



REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 05 JULY 2022

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(Formed by Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth)

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

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

Hon. Mrs Kalpana Devi Koonjoo-Shah

Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare

Hon. Avinash Teeluck

Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage

Hon. Teeruthraj Hurdoyal

Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

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

MAURITIUS**Seventh National Assembly**

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 19 of 2022

Sitting of Tuesday 05 July 2022

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

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

ANNOUNCEMENT**PROTOCOL ON CONDUCT OF SITTINGS AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS OF THE ASSEMBLY AND OTHER PARLIAMENTARY ACTIVITIES AMID THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I have an announcement to make with regard to the “Protocol on Conduct of Sittings and Committee Meetings of the Assembly and Other Parliamentary Activities amid the COVID-19 Pandemic”, pursuant to Standing Order 77 of the Standing Orders and Rules of the National Assembly (1995) on 04 May 2020 under my hand.

In the light of the Quarantine (COVID-19 Restrictions) Regulations 2022, published as Government Notice No. 155 in the Legal Supplement to the Government Gazette of Mauritius No. 94 of 30 June 2022, an amendment has been brought to paragraph (ix) of the said protocol and which now reads as follows –

“Wearing of protective mask

(ix) Every person accessing the Chamber shall be required to wear a protective mask”.

However, it is optional for any hon. Member to wear a protective mask when he/she is given the floor to take part in the proceedings of the Assembly.

The wearing of protective mask is optional outside the Chamber.

Hon. Members are invited to stand governed accordingly.

I thank you.

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

The Certificate of Urgency in respect of the Academy of Design and Innovation Bill (No. XI of 2022). (In Original)

B. Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development

The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Lotto Fund for the year ended 30 June 2021.

C. Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment

The Social Aid (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 163 of 2022)

D. Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance

The Financial Reporting Council (Rotation of Audit Firm Exemption) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 167 of 2022)

E. Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training

Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection

- (a) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Competition Commission for the year ended 30 June 2021.
- (b) The Consumer Protection (Maximum Price of Essential Goods) (Revocation) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 156 of 2022)
- (c) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Maximum Price of Essential Goods) (Revocation) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 157 of 2022)
- (d) The Consumer Protection (Consumer Goods) (Maximum Mark-Up) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 158 of 2022)
- (e) The Consumer Protection (Price and Supplies Control) (Amendment of Schedules) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 159 of 2022)
- (f) The Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Petroleum Products) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 160 of 2022)
- (g) The Consumer Protection (Control of Sale of Imported Live Animals for Home Slaughter) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 162 of 2022)
- (h) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 13) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 164 of 2022)
- (i) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 14) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 165 of 2022)
- (j) The Consumer Protection (Control of Imports) (Amendment No. 4) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 166 of 2022)

(k) The Workers' Rights (Prescribed Period) (Amendment) Regulations 2022.
(Government Notice No. 168 of 2022)

F. Ministry of Health and Wellness

(a) The Quarantine (COVID-19 Restrictions) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 155 of 2022)

(b) The Food (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 161 of 2022)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

INTERNET TRAFFIC - SNIFFING, INTERCEPTION, MONITORING OR RECORDING

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether he will state if he, the Secretary to Cabinet or anyone acting on behalf of Government, has had any discussions or agreement with any foreign party and/or telecommunication operator in connection with the installation or use of equipment to enable sniffing, interception, monitoring or recording of internet traffic to and from Mauritius and/or countries in the region.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me begin my reply by stating categorically that neither myself nor any official of my Office has, acting on behalf of Government, had any discussion or agreement with any foreign party and/or telecommunication operator in connection with the installation or use of equipment to enable sniffing, interception, monitoring or recording of internet traffic to and from Mauritius and/or countries in the region.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to point out that Mauritius sources content from the internet via its submarine cables network system. These include –

- (i) LION/LION2 – connecting Mauritius from the Terre Rouge Cable Landing Station to Mombasa and the rest of the world;
- (ii) SAFE/SAT3 – connecting Mauritius from the Baie Jacotet Cable Landing Station to -
 - (a) Penang towards the East, and
 - (b) Melkbostran in South Africa to terminate in Portugal, and
- (iii) METISS – connecting Mauritius from Arsenal Landing Station to South Africa.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that Baie Jacotet is a restricted area pursuant to Government Notice 183 of 2004, which is the Police (Restricted Area) (Baie Jacotet) Order 2004.

I must say that Government Notice 183 of 2004 is in force since 11 November 2004. The area is secured by the Special Mobile Force and manned by Mauritius Telecom staff.

In regard to the other two Landing Stations at Terre Rouge and Arsenal, they are secured respectively by MT and Emtel private security personnel.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to state, in the most unequivocal terms, that there has been at no point in time any installation or any attempt by my Office to install whatsoever equipment at any of these Landing Stations, to enable sniffing, interception, monitoring or recording of internet traffic to and from Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am taking this opportunity to reaffirm and reassure the House and the population that Mauritius being a sovereign democratic State where the rule of law prevails, this Government has not done, and shall not do, anything to infringe upon the fundamental rights of our citizens and act against our national security and our sovereignty.

Thank you.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister whether, on Friday 15 April, at 10.18 a.m., he called...

Mr Speaker: May I interrupt you.

Mr X. L. Duval: What is wrong?

Mr Speaker: According to Standing Order 25(5), you are not allowed to insist upon the question in light of the answer of the hon. Prime Minister on the basis...

(*Interruptions*)

Mr X. L. Duval: But you have not heard my question! You have not heard my question.

Mr Speaker: Wait! Wait, wait!

An hon. Member: *Li pankor mem poz kestion la!*

Mr Speaker: Wait, wait, don't rush! Don't rush! On the basis of the wording of the Private Notice Question; these are the wordings of your Private Notice Question. Read it again and you will see that you are condemned; you cannot ask any question. The Prime Minister has already answered 'no'!

Mr X. L. Duval: Being in the temple of democracy, I'm sure I can ask the Prime Minister something, with your kind permission.

Mr Speaker: Yes, temple of democracy, but we are not in the jungle of democracy!

Mr X. L. Duval: In the temple of democracy, I am sure you will abide by this!

Mr Speaker: No!

Mr X. L. Duval: I would like to ask the Prime Minister, therefore, on that date, at 10.18 a.m., whether he ...

Mr Speaker: If you have information! I withdraw your mic!

An hon. Member: *Censure!*

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: I withdraw your mic!

(*Interruptions*)

Whatever! Whatever!

Dr. Boolell: High treason!

Mr Speaker: Whatever!

An hon. Member: *Ou pe fer la censure !*

Mr Speaker: Whatever!

Dr. Boolell: Invasion of privacy!

Mr Speaker: Whatever!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr X. L. Duval: I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister whether, on that date...

Mr Speaker: You have no question, Leader of the Opposition!

(*Interruptions*)

You have no question!

(*Interruptions*)

An hon. Member: Shame on you! Shame!

Mr Speaker: You have no question!

Hon. Members: Shame!

(*Interruptions*)

An hon. Member: *Trahison!*

Mr Speaker: You have no question!

(*Interruptions*)

An hon. Member: *Trahison!*

Mr Speaker: You have no question!

(*Interruptions*)

An hon. Member: *Trahison!*

Dr. Gungapersad: I withdraw!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Gungapersad, I am asking you to withdraw from the Chamber for being grossly disorderly!

An hon. Member: *Eta ale do!*

(*Interruptions*)

Dr. Gungapersad: Shame!

Mr Assirvaden: *Xavier continié! Continié twa !*

(*Interruptions*)

An hon. Member: *Get enn pe fer walk-out! Ale!*

Mr Bhagwan: *Ale do ta!*

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan! You have been addressing the Chair in a very aggressive manner! Please apologise!

Mr Bhagwan: Apologise to you? Never!

(*Interruptions*)

Never!

Mr Speaker: Please!

(*Interruptions*)

Please!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Bhagwan: Never! Never! You are a shame!

An hon. Member: Shame!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: Then I name you!

An hon. Member: *Name ta!*

Mr Speaker: Then I name you!

Mr Bérenger: Shame!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Bhagwan: You don't have to name me; the whole world knows my name! My name is Rajesh Bhagwan!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: Please! This does not impress me! This does not impress me!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Bhagwan: *Al bwar dan taverne!*

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: I am naming you; threatening and being aggressive!

Mr Bhagwan: *Ale do ta!*

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: Yes, but this does not impress me!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Bhagwan: *Al pren to lapay laba!*

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: The whole world knows what Parliament is in Mauritius! Please!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr X. L. Duval: Shame on you, Mr Speaker!

An hon. Member: Shame!

Hon. Members: Shame! Shame! Shame! Shame!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, you are a shame to this country!

(*Interruptions*)

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, you are a shame!

(*Interruptions*)

An hon. Member: Shame!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: Withdraw from the Chamber!

(*Interruptions*)

An hon. Member: You are a shame!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: Withdraw from the Chamber!

(*Interruptions*)

Withdraw from the Chamber!

(*Interruptions*)

Hon. Members: Shame!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: I am naming you! I already told you three times, withdraw from the Chamber! I am naming you for being grossly disorderly!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Lesjongard: *Met zot deor!*

(*Interruptions*)

An hon. Member: Shame!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Assirvaden: *Haute trahison!*

Mr Mohamed: *Ey Joe vey to zafr ta! To pa speaker twa!*

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

(*Interruptions*)

An hon. Member: You are a shame!

Mr Speaker: Please! Please! Please!

An hon. Member: You are a shame!

(*Interruptions*)

An hon. Member: Shame!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: Please! I will not tell you that you are a shame!

(*Interruptions*)

Dr. Boolell: You are a shame!

An hon. Member: You are a shame!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: You are a shame!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: Go and study your reading!

(*Interruptions*)

An hon. Member: Shame!

Dr. Boolell: He is disloyal to the House! That's what he is!

An hon. Member: Cheap!

An hon. Member: *Zamai monn truvé sa!*

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: This is better? You are all quiet! Please!

(*Interruptions*)

Clerk, continue!

(*Interruptions*)

An hon. Member: *La honte !*

Mr X. L. Duval: *Poz li kestion li pa kapav reponn !*

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: Prime Minister's Question Time! Hon. Ms Anquetil!

An hon. Member: *Pena kestion pou poze!*

An hon. Member: No question!

Ms Anquetil: Vu les circonstances de haute trahison, je refuse de poser ma question !

(*Interruptions*)

Hon. Members: *Trahison!*

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: I am naming you!

(*Interruptions*)

An hon. Member: *Trahison!*

Mr Speaker: I am naming you! Directly!

(*Interruptions*)

An hon. Member: Name you too! Name you too!

(*Interruptions*)

An hon. Member: *Trahison!*

Mr Bérenger: *Imbécile!*

(*Interruptions*)

Speaker sa?

Dr. Boolell: He is disloyal to the House!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: Don't! Don't question my authority!

(*Interruptions*)

You have no right!

(*Interruptions*)

Please walk out from the Chamber for the rest of the day!

Mr Bérenger: You order me out as usual!

Mr Speaker: I want you to withdraw from the Chamber!

An hon. Member: Shame!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: It's a shame!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Bérenger: *Ek zot dakor ar sa!*

An hon. Member: *Enn cirque !*

(*Interruptions*)

Dr. Boolell: Is this temple of democracy?

(*Interruptions*)

An hon. Member: *Sa ki zot pe accepté la ?*

(*Interruptions*)

Ms J. Bérenger : *Pena konfians !*

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: Hon. David!

An hon. Member: Chômage technique!

Mr David: M. le président, nous sommes devant un cas de haute trahison !

(*Interruptions*)

An hon. Member: *Ayo !*

(*Interruptions*)

Hon. Members: *Trahison ! Trahison !*

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: So, I suspend the Sitting!

Hon. Members: *Trahison ! Trahison !*

Mr Speaker: I suspend the Sitting!

Hon. Members: *Trahison ! Trahison !*

Mr Speaker: I am naming you both! First, hon. Assirvaden! Second, hon. Ms Bérenger!

Ms J. Bérenger: *Ou censure nou Leader de l'Opposition ! Aukene la honte !*

Mr Speaker: You are out whatever both of you for the day!

Mr Ameer Meea: *To pas honter!*

Mr Speaker: Who said that?

Mr Ameer Meea: I said it!

Ms J. Bérenger: Shame!

Mr Speaker: I am naming you again!

Mr Ameer Meea: I said it!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: I am naming you also!

An hon. Member: *To ene la honte!*

Ms J. Bérenger: *To ene la honte to meme!*

An hon. Member: You are a shame!

At 11.44 a.m., the Sitting was suspended.

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

Mr Speaker: Please be seated! Next question, hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: M. le président, pour des raisons de haute trahison envers la nation, je n'ai pas de question pour le Premier ministre.

Mr Speaker: Again!

Mr Quirin: Yes.

Dr. Boolell: *Trahison! Trahison! Trahison!*

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

(*Interruptions*)

Clerk, I am naming hon...

(*Interruptions*)

I am...

(*Interruptions*)

I am naming hon. Dr. Boolell! I am naming hon. Shakeel Mohamed! Brandish your...

(*Interruptions*)

I am naming hon. Yeung Sik Yuen! I am naming hon. Osman Mahomed!

(*Interruptions*)

I am naming...

(*Interruptions*)

I am naming hon. Ramful!

(*Interruptions*)

I am naming hon. David! I am naming hon. Woochit!

Mr Mohamed: You have got everyone?

An hon. Member: *Trahison!*

Mr Mohamed: Are you sure you have got everyone?

Mr Speaker: This is contrary to Standing Orders, you have to respect Parliament!

(*Interruptions*)

I am ordering individually...

(*Interruptions*)

... all the hon. Members brandishing *pancartes*, and I suspend the Sitting!

An hon. Member: Shame! Shame!

At 12.42 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.30 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, please be seated! Next question!

FORMER PRIME MINISTERS - MEDICAL TREATMENT ABROAD - ASSISTANCE

(No. B/713) Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to former Prime Ministers, he will state if Government has any scheme to provide financial or other assistance thereto in relation to required medical treatment abroad and, if so, indicate if any such assistance has been extended since 2019 to date.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall reply to PQ B/713 and PQ B/722 together as they relate to the same subject matter.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is no specific scheme as such to provide financial or other assistance to former Prime Ministers for their medical treatment abroad. Such requests are considered on an *ad hoc* basis.

Since 2019 to date, only one such request for assistance has been received. In fact, the request was made on 06 September 2021 by one Mr Dhaneshwar Damry, for and on behalf of Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, former Prime Minister, for the Government to make an advance to meet the cost of the urgent medical evacuation of Dr. Ramgoolam to Delhi by a medical air-ambulance. Mr Damry also informed that the services of a local Company, the Kaluha Holdings Ltd, had been secured for the hiring of a medical air-ambulance for the air-lifting of Dr. Ramgoolam from Mauritius to Delhi.

In view of the fact that the patient is a former Prime Minister and was reportedly in critical conditions, the request was acceded to and arrangements were immediately made for payment, by the State Bank of Mauritius Ltd, through Kaluha Holdings Ltd, for the medical evacuation exercise.

The financial assistance had been extended on the clear undertaking by Mr Damry that he would reimburse the amount so advanced. The total amount involved in the medical evacuation stands at USD156,675.

Mr Nuckcheddy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether the Labour Party has reimbursed the amount for the medical evacuation of their Leader or it was just the usual *fausse promesse*?

The Prime Minister: I must say that the Labour Party has, in fact, not yet reimbursed the amount to date, despite several meetings and several reminders that have been sent.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister kindly inform the House of actions taken to recover the amount?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in an email addressed to Mr Damry on 28 October 2021, he was requested to effect the reimbursement, in accordance with his undertaking, by end of November 2021. A reminder was sent to Mr Damry on 10 December 2021 with a renewed request to reimburse the amount by 15 December 2021. Mr Damry still failed to effect the reimbursement. A meeting was convened on 29 December 2021 at the Prime Minister's Office during which Mr Damry, accompanied by Mr S. Faugoo, agreed to effect payment provided details of the different expenses were communicated to him by Kaluha Holdings Ltd. Mr Damry still did not reimburse the amount in spite of the fact that Kaluha Holdings Ltd did subsequently provide to him all the details.

A second meeting was convened by the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of Civil Service on 02 March 2022 during which Mr Damry, who was again accompanied by Mr S. Faugoo, reiterated his agreement to effect the reimbursement within a week after agreeing with Kaluha Holdings Ltd and the State Bank of Mauritius Ltd on the exact amount to be refunded. Mr Damry still failed to effect the refund to State Bank of Mauritius Ltd in spite of the fact that Kaluha Holdings Ltd had already submitted to him the details of the expenses incurred.

Mr Nuckcheddy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister confirm if the undertaking to reimburse that amount was undertaken by the Labour Party or by Mr Damry? Because as far as I know, Mr Damry is not a member of the Labour Party.

The Prime Minister: Whether he is or not, what I can say is that it was not only he who had given the undertaking. In fact, I do not want to go into the numerous public statements that have been made by members of the Labour Party, namely by hon. Assirvaden, hon. Shakeel

Mohamed and others, who have publicly stated that they would be reimbursing Government and that this will be done shortly; and each time it will be done shortly. But, as I have replied to an earlier supplementary question, there has so far been no reimbursement.

Mr Speaker: Any further question? So, we move on. I gather that some hon. Members have withdrawn their questions. The Table has been advised that PQs B/730, B/732, B/735 and B/745 have been withdrawn.

Hon. Doolub!

ORAL HEALTH PROMOTION – DECENTRALISATION SERVICE – MEASURES

(No. B/733) Mr R. Doolub (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to oral health, he will state the measures taken by his Ministry for the promotion thereof, indicating the measures taken, if any, for the decentralisation of the service therefor.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, oral health is a key indicator of overall health, well-being and quality of life. A bad oral health encompasses a range of diseases and conditions that include dental caries, periodontal disease, tooth loss, oral cancer, orodental trauma, and birth defects such as cleft lip and cleft palate. The oral lesions for certain general illness like immuno illness, autoimmune deficiencies and infections are frequent and help to diagnose those general illnesses.

My Ministry is committed to the improvement of oral health, primarily in children through the prevention of oral diseases. In this connection, the Prime Minister has launched a five-year National Action Plan for Oral Health (2022-2027) on 01 June 2022, with the objective of reducing the incidence and prevalence of oral diseases. The action plan is guided by the recommendations made by the World Health Organisation and aims to transform the oral health services from a disease-based curative model towards a preventive model. Moreover, the formulation and implementation of this action plan and a robust surveillance system for oral diseases will reinforce towards achieving a universal health coverage.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the context of the Oral Health Month held in June 2022, my Ministry has organised a promotion campaign and it has conducted the following activities –

- (i) Distribution of 76,000 oral health kits to all primary schools students, including SEN schools, that is, the Special Education Needs schools and ZEP schools, that

is, *Zone d'Éducation Prioritaire* schools in Mauritius, which has already started and will last for the next 6 months, and distribution also in Rodrigues will be soon organised;

- (ii) oral health talks are being organised in schools by a Dental Surgeon and a Senior Dental Assistant along with proper tooth brushing techniques and broadcasting of oral health clip to sensitise the population about the importance of good oral hygiene, and oral health talks are being conducted by Dental Surgeons.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the measures taken for the decentralisation of the dental services, I wish to inform the House that the new dental clinics have recently become operational at Baie du Tombeau Community Health Centre, Ste Croix Community Health Centre, and a second dental clinic has been opened at Goodlands. To further improve accessibility of oral health care to the population, new dental clinics will soon be set up at Stanley, Bel Air, Coromandel, and Quartier Militaire Medi-Clinics.

In line with the Budget 2022-2023, funds would be provided for the construction of 4 Area Health Centres at Henrietta, Cap Malheureux, New Grove, Plaine Magnien, and 2 Medi-Clinics at Chemin Grenier and Grand Bois, which will include a dental clinic.

Moreover, my Ministry will send a mobile dental caravan every month at Chamarel Community Health Centre to provide dental services to the inhabitants as from 18 July 2022. By August 2022, most of the part-time dental clinics will be operational on a full-time basis.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House about the different services currently offered concerning oral health in the public health sector? Thank you.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the free health services in the public sector is to fully strengthen and enhance the quality of care. It is an emphasis being placed as a patient-centred service. So, the Ministry offers a comprehensive oral health package which includes the oral health promotion, that is, the preventive side; the general oral health services, this includes diagnosis, extraction, temporary and permanent fillings, scaling, application of pit and fissure

sealants; and specialised dental services, that is, oral surgery, orthodontics and endodontics. They are all free of users' cost.

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform us about the number of Dental Surgeons and Assistant Dental Surgeons currently working in the public health sector?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the number of Dental Surgeons in the public sector is 60. The number of Dental Assistants is 76. There are in the different regions, Regional Dental Superintendents, that is, in the five regions we have 5.

Mr Speaker: Any other question? So, we move to the next question!

IRON, ZINC & FOLIC ACID INTAKE – MONITORING & CONTROL MEASURES

(No. B/734) Mr R. Doolub (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the rate of iron, zinc and folic acid in food consumed in Mauritius, he will state if any study is being undertaken by his Ministry for the monitoring thereof, indicating the measures being considered for the control thereof.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, iron and folic acid deficiencies can lead to anaemia which has important consequences for human health and development. Anaemia, even in the mild and moderate forms, can negatively impact on the quality of life of women as well as on the learning capacity of the young. For pregnant women, this can lead to extreme fatigue, decrease the growth of the baby during the foetal development and more importantly, this can lead to major risk of premature birth.

Folic acid is a vitamin. Its deficiency can cause peripheral neuropathy, mental confusion and depression. During the early stage of pregnancy, folic acid is essential for the development of the brain, spinal-cord and skull. Ensuring sufficient levels of folate in women prior to conception can reduce neural tube defects. Neural tube is a basic component which will form the brain and spine in the early phase of conception. It is estimated that around 14 children in Mauritius are born each year with neural tube defects, like Spina bifida due to a lack of folic acid.

Zinc is an oligo element that is important for growth, sexual maturation and intestinal health. It also helps to support a healthy immune system. Zinc deficiency is characterised by growth retardation, loss of appetite, delayed sexual maturation and impaired immune function.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in this respect, my Ministry is currently carrying out a National Nutrition Survey 2022. This survey will serve the purpose of monitoring and evaluating progress made within the last decade by comparing data from the previous survey which was carried out in 2012. This survey will also help to evaluate the prevalence of malnutrition and its related factors among the Mauritian population, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic in the country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, while all micro-nutrients are important for physiological health, selected ones will be used as indicators of population health during the Nutrition Survey. Therefore, biomarkers including iron, folic acid and zinc will be assessed in individuals during the conduct of the Nutrition Survey 2022. These selected micro-nutrients will provide a baseline or updated data which will allow for policy interventions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the previous Nutrition Survey of 2012 showed that the prevalence of anaemia was highest in female aged 20 to 49 years, that is, 33.6% followed by those aged 12 to 19 years, 28.5%. In one of the previous Budget speeches, this Government has taken the decision to encourage the supply of brown and white wheat flour that would be fortified with iron and folic acid to address the problem of high incidence of anaemia in women and reduce the prevalence of neural tube defects in new-borns. In this context, Mauritius is also in the process of programming mandatory fortification of brown and white wheat flour with iron, folic acid, zinc and vitamin B12 as wheat and wheat products are widely consumed by a large proportion of the Mauritian population.

In order to set up a Food Fortification Programme relevant to our local context, my Ministry has sought technical assistance from the Southern African Development Community (SADC). In that context, two Consultants, namely Dr. Wilson Enzama and Dr. Ronald Afidra Olema from the Food Fortification Initiative were on official visit from 13 to 20 February 2022. The aim was to meet with key stakeholders to gather information prior to undertaking a landscape analysis for planning, implementation and monitoring of food fortification programme in Mauritius.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Doolub!

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister in his reply just mentioned about a Food Fortification Programme, can the Minister provide us with some more details?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has sought technical assistance from the Southern African Development Community to set up the Food Fortification Programme. In the Mauritian context, wheat flour is the commonly consumed food. As such, it is the most appropriate food vehicle for inclusion in a Fortification Programme with a per capita consumption of 241g per day. Rice rates second to flour with a per capita consumption of 126g per day.

So, Mauritius has only one wheat flour mill, namely *Les Moulins de la Concorde*, where all imported wheat grain is milled. Therefore, the setting up of a Wheat Flour Fortification Programme in Mauritius will not prove to be difficult, and the focus will be on mandatory fortification. The new food regulation includes a clause regarding food fortification so that the industry and other stakeholders are ready to start Food Fortification Programme by beginning of 2023.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. In his reply, the hon. Minister mentioned about the National Nutrition Survey 2022. Can the hon. Minister provide further details pertaining to this subject, also the target group and the timeframe for the survey? Thank you.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Mauritius Nutrition Survey 2022 will be conducted by the Ministry of Health and Wellness in collaboration with international institutions like –

- Monash University, Melbourne, Australia;
- University of Helsinki, Finland;
- Umeå University Hospital, Sweden, and
- Imperial College, UK.

The main objective is to study food consumption patterns and assess the nutritional status of the population with a view to address diet and nutrition related health problems and non-communicable diseases in the country.

So, this survey will be carried out in 16 clusters throughout the island which have been selected randomly. The enumeration exercise has been completed in May/June 2022. 2,700 participants aged between 5 years to 74 years will be invited to participate in this survey, which will be divided into the following sub age groups –

- from 5 to 11 years;
- adolescents, 12 to 19 years;
- young adults, 20 to 49 years, and
- old adults, 50 to 74 years.

The field survey activities will be carried out as from 23 July to 10 August 2022.

Mr Speaker: Any further questions? Next question? No question! So, we move to motion.

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.

Mr Ganoo seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

12th WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE - GENEVA - 12 TO 17 JUNE 2022

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr A. Ganoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I wish to make a Statement on the outcome of the 12th World Trade Organisation Ministerial Conference held in Geneva from 12 to 17 of June 2022.

The 12th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC12) was scheduled to be held in June 2020 but had to be postponed twice due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The WTO Ministerial Conference took place in June 2022 in exceptional circumstances underpinned by the challenges facing the world economy in particular, the escalating prices of basic commodities and food stuff and the high global inflation rate which is a direct consequence of both the COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine.

In my pre-recorded address to the plenary session of the WTO Ministerial Conference, I emphasised the impact of the above-mentioned challenges on Net Food Importing Developing Countries (NFIDC) like Mauritius and the need for the conference to frame responses to address them.

I also proposed that a special desk be set up at the WTO to examine issues confronting the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and to propose solutions as appropriate. Concerns raised by the developing and low income countries regarding the inequitable access to vaccines influenced the discussions.

MC12 discussed several major issues –

- 1) The first outcome of MC12 is the Ministerial declaration on the WTO response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ministerial Conference reaffirmed the commitment of members not to impose unnecessary barriers to trade or to disrupt supply chains and to exercise due restraint with regard to the import and export restrictions. The WTO was mandated to monitor and report on progress achieved in the phasing out of exports prohibitions or restrictions. It was further agreed, Mr Speaker, Sir, to expedite the implementation of trade facilitation measures to prevent bottlenecks at the ports, airports and to strengthen regulatory corporation and coherence among the Member States;
- 2) On the issue of fisheries subsidies, after intense and protracted discussions, it was agreed that no Member State should grant or maintain any subsidy to a vessel or operator engaged in illegal, unreported or unregulated fishing or fishing related activities in support of IUU Fishing.

It was further agreed not to grant or maintain subsidies for fishing or fishing related activities regarding an overfished stock with a transitional period of two years for developing and least developed countries. Agreement, however, Mr Speaker, Sir, could not be reached on subsidies that contribute to overfishing and over capacity in view of the diverging interests in positions not only between the developed and developing countries but also among the developing countries themselves. It was hence decided that discussions on this outstanding issue would continue with a view to reaching a comprehensive agreement on fisheries subsidies within four years; should members fail to do so, the agreement reached would be terminated unless the WTO General Council agrees otherwise.

Thirdly, the MC12 agreed to take concrete steps to facilitate trade and improve the functioning and long term resilience of global markets for food, agriculture, fertilisers and other agricultural production input. It was further agreed not to impose export prohibitions or restrictions in a manner inconsistent with WTO rules and to exempt food stuffs purchase for non-commercial humanitarian purposes by the World Food Programme from any form of export prohibitions or restrictions. Members also agreed to have a dedicated work programme to consider the needs of the least developed countries and of the net food importing developing countries like Mauritius aimed at increasing their resilience in responding to acute food instability, bolstering food production and addressing food security.

Fourthly, Mr Speaker, Sir, MC12 discussions also focused on a proposal by several WTO members led by India and South Africa for a temporary waiver from the WTO Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS Agreement) to allow member States to produce vaccines that are protected by a patent. The Ministerial Conference agreed to the TRIPS waiver for a period of five years for the production and supplies of COVID-19 related vaccines for domestic consumption and exports. Discussions will however continue on the possibility of expanding the scope of the waiver to cover diagnostics and therapeutics.

Fifth, and lastly, Mr Speaker, Sir, Ministers agreed to initiate discussions aimed at reforming the WTO system so that it responds effectively to the challenges facing the world economy. It was decided that their discussions should be transparent, inclusive and should take place under the aegis of the General Council on the basis of proposals from member States.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: We move onto the next item! I would ask the Deputy Speaker to take over.

At this stage the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Please be seated. Allow me a couple of seconds to sort out the papers before me.

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

On motion made and seconded the Academy of Design and Innovation Bill (No. XI of 2022) was read a first time.

Second Reading

THE FOOD BILL

(NO. X of 2022)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Food Bill (No. X of 2022).

Question again proposed.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Dhunoo!

(3.01 p.m.)

Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. First, let us set the scene on this Food Bill before coming into the gist of our discussion. As the world population continues to grow, much more effort and innovation will be urgently needed in order to sustainably increase agricultural production, improve the global supply chain, decrease food losses and waste, and ensure that all who are suffering from hunger and malnutrition have access to nutritious food. Many in the international community believe that it is possible to eradicate hunger within the next generation and are working together to achieve this goal.

The United Nations reaffirmed the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger. The Sustainable Development Goal to “end hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture” (SDG2) recognises the inter linkages

among supporting sustainable agriculture, empowering small farmers, promoting gender equality, ending rural poverty, ensuring healthy lifestyles, tackling climate change and other issues addressed within the set 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Agricultural systems worldwide must become more productive and less wasteful. Sustainable agriculture practices and food system including both production and consumption must be pursued from a holistic and integrated perspective.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, land, healthy soil, water and plant genetic resources are key inputs into food production and their growing scarcity in many parts of the world makes it imperative to use and manage them sustainably. Boosting yields on existing agricultural lands including restoration of degraded lands through sustainable agriculture practices would also relieve pressure to clear forests for agricultural production. There are many elements for traditional farmer knowledge that, enriched by the latest scientific knowledge, can support productive food system through sound and sustainable soil, land, water, nutrient and pest management and the more extensive use of organic fertiliser.

In a post Rio+20 agenda, the objective is to seek renewed political and financial commitments for further implementation establish new or strengthen existing partnerships and agree on priorities. An increase in integrated decision-making processes at national and regional levels is needed to achieve synergies and adequately address trade-off among agriculture, water, energy, land and climate change. Given the unprecedented situation faced by the world and climate change, the global community is called upon to increase investment in research, development and demonstration of technologies to improve the sustainability of food systems everywhere. Building resilience of local food system will be critical to averting large-scale future shortages and to ensuring food security and good nutrition for all.

Coming to the Bill, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is a very technical and very specialised Bill and there is no doubt that modernisation and updating of our legislation in that matter was long overdue. The Food Bill 1998 can no longer cope with the emerging challenges and the new changes occurring in the field of food technology, food consumption patterns and quality assurance.

There are issues of interest to the nation that go beyond political affinity. Food safety is one of them as it impacts on the livelihood of every citizen. As responsible policymakers, we

need to ensure that there is a proper legal framework and business environment for dealings that concerned food. And, therefore, while I welcome the new Food Bill, I also look forward to the contribution from Members of the Assembly from both sides of the House, with a common aim of safeguarding our people – though today we do not have the Opposition.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, recent disease outbreaks, whether the COVID-19, the foot-and-mouth disease or the avian flu; they have all clearly demonstrated how humans can fall victims of microbial contamination. Moreover, there are also, at times, unfortunately, some unscrupulous businesses that overlooked food safety and tempted to market expired products. One such case was luckily averted in 2020 by the Public Health and Food Safety Unit when 28,310 kg of meat that was improper for consumption was seized.

I am, therefore, appreciative that the Food Bill is being introduced so as to reinforce our existing legislation. While the Food Bill depicts conditions allowing marketing of food for consumption, my appeal to food businesses is not to limit themselves to the law. I think, businesses must embrace the spirit of the law and they should by their own voluntary action, go the extra mile in ensuring that the food they provide to our citizens are safe, devoid of contaminants whether organic or inorganic. Here, I strongly appeal that they should all have a traceability system in place so that we can identify every actor across the chain as well as every practice that the food has been subjected to. To this end, I also invite my colleague Ministers to ponder on coming with a law for traceability of food from farm to fork as far as it may be applicable, including for imports.

For example, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if we take as an example fresh produce such as vegetables, many planters are victims of agricultural theft and the culprit usually steals from place A and will come to sell it at place B. Many people will not know if these vegetables are stolen and they will buy it sometimes at a very low price, not as per the market rate.

And, as you are aware, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have the Small Farmers Welfare Fund which registers planters as per the law and the planters have their planter's card. When we go through the food chain for fresh vegetable production, we know planters tend to sell to wholesalers - like the auction market - at the regional market or supermarket. These can be traceable and if we have the proper law for traceability, where the wholesaler will need to give a receipt to the planter selling to him and then the wholesaler will sell to vegetable seller who is

usually registered with the local authorities, that is, Municipalities or even District Councils and will also have a BRN number from the Registrar of Companies. As I am saying, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is very easy to trace these products and they will also help to combat agricultural theft. But we will need actors from each relevant Ministry to play their role.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we all agree on health matters and, therefore, last week, I have been very sensitive to what hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger said, in particular the correlation between cancer and pesticides. I am of the view that we need to have more evidence-based data among planters and consumers for us to understand what role pesticides are playing in deteriorating our health. Such studies can help us implement clear preventive policies to safeguard our citizens and maybe save millions of rupees that are engulfed in healthcare for treatment as mentioned by the Minister in his speech when he introduced the Bill to the House.

However, I am not on the same wavelength regarding some other claims, and, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to shed some light on a few of them. First of all, there is a distinction between the 3 laws, that is the Food Act - or should I say the present Food Bill that we will be presenting which will be replacing the old one which is going to be repealed - the Dangerous Chemicals Control Act 2004; and the Use of Pesticides Act 2018. They all have food safety in common but they all operate at different levels.

Broadly speaking, the present Food Bill or the existing Food Act sets the framework for the commercialisation of food for consumption, whether produced locally or imported. It sets a series of parameters that may deem a food commercialised to be unfit for consumption and also a series of parameters that deem food businesses as operating illegally and therefore committing an offence. At the same time, for enforcement purposes, we have the part whereby the authority has the power to monitor food business activities and to act accordingly.

The Dangerous Chemicals Control Act sets the framework for the importation and commercialisation of products that can be classified as pesticides. Here, I would like to stress that there is a diversity of pesticides. These can be, for example, for use in public health or for the agricultural sector. May I also stress on the following? An active ingredient can be perfectly legal to import by an authorised importer. However, its commercialisation may be limited to a particular sector; industrial, public health or agriculture. Thus, on occasions, the same active ingredient can be used both in the public sector and the agricultural sector or can be banned for

the use on vegetables but acceptable for use in public health. And this is where I fail to understand how people claim that we are abusing on the use of pesticides in the agricultural sector. Accusing our farmers, I agree we have an ageing population among farmers but they are conscious on what the planters are doing and how to use the pesticides.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if you have a look at the digest of agriculture from the Stats of Mauritius regarding the section on imports of agricultural inputs, you will find that the items have been categorised into fertilisers, insecticides, fungicides and herbicides. Regarding the Use of Pesticides Act 2018, we should thank hon. Mahen Seeruttun for bringing such a Bill when he was Minister of Agriculture. We should thank this Government for having a vision for the future, and I will explain why I am saying that.

There is no indication as to whatever has been used for food crops, ornamentals, sugarcane or turf. Could it also be that same active ingredients being used in Public Health? I believe that Stats Mauritius should collect and present distinct data for crop protection products for food crops, ornamentals, sugarcane, turf and public health. This task is a priority to ensure speculations on the matter because I remember hon. Uteem saying about the consumption of pesticides and herbicides that are being overused by Mauritius but if we will have this data, then we can have a better distinction and better understanding. It is then, only then that we will know how much is being utilised by each subsector.

In addition, let us also not forget that we are self-sufficient in fresh vegetables and to achieve this we practise an intensive crop production that leaves no fallow period in between crop cycles. Figures therefore presented in future by Stats Mauritius must also be correlated with food production surface area in order to understand the pesticide quantity per unit area utilised.

Regarding the Use of Pesticides Act, it limits itself to the users and the use of pesticides in the food crops production sector only. It fills a void where previously anyone could apply pesticides, but with the enactment of this law, only trained people having obtained a certificate for example from the FAREI are allowed to use or to spray pesticides. This modality looks at a critical aspect whereby people who are using pesticides are empowered, knowledgeable and know what they are spraying, for what purpose and how this activity is to be done. This is also a preventive way to curb the abusive use of pesticides.

I have to admit though that this is a work in progress, as the law itself dates to 2018, as I said earlier. As such, if I refer to PQ B/804 in 2021, hon. Minister Maneesh Gobin answered to hon. Joanna Bérenger that there were 2088 planters trained in the use of pesticides. I am, therefore, assuming that some 80% of planters are yet to be targeted and I would humbly appeal to hon. Minister Gobin to request the FAREI to accelerate training in the use of pesticides and allocate dedicated staff if need be, as this is a top priority.

Coming back to the Use of Pesticides Act, it further enlists pesticides that are allowed on crops and respective maximum residue levels permissible. Now, these maximum residue levels are to my understanding from the Codex Alimentarius of the FAO.

It goes, therefore, without saying that even if a crop is not listed and if tests are carried out, the same Codex recommendations will be followed. This is not explicitly mentioned, and perhaps here, may I suggest a humble amendment to the Food Bill for the insertion of a paragraph under Section 23, item 4 (a) whereby a food shall not be safe if maximum residue limit is outside the range recommended by the Codex Alimentarius of the FAO. This simple amendment shall cover for both local production and imports, and it provides an improved safety net for our citizens.

Regarding the *Guide Agricole*, I should say, it is a very, very good document that has been prepared. The latest one was published in 2019 by FAREI when the Minister, Mahen Seeruttun was still Minister of Agriculture, and we should commend the work that has been done. Allow me to congratulate the Minister and the people who worked on this. Clearly, it is a visionary document that bridged agroecology and bio farming.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as you may be aware, I have done my studies in Agribusiness at bachelor-level, and I have also worked for the Small Planters Welfare Fund for five years. Thus, when I went through this document, it gave me great pleasure to see how this document has been well worked out for our planting community, and with the vision that we have to move the planters and the farming community to agribusinesses and this will help forward for the vision that we have. Thus, any person feeling comfortable with agro ecological practices can adopt the good agricultural practices mentioned in the book and move towards bio farming. Besides, to my understanding, it is the first time that there has been much of work and focus in recommending bio alternative for pest and disease control; be it in terms of farming practice, use of natural

enemies, use of trap plants and replant plants or through the use of bio pesticide. This book also showcase that we have staff with talent. They should be encouraged to be the engine to transform our Mauritius agricultural sector into one based on natural farming.

And if one needs inspiration, one can look at India where there are states that have banned the use of pesticides and where crops are produced under natural farming system such as the new introduction in the Budget, the Zero Budget Natural Farming. I asked myself why this farming system is not picking up in Mauritius. We do not have a prohibition for it. So, why? Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, then, I realised that the success of the Zero Budget Natural Farming lies in preparation of soil enriches or crop enactment sprays for which they use cow urine and cow dung. And you know, when it is going to be used, it is going to enhance the production with less use of pesticides, less use of herbicides; it is natural and less costly which will bring down the cost of production for the planter. Even if in a rainy season, these are drained and gone to our rivers as compared to pesticides, they will also help to grow algae. It is very good for the fauna and flora. It is not noxious for our fauna and flora whether it is in the sea or in our rivers.

And this is where the procedure in Mauritius is flawed. In Mauritius, we are using the so-called improved breeds of cattle which are imported whereas in India, they use their indigenous cow breed that is bestowed with a unique micro flora essential for the success of the Zero Budget Natural Farming concoctions using the cow urine and cow dung. I would like to encourage planters to use the ZBNF but for this we need proper setup and raw materials. So, I know that this is a new budgetary measure. I know that the hon. Minister Maneesh Gobin and his team are working on it. I would suggest, given our good diplomatic ties with the Indian Government, I am inviting the hon. Minister Gobin to consider the importation of some of these animals and implement large commercial ZBNF plots from which our planters can be inspired. I must also confess that several planters have contacted me and made the same request. I am confident that this can pave way to shift in our production system which is heavily dependent on chemical inputs.

Coming back to the *Guide Agricole*, it is also worthy to know that the team which worked on the recommendations aligned themselves with the latest findings on the impact of pesticides on health as well as conventions signed by the Republic of Mauritius. To this end, many pesticides that could be imported in Mauritius are no longer recommended. As a domino

effect, the DCCB no longer delivers import permits for such products. Such products are perhaps not yet banned but import permits are no longer issued. However, I must say that I have witnessed a disparity between the recommendations of the *Guide Agricole* 2019 and the Use of Pesticides Act 2018.

Indeed, the Use of Pesticides Act 2018 still lists several active ingredients that are no longer recommended in its First Schedule. I take the case of *Linuron* which is no longer recommended in the *Guide Agricole* and for which import permits are no longer issued. This mismatch must be addressed the soonest and once more, I call upon hon. Maneesh Gobin to have the First Schedule of the Use of Pesticides Act updated based on the latest recommendations of the *Guide Agricole*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on these three topics, I will conclude by saying that the three laws that are distinct and looked upon holistically, they complement each other with the aim of ensuring food safety and food quality. I already made an appeal for the amendment to Section 23, item 4 (a), which I hope shall be adopted.

Allow me also to mention that there are other unseen phenomena that influence food safety and food quality that are going unnoticed. This concerns, for example, genetically modified organism in which food, be it processed or fresh, whether for human consumption or for animal, eventually also for human consumption consists of GMOs. On my behalf, I stand against the use of GMOs in our foods and I shall make a request to amend the Food Bill so as to either prohibit the importation of GMOs food or the hon. Minister can make an appeal that a regulation be made to make labelling of GMO foods mandatory. As citizens, we have the right to know what we are eating. I was looking at a study in Egypt where we see the bad effects of GMOs on the health of many people there and I see that this could be a problem for us.

Thus, the setting up of the Mauritius Food Standard Agency is most welcomed. As mentioned by the Minister, it will act as a body assessing and proposing food standards for adoption. It seems a bit similar to the Food Authority in Australia. I do not know if the Minister would also consider, I would like to propose that we have, like in France, a *Conseil national de l'alimentation*.

Le Conseil national de l'alimentation (CNA) est une instance consultative indépendante, placée auprès des ministres chargés de l'environnement, de la consommation, de la santé et de

l'agriculture. Il est consulté sur la définition de la politique de l'alimentation et émet des avis à l'intention des décideurs publics et des différents acteurs de la filière alimentaire sur des sujets tels que la qualité alimentaire, l'information des consommateurs, la nutrition, la sécurité sanitaire, l'accès à l'alimentation et la prévention des crises. Il est aussi positionné comme un 'Parlement de l'alimentation'. Le CNA développe un processus de concertation intégrant des préoccupations des filières de la société civile, la réalité du monde professionnel et attentes du consommateur entrent ainsi en compte dans les débats. Le CNA comprend aussi les principaux acteurs de la filière alimentaire, producteurs agricoles, transformateurs, des artisans, distributeurs, les restaurateurs, associations des consommateurs, d'usagers des systèmes de santé. Il y a aussi des étudiants, des protections de l'environnement, des protections de l'animal, d'aide alimentaire, syndicat des salariés, représentants du Parlement français comme c'est en France, ainsi que des personnalités qualifiées, et des professionnels. Les établissements publics de recherches et d'évaluations scientifiques aussi ainsi que les collectivités territoriales sont également membres de droit du CNA. Les représentants du ministère concerné assistent de pleins droits aux travaux. Je pense que le *Mauritius Food Standard Agency* - on ne l'a pas créé, mais on va le créer - et peut-être, on pourra voir dans ce même contexte comment on peut appliquer ces recommandations pour qu'on puisse avoir, comme on dit, *like a Food Authority in Australia* et aussi comme le Conseil d'alimentation en France.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to end my intervention, I would like to refer to Sadhguru who started a worldwide phenomenon with the save soil project.

He said, let me quote –

“If we have any love for our children, we have to leave our soil and water in a better condition than they are now.”

We therefore pledge, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as a committed Government, to fulfil a generational responsibility for ourselves, our children and our children's children.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

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

(3.27 p.m.)

The Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance (Mr M. Seeruttun): Merci, M. le président. M. le président, le grand philosophe grec, Socrates avait dit, il y a quelques siècles de cela, et je cite –

« Il faut manger pour vivre et non pas vivre pour manger »

Et en ce temps moderne et avec le nouveau style de vie de la population, s'il était là, il aurait dit, il faut manger sainement pour vivre sainement.

Comme vous le savez, M. le président, le gouvernement met beaucoup d'accent sur la santé de la population et le budget alloué au service de la Santé est énorme. Pour assurer une meilleure santé, la qualité de la nourriture que l'on met dans nos assiettes et que l'on mange est aussi importante que d'autres facteurs externes. Je dirais que la nourriture que l'on mange est peut-être la plus importante pour assurer une vie saine, et par extension, diminuer le fardeau de nos services de santé.

M. le président, c'est justement dans cette optique que ce projet de loi, bien ficelé, sera bientôt renforcé. M. le président, le *Food Act* actuelle date de 1998. 24 ans après, le monde a évolué, notre mode de consommation a changé ; le *lifestyle* des gens est différent et le manger rapide, *junk food*, nourriture cuite sur place prennent de l'ampleur. De ce fait, M. le président, le public est en droit d'attendre les aliments qu'ils consomment soient sans danger et propre à la consommation et qu'on le protège des intoxications alimentaires et des maladies transmises par les aliments.

M. le président, la provenance de la nourriture que l'on consomme peut être d'origine végétale ou animale, produit sur terre ou des fruits de mer, des produits frais ou surgelés, des produits naturels ou transformés ou même synthétisés, des produits locaux ou importés, des produits OGM ou non-OGM, des produits cuits, crus ou même précuits, nourriture préparée chez soi ou de l'extérieur, des *slow food* ou *fast food*, production conventionnelle ou industrielle. Et ajoutez à cela, M. le président, la population aussi connaît une croissance phénoménale ces dernières décennies. La pression sur la production alimentaire est grandissante à tel point que la sécurité alimentaire est un sujet de haute importance pour tous les gouvernements.

M. le président, d'après la *Food Agricultural Organisation (FAO)*, une agence des Nations unies, 30 % de notre production alimentaire sont soit perdus ou gaspillés, et le terme très utilisé, c'est *food losses and food wastes*. En grande partie, ces pertes sont dues du fait que la nourriture est impropre à la consommation et souvent par manque d'hygiène. Et en même temps, la *FAO* prévoit une croissance de la demande de nourriture de l'ordre de 60% à 70 % d'ici 2050 avec une population qui ne cesse de s'accroître. Pour rendre la tache encore plus difficile, M. le président, la superficie de terres allouée à l'agriculture est en baisse.

M. le président, l'OMS trouve que la nourriture impropre peut contenir des bactéries nuisibles, des virus, des parasites ou même des substances chimiques qui causent plus de 200 différents types de maladies allant de la diarrhée au cancer. Une seule bouchée de cette nourriture contaminée peut potentiellement exposer une personne à une intoxication microbiologique ou chimique. Des milliards de personnes à travers le monde sont à risque, et l'OMS estime que 600 millions de personnes peuvent être malades après avoir consommé la nourriture impropre qui résulte en 420,000 décès.

M. le président, il ne faut pas non plus oublier le scandale du riz plastique en Chine, la viande de cheval vendu comme de la viande bovine en Europe en 2013, et les faux aliments halal vendus pendant des années en Malaisie. Voilà donc, M. le président, dans le souci de répondre à cette nouvelle appréhension et exigence du jour que ce projet de loi vient à point.

L'objectif de ce projet de loi le résume clairement –

“(…) a new Food Act to provide for, inter alia, the modernisation and consolidation of the laws relating to the safety and nutritional quality of food, and for matters related thereto.”

M. le président, *safety and nutritional quality*, ces mots sont à bien retenir. Ce qui veut dire, écarter tout danger de contamination alimentaire et offrir des qualités nutritionnelles.

Désormais, M. le président, il incombe aux opérateurs de ce secteur de s'assurer que les aliments proposés sont salubres et propres à la consommation. Donc, je félicite mon collègue, le ministre de la Santé et du bien-être, l'honorable Dr. Jagutpal, de venir avec ce projet de loi qui donnera plus de moyens à son ministère afin de nous assurer que la nourriture que nous consommons est saine.

Pour ne pas répéter ce que les orateurs avant moi ont déjà *canvassed*, je vais m'en tenir à deux points que je trouve essentiels pour atteindre l'objectif que ce projet de loi s'est fixé. D'abord, M. le président, ce projet de loi vient étendre la définition “*article*.” Avec l'élargissement de la définition “*article*”, cela va permettre aux autorités d'être beaucoup plus en mesure d'avoir le contrôle sur le produit alimentaire de A à Z.

L'étiquetage, le label et la publicité vont être mieux contrôlés. Pour moi, M. le président, c'est peut-être là où il y a eu beaucoup d'abus surtout parmi les consommateurs moins avisés. Donner des informations précises et leurs dosages sur les étiquettes des produits de consommation, permettent aux consommateurs de faire un choix judicieux du produit. Toute information erronée sur une étiquette donnerait la possibilité à cet “*authorised officer*” de prendre des actions qui s'imposent. Mais avant tout, M. le président, la responsabilité incombe à celui ou celle qui met le produit en vente, de l'enlever du point de vente. Alors, pour moi, c'est primordial aujourd'hui que les informations qui sont données sur les produits vont permettre justement à mieux comprendre le produit que l'on va consommer. Et c'est là où, pour moi, donner ce pouvoir aux officiers du ministère de la Santé de faire enlever les produits qui sont incorrects par rapport au contenu du produit, cela va aider grandement à éviter tout risque que le produit ne relève pas exactement de ce qui est dit sur l'étiquette.

Et la même chose par rapport à la publicité, M. le président. La publicité des produits alimentaires; toute tentative de publicité mensongère ne serait plus permise sous cette nouvelle loi. Et on sait combien dans le passé il y a eu des tentatives de faire croire ou d'inciter les consommateurs à acheter ou à consommer un produit qui ne reflète pas vraiment ce qui est promis dans la publicité. Donc, pour moi, encore une fois aujourd'hui, on est en train de donner le pouvoir aux officiers du ministère de la Santé pour pouvoir agir et agir de manière prompte, rapide afin de faire respecter la loi.

Autre point que je voulais aussi faire ressortir est par rapport à la section 8 de ce projet de loi, M. le président, et cela concerne justement le pouvoir donné à ce qu'on appelle les “*authorised officers*.” Dorénavant, ils vont pouvoir agir avec promptitude en cas de suspicion et éviter ou réduire le risque qu'un produit soit mis en vente. Et je pense que le pouvoir est suffisamment large pour décourager tout contrevenant éventuel à prendre de tels risques. Donc, déjà ils savent que c'est leur responsabilité et au cas où ils décident de faire fi de cette loi, les

officiers du ministère ont tout le pouvoir de pouvoir intervenir à n'importe quel moment et d'arrêter ou de faire enlever ces produits.

Donc, je dois aussi quand même faire ressortir, M. le président, dans ce projet de loi et dans un esprit pour éviter la perception d'abus ou quoi que ce soit de la part des officiers du ministère et dans un esprit de *fairness*, le projet de loi, à la section 12, permet aussi aux producteurs, aux distributeurs et vendeurs d'avoir recours à la justice dans un délai de sept jours s'ils sentent que les produits sont en conformité avec la législation et de reprendre possession de leurs produits. Donc, c'est autant de nouvelles choses qu'aujourd'hui ce projet de loi donne comme pouvoir aux officiers du ministère de la Santé mais aussi à tous ceux concernés dans toutes ces activités liées à la production, distribution et vente des produits alimentaires de pouvoir faire les choses convenablement.

Alors, de ce fait, je voudrais encore une fois remercier le ministère de la Santé, le ministre lui-même et tous ces officiers d'avoir travaillé sur ce projet de loi d'une manière très recherchée afin d'avoir pu répondre aux besoins du jour.

Mais permettez-moi, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to come back to a few points raised by some Members of the Opposition who intervened last week especially, hon. Reza Uteem and hon. Joanna Bérenger. They expressed quite some concerns with regard to the use of pesticides in Mauritius – in fact my good friend, hon. Dhunoo, touched on this – but I would like also to say a few words on this particular issue because it has been said time and again here itself and also outside that in Mauritius we use a big amount of pesticides and this is causing lots of health problems and also environmental problems to the country. It is true to say that we have always been an agricultural island and one of the main crops we cultivate here is sugarcane. And we have been cultivating sugarcane intensively and to protect that crop, for years we have been using pesticides and other forms of fertilisers to be able to optimise production, and of course the amount of pesticide used is quite significant.

But I must say that this is something which is also our concern – not only the concern of the Members of the Opposition but also this Government. We are also very much concerned about this. And I must say, since 2014, when the Government led by the MSM came into power, we came with a number of initiatives to at least try to address this problem. In fact, it was also said by my good friend, hon. Dhunoo, just now but I would like also to say because I was myself

the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security, and I can list a number of initiatives that we took to at least sensitise, train farmers to do away with pesticides that are very harmful to the health of the farmers themselves and also for the consumers, the environment and the soil as well because if you overuse pesticides it destroys the richness of the soil. So, a number of initiatives were taken in terms of, like I said, sensitising the farmers, to start with, in how to protect themselves, and also in terms of making good use of pesticides because if you use the right dosage and you know how to respect the time it takes when you apply the pesticide and the time that you have to do the harvest, if the timeline is well-respected, there is no risk that there will be residues in the crops that you are going to harvest and that are going to be put on the market for consumption. So, like I said, a number of initiatives were taken. So, the issues of reducing pesticide are being addressed.

And I must say also that we are the ones who came with the idea of promoting organic farming. We came up with a number of schemes to allow farmers to shift from conventional farming to what we call, organic and/or bio farming. And of course, to go through that transition phase, we call it smart agriculture. And, like I said, since we are trying to promote also the food security in this country, we need to produce and to produce we have to ensure that the crops are well protected against pests, against diseases. And being a tropical island we are faced with those risks. So, we have to make sure that we have alternative products to protect the crops, so that is why we also introduce and made it more affordable for farmers to have access to bio fertilisers. So, these are the kinds of initiatives that we have introduced to be able to counteract the issue of abusing of chemical pesticides and fertilisers.

And the other thing that we also did, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is to create a bio zone at Britannia to showcase to the larger farmers community how to go about to produce and do bio farming. We even created an organic village at Union Park so to tell you the number of initiatives that we took to that end. And of course, we introduced the Use of Pesticides Act that came with the new legislation in terms of controlling further the use of pesticide and also ensuring that the officers of the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security have the power to go and take samples in the farm and do the test. If the test reveals that the level of pesticide residue is above the level acceptable, then there is kind of Information Notice that is issued to the farmers, for them to take corrective measures. And then, of course, if they repeat the same kind of act then, they will be fined according to what the legislation provides for. Like I said, these

are the kind of initiatives that we took to address this problem of ensuring that, at least, food that have been produced locally are safe and consumers are protected.

And, I must also say because, I think, hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger talked about the tests that are carried out are not published. But I can see; I, myself, have checked on the website of the Ministry, all the results of the tests carried out with regard to pesticides, tests for samples that are taken by the Ministry and are tested and the results are published and posted on the website of the Ministry. The latest one dates back to March 2022. She mentioned that there has not been any publication of those results and that they were not publicly available. It is not correct to say that.

She also asked about whether the Pesticide Regulatory Office is functional. Of course it is, it is manned by one officer in charge and four other officers, it is under the Food Technology Laboratory Office and also the fund is available there. I just wanted to give these information because last time, when they intervened, they showed some concern about pesticides. There was also one thing that they mentioned concerning the report of the FAO, that Mauritius is a big importer and consumer of pesticide materials. I am told that the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security has informed the FAO that we are not comparing like with like in the sense that they took the whole volume of pesticides that were being used here and comparing with other countries where they took only the active ingredients used in other countries. I believe that this is going to be amended and probably it will give a better picture when compared to other countries of how much we are using.

Not to be long, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I just wanted to again say that this Bill comes at the right time because it is going to address the problem that we are facing with regard to food safety and giving all the powers to the officers of the Ministry of Health to be able to do their job correctly and to ensure that we, as consumers, are getting safer food in our plate and this is going to help for our health. It also addresses some other problems with regard to the cost of keeping our population healthy. It has an economic cost to it. So, I am sure it also goes in line with what we want to do, that is to reduce the budget of the Ministry of Health. If people are healthier, this means that we are going to spend less on healthcare and also in terms of productivity. If we are healthy, we are not sick, we are going to work every day, we are going to be more productive and that is going to help also for the economy to grow further.

Let me again thank the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness for having come forward with this Bill. I would like to wish him all the best because I know he has been very much busy for the last two years in tackling the problem of COVID-19, and now again, to show his commitment to ensure that people are healthy in this country, with this new Bill again, it shows that commitment. Again, keep on with this good job my good friend and with this, I conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Thank you so much for your attention.

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

(3.52 p.m.)

The Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping (Mr S. Maudhoo): M. le président, permettez-moi d'abord de vous remercier de m'avoir donné l'occasion d'élaborer sur ce projet de loi qui forcément revêt d'un grand intérêt national car cela concerne la nutrition, notre nutrition à nous tous et aussi notre survie.

Les sages disent toujours que la nature même de la nourriture est sacrée. Depuis des âges, il nous a été à même d'apprendre et de comprendre que l'alimentation nutritive et l'alimentation saine ne peuvent qu'être bénéfique pour la santé. Cette réflexion a toujours été attribuée au célèbre médecin Hippocrate qui se passe de présentation bien sûr. C'est connu qu'une population pourvue d'une alimentation saine vit bien et évolue comme il se doit.

I would, therefore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, like to commend my good friend and colleague here on my side, hon. Dr. Kailesh Jagutpal, Minister of Health and Wellness and his officers, of course, for coming up with this Bill which I term as being *avant-gardiste*. *Bravo, cher collègue, pour cette initiative que je qualifie de fort louable.*

M. le président, la santé publique, nous ne le cesserons de répéter, est la priorité des priorités au sein de ce gouvernement responsable bien sûr. Notre Premier ministre s'évertue toujours dans le forum où il affiche sa présence de parler de la santé, de son importance globale ainsi que de l'importance de s'assurer que toutes les mesures soient prises pour avoir une population en bonne santé. Il va sans dire qu'une population en bonne santé est bénéfique pour l'économie du pays comme mentionné par mon collègue, l'honorable Seeruttun justement, car on dépense alors moins sur les soins médicaux et la mobilisation des logistiques.

Ainsi, M. le président, ce *Food Bill* qui abrogera l'actuelle loi est une nécessité à plus d'un titre. Il est en soi un élargissement même de la sphère de la réglementation et du control de tout ce qui a trait à l'alimentation et par extension à la santé publique dans le plus large sens du terme.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have no doubt that this piece of legislation will help to provide for more effective and efficient protection for consumers against those who put our health at risk by dealing with food that is not only unfit for human consumption but also detrimental to public health. Above all, it will allow us to cope with the emerging challenges and new changes occurring in the field of food technology, food consumption patterns and quality assurance.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as already mentioned, foodborne diseases affect human health and cause significant economic loss. As we all know, food is one of the essential basic human needs. It ensures the survival of human beings by providing the most needed energy, proteins, vitamins and all the minerals subject to its inherent qualities and safety. However, the consumption of contaminated food can cause diseases and even death. Consequently, it is essential to ensure food safety and prevent foodborne disease outbreaks among the public.

Hence, the Food Bill comes at an opportune time when the world, including Mauritius, is confronted with unprecedented sanitary and food safety challenges and this Bill will definitely help to prevent unwholesome and adulterated food from entering the domestic market. With a view to ensuring food safety, the Food Bill has been aligned to the international norms and standards recommended by the Codex Alimentarius and provides for the modernisation and consolidation of existing laws relating to food safety and nutritional quality.

This Bill is, therefore, intended to minimise the risk of food poisoning and intoxication due to microbial infection, poor handling practices, heavy metals, ciguatoxins and other foodborne diseases from entering the market.

In short, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Food Bill will act as a tool to help improve the quality and safety of food offered for sale in Mauritius through registration of all food business operators, entrusting responsibilities to the food business operator, premarket approval, imports control, procurement of samples and laboratory testing, seizure and destruction of adulterated food, prosecution of defaulters amongst others.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am glad to see that the Food Bill has adopted a new mechanism, which is already being implemented by the European Union and the USA for ensuring food safety, where the food business operator should ensure that the food produced, processed, imported, distributed or sold is safe for human consumption. Food business operator should also ensure that the food being sold is not prohibited or unsafe for consumption and complies with such terms and conditions as may be required by the Ministry of Health and Wellness. Moreover, the onus is on the food business operator to ensure that any food which does not comply with the law is withdrawn, recalled and disposed of. The traceability and recall procedures will help the health authority to follow up and trace back the food supplier, the producer, the importer and even the exporting establishment in case the food was imported, and to take appropriate measures to stop non-compliant food from entering the market. Thus, effectively reducing or eliminating the risk of food poisoning and illness.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Bill also provides such measures to secure compliance through an improvement notice that will give a specific timeframe to the food business operator to attend to matters which constitute failure on his or her part to comply with the requirements of the law. This provision in the law will help to prevent closure of food establishments and loss of jobs and will also guarantee the production of safe food.

Comme vous le savez, M. le président, l'un des secteurs dont je m'occupe, en l'occurrence la pêche, est directement lié à la nutrition et donc à la santé de la population. Les mauriciens tout comme les milliers de touristes qui visitent notre pays sont très friands des produits de la mer. Il est de notre devoir de s'assurer que les produits de mer locaux, importés ou exportés sont de bonne qualité.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, now, I would like to talk on how the Food Bill directly impacts on the activities related to my Ministry. The competent authority for seafood under my Ministry has been set up to verify and certify fish and fish products intended for export through export authorisations. They also inspect and approve fish business operators for export to our main markets, namely the EU and USA. Various biological and chemical tests are carried out on the samples before they are exported to ensure their safety as per the regulations in force in the importing countries.

Additionally, the Import/Export Unit of the Fisheries Division controls and monitors the import and export of fish and fish products through permits and landing authorisation at the ports of entry. The Import/Export Unit, which is based at the one-stop shop in the Port area works jointly with the Food Inspection Unit of the Ministry of Health and Wellness to ensure that –

- (i) the fish and fish products are fit for human consumption;
- (ii) the consignment is accompanied by the health certificate issued by the competent authority of the exporting country;
- (iii) the food exporting establishment is approved and registered by the certifying authority;
- (iv) the fish and fish products are kept at the required temperatures;
- (v) the products have been cut, handled, processed, packaged, stored and exported under sanitary and hygienic condition, as recommended by the Codex Alimentarius, and
- (vi) the products comply with the microbiological norms specified in the condition for the imports of fish and fish products, among others.

The new measures provided in the Food Bill will enhance the control of both imported and exported fish to protect the health of consumers. All the consignments of fish and fish products imported into Mauritius are inspected at the ports of entry and depending on the product, complete checks are effected at the time of unloading in the cold rooms. The Fisheries Protection Service of my Ministry carries out inspection at retail outlets and sale points to ensure that only good quality and safe fresh fish are entering the market for consumption. The Fisheries Training and Extension Centre provides training to fishmongers and fishers on fish handling, preservation and marketing with a view to empowering them to ensure production of good quality and safe fish for the Mauritians. The licences issued to them to carry out their activities also enforce compliance to the Food Act as one of the conditions.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on the whole, perishable food items such as fish and fish products require careful handling in accordance with the norms and standards recommended by the *Code alimentaire*. Hence, the implementation of the Food Bill will no doubt ensure availability of safe and good quality food on the local market. This Food Bill will also provide

confidence to foreigners in our export markets to procure food items, including fishery products originating from Mauritius.

M. le président, revoir de fond en comble les lois existantes pour les rendre plus modernes est un acte salutaire. Ce Gouvernement est un gouvernement d'action, M. le président. Le nombre de lois revues, revisitées à chaque fois que le MSM avec ses partenaires tiennent les rênes du pouvoir est impressionnant. Tout cela dans l'intérêt suprême de la population.

Again, this Food Bill, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, aims at protecting the consumers and compelling food operators to be more attentive to what is expected and to be responsible at all cost. The development of responsible skills is much needed in the field of nutrition so that at the end of the day, consumers have the right to safe and quality food stuff. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, without a proper law, *comme on dit - l'emporte-pièce est la pratique courante dans la préparation des mets, dans le food processing aussi.*

Or, ce projet de loi vient responsabiliser les opérateurs. La sévérité de la loi est tout aussi très importante si nous voulons atteindre l'excellence. Ce gouvernement ne veut rien faire à demi-mesure. Le cadre légal, très bien travaillé, est aussi un moyen pour permettre aux consommateurs d'avoir un *proper umbrella* pour se protéger et d'éviter de se faire contaminer. De même, les opérateurs deviendront non seulement plus responsables mais seront encouragés à moderniser leur business, ce qui favorisera une meilleure gestion et un meilleur contrôle.

We all know, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that nowadays people tend to look more for quality food than anything else and pay the price when it comes to quality of food. The World Health Organisation always campaigns for the consumption of safe and quality food. Our hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, being himself an experienced, specialised health professional, has left no stone unturned in this Food Bill to ensure that the population is served with food of good quality. With the Food Bill, it goes without saying that regulation and control are key factors in favour of consumers as a whole. In fact, all of us in the country and around the world are consumers. Yes, indeed, but we are talking about food and our lives depend on food consumption. But food does not concern exclusively consumers; but also the operators involved directly or indirectly in the production and processing of sale of food. *Il n'y a pas à sortir de là, M. le président.* Therefore, time and again, I will say that good quality food is of utmost importance to each and everyone in our everyday life.

M. le président, j'ai écouté avec beaucoup d'attention et d'intérêt la présentation de ce *Food Bill* et surtout les interventions de mes collègues. Mais surtout la présentation de ce *Food Bill* par celui qui sert si bien la cause de la santé, qui avec la grande contribution de notre Premier ministre, a si bien géré - tout le monde le sait - la pandémie dans notre République, l'honorable Dr. Kailesh Jagutpal. Et maintenant, voilà, une loi pour assurer une nutrition saine pour toute la population.

To conclude, I wish to quote the popular phrase –

“Let food be thy medicine, and let medicine be thy food.”

A philosophy often ascribed to Hippocrates and which has been used to emphasise the importance of nutrition to prevent or cure diseases as far back as 400 years before Christ. So, with these words, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I support the Bill.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. We shall break for 30 minutes. Thank you.

At 4.07 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.12 p.m., with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

ANNOUNCEMENT

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY – CHAMBER – GROSS DISORDER – STANDING ORDER 48

Mr Speaker: Please be seated! Hon. Members, I wish to inform the House that, concerning the gross disorder that occurred in the House earlier today in regard to the following hon. Members –

- The hon. Leader of the Opposition;
- Hon. Aadil Ameer Meea;
- Hon. Ms Stephanie Anquetil;
- Hon. Patrick Assirvaden;
- Hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger;
- Dr. the hon. Arvin Boolell;
- Hon. Fabrice David;
- Hon. Osman Mahomed;

- Hon. Shakeel Mohamed;
- Hon. Dhananjay Ramful;
- Hon. Michael Sik Yuen, and
- Hon. Woochit;

I have decided to substitute the naming thereof into orders to withdraw from the House for today's Sitting only by virtue of Standing Order 48.

Hon. Members, moreover, I maintain my decision to order the following hon. Members to withdraw from the House for today's Sitting by virtue of Standing Order 48 –

- Hon. Patrice Armance;
- Dr. the hon. Farhad Aumeer;
- Hon. Paul Bérenger;
- Hon. Nandcoomar Bodha;
- Hon. Richard Duval;
- Hon. Mrs Karen Foo Kune-Bacha;
- Dr. the hon. Mahend Gungapersad;
- Hon. Ehsan Juman;
- Hon. Franco Quirin;
- Hon. Khushal Lobine;
- Hon. Darmarajen Nagalingum;
- Hon. Mrs Arianne Navarre-Marie, and
- Hon. Reza Uteem.

In regard to the hon. Rajesh Bhagwan, I maintain my decision to name him for gross disorder and for persistently and wilfully obstructing the business of the Assembly by abusing its rules, by virtue of Standing Order 49.

MOTIONS – S.O. 17(3) & S.O. 29(1)

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, in view of your decision to name the First Member of Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière, hon. Rajesh Bhagwan, I beg leave, under Standing Order 17(3), to take the time of the House for urgent business.

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

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

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

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

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of your decision to name the First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière, hon. Rajesh Bhagwan, I beg to move that the hon. Rajesh Bhagwan be suspended from the service of the Assembly for today's Sitting and the next two Sittings, unless apologies are tendered to the House.

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

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bholah!

(5.16 p.m.)

The Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives (Mr S. Bholah): Thank you, Mr Speaker Sir. It is my pleasure to join to the debates on the new Food Bill which is being presented by the Minister of Health and Wellness, hon. Dr. Jagutpal.

I understand that the Food Bill aims to strengthen, to reinforce the food control system in Mauritius. This new Bill will ensure a coordinated approach to food safety from primary production to consumption. And this also implies improved coordination in all stages of food handling, which includes manufacturing, transportation, distribution and retailing.

Mr Speaker, Sir, achieving “Zero Hunger” and preserving “good health and well-being” are among the UN Sustainable Development Goals to be attained by 2030. These challenges put greater responsibility on food producers and handlers to ensure food safety. I note that there is a wide consensus from Members on both sides of the House on this important piece of legislation; this is because food safety is everyone’s business. Like air and like water, food is fundamental to life itself; we need it to survive and thrive. But food is so much more. It is a source of enjoyment.

It is an expression of culture and faith. It is an art form. And it brings families, friends and communities together.

However, it turns out that what should be a source of nourishment and enjoyment has very often been the cause of disease and death. Which is why, Mr Speaker, Sir, unsafe food is unacceptable. Who would have ever thought that 420,000 persons in the world die every year after having contaminated food? Who would have ever thought that an estimated 600 million – almost 1 in 10 people in the world – fall ill after eating contaminated food?

Nobody was alarmed about food contamination consequences until the World Health Organisation (WHO) published its first estimates in 2015; the figures came as a serious wake-up call. Before that, the global burden of foodborne disease was unknown. How many people who have diarrhoea will consult a doctor? Very few. If they do, what are the chances the symptom will be linked to contaminated food? Very low. If food poisoning is diagnosed, will the case be reported to health authorities? Rarely.

In a latest report, last May, WHO further emphasises on the direct consequences of intake of contaminated food. The Organisation estimates that children under 5 years of age carry 40% of the foodborne disease burden, with 125,000 deaths every year. In 2019, the World Bank came up with a report on the economic burden of the foodborne diseases. The report indicated that the total productivity loss associated with foodborne disease in low and middle-income countries was estimated at US\$ 95.2 billion per year. And the annual cost of treating foodborne illnesses is estimated at US\$ 15 billion.

Mr Speaker, Sir, today, we know that foodborne diseases caused by chemicals, viruses, bacteria and parasites will continue to kill hundreds and thousands of people every year, if we do not impose the necessary control system. It is worthy to note that with the new Food Bill, food safety is receiving the political attention it deserves.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have to recognise that food markets and food supply chains are now massive global industries. For example, food grown in country A may be exported to country B for processing. It is then incorporated into a final product in country C, along with other ingredients manufactured in countries D, E, and F. Then it is sold in country G. This is globalisation, Mr Speaker, Sir, and we cannot escape that as we are all evolving in this era.

Urbanisation and changes in consumer habits have triggered growing demand for a wider variety of foods. This has resulted in an increasingly complex global food chain. Climate change is also predicted to impact food safety. With the resurgence of COVID-19 across the globe, there is a sharpened focus on safe food, nutrition, immunity and sustainability. The Ukraine-Russia conflict has led to shortages of basic commodities. And it has become a mammoth task for food organisations to ensure food security for the 7.9 billion people living on this planet. So, as we can say, Mr Speaker, Sir, food safety is at the crossroads again.

As the House is aware, Mauritius imports around 75% of its food requirements. It is estimated that this market is worth Rs37 billion and represents 8% of our GDP. Therefore, it is legitimate that Government gives much importance to this aspect by providing a modern legislation. The presentation of the Food Bill today shows our seriousness and commitment to make food safety a public health priority. Food safety is mandatory along the entire food chain. As we say, from farm to table; this aspect is being given full consideration in the new Food Bill.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in our industrial development journey, we are putting a lot of emphasis on the uplifting of the food sector to achieve greater value addition. This can be done only if we adopt the latest production technologies and techniques and adhere to all food safety parameters. In doing so, our operators will be able to demonstrate their commitment to deliver to the highest norms and standards, thus gaining the confidence of consumers. Here, we should note that there is already a big market for processed food, both locally and abroad that could be further tapped into, provided the supply side capabilities adequately respond to acceptable norms. As at now, Mauritius has earned a good reputation for the export of food items such as fish preparations, cake decorations, alcoholic drinks, jams and jellies and sweets and confectioneries.

On the domestic front, a large group of manufacturing enterprises has been continuously supplying a wide range of food products as alternatives to imports. Many of these products have become household names enjoying the trust of buyers. I have in mind products such as canned food, beverages, chicken and meat, butter and margarine, spices, pasta and noodles, bakeries and pastries, edible oil, dairy products and pre-cooked meals.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the food business, the mandatory and overriding factor to gain market share is the ability to convince customers that one's product is safe for consumption. This requirement can only be achieved, if the manufacturer strictly adheres to all the conditions as laid

down in food legislations. Let me inform the House that at the level of my Ministry, we are constantly pressing upon manufacturers to be always in compliance with the necessary food safety standards. This is vital to ensure their long term sustainability.

Indeed, this Bill brings a new legal framework that will guarantee the safety and nutritional quality of food. In this perspective, the new Bill will certainly encourage operators in the food processing sector to revamp their production processes so as to integrate elements of food safety and traceability. This is a universally recognised concept to hygiene and accountability for the food industry. Furthermore, operators would be able to graduate to a much higher level of food sanitary protocols meeting the exigencies of the export market. The new Food Bill has given a new dimension to the concept of “food business”.

It has clearly defined the activities to be qualified as food business which comprise, *inter alia*, manufacturing, processing, packaging, storage, transportation, import, distribution and sale of food. This new definition will enable the Ministry of Health and Wellness to identify the various value chains in the food industry and come up more easily with the relevant food safety regulations to protect the population.

It is comforting to note that the Bill has given a definition for “novel food” which refers to food that does not have a history of being safe for human consumption and which requires an assessment of its impact on human health. This Bill is welcomed as this provision acts as a safeguard measure against any imported food product which is hazardous to the health of our citizens.

Moreover, in the global landscape, where food shortage has become a worldwide phenomenon, many operators will have recourse to “novel food” to cut down costs and increase supply, hence the importance of this provision in the Bill. It will give power to the Ministry of Health and Wellness to regulate sale of “novel food” in Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a fact that nowadays people are having more recourse to fast food. The provision made in this Bill with regard to “food recall” is yet another instrument in the hands of the Ministry of Health and Wellness to ensure that food business operators comply with industry standards and offer quality and safe foodstuffs to the population. It is generally said that

“No one wants to put our life at risk every time we lift a fork or a spoon to our mouth”.

The authorities will, therefore, have the power to remove the food from the market if it does not meet the required norms and standards.

I note with great satisfaction that amendment is being brought to the Bill with regard to make it mandatory for any person including the Mauritius Standards Bureau to apprise the Ministry of Health and Wellness of any instance where food is found to be unfit for human consumption or is likely to cause harm to health or food poisoning. This amendment is removing hurdles to share key information with authorities concerned to safeguard the health of the population.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the new Bill is indeed a modern legal framework. In the previous Food Act, mention is made that any person who commits an offence under the Act is liable to a fine of not less than Rs2,000. It was observed that the fine was not deterring people from committing infringements to the law. Now, it is gratifying to note that the new Bill has increased this fine substantially to Rs100,000. No doubt, this provision will act as a powerful deterrent to discourage violations to the law and will shield our population from any hazardous food consumption.

My Ministry is leaving no stones unturned to contribute to the welfare of the population. The support institutions falling under my Ministry have already put in place several mechanisms to regulate the food safety aspect in the country. To assist operators in this endeavour, Government has provided support schemes to enable them modernise their equipment, upgrade their production processes, acquire new skills and knowledge and strive towards certification such as HACCP, Global Food Safety Standard, IF Food Certification of Products and SA 8000.

I wish to inform the House that, at the level of the Mauritius Standards Bureau (MSB), the Food and Agriculture & Microbiology Laboratory provides chemical and microbiological testing services of food and food products such as dairy products, alcoholic products, cereals, meat and fish products to operators.

In addition, the Mauritius Accreditation Services (MAURITAS) which has acquired international recognition has accredited eight food testing laboratories. MAURITAS has also accredited the Quality Assurance Unit of the MSB for the certification schemes namely, Food

Safety Management Systems (FSMS) and Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP). This facility is ensuring that food products being tested by our laboratories achieve international norms and standards.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to conclude, I wish to reiterate that this new piece of legislation will change the consumer behaviour pattern in Mauritius with regard to food consumption. As a responsible Government, we will continue to –

- a) ensure safe and nutritious food through the promotion of sustainable agriculture and food systems;
- b) foster multisectoral collaboration;
- c) urge the industry and food producers to pursue good practices;
- d) urge business operators to apply preventive controls and programmes and other measures to detect and prevent biological, chemical and physical contamination in food throughout their operations, and
- e) educate and empower consumers to make healthy food choices.

I will not stop emphasising that food safety is not an issue for one agency, or one Ministry. We can only make progress with a coordinated approach that addresses food safety holistically. Three major stakeholders namely, Government, industry and consumers share equal responsibility. I have no doubt that the Bill will instil more confidence in consumers as they will be guaranteed with more high quality food products. And operators will be provided with a conducive business environment to prosper.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Thank you. The last orator! I will call the Deputy Speaker to take over.

At this stage, the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Please be seated! Hon. Minister, for your summing-up!

(5.34 p.m.)

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will now proceed with the summing-up of this important piece of legislation.

First, I would like to thank all the Members of Parliament from both sides of the House for having brought their insights on the Food Bill 2022. It is unfortunate that the two Members of the Opposition who had to participate in this debate chose intentionally not to respect Standing Orders, and for such attitude, the consequences and the outcomes, we all know.

This Bill will repeal and replace the Food Act 1998. It paves the way for the new food safety and food nutrition standards so as to be in line with the highest international standards. The Food Bill 2022 will, therefore, promote healthier eating habits. To bring nutritive value in the forthcoming regulations, we will set standards for the control of trans-fatty acids, saturated fats and salt in specific foods.

The House may note that consumption of food containing trans-fats such as, partially hydrogenated vegetable oil is linked to the increased risk of several non-communicable diseases, in particular cardiovascular diseases. As such, public health experts have recommended the removal of trans-fats from food in the food supply chain, as an effective way to improve diet and decrease the possibility of non-communicable diseases. In consequence, the World Health Organisation has requested actions from its member countries in terms of regulatory and voluntary measures to substitute trans-fats with polyunsaturated fat, together with public sensitisation in the risk associated with the consumption of this food component. Therefore, these measures are in line with the recommendation of the World Health Organisation and our endeavour to curb down the incidence of diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and other Non-Communicable Diseases.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like, here, to point out that hon. Dr. Arvin Boolell and hon. Reza Uteem, from the ranks of the Opposition, also came up with some relevant inputs in line with what we, in Government, want to achieve through the enactment of this Bill.

I will now address the issues which have been raised during the debates. Hon. Dr. Arvin Boolell acknowledged that there is wide consensus in relation to provisions of this Bill; alongside hon. Reza Uteem. He asked why we did not seize the opportunity and go all the way to

set up a Food Authority which would act as a one-stop shop for all stakeholders in the food business.

We are in fact setting up an agency which will act as a one-stop shop for all stakeholders as it was announced in the Government Programme 2019-2024. The Mauritius Food Standard Agency (MDSA) will be operational as from early next year and will act as a one-stop shop for all actors along the food supply chain.

In fact, the objective of setting up of the Mauritius Food Standard Agency is to harmonise the activities among all the stakeholders across the food supply chain to ensure the safety and nutritional quality of food on the market. This will be achieved through its Board, which will consist of the key holders along the food supply chain.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Dr. Arvin Boolell raised the question about consultations held in the preparation of this Bill. The Draft Food Bill was circulated among the key stakeholders in November 2021. Among the stakeholders, there were the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security, the Mauritius Standards Bureau, representatives of various Food Business Operators, Union Representatives, and representatives of consumers such as *Association des Consommateurs de l'Île Maurice*, the Association for the Protection of Environment as well as the Consumer Advocacy Platform. Furthermore, a webinar was held on Monday 20 December 2021 at the WHO local office in Port Louis with all the stakeholders to discuss with the technical committee and the Consultant, Dr. Bittsnich, some of the pertinent issues raised in their representations.

The Consultant from the World Health Organisation, Dr. Bittsnich, who provided technical assistance in drafting the Bill, will be in Mauritius by the end of this month for a two weeks in-country mission. During his in-country mission, a workshop will be organised whereby we will invite all key stakeholders again, including the food business operators working at all levels to give their views on the forthcoming Food Regulations. We will also launch a communication campaign focusing on the educative aspects to explain the new food law to all stakeholders.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Reza Uteem elaborated lengthily about the introduction of relevant and appropriate provisions pertaining to halal and vegetarian food and asked when this

will be considered. Well, I am sure that hon. Reza Uteem will be happy to know that this issue will be among the objectives of the Mauritius Food Standard Agency.

The Mauritius Food Standard Agency will develop standards and procedures for the certification of vegetarian food and halal food. These certifications will be of interest to Mauritians and tourists and we are making sure that these standards, like the others, are framed according to the guidelines of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. Halal certification will be based on guidelines set by this Commission. Concerning the introduction of Vegetarian Certification, since the Codex Alimentarius Commission does not provide such guidelines, the Mauritius Food Standard Agency will develop its strategies based on countries like India. Our Vegetarian Standards will hence be developed based on the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India and adapted to the local requirements and context.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Codex Alimentarius is a collection of internationally recognised standards, codes of practice, guidelines and recommendations made by the Food and Agriculture Organisation, the FAO, and the World Health Organisation, the WHO, to protect consumer health and promote fair practices in the Food Business. It is to be noted that 188 countries worldwide are members of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. Codex Standards are voluntary in nature and need to be translated into national legislation or regulations in order to be enforceable.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Dr. Boolell and hon. Uteem both asked whether there will be a balance between deterrence and legislation and whether, food businesses will be persecuted or harassed. The main role of the Authorised Officers is to educate the Food Business Operators. Policing of Food Business Operators will only be a last resort in extreme cases of non-compliance with the law.

For instance, the Food Bill makes provision for legal tools, where the Food Business Operator will be given the opportunity, in writing, to comply with the requirements therein within a delay, which can be even extended upon request by the Food Business Operator. Contraventions and closure of the Food Businesses will only take place in case of non-compliance.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have no intention to ostracize, persecute or harass food business operators. Our aim is to ensure that safe food reaches our plates; hence, we have to be

cautious at all levels of the food supply chain. Moreover, the power given to the Authorised Officer is balanced in the Food Bill by the appeal possibilities of the Food Business Operator to a District Magistrate, where he feels that his rights have not been respected; for example, food seized, as well as, Prohibition Order can be challenged in front of a District Court. In addition, the Authorised Officers are accountable to the Ministry and any negligence in the performance of their duty will be subjected to disciplinary action.

Hon. Dr. Arvin Boolell asked what is being done to discourage colouring contents and chemicals used to make food attractive *au détriment de la santé publique*. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the forthcoming new Food Regulations will set the standards, derived from the Codex Alimentarius again, regarding what is permissible as colouring substances and any other food additives. The new Food Regulations will go even further by setting the maximum permissible limits for those colouring substances and food additives. The Food Bill empowers the Authorised Officers to take sample of any food to ensure compliance accordingly.

If there is any contravention to the food law, the Food Business Operator will be prosecuted and the incriminated food will be seized and destroyed. If the Food Business Operator is convicted, he will be liable to a fine not exceeding Rs100,000 and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years, and in case of a corporate body, to a fine of not less than Rs100,000.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Dr. Arvin Boolell asked what measures will be taken to prevent dumping. Authorised officers are presently posted on a rotational basis at the Food Import Unit and the Airport Health Office to verify any imported food coming by sea or air respectively, to check for compliance with our food legislation. Any food not compliant with our regulations is not granted authorisation to enter the country. This control measure will not only continue, but will be reinforced under the new Food Bill. For example, a new section 3 has been introduced relating to the conditions of import food. Hon. Dr. Arvin Boolell used an example whereby a cook, what he called Typhoid Mary, was barred from working because of an infectious disease; in this case, it was typhoid fever. He asked what is being done to address such kind of issues. Let me reassure the House that the Food Bill 2022 rightly instructs food business operators to ensure that no food handler likely to suffer from infectious diseases is involved in

any stage of food production, processing, storage or distribution. Provision is made under section 5(3) of the Food Bill 2022.

In addition, all persons who intend to handle food shall possess a valid Food Handlers Certificate issued by my Ministry under the Food Regulations. In order to obtain this certificate, a person will have to undergo a training in food hygiene and a medical screening by a government medical officer certifying that he or she is free from any infectious disease, having the potential of contaminating food and causing food borne diseases.

Hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger asked whether the Food Bill 2022 will be aligned on the use of Pesticides Act and the Dangerous Chemicals and Control Act. The forthcoming new food regulation will again set the standards aligned with the Codex Alimentarius regarding the maximum residual limits for pesticide residues in food. In addition, the Mauritius Food Standard Agency will contribute in harmonising the standards across all authorities regarding food. This Agency will also ensure collaboration between my Ministry, the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security regarding the use of pesticides.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Dr. Arvin Boolell and hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger wanted to know which laboratory has the final say regarding analysis of samples. The Ministry of Health and Wellness has the final say based on results of tests carried out at the Central Health Laboratory of the Ministry of Health and Wellness. It is responsible for the microbiological examination of any food, and the Government Analyst Division carries out chemical analysis of food.

So, we have two types of analysis –

1. the microbiological analysis conducted at the Central Health Laboratory, and
2. the chemical analysis conducted at the Government Analyst Division.

You will note that the Government Analyst Division is also ISO Certified and this is recent. This Division carries out on around 3,500 samples every year, corresponding to 35,000 tests parameters. So, it is a huge amount of tests carried out at those centres.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are proposing to amend the Public Health Act so as any person, including corporate bodies and laboratories, whether be it in private or public, has reason to believe that an article or food is unsafe or likely to pose a threat to human health, he will have

the duty to inform the Sanitary Authority of the Ministry of Health and Wellness accordingly. Failure to do so will entail a fine of Rs10,000 and an imprisonment term not exceeding six months. So, it is duty bound to inform the Ministry of Health and Wellness if ever there is any doubt of any contamination in any food or article.

I will also remind the House that according to the definition of ‘Article’ in the Food Bill 2022, it encapsulates –

- (a) “any food;
- (b) any appliance;
- (c) any package;
- (d) any contact material,
- (e) and any labelling or advertising material in connection with the sale or production of food.”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, henceforth, it will become a duty for anyone, be it a Food Business Operator or any laboratory, be it public or private, to inform the Ministry of Health and Wellness any time a sample result concludes that any article is likely to be unsafe.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since 01 of July of this year 2022, few days back, the Food Regulations 1999 has been amended to provide for the terms Best Before date and Use by date. So, “Best Before date”, in respect of a food or for sale, means that the date up to which the food for sale shall remain fully marketable and shall retain any specific qualities for which expressed or implied claims have been made, provided the food for sale remains in an intact package during its storage, and is stored in accordance with such storage condition as the manufacturer may specify.

What about the “Use by date”? This is in respect of a food for sale, meaning the date after which it is estimated that the food for sale shall not be consume for health or safety reasons, provided the food for sale remains in an intact package during its storage; and is stored in accordance with such storage condition as the manufacturer may specify.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as from 01 July 2022, every pre-packed food shall be sold, not later than 7 days, after the best before date has lapsed but in an dedicated area, and this

regulation has already been gazetted. I can ensure the House that our Public Health and Food Safety Inspectors are currently involved with all stakeholders in their food business to implement this new regulation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Food Bill 2022 empowers our enforcement officers regarding control measures but the success of any piece of legislation rest on each and everyone's cooperation and contribution. The ultimate objective underlying this Bill is to nurture a food safety culture among Mauritians.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank all my colleagues, and even the Members of Opposition who contributed to this debate. I would like to commend the contribution of my colleague, the Attorney General, hon. Maneesh Gobin, as well as, his officers for their valuable assistance in the preparation of this Bill.

I would also like to thank the Food and Health Inspectorate and the staff of my Ministry who helped during the various stages in the drafting of this Bill.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(The Deputy Speaker in the Chair)

THE FOOD BILL

(NO. X OF 2022)

Clauses 1 to 11 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 12 (Remedy in respect of articles seized)

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

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Chairperson, I move for the following amendment in clause 12 –

“In clause 12, in subclause (3)(a), by deleting the word “released” and replacing it by the words “set aside””.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 12, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill,

Clauses 13 to 25 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

New clause 26 (Consequential amendment).

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

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Chairperson, I move by inserting after clause 25, the following new clause, existing clauses 26 and 27 being, respectively, renumbered as clauses 27 and 28 –

“26. Consequential amendment

The Public Health Act is amended –

(a) in section 2, by inserting, in the appropriate alphabetical order, the following new definitions –

“article” has the same meaning as in the Food Act 2022;

“food” has the same meaning as in the Food Act 2022;

(b) by repealing Part IX and replacing it by the following Part –

PART IX – DUTIES

150. Duty to inform

(1) Where any person has reason to believe that any article or food is unsafe or is likely to be injurious to health or cause food poisoning or any disease communicable to human being, he shall, notwithstanding any other enactment, forthwith inform the Sanitary Authority accordingly.

(2) Any person who contravenes this section shall commit an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding 10,000 rupees and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months.”

Amendment agreed to.

New clause 26 read a second time and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 26 and 27 renumbered 27 and 28 respectively.

Clauses 27 and 28 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

The First to Thirteenth Schedules ordered to stand part of the Bill.

The title and the enacting clause were agreed to.

The Bill, as amended, was agreed to.

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

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Food Bill (No. X of 2022) was read a third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr Seeruttun seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

Adjournment matters, please! Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

MATTERS RAISED

(6.03 p.m.)

PADCO LTD – YARD – DRUG ADDICTS

Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue):
 Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning; there is a request on behalf of inhabitants of Riche Terre and the New Wave Community Action to secure the yard of the PadCo premises which is under receivership as well as its backyard, as this area has become a den for drug addicts. I shall be grateful if the hon. Deputy Prime Minister could look into the matter. Thank you.

The Deputy Prime Minister: I understand this refers to the yard of PadCo under receivership at Riche Terre.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: At Riche Terre.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I undertake to look into the matter and find a proper solution.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Hon. Dhunoo, please!

(6.03 p.m.)

DUBREUIL & CAMP BOOLELL – BUS ROUTE NO. 30 & 30A

Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My adjournment matter is addressed to hon. Minister Ganoo, the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail; there is a request from inhabitants of Dubreuil concerning bus route No. 30 and 30A operated by the United Bus Service. Usually, the bus used to go till Dubreuil and Camp Boolell inside, but since more than 7 months the bus operated by the United Bus Service concerning route No. 30 and 30A has stopped going there and it causes many inconveniences for the inhabitants. I am making a request to the hon. Minister if he could look into the matter with the NLTA and if possible also, he could consider having the small buses of the CNT because the time gap between the buses coming there is extended for more than 40 minutes or 1 hour time.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister please!

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr A. Ganoo): I thank the hon. Member for having raised the matter, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I will certainly get in touch with the NLTA and convey to them the request made by the hon. Member.

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

(6.05 p.m.)

LUX BELLE MARE HOTEL – FIRE – TEMPORARY CLOSURE – TAXI DRIVERS & HAWKERS

Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My request of the day is addressed to both the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and hon. Ganoo. As you are aware, a fire broke out at Lux Belle Mare on Saturday which has caused consequent damages, thus the hotel will not be operational for several months. So, my request is that if both Ministers can have a meeting with the taxi drivers and the beach hawkers based at this hotel and find a way forward to find a temporary measure to bring relief to them as they have suffered a lot during the pandemic and now as they have started to pick up, this sad event occurred and they are in a real desperate situation. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Deputy Prime Minister shall take it because he is the senior most.

The Deputy Prime Minister: I thank the hon. Member for recalling the importance that we do something about these two categories of our citizens and I undertake to liaise with my colleague the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail to see what can be done.

The Deputy Speaker: No more adjournment matters from backbenchers? Thank you very much. Have a good trip back.

At 6.06 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 12 July 2022 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

NEW BRIGADE - *PROTECTION DE LA FAMILLE* – FUNCTIONS & OPERATIONS

(No. B/709) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the new Brigade *pour la protection de la Famille*, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) if it is fully operational, and
- (b) the names, qualifications and experience of the Officer In Charge and of the senior officers thereof, indicating to whom are they accountable.

(Withdrawn)

RESIDENCE VALLIJEE – ALLEGED POLICE BRUTALITY – INQUIRY & ACTIONS

(No. B/710) Mr F. David (First 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 alleged cases of Police brutality towards members of the S. family on 24 March 2020 in Residence Vallijee, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand as to the inquiry initiated thereinto, indicating the number of Police Officers involved therein and actions taken in relation thereto, if any.

(Withdrawn)

MR D.N.S.W., CHAIRMAN - ICTA - APPOINTMENT & RENUMERATION

(No. B/711) 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)

MRS V.A & MR V.A.R - DRUG ARREST – INQUIRY UPDATE

(No. B/712) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the arrests of Mrs V. A. and of Mr V.A. R. by the Anti-Drug Smuggling Unit with 1 kilogramme of gandia on 13 May 2022, he will, for the benefit of House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand as to the inquiry initiated thereinto.

(Withdrawn)

MBC TV LICENCE FEES – AMENDMENT OF LEGISLATION

(No. B/714) 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 television licence fee of Rs 150 payable to the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will state if consideration will be given for the legislation to be amended with a view to providing for the payment thereof to be optional.

(Withdrawn)

COVID-19 REGULATIONS – CONTRAVENTIONS, FINES & PENALTIES

(No. B/715) 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 failure to wear protective mask over mouth and nose in breach of COVID-19 Preventive and Sanitary Measures Regulations 2021, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of contraventions booked therefor, indicating the total sums of money collected in terms of fines and penalties thereof as at to date.

(Withdrawn)

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMISSION – COMPLAINTS & COMPLETED INVESTIGATIONS – JULY 21 TO JULY 22

(No. B/716) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Equal Opportunities Commission, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number of complaints of discrimination received thereat since 01 July 2021 to date, indicating the number thereof in which investigations have been completed.

(Withdrawn)

MR P.M., CHAIRPERSON – AIRPORTS OF MAURITIUS LTD – APPOINTMENT & REMUNERATION

(No. B/717) 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)

IMMERSUB & CO. LTD - NON-ISSUE OF LICENSE - INQUIRY

(No. B/718) 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 non-issue of a license for in-water hull cleaning to Immersub & Co. Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Ports Authority, information as to if an inquiry has been carried out to ascertain why the company was treated unfairly and the remedial actions taken, if any, following the judgment delivered by the Supreme Court in the case of Immersub & Co. Ltd. v. The Mauritius Ports Authority dated 12 May 2022.

(Withdrawn)

VALLÉE PITOT - NEW POLICE STATION

(No. B/719) Mr Osman Mahomed (First 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 proposed construction of a new Police Station at Vallée Pitot, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if a post of Anti-Drug Smuggling Unit is being housed thereat.

(Withdrawn)

MR S. K. - DEATH - INQUIRY & STATEMENTS

(No. B/720) 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)

**RWANDA OFFICIAL MISSION – DELEGATION, COSTS & *PER DIEM*
ALLOWANCES**

(No. B/721) 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 his recent official mission to Rwanda, he will state the –

- (a) composition of the accompanying delegation, indicating if Mr K. A. was part thereof and, if so, in which capacity, and
- (b) cost incurred, including, cost air tickets and per diem allowances.

(Withdrawn)

**FORMER PRIME MINISTERS - SPECIAL HEALTHCARE TREATMENT -
GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE**

(No. B/722) Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to former Prime Ministers, he will state if they are eligible to Government assistance in case they require special healthcare treatment and, if so, indicate if any such assistance has been extended since 2019 to date.

(Vide reply to PQ B/713)

Mr R. D. - FORMER CEO, SBM – ALLEGED FRAUD CASE

(No. B/723) 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 he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if a complaint has been reported against Mr R. D., former Chief Executive Officer of the State Bank of Mauritius Ltd. in relation to an alleged case of fraud thereat and, if so, indicate if an inquiry has been initiated therein and where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

**CGS BARRACUDA - 17 MAY 2022 - ILLICIT DRUG TRAFFICKING -
INQUIRY & ARRESTS**

(No. B/724) 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, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if, on or about Monday 17 May 2022, onboard the CGS Barracuda, illegal materials suspected of being proceeds of illicit drug trafficking were found thereon and, if so, if an inquiry has been initiated thereinto, indicating the number of officers of the National Coast Guard, if any, having been arrested in connection therewith.

(Withdrawn)

SIR GAËTAN TUG - SEA CASUALTY – COMPENSATION & ACTION

(No. B/725) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the casualty at sea of the Sir Gaëtan tug, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Ports Authority, information as to the actions, if any, taken –

- (a) against any person who may have been at fault, and
- (b) to compensate the family of the victims thereof.

(Withdrawn)

MR P. M. - SENIOR ADVISOR – PUBLIC BODIES AND/OR STATE-OWNED COMPANIES - BOARDS - REMUNERATION

(No. B/726) 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)

PRICE OBSERVATORY COMMITTEE – COMPOSITION, MEETINGS & REMUNERATION

(No. B/727) 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)

ASSOCIATION POUR LES HANDICAPÉS DE MALHERBES SHELTER – TEENAGE PREGNANCY – INQUIRY

(No. B/728) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to an alleged case of pregnancy on a teenager at *l'Association Pour Les Handicapés de Malherbes* Shelter, she will state if her Ministry has carried out an inquiry thereinto and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof and the date of the last inspection carried out by officers of her Ministry thereat.

(Withdrawn)

IMMIGRATION SQUARE URBAN TERMINAL – CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/729) 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 construction of the Immigration Square Urban Terminal, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

CLASSIFIED ROADS - CONVERSION - CRITERIA

(No. B/730) Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to classified roads, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to the –

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

(Withdrawn)

GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES – DISBURSEMENT BREAKDOWN – FINANCIAL YEAR 2021-2022

(No. B/731) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to subsidies given by Government, he will state the amount disbursed for Financial Year 2021-2022 as at 30 June 2022, giving a breakdown thereof.

(Withdrawn)

NON-BIODEGRADABLE SINGLE USE PLASTIC PRODUCTS – BAN

(No. B/732) 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)

WOOTON FLYOVER – CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/735) Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the proposed construction of the new Wooton flyover, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

FAKE MORCELLEMENT PERMITS – INQUIRY

(No. B/736) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the alleged fake morcellement permits issued by officers of his Ministry, he will state where matters stand as to the inquiry initiated thereinto.

(Withdrawn)

CENTRAL ELECTRICITY BOARD & TERRAGEN LTD – POWER PURCHASE AGREEMENT

(No. B/737) 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 Ltd., in 2020, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain and table copy thereof.

(Withdrawn)

CENTRAL ELECTRICITY BOARD – TERRAGEN LTD – NEGOTIATIONS

(No. B/738) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to electricity production, he will state if his Ministry has or, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to if it has resumed negotiations with Terragen Ltd. in connection therewith.

(Withdrawn)

SPYWARE – INTERCEPTION/MONITORING SOFTWARE – ACQUISITION

(No. B/739) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to spyware or similar interception/monitoring software, he will state if Government or any public authority /body has acquired same.

(Withdrawn)

STREET LANTERNS & LIGHTINGS – INSTALLATION

(No. B/740) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Vacoas Phoenix, detailed information as to the number of street lanterns and lightings earmarked for installation during the year 2022, indicating the –

- (a) quantum of funds earmarked therefor;
- (b) name of the successful bidder(s) for the supply thereof, and
- (c) number of lanterns and lightings purchased and installed in each ward thereat as at to date.

(Withdrawn)

SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS SCHOOL – PHYSICALLY DISABLED**MINORS – SEXUAL ABUSE**

(No. B/741) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the alleged cases of sexual abuse on physically disabled minors

in a Special Education Needs School at Beau-Bassin, she will state if her Ministry has conducted an inquiry thereinto and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

(Withdrawn)

FORMER BANYAN TREE BANK – RECOVERY OF FUNDS

(No. B/742) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the former Banyan Tree Bank, he will state where matters stand as to the recovery of funds invested therein by parastatal bodies, Government-owned companies and local authorities, respectively.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS COLLEGE, CUREPIPE – ALLEGED RACIST REMARKS – INQUIRY

(No. B/743) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the unrest prevailing at the Mauritius College, Curepipe, following the utterance of allegedly racist remarks by the manager to the address of a student, she will state if her Ministry has carried out an inquiry thereinto and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

(Withdrawn)

TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT OF DISABLED PERSONS BOARD - NON-COMPLIANT EMPLOYERS

(No. B/744) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to persons with disabilities, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Board, for the year 2021 and since January 2022 to date, information as to the number –

- (a) thereof –
 - (i) registered therewith;

- (ii) trained, indicating the courses and places of training, and
- (iii) placed in employment, and

(b) of employers not complying with the statutory obligation for the employment thereof.

(Withdrawn)

CUREPIPE & MIDLANDS - FLOOD PRONE AREAS

(No. B/745) Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the Digital Elevated Model, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Land Drainage Authority, information as to the number of flood prone areas identified in Curepipe and Midlands, indicating the measures that need to be taken under the National Flood Management Programme thereat.

(Withdrawn)

DIRECTOR OF AUDIT REPORT 2020-2021 - PROCUREMENT EXERCISES

(No. B/746) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the 24 procurement exercises that were cancelled at the level of his Ministry, as observed in the last Report of the Director of Audit, he will state the projects to which they relate.

(Withdrawn)

AGRICULTURAL SEED PRODUCTION DIVISION - STAFFING

(No. B/747) 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)

POLICE & CRIMINAL JUSTICE BILL - INTRODUCTION

(No. B/748) 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 proposed introduction of the Police and Criminal Justice Bill, he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

DRUG USERS - ACTION PLAN - TREATMENT & REHABILITATION

(No. B/749) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to people who inject drugs, he will state if consideration will be given for the development and implementation of an Action Plan for the treatment and rehabilitation thereof following the submission of the outcome of the 2020 Integrated Biological and Behavioural Surveillance Survey among People Who Inject Drugs and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

CASINO DE MAURICE - SEXUAL HARASSMENT

(No. B/750) Mr F. Quirin (Third 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 the ladies' staff members who complained against Mr D. N., Human Resource Director at the *Casino de Maurice*, Curepipe, for sexual harassment, he will state if he is in presence of representations to the effect that they are subjected to undue pressure, including insulting comments and foul language and, if so, indicate the actions taken, if any, by his Ministry in relation thereto and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

MAHEBOURG HOSPITAL - ROAD WORKS

(No. B/751) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to drainage works being undertaken along the roads leading to the Mahebourg Hospital, he will state if the completion thereof is being delayed and, if so, indicate the reasons therefor.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS EXAMINATIONS SYNDICATE - MR V. S. B. - SUSPENSION

(No. B/752) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the suspension of Mr V. S. B. with immediate effect, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, information as to the reasons therefor.

(Withdrawn)

SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION AUTHORITY - BOARD - COMPOSITION

(No. B/753) 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 Special Needs Education Authority, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

- (a) composition of the Board thereof, indicating the quantum of fees paid to each member thereof, and
- (b) criteria used for the selection of the officer in charge thereof, indicating the salary drawn.

(Withdrawn)

**SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS SCHOOLS - CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES -
SEXUAL ABUSE**

(No. B/754) 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 sexual abuse of children with disabilities in Special Education Needs schools, she will state the number of complaints thereof received since January 2015 to date, indicating the number of cases referred to the Police for inquiry.

(Withdrawn)

**EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE - NATIONAL CERTIFICATE
LEVEL 3**

(No. B/755) 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 National Certificate Level 3 in Early Childhood Education and Care run by the MITD, he will state the –

- (a) entry requirement therefor;
- (b) course content thereof, and
- (c) number of students enrolled therefor since January 2022 to date.

(Withdrawn)

12TH CJSOI GAMES - ORGANISATION

(No. B/756) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the 12th CJSOI Games to be held in Mauritius from 04 au 11 December 2022, he will state where matters stand as to the organization thereof, indicating the –

- (a) composition of the organizing committee;
- (b) total estimate cost thereof, indicating accommodation cost and locations earmarked therefor;
- (c) participating countries;
- (d) number of sports disciplines and respective competitions sites earmarked, and
- (e) quantum of funds earmarked for the preparation of each Mauritian team.

(Withdrawn)

PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGN IN CHINA – SUM DISBURSED

(No. B/757) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the promotional campaign in China, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority, information as to the sum disbursed therefor in Financial Year 2021-2022.

(Withdrawn)

CENTRAL ELECTRICITY BOARD (FIBERNET) COMPANY LTD

(No. B/758) 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)

CASINO DE MAURICE, CUREPIPE - MR D. N. - HR DIRECTOR - DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS

(No. B/759) 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)

MRA - CONTRIBUTION SOCIALE GENERALISÉE - FUNDS

(No. B/760) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the *Contribution Sociale Generalisée*, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Revenue Authority, information as to the quantum of funds –

- (a) disbursed therefrom as at to date, and
- (b) presently available therein.

(Withdrawn)

RUISSAU DU POUCE, PORT LOUIS - STALLS - HOMELESS PEOPLE

(No. B/761) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the homeless people who use to find refuge at night in the stalls found at *Ruisseau du Pouce* and in the vicinity thereof, in Port Louis, she will, state the actions her Ministry proposes to take following the announcement made by the Lord Mayor of the Municipal City Council of Port Louis to destroy the said stalls.

(Withdrawn)

KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA - MOSQUES REFURBISHMENT - FUNDS

(No. B/762) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the process leading to disbursement of funds to be donated by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the refurbishment of mosques, he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

LIVERPOOL FOOTBALL CLUB - CONTRACT

(No. B/763) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the contract of £7,500,000 (approximately Rs400 million) signed in 2020 with Liverpool Football Club (LFC) as an official tourism and economic development partner, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA), information as to the quantum thereof paid, as at date indicating –

- (a) when the contract will come to an end, and
- (b) if the MTPA is considering renewing the said contract and, if so, give the reasons therefor.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS EXAMINATIONS SYNDICATE – PSAC & NCE EXAMINATION PAPERS - ALLEGED TAMPERING - INQUIRY

(No. B/764) 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 alleged tampering with the Primary School Achievement Certificate and the National Certificate of Education 2022 Examination Papers, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, information as to the outcome of the internal inquiry carried out thereinto.

(Withdrawn)

METRO EXPRESS LTD - REVENUE & LOANS

(No. B/765) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether in regard to the metro express, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Metro Express Ltd., information as to the –

- (a) total number of passengers conveyed as at to date;
- (b) total revenue obtained from sales of tickets, and
- (c) quantum of outstanding loans.

(Withdrawn)

CUREPIPE SHELTER - ALLEGED CASE OF CAUSING A CHILD TO BE SEXUALLY ABUSED - INQUIRY

(No. B/766) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the recent alleged case of causing a child to be sexually abused in a shelter at Curepipe, she will state if her Ministry has carried out an inquiry thereinto and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

(Withdrawn)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD - OCCUPATION PERMITS

(No. B/767) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to occupation permits, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Economic Development Board, for each of the years 2015 to 2021 and for the period January 2022 to date, information as to the number of applications for the issue thereof –

- (a) received;
- (b) issued, and
- (c) revoked.

(Withdrawn)

METRO EXPRESS LTD - ROSE HILL TO RÉDUIT - COSTS

(No. B/768) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the metro line between Rose Hill to Réduit, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Metro Express Ltd., the detailed costs thereof.

(Withdrawn)