefits of Professor D. J. have been computed on the basis of the pensionable emoluments of the post of Vice Chancellor.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in accordance with the various provisions of the PRB Report, Professor D. J. was also eligible for the refund of accumulated sick leaves, vacation leaves and his passage benefits.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Professor D. J. was technically an employee as at 24 March, enjoying salaries and benefits as the Professor of Faculty of Science despite

being on an approved vacation leave. Does the hon. Minister have any information as to why his retirement and benefits have been computed and backdated to 9 March while at his own request he demanded that his leave be approved at 28 February?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, Professor D. J. had, in fact, written a letter to the Council, informing the Council that he intended to retire as from 28 February 2022. His request was submitted to the University's Council and he was asked to wait for a reply. The Vice Chancellor did not go back to work and if ever there was an overpayment made, it was recouped by the Council of the University.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I quote, 'as per PRB Report, a retired officer gets the benefits at the post he was holding on the previous day.' Can I ask the hon. Minister whether the representative of her Ministry was agreeable to that exceptional backdate which led to an extra payment of Rs733,000 combined sick leave and vacation leave and it was, at that time, computed as if he was still the Vice Chancellor?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to stress on one particular fact. The Vice Chancellor was appointed as Vice Chancellor and had retired as Vice Chancellor. The Council wanted some time to figure out what were his benefits and they requested advice from the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms and, in fact, there was a High Powered Committee that had figured out and had decided that he could, in fact, retire as Vice Chancellor because he was appointed Vice Chancellor, he was not even acting as one. He was appointed as Vice Chancellor as from 2017.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can I ask the hon. Minister, in the request of his early voluntary retirement there is also the issue of having inquiries of two internal cases and two external cases which had been levied against him, whether her Ministry would ensure that the University of Mauritius pursues all investigations and if there were to be any criminal offence, would the matter be reported to the authorities concerned and appropriate actions taken?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the University of Mauritius will operate as per its statute and will have to carry out any investigation if ever required.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

ROAD B104, CHAMAREL/CASE NOYALE – SOIL STABILISATION WORKS

(No. B/648) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to soil stabilisation works currently ongoing along road B104, Chamarel - Case Noyale, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to where matters stand.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Chamarel - Case Noyale Road B104 provides a major connection between the western coast and the central plateau. This road is extensively used not only by the local inhabitants but also by other commuters, in particular tourists and other visitors in view of some specific and unique attractions in that region.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Road Development Authority that part of the road between Chamarel and Case Noyale was severely deteriorated over a length of approximately 1.4 kilometres connecting Chamarel to Case Noyale and La Gaulette. The segment of the road consists of several dangerous curves, with vertical slopes on one side over a height of 25 metres and ravines on the other side. The road width varies between 4.8 to 5.8 metres at different locations.

I wish to highlight here, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the present characteristic of the road along this stretch does not allow simultaneous two-way traffic, which normally requires a width of 6 metres. Moreover, this narrowness of the road, coupled with frequent rockfalls from the vertical slopes, represents serious safety hazards to road users.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in this respect, on 20 November 2020, the RDA, after an international bidding exercise, awarded a contract to Sinohydro Corporation Ltd for an amount of around Rs367.8 m. inclusive of VAT for the construction and widening of the existing road.

The scope of works comprises –

- (i) the construction and widening of the existing road over some 1.4 kilometres consisting of 7 metres width carriage way and 2-metre wide paved shoulder on one side in flexible pavement with crushed stones sub base;
- (ii) excavation in mountain slopes using specialised techniques;
- (iii) construction of gabion retaining structures;

- (iv) installation of rocknets;
- (v) construction of drainage structures;
- (vi) provision of road furniture;
- (vii) installation and commissioning of solar street lighting poles and luminaires, and
- (viii) construction of two viewpoints.

Last week, my colleagues of Constituency No. 14 and myself had the opportunity to take stock of the complexity of the works and progress on site. We have noted *de visu* the various stabilisation measures being undertaken for the angles of the cut slopes varying between a height of 22 metres, the types and length of anchors being fixed, provision of gabions as retaining walls and types of drainage structures used for evacuation of surface runoff. We have also witnessed the most critical section which lies over 120 metres where the slope is very unstable and where careful excavation followed by fixing anchors will be carried out from top to bottom to prevent any collapse of the existing slope.

Mr Speaker, Sir, works are progressing smoothly and I am informed that same are expected to be completed in August 2022, following which the road from Chamarel to Case Noyale will be opened to the public. As at date, 65% of the works have been carried out. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Mayotte!

Mrs Mayotte: Can the hon. Minister inform the House of the number of trees that have been fallen for the implementation of this project and what about the actions that have been taken after that to replace them?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have mentioned in my reply, we are working on a very, I may say dangerous site. On one side, there is the ravine and on the other side, there is a slope where there was rock falls that could constitute a life threatening hazard. So, we had no choice but to cut down 211 trees. But after cutting 211, 633, that is, 3 times more trees have been planted. And regarding the endemic plants, a total of 426 have been transplanted. And the hon. Member will be interested to know that these plants have been replanted or transplanted in the region of Nouvelle France.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Yes, thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is a very popular road used by nature lovers. In a Parliamentary Question, B/728 dated 24 July 2018, the then Minister of Public Infrastructure stated that works will start in May 2019. Can we know why such a delay in the implementation of this particular project?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think it is a question of each Minister having their own set of priorities. When I came at the Ministry, nothing was done at that time, about the consultancy maybe, but I am informed that not much was done and, obviously, there was no contract awarded. As I have just mentioned, the contract was awarded in November 2020, and that also, after my colleagues from Constituency No. 14, hon. Sandra Mayotte, hon. Alan Ganoo and hon. Prakash Ramchurrun, we have had long and tedious meetings on site. And we, obviously, know also all the lobbies that we have had not to cut down the trees. But, we, on this side of the House, got our priorities right, we believe that the children of Chamarel also need a proper road to travel in all safety, to go to school; and people of Chamarel also need development at their doorstep.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Mayotte!

Mrs Mayotte: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House if there has been any other delay in the present implementation of the project?

Mr Hurreeram: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. My hon. colleague will understand, given the complexity of the conditions of the ground, the site was divided in three zones. And at some point in time, yes, the slope was very unstable. And in view of the major excavation work being carried out, the traffic to Chamarel has had to be rearranged. Also, we had COVID-19 lockdown twice. And on this site, it is good to know that it is impossible to work during rainy season and we have had quite a long period of rainy season at the beginning of this year itself. The work ought to have been completed - *je dis cela de mémoire - avril 2022*. And now, as I have replied, we will have those delays; we have extended the work till August 2022. I can reassure the hon. Member that I will see to it that there is no that the delay because we know very well the

encumbrances and difficulties being faced by the inhabitants of Chamarel. But *on ne peut pas faire des oeufs sans casser les omelettes. On est en train de...*

(Interruptions)

On ne fait pas d'omelette sans casser des œufs ! Ça arrive ! Oui, ça arrive !

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Hurreeram: Des lapsus, ça arrive. Peut-être à eux, cela ne leur arrive pas, mais moi ça m'arrive, je suis humain ; je reste humain. Au fait, c'est de l'émotion. Quand je ressens cette souffrance qu'ont vécue les gens de Chamarel pendant toutes ces années et que rien n'a été fait, eh bien, on est émotionné; on ne peut pas faire autrement.

Merci.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Ms J. Bérenger: Les ONG militant pour la protection du patrimoine avaient alerté sur le fait qu'une plaque bicentenaire datant de 1822 avait été enlevée pour les besoins de ces travaux. L'honorable ministre peut-il nous rassurer, aujourd'hui, sur le fait que cette plaque soit en lieu sûr; où est-ce-que se situe cette plaque aujourd'hui ? Et peut-il nous éclairer sur ce qu'il adviendra de cette plaque ?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have not been informed about it; my question does not pertain to that *plaque*. It pertains more to the stabilisation of the soil. So I have enquired and I am informed about the instabilisation of the soil. But knowing the indulgence and professionalism *des fonctionnaires du ministère de l'Infrastructure*, I am sure they are handling it the way it should be.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

CEB - PEAK DEMAND & DEMAND SUPPLY BALANCE MATRIX

(No. B/649) **Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to electricity, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to the –

- (a) highest peak demand thereof recorded on a month to month basis since 2019 to date, indicating the corresponding energy generated and gap between the available capacity and the highest peak demand recorded as at to date, and
- (b) 10-year demand supply balance matrix, including, the CEB, the Independent Power Producers and Renewable generations and table copy thereof.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am tabling information with regard to the highest peak the demand recorded on a month-to-month basis since 2019 to date, and the 10-year demand supply balance matrix.

Mr Speaker: You still have a supplementary?

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, *can I?* Je n'ai pas eu l'occasion, malheureusement, de regarder ce que le ministre a *tabled*. En juin 2019, suite à la question B/455 sur le *demand supply balance*, l'honorable Collendavelloo, alors ministre de l'Énergie indiquait, pour 2019 à 2028, que le *old coal and bagasse plant would still be in operation until 2028*. Peut-on savoir, M. le ministre - je n'ai pas encore vu les papiers que vous avez déposés - si tout le *demand supply balance* présenté en 2019 est intact ou a été chamboulé vu que *CTBV*, donc, Terra, est sorti entre-temps avec 62 mégawatts ?

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, as the hon. Member stated, he has not taken cognizance of the documents which I have tabled, especially the document with regard to the 10-year demand supply balance matrix. These figures that I have tabled are official figures that have been submitted by the Central Electricity Board and have taken onboard also the stoppage of activities by Terragen.

We should understand, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the balance matrix is not static but a dynamic matrix. So, first of all, the units that we have lost with the stoppage of Terragen have been taken into consideration. I have stated earlier that because of that, the Central Electricity Board has had to review its maintenance plan, that is, having more maintenance concentrated during the winter months and shifting others during the summer months.

As it is, we do not have energy from Terragen since 29 April, and we have been able to supply the country. And on that note, Mr Speaker, Sir, let me again assure, first of all, the House but also the population at large, that the Central Electricity Board will be able to fulfil its obligations with regard to the supply of electricity in the country and meet the demand. And allow me also, Mr Speaker, Sir, to seize this opportunity to congratulate the staff of the Central Electricity Board and to put on record, especially those at the level of the Production Department and the Load Dispatching Department for the good work that they are doing.

So, this matrix, Mr Speaker, Sir, takes into consideration several factors, especially the changes that I have highlighted. But, at the end of the day, what is important, Mr Speaker, Sir, in the matrix, is the reserve capacity margin.

Mr Lesjongard: And I can again assure the House that with regard to that reserve capacity margin, the Central Electricity Board is operating above the threshold value, which is -5 for the coming 10 years.

Mr Speaker: I give you the floor. Don't give another one the floor!

Mr Bhagwan: Can the Minister inform the House how many times the CEB has had recourse to the gas turbines of Nicolay and what is the present cost of production of 1kW at Nicolay?

Mr Lesjongard: The present cost of production of electricity from the Nicolay substation is around Rs15. But, again, Mr Speaker, Sir, since 29 April, not a single day, not a single hour, not a single minute, not a single second has the Central Electricity Board had recourse to the generators at Nicolay.

Mr Osman Mahomed: My question pertains to the renewable energy aspect of the question. According to CEB's diary, in 2020, 22.3% were from renewables and in 2021, last year, only 19.83% because of lower production in bagasse. Being given he has stated yesterday that he is very confident that the country is going to achieve 60% renewables by 2030 - my question is a shorter term - can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is confident that, by 2025, the target that existed before, 35%, will be achieved being given the downside scenario?

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, once again, I am very confident that we will achieve the target of 60% by 2030. But the question put by the hon. Member does not pertain to the main

question, which is related to the highest peak demand recorded on a month to month basis since 2019 and the 10-year demand supply balance matrix.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Assirvaden: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have one more question.

Mr Speaker: The question has already been...

Mr Assirvaden: Je n'ai posé qu'une question, M. le président !

Mr Speaker: No, that does not matter! You should know your Standing Orders!

Mr Assirvaden: Non, juste une dernière, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: No, you are fighting the Speaker! Each time you...

Mr Assirvaden: Il y a des questions importantes...

Mr Speaker: Please! Withdraw from the Chamber! Please, withdraw from the Chamber!

Mr Assirvaden: ...

Mr Speaker: No, you cannot take the habit of fighting the Speaker!

(Interruptions)

You withdraw from the Chamber!

An hon. Member: ... *pa fer sa*.

Mr Speaker: You cannot do that!

Dr. Boolell: It is unfair! Unfair!

Mr Assirvaden: Most unfair!

Mr Speaker: Again, you are playing with fire. Most unfair, most unfair. You are casting aspersion on the Speaker.

(Interruptions)

The Speaker goes by the Standing Orders! If you don't know your Standing Orders, it is not my problem!

Dr. Boolell: ...

Mr Speaker: You are starting another fire! You are very romantic, former Leader of the Opposition. And this is what you wanted; take the whole time. Ok, we will sit down and take the whole time of Parliament until the hon. Member withdraws from the Chamber. Take your time Sir! And then, you will go and say you don't know why you were asked to withdraw. Earlier, I made an announcement and you still do the same thing.

So, I said next question! Whose turn is that?

Mrs Mayotte: PQ B/650!

SURINAM - FOOTBALL PLAYGROUND PROJECT

(No. B/650) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the Football Playground Project at Surinam, he will state where matters stand as to the implementation thereof.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the District Council of Savanne that a decision was taken in the year 2018 to upgrade the J. Purmanund Football Ground at Surinam. A contract was awarded on 06 May 2019 to Best Care Ltd. for a sum of Rs9,521,770 including VAT for the following works –

- construction of gradin and shelters;
- provision of parking area;
- reinstatement of chain link fencing and polls;
- provision of drains inside the football ground, and
- levelling and turfing of the playground.

I am informed that the Council was not satisfied with the levelling and the turfing work. Despite the attention of the contractor being drawn to the shortcomings, no remedial action was taken by the latter. On 25 November 2020, the contractor was requested to stop the work pending further instruction.

I am further informed that the Council decided on 28 December 2020 to re-launch a procurement exercise for the levelling and turfing of the football ground, and the exercise was unsuccessful as the sole offer received was above the acceptable threshold. For the third time, an

e-procurement exercise was launched on the 07 September 2021 but no bid was received. Fourthly, a new bidding exercise was done on 11 October 2021 and two bids were received but both were not responsive.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that meanwhile, the Council with the assistance of the employee of Mauri-Facilities Management Co Ltd., carried out some levelling works, whereby some 780 tons of topsoil were used.

A bidding exercise for mainly turfing work was launched on 05 November 2021, and a contract was accordingly awarded on 14 January 2022 to DPA Enterprise Ltd. However, following handing over of the site, the contractor informed the Council that there were additional levelling work to be done and did not start work.

On 02 March 2022, the contractor was invited to attend a Performance Review Committee and following which, he submitted an additional quotation to complete the work.

I am informed that the Council decided on 08 April 2022 to terminate the contract as the revised costs estimate submitted by the contractor exceeded the threshold of 25% allowable.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in order to get the project completed, my Ministry is extending necessary assistance through the Field Service Unit (FSU) to the District Council of Savanne to complete the outstanding work, that is, levelling and turfing. The works have already started on Monday 16 May 2022 and would be completed hopefully by the end of May 2022.

Mrs Mayotte: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Following the payment of Rs8.5 m. to the first contractor, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether an enquiry on the surplus of money that has been paid will be done, and if there are some actions that will be taken for the reimbursement?

Dr. Husnoo: Yes, it is very important, Mr Speaker, Sir. I raised that question with the Chief Executive of Savanne District Council and I told her that the enquiry must be done. Secondly, that contractor must be reported to the appropriate authority.

Mrs Mayotte: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether there has been any follow-up of the renovation works since 2018 up to now for use by officers of Local Government, because the new lighting installations, fencing and painting were in a very bad state and needed to be refinanced anew to do the renovation.

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think, the main problem was the turfing. So, we are concentrating on the turfing. If necessary, we will have a look at the lighting as well.

Mr Speaker: Yes, last question!

Mrs Mayotte: Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister state if any surveillance monitoring system will be provided to prevent vandalism?

Dr. Husnoo: Exactly. When I did a site visit at that particular football pitch, I did ask the Savanne District Council that they have to put cameras because the pitch was not used for the last three years, some of the amenities have been vandalised there. So, I have asked the District Council to consider putting surveillance cameras there.

Mr Speaker: The table has been advised that PQs B/667, B/682, B/683, B/691, B/696 and B/704 have been withdrawn. Next question!

TANK WEN STREET, LA BUTTE – LANDSLIDE

(No. B/652) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the landslide which occurred at Tank Wen Street, La Butte, in Port-Louis on 28 April 2022, he will state the measures taken by the authorities to ensure the security of the inhabitants thereat.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre (NDRRMC) that at around 7.35 p.m. on Thursday, 28 April 2022, a portion of Affan Tank Wen Street, a public road at La Butte, partially collapsed. That was due to excavation works which were being undertaken on a private construction site found thereat by a contractor. The partial collapse of the road caused damage to the water piping systems of both the Central Water Authority (CWA) and the Wastewater Management Authority (WMA) whilst two electric poles of the Central Electricity Board (CEB) along the road of the construction site were also at risk of being destabilised. The existing sewer manhole situated at the corner of Affan Tank Wen Street had also collapsed.

I am informed that the Geotechnical Unit of the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development has advised that no incidence of landslide was found. The collapse of

the road was due to soil erosion of the excavated area caused by water leakages and the lack of proper excavation methodology on behalf of the private contractor.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a preliminary intervention was carried out on the same night by the National Disaster Unit together with the Police Information and Operation Room, the CWA, the WMA and the CEB. Preliminary repair works were undertaken by the CWA and the WMA to fix the damaged pipes whilst the CEB intervened on the two destabilised electric poles on the same night. Two water tankers were also deployed as a palliative measure for the affected inhabitants.

The affected site was cordoned off by the Police and vehicular access along the road was restricted. Police presence was maintained thereat and the public was informed of the closure of the road through *Inforoute*. The Police was requested to carry out regular patrol in the affected area.

Furthermore, the collapse of the soil caused horizontal cracks in the foundation of an adjacent building, wherein the owner of the building was advised to look into measures to reinforce the basement.

A first site visit was effected on Friday, 29 April 2022, that is the next day, by the relevant stakeholders, including my colleague, hon. Dr. Mrs Chukowry, Parliamentary Private Secretary, the Geotechnical Unit of the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development and the Municipal City Council of Port Louis, following which the owner of the affected site was officially requested to reinstate same at the earliest.

Following complaints from the inhabitants of persistent water pipe leakages, another site visit was carried out on Monday, 02 May 2022 with all the relevant stakeholders, including the owner of the affected site, the private contractor, the Police and the Special Mobile Force to re-assess the situation and the following measures were taken –

- the source of the water leakage was detected and remedied by the CWA. As a precautionary measure, the latter rerouted its water pipes away from the affected site;
- the WMA reinforced its sewer line found on the affected site and monitoring of the affected site is being conducted twice daily by the WMA Inspectorate team, and

- the CEB rerouted its overhead electric cables from an existing electric pole found on the rim of the collapsed portion of the road.

As far as the light rail system is concerned, I am informed by the NDRRMC that the Metro Express Limited confirmed that the metro rails were 70 metres away from the affected site and same did not represent any danger to the light rail system.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Municipal City Council of Port Louis is proposing to issue the necessary clearance to the owner to take appropriate action to render the site safe for further development works. The private contractor has been requested to ensure that all works are undertaken in accordance with the law. As a precautionary measure, the private contractor has been requested to place sandbags up the road to avoid flow of storm water towards the affected site when it rains, and to urgently remove all the load of aggregates on the road surface at the affected site manually. A temporary structure of circular bricks filled with soil has been placed to stabilise the affected area and prevent further erosion and degradation.

Furthermore, the NDRRMC together with the Police have carried out sensitisation campaigns with local inhabitants regarding precautionary measures to be taken and were advised not to venture near the affected site. The situation is being closely monitored and so far, there has been no further incident.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Thank you, Sir. Will the hon. Minister state whether a construction or a development permit had been issued by the Municipality of Port Louis for a wall to be built there or excavation works to be carried on the spot and whether in view of the nature of the land, soil tests had been undertaken prior to the issue thereof?

Dr. Husnoo: You mean prior to the construction work, before the construction work started?

Mrs Navarre-Marie: The construction of a wall or excavation works?

Dr. Husnoo: No, I am sorry; I don't have this information for the construction of a wall.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: You don't have the information on that.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

SIR GAETAN TUG CASUALTY – COURT OF INVESTIGATION

(No. B/653) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the Court of Investigation set up to inquire into the casualty at sea of the Sir Gaëtan Tug, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if the investigation has now been completed and, if so, indicate the findings and recommendations contained in its report and table copy thereof, and
- (b) state the actions taken in relation thereto, if any.

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that on 18 September 2020, by virtue of the powers conferred upon the Minister responsible for shipping matters, under section 10(2) of the Merchant Shipping Act 2007, the hon. Attorney General and Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security who had been assigned the responsibility for shipping development and merchant shipping had, after consultation with the hon. Prime Minister, appointed a Court of Investigation to investigate into the casualty at sea of the tug, Sir Gaëtan, on 31 August 2020.

The Court of Investigation was chaired by no less a person than Mr Joseph Gérard Angoh, former Puisne Judge and the members who are Captain Mahendra Babooa, Master Mariner and Captain Jacques Goulot, Master Mariner.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Terms of Reference of the Court of Investigation were as follows –

- (a) to investigate into and report on the circumstances surrounding the shipping casualty which occurred on or about 31 August 2020 involving the tug Sir Gaëtan and the barge L'Ami Constant including further collision between the tug Sir Gaëtan and the barge L'Ami Constant
- (b) the loss of life of Mr A. J. S., Mr S. S. K., Mr P. L. L.;
- (c) the presumed loss of life of Mr M. B.;
- (d) the injury sustained by other persons resulting from the said shipping casualty, and
- (e) damage caused to and by the tug Sir Gaëtan and the barge L'Ami Constant;

- (f) also to situate responsibility for the acts done at each stage leading to the shipping casualty and any other matter connected with or relevant, or incidental to paragraphs A and B above, and make recommendations as appropriate.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the report of the Court of Investigation into the casualty at sea of the tug Sir Gaëtan was submitted to my Ministry on 22 March 2022. I wish to inform the House that at its meeting of 06 May 2022, Cabinet decided to set up an Inter-ministerial Committee 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.

The Inter-ministerial Committee will be chaired by the hon. Prime Minister and will comprise of the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management, the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change, the Attorney General and Minister of Agro Industry in Food Security, and myself.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it would not be appropriate to table the report as it has not yet been examined by the Inter-ministerial Committee.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, four people lost their lives in the collision by Sir Gaëtan tug and the barge, L'ami Constant.

The Minister has said that he is not going to table the report at this stage but for the benefit of the family of those victims, can the Minister at least inform the House whether, the Court of Investigation had found any person liable for what happened at sea on that day?

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the first meeting of the Inter-ministerial Committee is scheduled for this Thursday of this week. In fact, I do not want you to speculate and I will just make an appeal to Members of the House not to make believe that there is any sort of cover-up.

In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to assure the House and the public at large that there has not been any cover up and there will never be any cover up. I prefer that you wait for the Inter-ministerial Committee.

En fait, M. le président, que le bon sens soit là. Je fais un appel à tout un chacun, y compris les parlementaires bien sûr, le publique et surtout les medias. Comme l'a bien dit l'honorable Membre, ce drame a entraîné la mort de trois de nos compatriotes ainsi que la disparition du capitaine. Alors, il ne faut pas tirer de conclusions hâtives sur le rapport. Il faut

réaliser que les familles, surtout les enfants des victimes portent toujours le deuil de leur proches. Alors, je lance un appel à la compassion de tout un chacun. Comme l'on dit, ne remuons pas le couteau dans la plaie. Alors, *we prefer to wait for the Inter-ministerial Committee and the decision thereof.*

Mr Uteem: Precisely for there to be no allegation of cover up, we are asking the publication of this report. May I know from the hon. Minister whether any decision has been taken by Government or will be taken in that Ministerial Committee for as far as compensation payable to the family of the three dead persons and the fourth one who has not been recovered?

Mr Maudhoo: I am not aware of such issues but let the Committee meet and then we can take stock and then we will come back again.

Mr Speaker: Next supplementary!

Mr Uteem: Impending the decision of the Inter-ministerial Committee, has any decision been taken by the Mauritius Port Authorities with regard to any officers who have been involved in the dramatic incident?

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not have the information right now but I got information that there are some cases. I think the MPA has initiated action against those officers who were responsible on that day. So, I do not have exactly what disciplinary action has been taken up to now but I think that is up to the MPA.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Nuckcheddy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. B/654, please.

MOFED - MR G. S., ADVISER/SENIOR ADVISER - APPOINTMENT

(No. B/654) **Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil)** asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to Mr G. S., he will state the date of appointment thereof as adviser/senior adviser at the then Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, indicating the –

- (a) duration of the appointment and monthly remuneration drawn, and

- (b) board of parastatal bodies on which he served over the period 2015 to 2019, indicating in each case, the monthly remuneration drawn.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, M. G. S. a d'abord été employé en tant que *Senior Adviser* au Ministère des Finances à temps partiel pour une période de trois ans à partir du 04 avril 2016. M. G. S. a offert ses services sans aucune rémunération du 04 avril 2016 au 22 janvier 2017. Cependant, il siégeait sur le conseil d'administration de plusieurs corps paraétatiques.

Le 23 janvier 2017, les termes et conditions de son contrat de travail ont été révisés et ses services ont été retenus à temps plein. En conséquence, il a perçu un salaire mensuel de 122,000 roupies et une indemnité mensuelle de service supplémentaire de 50,000 roupies. Il avait également droit aux avantages et conditions de services accordés aux hauts fonctionnaires de niveau comparable dans la fonction publique. Son contrat de travail a ensuite été renouvelé pour une nouvelle période d'un an avec effet au 04 avril 2019, aux mêmes conditions.

Toutefois, l'emploi de M. G. S. en tant que conseiller principal a été résilié en vertu de l'article 113 de la Constitution et de l'article 62 de la *Workers' Rights Act* avec effet au 14 novembre 2019 à la suite des élections générales qui se sont tenues en novembre 2019.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne la partie (b) de la question, M. G. S. était premièrement, le président du conseil d'administration du *Board of Investment* du 3 mars 2015 au 14 janvier 2018 où il percevait une rémunération de 70,000 roupies par mois. Il était aussi le président du '*Human Capital Committee*' d'avril 2015 à janvier 2016, ainsi que de mars à octobre 2016. A ce titre, il touchait une allocation mensuelle de 5,000 roupies ainsi qu'une allocation de 10,000 roupies par séance.

Deuxièmement, il était président du conseil d'administration de la *Financial Services Promotion Agency (FSPA)* de février à décembre 2017 bénéficiant d'une rémunération mensuelle de 70,000 roupies.

Troisièmement, il était président du conseil d'administration de *Landscape* du 30 juin 2016 au 21 novembre 2019 avec une rémunération de 70,000 roupies par mois. Il était aussi président du conseil d'administration des subsidiaires de *Landscape Mauritius* comme suit –

- du 16 février 2017 au 21 novembre 2019, *Cyber Properties Investment Ltd* avec une rémunération mensuelle de 20,000 roupies par mois;
- du 1er avril 2017 au 21 novembre 2019, *Informations Park Ltd* avec une rémunération de 20,000 roupies par mois, et aussi
- du 1er avril 2017 au 21 novembre 2019, *BPML Freeport Services Ltd* avec une rémunération de 20,000 roupies par mois.

Quatrièmement, il était membre du conseil d'administration du *Mauritius Multi Infrastructure Ltd* (MMIL) du 24 janvier 2017 au 14 novembre 2019 avec une rémunération de 25,000 roupies par mois.

Il était aussi membre du *Build Evaluation Committee (BEC)* où il était payé 32,500 roupies du 24 janvier au 31 décembre 2017, 40,000 roupies du 1^{er} janvier 2018 au 31 décembre 2018.

De plus, il était payé 15 000 roupies pour le '*technical committee*' du 1^{er} janvier au 31 décembre 2018.

Cinquièmement, il était membre du *Higher Education Commission Board* où il était payé 2,000 roupies par séance de 2017 à 2019.

Sixièmement, il était membre du *Heritage City Co. Ltd* du 22 juillet au 03 août 2016. Au total, Mr G. S. a perçu des allocations pour les différents conseils d'administration susmentionnés d'environ R 9 m.

(Interruptions)

Les informations demandées par l'honorable membre sont déposées.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Nuckcheddy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. As per the reply of the hon. Minister, *on voit bien que le M. G. S. avait plusieurs cordes à son arc* and can the hon. Minister please confirm while Mr G. S. was at Landscape, if there was any inquiry on him concerning abuse of petrol allowance?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, je ne suis pas au courant de ces abus. Je vais faire le nécessaire et enquêter auprès de *Landscape* et apporter la réponse par rapport à cette question.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Nuckcheddy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister also replied that Mr G. S. was on the Board of the Mauritius Multi Infrastructure Ltd. Can the Minister confirm if it is the same Board that approved the construction of Côte d'Or Stadium? Thank you.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, je vais vérifier les informations et déposer à la Chambre. Merci.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister gave a list of several appointments of Mr G. S., Info, BPML, MMIL, Multisport and Landscape, etc. My question to the hon. Minister is: who nominated Mr G. S. on all these Boards? His nomination was approved by whom?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, je vois que l'honorable membre est tout content d'avoir posé cette petite question.

Mr Ameer Meea: It is my job!

Dr. Padayachy: Je suis très heureux de répondre à cette question. C'est le gouvernement qui avait nommé monsieur G. S.; sans peur et sans reproche, sur ces différents conseils d'administration.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Abbas Mamode: PQ B/655.

VICTORIA & DR. A.G. JEETOO HOSPITALS - MEDICAL & CARDIAC UNITS - DOCTORS

(No. B/655) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Medical and Cardiac Units at the Casualty Department of the Queen Victoria and Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospitals, he will state if consideration will be given for an increase in the number of doctors by one in each unit.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a pool of 15 Medical Health Officers/Senior Medical Health Officers in the Cardiology Unit and 21 Medical Health Officers/Senior Medical Health Officers in the Medical Unit of Victoria Hospital. The Consultant in Charge decides on

the number of doctors to be posted thereat on a daily basis at the Accident and Emergency Department. On a daily basis, there are 3 doctors who are posted in the Cardiology Unit of the Accident and Emergency Department and 3 doctors are posted in the Medical Unit of the Accident and Emergency Department of Victoria Hospital.

At Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital, there is a pool of 11 doctors in the Cardiology Unit and 22 doctors in the Medical unit.

On a daily basis, there are 2 doctors who are posted in the Cardiology Unit of the Accident and Emergency Department and 3 to 4 doctors posted in the Medical Unit of the Accident and Emergency Department of Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed that the number of doctors presently posted in the Medical and Cardiac Units of the Casualty Department of both hospitals are enough to ensure the smooth running of the service.

Whenever there is an increase in the number of patients awaiting consultations in the Medical and Cardiac Units, it is the duty of the Ward Managers at the Casualty Departments to inform the Consultants in Charge that there are patients who are waiting. Thereafter, the Consultant in Charge redeploys doctors posted in his unit to the Accident and Emergency Department or informs the Regional Health Director to redeploy doctors from other units to assist those units where patients are waiting. This type of coordination between the Ward Managers, the Consultants in Charge, the Medical Superintendent and the Regional Health Directors helps to ensure that patients get the optimal care without undue delay.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed that there has been no request from the Consultants in Charge of those units to increase the number of doctors.

Mr Abbas Mamode: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The number of patient's admission in hospitals, especially cardiac patients, is on the high side. Can we know from the hon. Minister what steps are being taken for restructuring of the Casualty Department?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, if patients attending our hospitals are on the high side, it means that they rely on the services being offered in the hospitals. Now, what are the steps for restructuring the Casualty Department? My Ministry is planning to restructure the Casualty Department of Victoria Hospital where a pilot project will be implemented to

effectively utilise the resource of the SAMU doctors to assist in the management of patients in the Accident and Emergency Department. Hence, optimising the SAMU resources, curtailing waiting time and improve handling of emergency cases, and shorten waiting time for patients who need admission.

If this project is a success in the future, the Ministry is envisaging extending same in the Accident and Emergency Departments of all Regional Hospitals. This project will start in the month of August/September.

Mr Speaker: Next question! You have one?

Mr Uteem: This question relates to the Medical and Cardiac Units at Casualty Departments which usually deal with emergency cases. Is there any protocol in case there is a shortage of staff or doctors and these patients need urgent medical intervention? Is there any protocol with private clinics and hospitals where the patients can be redirected in case of urgency?

Dr. Jagutpal: No, Mr Speaker, Sir. For the time being, there is no joint venture between the private and the public sector. We have to look at the different stages. For example, at one point in time the CT Scans were not available in the public sector. The patients were directed to the private sector. Recently, the EEG machines in the hospital were broken. So, we directed patients specifically to do the EEG test.

Obviously, we have to weigh the cost and benefits. Will it be better to procure additional machines and resources or will it be better for us to direct those patients to the private sector in a joint venture? The Ministry is working on this. If we gain more efficiency through these projects, obviously, we will go ahead with send patients to the private.

In the meantime, we are working on the overseas treatment because we send many patients overseas for specific and specialised treatments. We are working with the private sector. If they can get those experts to come in their clinics and do their operations, then the public sector will not send these patients abroad and will be operated in private clinics. We shall embark on this new project and it will be the start of a new form of collaboration between the public and private sector.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs B/657, B/658, B/662, B/663, B/664, B/671, B/674 and B/676 have been withdrawn.

Next question!

HAJJ PILGRIMAGE 2022 – TRANSPORTATION & ACCOMODATION

(No. B/656) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to the Hajj Pilgrimage 2022, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Islamic Cultural Centre, information as to as the –

- (a) number of visas obtained therefor;
- (b) number of persons who have applied to perform pilgrimage this year, and
- (c) measures taken for the transportation and accommodation of the pilgrims in connection therewith.

(Vide Reply to PQ B/641)

PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTIONS - DRUGS SHORTAGES

(No. B/657) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to drugs, he will table the list thereof in respect of which there are shortages in the public health institutions, indicating the –

- (a) reasons therefor, and
- (b) expected impacts thereof on public health service delivery.

(Withdrawn)

CASINO DE MAURICE, CUREPIPE - MR D. N. - HUMAN RESOURCE DIRECTOR – DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

(No. B/658) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to Mr D. N., Human Resource Director at the Casino de Maurice, Curepipe, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if disciplinary proceedings have been initiated against him and, if so, give details thereof.

(Withdrawn)

BUNKER BARGES - EIA LICENCE - APPLICATIONS

(No. B/659) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the operation of oil barges in Mauritius, he will state the number of applications received for the issue of Environment Impact Assessment licenses therefor, indicating –

- (a) the applicants to whom same have been issued, and
- (b) if any of the said applicants is responsible for the oil spill in the Port Louis Port area on 29 April 2022.

Mr Ramano: Mr Speaker, Sir, the bunkering sector has been a key driver in the ocean economy with a 90% increase in volume during the past six years and is contributing significantly to the economy.

In view of its strategic location along the main shipping routes in the Indian Ocean, the Port Louis Harbour has seen an increasing demand for bunker fuels from vessels. Since 2014, bunker trade increased from 348,871 tonnes to reach 661,474 tonnes in 2019. Also, the number of vessels calling for bunker from Port Louis has increased by 37 %, from 1799 to 2470 vessels, from 2017 to 2019. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the bunkering sector has shown resilience.

The objective of Mauritius to become a petroleum hub by 2030 was further consolidated when Government took proactive measures to keep the jurisdiction aligned to the International Maritime Organisation 2020 requirements to ensure that the environmental norms for marine fuel be complied with by making low sulphur fuel available.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, my Ministry has, to date, received eight applications for Environment Impact Assessment licence for the operation of bunker barges within the limit of the Port area from the following bunker barges operators –

- 1) Tresta Trading Ltd for barge MT Tresta Star;
- 2) Bunker One (Mauritius) Ltd for barge MT Tulip;
- 3) GRM-EOT Ltd for barge MT Sea Phantom;

- 4) Oceanis Bunkering Ltd for barges MT Emily and MT Elise;
- 5) Peninsula Petroleum (Mauritius) Ltd for barge MT Splendour;
- 6) WD Associates Co. Ltd for barge MT Flores;
- 7) Indian Oil (Mauritius) Ltd for barge MT Ask Progress, and
- 8) Stonewin (Mauritius) Ltd for barge MT Hakkasan.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that out of the applications received, the application of Tresta Trading Ltd has been set aside on 15 March 2022 as the barge MT Tresta Star ran aground on the south coast of Reunion Island during the passage of cyclone Batsirai.

I wish to inform the House that the remaining seven applications have been duly processed and have been examined at the last meeting of the Environment Impact Assessment Committee held on 16 May 2022 under the Chair of my Ministry. The recommendations of the Environment Impact Assessment Committee are awaited for consideration at my level in line with Section 23 of the Environment Protection Act 2002.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that, on Friday 29 April 2022, the Mauritius Ports Authority activated the Port-Louis Harbour Oil Spill Response Plan after the presence of oil was observed at Quay D in Port-Louis port area during a “bunker delivery” operation. The cargo loading of a total volume of 3,000 metric ton of Very Low Sulphur Fuel Oil was being carried out on board bunker barge MT Ask Progress. The oil was being pumped from the Terminal Storage of Mauritius Molasses Company Ltd, the bunker operator, to the vessel through a pipeline going underneath Quays D and E. However, at about 09 00 hours, the presence of oil was observed at sea alongside Quay D. The pumping operation was immediately stopped, the intervention plan activated and the relevant stakeholders, including officers of my Ministry called on site. The Port Emergency Services team contained the oil spill by deploying booms and a skimmer was put at sea to recover the spilled oil which has been carted away by Eco Fuel Ltd for treatment. The latter has reported that about 13,500 litres of contaminated water and about 4,500 litres oil have been recovered.

Upon investigation of the circumstances of this incident by the Mauritius Ports Authority, it has been found that the root cause of the oil spill was a puncture of the existing pipeline due to contact with an angle bar from an old pipe support. Recommendations have been made with a

view to prevent such incidents in the future and Mauritius Molasses Company Ltd, the bunker operator, has put the faulty section of the pipeline out of service and intends to replace it by a new one.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that observations made during the subsequent days did not show any oil spill at sea and that booms were removed on 10 May 2022. The Albion Fisheries Research Centre has carried out a monitoring of the harbour water quality following the oil spill and the latest results submitted shown a return to normalcy.

Ms J. Bérenger: L'honorable ministre est-il au courant que 7 des 8 rapports *EIA* soumis à son ministère et mentionnés dans sa réponse ne sont en réalité que des copier-coller qui ne respectent pas la loi puisqu'ils ne prennent pas en considération les impacts environnementaux, les impacts sur la biodiversité marine, le changement climatique et encore moins, les engagements pris par la COP26. L'honorable ministre peut-il nous dire qu'est-ce qu'il compte faire de ces rapports *EIA* ? Est-ce qu'il compte demander aux applicant de revoir leurs rapports et de respecter la loi ?

Mr Ramano: M. le président, le *EIA Committee* fonctionne en toute indépendance. Ce n'est pas le ministre qui siège dans le *EIA Committee*, bien que le ministre, à travers l'*Environment Protection Act*, a un pouvoir d'approuver ou pas. Mais le comité est souverain de prendre ses décisions à la base de toutes les recommandations. M. le président, donc, comme je l'ai mentionné, le comité s'est réuni hier. Laissez-moi prendre connaissance des recommandations du comité. À la base des recommandations du comité, on va prendre des décisions qui s'imposent mais en ce qui concerne les insinuations, les allégations qui ont été faites pas l'honorable membre, elle assume ses responsabilités.

Ms J. Bérenger: C'est assez étonnant que l'honorable ministre ne soit pas encore au courant des recommandations. Étant donné la stratégie de ce gouvernement de faire de Port Louis un *oil bunkering hub*, le ministre n'est-il pas d'accord que cette stratégie aurait dû avoir fait l'objet d'une étude environnementale stratégique pour permettre une analyse détaillée des risques et d'évaluer les impacts cumulatifs? Peut-il aujourd'hui prendre l'engagement d'initier une telle étude ?

Mr Ramano: M. le président, si l'honorable membre est surprise, elle est libre d'être surprise. Moi, je suis en train d'assumer mes responsabilités en tant que ministre et toutes les institutions fonctionnent en toute indépendance.

Je dois aussi dire, M. le président, que selon les documents qui m'ont été soumis, je vous lis les réponses qui m'ont été fournies par les différentes autorités –

“The Mauritius Ports Authority has informed that the bunker barge operators were issued with short term port licenses which have been extended up to 30 June 2022 under specific conditions, including those emanating from the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change. These conditions are as follows –

- Submission of an oil spill contingency plan for up to Tier 3 level to the satisfaction of the Ministry of Environment;
- Availability of sufficient oil spill response equipment to cater for at least Tier 2 oil spill which should be either kept on board of the bunker barge or at a dedicated location nearby the site of operation;
- Signature of an agreement with a dedicated oil spill response company for response in case of any oil spill up to Tier 3 level;
- Carrying out of all bunkering operations in a safe dedicated working area;
- Safe mooring of both bunker barge and receiving vessel taking into consideration the prevailing and expected sea and weather conditions;
- Effective surrounding of the working area with booms to contain any spill in case of leakage;
- Automatic stoppage of all operations in case of an oil spill or any other accident, and
- Holding of an adequate insurance cover for a Tier 3 oil spill and any other environmental pollution.”

Furthermore, the Mauritius Ports Authority, as regulator of the port and bunkering activities, has prepared a bunkering code of practice for the safe conduct of bunkering operations. The code of practice details the bunkering operational parameters and procedures for all phases of bunker operation, communication and reporting schedules, requisite equipment to be deployed for bunkering, mandatory inspection of hose and mooring equipment, safe working

practices and emergency preparedness and response measures for initiating an emergency shutdown in case of emergency and suspicious situation.

Furthermore, as per the code, bunkering operations are allowed at both inner and outer port but with the following additional restrictions –

- “Ship to ship cargo transfer operations are only allowed at five designated locations in the southern region of the outer port with the objective of protecting ecologically sensitive sites such as, Rivulet Terre Rouge Estuary Bird Sanctuary and the Balaclava Marine Park.
- Bunkering operations during cargo operations shall be allowed subject to a risk assessment carried out by the master of the sailing vessel, the master of bunker barge and the Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd.
- Bunker supply to vessels at anchorage is allowed at outer port in the northern and southern regions.
- No bunkering operation is allowed on the entrance channel and English Channel of the Port Louis harbour.”

Voilà, M. le président !

Mr Speaker: Dernière question !

Ms J. Bérenger: L’honorable ministre a mentionné les risques et les actions prises mais pas les impacts sur l’environnement. Cela n’est pas mentionné dans les rapports *EIA*. La *Marine Megafauna Conservation Organisation* a évalué les nombreuses menaces qui pèsent sur certains mammifères marins avec cette ambition de l’*oil bunkering hub*. Je dépose sur la Table leurs explications. Le ministre, peut-il dire à la Chambre combien de consultations ont eu lieu avec la société civile et avec qui précisément avant de vouloir faire de l’*oil bunkering* un nouvel axe économique à Maurice ?

Mr Ramano: M. le président, je demanderai gentiment à l’honorable membre de se référer à l’*Environment Protection Act* qui est clair en ce qui concerne les procédures avant l’émission de tout *EIA licence*. Il y a une procédure de consultation. Les différents documents qui ont été soumis sont à la disponibilité des membres du public. Il n’y a aucun élément qui n’est pas...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: What is happening there?

(Interruptions)

Behave yourselves!

Mr Ramano: ...à la disposition du public. M. le président, si l'honorable Membre avait fait son *homework* comme il se doit, elle aurait trouvé que tous les renseignements figurent sur le *website* de cet *EIA Committee*, M. le président. Merci.

Mr Speaker: Time over!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Supplementary Appropriation (2021-2022) Bill (No. VIII of 2022) was read a first time.

Second Reading

THE ROAD TRAFFIC (AMENDMENT) ACT 2019 (AMENDMENT) BILL

(No. VI OF 2022)

Order for Second Reading read.

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr A. Ganoo): I move that The Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2019 (Amendment) Bill be read a second time.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2019 was presented as there was a dire need to reduce the number of deaths in road crashes in line with the National Road Safety Strategy. The number of persons who died on our roads in year 2017 was 157, in year 2018- it was 143, in year 2019 - it was 144, in year 2020 - it was 131 and finally last year in 2021 - it was 108.

As at 15 May 2022, the number of fatal road accidents amounted to 29 and 31 persons lost their lives as a result. From year 2017-2021, there is a downward trend in the number of fatalities and in year 2021, as compared to year 2017, there is a 31% decrease in the number of road fatalities. Nonetheless, I must concede that there is still room for improvement as one death is too many.

Mr Speaker, Sir, driving requires concentration, skills, common sense and a concern for the safety of everyone on the road, especially for the vulnerable users. Alertness, perception of the dangers and reaction time make the difference in the interaction between the driver and the external environment. When a driver is under the influence of alcohol, drug or intoxicating substances, his perception is seriously impaired as his ability to interact and deal safely with unexpected events is lessened and this state of things may lead to fatalities involving both the driver and other road users.

Available statistics indicate that each year a significant number of people are killed as a consequence of driving under the influence of substances that affect cognitive processes reaction rate and coordination of movements while driving vehicles.

According to statistics submitted by the Forensic Science Laboratory, the number of fatal road accidents where drugs have been detected in body fluids was 56 in 2017, 43 in 2018, 26 in 2019, 48 in 2020 and 21 in 2021. The drugs commonly detected are ketamine, morphine, fentanyl, methadone, 7-aminoclonazepam, phenytoin, codeine, tetrahydrocannabinol amongst others.

Mr Speaker, Sir, following the enactment of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2019 and the present Bill, my Ministry will carry out an intensive sensitization campaign to raise the awareness about the potential lethal consequences of the use of substances in relation to driving. Special emphasis will be laid on the danger resulting from the mixture of the different drugs or by the use of alcohol with drugs and medicines on the cognitive ability of the driver.

As the number of deaths on our roads due to drug driving is quite alarming, my Ministry, with the unflinching support from the Police and the Forensic Science Laboratory, is leaving no stone unturned in the fight against this scourge. The Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2019 on Drug Driving was passed by the National Assembly on 14 May 2019 and published in the Extraordinary Government Gazette of 29 May 2019.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to remind the House that the Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2019 amended the Road Traffic Act to make it an offence for a person, whilst being under the influence of a drug or an intoxicating substance to –

- (i) ride a cycle on a road or any other public place;
- (ii) drive or attempt to drive a motor vehicle on a road or any other public place;
- (iii) drive or attempt to drive, a vehicle which is involved in a road accident;
- (iv) be in charge of a motor vehicle on a road or any other public place, but not driving the vehicle; or
- (v) occupy the front seat of a motor vehicle as a competent driver supervising a learner driver who is driving the motor vehicle on a road or any other public place.

In addition, the Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2019 is innovative in that it provides for the methods of detecting the presence of drug or an intoxicating substance in a person who is driving or is in charge of a motor vehicle or is riding a cycle under the influence of a drug or an intoxicating substance.

Mr Speaker, Sir, likewise, the Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2019 amended the Road Traffic Act to provide for the procedures for roadside checks to detect the offence of driving under the influence of drug. The procedure for road side checks includes –

- (i) a Field Impairment Test conducted by a Police officer in suspected cases of drug driving to detect physical impairment of a driver or cyclist;
- (ii) a “preliminary drug test” is conducted on a person for the purpose of obtaining, by means of an approved device, an indication whether the person is under the

influence of a drug. The test is undertaken by means of a device using either the saliva or the urine of a person suspected to be under the influence of a drug, and

- (iii) a specimen of blood or urine taken from such person for evidential testing by the Forensic Science Laboratory.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2019 has not been proclaimed so far in view of a series of complications in procuring the relevant equipment and kits for carrying out the evidential tests to prove the presence of the drugs in blood and body fluids. The procurement process was lengthy and cumbersome and several bidding exercises were conducted as bids received were not responsive in view of the complexity of the technical issues.

In fact, following the assent of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2019, the Home Affairs Division of the Prime Minister's Office launched a tender in May 2019 for the acquisition of the Liquid Chromatography High Resolution Mass Spectrometer System for the detection of drugs in the body fluids and in the blood by the Forensic Science Laboratory. The closing date was 26 June 2019. On 21 October 2019, the tender was cancelled and new specifications were drafted by a team comprising –

- (i) a representative of the Forensic Science Laboratory;
- (ii) a representative from the Procurement Section of the Prime Minister's Office;
- (iii) a representative of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life (Bio Medical Engineer);
- (iv) a representative from the Government Analyst Division, and
- (v) a representative of the University of Mauritius.

The specifications were finalised and the tender for the procurement of the Liquid Chromatography High Resolution Mass Spectrometer System for Drug Driving testing was floated internationally on 12 December 2019. The closing date for submission of bids was on 30 January 2020. On receipt of bids, an evaluation exercise was undertaken and the Letter of Award was issued to the successful bidder on 03 March 2020.

On 14 May 2020, the FSL informed that the delivery period for the instrument according to the tender equipment was 8 weeks. The delivery for of the equipment from the USA was however delayed due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

On 05 January 2021, the Forensic Science Laboratory informed that the instrument was delivered, installed and commissioned in September 2020. The testing and validation had been undertaken. The instrument is operational and in use since January 2021 to carry out tests following any inquiry in relation to drugs or cases of accidents where consumption of drugs is suspected to be the main cause.

Mr Speaker, Sir, similarly, the Police also encountered difficulties in procuring the kits for the preliminary drug test on suspected drivers for the enforcement of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2019. To be able to perform the preliminary drug test as prescribed therein, the Mauritius Police Force launched a tender for the procurement of 500 units of urine drug testing cup kits and a thousand units of saliva drug testing kits in December 2019. The specifications for the items were provided by the FSL. Following a bid evaluation exercise, no responsive bid was received and the FSL was requested to revise the specifications.

The FSL reviewed the specifications, and in a meeting chaired by the Chief Police Medical Officer on 9 June 2020, the specifications were finalised. The FSL submitted the final revised specifications and a new tender exercise was subsequently launched.

Following this tendering exercise, the Police informed that the Saliva Drug Testing Kit was procured. However, unfortunately, with regard to the procurement of the Urine Drug Testing Cup Kits no responsive bid was received.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in a bid to regulate and control drunk driving, the Police requested on 08 December 2020 that advice be sought as to whether the Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2019 could be proclaimed with only the saliva drug testing kit being available. However, the FSL informed that it is scientifically advisable that both the saliva and the urine test be carried out in conjunction with the procedures set out in the Act. Therefore, the urine drug testing cup kits had to be procured simultaneously. The Police apprised my Ministry that the procurement of the 500 units of urine drug testing cup kits was expected to be launched by end of January 2021 and the delivery date was due in July 2021. On receipt of the kits on 12 August 2021, the Police

informed that the urine drug testing cup kits be approved, as per the requirement of Section 188A of the Road Traffic Act.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on the successful receipt of the equipment from the Police and the FSL on 19 August 2021, the Attorney General's Office was requested to vet the draft regulations of the Government Notice to allow that the saliva drug test kits, the urine drug testing cup kits and the apparatus of the FSL be approved by the Minister. On 29 October 2021, the Attorney General's Office submitted the draft regulations, to which, the FSL gave its approval on 03 December 2021, and requested that the Police ensures it has the capacity to drive the operation on the field. A training under the supervision of Dr. Mercier Guyon, a forensic medicine and emergency doctor and Head of a license training centre of Haute-Savoie in France, was provided to Police officers.

On 14 December 2021, when actions were being initiated to prescribe the devices, the Police noticed that there was already a Twelfth Schedule of the Road Traffic Act, which prescribed the form for the Cumulative Road Traffic Conviction Notice under Section 123AG(8A). It was thereupon proposed that the wording Twelfth Schedule and Thirteen Schedule, wherever it appeared in the Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2019, be deleted and replaced by the wording Thirteenth and Fourteenth Schedule, respectively. The Twelfth Schedule to be reworded as the Thirteenth Schedule listed in Part I, the drugs with zero tolerance, and in Part II, it listed the therapeutic drugs with the respective threshold value in the blood.

The Thirteenth Schedule to be reworded as the Fourteenth Schedule describes the field impairment assessment which should be undertaken by a Police officer, if he has reasonable ground to suspect that a person's physical state is impaired as provided for in the Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2019. The Attorney General's Office submitted the draft Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2019 (Amendment) Bill with a view to curing the cross references with regard to the Schedules in the Act. Accordingly, the wording Twelfth Schedule and Thirteenth Schedule mentioned in Section 20 of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2019 have been renumbered, particularly in the Bill before they have at Sections 3, 5, 6, 8 and 14.

Mr Speaker, Sir, given that the Saliva and the Urine Testing Kits to be used by the Police and the apparatus for measuring drugs in the body fluids, and blood samples to be used by the

FSL have now been procured, arrangements will be made for the proclamation of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2019, after adoption of the present Bill by the House today.

Mr Speaker, Sir, synthetic cases represent almost 30-35% of total drugs submission by the ADSU. Information as provided by the FSL shows that –

- in 2015, the number of synthetic drug cases were 124;
- in 2016, 300 cases;
- in 2017, 608 cases;
- in 2018, 1,182 cases;
- in 2019, 1,289 cases;
- in 2020 it was 1,384 cases, and
- and in the year 2021, it was 979 cases.

Synthetic drugs, Mr Speaker, Sir, are extremely dangerous drugs, especially those that are manufactured in clandestine laboratories. These drugs are responsible for a number of deaths worldwide. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction has reported that the compounds are highly addictive with little information available as to their toxicity. More so, the treatment for such addiction is still limited.

Further to some analysis carried out, the FSL has noted that in some cases of impaired driving, tests were carried out on drivers who were aged from 21 to 40 years old, and the result, Mr Speaker, Sir, revealed that the drivers were under the influence of one drug or a cocktail of drugs at the material time they were driving. As regards one particular driver, the blood specimen indicated that, at the time of the offence, the driver was driving under the influence of a mixture of nine drugs. In most submissions made by the Police, drivers were found to be under the influence of more than one class of drugs, even though, the breath analyser gave a negative result for alcohol.

Now that the Police is equipped for carrying out the drug test as specified in the Act, it is urgent and imperative to proclaim the Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2019. The Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2019 amended the Road Traffic Act, Mr Speaker, Sir, to provide that the Saliva Test Kit can screen for seven classes of drugs and the urine kit can screen for six classes

of drugs. The equipment procured by the Police and the FSL using the saliva, urine and blood can detect the illicit drugs such as –

- Amphetamine;
- Benzoyllecgonine;
- Cocaine;
- Cannabis;
- Lysergic Acid Diethylamide;
- MDMA;
- Methylamphetamine, and
- Heroin.

In addition to therapeutic drugs, such as –

- Clonazepam;
- Diazepam;
- Flunitrazepam;
- Lorazepam;
- Methadone;
- Morphine, and
- Oxazepam.

The analysis performed at the FSL will be a confirmatory test that can cover all classes of drugs covered by the Schedule I of the Dangerous Drugs Act, including synthetic drugs. The analytical results undertaken on the saliva, urine and blood would be used as evidence for Court purposes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in cases where a person cannot be prosecuted under the Thirteenth Schedule of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2019, the offence can be extended under the Schedule I of the Dangerous Drugs Act for all illicit substances.

As recommended in the report of the Commission of Inquiry on Drug Trafficking (2018), the FSL, which falls under the aegis of our Prime Minister, has already implemented a standalone dedicated drug unit dealing exclusively in drugs and drugs related cases. This new service, Mr Speaker, Sir, will have a turnaround time of five working days and analytical results will be issued as evidence, meeting all legal standard of proof for Court purposes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I personally visited the Forensic Science Laboratory on 27 April this year with senior officials of my Ministry to take stock of the state-of-the-art technology that is available at the standalone dedicated unit. The country should be grateful to the Prime Minister because I am informed, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this is the latest technology available on the world market. It has been acquired for Rs43.7 m. and will be used for analysis of drugs in body fluids, body saliva urine, including current and evolving synthetic drugs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, therefore, with the adoption of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2019 (Amendment) Bill, which would enable the proclamation of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2019 the offences and relevant penalties under the proposed legislation would henceforth be applicable. The Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2019 provides severe penalties if a person under the influence of alcohol, a drug, intoxicating substances or an intoxicating substance causes the death of another person by driving a motor vehicle on a road or public place without due care and attention. He will be liable to a fine of not less than Rs25,000 nor more than Rs50,000 and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years.

A person under the influence of alcohol, drug, intoxicating substance above threshold limit cannot ride a cycle on a road or public place. In case he does, he will have to pay a fine of not less than Rs5,000 nor more than Rs25,000. On a second or subsequent conviction, he will be liable to a fine of not less than Rs25,000 and not more than Rs50,000 and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months.

The Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2019 provides also, Mr Speaker, Sir, that a person commits an offence if he is under the influence of alcohol, a drug or an intoxicating substance and is driving or is in charge of a motor vehicle on a road or public place or if he is teaching a learner driver whilst being seated in the front seat. He will be sentenced to pay a fine of not less than Rs20,000 nor more than Rs50,000 and he will be imprisoned for a term not exceeding 5 years.

On a second or subsequent conviction, he will be liable to a fine of not less than Rs50,000 nor more than Rs75,000 together with the imprisonment for a term of not less than 12 months nor more than eight years.

A person who rides a cycle on a road and fails to provide a specimen of blood or urine for a laboratory test to detect the presence of drug or any intoxicating substance shall be liable to a

fine of Rs5,000 nor more than Rs20,000. On a second and subsequent conviction he shall be liable to a fine of not less than Rs25,000 nor more than Rs50,000 and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months.

A person, Mr Speaker, Sir, who refuses to undergo a field impairment test or a preliminary drug test shall commit an offence and on conviction he is liable to a fine of not less than Rs5,000 nor more than Rs25,000. If he is convicted on a second occasion or subsequently, he shall be liable to a fine of not less than Rs25,000 nor more than Rs50,000 and to a term of imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with the proclamation of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Act of 2019, if a person is driving a motor vehicle and fails to provide a specimen of blood or urine for laboratory test if suspected to be under the influence of drug or intoxicating substance he shall commit an offence and be liable to a fine of not less than Rs20,000 nor more than Rs50,000 and to a term of imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years.

With these words, Mr Speaker, Sir, I commend the Bill to the House.

The Deputy Prime Minister seconded.

Mr Speaker: Hon. François!

(4.44 p.m.)

Mr F. François (First Member for Rodrigues): Thank you very much. Mr Speaker, Sir, as I will intervene very briefly on this Bill, I again stand in support of Government's commitment to make it an offence by driving under the influence of drugs and intoxicating substance in the system of drivers, through this Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2019 (Amendment) Bill (No. VI of 2022).

Allow me to thank the hon. Minister Ganoo for bringing this Bill, with its main object to curing some cross references with regard to Schedules in the main Act. This Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill is a very important step in the right direction and a top priority concern for Government to stop road trauma through its vision towards a deterrence approach and a zero approach to road death and serious injuries on our roads. I fully agree that driving under the influence of drug in our society would not be tolerated at all, while we are aiming at making our Republic a drug free society.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as stipulated in the Explanatory Memorandum, the Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2019, will soon be proclaimed, as rightly pointed out the hon. Minister, which is most urgent despite some procurement exercise issues. This is absolutely essential, while Government is fully assuming its responsibility for improving road safety, saving lives on our roads and in the fight against drug to keep drug drivers off the road.

With this Amendment Bill, what I understand is that the mechanism of roadside drug testing will come into action soon, to deter drug-impaired driving. I have to ask the hon. Minister to inform the House of the correct timing for the roadside drug testing exercise.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I was comparing some statistics from some European countries, particularly UK, drug driving is overtaking drink driving. It is reported that drug driving Court cases have risen from just under 1,500 in 2015 to 13,700 in 2020.

From the Statistics Department of Sweden, the number of people driving under the influence of drugs from year 2017 to 2020, I note that each year, a higher number of people were caught drug driving than driving under the influence of alcohol. The hon. Minister mentioned a few statistics at local level. However, in our case, it has been too easy for many drivers to drug-driving on our roads so far, as our Police do not have all the necessary tools for drug driving enforcement.

With this Amendment Bill, our Police will now be able to roadside drug testing on drivers in our Republic, especially our youths, as driving under the influence of illicit drugs should not become a way of losing life for our youths on our roads.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with reference to the speech of hon. Bodha in 2018, can the hon. Minister confirm, whether there is available a list of all approved devices for drug testing, in addition to the mentioned Liquid Chromatography High Resolution Mass Spectrometer for testing of physical form of both synthetic and non-synthetic drugs, amongst others? I recall, in 2019, that some equipment was supposed to be delivered by then, which the hon. Minister just informed the House of all the delays and non-responsive procurement exercise.

Mr Speaker, Sir, here, I seize this opportunity to reiterate my request made in 2019, during my response to the Road Traffic Act (Amendment) Bill, that beyond the areas of legislation, testing and enforcement, the drug driving laws should not be only used as a *de facto*

mechanism for punishing individuals but should accompany them as well. The UK is actually going in that direction to recommend that drug-drivers be required to undertake rehabilitation courses before being allowed back behind the wheel.

In that regard, the following measures also need to be put in place and implemented in our case: prevention, awareness-raising campaign - as rightly stated by the hon. Minister - counselling and treatment for those drug drivers caught drug-driving.

In the same vein, I propose that community-based research studies be carried out in our Republic to know the extent of drug driving and the category to most used illicit drug and drive on our roads.

Here, again I restate my full support to the zero-tolerance approach of the presence of any illicit drugs concentration in the blood or oral fluid of any driver as per the amendment of Section 9 of the Bill through the list of the Thirteenth Schedule – Drugs with Zero Tolerance.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to Rodrigues, the people of Rodrigues, also adhere to the vision for a zero-tolerance approach and zero road accident on our roads.

The Police statistics from Rodrigues for year 2014 to 2021 reveal that the total number of reported drug cases in Rodrigues is on the rise, that is, in year 2014 - 219 cases, year 2018 - 300 cases and in year 2021 - 536 cases respectively.

With regard to statistics on road-related accidents cases, I note in –

- Year 2021 - 129 cases: 3 fatal and 7 seriously injured;
- Year 2020 - 158 cases: 2 fatal and 16 seriously injured, and
- Year 2019 - 168 cases: 6 fatal and 7 seriously injured.

And most cases involved motorcycles.

However, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Police service in Rodrigues needs to be reinforced both in terms of strength and equipment, in relation to the enforcement of this legislation and other legislations and local requirements.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said I would be very brief, to conclude, I fully support this Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, with the view to protecting the lives of our people and to deter them from drug driving or driving under the influence of an intoxicating substance on our roads.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with these words, I thank you for your kind attention.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister!

(4.52 p.m.)

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Mr K. Jagutpal): Mr Speaker Sir, I will start my elocution by conveying my sincere condolences to the parents who yesterday, lost their son at a very young age due to substance abuse. As sadly related by my colleague, Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare, hon. Mrs Koonjoo-Shah, that the son was undergoing treatment in a rehabilitation centre and for some reasons, he could not stay in that rehabilitation centre. And his father while driving home, stopped near a shop and the son probably wanted to smoke a cigarette and then while the father was driving his son back home, he collapsed in the car and passed away. So, we have witnessed the tragedy that happened to a parent yesterday.

Mr Speaker Sir, it is not only the driver who can put the lives of others in danger but it can also happen at any place, at any time.

Mr Speaker, Sir, today, while sympathising with the parents, we reiterate our commitment to rid our country of the drug affliction. Driving a car, a lorry, a bus or even a motorcycle or bicycle, is a complex task. To remain safe and to keep others safe on a road layout, one has to rely on various factors. These are, amongst others, good vision, instant decision-making, vigilance, reaction time and obviously, coordination. Above all, in order to safely engage in traffic, one has to have full control on his or her cognitive skills. The intake of alcohol or any other intoxicating substance will definitely alter these cognitive functions. Over the years, and around the world, the focus was mainly set on the negative impacts of alcohol consumed by road users.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our country rightly decided to adopt a zero tolerance approach with regard to drunk driving. It would be naïve on our part to believe that the use of drugs and other substances do not have a bearing on the number of accidents on our roads. We are following the steps of various other countries which also felt the need to exercise such controls.

Scientific studies carried out abroad give a clear indication of the effect of drugs and other intoxicating substances on the cognitive abilities of a person. Stimulants like cocaine and methamphetamines hinder concentration. They are likely to give an artificial boost of energy to

the user thus making him or her drive at higher speed than usual. And what is more important is that these substances make someone become less inhibited and has a disinhibited effect. Sedatives like marijuana and heroin have the inverse effect. Their intake leads to drowsiness. The users are thus likely to fall asleep while in traffic. We have another category, Mr Speaker, Sir, we call it 'hallucinogens'. For their part, they create distorted perceptions and belief in the user's mind and this will once again hinder cognitive abilities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in year 2020, our public hospitals attended to 1,195 injuries following road traffic accidents. This figure rose to 1,397 in 2021. And these figures were recorded during the years when our country applied lockdowns and sanitary measures. These measures impacted on the fleet of vehicles on our roads. Yet, what calls for thinking, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that in year 2019, a normal year with no sanitary restrictions, our hospitals treated 1,916 patients following road traffic accidents.

This Government has been constantly upgrading local road network. Alternatives to travel, like the Metro Express, have also been made available to the public. Legislations have been regularly reviewed in order to curb down the number of accidents on our roads but the fact remains that, for an island like ours, we have too many road traffic accidents.

Latest data compiled by Statistics Mauritius indicate that we had 119 fatal road accidents and 1,967 accidents with serious to light injuries in 2020. At times the gravity of an accident shocked every one of us. In normal state, no driver can commit such blunder but the question is, why are such tragedies happening? How is it that we are still witnessing such violent accidents? In a country where we have an ageing population and a low birth rate, we cannot afford to lose our citizens for such reasons.

The financial cost resulting from road traffic accidents are very considerable, Mr Speaker, Sir. The cost per visit in the public hospital at the Accident and Emergency Department turns around Rs900 per consultation. Imaging Services vary from Rs700 to Rs7,000. The cost for a minor surgery is approximately Rs3,800 while a complex surgery costs more than Rs25,000. The estimated cost per bed occupied ranges between Rs3,600 to Rs4,600 while a single SAMU intervention costs around Rs8,000. Road traffic accident victims also require medical follow-up which adds to these costs.

Mr Speaker Sir, the decision to control road users for engaging on our roads under the influence of drugs or intoxicating substances will surely act as a deterrent. I am sure that Members in this House are unanimous when it comes to the necessity of taking such measures.

The methodology which will be used for testing road users suspected of being under the influence of drugs is fitting. Our Police services have, over the years, gathered the required experience to carry out reliable screenings of a road user's cognitive behaviour. They will be assisted in their task by adequate test kits to further their investigations. The Police will then resort to our hospitals for further enquiry through blood specimens or urine samples.

The Ministry of Health and Wellness already has the required expertise for collection exercises. It will be then up to the Forensic Science Laboratory to determine the presence of drugs or any other intoxicating substance.

I am glad to note that failure to comply to the requests for testing will also be considered as an offence.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the new measures make a distinction in the case of certain psychoactive prescription drugs. The prescription of such drugs is henceforth strictly controlled. The use of triplicate prescription forms, as recommended by the Commission of Enquiry on Drugs, which was introduced last year, is already giving good results.

Moreover, medical practitioners and pharmacists are bound to inform patients on such medication whether they can drive or not, depending on the dosage prescribed. As for those who deviate prescription drugs from their initial usage, they will be easily tracked down thanks to new prescription forms.

The Ministry of Health and Wellness remains committed to continue to educate patients on the risks attached to driving under the influence of certain types of medication.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the aim of applying such controls is aimed at protecting lives on our roads. This Government acknowledges drug users as victims. This is the reason why we have always been in favour of providing drug victims with the possibility to rehabilitate themselves.

We are currently working on the legal framework for the setting up of a Drug Offenders Administrative Panel (DOAP). The DOAP will see to it that in certain specific cases, drug

victims are not treated as mere criminals. The Ministry of Health and Wellness also has the responsibility to provide drug victims with adequate treatment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, while it is our duty to provide adequate treatment and rehabilitation opportunities, we also put much efforts in prevention and sensitisation. Our objective is to prevent each and every fragile soul to succumb to the hell of drugs.

We have also embarked on a mass media campaign putting emphasis on the damages caused by drugs, in particular synthetic drugs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, all of us look forward to a society free from the scourge of drugs. Our staunchest ambassador in this relentless battle is our Prime Minister. This Government has mustered all the courage and gathered all the required resources to win the battle on drugs.

With the introduction of these tests, we are not only making our roads safer, we are also getting rid of this plague. I am confident that these new measures will bring positive results and I congratulate the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail for coming up with such a Bill.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Members, at this stage I will suspend the sitting for 45 minutes.

At 5.04 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.53 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please be seated! Hon. Ganoo!

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr A. Ganoo): Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. To sum up, Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to thank the two hon. Members who have participated in the debate; hon. François and my colleague, the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, Dr. Jagutpal. I do indeed thank them for their useful contribution, for their interesting statistics that they have provided by way of supplementing the information I already gave during my speech.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will be very brief because there has been a consensus in the House among those who participated in the debates. Mr Speaker, Sir, just to answer hon. François, with regard to the devices and equipment, all the devices and equipment, as I explained in my

intervention, are now available. So, the needful has been done. I reminded the House how tedious, cumbersome, lengthy the different bidding exercises were. Now, we have crossed this stage, Mr Speaker, Sir. The devices and the equipment are here and they are now available. So, now the law is ready for proclamation and we have now come to the implementation period.

I can inform the hon. Member also that the Police will start roadside checks in about two weeks, of course, after the proclamation of the two pieces of legislation. I also wish to inform the hon. Member that the same devices will be used in Rodrigues. The Police in Rodrigues will use the kits prescribed as in Mauritius, and samples of blood will be sent to the FSL in Mauritius for analysis.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I note that no member from the Opposition has participated in this debate. What I can conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir, from this nonparticipation, the absence of the Opposition can only illustrate *l'indifférence de l'Opposition sur la question du combat contre la drogue. Cette absence très remarquée, M. le président ; pas un seul membre a choisi de faire quelques commentaires sur ce projet de loi. Cette absence remarquée est une preuve, s'il en fallait une, M. le président, du désintéressement ou je dirais même de la distanciation de l'Opposition sur la question de la drogue.*

But, we on this side, we are comforted to reassure the country at large that we are taking every step to reduce the loss of life as a result of road crashes. The objective of my Ministry remains the provision of safe mode of transport to the population. As I said, safety is not restricted to only drivers and riders but also to pedestrians alike. We will leave no stone unturned for the safety of our road users.

This Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, I repeat again, bears testimony to the efforts of this Government, of this Prime Minister and our commitment to improve road safety and protect all road users. Additionally, it symbolises also the continuous fight of our Government, under the leadership of the Prime Minister, against drug abuse and its lethal consequences at all levels.

As the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, I would like to thank the Prime Minister's Office, the Police, the FSL for their unflinching support, Mr Speaker, Sir. This Bill is innovative in that the Police have now the lawful procedures and sophisticated mechanism at its disposal, as I mentioned in my main speech, to detect cases of driving under the influence of drugs.

Government is relying on the support of the Police Officers, who have provided their unfettered support so far, to reduce the number of road crashes to continue their enforcement activities. For this reason, Mr Speaker, Sir, we reiterate our appeal to the Commissioner of Police for the support of his officers in fighting drunk driving on our roads, which is a major cause of vehicle accidents.

Last but not least, Mr Speaker, Sir, I take this opportunity to make an appeal to all road users, to the population at large, to make the road a safe place for one and all. *La route n'est pas une espace privée, M. le président. Elle appartient à tout un chacun.* Let us all make our roads safer for our cherished ones. I am done.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

The Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2019 (Amendment) Bill (No. VI of 2022) was considered and agreed to.

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

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2019 (Amendment) Bill (No. VI of 2022) was read a third time and passed.

(6.01 p.m.)

Second Reading

THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT CLEANING AUTHORITY BILL

(NO. V OF 2022)

Order for Second Reading read.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I move that the National Environment Cleaning Authority Bill (No. V of 2022) be read a second time.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the importance of a clean environment cannot be undermined as it is the key to existence and survival of life on planet earth. A clean environment has a direct impact on the health as well as on the quality of life of inhabitants.

In fact, on 08 October 2021, the United Nations Human Rights Council recognised, for the first time, that having a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment is a human right. In resolution 48/13, the Council called on States around the world to work together, and with other partners, to implement this newly recognised right.

My Government has, at the top of its Agenda, the development of a cleaner and safer living environment for each and every citizen of this country. This is reflected in the Government Programme 2020-2024 wherein we took the commitment to develop a cleaner and greener Mauritius.

As you all know, ensuring a clean and sustainable environment has also been my personal struggle for our country.

The cleanliness of our beaches, lagoons, streets, and of all areas for our living and for doing business is a *sine qua non* condition to ensure good health and quality of life of our citizens, and contribute to the attractiveness of Mauritius as a tourist destination. This requires a national and sustained collective effort. In short, a change in mindset and habits of our people.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is our duty and responsibility towards our youth and future generations to engage in the transformation of our society into a sustainable and environmentally friendly model.

This has been precisely captured through our vision to achieve a “cleaner, greener and safer Mauritius”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the furtherance of this vision, we have introduced policies and programmes to shape social norms, and keep Mauritius clean.

Presently, multiple agencies are involved in cleaning works in towns, villages, public beaches and lagoons, tourist sites, motorways, public roads, rivers, canals, and drains. A sizeable amount of financial, human, and logistical resources is being deployed by Ministries,

Departments, Local Authorities and other public entities for cleaning activities and embellishment.

In this respect, an amount of around Rs5.6 billion has been spent over the last three financial years by the different public institutions. This covers waste management, which includes waste collection, operation and maintenance of transfer stations and transportation of wastes to landfill, as well as operation and maintenance of the landfill site. These services are provided by various public institutions and are summarised as follows –

- (i) main public roads are maintained and cleaned by Local Authorities using both in-house employees, and through outsourced services on a daily basis. Further, they are responsible for cleaning and embellishment of the city, towns and villages. Rivers, canals, watercourses, and drains are also cleaned by Local Authorities with the support of other relevant institutions or outsourced to the private sector. Cleaning of bare lands is within the sole obligation of respective owners. However, those which are situated in the residential areas and which are left unattended, thus causing health and security hazards, are also partly cleaned by Local Authorities;
- (ii) cleaning and embellishment of our public beaches and lagoons is assigned to the Beach Authority;
- (iii) tourist sites and our different islets are under the responsibility of the Tourism Authority;
- (iv) the Road Development Authority is responsible for ensuring cleaning along the motorways with the support of the Local Authorities, and the Living Environment Unit of the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change. It also embellishes roundabouts with the assistance of private sector organisations;
- (v) operation and maintenance of transfer stations and landfill sites is under the purview of the Solid Waste Management Division of the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change, and

- (vi) legislation regarding illegal dumping and littering which damaged our environment, is enforced by the *Police de l'Environnement*, Local Authorities, and the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House would also recall that a set of measures was announced in Budget Speech 2019/2020, including the setting up of a Centralised Cleaning Coordination (3C) Committee under the aegis of the then Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands to coordinate administratively all cleaning activities in the different regions across the island, with focused actions in a number of priority areas, including public beaches and lagoons, tourist sites, city centres, motorways, embellishment and regular maintenance of roundabouts along motorways, main public roads, rivers, canals, watercourses, and drains.

In the same context, the “*Moris Nou Zoli Pei*” campaign was launched to sensitise the population on the importance of keeping the environment clean.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since its setting up, the 3C Committee had embarked on several major cleaning and embellishment campaigns at national, regional, and local levels with the participation of various stakeholders, including the private sector, Non-Governmental Organisations and the community.

The 3C Committee, in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change, reviewed the Local Government Act and the Environment Protection Act in respect of the harmonisation of fine regarding illegal dumping and littering. Regulations were made thereunder to bring uniformity and consistency in the enforcement of the law.

Tougher penalties, including terms of imprisonment, were also introduced by the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change.

Mr Speaker, Sir, however, it is considered that this administrative arrangement should have a legal framework to ensure better coordination and use of available resources, monitoring and supervision of the implementation of cleaning and embellishment programmes. Mr Speaker, Sir, moreover, it has been observed that certain cleaning activities are cross cutting or overlapping with each other and require the intervention of several departments. Resolving such

cross cutting or overlapping issues by several departments causes bottlenecks, delay in service delivery and citizens' frustration.

It is interesting to note that since its inception, the Citizen Support Portal has registered, for the period 28 April 2017 to 06 May 2022, 13,512 complaints as follows –

- (i) 6,293 in respect of cleaning of bare lands;
- (ii) 3,785 for removal of domestic refuse and bulky waste;
- (iii) 2,793 relating to cleaning of drains, rivers and road sides, and
- (iv) 641 concerning cutting and lopping of hazardous trees by the Forestry Services.

Mr Speaker, Sir, that is why precisely we are here today, introducing this piece of legislation. The National Environment Cleaning Authority Bill indeed constitutes a major breakthrough and landmark as it translates Government action to further improve the living conditions of our citizens.

In fact, paragraphs 371 and 372 of the Budget Speech of this Financial Year provides for the establishment of the National Environment Cleaning Authority under the aegis of my Office that will spearhead the national cleaning agenda.

Through the setting-up of the National Environment Cleaning Authority, we will bring together all the expertise and know-how of the relevant stakeholders, such as the Local Authorities, the Road Development Authority, the Tourism Authority, the Beach Authority, and other relevant stakeholders, including entities financed by the National Environment and Climate Change Fund, thus providing a “one-stop-shop” approach for better coordination, results and accountability for cleaning and embellishment in the country.

This will definitely spare us from any duplication of work and wastage of time, human resources and public funds.

Therefore, the main object of this Bill, as specified in the Explanatory Memorandum, is to provide for the establishment of the National Environment Cleaning Authority which shall be responsible for –

- (a) the development of a National Cleaning and Embellishment Strategy with an Action Plan to embellish Mauritius and keep Mauritius clean, in consultation with relevant Ministries and other stakeholders;
- (b) identifying and prioritising, in collaboration with relevant Ministries and other stakeholders, the sites to be kept clean and embellished, and
- (c) coordinating, monitoring and supervising the implementation of cleaning and embellishment programmes.

The Bill further provides that the National Environment Cleaning Authority shall, in the discharge of its functions and exercise of its powers, *inter alia* –

- (a) undertake, as and when required, cleaning and embellishment works and cause cleaning and embellishment works to be undertaken by a Local Authority, the Road Development Authority, the Tourism Authority, the Beach Authority and other relevant stakeholders, including entities financed by the National Environment and Climate Change Fund;
- (b) assist and be assisted by a Local Authority, the Road Development Authority, the Tourism Authority, the Beach Authority, and other relevant stakeholders, including entities financed by the National Environment and Climate Change Fund, and
- (c) advise the Minister on cleaning and embellishment policies and strategies, including recycling of waste and on any other matter related thereto.

This Authority will operate under the aegis of my Office, and will spearhead the national cleaning agenda.

The role of the National Environment Cleaning Authority in coordinating cleaning activities being undertaken by the Local Authorities and other stakeholders will confirm the proactive approach being taken by my Government in mitigating risks associated with flooding caused by obstructed watercourses and drains.

This will make way for a clean and salubrious environment, thus contributing towards mitigating the spread of vector-borne diseases. The cleaning and embellishment of Mauritius will be an asset to the tourism industry.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now highlight the main provisions of the Bill.

With a view to meeting its objectives, Clause 5 of the Bill makes provision for the Authority, to –

- (a) carry out an inventory and mapping of all sites to be cleaned and embellished and maintain a database thereof;
- (b) undertake, as and when required, cleaning and embellishment works;
- (c) address any gaps or bottlenecks with respect to tasks assigned to each relevant organisation in the implementation of cleaning and embellishment programmes;
- (d) prepare a sensitisation and communication strategy and Action Plan and ensure its implementation;
- (e) promote community engagement in the cleaning and embellishment programmes;
- (f) mobilise resources so as to support the effort of public organisations in the delivery of the cleaning and embellishment programmes;
- (g) develop a monitoring and evaluation framework to ensure that all stakeholders provide feedback regularly;
- (h) cooperate with any other organisation, including the private sector, having objects wholly or partly similar to its objects, and
- (i) advise the Minister on cleaning and embellishment policies and strategies, including recycling of waste and on any other matter related thereto.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the National Environment Cleaning Authority will be an apex institution responsible for the development and implementation of a National Cleaning Strategy with an Action Plan for the island of Mauritius. This will include waste collection and waste recycling in the medium to long-term.

The National Environment Cleaning Authority will monitor the cleaning, greening and embellishment exercise over the island in a holistic manner and address any gaps or bottlenecks with respect to tasks assigned to each relevant organisation, including seeking funds as well as implementing the task whenever required.

The National Environment Cleaning Authority will also promote community engagement and the private sector in the cleaning and embellishment programmes for a cleaner and greener Mauritius for the benefit of the population.

The focus will not only be on cleaning and embellishment but also on sensitisation and raising awareness of the population on the importance and urgency of keeping Mauritius clean, green, and safe.

Keeping Mauritius clean is a collective responsibility and can only be achieved with the support of the whole nation. That is why the National Environment Cleaning Authority will come up with sustainable programmes to sensitise the community at large on the issue of cleaning and embellishment, while involving their active participation therein.

All the different stakeholders will be called upon to play major roles in the implementation of the programmes when human and financial resources and logistic facilities will be made available.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Clause 6 of the Bill empowers the National Environment Cleaning Authority to instruct a Local Authority, the Road Development Authority, the Tourism Authority, the Beach Authority, and other relevant stakeholders, including entities financed by the National Environment and Climate Change Fund, to carry out any cleaning and embellishment works.

Once the cleaning and embellishment exercise is carried out and the wastes collected and transported to one of the five transfer stations located across the island, the Solid Waste Management Division will be required to manage these wastes by ensuring that all the wastes that are brought to the transfer stations are properly sent to the Mare Chicose sanitary landfill, and disposed of in an environmentally safe and sound manner.

The disposal of the wastes at the Mare Chicose landfill is, however, a short-term measure. In the medium to long-term, that is, as from 2024 onwards, the Solid Waste Management Division is envisaging to set up regional composting plants and sorting units with a view to processing organic wastes such as food wastes and green wastes for production of compost, while the sorting unit will accept recyclable materials such as paper, plastics, carton, and metal for further separation and recycling.

The regional composting plants and sorting units are expected to be operational, most likely, as from mid-2024. Thereafter, all wastes collected will have to be segregated into two main streams, namely organic wastes, and recyclable materials. The organic waste stream will comprise any food wastes and green wastes/branches collected and sent to the composting plant, while the recyclable stream will consist of waste materials such as paper, carton, plastics, and metals, and sent to the sorting units. A third waste stream, namely residual waste, may be envisaged and this waste will be disposed to the landfill.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with the coming of the regional composting plants and the sorting units and the requirements for wastes to be collected as segregated streams instead of commingled streams, the National Environment Cleaning Authority will be called upon to ensure that all the relevant stakeholders follow this new guideline of waste collection and transportation.

With the efficient operation of these new waste management facilities, we shall thus move towards the implementation of a circular economy approach in the solid waste sector, boost recycling and resource recovery, and meet target 12.5 of Sustainable Development Goal 12 on “Sustainable Consumption and Production”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Clause 7 provides for the Authority to be administered and managed by a Board comprising a Chairperson, representatives of both public and private sectors as well as appointment of two persons having wide experience in the field of landscaping or urban regeneration.

The Bill also makes provision for co-opting of any persons who may assist the Authority in attaining its objectives.

Clause 10 further provides for the appointment of a Director by the Minister, who will be responsible for the day-to-day activities of the Authority.

Other salient features of the Bill pertain to the following –

- (i) Clause 11 empowers the Board to appoint such staff and consultants following approval of the Minister for the proper discharge of its functions under this Act. Moreover, the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service may, subject to the approval of the Public Service Commission or the Local Government Service

Commission, designate such public officers to assist the Authority in the discharge of its functions;

- (ii) Clause 12 provides for the Authority to establish a General Fund into which all monies received shall be paid and out of which all payments required to be made for the purposes of this Act by the Authority shall be effected;
- (iii) In accordance with Clause 13, the Authority shall submit to its responsible Minister, not later than 31 March in every year, an estimate of the income and expenditure of the Authority for the next financial year for his approval;
- (iv) Clause 14 provides that the Board shall prepare an annual report together with an audited statement of accounts on the operations of the Authority, in respect of every financial year to be laid before the National Assembly. Moreover, the auditor of the Authority shall be the Director of Audit; and
- (v) Finally, Clause 15 empowers the Minister to give such written directions of a general nature to the Authority, as he considers necessary in the public interest, and the Authority shall comply with such directions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with a view to expediting the setting up of the National Environment Cleaning Authority, technical assistance will be sought from development partners through the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development for the preparation of the National Cleaning Strategy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill marks another milestone in our bid to keep Mauritius clean. The state of public cleanliness reflects the character of our citizens. Through collective action, we shall forge together and in unity a cleaner, safer, and stronger Mauritius for generations to come.

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

The Deputy Prime Minister seconded.

(6.29 p.m.)

Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill): Mr Speaker, Sir, as rightly said by the hon. Prime Minister, this Bill, if implemented, has as main objects, and I quote –

“The development of a National Cleaning and Embellishment Strategy with an Action Plan to embellish Mauritius and keep Mauritius clean, in consultation with relevant Ministries and other stakeholders;

(b) identifying and prioritising, in collaboration with relevant Ministries and other stakeholders, the sites to be kept clean and embellished;”

It is a blatant fact that wherever we travel through the island we are bound to encounter eyesores in respect of waste materials thrown on roadsides, public recreational spaces and gardens in miserable states, public buildings which need upgrading, maintenance, cleaning and fresh painting. Mauritius has turned into an unclean country and we all know that this causes much harm to our tourist industry and to the local population and public health.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is the situation as far as cleaning and embellishment are concerned. But then, we may ask: are there no institutions, bodies, authorities whose duty, amongst other responsibilities, is to clean, maintain, upgrade and embellish Mauritius? They do exist, Mr Speaker, Sir. We have the Local Authorities that is the Municipalities, District Councils, Village Councils, as mentioned by the hon. Prime Minister, the Road Development Authority, the Tourism Authority, the Beach Authority and organisations financed by the National Environment and Climate Change Fund.

Mauritius is not clean and embellished for the simple reason that these institutions and authorities are not working as they should. They are failing in their assigned responsibilities to clean and embellish Mauritius. We witness with utmost sadness and pain the state of our towns and villages. It is really a pity when we look around and we find sites and other public places which, some years back, were small jewels, that those same places have been converted into waste deposits.

To make it simple, Mr Speaker, Sir, let us say that these authorities are not fulfilling and assuming their responsibilities correctly. But then, the question is: why are they not doing their work properly? Let me, Mr Speaker, Sir, take as an example to explain my point, the case of Councillors of Municipalities, District Councils and Village Councils. Mr Speaker, Sir, our towns and villages are in this state because those Local Authorities suffer from a scarcity of means. It is not normal that the gross bulk of Local Authorities' budget goes to the salary item.

No real funds are made available for purchase of new equipment and implementation of new projects.

During those past years, Mr Speaker, Sir, numerous reports have been commissioned on local administration. They have unanimously proposed to re-establish the powers of local administration, to give them more financial means to carry out properly their duties. On the other end, matters are deteriorating in local administrators due to the incompetent and unprofessionalism of ruling councillors whose allegiance is more towards Government than towards the citizens. Government is aware of this state of things but instead of logically finding solutions to those two weaknesses I have just mentioned, that is organised as soon as possible regional elections and thus have a new and competent team in our local administration and give them the means, that Government proposes to create a super body which shall control those local bodies, that is, a superstructure which will, in fact, be controlled by the Prime Minister's Office.

Government continues thus to steal the powers of Municipalities and District Councils so much that those local administrations are but Government puppets without any real powers to perform their duties.

Quels sont les facteurs qui ont contribué à cette incapacité, à cette dégradation, à cette léthargie des collectivités locales. Permettez-moi, M. le président, de résumer ces raisons –

- viole de la démocratie régionale, renvoie des élections ;
- la centralisation outrancière au lieu d'une décentralisation planifiée pour plus d'autonomie. Pour preuve, les collectivités locales ont été transformées en des *sub-offices* des PPS ;
- le sous-financement des collectivités locales par rapport à leur responsabilité est statutaire ;
- le manque de main d'œuvres et la démotivation du personnel ;
- l'opacité de la *Local Government Service Commission* ;
- le manque ou l'absence de supervision ;
- pas de politique de maintenance régulière ;
- le service municipale est plus réactif que proactif ;

- les équipements sont sous utilisés et mal entretenus ;
- absence de synergie avec la communauté, les forces vives, les communautés du quartier, par conséquence davantage pour ne pas aller encore plus loin.

M. le président, les citoyens ne croient guère aux capacités ou pire à la réelle volonté des collectivités locales de bien gérer la ville. Au lieu de créer des nouvelles institutions qui entraîneront de lourdes dépenses administratives, il faut revigorer les collectivités locales ; leur fournir les moyens humains, techniques, logistiques et financiers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, everybody knows that this Government cherishes big projects that cost millions and billions of rupees usually financed by foreign debts but those projects avail themselves to be *des éléphants blancs*. Are we creating a new white elephant with this National Environment cleaning up embellishment authority? Are we, once more, throwing public funds through the windows?

On this particular part of the Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, no indications are laid out about the funding, real funding of this authority. But it is working capital and its development fund. How will the authority be financed? Or should we guess that Government intends to use the money of the National Environment Climate Change Fund for this purpose instead of funding the different existing cleaning and embellishment programmes of Local Authorities and ecological private organisations.

This Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, if it is voted, will contribute to further undermine, reduce drastically the few remaining powers of local administration. Regional elections have been twice postponed; local powers are being shifted to Ministries and now to a new authority. Is it Government's ambition to scrap completely elected local administration? This is a legitimate concern.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to conclude, let me, deep from my heart, tell the hon. Prime Minister that this Bill is a nonsense. It aims at doing what other institutions are supposed...

Mr Speaker: No, please! Hon. Member, this is not a parliamentary word.

Mr Nagalingum: Okay, I withdraw the word.

Mr Speaker: Thank you, very much.

Mr Nagalingum: ... to be doing but not doing it properly and this is for all those reasons I mentioned above. Instead of creating a new white elephant *pour protéger quelques gens du pouvoir* and dilapidate public funds, Government should organise long due regional elections, amend the law to give back their powers to local administration and give them more financial means and more autonomy.

This is the solution. Let us get back to the principle and practice of democracy. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Hurreeram!

(6.41 p.m.)

The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Mr M. Hurreeram): Mr Speaker, Sir, on this side of the House we believe in action! We have a Prime Minister who walks the talks. Ever since in politics, the Prime Minister has been championing for the cleanliness of our environment and no wonder, at each possible occasion, *il met la main à la pâte pour nettoyer et pour témoigner son amour pour un environnement sain qu'il veut léguer à nos enfants demain. Certains vont encore parler de moi dans leur rubrique profil bas parce que j'ai dit ici que le Premier ministre sera reconnu comme le père de l'île Maurice moderne mais pour une fois, M. le président, je pense que j'avais raison parce que vous ne serez pas seulement le père de l'île Maurice moderne M. le Premier ministre, vous serez le père d'une île Maurice moderne et propre !*

Je ne pense pas qu'il faut tenir rigueur au député du MMM qui m'a précédé. On pourrait écouter ces auto proclamés grands défenseurs de l'environnement de l'autre côté de la Chambre mais très vite on va comprendre qu'ils sont totalement coupés de la réalité. 22 ans, M. le président, rester hors du pouvoir, perdre les élections après les élections, je pense qu'ils ont du mal à comprendre qu'aujourd'hui l'île Maurice moderne a besoin d'autre chose que les municipalités d'antan – qui ont fonctionné à leur époque – mais aujourd'hui, *there are other ways of doing things and the Prime Minister said it !*

This National Environment Cleaning Authority will be an apex body. What is an apex body? Let me take two seconds to explain. As we know, everybody's job is nobody's job. There are several authorities doing the same job. There is a lot of overlapping. For instance, on the

motorway, the central verge of the motorway is being looked into by the RDA and the two sides of the motorway are being looked by the Ministry of Environment. The road users that are actually using the road and you think, they will be only seeing on one side of the RDA and not seeing the other side of the Ministry of Environment. They do not care who cleans what. For them, it is one Government and rightly so!

So, today the Prime Minister, bringing this Bill in the House, *c'est pour mettre un peu de l'ordre dans la maison et que finalement comme il l'a bien mentionné lui-même, qu'est-ce qu'il veut finalement ? Qu'est-ce que ce gouvernement-là veut finalement ? Que le public a la satisfaction en regardant autour de lui, en regardant son pays.*

So, no wonder today, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are in this House with this piece of legislation that provides for the creation of an authority that will focus itself on beautifying our environment. Just like we did with the Land Drainage Authority which falls under the purview of my Ministry and oversees our drainage strategy, the National Environment Cleaning Authority (NECA) will allow the Government to have a holistic approach to the maintenance of our environment as a whole.

The Road Development Authority which also falls under the purview of my Ministry, will be directly involved in this project and if you allow me Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to stress on its role in the near future. The road network in Mauritius consists of around 2,300 kilometres of roads, out of which only 1,274 kilometres fall under the responsibility of the RDA and are comprised of the motorway, A roads and B roads. The RDA undertakes to ensure the maintenance and upgrading of those roads, its infrastructures such as guardrails and signage but it also involves its environment. This involves the trimming of grass and weeding, lopping of branches, trimming of hedges, cleaning of drains, repair and replace damaged guardrails and concrete slabs, painting of road infrastructures.

Presently, the RDA is responsible for the embellishment of the central verge of our motorways which represents approximately 500,000 square metres. Added to that, another almost 1 m. square meters which represents the vegetation along our main roads. You will agree, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a considerable surface area and requires much time and labour to maintain at once, especially during the summer, rainy season. This is why the RDA welcomes the initiative of the hon. Prime Minister to come forward with the NECA which will act as a

guide for the maintenance and embellishment of our classified roads and motorways. The NECA will provide all the authorities concerned with a strategy which will henceforth ensure a standard level in terms of maintenance across the whole island.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government is sparing no efforts when it comes to our environment. Despite all the criticism, we, on this side of the House, already have a long list of measures taken to improve our environment. The bold policy decisions taken by my friend and colleague, hon. Ramano, with regard to single use plastic products; for example, he even started his mandate with “*les assises de l’environnement*”. We voted the Climate Change Act in this very Assembly.

The culture of recycling is consistently improving year by year and we are now capable of recycling tyres! We came up with the National Youth Environment Council to encourage youth participation in the protection of the environment. There are now schemes to encourage the use of electric cars and the installation of solar panels for both electricity production and water usage. The policy of this Government is, for every tree that has been cut down, we are compelled to plant 3 trees and this is applied to every infrastructural project implemented by this Government, even at Chamarel where road stabilisation works are ongoing and I had the pleasure to inform the House about the number of trees that has been planted and transplanted in the region of Nouvelle France.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will not stop reminding members of this House of the danger we are facing because of climate change. Fortunately, this Government is farsighted and has, at its head, a visionary Prime Minister, who came up with the Land Drainage Authority in 2017. Then also, *c’était la même rhétorique*; jobs for the guys, *éléphant blanc* and today we see and very soon we will come with the Land Drainage Master Plan. Today we have been able to come up with a 3-D model of our topography which allows us to identify regions which may be subject to flood and this Government is injecting massively to ensure that we secure those locations.

The Bill we are debating today bears testimony to this Government’s endeavour, not only to improve our infrastructure, but also to preserve our environment and attain sustainability and make Mauritius an eco-friendly country and a green destination.

This Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, and the authority that is being created, have nothing to do with the famous *Maurice Ile Durable*. A dream sold to us by Dr. Navin Ramgoolam and spearheaded by hon. Osman Mahomed. Where is it now? *Un flop total, M. le président!* That one was

l'éléphant blanc! This was the job for the guy. They promised us more than a 100 projects worth billions of rupees. I wonder where did all that money go? Unfortunately, hon. Mahomed is not speaking; they walked out. Obviously, they could have enlightened the House. And then, they dare to talk about *l'éléphant blanc!*

La ferme photovoltaïque des Seetaram, M. le président ! N'en parlons pas des ampoules économiques qui ont couté des millions de roupies au *CEB* ! Je n'ose même pas vous rappelez la centrale à charbon que le gouvernement Travailleurs a voulu nous imposer et heureusement que le gouvernement MSM était là pour faire échec à ce projet. Ils osent aujourd'hui nous parler de durabilité, mais la seule chose durable qu'ils nous ont léguée, est leur place garantie sur les bancs de l'opposition, M. le président.

Coming back to the Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am confident the measures taken by this Government in favour of the environment will bear fruits and stand the test of time for generations to come. This is called proper management. The NECA will be the driving engine that will help to coordinate all agencies involved in the maintenance and embellishment of our environment. They can criticise all they want. But, all agencies that have been created under this Government have delivered. Unlike the Labour Party regime, we have not invented bodies to accommodate *chamchas*.

And there is a world of difference, Mr Speaker, Sir, when we compare those who were being nominated between 2005 to 2014 and the nominations under Pravind Kumar Jugnauth.

I am convinced this authority will be a success and the results will soon be visible on our roads, in our surroundings and in our immediate environment.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Ramdhany!

(6.53 p.m.)

Dr. A. Ramdhany (First Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or): Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the debate. At the very outset, allow me to thank the hon. Prime Minister for bringing this important legislation to the House.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in line with the policy of the Government to create a cleaner, greener and safer environment, and with the inception of the Clean-Up and Embellishment Campaign

launched by the hon. Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth in 2017, this Bill will consolidate the existing legal framework.

Mr Speaker, Sir, ensuring the cleanliness of our public spaces is a shared responsibility. Beyond what the Government can do, we, members of the public must help keep Mauritius clean as a matter of habit and reflex. The majority of Mauritians take pride in keeping Mauritius clean and most of our public spaces are clean because of efficient cleaning services. However, Mr Speaker Sir, it is a pity to see dumping by irresponsible individuals throughout the island when, in fact, there are many scavenging facilities provided by the local authorities island wide.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to refer the section 2 of the Environment Protection Act 2002, which is a declaratory provision and reads as follows –

“It is declared that every person in Mauritius shall use his best endeavours to preserve and enhance the quality of life by caring responsibly for the natural environment of Mauritius.”

This provision, Mr Speaker, Sir, as innocuous as it may seem, in fact, entrusts each and every individual with an environmental stewardship. True it is, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the legal framework in regard to the protection of the environment is already robust, but the proposed legislation will further bolster it with a very holistic approach of the National Environment Cleaning Authority.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritians are truly blessed to be born in this beautiful island and we often fail to realise it. Recently, the National Flag, Arms of Mauritius, National Anthem and other National Symbols of Mauritius Bill was voted into legislation, with the aim to instil a sense of pride in our country. Mr Speaker, Sir, this sense of pride should be reflected in our commitment, as a nation, to protect and keep clean the paradise that Mark Twain had so marvellously defined.

Mr Speaker, Sir, cleaning and embellishment must become a way of life and this is precisely what the Bill aims to achieve. Our economy depends very much on the hospitality sector. A serious and sustained level of cleanliness and embellishment is essential in the higher interests of the tourism industry.

My constituency, Mr Speaker, Sir, has always been the window of Mauritius with regard to the tourism industry. We have been marketing our beautiful beaches, our lagoon, our remarkable skills, our diversity, and our sense of hospitality to attract foreign visitors. However, we are now increasingly conscious that we need to add other dimensions in our marketing strategy. This is where the importance of the National Environment and Cleaning Authority Bill is felt. Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill places Mauritius on the starting block in our race towards a cleaner and more beautiful Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to make a special mention about our cleaners workforce. They are our essential workers and frontline heroes. They have worked hard, particularly during the pandemic, to keep our public spaces clean, sanitised and litter-free. Let us all extend our appreciation to them and help empower them even further.

The COVID-19 situation has provided the environmental services industry with an opportunity to transform and emerge stronger. For example, to upskill the cleaning workforce, this will enhance the career prospects of workers through a structured training framework. A multi-skilled cleaner can expect to earn higher wages.

Keeping our environment clean calls for the participation of our people and the right mindset, not like the Opposition. While there exists legal provisions to punish people for littering the environment, we understand that the system may not effectively put the Environment Police at all nooks and corners. We may not win the battle for a cleaner environment through a repressive strategy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have come to understand that we have to set the example. This is what the National Environment and Cleaning Authority aims to achieve. In fact, we do have different agencies which have their own mandates to ensure cleanliness. However, there is a need for a coordinating mechanism. The Road Development Authority, the Tourism Authority, the Beach Authority, and the Local Authorities are there to implement programmes. However, they have defined boundaries and cleaning decisions are taken separately by these organisations. Ad-hoc approach has, so far, remained the practice, especially in the context of specific festivals.

The National Environment and Cleaning Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, aims at bringing a holistic approach with regard to cleaning and embellishing Mauritius. The National Environment and Cleaning Authority would have the powers to develop an action plan and a holistic strategy to

keep Mauritius clean, to embellish specific places, in consultation with other stakeholders. This authority would also monitor the cleaning and embellishment activities taken by the different agencies mentioned earlier.

Placed under the supervision of the hon. Prime Minister himself, the National Environment and Cleaning Authority would be directly answerable to the hon. Prime Minister. There would be no room for delays, gaps and bottlenecks. While coordinating the activities of different Agencies, the National Environment and Cleaning Authority would also rally support of the community and actors of the private sector to achieve set objectives under this Bill.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius is a privileged land abounding in places of natural beauty within very short distances. The goal of embellishment is within our reach. We can achieve it.

Some time back in our history, when I was growing up, there were some programmes under the label of "*fleurir Maurice*" which were implemented through initiatives of some Village Councils. I remember trees were planted on road reserves. Flowers and other decorative plants were grown. Competitions were organised and winning villages and municipal wards were honoured.

The National Environment and Cleaning Authority would have to explore the latent possibilities within the community and the private sector. The latter do already adopt roundabouts along highways. The House takes good note of the effort displayed by private sector organisations.

Mr Speaker, Sir, many households do already embellishes the reserves along their respective property. However, it does not make much sense if the whole neighbourhood is not in harmony.

The National Environment and Cleaning Authority would have the responsibility to provide the leadership for an embellished Mauritius. The embellishment challenge is not impossible to achieve. Countries of the Middle East have effectively overcome the greenery deficit and successfully embellished public places despite the climate challenge and not so conducive environments. Malaysia, where rain is abundant, has adopted the embellishment culture since many decades. Mauritius will not have major difficulties in maintaining the

domesticated greenery in public places. Mauritius is not a rain-deficient country. The cost of maintaining the greenery would be far less than that in Dubai, for example.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a need for the right leadership to make Mauritius clean, green and beautiful. This is the goal set by the hon. Prime Minister after having embarked on modernising the country.

I sincerely look forward for a day, in a future not so remote, when Mauritians and foreign visitors would be enjoying their journeys either by the metro, with its magnificent sceneries from the heights, or by bus along a clean environment and green and flourished sceneries along the roads and highways.

In conclusion, Mr Speaker, Sir, each one of us is an integral part of our collective effort to protect our Environment and keep our island clean. Our level of public hygiene reflects who we are as a people. Our daily choices define the cleanliness of our environment, and the safety of our community. By taking proactive action, and making meaningful adjustment in our daily lives, we can make a difference. With the Government, industries and community working together, I am confident that we can keep Mauritius clean and become a litter-free nation.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: MP J. Bérenger!

(7.04 p.m.)

Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal): Une nouvelle autorité est en train d'être créée et elle viendra s'ajouter à une longue liste d'institutions dysfonctionnelles et voraces de l'argent des contribuables.

M. le président, je ne vois aucune explication valable qui puisse justifier la création de cette *National Environment Cleaning Authority*. En réalité, la seule raison de la création de cette autorité est d'assurer la pérennité du MSM. Depuis 2019, ce gouvernement n'a cessé de créer des *agencies*, des *authorities*, des *councils*. Ils diront certainement *travay la pe fer* mais ce n'est pas forcément le cas. Et ne voient-ils pas que ce faisant, ils enlèvent la liberté d'action à des organismes et structures qui sont déjà là ?

M. le président, je m'attèlerai à mettre en lumière les incohérences de ce projet de loi dans les minutes qui me sont allouées. En premier lieu, cette loi vient dupliquer les

responsabilités et représente dans les faits un aveu d'incompétence, d'inefficience et d'inefficacité.

La semaine dernière nous avons débattu la motion de censure contre le gouvernement. Et bien cette semaine, c'est le Premier ministre qui vient désapprouver et censurer plusieurs de ses ministres et des *chairpersons* qu'il a lui-même placé à la tête de nombreuses autorités existantes. C'est une véritable claque pour ces ministres et ces *chairpersons*. Une claque très sonore !

Ce projet de loi équivaut à une motion de blâme d'abord contre le ministre des Collectivités locales si on s'en tient à la section 50 du *Local Government Act* ; contre le ministre de l'Environnement et de son *Solid Waste Division* si on s'en tient à la section 89 de l'*Environment Protection Act*; contre le ministre des Infrastructures publiques et responsable de la *Road Authority* si on s'en tient à la section 4 de la *Road Authority Act*. Et au-delà d'être une motion de blâme à ses ministres, avec cette nouvelle autorité, le gouvernement est en train de répéter les mêmes erreurs, c'est-à-dire rendre tout le monde responsable de tout et au final personne ne sera responsable de rien, et le travail ne sera pas fait.

Prenons des exemples concrets, le nettoyage des drains. Une tâche dont la responsabilité est supposée revenir aux administrations régionales mais aussi à la RDA, à la LDA et le résultat est que *sakenn pas boul* et finalement, les drains sont bouchés et le pays est inondé. Le gouvernement refait la même erreur ici avec le *National Environment Cleaning Authority*, la *Beach Authority*, la *Road Development Authority*, la *Tourism Authority*, les *District Councils* et les municipalités. Toutes ces autorités ont déjà la responsabilité de nettoyer et d'embellir. Au final, on verra la même chose que pour les drains. Chaque autorité se renverra la balle et le travail ne sera pas fait. Le Premier ministre dit qu'il faut faire la coordination entre les autorités, mais il y a déjà en place une *National Environment Commission*, un *Environment Coordination Committee*. Pourquoi ne pas les utiliser ? Pourquoi ne pas les renforcer ? Ce qui m'amène à mon deuxième point.

Ce projet de loi affaiblit davantage les organismes existants. Et comme je viens de le demander, je ne comprends pas pourquoi ne pas plutôt renforcer et responsabiliser davantage ces organismes qui sont déjà existants. En même temps qu'il crée des doublons, ce projet de loi diminue les rôles des autres institutions publiques qui sont supposées assumer cette responsabilité de nettoyage et d'embellissement, y compris les *District Councils* et municipalités,

et octroie donc encore plus de pouvoirs au Premier ministre comme s'il n'en avait pas assez, qui en tant que ministre responsable du *National Environment Cleaning Authority*, pourra donner des ordres à d'autres autorités lorsque la tâche n'est pas remplie par celle-ci. En effet, parmi les fonctions de cette autorité, il y a, je cite –

« *Undertake, as and when required, cleaning and embellishment works (...),* »

Donc, nous sommes en droit de nous demander combien d'officiers seront recrutés pour faire ce travail, avec quelle formation.

On sait aussi que comme expliqué dans l'*Explanatory Memorandum*, cette nouvelle autorité peut, je cite –

« (...) *cause cleaning and embellishment works to be undertaken by a local authority, the Road Development Authority, the Tourism Authority, the Beach Authority and other relevant stakeholders (...)* »

Donc, nous pouvons aussi nous poser naturellement la question, est-ce que l'effectif des autorités déjà en charge du nettoyage sera augmenté puisque ces autorités que je viens de mentionner manquent clairement des moyens. Et au lieu de les renforcer, au lieu de leur donner plus de pouvoir et des moyens, le gouvernement vient créer une nouvelle autorité et gaspiller l'argent des contribuables qui ont déjà les poches presque vides.

Prenons un exemple, les plages de Pointe aux Piments, Balaclava et les environs - comme beaucoup d'autres mais on va s'arrêter sur celles-là - sont souvent envahies des déchets. Et pour cause, les 25 poubelles débordent tout le temps. J'ai les photos à l'appui et je les dépose.

La collecte des ordures sur le front de mer et la plage publique se fait trop rarement. D'ailleurs un habitant s'en est plaint à la radio pas plus tard que la semaine dernière. Et ce qui est étonnant est que le Chairman de la *Beach Authority* est intervenu sur ce même sujet lors de l'émission et a affirmé qu'il n'y a pas d'entrepreneur désigné pour entretenir cette plage et que la *Beach Authority* ne dispose pas de camions bennes. Et d'affirmer également que la *Beach Authority* bénéficie d'un coup de main de la *Tourism Authority* et du *District Council*.

Dans ces conditions, ce serait quand même assez ironique que le *National Environment Cleaning Authority* aille demander à la *Beach Authority* de procéder à des travaux de nettoyage qu'elle n'arrive déjà pas à faire. C'est le comble de l'ironie. Est-ce que donc, l'effectif et les

moyens des autorités qui ont déjà la responsabilité du nettoyage et de l'embellissement, seront renforcés ?

En troisième lieu, qu'est-ce qui est entendu par *cleaning* puisqu'il ne faut pas encore une fois que le nettoyage se fasse au détriment de la santé ? La protection de l'environnement ne se limite pas à l'aspect visuel, à l'esthétique ou au cosmétique. Embellir c'est bien mais il y a des questions de fond, il y a une pollution moins visible et il ne faut pas que le nettoyage se fasse au détriment de la santé. Il n'est pas précisé dans le projet de loi ce qui est entendu par *cleaning*. J'espère que l'honorable Premier ministre nous en dira plus mais en attendant je présume qu'on parle aussi du désherbage le long des routes et des autoroutes. Je saisis donc cette occasion pour demander quelles sont les produits qui seront et sont utilisés pour cet exercice? À quelle fréquence sont et seront-ils utilisés ? Quelle protection et formation sont données pour ces hommes et femmes qui se baladent le long des routes avec leurs pulvérisateurs et souvent sans le matériel adéquat?

Très souvent, M. le président, les herbicides sont plus néfastes à l'environnement et à la santé qu'autre chose. Lorsqu'ils sont pulvérisés ou épandus globalement, 95 % des pesticides atteignent une destination autre que leur cible selon une étude de George Tyler Miller intitulé - *Sustaining The Earth : An Integrated Approach*. Les eaux de ruissellement ou encore le vent transportent ces produits nocifs vers d'autres milieux, y compris les milieux aquatiques et dégradent davantage nos écosystèmes. Cela a bien évidemment des conséquences létales sur les humains avec des maladies congénitales ou encore le cancer mais aussi augmente la résistance des ravageurs.

Donc, où est le respect des normes environnementales dans cet exercice de *cleaning* ? En cette journée internationale de la santé, j'insiste, le nettoyage ne doit pas se faire au détriment de la santé.

Aussi, quand on parle de nettoyage, M. le président, cela implique forcément la gestion des déchets. Et si l'on veut bien faire les choses, il faudrait nettoyer en triant les déchets. Le Premier ministre l'a mentionné mais en 2022 c'est une réalité : la collecte des tris sélectifs des déchets n'est toujours pas d'actualité. Et comble de l'ironie, la *Beach Authority* par exemple à signer des contrats pour des nettoyages des plages où les compagnies de nettoyage sont supposées trier les déchets plastiques. Mais on ne voit nulle part sur les plages des poubelles

destinées aux plastiques. Et qu'en est-il du recyclage local ? Qu'en est-il du compostage? Le Premier ministre l'a mentionné mais ce ne sont que des belles intentions. Zéro action !

En dernier lieu et pour finir, M. le président, je ferai un ultime appel pour ne pas gaspiller davantage l'argent des contribuables et sauver nos *District Councils* et municipalités. Le gouvernement dispose déjà de plusieurs leviers pour agir et s'ils ne sont pas performants, il faut savoir pourquoi. Est-ce qu'il y a des sous-effectifs ? Est-ce que les ressources sont inadéquates ? Est-ce qu'il y a un manque d'équipement, une démotivation en raison de l'absence de méritocratie ? Ce n'est pas en continuant de gaspiller l'argent des contribuables, et on ne parle pas d'une petite somme; on parle de 100 millions de roupies si je me réfère au dernier budget. Ces 100 millions de roupies devraient revenir aux collectivités locales ou à la limite, à aider les Mauriciens à joindre les deux bouts à la fin du mois.

Donc, ce n'est pas en continuant de gaspiller l'argent des contribuables, en dupliquant les responsabilités que le problème sera réglé. Ce n'est pas en centralisant davantage, en usurpant les pouvoirs des collectivités locales que l'on atteindra les objectifs. Il aurait fallu renforcer les autorités déjà existantes ; les municipalités et *District Councils* doivent retrouver leur autonomie. C'est ce qu'a toujours prôné le MMM. Et il est regrettable que le Premier ministre préfère les sacrifier pour encore une fois avoir le contrôle suprême, avoir la main mise quitte à blâmer au passage ses ministres et a avoué sans vraiment le réaliser, on dirait, que nos institutions publiques supposément responsables du nettoyage et de l'embellissement, ne fonctionnent pas comme elles le devraient à cause du copinage incessant entretenu par ce gouvernement. Ce gouvernement est responsable de la faillite de nos institutions et trouve maintenant le besoin de créer une nouvelle autorité pour faire croire que le travail sera fait.

Mais pour conclure, M. le président, je dirais qu'en multipliant ainsi les autorités, le gouvernement montre ses prétentions d'un cheval de course mais finit toujours par avoir les résultats d'un âne. Merci.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Jutton!

(7.17 p.m.)

Ms T. Jutton (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle): Thank you. Mr Speaker, Sir, as soon as this Government was sworn in 2019, the vision was clear. As caption in our Government programme 2020-2024, the aim was to move...

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am being interrupted and disturbed by noise.

Mr Speaker: Continue!

Ms Jutton: The aim was to move ‘Towards an Inclusive High Income and Green Mauritius and Forging Ahead Together’.

However, early 2020 the whole humanity was hit by the worst pandemic ever of biblical proportion and it was against this backdrop that this Government, under the leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, which took up the cudgels to successfully steer this tiny island of ours towards a climate of hope, of optimism and well-being while other major world economies were faltering with some even going on the brink of bankruptcy. We have been here for the vision, determination, dedication and hard work of the hon. Prime Minister and his team efficiently been reengineering to adapt to the circumstances.

Hence, today, it is with immense pride that I am adding my contribution to the National Environment Cleaning Authority Bill brought to this House by the hon. Prime Minister. ‘Pride’, because it gives me a deep sense of mission to be able to contribute in making his vision for the country a reality. It is an indisputable fact that this country has a Prime Minister who is a man of vision, a man of his words.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the fundamental objective of this Bill goes in line with what the MSM as the leading Party of this country and of the Government, has undertaken since the Party, under the stewardship of the hon. Prime Minister, has started and is continuing to make. It is about the commitment towards the people as a caring Government.

It shows the commitment of the Government towards also meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals with a bid to, on one hand, stem the untold damages already caused to Mother Earth, and on the other hand, to ensure that we, as today’s legislators, bequeath a planet worth living to generations which are yet unborn. And of course, needless to say that planet B does not exist.

Mr Speaker, Sir, hearing hon. Bérenger speak, I am tempted to highlight the series of unprecedented bold actions that this Government has taken to almost change the very landscape of this island as far as a sane, sound and sustainable environment is concerned. But this will take too much time of the House. Suffice it to say that it is unfortunate, Mr Speaker, Sir, that it is often necessary to state the obvious, for those who despite being endowed with sound insight and eyesight, systematically refuse to see in broad daylight, a reality which even those with impaired vision can see.

Be that as it may, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have taken note of what hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger has said. But I also need to remind her that this Government has systematically refrained from falling into the trap of opting for an unbridled spree of wild development. *Ce n'est pas une motion de blâme contre les autorités et non, ce n'est pas de l'incompétence et de l'inefficacité, bien au contraire.* We have rather gone the hard and often unpopular way of paying heed to the overall environmental concern and to sustainable growth and development. This is because we, as a Government, first and foremost, work towards the interest of the country rather seeking easy political mileage.

M. le président, ce projet de loi vise, à travers la mise sur pied d'un corps centralisé, doté de tous les moyens nécessaires la *National Environment Cleaning Authority* pour chapeauter et coordonner toutes les activités ayant trait à l'embellissement et la salubrité de notre territoire. Jusqu'ici, différentes organisations à plusieurs niveaux se sont affairées à leur manière, à rendre notre environnement et une écologie plus salubre, plus saine et plus durable. Mais souvent, en dépit de leurs bonnes intentions, en raison d'une absence de coordination synthétisée, ainsi que peut-être par manque de moyens, ces actions se font d'une manière disparate et finissent involontairement par ne pas être fait au grand dam des environnementalistes.

Mais, comme l'a expliqué le Premier ministre, c'est justement pour endiguer ces actions réalisées à grand frais mais qui se soldent justement par une aberrante futilité qu'on a besoin de la mise sur pied de la *National Environment Cleaning Authority*. Nous voulons que chaque ville, chaque village, chaque quartier de notre belle île Maurice soit d'une salubrité hors pair, et d'un embellissement qui cadre avec les grandes valeurs paysagistes dignes d'une île Maurice moderne et en phase avec les principes du développement durable des Nations unies. Nous voulons que

notre pays soit une vitrine dans cette partie du monde en matière de respect de l'environnement, de la propreté et aussi de l'embellissent du territoire.

Mr Speaker, Sir, just like in Singapore and Dubai, we have seen a lot of initiatives to promoting today a green and clean culture. Recently, in India, the Prime Minister, Modi Ji launched a cleanliness campaign entitled *Swachh Bharat*, meaning a clean India. With this Bill, in Mauritius, our Prime Minister is today launching a legal campaign for a *Swachh Mauritius*, meaning a clean Mauritius. Greening Mauritius is vital because if each country adopts sustainable practices, they can even help to curb down the effects of climate change.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the National Environment Cleaning Authority will have a clear strategy to embellish Mauritius and to keep Mauritius clean. The Authority will work in collaboration, I repeat in collaboration, *et non pas comme l'a prononcé l'honorable Bérenger - affaiblir les autres autorités; bien au contraire*, in collaboration with relevant Ministries and other stakeholders to identify, to prioritise all the sites that have to be kept clean and embellished, *et non pas sanctionner*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it shall act as an apex body as hon. Hurreeram clearly explained, an apex body to coordinate and monitor the implementation of cleaning and embellishment programmes nationwide and to be responsible to address any bottlenecks by any institutions, and a kind of watchdog to ensure that each authority and stakeholder is actually undertaking its responsibilities.

Earlier, the hon. Prime Minister mentioned the 13,512 complaints received on the CSU Platform, amongst which more than 10,000 relate to cleaning of barelands, removal of refuse waste and bulk waste, cleaning of drains and lopping of branches. Mr Speaker, Sir, I have chaired so many CSU Task Forces for my constituency, where no less than 1,000 tickets pertain to illegal dumping and littering, especially on bare lands and the relevant local authorities have been called on to address the complaints.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now come to drains. It is a fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, that no country is spared from the disastrous effects of climate change and our country has, over the last one and a half year, witnessed historical flash floods. And even if climate change is inevitable, our response to it is not. *Ce gouvernement, épousant les valeurs de son leader, croit dans l'action*

and this is why, several measures were adopted to swiftly to mitigate the disastrous effects of flooding.

For instance, in my own constituency, following the flash floods of 16 April, the NDU in collaboration with the Land Drainage Authority immediately embarked on emergency desilting and dredging works on several sites such as –

- a) desilting of 1.2km along Bambous Virieux;
- b) desilting of 1.0km along the Bois des Amourettes Rivulet;
- c) desilting of natural drains at Vieux Grand Port;
- d) desilting of natural drains at Anse Jonchee;
- e) desilting of natural drains at Rivieres des Creoles.

All of this desilting works amounted to more than Rs50 m. and coupled with urgent actions by the local authorities and the Road Development Authority to undertake urgent cleaning of existing drains and culverts which were blocked. *Pour répondre à l'honorable Bérenger encore une fois, oui travay la pe fer.* Works have been satisfactorily completed for most sites and, of course, additional consolidation works are going on and there are a number of drain works coming up in long term.

Mr Speaker, Sir, during these exercises, it was clearly seen that some of the alarming reasons contributing to flooding are debris and dumping in those rivers & outlets. Hence, the desilting & dredging exercise needs to be carried out on a regular basis and this is exactly what the NECA will ensure. But more importantly, Mr Speaker, Sir, the National Environment Cleaning Authority will be responsible for the overall sensitisation and communication strategy. Sensitisation is a *sine qua non* because if in the very first instance, there was no littering and dumping, there would have been no need for cleaning and hence, no flooding due to blocked outlets from debris. Hence, the National Environment Cleaning Authority will also have as mission to create community engagement which will also entail private sector engagement, on which I will dwell on a bit later.

Mr Speaker, Sir, having a clean Mauritius is important not just to ensure that tourists find Mauritius to be a destination of choice but also to support local economies, protect wildlife and raise public awareness of the threat of litter to communities. Prolific litter in communities and

neighbourhoods can misrepresent the area and contribute to health risks and low levels of self-image.

We have a growing number of people, especially our youths who are now very conscious of the need to prevent littering and many youth-led NGOs who are actually doing an amazing job out there promoting the clean and green culture. And I am happy that the Mauritian population, on the whole are widely embracing this new culture.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as outlined by WHO's Healthy Cities Initiative, green public spaces such as parks, sports fields, woods and natural meadows have multiple benefits. As per research, the green spaces are more conducive to initiate to physical activities and have people walking, jogging, cycling and engaging in outdoor games, therefore keeping at bay non-communicable diseases. Hon. Ms J. Bérenger also questioned on the effect of health of the Bill, and I would like here, again, to reiterate that by having such green spaces, which is evidenced by research, this will bring a positive effect to the whole community.

And, Mr Speaker, Sir, our hon. Prime Minister has time and again, at every opportunity requested the population to take care of their health and to practice physical activities and he has, himself, on several occasions, led by example. Not only this shows his care towards his people but his actions inspire so many of us.

Green public spaces will likewise also help to protect and help reduce mental health issues as per research. And green public spaces and the beautiful landscapes have been proven to have a huge effect in enhancing the mental health of every citizen.

Mr Speaker, Sir, being part of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS), it is imperative that we, as a responsible Government, put enough emphasis on ecologically sane and sustainable development. Everything that we do on land will also eventually reach out to our ocean. From littering to clandestine construction, our ocean and its ecosystem will deteriorate. According to the Commonwealth Industrial and Scientific Organisation (CSIRO), the amount of plastic at the bottom of the sea is twice the amount on the surface of the ocean. And as pointed out by Kara Lavender Law, a research oceanography professor at the Sea Education Association –

“If the top item found is tires, we’re talking about illegal dumping,”

and

“If it’s bottle caps and cigarette butts, it is probably litter.”

This is why we are hereby reiterating the aim to keep our beautiful island not just litter-free but also dumping-free. The cost to Local Governments to clean beaches can hence be seen as a huge investment as clean beaches will provide economic benefits to local communities in the form of tourism.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill aims at strengthening this Government’s action and also reducing the damage caused by the lack of actions of the previous Government from 2005 to 2014.

Coming to private sector engagement, Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer to the United Nations Environment Programme, which prone that in a green economy, growth in employment and income are driven by public and private investment and hence, this will allow enhanced energy and resource efficiency, and better ecosystem services. I hereby wish to highlight the collaboration of the private sector in my own constituency to ensure a clean and green Mauritius. For instance, at the level of Ciel Group and Vallée de Ferney Conservation Trust, we have reintroduced more than 30,000 endemic trees and 150 endemic birds. And I also seize this opportunity to applaud the initiative, as hon. Hurreeram mentioned earlier, of the planting of 600 trees in my constituency, in Nouvelle France. Further sustainable developments are planned, fully integrating environmental and social components.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we all know that we are now living in a world full of uncertainties and unpredictability. And as I am concluding, I would say that the ongoing war in Ukraine, and God forbids, its likely expansion, is causing untold miseries to people and to economies around the world. With global disruptions in supply chains, we in Mauritius are not spared. Needless to say that this will affect our overall development and our untiring efforts to ensure a cleaner and greener Mauritius. This is why it is important to usher in measures that would bolster our efforts and this Bill is precisely one of these efforts. The United Nations has declared this decade as the decade for action and our Government is leaving no stone unturned in taking relevant action necessary to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the unmatched progress that this Government has ushered for this country in almost all spheres of activities together, now, with this Bill will further serve to

improve the quality of life of every single citizen and to transform our small island into a little piece of paradise and a beacon of light for the rest of the world.

The hon. Prime Minister mentioned earlier that it is his personal struggle to make Mauritius cleaner, greener and safer, and I hereby fully support his endeavours, and I will end along these lines -

“Ensam, lame dan lame anou batir nu lil Moris modern: Moris Nu Zoli Pei!”

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ramchurrun!

(7.36 p.m.)

Mr P. Ramchurrun (Third Member for Savanne & Black River): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, it is an honour for me to address this august Assembly tonight on the National Environment Cleaning Authority Bill, and I thank the hon. Prime Minister in bringing in this Bill.

Against the backdrop of the current COVID-19 pandemic, it has become primordial to encourage, equip and provide our Mauritian citizens with the right opportunities to take ownership of the cleanliness of our shared public spaces. These very public spaces are indeed under the stewardship of the central and local authorities that are being maintained and given public status for the benefit of the local and international members of the public. Ensuring the cleanliness of our public spaces has always been a shared responsibility between the Government and members of the public. Beyond what the members of the public are already doing in keeping their surroundings clean and safe, since our Government has taken the reins of power, we have been driving the initiative to come up with Action Plans to clean and embellish our island. However, given that the number of stakeholders involved is numerous, there has been a gap to come up with a single authority with full responsibility to manage our country’s cleaning and embellishment initiatives.

Cleaning the environment is the key to existence and survival of life on planet earth. Maintaining a clean environment reduces pollution, preserves our biosphere, protects endangered species and helps preserve the earth’s natural resources. In society, the state of cleanliness, our society represents the mindset. Cleanliness in the simplest terms is the state of being free from

clutter and anything irrelevant and unnecessary, and the maintenance and sustenance of its state. It is one of the fundamental factors that distinguish a progressive, cultured and civilised society from an underdeveloped and uncivilised commune. Cleanliness is an important phenomenon that is not just confined to personal hygiene but covers all aspects of our daily lives. Cleanliness is important for it builds up a healthy environment that facilitates physical and mental well-being and growth. Therefore, its individual as well as collective importance cannot be denied.

Cleaning the environment is the key to existence and survival of life on planet Earth. Cleanliness, be it personal, social or organisational, is not a matter of choice but an obligation. It is essential to incorporate necessary measures to ensure that the environment stays in its natural state, devoid of any perilous influence that may alter its smooth operations or endanger its inhabitants.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our Government's priority is to consolidate our public environmental health resilience against the pandemic and future public health threats and as such, it is of utmost importance to be guided by a universal policy. Hence, one of the primary responsibilities of the National Environment Cleaning Authority will be to pave the way alongside the central and local authorities and the public and private stakeholders to devise, implement and continuously assess and improve the prescribed National Cleaning and Embellishment Strategy plan.

Since the emergence of the pandemic, our approach, and actions with regard to personal sanitation has changed drastically to the extent that, using hand sanitisers or washing our hands, throughout the day, is now entrenched in our habits. However, our public sanitation habits have also witnessed a major paradigm shift in the habits of cleaning and maintaining our common and public spaces. For instance, within all the governmental authorities, we have up-skilled the cleaning workforce to provide disinfection services to keep our public spaces clean and sanitised in an attempt to fight and contain COVID-19.

Mr Speaker, Sir, all around the world, economies at all stages of development are adopting new low-carbon technologies and efficient use of resources to move onto a path of clean, green and sustainable growth. Similarly in Mauritius, we continue to thrive towards green energy, especially after the new Renewable Energy 2030 Roadmap announced by the hon. Minister Lesjongard a few days back. With the introduction of the Metro Express, we have already made a huge step towards promoting green energy and through this Bill, we will be

firmly on the path towards eliminating waste, embellishing the environment and ultimately winning another battle against climate change.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let us recall what the famous American author wrote in his book 'Following the Equator', which he published in 1897 after his long sea voyages and visit to Mauritius on the 15th April 1896 –

“Here the citizen does the talking about the country himself; the stranger is not asked to help. From one citizen you gather the idea that Mauritius was made first, and then heaven; and that heaven was copied after Mauritius.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, what Mark Twain taught the world is that not only Mauritius was copied from heaven and that it is a heaven on earth, but that the Mauritians are the best ambassadors to represent our beautiful country. Hence, through this Bill, the Government will announce again the chance to Mauritians to be ambassadors of their own country's beauty and cleanliness.

One of the main economic pillars, the E-Tourism industry, will be among the first to benefit from this initiative. The National Environment Cleaning Authority will be crucial to hotels and restaurants which are already striving hard to bring back their customers. Indeed, Mauritius is blessed with an abundance of breath-taking landscapes, natural habitats and vegetation and these natural assets are of immense value. Our coastal water, for example, is one means by which we sustain our existence. People from all over the world are drawn to our island to enjoy our beautiful landscapes and shores, supporting hundreds of thousands of jobs in tourism. Cleaning and embellishing our environment are concrete initiatives in sustaining our economic activity. Many of us Mauritians enjoy the different, natural places including seaside and park to spend quality time with friends and families, to exercise or simply to recharge our batteries after a week of hard work. Therefore, the environment is important for us and we have a responsibility to protect and enhance it.

As a reminder, Mr Speaker, Sir, plastic is ingested by several species of marine animals and hundreds of species of birds, causing suffering to these creatures and degrading vital habitats. Thousands of sea mammals and turtles die every year from eating and getting tangled in plastic wastes. This surely is one of the great environmental curses of our time. In order to reduce the demand for plastic and the number of plastics in circulation, the Environment Protection Regulations 2020 came into operation and banned the importation, manufacture,

possession, sale, supply, and use of not less than 10 non-biodegradable single use plastic products since January 2021. Hence, it is essential that bold measures are taken and the creation of the National Environment Cleaning Agency is more than necessary to help our island with the major task of cleaning and maintaining cleanliness. Mr Speaker, Sir, let me quote Mr Ban Ki-moon, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations who said –

“We are the first generation to be able to end poverty and the last generation that can take steps to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. Future generations will judge us harshly if we fail to uphold our moral and historical responsibilities.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government will leave no stone unturned to ensure that high standards are met in order to protect and embellish our environment. Together with different ministries and the private sector, we will strive to leave our natural environment in a better state than when it was found. We will protect and enhance our natural environment so that we can all enjoy and which we can be proud to pass on to the next generation, so that they can have a healthy and beautiful country to live in. The National Environment Cleaning Agency’s operation will operate with this same vision in mind.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me conclude with the pearls of wisdom of late Sir Anerood Jugnauth from 1983, which supports and is in line with the philosophy of the MSM and our Government in setting up the National Environment Cleaning Agency –

“We need to ponder on how we can help Nature to help us, not exploit natural resources rapaciously and denude our earth of its reaches, impoverishing our future generations.”

On the same line, Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritians will recall ‘*Fleurir Maurice*’, a national campaign held in this country - “*Moris Nou Zoli Pei*”, *les assises de développement*, which was campaigned island-wide. In India, as hon. Ms Jutton stated - *Swach Bharat* in India and the annual Clean-Up, the world campaign held in conjunction with United Nations Environment Programme which mobilised an estimate of 35 million volunteers from 130 countries and their motto was - ‘Our place, our planet, our responsibility.’ Mr Speaker, Sir, I will tell hon. Nagalingum from the depth of my heart that, this Bill is vital for a better future and the generation of Mauritius.

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

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

At 7.50 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 9.33 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please be seated!

ANNOUNCEMENT

HON. ASSIRVADEN - EXPULSION - STANDING ORDERS & RULES

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, earlier today, once again, the hon. Second Member for La Caverne and Phoenix, Mr Assirvaden, was asked to withdraw from the House after he challenged the authority bestowed upon me as presiding officer with regard to supplementary questions, both in terms of relevancy and number.

Although Standing Order 79 provides that I am not bound to give any reason in support of any of my decisions, I am making an exception to explain what happened earlier, from a procedural point of view since it appears that some hon. Members persist in ignoring the Standing Orders, Rules and other established practice governing this House.

The conduct of the Chair is, thereafter, commented upon and/or misrepresented outside the House in a manner which is detrimental to this august Assembly. While the Official Report and the video footage testify to what happens during proceedings, it may, however, not always be clear to viewers as to whether same are procedurally in order or not.

In the light of the aforesaid, allow me to refer to the procedure governing Supplementary Questions, namely, Standing Order 26 which provides as follows –

- “(1) Supplementary questions may only be put for the further elucidation of the information requested, and shall be subject to the ruling of the Speaker, both as to relevance and number.
- (2) A supplementary question must not introduce matter not included in the original Question.”

It follows from the above that, once the Chair is satisfied that a question has been sufficiently canvassed, the question of further supplementary questions does not arise.

Moreover, as I intimated in a precedent announcement, as Speaker, whose duty it is to preside the Sittings of the Assembly, I only exercise such authority with which I am endowed.

It is now clear to one and all, I hope, that earlier today, once again, hon. Assirvaden ignored the provisions of the Standing Orders and persisted in the said direction in spite of my guidance and in the circumstances, in order to allow the House proceed with its business, hon. Assirvaden had to be ordered to withdraw from the House.

I thank you for your attention.

Hon. Lobine!

(9.36 p.m.)

Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, as we, the human race, continue to embark on an unknown journey on this irreversible path of destruction of our mother nature and our ecosystem, one certainty that subsists is that we should do whatever is possible to take mitigating actions to alleviate future human sufferings that will continue to affect planet Earth in the form of diseases, climate change and other natural calamities.

As highlighted by the hon. Prime Minister, the United Nations Human Rights Council's recognition that a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is a human right. This can be a game changer, Mr Speaker, Sir, for people and the planet, that is, actions that we will take to protect our environment and to live in a clean environment.

To make it happen, Mr Speaker, Sir, I agree that we should develop a National Cleaning and Embellishment Strategy with an Action Plan to embellish Mauritius and keep Mauritius clean. I also agree that we should identify and prioritise what are the sites that we need to be kept clean and need embellishment. I also agree that we should coordinate, monitor and supervise the implementation of embellishment and cleaning programmes. But, for this to happen, Mr Speaker, Sir, the creation of yet another authority will not suffice.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is much more needed to make this human right a reality for all. We must advance efforts to implement the right, working hand-in-hand with the civil society, the businesses and other stakeholders. We must take urgent environmental action backed by adequate finance and support a just transition to a sustainable human rights-based economy.

There is a crying demand, for instance, Mr Speaker, Sir, to provide the local authorities with this opportunity to continue to help in this quest to keep our country clean with adequate financing and manpower as, Mr Speaker, Sir, more than 80% of the annual budget for local authorities are allocated to those authorities to cater for salaries of staff. That is why local authorities are dysfunctional in their mission to maintain cleanliness around. Even the hon. Prime Minister, at some point in time, said that the local authorities need to be more proactive. Because they do lack incentives, they do not have proper equipment, and they are poorly manned. I do appreciate that this authority will overlook what those local authorities are doing. But empowering those local authorities as well will also help in going a step further for a clean Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, businesses and the private sector as well should integrate environmental considerations in human rights to diligence processes fully accounting for how the environmental effects of their activities can also affect human rights. Here in Mauritius, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is worth pointing out that we have fallen short of two very important targets set on the global stage by multinational environmental agreements. Mauritius pledged to protect 17% of terrestrial and in-land water as well as 10% of coastal habitat by 2025.

As of now, Mr Speaker, Sir, only 4.725% terrestrial area and 0.003% of marine and coastal areas are protected. On the millennium development goals, Mr Speaker, Sir, targets for Co2 emissions per capita emissions continue to grow every year and, Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius overall lacklustre environmental performance at its per capita income level is evident in its below average position in an Environmental Performance Index 2022 where all African Small Island Developing States are singled out. This environmental performance index was conducted by researchers from Yale University and Columbia University in collaboration with the World Economic Forum to measure the cleanliness and environmental friendliness of 180 countries around the world. To accomplish this task, they created the Environmental Performance Index.

In comparison, Mr Speaker, Sir, Seychelles is ranked 38th, Singapore is ranked 39th, the United Arab Emirates are ranked 42nd and Mauritius, Mr Speaker, Sir, is ranked only 83rd. We must also bear in mind that Mauritius is considered to be the 7th most exposed country to natural disasters out of 171 countries and ranked 19th in terms of risk because of the state of preparedness of the country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, thus, each year matters, each choice matters, each half a degree matters. There is utmost urgency to act. This is an indication that we have a mammoth task ahead to take Mauritius to the level of cleanliness that we would wish our country to be in the best interest of our people. We all want to see the borders, the edges, the verges of our moor towards green, clean, well maintained, with the lawns properly maintained as it was before, with beautiful flowers throughout the season like in Dubai and Singapore. We want to have a vast programme for the plantation of endemic trees, as many as possible around the island. We want to have our rivers cleaned, Mr Speaker, Sir, but also our drains to be well maintained. As pointed out by hon. Nagalingum and hon. Joanna Bérenger, this authority will be yet another addition to the other authorities and stakeholders that are already embarking in such initiative as per the spirit of this Bill.

I shall refer here to an answer provided by the hon. Minister Ramano to a PQ asked by hon. Abbas Mamode on 23 November 2021 with regard to the implementation of the Master Plan for the greening and embellishment along the M1, M2 and M3 motorways and the hon. Minister stated as follows, and I quote –

“In line with its vision for a cleaner and greener Mauritius, the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change has on 05 October 2020 contracted the consultancy services of YK Engi Ltd for the preparation of a Master Plan for the greening and embellishment of the motorways M1 and M2.”

And, it goes on to say that they have got in this project the purpose of planting more than 600,000 plants around the motorways that will represent around 8,740 plants per kilometre. In this very lengthy answer, the hon. Minister has provided what the Master Plan is all about. That is, the work is already on the way. There is a Ministry, the Ministry of Environment that has already entered into Memorandum of Understanding with the Road Development Authority and the other sponsors for the embellishment and cleaning programmes with regard to motorways. Same is being done by Local Authorities, same is being done by the Beach Authority.

So, at this point in time, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am of the humble opinion that the hon. Prime Minister should have gone a step further. Instead of advocating for the setting up of a National Environment Cleaning Authority, there should have been a more holistic approach and instead come with a National Environment Agency with more powers, constitutional powers if need be

to englobe, as an umbrella organisation, all the stakeholders, be it the Waste Water Management Authority, be it the Road Development Authority. All those authorities come under this National Environment Agency which will have these supervisory powers to oversee all their actions. Instead of co-opting representatives from all these various Ministries, you will have an agency that you have in Singapore. Singapore has this National Environment Agency and it is working very well, Mr Speaker, Sir.

This would, in my humble view, help to harmonise the position, the acts and doings of local authorities, the RDA, the Beach Authority and the Waste Water. So, I shall urge the hon. Prime Minister to also consider that we need to revamp and have a more vibrant and well equipped and properly manned *Police de l'Environnement* as a law enforcement agency because to keep cleanliness and to have a green Mauritius, we need also to have responsible citizens and we need a *Police de l'Environnement* that is well equipped, Mr Speaker, Sir. As it is now, the *Police de l'Environnement* is the poor men in the Police services. They do not have properly manned vehicles or they do not have well-equipped personnel to go on the spot to tackle people who are polluting around. I will also urge the hon. Prime Minister – I suppose this Bill will pass and there will be a new authority, so be it – to consider that major investments should be made with regard to tools and equipment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when you go around the island, you will see the way our manual workers, be it in the Local Authorities or Beach Authority, wherever they are, they are poorly equipped, Mr Speaker, Sir. They do not have the basic requirement tools and also, they do not have the modern tools for example. You go on the motorway, they will be using grass cutters, it is not proper lawn mowers for motorways that we have in Singapore of Dubai. So, I would urge the hon. Prime Minister that they should be provided with adequate equipment and we should give more incentives. And the working conditions of manual workers that will man this authority, that will work with this authority should be given further incentives in terms of their conditions of work and in terms of salaries.

Mr Speaker, Sir, cleanliness is next to godliness, there should be a concerted effort by each and every one to make our country clean and green and pass on a legacy of hope to our future generation. We are in a climate change emergency, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sure that most of us got involved in politics to effect positive changes and the most important changes and legacy

that we parliamentarians, from both sides of this House, can leave are the ones that will help to shape the future for our children and our grandchildren by taking positive steps to save and protect our environment and their future prosperity. Let us rise above party politics and make Mauritius a reference and example for the rest of the world in terms of our cleanliness, well-being and quality of life.

And I am sure that, be it this Authority, be it the Ministry of Environment, be it the Ministry of Local Government, there should be that concerted effort. Instead of just having all these authorities working on their own, have this concerted effort under this Authority, whether it will be consolidated with other people being co-opted on this Board, I humbly suggest and believe and want it to happen that they will work in the best interest of our environment to have a clean Mauritius because we all want a clean, beautiful and green Mauritius. I am very positive that this will happen and I will urge Government to embark on this path to make Mauritius clean and green.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Léopold!

(9.50 p.m.)

Mr J. B. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, I wanted to take part in this debate briefly and to say a few words on this Bill because with the everlasting debates on climate change and the effort that Government is taking to meet environmental objectives, I believe that this piece of legislation in setting a National Environment Cleaning Authority is an element of the governance framework to meet the environmental objectives, that is, keeping Mauritius clean. First, to maintain and achieve an environment which enhances human health and the well-being of everyone.

This is a good step in achieving sustainable development as it is a key element in offering opportunities to create a coherent, long-term framework for the environment, in enabling all sectors and all parts of the society to plan, to commit to and to collaborate on improving the environment on which we and the future generation depends. Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a core governance element that will be needed, as I have said, for generations to come. A cleaner

Mauritius will also enhance its beauty in terms of biodiversity and its natural heritage and this will attract further more visitors to our country.

The people in the Republic of Mauritius are all concerned of the disastrous effects of unclean environments and climate change, and efforts are being made across the Republic to maintain a safe and clean environment. One of the examples is the banning of single-use plastic bags. Conventional plastic packaging, plastic bags, which are not reusable, which are not recyclable, which are not compostable will soon not be found in our wastes. So, this Bill will give us the opportunity to clear and making our Republic free from single-use plastics.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with the role of the Authority to set up sensitisation and communication strategy, so, therefore, its role, together, with other partners, will not be solely on cleaning and embellishment. Maintaining a clean environment is not just an enforcement matter; it must be an educational matter too.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there will be little or no waste if there are no litterers. Litterers are the biggest polluters in Mauritius. Education and sensitisation are very important therefore to keep Mauritius clean and embellished. And this Bill Mr Speaker, Sir, needs to give that legal provision and the necessary legal provision to the Environment Cleaning Authority to see the relative balance of responsibilities of litterers.

And once again I welcome this Bill; it is an advance in keeping Mauritius cleaner. It is bringing necessary regulation and education and will contribute to get up a healthier, safer and attractive environment for all its people and visitors. This is my contribution on this Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir.

I thank you for your attention.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Koonjoo-Shah!

(10.55 p.m.)

The Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare (Mrs K. Koonjoo-Shah): Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank you and I am very grateful to be availed this opportunity to contribute to the National Environment Cleaning Authority Bill. I start by congratulating our hon. Prime Minister for bringing this Bill to the House.

Mr Speaker, Sir, over the years, various Governments across the world have adopted different policy measures and efforts in order to clean up their towns and cities. In the recent past, in 2017, the President of Ghana established a dedicated Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources with a bid to make Accra the neatest and cleanest city in Africa to enable his country to gain a global status in environmental cleanliness. In another continent, the UK, Mr Speaker, Sir, aims to be a leader in environmental protection, going further than the initiatives to date and delivering a country where everyone can proudly say that they ‘Love where they Live’.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to go over a couple of points put forward by hon. Ms J. Bérenger, who was purporting that it is by-passing the existing institutions. I do not think, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this Bill aims at blaming or side-lining our existing institutions that are responsible for cleaning. What she was putting forward was: what to clean, where to clean, when to clean, what to use, what precautions to take to protect the health and the environment.

This Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, it aims at having a well-coordinated national strategy and an action plan to ensure more effectiveness and efficiency in exactly that, keeping the country clean and healthy. And this automatically, naturally, implies reinforcing our existing capabilities of the Beach Authority, the local authorities, the RDA, the LDA and all the other institutions. There is no paradox as put forward or purported by the hon. Member on the other side. There is no duplication in responsibilities at all. But what this Bill and the upcoming Authority bring about is a synergy, distinction in roles and responsibilities of these existing institutions and this, Mr Speaker, Sir, will only help in improving their effectiveness.

So, I believe that the hon. Member’s arguments are very much *à côté* and if we go about adopting her proposals on how cleaning should be done, which amounts to a split, a piecemeal approach to what is a national concern. What we actually need is coherence, we need harmonisation, we need synergy, like I said. We need to optimise our resources. We need to distinctly have our responsibilities looked at with a holistic approach. And because of its bearing, its importance, cleanliness in itself has a huge bearing on the environment, on our health, the health of our citizens and very importantly on the attractiveness of our country to foreigners and to investors, Mr Speaker, Sir.

“The Keep Singapore Clean” campaign was one of Singapore’s first national campaigns launched in 1968 as an independent nation. It was a month-long campaign aimed at making

Singapore the cleanest and greenest city in the region by addressing the problem of inconsiderate littering. The campaign reached out to every stratum of society and sought to instil in Singaporeans the importance of keeping public places clean. The Government believed that improved environmental conditions would not only enhance the quality of life of its citizens and cultivate national pride, but also help to attract foreign investors and tourists to Singapore, and we are all aware of how successful that was.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we know that Mauritius is set onto an unprecedented path of modernity under the leadership of our hon. Prime Minister and with him at the helm, we shall keep on this track. Modernity has to be coupled with cleanliness. People and States shall recognise the transformation that Mauritius is going through but it is paramount that we always remember and be reckoned for sustainable environment and our palm-fringed beaches. It is therefore praiseworthy that the hon. Prime Minister and his Government are not overlooking the importance of safeguarding the very soul of our paradise island. And the pristine beauty of our island, Mr Speaker, Sir, will definitely be further preserved through the National Environment Cleaning Authority Bill.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Authority, like extensively explained by the Prime Minister in his introduction, will work in close collaboration with relevant ministries and stakeholders to come up with adequate strategies, and there shall be an appropriate action plan for this holistic approach in order to manage the environment.

But, Mr Speaker, Sir, the implementation of such an action plan, and let us be very clear about this, shall not be the responsibility of authorities only. It should engage and involve every citizen in our Republic and that is when we will see the meaningful changes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius has been experiencing floods, flash floods with increasing frequency and this undoubtedly affects families to the extent of some of them losing sometimes all their precious belongings at times.

This Government already has, and keeps on improving on their schedule of clearing of drains, of natural water courses, of rivers. Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to share with the House and the population, and I speak here under the correction of my colleagues, hon. Hurreeram and hon. Ramano, allow me to share the alarming findings, the shocking amount of junk that is discovered during these scheduled and emergency clearing exercises. Mr Speaker, Sir, plastic, rubber tyres,

washing machines, wheelbarrows, *balti*, *dekti*, *kivet*, masses and masses of non-bio degradable rubbish are discovered during these clearing exercises. Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, on one occasion, we even struggled to remove a queen size mattress from a small drain that barely had enough room to swing a cat in. This is unfortunately due to the irresponsibility of some people.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius is highly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change. The 2021 World Risk Report has ranked Mauritius as the 51st country with the highest disaster risk, out of 181 countries, and obviously, this calls for concern.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the gender dimension of climate change is a relatively recent area of work in the Mauritian context. The Climate Change Act 2020, which came into force as of April 2021, has made provision for a department of Climate Change, which also takes into consideration the gender aspect when it commissions studies on climate change. I take this opportunity to thank the Government for that. This will ensure that women are involved in decision-making processes at the correct levels.

Mr Speaker, Sir, despite all the unprecedented challenges and the pandemonium created by the COVID-19, this Government, being a socialist Government is putting the wellbeing of its population at the centre of every development. The National Environment Cleaning Authority will, with the joint collaboration of all stakeholders, make all citizens feel the change but most importantly, be the change and benefit from one of the dimensions of wellness, which is environmental wellness.

The Government has already taken several bold decisions in respect of our environment, one of them being the ban on plastic bags. Wastes from plastic bags pose a serious environmental danger to human and animal health. We are now making use of eco-friendly bags such as biodegradable and compostable bags for the benefit of our environment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the National Environment Cleaning Authority Bill also makes provision for a monitoring and evaluation framework to ensure that all stakeholders submit feedback regularly. This provision is very important inasmuch as it will assist enormously with thinking through the programmatic strategies, objectives and planned activities which are fundamental for the attainment of the objects of the Bill. And here, I welcome the suggestion of hon. Lobine from the other side of the House, when he mentioned that the authority and the personnel need to be adequately equipped to be able to perform their duties in making Mauritius green and clean. But

there is also the danger that when we do equip them, *be zot pou dir inn aste, kan inn aste, ena problem*. So, there is always going to be perpetual debates about how we go about Government business.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill reiterates the Government's firm undertaking to promote a clean and healthy environment. Community engagement is one of the cornerstones of environmental sustainability. It is through community engagement that we will appreciate the experiences that impact not only the environment, but also the individuals and the communities as they interact with the environment. We have to, in the words of Fergus Bruce, Co-Founder of 'After The Pandemic,' and I quote –

“We need to rethink, reimagine and redesign our cities and communities to be greener, more resilient and more vibrant.”

This, Mr Speaker, Sir, will ultimately be the start of the journey towards a greener, healthier and brighter future.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I go back again to what hon. Ms J. Bérenger purported earlier on saying that the setting up of such an authority will be inviting a misuse of public funds. This cleaning authority, Mr Speaker, Sir, unfortunately for her Party, cannot be extended to *un déblayage politique* because maybe otherwise, it could have been used to stop the erosion within the Party. That is very unfortunate but I wish to reassure her that the objects of this Bill are very much welcome.

To conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir, through the National Environment Cleaning Authority Bill, the Prime Minister is setting out to make a huge difference. The Bill is a gift to posterity, a gift to our motherland, to the future generations, to our children for a beautiful, cleaner, safer and healthier environment. This is or will be impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Allow me, Mr Speaker Sir, to put on record my appreciation to the Prime Minister, once again, for bringing the Bill to the House; a Bill that demonstrates his all-encompassing vision for a prosperous Republic, prosperity in all its forms.

I thank you all for your attention, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ramano!

(10.09 p.m.)

The Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change (Mr K. Ramano): M. le président, le *National Environment Cleaning Authority Bill* est une étape importante pour réaliser le rêve de tous nos citoyens d'avoir un pays propre et bien embelli. L'objectif principal de la *National Environment Cleaning Authority* est de développer une stratégie nationale de nettoyage et d'embellissement avec un plan d'action pour embellir et garder Maurice propre. Ces étapes feront de Maurice un pays plus propre et plus vert et, bien sûr, où il serait agréable de vivre.

En fait, il existe actuellement diverses législations bien connues couvrant les aspects de *littering*, *dumping*, des terrains vagues, le nettoyage et l'entretien des espaces verts, les réserves routières, les plages entre autres. Cependant, les parties prenantes concernées sont toujours confrontées non seulement à de nombreuses contraintes, mais également à des lacunes et des obstacles majeurs, notamment le manque de coopération.

La création de la *National Environment Cleaning Authority* était une initiative très attendue et opportune. L'autorité apportera les synergies nécessaires et fournira l'assistance nécessaire à toutes les entités concernées en coordonnant, en surveillant et en supervisant la mise en œuvre des programmes nationaux de nettoyage et d'embellissement. Conformément au programme gouvernemental 2020-2024, le développement d'un cadre de vie plus propre et plus sûr pour chaque citoyen de ce pays est l'une des principales priorités de ce gouvernement. Nous nous sommes efforcés de développer une île Maurice plus propre et plus verte et nous arrivons maintenant à la création de la *National Environment Cleaning Authority*.

Cette autorité sera une *one-stop shop*, adoptera une approche *one-stop shop*, pour une meilleure coordination des résultats et une meilleure responsabilité pour le nettoyage. A travers la mise en place de cette autorité, nous réunirons toutes les ressources, l'expertise et le savoir-faire des acteurs concernés dont mon ministère pour assurer la coordination de toutes les actions relatives au nettoyage et à l'embellissement de Maurice. Cette approche coordonnée garantira la prévention de toute duplication de travail et les activités de nettoyage par les différentes autorités pourront être réalisées efficacement avec des ressources humaines et des fonds publics limités.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne mon ministère, la *Living Environment Unit* (LEU) apportera son appui à la *National Environment Cleaning Authority*, pour la conception,

l'élaboration, la gestion, la réalisation et l'entretien de divers projets visant à améliorer l'environnement immédiat ainsi qu'à améliorer la qualité de vie des citoyens de Maurice. La réalisation des projets et l'entretien des sites sont sous la tutelle de la LEU de mon ministère et comprennent, entre autres, le nettoyage et l'embellissement des lieux publics, y compris les lieux de culte, l'aménagement, et l'entretien des espaces verts, *health tracks*, jardins endémiques, jardins d'enfants et *wellness parks*, l'organisation de campagnes de nettoyage en collaboration avec les autorités compétentes et l'entretien régulier des bordures d'autoroutes M1 et M2 de Grand Baie à Plaine Magnien par une équipe dédiée d'ouvriers internes. La Chambre souhaite peut-être également noter qu'à la suite d'un *Master Plan* pour les autoroutes M1 et M2, mon ministère verdit et embellit le tronçon du rond-point de Balisson au rond-point de Nouvelle France grâce aux fonds fournis par le *National Environment and Climate Change Fund*. Le verdissement et l'embellissement du rond-point de La Vigie au rond-point de Wooton sont également envisagés et la collaboration d'organisation du secteur privé est recherchée pour la mise en œuvre des recommandations du *Master Plan* le long des segments restants des autoroutes M1 et M2. De plus, avec la collaboration de la *Road Development Authority* et des autorités locales respectives, mon ministère propose le verdissement et l'embellissement des routes principales menant vers les villes et villages.

M. le président, le *National Environment Cleaning Authority Bill* arrive au bon moment, alors que les deux côtés de la Chambre débattront et soutiendront un autre projet de loi, le *Beach Authority (Amendment) Bill*, qui indique clairement le sérieux et la détermination de ce gouvernement dans sa volonté de réhabiliter nos côtes, de gérer, contrôler et réguler les activités balnéaires ainsi que s'engager dans le nettoyage et l'embellissement de notre pays. Ce sont des conditions *sine qua none* pour commercialiser notre pays au monde extérieur en tant que pays propre et soucieux de l'environnement, à un moment où notre secteur du tourisme se remet progressivement de l'épidémie du COVID-19.

Nous devons aller de l'avant sur la voie du programme national de nettoyage qui sera dirigé par le bureau du Premier ministre. À cette fin, le *National Environment Cleaning Authority Bill* fixe à juste titre le cadre juridique et institutionnel pour une coordination, un suivi de supervision. À l'heure actuelle, nous savons tous qu'il existe plusieurs institutions notamment le ministère des Collectivités locales, de la Gestion des Catastrophes et des Risques, le ministère du Tourisme et mon propre ministère engagés isolément dans ces activités de nettoyage.

Malheureusement, il faut concéder ici que les travaux de nettoyage et d'embellissement sont des fois à la traîne. Il est donc grand temps d'avoir cette autorité centrale comme organe suprême chargé de coordonner la mise en œuvre d'un programme d'une stratégie nationale. Cela aidera ainsi à mettre en place des normes et des standards à adopter lors de l'exécution de ces travaux de nettoyage et d'embellissement et en même temps à garantir que les travaux effectués par les autorités compétentes correspondent à une stratégie nationale.

M. le président, comme je l'ai mentionné précédemment, le programme de nettoyage et d'embellissement impliquera évidemment la participation active de mon ministère, y compris de la *Beach Authority*, qui est actuellement responsable de la gestion et du contrôle de 132 plages publiques à Maurice et 12 à Rodrigues. Nous savons tous que la préservation de nos plages publiques est un moteur de l'augmentation de la visibilité du pays et aussi un outil de promotion pour notre île.

À cette fin, nous nous lançons dans la campagne de marketing touristique et en ciblant particulièrement nos plages immaculées dans le monde entier, nous ne devons pas échouer dans notre volonté de les garder propres, vertes, sûres et exemptes de toutes sortes de pollution avec les commodités de base en place pour le bénéfice de nos usagers de la plage.

À ce stade, il est utile de mentionner que l'une des fonctions essentielles de la *Beach Authority* est d'assurer le nettoyage quotidien de toutes les plages publiques qui est actuellement exécuté via des contracteurs pour 71 plages publiques et le reste par la main d'œuvre interne de l'autorité. Malheureusement, en tant que Petit Etat Insulaire en Développement exposé aux aléas climatiques et à ses dégradations environnementales sur nos plages, la *Beach Authority* n'est pas du tout épargnée par ces imprévus qui freinent définitivement ses bonnes actions. La mise en œuvre d'une telle autorité sera sans aucun doute très utile et bénéfique pour le pays pour se préparer à une meilleure gestion et une coordination de sa stratégie de nettoyage face aux aléas du changement climatique.

M. le président, il est bien connu que les déchets jonchés abritent des moustiques, vecteurs de maladies telles que le paludisme, le chikungunya, la dengue et d'autres menaces pour la santé publique. Une autre priorité, un peu reléguée pour l'instant du fait de la pandémie du COVID-19, est de renforcer encore notre résilience de santé publique environnementale face à ces menaces omniprésentes. La mise en place de la *National Environment Cleaning Authority*

permettra sans doute aux autorités de mieux réunir les moyens afin d'assainir notre environnement. Au niveau de mon ministère, des amendements ont été apportés aux *Local Government (Dumping and Waste Carriers) Regulations* par la Division de la gestion des déchets solides pour permettre à toute personne de transporter des déchets jusqu'à 500 kg dans leurs véhicules jusqu'à la prochaine déchèterie qui est située au niveau des stations de transfert. D'autre part, les petits camions ayant des paniers à déchets d'une hauteur allant jusqu'à 50 cm peuvent désormais transporter des déchets de construction et de démolition et des déchets secs vers n'importe quelle station de transfert.

Dans notre croisade pour une transition vers une économie circulaire dans la gestion des déchets, mon ministère veillerait à la valorisation maximale des déchets pour maximiser l'utilisation des matériaux et des produits afin de réduire l'utilisation des ressources vierges. Tous ces déchets devraient autant que possible devenir l'intrant d'un autre processus contrairement à l'économie linéaire traditionnelle qui a un modèle de production « prendre, fabriquer, utiliser, jeter » où les ressources sont utilisées à partir des réserves finies pour créer des produits avec une durée de vie déterminée qui finissent finalement dans les décharges. Cette mesure, comme soulignée dans la hiérarchie de la gestion des déchets, est alignée sur l'Objectif 12 du Développement Durable qui vise à –

« D'ici à 2030, réduire considérablement la production de déchets par la prévention, la réduction, le recyclage et la réutilisation. »

M. le président, l'élimination des déchets à la décharge de Mare Chicose est néanmoins une mesure à court terme. A moyen-long terme, mon ministère prévoit la mise en place d'usines régionales de compostage pour traiter les déchets organiques pour la production de compost et d'unités de tri. Accepter les matériaux recyclables non contaminés à des fins de recyclage. Les déchets qui ne peuvent pas être compostés ou recyclés seraient éventuellement éliminés à la décharge. Avec ces installations en place et les exigences de collecte des déchets sous forme de flux séparés au lieu de flux mélangés, la *National Environment Cleaning Authority* veillera ainsi à ce que toutes les parties prenantes concernées suivent cette nouvelle directive pour le fonctionnement efficace de ces unités en fournissant des déchets de haute qualité. Cela permettrait d'aller vers la mise en œuvre d'une approche d'économie circulaire dans le secteur des déchets solides.

M. le président, le problème de terrains vagues afflige notre pays depuis un certain temps avec des impacts environnementaux, sociaux et sanitaires néfastes. Selon les enquêtes menées par les autorités locales et les statistiques soumises par ces dernières à mon ministère, à fin mars 2022, il y avait au total environ 14,950 terrains vagues qui ont été identifiés à proximité des zones résidentielles et des utilisations sensibles des terres. Celles-ci comprennent 7,520 terrains vagues avec des propriétaires connus, 7,060 avec des propriétaires inconnus et 370 *state lands*. Des plaintes sont reçues en permanence auprès de mon ministère et d'autres autorités, y compris via le *Citizen Support Portal*, concernant les nuisances résultant des terrains vagues. Il convient de noter que depuis le lancement du *Citizen Support Portal* en avril 2017 jusqu'en février 2022, un total d'environ 5,800 plaintes concernant diverses nuisances causées par des terrains abandonnés ont déjà été enregistrées sur le portail. Comme vous le savez bien, les terrains abandonnés avec une végétation envahissante sont désagréables, inesthétiques et bien sûr représentent un danger à la santé des citoyens.

Les déchets y sont déversés sans discernement par des citoyens malheureusement irresponsables et qui, par un phénomène connu sous le nom du *Broken Windows Theory*, conduit souvent à de plus en plus de déchets déversés sur ces parcelles, conduisant finalement à la transformation de ces sites en dépotoirs donnant ainsi lieu à la prolifération de rongeurs et autres ravageurs et une augmentation de l'incidence des maladies à transmission vectorielle. La Chambre se souviendra de la question de l'infestation de myriapodes à Pointe aux Sables qui été soulevée dans cette même Assemblée. La principale cause de cet incident remonte à la présence de terrains vagues à proximité des zones habitées. De plus, très souvent, les terrains vagues abritent également des bâtiments abandonnés et des véhicules d'épaves qui aggravent la situation et deviennent des cachettes pour malheureusement des personnes mal intentionnées.

M. le président, malgré les différentes législations et mécanismes réglementaires en place, le problème des terrains vagues et des nuisances qui y sont associées persiste toujours. Étant une île tropicale avec des précipitations fréquentes, il y a une tendance à une croissance rapide et récurrente de la végétation qui nécessite donc un entretien et une mobilisation constante de la main-d'œuvre. Les coûts associés à un tel nettoyage sont élevés et difficiles à récupérer. On m'informe que les autorités locales doivent déboursier environ R 15,000 pour nettoyer une superficie moyenne de 400 m² de terrain vague, y compris l'élimination des déchets. Le nettoyage des plages a également des contraintes similaires à celles des terrains vagues. Ainsi, la

pérennité des opérations de nettoyage sur l'ensemble de l'île devient un enjeu majeur. À cet effet, la *National Environment Cleaning Authority* contribuera à apporter la solution nécessaire en mobilisant les ressources nécessaires.

M. le président, garder Maurice propre est l'une des visions du gouvernement. La question des nuisances des terrains vagues et la manière de s'y attaquer ont été discutées lors de la 22^{ème} réunion du *National Environment Commission (NEC)*, tenue en 2018 sous la présidence du Premier ministre. Les questions abordées comprennent, entre autres, le renforcement de l'application et de la surveillance des terrains vagues, le suivi et l'identification des propriétaires des terrains vagues, la consolidation des législations existantes et des campagnes de sensibilisation. Malgré cela, les difficultés liées à la gestion des terrains vagues sont toujours présentes. Et là, la *National Environment Cleaning Authority* fournit la plate-forme appropriée pour aider à combler ces lacunes.

M. le président, maintenir la propreté pour conserver la beauté de l'environnement est la responsabilité de tout un chacun et seul le gouvernement ne peut pas tout faire. La société civile, les ONG devront agir de manière proactive en aidant à garder notre environnement le plus propre que possible. En tant que personnes bienveillantes, ne sommes-nous pas, en tant qu'individus, suffisamment responsables pour ne pas jeter nos déchets de nos véhicules sur le bord des routes, ramener nos déchets à la maison pour les mettre dans les poubelles? Assurer la propreté de nos routes et nos espaces publics est notre responsabilité partagée. Ce n'est pas seulement le travail des nettoyeurs. Je tiens à exprimer ma sincère gratitude à ceux qui, pendant la pandémie de Covid-19, ont travaillé dur pour maintenir la propreté et désinfecter les lieux publics.

Nous espérons qu'avec la création de cette autorité et avec la collaboration de tous, nous pourrions être fiers de voir notre environnement à Maurice plus propre. Nous en serons les bénéficiaires et nos générations futures pourront ainsi vivre dans un environnement plus sain.

Je terminerai en félicitant le Premier ministre d'avoir présenté ce projet de loi qui confirme la détermination de ce gouvernement à faire de Maurice un lieu de vie, de travail et de séjour plus propre, plus vert, plus sûr sans manquer de promouvoir globalement Maurice comme une île paradisiaque dans l'océan Indien.

Je vous remercie, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Husnoo!

(10.26 p.m.)

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I move for the adjournment of the debates.

The Deputy Prime Minister seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I move for adjournment of the House to Tuesday 24 May 2022 at 11.30 a.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned. For adjournment matters, I will ask the Deputy Speaker to step in.

At this stage, the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Please be seated! Specific matter, hon. Navarre-Marie!

(10.27 p.m.)

SPECIFIC MATTER

COVID-19 PANDEMIC – ONLINE TEACHING – STUDENTS - DISPARITIES

Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Merci, M. le président.

M. le président, avec la fermeture des écoles pendant la pandémie, les enseignants se sont tournés vers les applications d'Internet pour l'apprentissage des élèves. Mais, étant donné que de nombreux parents sont dépourvus des compétences nécessaires pour accéder à l'Internet, aux iPads et à l'équipement d'apprentissage à distance et la formation pour l'utiliser, une vérité est rapidement apparue - de nombreux enfants sont restés à la maison sans éducation pendant plusieurs mois.

La pandémie a révélé des lacunes dans notre système éducatif pour des centaines d'élèves, en particulier dans les familles où les adultes et les enfants manquent de compétence numérique, l'éducation a été suspendue à la fermeture des classes. De nombreux enfants n'ont reçu aucune éducation après la fermeture des écoles. Certaines écoles n'offrent tout simplement pas d'enseignement à distance. D'autres qui pouvaient l'offrir ont constaté que les élèves et/ou les enseignants n'avaient pas d'iPad, l'accès à l'Internet ou les compétences nécessaires pour qu'il soit efficace.

Le fossé de l'éducation numérique a davantage creusé les inégalités qui existaient déjà. Alors que les élèves les plus aisés ont pu poursuivre leur parcours d'apprentissage à travers l'Internet, d'autres enfants ont été incapables de suivre le pas. Mais, il n'y a pas eu de monitoring approprié pour s'assurer que ceux qui avaient accès aux équipements avaient vraiment suivi le cours en ligne et d'autres enfants encore ont décroché.

Comment pouvons-nous dispenser les cours numériquement ? Le gouvernement avait préconisé la mise sur pied d'une *e-platform* dans son dernier discours sur le budget. Ne devrait-on pas se mettre à la tâche très vite en consultant les différents partenaires de l'éducation? Une assise de l'éducation est nécessaire afin de soutenir l'apprentissage en ligne et le renforcement des compétences, d'échanger des bonnes pratiques et voir comment mettre sur pied ce *e-platform* rapidement pour éviter de creuser davantage les écarts entre nos enfants. Un *survey* doit également être effectué pour connaître le nombre d'enfants ayant décroché.

Ce projet, M. le président, devra veiller à ce que l'enseignement et l'apprentissage restent ouverts et accessibles à tous à travers la République en préservant le droit à l'éducation pour tous, surtout en cas de crise. Le projet se devrait d'aller au-delà de la situation actuelle et d'ouvrir un nouveau chapitre numérique sur l'équité et la qualité de l'éducation, que ce soit en temps de crise ou pas. Quelques pays d'Afrique s'y sont déjà attelés à la tâche. Nous nous vantons souvent d'être parmi les premiers en termes d'accès à l'éducation sur le continent africain, mais force est de constater que nous sommes à la traîne derrière l'Égypte, l'Éthiopie et le Ghana.

Une suggestion serait un apprentissage hybride dans les moments de pandémie. Les classes se font normalement avec la moitié de la classe en présentiel et l'autre moitié à domicile et suivant les cours en ligne pendant une semaine et la semaine suivante, on alterne. Ceux qui

était en présentiel, suivent les cours en ligne et ceux qui suivaient la classe en ligne sont en présentiel. Cela permettra à tous les enfants de suivre les classes tout en gardant le contact physique avec leurs camarades et leurs enseignants. C'est une suggestion à être étudiée et considérée en consultation avec les différents partenaires de l'éducation.

Je fais, ici, un plaidoyer afin que le ministère entame le plus vite possible des consultations avec les différents partenaires de l'éducation pour la mise en œuvre d'un nouveau système qui permettrait à tous nos enfants d'avoir accès à l'éducation à travers les nouvelles technologies *so that no child is left behind*.

Je vous remercie.

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

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021, my Ministry elaborated a National Education Resilience Strategy to provide an immediate response and ensure continuity in teaching and learning. The objective was to ensure that learners were not disconnected from their studies due to school closures.

The Strategy comprised various components, namely –

- the broadcast of educational programmes on MBC's Learning Channels for primary and lower secondary students, that is, from Grades 1 to 9;
- access to online educational resources available on the Student Support Portal for lower secondary students, and these resources were also made available on the MBC TV Learning Channels as we were aware that some students did not have digital devices,
- the conduct of online classes for upper secondary students in Grades 10 to 13, and this involved the creation of credentials to access the Microsoft Teams platforms. Overall, about 8,500 educators' credentials and around 40,000 credentials for students of Grades 10 to 13 were created.

Equally conscious of the fact that many students did not have access to digital devices and internet connectivity, Government decided, in a spirit of ensuring equity and overcoming learning roadblocks, to provide digital devices and internet connectivity to students whose families were on the Social Register of Mauritius (SRM). The Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity catered for these students by providing 1,125 tablets to the students.

Furthermore, I am informed by the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity that provisions were made in the Budget for the Mauritius Telecom to provide free access to broadband internet connectivity to about 7,000 families on the Social Register of Mauritius (SRM).

But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are aware that connectivity and devices were not the only problem. There was a need for teachers to get trained for such switch from face-to-face teaching to online teaching. Because of that, we ensured that training was offered to teachers. But then, training for a different approach to be adopted with online classes, was also considered. However, we must not forget that during that time, we were in confinement and people were not moving around. So, the training was done online.

Obviously, we also know that there are families who are not on the SRM and whose children face similar difficulties. So, Government came forward and put up a scheme at the Development Bank of Mauritius (DBM) for a loan of up to Rs50,000 for financing the purchase of digital devices, at an interest rate of only 3%. I am informed that in respect of this loan scheme, a total amount of Rs6.6 m. has already been disbursed.

Also, the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation has deployed free internet connectivity in 250 WiFi hotspots and 100 public access points across the island, and even in Rodrigues for the public. All primary schools are connected to internet. All secondary schools will shortly be connected to internet. Tenders are already out and all classes of all grades, libraries, labs and public areas within the schools would be connected.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Fourth Member for Grand River North West & Port Louis West also raised the issue of training on the use of devices and educational platforms such as Microsoft Teams and the Student Support Portal. In fact, students from Grade 10 to 13 are already conversant with the use of digital devices; given that they are taught ICT at school up to

Grade 9, and are familiar with the use of digital devices. We must not forget that as far as primary schools are concerned, as from 2017, students are provided with tablets in schools, in all grades, and we have now reached Grade 5. Next year, it will be Grade 6. Short videos targeting students were produced to improve their capacity to use these devices and to join the digital platforms. Training of educators, as I have said earlier, was also carried out and this training is ongoing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

With a view to bridging the gap, my Ministry has come up with additional initiatives such as the distribution of learning packs to all pupils in the primary schools from Grades 1 to 6 and for all subjects. This proved useful to pupils to catch up with their studies if they had not been able to follow the educational lessons on MBC TV channels during the periods of school closure. Furthermore, the MBC managed to allow all these lessons on the four channels to be re-viewed in case parents could not get their children to follow the classes when they were broadcast.

On the other hand, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to guard against the eventuality of increasing the gap between the students who had followed lessons via the different teaching modes and those who might not have educators, on resumption of schools, they were asked to engage in catch-up lessons. And based on their deeper knowledge about the learners' competencies, bring all pupils, more or less, on par.

Furthermore, in a bid to allow more time for students to better prepare themselves for sound learning, the 2021/2022 Academic Year has been extended to November 2022. This extension of the Academic Year enables the full coverage of the curriculum as well as the completion of course works and other practical sessions that were interrupted by the pandemic.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, several measures were resorted to allowing ample time for students to catch up and make good any learning loss arising from the school closures. We should all wise up to the reality that the impact of the pandemic on the education process has not been an exclusive and characteristic feature of Mauritian schooling. In the world over, the impact has been the same. Highly developed countries too have borne the brunt and gaps have been noticed there as well, in the provision and access to digital devices.

Allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to reassure the hon. Member that Government is strongly and deeply conscious of its responsibility to be inclusive and to care for, as well as to cater for the learning needs of all of our children. As I have informed the House earlier, we have

already started a hybrid program on a pilot basis and we intend to roll it out in all the other schools after the pilot phase. We intend to have both face-to-face and online classes. And we are starting very shortly with that. We are ready for it and this is what we intend to do.

This Government, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is determined and fixed in its commitment to fight both learning loss and the factors that caused it. Now, what we intend to do also, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is to come up with a series of programs for students at school ensuring that we can switch from the face-to-face learning to the online learning and vice versa.

So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I have said earlier, we are aware that there are problems; problems have arisen elsewhere in the world, 180 countries had had school closures, 91% of students across the world have faced school closures. And we are all aware that the digital gap existed prior to the pandemic and will still exist, but we will do all that we can to ensure that this gap does not widen further but instead we need to bridge the gap, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Thank you.

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

Thank you very much; have a safe trip back!

At 10.41 p.m., the Assembly, was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 24 May 2022 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

MR P. M., SENIOR ADVISOR - BOARDS - RENUMERATION

(No. B/625) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to Mr P. M., Senior Advisor attached to his Office, he will state, since October 2021 to date, the number of Boards of public bodies and/or State-owned companies on which he is serving, indicating in each case the –

- (a) nomination date, and
- (b) monthly remuneration drawn.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS PORTS AUTHORITY - OIL SPILL

(No. B/626) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the oil spill that occurred within the waters falling under the control of the Mauritius Ports Authority on or about 29 April 2022, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the MPA, information as to –

- (a) the causes thereof,
- (b) if an inquiry has been initiated to identify the polluters, and
- (c) the immediate actions taken to mitigate the negative impacts thereof on marine environment within the region.

(Withdrawn)

OVERSEAS MISSIONS – MINISTERIAL DELEGATIONS & HON. MEMBERS

(No. B/627) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to overseas missions, he will state the number of ministerial delegations and Honourable Members having undertaken same since the reopening of the borders in October 2021, indicating in each case the –

- (a) purpose and outcome thereof, if any, and
- (b) cost incurred, including air tickets and *per diem* allowances.

Reply: Since October 2021 to date, 36 ministerial delegations undertook overseas missions. During the same period, eight hon. Members of the National Assembly participated in missions abroad.

In regard to parts (a) and (b) of the question, the information sought by the hon. Member is being placed in the library of the National Assembly.

It is to be emphasised that ministerial missions are undertaken to further our national economic agenda and development priorities. Such visits are principally geared towards expanding our regional and multilateral cooperation and networks, trade agreements and market access.

In the context of our post COVID-19 economic reconstruction programme, such overseas missions are essential for Mauritius to secure new opportunities in our traditional and emerging markets.

It must be pointed out that wide publicity is given to all such ministerial missions. After Cabinet has considered the mission reports, information regarding these ministerial missions is posted on the website of the Cabinet Office.

For information, payment of all allowances for such missions is made in accordance with prevailing rates approved by the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development.

NON-WEARING OF PROTECTIVE MASKS - FIXED PENALTY NOTICES

(No. B/628) 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 non-wearing of protective masks by persons in places other than their ordinary places of residence, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of Fixed Penalty Notices issued, indicating the amount of money collected in terms thereof as at to date.

(Withdrawn)

MUNICIPAL CITY COUNCIL AND MUNICIPAL TOWN COUNCILS ELECTIONS

(No. B/629) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Municipal Council Elections, he will state when same will be held.

Reply: To remind, the last Municipal City Council and Municipal Town Councils Elections were held on 14 June 2015. By virtue of section 10A of the Local Government Act, the life of Municipal City Council and Municipal Town Councils is six years.

Back in May 2021, in view of the prevailing COVID-19 situation in the country, the Local Government Act was amended to provide for the extension of the lifetime of the entire Municipal City Council and Municipal Town Councils, or entire Village Councils, by not more

than one year at a time, provided that the life of the Councils shall not be extended for more than two years.

On 14 June 2021, having taken into account the rising number of cases of COVID-19 being recorded on a weekly basis and being given that a quarantine period was still in force in the country, the President of the Republic of Mauritius had, on my advice, extended the life of the entire Municipal City Council and Municipal Town Councils for one year as from 15 June 2021.

On 13 April 2022, in view of the prevailing COVID-19 situation and of the applicable sanitary restrictions, and given that the quarantine period would remain in force in Mauritius until 30 June 2022, the President, acting on my advice, extended the life of the entire Municipal City Council and Municipal Town Councils for one year as from 14 June 2022.

Accordingly, the Municipal City Council and Municipal Town Councils would stand dissolved on 13 June 2023.

To remind, I dwelt lengthily on the reason for the extension of the life of Municipal City Council and Municipal Town Councils for a further period of one year during my statement on Friday 13 May 2022. I also gave reassurance that the life of the Municipal Councils has been extended only for one more additional year and the Municipal elections would be held at any time within the prescribed period.

It is to be highlighted that if, at any time, it is considered that it would be opportune to hold the Municipal City Council and Municipal Town Councils elections, these elections may be held before the dissolution of the Councils in June 2023.

The Government is closely monitoring the evolution of COVID-19 pandemic. Once it is deemed appropriate to hold the elections, I shall advise the President accordingly.

MAURITIUS POLICE FORCE - RISK INSURANCE SCHEME

(No. B/630) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the proposed implementation of a Risk Insurance Scheme for officers of the Mauritius Police Force in case of death/disability occurring in the exercise of their duties, he will, for the

benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand.

Reply: The Pay Research Bureau has, at paragraph 16.16.37 in Volume 1 of its Report published in 2021, recommended that the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, in consultation with the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms, considers the advisability of setting up a Risk Insurance Scheme which will provide coverage to those incumbents in grades identified by the Departmental Safety and Health Committees.

At paragraph 16.3.71 in Volume 2 of the Pay Research Bureau Report 2021, it has been recommended that the Mauritius Police Force considers the advisability of implementing a Risk Insurance Scheme for Police Officers, in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms, the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, and other relevant organisations in line with recommendations made at paragraphs 16.16.38 and 16.16.39 in Volume 1 of the Pay Research Bureau Report.

The Pay Research Bureau has, in addition, made the following recommendations concerning the Risk Insurance Scheme –

- (a) all eligible officers, who as at the eve of the publication of the 2021 Pay Research Bureau Report, are drawing a risk allowance, should be given the option to join the Scheme. However, on joining the Scheme, the payment of the risk allowance should lapse, and
- (b) all officers who would be eligible, as from the date of the publication of the 2021 Pay Research Bureau Report, to the payment of a risk allowance should join the Risk Insurance Scheme when it becomes operational. However, pending its setting up, the concerned officers should be paid the risk allowance.

The Commissioner of Police has informed that the Mauritius Police Force is currently looking closely into the recommendations of the Pay Research Bureau regarding the setting up of a Risk Insurance Scheme for Police Officers and its implications, and will subsequently consult concerned Ministries on the way forward.

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

(No. B/631) 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 Côte d'Or International Racecourse and Entertainment Complex Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to when decision was taken for the setting up thereof, indicating the purpose thereof, giving details of the project.

Reply: The decision to set up a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) to develop a new state-of-the-art Racecourse and Leisure and Entertainment Complex at Côte d'Or was taken by Government on Friday 18 February 2022. Subsequently, on Friday 29 April 2022, the SPV was incorporated as the Côte d'Or International Racecourse and Entertainment Complex Ltd.

The project will mainly comprise a new state-of-the-art Racecourse of international standards and all its associated facilities. Concerning other details of the project relating specifically to the Leisure and Entertainment Complex, the newly set up company will consider them following the obtention of the relevant expertise.

NON-WEARING OF PROTECTIVE MASKS - CONTRAVENTION

(No. B/632) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the instruction given to Trainee Police Constables and Trainee Women's Constables to book at least five contraventions daily for non-wearing of protective masks by persons in places other than their ordinary places of residence, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the rationale thereof.

Reply: The coming into operation of the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2021, on 05 August 2021, amended the Quarantine Act 2020 in order to make provision for the offence of failing to wear protective mask, in any place, other than in an ordinary place of residence or

fails to wear a protective mask over his mouth and nose. For these offences, a fine of Rs2,000 is imposed by way of Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN).

The Commissioner of Police has informed that since then, Police has continuously developed policing such strategies as sensitisation campaigns and enforcement to ensure compliance therewith by the public.

However, it has recently been observed that some members of the public were not complying with the provisions of the law. To this end, Police Officers, irrespective of their rank and posting, have been directed to adopt a zero tolerance approach regarding the enforcement of the legislations including booking of any person committing an offence of not wearing protective masks in places other than their ordinary places of residence.

The Commissioner of Police has also informed that Divisional Commanders too have, at their level, conducted several meetings and issued instructions to sustain the enforcement strategy with regard to the wearing of protective mask. The rationale is mainly to protect the population against COVID-19 and to ensure its compliance with the law. Instructions given to Police Officers to enforce the Laws/Regulations in force in the Republic of Mauritius, are therefore justified, and are in accordance with the Police Act.

From 17 August 2021 up to 12 May 2022, 47,948 persons found not wearing protective mask in a place other than in their ordinary place of residence have been booked and issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice to pay a fine of Rs2,000 within 28 days at the Cashier's Office of the appropriate District Courts.

MOLNUPIRAVIR TABLETS - PROCUREMENT - INQUIRY

(No. B/633) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the inquiry on the procurement on Molnupiravir tablets in December 2021 by the Ministry of Health and Wellness, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if an inquiry has been initiated thereinto, indicating where matters stand.

Reply: The Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) has informed that an investigation into the procurement of Molnupiravir tablets has been initiated by the Commission and is ongoing. Disclosure of any information pertaining thereto will not be in order as it may be prejudicial to the investigation.

MR L. D. S. – POLICE BRUTALITY – INQUIRY

(No. B/634) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the alleged case of Police brutality on the person of Mr L. D. S. in the course of the arrest thereof, on 22 April 2022, at Camp Levieux, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if an inquiry has been initiated thereinto and, if so, indicate the names and grade of the Police Officers involved therein and if they are still on duty.

Reply: The Commissioner of Police has informed that on Friday 29 April 2022 at 15.05 hours, Mr L. D. S. has, in presence of his Bar-at-Law, reported a case of alleged Police brutality at the Central Criminal Investigation Department (CCID).

In accordance with Section 10(c) of the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) Act, the case has been referred to the IPCC for enquiry by the Commission.

Since investigation by the IPCC into the case of alleged Police brutality is proceeding, disclosure of any information pertaining thereto may be prejudicial to the investigation.

MR S. K. - DEATH - FINDINGS & STATEMENTS

(No. B/635) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the death of late Mr S. K. at Moka, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand as to the inquiry carried out thereinto following the findings of the Magistrate of the District Court of Moka, indicating the number of statements recorded by the Central Crime Investigation Division, including if Mr Y. S. has been interrogated.

(Withdrawn)

ICTA - MR D.N.S.W, CHAIRPERSON - APPOINTMENT

(No. B/636) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to Mr D. N. S. W., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Information Communication and Technologies Authority (ICTA), information as to the terms and conditions of appointment and duration of contract thereof, indicating the remuneration drawn as Chairperson of the –

- (a) ICTA, and
- (b) other sub-committees of the ICTA, if any.

(Withdrawn)

VALLÉE DES PRÊTRES - THEFT & VIOLENCE - SAFETY & SECURITY MEASURES

(No. B/637) Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to Vallée des Prêtres, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the safety and security measures being envisaged following the recent reported cases of theft and violence thereat.

(Withdrawn)

AIRPORTS OF MAURITIUS LTD - MR P. M. - CHAIRPERSON

(No. B/638) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to Mr P. M. he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Airports of Mauritius Ltd., information as to the –

- (a) date of appointment thereof as Chairperson of the board thereof, and
- (b) terms and conditions of appointment, including, the monthly remuneration drawn and if he is entitled to an official car, indicating the type, date of purchase and total cost thereof.

(Withdrawn)

LE MORNE VILLAGE - EVICTION EXERCISE

(No. B/639) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the eviction exercise carried out by the Police in Le Morne Village on 21 April 2022, he will state the circumstances thereof.

Reply: The Commissioner of Police has informed that, on Monday 22 November 2021, the Supreme Court issued an Order for the illegal occupants of a plot of land belonging to Le Petit Morne Ltee., situated at Le Morne, to vacate same by end of January 2022 failing which a “*Writ Habere Facias Possessionem*”, that is an order for taking possession of the land, shall be issued.

As the illegal occupants did not vacate the land, the hon. Chief Justice issued the Order for taking possession of the land on Friday 11 February 2022 directing the Chief Ushers, Ushers of the Supreme Court and all registered Ushers to cause Le Petit Morne Ltee. to be put in possession on the said plot of land without delay and execute this Writ. Following the Order, a registered Court Usher requested the assistance of the Police on Wednesday 16 March 2022 to execute same. However, given that the exact location of the said plot of land could not be identified, the Writ could not be executed at that point in time.

Thereafter, pursuant to a letter dated Tuesday 12 April 2022, issued by another registered Usher, a request was made anew to the Police for assistance to execute the Court Order. Consequently, on Thursday 21 April 2022, at around 9:30 hours, Police Officers from La Gaulette Police Station and other support staff accompanied the two Court Ushers for the execution of the Order.

However, on reaching the site, several persons, including women and children, were gathered thereat, and on being asked by the Ushers to vacate the premises, refused to do so and grew hostile. Moreover, the workers accompanying the Ushers were found to be insufficient in number and were not adequately equipped to execute the task. Thus, for security reasons, the Ushers took the decision to postpone the execution of the Court Order to a later date.

The Commissioner of Police has also informed that the Police has again been solicited by the two Registered Ushers to execute the Court Order on a date to be agreed by both.

PORT LOUIS - ILLEGAL HAWKERS

(No. B/640) 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 hawkers operating illegally in Port Louis, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, for each of the years 2015 to 2021 and since January 2022 to date, information as to the –

- (a) number thereof having been
 - (i) arrested;
 - (ii) prosecuted;
 - (iii) convicted, and
- (b) description of goods seized, indicating –
 - (i) the market value thereof, and
 - (ii) how same have been disposed.

Reply: According to the Twelfth Schedule of the Local Government Act 2011, a mobile seller of foodstuff and non-foodstuff, except on public beaches, is considered to be a hawker.

A hawker has to obtain an authorisation from the Municipal Council within the jurisdiction of which he or she intends to carry any trade prior to the payment of fees. Subsequently, a hawker's licence is issued under Regulation 10 (1) of the Local Government (Fees) Regulations 2019.

Any person who contravenes these regulations shall commit an offence. The penalty provided under Regulation 13 of these Regulations is a fine not exceeding Rs25,000. The offence under these Regulations is not an arrestable one. However, the person committing an offence is booked and issued a contravention.

The Commissioner of Police has informed that Police Officers assist Inspectors from the Municipal Council of Port Louis in conducting regular inspection throughout Port Louis. Additionally, a joint special team comprising Police Officers and Inspectors from the Municipal

Council of Port Louis has been set up to take all reasonable steps against hawkers operating within 500 metres radius from the Central Market of Port Louis.

With regard to part (a) of the question, the Commissioner of Police has informed that no hawkers operating illegally in Port Louis have been arrested. However, since 2015 to date, there have been 1,072 cases of hawkers having been booked for illegally operating in Port Louis, out of which number, 563 fines were imposed, 327 were filed and 113 are awaiting completion of enquiry or court proceedings.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the Commissioner of Police has also informed that the goods and articles seized are mainly the following –

- (i) vegetables;
- (ii) fruits;
- (iii) clothes;
- (iv) sunglasses;
- (v) mobile accessories;
- (vi) bags;
- (vii) toothbrush;
- (viii) energetic drinks, and
- (ix) umbrellas.

The market value of the goods and articles seized is not available as computation of same is not required in such cases.

The Commissioner of Police has also informed that the goods and articles seized are either returned to their owners or forfeited by the court. In the case of perishable goods, they are donated to charitable organisations.

(No. B/651) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the Nationally Determined Contribution of the Republic of Mauritius, he will state the work progress thereof as at to date regarding the targeted increase in energy efficiency by 10 per cent based on the 2019 figures as specified therein.

Reply (The Minister of Energy and Public Utilities): I am informed that in fulfilment of the requirement of the Paris Agreement, the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change had, on 05 October 2021, submitted an updated Nationally Determined Contributions for the Republic of Mauritius to the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Further to the call of the United Nations General Assembly to come up with a more ambitious target to address the worsening impacts of climate change, Government has pledged in the 2021 Nationally Determined Contributions to reduce overall greenhouse emissions by 40 per cent by 2030 as compared to 30 per cent in 2015. This new target would be achieved through a series of adaptation and mitigation measures. With respect to the energy sector, the following targets are expected to be achieved within the 2030 timeframe –

- i. production of 60 per cent of energy needs from renewable sources;
- ii. phasing out of the use of coal in electricity generation and the development of a biomass framework, and
- iii. an increase in energy efficiency by 10 per cent based on year 2019 figures.

The pledge made in the first Nationally Determined Contributions to reduce our electricity demand by 10%, having the year 2009 as base year, has been achieved and it is in this perspective that Government is now aiming to reduce its electricity demand by a further 10%, with the year 2019 as base year. This target would correspond to a reduction of greenhouse gas of some 360 kilotons carbon dioxide equivalent by 2030.

I am informed that a Nationally Determined Contributions Action Plan is currently under finalisation at the level of the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change and several initiatives are planned to meet this goal relating to energy efficiency in sectors such as water, infrastructure and tourism.

At the level of my Ministry, the Energy Efficiency Management Office has worked out an Energy Efficiency/Demand Side Management Master Plan and Action Plan for the period 2016-2030 with specific measures for the industrial, services, household, public and transport sectors.

Allow me to highlight a few measures that have recently been implemented by the Energy Efficiency Management Office over the past years –

- a) Appliances that are deemed inefficient are levied with an additional 25% tax at Customs to ensure that only energy efficient electrical appliances are imported into the country. This measure concerns refrigerators, dishwashers, electric ovens, air conditioners, tumble dryers and electric lamps.
- b) Amendments have been made this month to the Energy Efficiency (Labelling of Regulated Machinery) Regulations 2016 to allow dealers to register new energy efficient models of refrigerators and dishwashers on the basis of new energy labels.
- c) Introduction of minimum energy performance standards for household appliances are being worked out to reduce import of inefficient appliances.
- d) In order to pave the way for more energy efficient lighting, the Energy Efficiency Management Office, in collaboration with the Ministry of Commerce and Mauritius Revenue Authority, has implemented a ban on the importation of all incandescent lamps used for general lighting.
- e) As the public sector is a large energy consumer, energy audits have been commissioned by the Energy Efficiency Management Office in public buildings. Subsequently, the Energy Efficiency Management Office has issued energy guidelines to help public bodies reduce their electricity consumption by 5% and has accordingly established procedures to monitor energy efficiency and consumption in December 2021.
- f) 20 large energy consumers in the private sector have been notified for mandatory energy audits. As at date, 61 notifications have been issued to large energy consumers in the public, parastatal and private sector. By 2030, it is expected that

240 notifications for mandatory energy audits will be issued. The Energy Efficiency Management Office is following up on the implementation of energy audits recommendations by these large energy consumers. I wish to add that proposals have been made in the forthcoming Budget to facilitate and give a boost to the implementation of the recommendations of energy audit reports in order to realise energy gains.

- g) A framework to promote energy performance contracting is being developed and a project submitted to the Green Climate Fund Programme to set up a Mauritius Energy Efficiency Fund.
- h) A framework for the promotion and adoption of heat pump technologies to improve energy efficiency in water and space conditioning applications is being developed.
- i) The Energy Efficiency Management Office has prepared and disseminated guidelines for energy efficiency and conservation in hotels in February 2022.
- j) Guidelines for the proper installation and maintenance of air conditioners have been issued by EEMO in March 2022.
- k) Bidding procedures have been initiated for the commissioning of guidelines for energy efficiency and energy conservation in commercial buildings, industries and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). This will be disseminated to stakeholders for implementation.
- l) Sensitisation campaigns are being conducted on TV and radio to raise awareness amongst the public on the need to use air conditioning and household appliances judiciously to reduce energy consumption and help to mitigate the peak demand in electricity. Energy saving campaigns are also regularly broadcast. Sensitisation is also held in educational institutions.

The above measures are incorporated in the Nationally Determined Contributions Action Plan being finalised by the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change. My Ministry is working in close collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, Solid

Waste Management and Climate Change towards the achievement of Energy Efficiency targets as pledged in the Nationally Determined Contributions.

MAURITIUS POST LTD - STAFF - COVID-19 BOOSTER DOSE

(No. B/660) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the postal services, he will state if he is in presence of representations emanating from some staff members thereof in relation to denial of access thereto to their places of work due to the fact that they have either not been COVID-19 vaccinated or not received the COVID-19 Booster dose and, if so, indicate the measures he proposes to take in relation thereto, if any.

Reply: In the reply made to PQ B/352 on 19 April 2022, the House was informed that 51 employees of the MPL had been debarred from attending duty as at that date, in accordance with the Consolidated COVID-19 (Amendment No 15) Regulations 2022. Mention was also made of the measures being put in place to encourage the employees to be fully vaccinated, as well as for the smooth running of the postal services despite the reduced number of staffs at work.

No representation has officially been addressed to the Ministry so far by any staff member of the Mauritius Post Ltd who has been denied access to his/her place of work for not being fully vaccinated against COVID-19 in accordance with the Consolidated COVID-19 (Amendment No 15) Regulations 2022.

The Mauritius Post Ltd has informed that in an email dated 13 April 2022 addressed to the Human Resource Manager of the company, one officer who is not fully vaccinated complained against the fact that she had been denied access to her place of work on that very day as she had not submitted an up-to-date negative PCR Test. She appealed to Management for the latter to be more lenient and flexible on this matter.

The Consolidated COVID-19 (Amendment No 15) Regulations 2022 have been promulgated as a measure to protect the citizens as a whole against the spread of the COVID-19 virus and there can be no compromise on that issue. This is why the Mauritius Post Ltd is continuously sensitizing its officers to be fully vaccinated. The campaign has indeed proved to be successful and the number of non-vaccinated officers has reduced from 154 on 04 April 2022 to 19 on 12 May 2022.

NOTRE DAME RELAY SHELTER

(No. B/662) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Notre Dame Relay Shelter inaugurated in October 2021, she will state why same is not operational.

(Withdrawn)

**SOLFERINO - NEW CANCER HOSPITAL - CONSTRUCTION &
RENOVATION**

(No. B/663) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the construction and renovation of the New Cancer Hospital at Solferino, he will state the –

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

(Withdrawn)

AGRICULTURAL SEED PRODUCTION DIVISION - STAFFING

(No. B/664) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the Agricultural Seed Production Division of his Ministry, he will state the measures taken since June 2020 to date for the proper staffing thereof.

(Withdrawn)

POINTE AUX SABLES - COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

(No. B/665) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the proposed construction of an Area Health Centre at Pointe aux Sables, he will state when works will be completed.

Reply: A new Community Health Centre is being constructed at Pointe aux Sables and not an Area Health Centre.

The contract for the construction of the Community Health Centre was awarded in October 2021 to Modern Jurassic Building & Construction Limited. The new CHC is being constructed on a plot of land which is adjacent to the existing CHC.

I am also informed that works at the new Community Health Centre are ongoing and the overall progress of work, as at date, is at 45%. The project is expected to be completed by end of this year.

SIM CARDS – NUMBER IN USE

(No. B/666) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to SIM Cards, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number thereof presently in use on mobile phones and connective devices, indicating the –

- (a) total number thereof for each service provider;
- (b) conditions attached for registration thereof, and
- (c) number thereof lost and reported to the Police.

(Withdrawn)

OCCUPATION PERMIT – APPLICATIONS – 2020 TO MAY 2022

(No. B/667) Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Occupation Permit, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Economic Development Board, information as to the number of applications received therefor, for the years 2020, 2021 and since January 2022 to date, indicating the number thereof approved.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION – 2021-22 & 2022-23 SEASONS

(No. B/668) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to football, he will –

- (a) state if his Ministry has been officially informed by the Mauritius Football Association (MFA) that the 2021-22 season has been cancelled and, if so, give details thereof, and
- (b) obtain from the MFA, information as to when all national leagues, including the women league, for 2022-23 season will start, indicating the terms and conditions thereof.

Reply: I have been informed by the Mauritius Football Association (MFA) that the football season 2021-22 has not been cancelled.

As regards part (b) of the question, the MFA has submitted to my Ministry a proposal for a new model of competition regarding the national leagues including the women league which would start in mid of August 2022 and completed in April 2023.

On 05 May 2022, the MFA has been advised to have a consultative meeting with regard to the new model of competition with the clubs participating in the different leagues and submit the outcomes thereof to my Ministry for consideration.

Up to now, the MFA has not yet reverted to my Ministry.

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY ON DRUGS - DANGEROUS DRUGS – CONTROL MEASURES

(No. B/669) Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to dangerous drugs, he will state the additional measures taken by his Ministry for the control thereof in the wake of the recommendations of the latest Commission of Inquiry on Drugs.

(Withdrawn)

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

(No. B/670) Ms J. Tour (Third 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 youth unemployment, he will state the actions being taken by his Ministry in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

NON-BIODEGRADABLE PLASTIC PRODUCTS BAN

(No. B/671) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the extension of the moratorium for the banning of some non-biodegradable single use plastic products up to 14 January 2023, he will state the rationale thereof.

(Withdrawn)

COVID-19 – ARTISTS COMMUNITY – ACTIVITIES

(No. B/672) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to the artists community, he will state the initiatives his Ministry proposes to take to ease the carrying out of the activities thereof amid the current COVID-19 situation.

Reply: Since 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing sanitary restrictions have had a direct negative impact on the creative sector. This situation has set forth significant challenges to most countries. In Mauritius, to mitigate such negative impact and stimulate the artistic and creative sectors, my Ministry triggered various initiatives for our artists to pursue their activities amid the current situation.

Some of these measures are *inter alia* –

- (i) implementation of the Post COVID-19 Action Plan 2020 for the Creative and Heritage Sectors whereby seven schemes were put in place, namely financial assistance to artists to perform in concerts, the virtual theatre and other performances scheme, the online story telling for kids, organisation of “*Moris, nou kiltir nou talen*”, Street Art Scheme and Virtual Exhibition Scheme. Around 1300 artists benefitted from these schemes for a total amount of Rs15 m.;
- (ii) implementation of the COVID-19 Artists Support Plan 2021 whereby a financial support was offered to artists as an incentive to further develop their artistic talent

and create new art productions. Seven schemes were devised under this Support Plan, such as the recording of song scheme, purchase of books scheme, production of short stories scheme, painting scheme, sculpture scheme, film making scheme, photography scheme and other forms of Art Scheme. 255 artists received financial assistance to the tune of Rs5.7 m. under this plan;

- (iii) implementation of an Artwork Acquisition Programme in 2021 by the National Art Gallery which is a parastatal body under the aegis of my Ministry whereby 29 artworks comprising paintings, sculptures, photographs and prints (print-making) have been acquired for a sum of Rs1.1 m. from well-known and emerging artists. This “Artwork Acquisition Programme” has been extended in 2022 and a sum of Rs1 m. has been earmarked by the National Art Gallery for this purpose. I am informed that the call for application has already been launched;
- (iv) organisation of a virtual art exhibition in 2021 by the National Art Gallery whereby the artworks of 27 artists were curated in a way that the public could interact with the exhibition space, allowing them to enjoy the artworks and gather information from a virtual catalogue. To participate in the virtual exhibition, 27 artists benefitted from a financial assistance of Rs58,000 to support and encourage them further;
- (v) organisation of an online concert in collaboration with Jorez Box to celebrate Seggae Day on 21 February 2022. The concert was livestreamed on Facebook and met with a huge success. A sum of Rs150,000 was paid as cachet to 8 groups of artists, and
- (vi) organisation of a Virtual Festival Kreol Edition 2021 at the Serge Constantin Theatre with the participation of some 700 artists. A sum of around Rs5.47 m. has been disbursed to the 700 artists. An official launching would be scheduled shortly.

Over and above these exceptional measures taken to address the serious disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in the artistic community, my Ministry is

further supporting the artists financially upon request for the organisation of concerts, events both locally and internationally. Recently, my Ministry has extended financial assistance to the group “Anonym” for performance in the first part of the concert of the renowned artist Christophe Mae at the Olympia, Paris on 14 and 15 May 2022. My Ministry will entertain similar requests of financial assistance from the artists to perform on the international scene.

Given that the creative economy is gaining importance as a new source of economic growth in the world, my Ministry is leaving no stone unturned in support for the community of artists.

NATIONAL AGRI-FOOD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME – INCEPTION

(No. B/673) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the food security strategy for the country, he will state where matters stand as to the inception of a comprehensive National Agri-Food Development Programme, as announced in the 2020-2021 Budget Speech.

Reply: The inception of a National Agri-Food Development Programme was enunciated in the Budget Speech 2020/2021 with a view to attain self-sufficiency in terms of agricultural products so as to ensure availability, affordability and sustainability. Moreover, this programme would promote the Farm to Fork concept, ensure food security and reduce our dependence on imports.

Food Security is the main concern across the world following the COVID-19 pandemic and the geopolitical situation between Ukraine and Russia, and same has been put high on the agenda of my Ministry.

The new normal for agriculture would be in terms of transformation, semi processing and value-addition, which is in line with Government's objective to go towards import substitution and reduction of food waste.

The National Agri-Food Development Programme has as objectives to –

- i. increase local production and reduce import of targeted crops;
- ii. development of fruit sector;
- iii. development of new varieties;
- iv. stabilise market price;
- v. development of the agro-processing *filière*;
- vi. development of seed production strategy, and
- vii. promote food safety and efficient and sustainable production system through agro-forestry.

The vision of this Government is for a more resilient, fair and sustainable food system so that we produce more of what we consume and we consume what we produce. In order to achieve this vision, planters are being encouraged by the Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (FAREI) through on-field visits, regional meetings and trainings to adopt planned production of crops so that there is sustained supply throughout the year. Moreover, my Ministry has disbursed around Rs149 m. to some 6,050 planters, breeders, agro-processors and backyard fruit owners for the year 2021/2022 in order to support the local production.

To boost the local production of vegetables, fruits and livestock, a planned production strategy is being implemented by my Ministry and a Planned Production Committee has been set up under the chairmanship of the Senior Chief Executive of my Ministry to oversee and coordinate agricultural activities among all the stakeholders. In addition, several adhoc meetings are held with specific stakeholders on related issues. My Ministry, through the FAREI, is accompanying the planters and is giving the necessary technical support and advice to enable them to adopt good agricultural practices.

Incentives are provided to growers to increase the production of certain targeted strategic crops, namely potato, onion, tomato, bean and carrots, amongst others. New varieties of potatoes, namely "Vigora" and "Everest" and beans, namely "Ferrina" have been tested at the FAREI and are being multiplied for large scale production.

It has been often observed that during the period of high supply, many growers prefer to leave their crops in field due to low market price. In view of encouraging planters to continue

production despite the period of high supply, my Ministry is promoting the processing of these vegetables which will decrease importation of frozen and processed vegetables as same is significantly high in Mauritius.

The FAREI has already developed processing protocols for certain vegetables such as potato chips, frozen tomato, tomato paste/purée, frozen carrots and beans, amongst others. Other promising products such as turmeric paste, dehydrated fruits, canned vegetables and ready to cook vegetables have been earmarked as part of the agro-processing programme.

Hon. Members must have come across locally processed food which sale is on the increase. Many women have been trained in agro-processing and are doing fairly well as a business. In order to develop this agro-processing sector, a feasibility study financed by the AfDB will be undertaken shortly. An international Expression of Interest has been launched and same is being evaluated.

To achieve the goal of self-sufficiency in the production of local food and reducing importation, it is imperative to have a strong seed production. Under the programme of the Quality Declared Seeds (QDS), cucumber and squash are being grown for seed production. Certain Corporates such as St Antoine is actively engaged in seed production of onion and potato. My Ministry, through the AMB, caters for a local seed production programme for potato, onion and garlic by providing a guaranteed market and producer price which is vital for assuring the perennity of a viable seed industry in Mauritius. The QDS will be extended to cover other vegetables.

My Ministry is currently working on the possibility to extend the guaranteed floor price to non-controlled products which may include sweet potato, cassava, taro, carrots, beans, beans (pulses), cabbage, tomatoes, cucumber and pumpkin due to seasonality of crop production in Mauritius which lead to unstable price in the market. This initiative would aim at regulating demand and supply to stabilise availability of crops as well as the price in the market.

To revitalise the local fruit production, my Ministry is engaging in the promotion of 'Super food' fruits such as jackfruit, breadfruit, soursop, *jamblon* and avocado on a large scale. These fruits are known for their high nutritional benefits and minimal calorie known for their

health attributes. My Ministry is also proposing to embark in Agro-Forestry, where these super foods would be produced on a larger scale.

My colleagues may wish to note that in view of promoting the propagation of fruit trees, an MOU has been signed between my Ministry and the Prisons Department to support agricultural activities in the Prisons Department and to produce grafts and layers of fruit trees in large quantity.

DRAINS INFRASTRUCTURE CO. LTD – PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/674) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the projects being implemented by the Drains Infrastructure Company Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain details thereof.

(Withdrawn)

NEW SOCIAL LIVING DEVELOPMENT LTD. - HOUSING UNITS - WATER SUPPLY

(No. B/675) Mr R. Wochit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the proposed construction of 12,000 housing units by the New Social Living Development Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if arrangements have been made for the submission of applications for water supply prior to the start of construction works.

Reply: I am informed by the NSLD Ltd that it has been working closely with the Central Water Authority (CWA) and the Water Resources Unit (WRU) to assess the water requirements.

In respect of each of the sites identified for construction of housing units and where the future demand has been determined, same has been submitted to the CWA with a view to ensuring that there is adequate water supply when the residential units are delivered.

LA MARIE ROAD – DIOLLE-GLENPARK – DECONGESTION

(No. B/676) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether in regard to the proposed measures to be taken for the decongestion of La Marie Road, from Diolle to Glen Park, he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

FARMERS – CLIMATE CHANGE – AGRO-ECOLOGICAL APPROACH

(No. B/677) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the project aiming at increasing farmers resilience to climate change through the adoption of an agro-ecological approach, he will give details thereof, including, the number of farmers benefiting therefrom.

(Withdrawn)

WATER SECTOR REFORM – FUNDS DISBURSED & REPLACEMENT OF PIPES - 2019 TO MAY 2022

(No. B/678) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the water sector reform, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the –

- (a) quantum of funds disbursed for water pipe replacement on a yearly basis for 2019, 2020 and 2021 and since January 2022 to date, and
- (b) current percentage of non-revenue water.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the CWA that some 156.2 km of pipes have been replaced by the CWA over the period January 2019 to date for a value of Rs685.3 m. The quantum of funds disbursed under the respective financial years between 2019 and now stands at –

- Rs429 m. in 2019;
- Rs134 m. in 2020;
- Rs111 m. in 2021, and

- Rs11.3 m. from January 2022 to date.

Moreover, an additional 157.7 km of pipes have been replaced by Wastewater Management Authority, Metro Express and the NDU under their respective projects.

There has been a relatively slower progress in years 2020 to date due to the lockdown and sanitary restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as disruptions in production and supply chains, rising prices of materials and freight.

With reference to part (b) of the question, as I had stated in my reply to PQ B/532 on 11 August 2020, due to the unavailability of reliable data, it is currently not possible to provide an accurate baseline data; hence an exact figure for Non-Revenue Water is not available.

Based on a raw difference between water production and water sales figures, in the absence of exact water meter readings, the NRW figures could stand at around 60%.

This matter is high on the agenda of the CWA and all efforts are being made to address it in a holistic manner.

CENTRAL ELECTRICITY BOARD (FIBERNET) CO. LTD - OPERATION

(No. B/679) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Central Electricity Board (Fibernet) Company Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if it is fully operational or has been scrapped.

(Withdrawn)

MORCELLEMENT LA VALLEE LE CORNU, STE CROIX - DRAIN PROJECT

(No. B/680) 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 drain project at Morcellement La Vallée Le Cornu, Ste Croix, he will state where matters stand as to the implementation thereof.

Reply: The hon. Member is referred to the reply made to Parliamentary Question B/236 on 07 July 2020 regarding the same subject.

As at September 2022, 98% of drain works at Morcellement La Vallée, Le Cornu, Sainte Croix have been completed. However, delays have been encountered during the implementation of the project mainly due to –

- (i) lockdown in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, and
- (ii) the recurrent rainfall during the past months which delayed the implementation of the works and which resumed as from the end of April 2022.

In view of the poor performance of the Contractor, a first meeting was held with the latter on 15 April 2022 to identify and resolve any bottleneck for the timely implementation of the project.

A second meeting was held in May 2022 wherein the Contractor was warned regarding the slow progress of works. Should no improvement be noted in the Contractor's performance, necessary actions would be contemplated against him as provided for in the contract. The project is scheduled to be completed by November 2022.

RELAUNCHING TOURISM AS ONE MAURITIUS PROJECT – JUNE – DECEMBER 2022

(No. B/681) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the Relaunching Tourism As One Mauritius Project targeting one million tourists by end 2022, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority, information as to the number of tourists expected between June to December.

(Withdrawn)

BASIC INVALIDITY PENSIONS – APPLICATIONS & GRANTS

(No. B/682) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the Basic Invalidity Pensions, she will state the number of applications received for the granting

thereof, since July 2021 to date, including the number thereof received from persons suffering from physical and/or mental disability, indicating the number thereof benefitting thereunder.

(Withdrawn)

CONSTITUENCY NO. 20 – DRAINS – CLEANING

(No. B/683) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to drains in Constituency No. 20, Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Development Unit and the Land Drainage Authority, information as to the present number thereof, including the frequency of the cleaning thereof annually, indicating when same were last cleaned.

(Withdrawn)

DRUGS SHORTAGE – MEASURES

(No. B/684) (Mr E. Juman) (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the public health services, he will state if a shortage of certain drugs has occurred over the past six months thereat and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) reasons therefor;
- (b) remedial measures taken, and
- (c) quantity thereof purchased under emergency procurement.

Reply: My Ministry makes provision for some 850 different drugs comprising tablets, capsules, injections, syrups, implants and suppositories to the treating doctors for them to prescribe accordingly. These drugs are classified into different classes for which the prescriber can have the option to effectively choose for his/her patients.

For example, for upper respiratory tract infections, there are different classes of antibiotics. In each of these classes, there are several different drugs.

For instance, a treating doctor can prescribe different antibiotics of the same class.

For the treatment of breast cancer patients, there are different medications such as Capecitabine, Gemcitabine, Vinorelbine, Goserelin and Triptorelin.

For example, if Capecitabine is not available, Gemcitabine or Vinorelbine can be prescribed. The same for Goserelin, which can be substituted by Triptorelin.

For patients who require pain killers, there are different analgesics, such as Paracetamol, Ibuprofen, Diclofenac and Indomethacin.

Therefore, even if there is a shortage of a drug in a particular class, most of the time, there is a substitute. There may be shortage of drugs with a specific dosage, but the required dosage can be obtained from the same drug with a different dosage.

Shortage of drugs in a particular class is not a new phenomenon in the public health service. In fact, the WHO Essential List of Medicines has 479 drugs which have to be made available in each country. With the coming up of new generation drugs in the market, the WHO gradually replaces the old generation drugs. My Ministry regularly upgrades the drug formulary list to new generation drugs.

For example, for Gastrointestinal, the new generation medication is Esomeprazole, but in hospitals, both Esomeprazole and Omeprazole are available.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed there are several factors which account for such a situation and which are beyond our control, namely –

- (i) default by suppliers;
- (ii) significant delays in delivery by suppliers;
- (iii) export restrictions or limitations imposed by countries;
- (iv) border/sanitary restrictions impacting on movement of cargo;
- (v) shortage of active Principal Ingredient (API) on the world market;
- (vi) increase in consumption pattern due to COVID-19 pandemic;
- (vii) delay in the manufacturing process due to lockdown in certain countries, and
- (viii) potential international bidders not interested in our market due to its small size.

As for part (b) of the question, in order not to hamper public health service delivery, my Ministry has been proactive to ensure that the treatment of patients is not affected.

Accordingly –

- (a) The Ministry holds regular Drug Monitoring Committees to constantly take stock and assess the situation;
- (b) Besides the annual procurement exercise, my Ministry has recourse to bridging exercises with accelerated timescales to palliate any shortage of drugs, as and when needed;
- (c) The contract management team at the Procurement Section has been reinforced to closely monitor outstanding orders and promptly flag any expected delay in delivery so that timely and appropriate corrective measures are taken to avoid shortages;
- (d) The Central Supplies Division, Regional Hospitals and Procurement Unit have been requested to better coordinate and communicate for prompt sharing of information regarding inventory management, and
- (e) use of substitutes and alternative medications, wherever possible.

As for part (c) of the question, I am informed that there has been no purchase of drugs under Emergency Procurement method for the past 6 months.

SOCIAL REGISTER OF MAURITIUS - RECERTIFICATION EXERCISE

(No. B/685) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the Recertification of Beneficiaries on the Social Register of Mauritius, she will state the total number of beneficiaries/households for the year 2022, indicating the number thereof –

- (a) having signed their social contract as at to date, indicating the duration and terms and conditions thereof, and
- (b) whose social contract –
 - (i) are pending, giving reasons therefor, and
 - (ii) have been cancelled.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, as at 12 May 2022, 3,227 households were found eligible to remain on the Social Register of Mauritius and have signed their social contracts for a period of 1 year on the same terms and conditions.

Concerning part (b) (i) of the question, as at 12 May 2022, the applications of 207 households for re-assessment under the Social Register of Mauritius are still being processed at the level of the Ministry.

For part (b) (ii) of the question, as at 12 May 2022, 516 households have not been found eligible under the Social Register of Mauritius after the recertification exercise.

RACING SEASON 2022 - EXPATRIATES - EMPLOYMENT

(No. B/687) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Horse Racing Division of the Gambling Regulatory Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the number of expatriates employed thereat for the Racing Season 2022, indicating in each case the –

- (a) duration of contract;
- (b) job description and experience held, and
- (c) salary and other benefits drawn.

(Withdrawn)

BACKYARD GARDENING SCHEME - ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

(No. B/688) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Backyard Gardening Scheme, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd., information as to the –

- (a) eligibility criteria to benefit thereunder, and
- (b) number of households having benefitted thereunder as at to date.

Reply: Conformément aux mesures annoncées dans le Discours du Budget 2020/2021, le *Backyard Gardening Loan Scheme* a été introduit par la Banque de Développement de Maurice dans le but de donner aux femmes au foyer les moyens d'entreprendre des activités de jardinage dans leur jardin et sur leur toit.

Et cela pour produire des légumes pour leur consommation et la vente de l'excédent, le cas échéant.

Cette mesure s'intègre dans la stratégie du gouvernement pour renforcer notre autonomie alimentaire.

En ce qui concerne la partie (a) de la question, je souhaite informer l'Assemblée qu'à partir de juillet 2021, les critères d'éligibilité du *Backyard Gardening Loan Scheme* ont été élargis pour permettre à tout membre d'un ménage de bénéficier de ce programme. C'était d'ailleurs l'une des mesures du Budget 2021-2022.

En ce qui concerne la partie (b) de la question, je souhaite informer la Chambre qu'un montant de 3,14 millions de roupies, sur un montant approuvé de 3,69 millions de roupies, a déjà été déboursé pour 118 ménages.

COVID-19 VACCINATION CAMPAIGN – PFIZER VACCINES – CHILDREN – 5-11 YEARS

(No. B/690) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign for Children between 5 to 11 years, he will state the number of Pfizer vaccines received therefor, indicating the –

- (a) mechanism set up for the carrying out thereof, and
- (b) number of vaccines administered as at to date.

(Withdrawn)

FEMALE WORKERS – COMPLAINTS – 2019 TO MAY 2022

(No. B/691) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to female workers, he will state the number of complaints received therefrom since 2019 to date at his Ministry for –

- (a) harassment;
- (b) discrimination, and
- (c) unequal remuneration for work of equal value.

(Withdrawn)

WAR MEMORIAL – 100TH ANNIVERSARY – COMMEMORATION

(No. B/692) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to the 100th Anniversary of the War Memorial, he will state why same has not been commemorated by his Ministry in spite of representations made formally to his Ministry to that effect.

Reply: With regard to the 100th anniversary of the War Memorial, I am informed by the National Heritage Fund, a parastatal body operating under the aegis of my Ministry and whose mandate is to identify, valorise and promote our National Heritage, that it is the practice every year on 11 November to commemorate the end of World War I by organising a remembrance day parade. This parade is organised to honour the memory of some 3,000 Mauritians who fought during World War I, out of whom some died.

I am further informed that it is not the practice to commemorate the centenary of a listed monument unless it coincides with the purpose for which the memorial was erected. In this particular case, the memorial was erected in April 1922, while the commemoration is on 11 November to mark the end of World War I and honour those who fought and lost their lives during that war.

In view of these aforesaid reasons, my Ministry will commemorate both the centenary of the War Memorial and the end of World War I on 11 November 2022.

**COVID-19 PANDEMIC – SCHOOLS & OTHER DEPARTMENTS - MEASURES
TAKEN**

(No. B/693) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the schools and other departments falling under the aegis of her Ministry, she will state the measures taken since May 2021 to date to ensure the safe environment thereof amid the COVID-19 pandemic, indicating the names of the contractors who were awarded contracts in relation thereto, indicating in each case the –

- (a) contract value, and
- (b) date of award of contract.

Reply: In my reply to Parliamentary Questions B/241 and B/282 on 20 April 2021 on the same subject matter, I informed the House on measures taken by my Ministry to ensure a safe and secure environment for students, Educators and personnel of schools and departments, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

I had pointed out that schools were closed as from 10 March 2021 to mid-June 2021 in the wake of the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Following the re-opening of schools and resumption of classes on face to face mode, all necessary measures and protocol for cleanliness, sanitation and hygiene have been sustained in schools and other departments of my Ministry. I am again highlighting the measures taken –

- 1) Full sensitisation of the student community and school personnel on health and safety guidelines.

The guidelines included –

- temperature checks upon arrival at schools;
 - the mandatory use of face masks;
 - frequent cleaning;
 - disinfection of the classrooms to ensure health protection.
- 2) Rapid PCR testing was carried out for all teachers and non-teaching staff to ensure the health and safety of all students upon resumption.
 - 3) A series of sensitisation workshops were held in collaboration with the World Health Organisation and the Ministry of Health and Wellness with members of the School

Health Clubs on Infection, Prevention & Control of COVID-19. (A total of 98 Educators and 157 students participated in these workshops).

- 4) Another major action taken was the vaccination of all secondary school students. Also schools were declared as specified institutions, under regulations made by the Ministry of Health and Wellness in August 2021, where access is granted only to persons having been vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine or having a negative PCR test result slip dating back to not more than 7 days from the date of the PCR test in case they are not vaccinated.

This year as from February 2022, a dedicated Testing Team comprising some 90 trainee nurses was set up to conduct Rapid Antigen Tests in schools on students upon detection of a positive case within the classroom and to advise schools on Infection Prevention and Control protocols.

As regards cleaning services, my Ministry has a contract with Mauri-Facilities Management Co. Ltd, a government owned company under the aegis of Landscape (Mauritius) Ltd, for the provision of daily cleaning and disinfection services in all our Primary Schools and Secondary Schools. General Workers employed in schools are also involved in the cleaning and disinfection of classrooms. As regards the departments of my Ministry, the cleaning and disinfection are carried out by Office Auxiliaries.

The team followed a training programme on Rapid Antigen Testing and Infection Prevention and Control organised by the Ministry of Health and Wellness in collaboration with the World Health Organisation.

Additional necessary measures have been taken by my Ministry to mitigate the spread of the infection following the detection of positive cases of COVID-19 within classrooms. The Ministry of Health and Wellness has provided my Ministry with the testing kits and other medical items for the testing exercises in schools.

I wish to emphasise that no other contract has been awarded either for one-off sanitisation and disinfection of schools or other cleaning services during period May 2021 to date.

The services of Mauri-Facilities Management Co. Ltd have been satisfactory taking into account the standards and exigencies in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and no adverse report has been received so far.

TIPPER LORRIES – PURCHASE, DELIVERY & COMMISSIONING

(No. B/694) 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 purchase of seventeen tipper lorries for local authorities, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if same have been delivered and commissioned as per their respective safety standards and efficiency.

Reply: In July 2019, following an open national bidding exercise, a contract for the supply of 17 tipper lorries for an amount of Rs42.3 m. was awarded. The lorries had to be delivered by January 2020.

However, delivery was delayed, *inter alia*, due to non-compliance with one specific item which was noted during the commissioning exercise. In fact, the power take-off mechanism of the lorries was locally fitted instead of being factory fitted as per bidding documents.

The attention of the supplier was drawn thereto. Thereafter, it shipped the vehicles back to South Africa to address the non-compliance. On XXXX, the supplier informed the Ministry that the non-compliance had been addressed and requested for the commissioning of the vehicles prior to delivery.

During the second commissioning exercise, it was noted that the vehicles were still fitted with the same power take-off mechanism albeit it was reinforced.

In these circumstances, as there was some ambiguity in the definition of the term “factory fitted” being given that the vehicles had been shipped back to South Africa for the installation of the mechanism, the Solicitor General’s Office was approached for advice.

Following advice from the Solicitor General’s Office, a technical team, comprising mechanical engineers from the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development and the City Council of Port Louis, was set up to assess that the safety standards and efficiency requirements of the vehicles were met with. In accordance with the recommendations of the technical team, on 20 April 2022, the supplier was requested to provide a list of documents, certificates and carry out various tests to enable the said assessment.

The supplier has indicated that its technical report will be submitted by 25 May 2022. Thereafter, the technical team will assess the vehicles and a decision will be made upon receipt of their report.

SIFB – LAND ACQUISITION – FACT-FINDING COMMITTEE MEASURES & RECOMMENDATIONS

(No. B/695) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the Fact-finding Committee set up in 2018 to look into land acquisition by the Sugar Insurance Fund Board, at Trianon, he will state the measures taken, if any, in relation to the recommendations contained in the report thereof submitted in 2019.

Reply: I am informed by the Sugar Insurance Fund Board (SIFB) that the Report of the Fact-Finding Committee (FFC) on the acquisition of 6A of land at Trianon, which was received on 24 May 2019, contains five recommendations.

An Implementation Committee was set up shortly after the receipt of the Report to look into the recommendations made and ensure their successful implementation.

The Implementation Committee was chaired by the then Senior Chief Executive of my Ministry and had as members the then CEO of the SIFB, the Lead Financial and Governance Analyst, from the Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance, the Assistant Manager, Internal Control from the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning & Development and the then HR Manager of my Ministry.

The Implementation Committee met on six occasions. It also had several working sessions with key staff of the SIFB with a view to facilitating the smooth implementation of the recommendations.

I am told that so far two out of the five recommendations made in the Report have been fully implemented. The remaining three recommendations which relate essentially to a full Corporate Governance Compliance review of the SIFB require, among others, the introduction of new Standard Operating procedures, a Financial

Management Manual, a Human Resource Manual and a complete audit of the SIFB's Information Technology system.

The House would agree that such tasks take time to be completed. In view thereof, the three recommendations are still under progress. However, I understand that they will be fully implemented in a very near future as all the documents I mentioned earlier have already been worked out and are on the verge of being finalised. Once completed, they will be put into practice.

ROBINSON FOOTBALL PLAYGROUND – CLOAKROOM

(No. B/696) Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the Robinson Football Playground, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Curepipe, information as to the present use made of the amenities thereof, particularly, the cloakroom.

(Withdrawn)

HAJJ MISSION – HAJJEE VISAS & TARIFFS

(No. B/697) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to the recent Hajj Mission undertaken in Saudi Arabia, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Islamic Cultural Centre, information as to –

- (a) the number of visas obtained, indicating if representations have been made for additional ones, and
- (b) where matters stand as to tariff per hajji and other conditions.

(Vide Reply to PQ B/641)

L'UNIVERSITÉ DE LA RÉUNION - RECOGNITION - MEDICAL INSTITUTION

(No. B/698) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Medical Council, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) if *l'Université de la Réunion* has been refused recognition as an awarding body for the dispensation of medical specialist training as at end April 2022, and
- (b) the number of requests made by holders of *Diplome Universitaire* from *l'Université de la Réunion* for recognition of specialist training, indicating the specialty fields.

Reply: I am informed that *l'Université de la Réunion* is currently not on the list of recognised medical institutions as per the Medical Council (Medical Institutions) Regulations 2016.

I am further informed that 25 Trainee Emergency Physicians of my Ministry were enlisted to follow the postgraduate Diploma in Emergency Medicine. The 3-year diploma started in October 2017 and ended in November 2021. The 1-year delay was due to COVID-19.

Following the completion of a postgraduate diploma in Emergency Medicine, the Medical Council of Mauritius apprised this Ministry that the said diploma was awarded by the University of Bordeaux in collaboration with *Université de la Réunion*.

Given that University of Reunion Island is not on the list of Medical Institutions, contrary to University of Bordeaux, it was proposed to include *Université de la Réunion*, by amending the schedule to the principal regulations so that the future batches following the diploma can register directly with the Medical Council of Mauritius.

The Medical Council of Mauritius was consulted and has agreed to the listing and recognition of *Université de la Réunion*. On 22 March 2022, the advice of the Attorney General's Office (AGO) was sought in the matter as to whether there would be any legal impediment in the recognition of *Université de la Réunion*.

On 30 March 2022, the Attorney General's Office informed that there is no legal impediment to the inclusion of *Université de la Réunion* in the list of recognised medical institutions. My Ministry is now in the process of consulting the Mauritius Institute of Health and the Attorney General's Office prior to recommending the listing of *Université de la Réunion* with retrospective effect.

Once *Université de la Réunion* is included in the recognised list of medical institutions, the Post Graduate Medical Education Board of the Medical Council will conduct an assessment of the candidates. The recommendation of the Postgraduate Medical Education Board will be put before the Medical Council during its sittings, and a decision will be taken on their respective registration as Specialist in Emergency Medicine.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that there are 25 General Practitioners who have applied for registration as Specialist in the field of Emergency Medicine.

WATER SUPPLY - NORTHERN COASTAL AREAS – ESTIMATED DEMAND

(No. B/699) Mr R. Wochit (Third Member for Pamplémousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to water supply in the northern coastal areas, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the estimated demand thereof over the next five and ten years, respectively, indicating the measures being envisaged to satisfy same.

Reply: I am informed by the Central Water Authority that water in North District Zone is supplied from La Nicolière Treatment Plant, Boreholes and Irrigation Authority pipelines. Currently, La Nicolière Reservoir has a storage capacity of 5.26 million m³ and the daily water production at La Nicolière Water Treatment Plant is 77,700 m³. The production on a daily basis from borehole is around 83,000 m³ during normal season and the production from abstraction of irrigation pipeline is 24,000 m³. A total of approximately 184,700 m³ water is being supplied daily to Water Supply Zone North.

The number of subscribers as at date for Water Supply Zone North is 83,523. It is estimated that the number of subscribers will rise to 108,563 in the next five years and 126,563 by end of 2032 with the coming up of smart cities, IRS projects, Hotels projects, Property Development Scheme, Housing projects including Villas, Business and Industrial Parks, *Morcellement* and others.

In order to supply water for future development and new customers in water distribution North District over the next 5 and 10 years, the following major projects are envisaged; subject to feasibility and availability of funding –

- i. Enlargement of La Nicolière Reservoir;

- ii. Rehabilitation & Extension of La Nicolière Water Treatment Plant;
- iii. Rehabilitation and upgrading of Poudre d'Or Balancing Tank;
- iv. Mobilisation & treatment of water from Bassin Grande Marais to Old Goodlands Reservoir;
- v. Reduction of Non-Revenue Water level;
- vi. Installation and commissioning of new pressure filters from abstraction of water courses, water bodies and irrigation pipeline;
- vii. Renewal of pipelines and Trunk Mains.

CEB & TERRAGEN - POWER PURCHASE AGREEMENT 2020

(No. B/700) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Power Purchase Agreement signed between the Central Electricity Board and Terragen in 2020, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain and table copy thereof.

(Withdrawn)

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND - ARTICLE IV CONSULTATIONS REPORT

(No. B/701) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, he will state if he has taken cognizance of the latest Article IV Consultations Report of the International Monetary Fund and, if so, indicate the measures that will be taken to address the issues mentioned therein.

Reply: Le FMI effectue chaque année une mission de consultation dans ses pays membres au titre de l'article IV.

A cet égard, la délégation du FMI organise des consultations avec les responsables du gouvernement et de la banque centrale ainsi qu'avec d'autres parties prenantes. Le but étant d'évaluer les récents développements économiques et de discuter des politiques économiques et monétaires. Le FMI publie ses conclusions et recommandations préliminaires dans un communiqué de presse à l'issue de sa mission de consultation.

Jusqu'à présent, le FMI a seulement publié un communiqué de presse. Les autorités mauriciennes attendent du rapport complet des consultations au titre de l'article IV, qui doit

encore être finalisé par la mission de l'article IV du FMI et approuvé par son Conseil d'administration.

Dans l'intervalle, les recommandations préliminaires sont examinées et les mesures appropriées seront prises.

MAURITIAN LAGOON - MARINE RANCHING

(No. B/702) 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 Mauritian lagoon, he will state the measures taken by his Ministry for the restocking thereof since January 2020 to date.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that restocking of the lagoon is also known as Marine Ranching and it refers to the enhancement of fish stock in the lagoon through the release of fries/fingerlings or juveniles of different commercial species of fish with a view to increasing fish production and fish catch for the benefit of the fishermen community and the public at large. These fries/fingerlings are raised or reared in hatcheries/nurseries in the Albion Fisheries Research Centre for subsequent release in the lagoon.

As far as Marine Ranching is concerned, successive Governments have been undertaking the Marine Ranching Programme since its start in 1997. I wish to inform the hon. Members that, to date, some 3.95 million fries/fingerlings of *Guêule pavée*, marine shrimps, crabs and *cordonnier* have been released at selected sites in the lagoon.

Moreover, all new fishing licences are issued off-lagoon to relieve the pressure and protect the in-lagoon ecosystems to make a natural nursery for an effective restoration programme.

Corals, mangroves and the sea weed restoration programmes are high on our agenda for the enhancement of the habitat of all species.

My Ministry will also embark on a project for installation of mooring in-lagoon buoys and promulgate regulations for the banning of use of anchors.

For the period mentioned by the hon. Member, that is, January 2020 to date, some 205,000 seabream fries have been released in different areas around the island. Seabreams reared

in ponds at the Albion Fisheries Research Centre for breeding purposes have been used for seed production. No other species was restocked as fish collection from the lagoon was not carried out due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

I wish to inform the House that My Ministry is looking forward to enhancing the Marine Ranching Programme by restocking our lagoons with different fish species, marine shrimps, crab and bivalves.

The main objective is to enhance the capacity of our existing hatcheries to increase seed production on a larger scale so that my Ministry can develop new culture techniques for the implementation of a sustainable Marine Ranching Programme.

For that purpose, projects are being prepared for setting up additional facilities, including related infrastructure and logistics at the AFRC. Procurement of all associated live marine organisms required for developing culture techniques for new species of marine fishes, shrimps, crab, bivalves and sea cucumber such as phytoplankton and zooplankton is also underway.

PSAC 2022 - GRADE 5 STUDENTS - SURVEY

(No. B/703) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the Primary School Achievement Certificate Assessment 2022, she will state if a survey has been carried out to assess the number of Grade 5 students, who upon the request of their respective responsible parties, will be taking part therein and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

(Withdrawn)

TOURIST ACCOMMODATIONS - CERTIFICATE HOLDERS & SPECIFICATIONS

(No. B/704) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to tourist accommodations, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Tourism Authority, information as to the number of certificate

holders thereof, categorised as hotels, guest houses and other residences, indicating in each case the respective –

- (a) room capacity and total bed capacity thereof, including maximum number of tourists that can be accommodated thereat, and
- (b) room occupancy and bed occupancy rates of hotels since the reopening of the borders to date.

(Withdrawn)

EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS - GRADUATES

(No. B/705) Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the graduates, he will state the present number thereof being –

- (a) unemployed, and
- (b) underemployed.

Reply: Regarding part (a) of the question, I am informed that on the basis of figures communicated to my Ministry by Statistics Mauritius, for the fourth quarter of 2021, the estimated number of unemployed graduates was around nine thousand and nine hundred (9,900).

Regarding part (b) of the question, I am informed that Statistics Mauritius compile information on ‘skills-related underemployed’, meaning those who were in employment and having tertiary qualifications and were engaged in occupations such as clerical support workers, service and sales workers, skilled agricultural workers, plant and machine operators and elementary occupations.

I am further informed that according to Statistics Mauritius, in 2019, the estimated number of skills-related underemployed was around forty three thousand and seven hundred (43,700). Figures for 2020 has, however, not been compiled due to lockdown measures taken by the Government in March 2020. As regards the estimated figures for 2021, I am informed that it will be published in the course of this month.

**PRICE OBSERVATORY COMMITTEE – COMPOSITION, MEETINGS &
REMUNERATION**

(No. B/706) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the Price Observatory Committee, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

- (a) composition thereof;
- (b) number of meetings held as at to date, and
- (c) total cost incurred in terms of remuneration of the Chairperson and members thereof.

(Withdrawn)

GRA – PTC-PLC – HORSE RACING ORGANIZER LICENSE

(No. B/707) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Racing Season 2022, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Horse Racing Division of the Gambling Regulatory Authority, information as to if a letter of intent has been issued to the People's Turf PLC (PTC-PLC) for a Horse Racing Organizer license and, if so, indicate the date of issue thereof, indicating the terms and conditions contained therein.

Reply: J'ai été informé par la *Gambling Regulatory Authority*, qui est l'autorité chargée de délivrer la licence d'organisateur de courses de chevaux en vertu de l'article 30 de la *GRA Act*, qu'une lettre d'intention a été délivrée à *People's Turf PLC Ltd* le 6 avril 2022 à la suite d'une demande de licence d'organisateur de courses de chevaux.

Cette lettre d'intention contient un ensemble d'exigences juridiques et techniques que la société doit obligatoirement remplir et respecter, à la satisfaction de l'Autorité, avant de se voir délivrer une licence d'organisateur de courses de chevaux.

À cette fin, je dépose les termes et conditions qui y sont contenus dans la Bibliothèque de l'Assemblée nationale.

**META - ONLINE BEHAVIOUR - AWARENESS ACTIVITIES &
WORKSHOPS**

(No. B/708) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to Meta, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Independent Communication Technologies Authority, information as to where matters stand as to the carrying out in Mauritius of a proposed programme of activities and workshops to build awareness on responsible online behaviour.

(Withdrawn)