



SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 15 JUNE 2021

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THE CABINET

(Formed by Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth)

Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth	Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity
Hon. Louis Steven Obeegadoo	Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism
Hon. Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun, GCSK	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology
Dr. the Hon. Mohammad Anwar Husnoo	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management
Hon. Alan Ganoo	Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
Dr. the Hon. Renganaden Padayachy	Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development
Hon. Mrs Fazila Jeewa-Daureeawoo, GCSK	Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity
Hon. Soomilduth Bholah	Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives
Hon. Kavydass Ramano	Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change
Hon. Mahen Kumar Seeruttun	Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance
Hon. Georges Pierre Lesjongard	Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
Hon. Maneesh Gobin	Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security

Hon. Jean Christophe Stephan Toussaint	Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation
Hon. Mahendranuth Sharma Hurreeram	Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development
Hon. Darsanand Balgobin	Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation
Hon. Soodesh Satkam Callichurn	Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training
Dr. the Hon. Kailesh Kumar Singh Jagutpal	Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection
Hon. Sudheer Maudhoo	Minister of Health and Wellness
Hon. Mrs Kalpana Devi Koonjoo-Shah	Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping
Hon. Avinash Teeluck	Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare
Hon. Teeruthraj Huroyal	Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage
	Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms

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MAURITIUS

Seventh National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 13 of 2021

Sitting of Tuesday 15 June 2021

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

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Prime Minister's Office

Ministry of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications

Ministry for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity

- (a) The Reports of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Media Trust for the years ended 31 December 2014 and 2015 and for the 18-month period ended 30 June 2017. (In Original)
- (b) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Rodrigues Subsidy Account for the year ended 30 June 2019.

B. Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development

The Pensions (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 123 of 2021)

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

The Environment Protection (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 127 of 2021)

D. Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance

- (a) The Financial Services (Robotic and Artificial Intelligence Enabled Advisory Services) Rules 2021. (Government Notice No. 128 of 2021)
- (b) The Financial Services (Consolidated Licensing and Fees) (Amendment No. 3) Rules 2021. (Government Notice No. 129 of 2021)
- (c) The Securities (Investment Advice) Rules 2021. (Government Notice No. 130 of 2021)
- (d) The Securities (Solicitation) (Amendment) Rules 2021. (Government Notice No. 131 of 2021)

E. Attorney General

Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security

The Revisions of Laws (Revised Laws of Mauritius) (Supplement – Issue 10) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 125 of 2021)

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

The Workers' Rights (Prescribed Period) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 126 of 2021)

G. Ministry of Health and Wellness

The Dental Council (Continuing Professional Development) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 124 of 2021)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

MAURITIAN CITIZENS & EXPATRIATE WORKERS - MISSING

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to persons gone missing and not found, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof being –

- (a) Mauritian citizens, distinguishing between male and female and excluding those who disappeared at sea, for 2019 and 2020 and since January 2021 to date, categorised as follows –
 - (i) below the age of 12;
 - (ii) between 12 and 18;
 - (iii) Alzheimer sufferers and mentally impaired;
 - (iv) aged and handicapped, and
 - (v) others, and
- (b) expatriate workers presently missing and who were reported as such by their employers.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that in accordance with established procedures set out in the Police Standing Order 130, under the heading - “Missing Persons” - and the Police Instructions Manual, any missing person should be reported to the nearest Police Station and Police action must start immediately.

Whenever a person is reported missing at a Police Station, the case is recorded in the Register of Missing Persons, giving a detailed description of the missing person.

In fact, missing persons are classified in five categories, as follows –

- (a) children under the age of 12 years;
- (b) young persons between the ages of 12 and 18;
- (c) aged or infirm persons;
- (d) adult persons who are suffering from mental or nervous disorders, and
- (e) adult persons of sound mind above the age of 18.

Special attention is given to cases involving children and minors, elderly, infirmed persons and adult persons suffering from serious diseases.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, for the period 2019 to date, 1,525 persons were reported missing, out of whom 1,448 persons were successfully located by the Police and found safe, 24 were found dead, and 53 persons are reported as still missing.

With regard to calendar year 2019, 773 Mauritian citizens, excluding those lost at sea, were reported missing. For calendar year 2020, 574 persons were reported missing whereas for the period January 2021 to date, the figure stands at 178.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the number of missing persons in the different categories is as follows –

	2019	2020	January 2021 to date
Below the age of 12	Nil	Nil	Nil
Between 12 and 18	3 Males	2 Males + 1 Female	1 Male + 2 Females
Alzheimer sufferers and mentally impaired persons	Nil	Nil	Nil
Aged and Handicapped	1 Male + 1 Female	1 Female	2 Males
Others	5 Males + 1 Female	16 Males + 1 Female	14 Males + 2 Females
TOTAL	9M + 2F = 11	18M + 3F = 21	17M + 4F = 21

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Passport and Immigration Office that the number of expatriates reported missing by their employers is 2,224 as at date, comprising 2,126 males and 98 females.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that a non-citizen is not allowed to take any paid employment in Mauritius without a valid work permit under the provisions of the Non-Citizens (Employment Restriction) Act. Any non-citizen engaged in any gainful employment in Mauritius without a valid work permit shall commit an offence and shall be liable, on conviction, to a fine of not less than Rs25,000 but not more than Rs50,000, and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years. Likewise, it is an offence for any employer or any individual to employ a non-citizen who does not hold a valid work permit. Such an offence is also subject to a fine of not less than Rs25,000 but not more than Rs50,000, and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years.

Mr Speaker, Sir, employers of non-citizens in Mauritius have an obligation under Section 6 of the Non-Citizens (Employment Restriction) (Work Permit) Regulations 2017 to forthwith notify the Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training and the Passport and Immigration Office (PIO) when their workers (non-citizens) are missing for more than five consecutive days from their dormitories and workplaces.

Once notified, the PIO and the Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training respectively conduct independent inquiries to ascertain the circumstances surrounding the absence of the worker from his workplace and whether the conditions of the contract of employment have been breached.

Further to investigations by these two authorities, the work permit and the residence permit, if still valid, are normally cancelled. Thereon, the PIO pursues the search for the worker with the aim of locating and repatriating him. Should incriminating evidence be obtained against the offender in this process, the case may be referred to the Commissioner of Police for investigation and referral to the Director of Public Prosecutions for appropriate advice.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with a view to addressing the problem, a High-Level Committee, co-chaired by the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training and the Attorney General, was set up to analyse it and propose solutions for remedying the current situation, whereby many foreign workers are missing from their workplaces and working illegally in Mauritius.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, the figures that the Prime Minister has given appear on the low side compared to what has been publicly said by the Police. And also, I note that he says no Alzheimer sufferers are still missing. But I know of a case in his own

Constituency No. 8, where I think Mr Mohan, if the name is right, is still missing. Perhaps the Prime Minister - I know he has not had much notice - can ask for the figures to be double-checked. They do seem to be very much on the low side compared to what the Police have been releasing recently.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I can only rely on the figures and the information that have been provided to me by the Police, and I take it that they have records of all those persons who are missing. And as I have just said, the Police Standing Order 130 itself establishes the procedures which regulate in which categories are placed people who are reported missing. So, I believe that the information is very reliable. Now, if the hon. Leader of the Opposition knows of a specific case, as he just mentioned, the details can be provided to me, and I shall, of course, request the Police to check.

Now, let me say one thing also because I had a look at different Press reports. We have to be careful. We cannot rely on figures in certain Press reports as compared to real figures.

Mr X. L. Duval: I will send you that specific case and that might show that some of these figures are not accurate. Anyway, even if we take the 53 persons still missing over the last two and a half years, Mr Speaker, Sir, every case, as we know, is a traumatising experience for the family. Every case is a tragedy for the family. So, I would like to ask the Prime Minister, there have been reports in the Press, and I have spoken to some of these families, that the system put in place by the Police is not adequate, in that it is Police Stations taking care of it, just uniformed Police usually, and the families feel that not enough attention is rapidly given to their cases, and often, if it's too late, you find the missing person already dead. So, will the Prime Minister consider speaking to the Commissioner of Police to see that, as in other countries, you would have a specialised squad, a specialised unit maybe, in each District Headquarters, that could take missing persons as their main objective and, therefore, make sure that this is always followed up, and cases, whether they be 1 year or 10 years old, remain active and live?

The Prime Minister: I can assure the hon. Leader of the Opposition that whenever a case of a person missing is reported, and if that person cannot be traced out within 24 hours, there is a huge deployment within the Police Force for, first of all, communicating to each Police Station and authorities and also using the media to try to gather as much information as possible. And also, there is a thorough investigation with regard to those who are close to,

and relatives of the missing persons. Now, whether we should have a specialised unit, I do not know; this has to be looked into, but I can say that all Police Stations are fully involved in trying to locate that missing person. Of course, it is a tragedy for the close ones, the family, relatives and friends.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, why I am saying this is because I have taken the trouble to download the missing persons' website from the Mauritius Police Force. Now, I will say there is perhaps more; the Prime Minister has given 53 only in the last two and a half years. Mr Speaker, Sir, is the Prime Minister aware that the last apparent posting on this Mauritius Police Force website was in 2013, nearly 10 years ago, and it has only got 11 persons on it, whereas since that time to date, there are hundreds probably still missing? So, this is why, Mr Speaker, Sir, my point is it's obvious that there are some lacunas in the way that the Police are dealing with it. I can take other examples to show that there are lacunas and there should be a specialised unit with its main objective being the finding, the tracing of these persons. I will table, Mr Speaker, Sir, for your knowledge.

The Prime Minister: I am not aware of the website, but, again, let me say that the website is one thing, but the information is communicated to all Police Stations, to the media also and to the MBC for dissemination, so that people who have any information can come forward and help the Police in its work.

Mr X. L. Duval: Let me take this website as an example, Mr Speaker, Sir. There are not even pictures on the website; just the name of the persons. So, if we take that as an example of how the Police are treating missing persons, you will see that they are not giving it the importance that the tragedy represents for each family. It is a question of amount of effort. Mr Speaker, Sir, perhaps the Prime Minister can raise it with the Commissioner of Police. I mean, there is no national missing persons' database that you can look at, that is public and people can check.

Also, Mr Speaker, Sir, the feeling is that there is only limited publicity given to each person who has disappeared. So, what can the Prime Minister say? I am sorry, it is not a political PNQ; it is a question of human tragedy and human suffering. Can I appeal to the Prime Minister that there will be much more attention given to the missing persons? Because recently we just had two ladies found dead. This is a national tragedy and we must look at it more seriously from the Police point of view.

The Prime Minister: Let me say that we must explore and use all possible avenues and, of course, use technology also to try to resolve the case of missing persons. But, as I say again, there cannot be a better avenue than communicating to, and informing the public and the investigative authorities, not only the Police but also other authorities so that they are not only made aware, but they will also collaborate and help in trying to find a missing person.

Mr X. L. Duval: Let us move on to Safe City. Now, the Safe City project, we were told, has facial recognition software. Are the pictures of these missing persons being put on the Safe City system so that we can try and retrace them?

The Prime Minister: I answered a question on that and, as far as I can remember, this software is not yet in operation. I recall that there would be such inputs as those of missing persons, and of criminals, so that they can be identified. But that is not yet in operation. I know work on it is ongoing and, hopefully, it will materialise.

Mr X. L. Duval: You have a date when it will be operational?

The Prime Minister: I do not have a date, but I can find out.

Mr X. L. Duval: With telephones now, you can track them where they are. Even if they are off, you can track the telephones. Can I also ask the Prime Minister whether the Police are using telephone tracking systems to find the person who is reported missing?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am, of course, not aware of the way in which the investigations are carried out, the methods that are being used in order to try to track a person who is missing, but I am sure that the Police will be using the available technology, as mentioned by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, like trying to track missing persons by means of telephones. I believe that this must probably be done.

Mr X. L. Duval: I think the Prime Minister might want to check because it is apparently not the case and, if it is the case, they wait for Judges' Orders, and it takes months, etc. So, the system needs to be completely re-dynamised.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as Alzheimer sufferers are concerned, there are about 5,000. Now, we have just been shown that there is a lot of money in the Budget. It is only time, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we could offer at least lower income persons, the pensioners, a tracking device for those suffering from Alzheimer. It is a bracelet, it is not expensive. Is that something that you could consider?

The Prime Minister: I take note of this proposal from the hon. Leader of the Opposition, and we shall look into it. But with regard to the earlier question that was put, I heard the hon. Leader of the Opposition saying that it takes time because of Judges' Order. It does indeed take time. In fact, I am aware of this because there is a legal process before information which is confidential can be obtained and, therefore, I believe that the Attorney General will need to have consultations with the Judiciary.

Mr X. L. Duval: Press upon the Attorney General; that could be a very good case where privacy can be lifted so that we can find the persons who are missing as quickly as possible because time is of the essence in all these issues.

Concerning now unidentified bodies in morgues, would the Prime Minister have the number of - we are talking about people not found and people who are lying in morgues, obviously dead - how many bodies we have at the moment? Would you know?

The Prime Minister: Yes, this information has been communicated. For 2019, we have two unidentified human remains and dead bodies, and for 2020, three.

Mr X. L. Duval: As far as the DNA tests are concerned, I am told that in other countries, DNA tests take only a few days. In Mauritius, when we are looking at these dead bodies, etc., DNA tests take three to six months. Does the Prime Minister know why this is the case?

The Prime Minister: I do not know, but I shall look into the matter.

Mr X. L. Duval: If I may now come to the foreigners, Mr Speaker, Sir. I think there are something like 2,400 who are missing. That is a very large number for such a small island like Mauritius. Can the Prime Minister tell us what is the difficulty in tracing those persons?

The Prime Minister: I must say that the cases have, first of all, to be reported by the employers, and then all the detailed information must be provided so that the Police can then start investigating, and try to track them. But I must say, at times, quite a number have been able to be traced and they have been arrested, they have been repatriated. But, with regard to others, unfortunately, it does take time. I must admit that it does take time because they try to avoid detection and they are harboured. Unfortunately, there are cases where there are, I would call them, unscrupulous employers also who take advantage and do employ them illegally. But, also, they do harbour them so that Police are not able to arrest them as quickly as possible. But we do hope that there is the collaboration of the public also so that Police can

get reliable information whenever and wherever there are people who are illegally staying and illegally working.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is about at least more than 5% of the expatriates in Mauritius who are missing at the moment. Given that we are now going to open to students of all sorts, to other people like that, what measures will the Government propose and take to ensure that this does not happen over and over again, now with students coming from all over supposedly to study in Mauritius, if we cannot even find the people who are here at the moment?

The Prime Minister: As I say, there is a Committee which has been set up to look into that. But there are a few measures that have already been taken. For example, the Bank of Mauritius has instructed all its licensees to review the guidelines so that banking transactions by foreign workers are carried out under stringent conditions, and all foreign workers are required to produce adequate documentary evidence, including a copy of their valid Work Permit or other relevant documents. I do not want to go into all the details, but many of them do work illegally and they do send their money abroad by effecting transactions at commercial banks and money exchange dealers.

We also have amendments to the Non-Citizens (Employment Restriction) Act which have already been initiated and we shall reinforce the following provisions, that is, a substantive increase in the fine for the illegal employment of non-citizens from Rs100,000 to Rs500,000; an increase in imprisonment term from 2 years to a maximum of 5 years, and the Courts will have the power to impose the costs of repatriation of the worker on the illegal employer. There are also other measures which are being taken and are being looked into. But as I say, again, this Committee, which, of course, comprises the Police, the Prime Minister's Office, the MEXA also, that is, the private sector, will address this issue and come forward with other recommendations.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much. Can the Prime Minister give us a breakdown in relation to countries of origin of expatriate workers presently missing and were reported as such by their employers?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I do have this document, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is a long list; I can table this document.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, my last question concerns the US Department of State Report of June 2020, and this is what the US Department of State Report said: “The National Steering Committee on human trafficking was inactive - it is headed by the PMO, I believe - since a change in leadership in March 2019.” Can the Prime Minister tell us whether this National Steering Committee is still inactive or whether it has now restarted its work?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am personally looking into the findings of this Report, although I must say I do not entirely agree with those findings. But, anyway, we have to address this issue because it is a Report which has been rendered public by a country with which we have very good and friendly relations. But I have been in consultation with different units, different authorities, in order to address this issue.

Mr X. L. Duval: Is it active or inactive?

The Prime Minister: It is active. I do not want to say more on that. I do not know; in fact, I sometimes wonder where they gather the information. But, anyway, we shall engage with the US and provide them with the information in order to correct, I believe, certain probable misunderstanding or confusion, but we shall provide them with the right and reliable information.

Mr Speaker: Questions to the Prime Minister! The Table is advised that PQs B/552, B/553, B/554, B/555 and B/556 have been withdrawn. Hon. Mrs Tour!

DRUG TRAFFICKING – SAFE CITY PROJECT

(No. B/547) Mrs J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to drug trafficking, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of cases thereof elucidated with the help of cameras and other components of the Safe City Project, indicating the –

- (a) number of cameras and other components of the Safe City Project installed in Constituency No. 4, Port Louis North and Montagne Longue as at to date, and
- (b) other measures being taken to curb same.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Safe City Project is being implemented to safeguard national security and public safety. As such, it enables the Mauritius Police Force to effectively discharge its duties under the Police Act and other duties as may be conferred

upon it under any other enactment. The Safe City Project incorporates a wide array of technology-driven subsystems. Their integration and their inter-operability are effective tools in obtaining more reliable intelligence for decision makers to enable them to be proactive and to optimise responses in dealing with situations of law and order, thereby contributing to enhance the safety and security of Mauritian citizens and of visitors.

The Project comprises the following deliverables and components –

- (a) supply, installation, testing and commissioning of 4,000 Intelligent Video Surveillance (IVS) cameras over 2,000 sites;
- (b) supply, installation, testing and commissioning of 300 Intelligent Traffic Surveillance (ITS) cameras over 75 sites;
- (c) supply, installation, testing and commissioning of 45 Enterprise/Enhanced Long Term Evolution (eLTE) sites, including 4,500 Multimedia Radio Trunking and 500 Vehicular mounted terminals, and
- (d) Centralised Command and Control Centre, including –
 - (i) a Main Command and Control Centre;
 - (ii) a modern Integrated Emergency Response Management System (999);
 - (iii) 7 Sub-Command Centres;
 - (iv) a Traffic Management and Control Centre, and
 - (v) a Monitoring Bay at each of the 71 Police Stations and one Police Post.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, since the coming into operation of the Main Command and Control Centre in August 2019, 200 cases, as at date, which required a Police inquiry have been detected through the Safe City cameras. Out of these, 7 cases were related to drug dealing and drug possession while one case was related to drug trafficking. I wish to highlight that the Safe City cameras are extensively used by Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit (ADSU) in the detection of cases, in the investigation of ongoing cases and also for gathering of intelligence. Furthermore, it has been observed that the presence of Safe City cameras acts as a deterrent to drug trafficking.

In regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, as at date, 146 IVS cameras and 4 ITS cameras have been installed and are operational in Constituency No. 4, Port Louis North and Montagne Longue. There is also a Monitoring

Bay at each of the two Police Stations in Constituency No. 4. Police vehicles at these Police Stations are also fitted with multi-media radios which are connected to the Safe City system.

The Safe City cameras have been installed in order to deliver an efficient and effective policing service to the residents of Constituency No. 4 and meet the public needs and expectations. Prior to the installation of these cameras, the Mauritius Police Force conducted a survey to identify strategic sites where these cameras would be installed. The following factors have been considered during the exercise –

- (a) crime prone areas;
- (b) accident prone areas;
- (c) vicinity of educational institutions;
- (d) vicinity of places of worship;
- (e) major roads where there are heavy traffic flows, and
- (f) well frequented public places.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the following measures are being taken to combat drug trafficking –

- (i) the Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit (ADSU) personnel work jointly with the Special Support Unit (SSU), *the Groupe D'Intervention de la Police Mauricienne* (GIPM), the local Police, the National Coast Guard (NCG) as well as other external agencies, such as the Customs Anti-Narcotics Section (CANs) of the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA), the Mauritius Port Authority (MPA), the Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd (CHCL), and the Central Post Office to prevent the entry of illegal drugs in the country and suppress other illegal activities along our coastal areas;
- (ii) increase in the human resources and logistics of the ADSU;
- (iii) stringent measures at the Point of Entries, namely at the Port and Airport;
- (iv) working in close collaboration with Regional and International Anti- Drug Agencies;
- (v) regular targeted crackdown operations;
- (vi) tailor-made training for ADSU personnel to enhance capabilities;

- (vii) a close collaboration between ADSU and other Law Enforcement Agencies such as the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), Independent Commission against Corruption (ICAC), Asset Recovery Investigation Division (ARID), and
- (viii) ADSU, as part of its duties, gathers information and intelligence from the public, informants and other sources.

The following additional measures are also being taken to curb drug trafficking –

- (i) the movement of vessels entering the territorial waters of Mauritius are closely monitored by NCG Operations Room through the Automatic Identification System (AIS) and the Coastal Surveillance Radar System (CSRS) which will be replaced by a modern Surveillance System shortly;
- (ii) suspicious persons and pleasure crafts are checked by National Coast Guard Officers, MRA Customs Officers and Fisheries Officers;
- (iii) regular aerial surveillance patrols of our coastal waters are carried out by NCG Dornier aircraft and Police Helicopters;
- (iv) seaborne patrols are carried out by NCG vessels, CGS Barracuda, CGS Valiant and CGS Victory, Heavy Duty Boats and Fast Interceptor Boats;
- (v) joint crackdown operations are carried out by officers of the NCG, MPA, ADSU, Police Dogs Unit, GIPM, MARCOS, SSU and MRA;
- (vi) suspicious incoming parcels and mails are checked by Postal Officers in presence of ADSU and MRA Custom Officers;
- (vii) NCG Field Intelligence Officers (FIO) gather information on operators of pleasure crafts with high rating engines and the movement of these crafts are monitored by the NCG Maritime Intelligence Cell;
- (viii) a Hot Line 177 is available for reporting suspicious activities, and
- (ix) an NCG Officer based at the Regional Coordination Operations Centre (RCOC) in Seychelles and another one based at the Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre (RMIFC) in Madagascar also provide intelligence on maritime movement where there is suspicion of drug trafficking.

Moreover, additional resources will be provided in the next Financial Year to increase the operational and intelligence gathering capabilities of ADSU.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have stated time and again, my Government is fully committed in relentlessly combating the drug scourge and various and frequent seizures of drugs do prove that no stone is being left unturned to deal with the drug situation in the country.

Mrs Tour: Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether all the cameras in Constituency No. 4 are currently operational?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I understand that all the 4 Intelligent Traffic Systems are operational, and as regards the Intelligent Video Surveillance, as I said, there are presently 146 cameras and all of them are in service. I am also informed that there are more IVS cameras which are being installed at five different sites in Abercrombie and at two different sites in Montagne Longue. Those cameras being installed will add to and complement the already 146 IVS cameras.

Mrs Tour: Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether the ADSU is properly manned in Constituency No. 4?

The Prime Minister: Although the ADSU teams are free to operate island-wide, because we do not depend only on those teams which are located in Constituency No. 4, I must say that all the regions of Constituency No. 4 are being covered by eight ADSU teams that are based in Port Louis and one based in Northern Division. Each team is commanded by an officer of the rank of Sergeant or Inspector and supervised by a Chief Inspector, and each team comprises an average of 10 Police Officers.

As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, in my reply, the ADSU teams do not work in isolation, but, instead, they work jointly with the Special Supporting Unit, the GIPM, the local Police, and it is worth mentioning that in Constituency No. 4 and its boundary, there are five Police Stations and in each Police Station there is a Monitoring Bay for viewing the live images that are transmitted by the Safe City cameras that are found in the Station itself.

Dr. Boolell: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether there has been an effective study carried out in respect of video surveillance and the monitoring and surveillance of our coastal zone, let alone of our EEZ?

The Prime Minister: Coastal and EEZ, Mr Speaker, Sir, do not relate to this question.

Dr. Boolell: But you gave it in your reply.

The Prime Minister: Yes, I have stated all the measures that are being taken by ADSU, but if the hon. Member will come with a specific question, I shall, of course, answer. This question relates to what is being done in Constituency No. 4.

Dr. Boolell: Except that your reply was very wide.

The Prime Minister: Yes!

Dr. Boolell: Sorry.

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I would like to know from the hon. Prime Minister whether all the sub-command centres are operational. I am referring to the function of the IVS, ITS, eLTE, multimedia radio tracking and vehicular mounted terminals.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the ones which are situated at the Central Division, the Metro South Division, Eastern Division, Western Division, Northern Division and the Traffic Command Centre are all operational. Now, there are two; one of the Southern Division where installation is being completed and they are awaiting power for configuration, and for the other one - unfortunately, this relates to Abercrombie - Metro North Division, I am informed that works are still in progress by ESD and ACs are not yet installed. So, hopefully, in the near future, this one also will become operational.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Dr. Aumeer: In addition to the various measures mentioned by the hon. Prime Minister, can he inform us whether there are any other specific measures being taken to curb the rise of synthetic drugs, particularly the identification of laboratories that are cropping up in certain inner cities? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: These are the measures that are being taken in order to counter drug trafficking. Drug trafficking or drug consumption, there is, of course, no difference. All drugs are illegal, including synthetic drugs. So, all these measures have been taken in order to see to it that we get rid of this drug scourge.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

POLICE OFFICERS – INTERDICTION

(No. B/548) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and

External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Police Officers, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof suspended from duty, since January 2010 to date, indicating the reasons for the suspension in each case.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since January 2010 to 11 June 2021, 374 Police Officers have been interdicted from duty in accordance with Regulation 28 of the Disciplined Forces Service Commission Regulations, which provides for the interdiction of members of the Disciplined Forces.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am tabling the information regarding the reasons for the interdiction of the Police Officers by category of offence.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. In your answer, you mentioned the figure of 374. Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether actions have been taken following comments from the Director of Audit with regard to the huge amount of funds being paid to the interdicted Police Officers? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, on 17 October 2020, the Commissioner of Police had issued an Order No. 3 of 2020 regarding enquiries into criminal cases involving Police Officers to be dealt with on a fast track basis, requesting Divisional Commanders and Branch Officers to take immediate remedial actions to deal with such cases on a fast track basis. In this Order, the Commissioner of Police set a time frame for Divisional Commanders and Branch Commanders to ensure that enquiries into simple cases are completed within one month and complex cases, within three months, and delays beyond this time frame should be fully justified by enquiring officers, failing which they will be liable to disciplinary actions. Now, these actions are meant, of course, to limit the time taken to complete enquiries at the level of Police and cases are then, of course, referred to the Office of DPP for prosecution and cases eventually to be lodged before the Courts.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. We all know that those Police Officers are innocent until proven guilty. But can the hon. Prime Minister inform us if there is a way that the Government can avoid paying the salaries to those who are interdicted for such a long period of time and who actually, in the meantime, are working elsewhere, like those who have their own business or those who are drivers as well?

The Prime Minister: The proceedings for appointment, promotion and termination of the appointment of Police Officers are governed by the Disciplined Forces Service

Commission Regulations of 1997, and Section 28 of this Regulation, in fact, provides for the interdiction of a member of the Mauritius Police Force from exercising the powers and functions of his office in the public interest, where proceedings for dismissal are being undertaken or where criminal proceedings are being instituted or where proceedings or retirement on grounds of public interest are being taken against that member. However, the Regulations provide stringent rules concerning the dismissal and disciplinary proceedings that are taken against them or those who are involved in criminal cases. Officers involved in the criminal cases are safeguarded from dismissal throughout their entire and sometimes lengthy criminal processes. And also, this is regulated by the Financial Management Manual, which provides that officers under interdiction shall not be deprived of their basic salary. So, Government cannot avoid paying unless we do amend these Regulations. But, unfortunately, I do not think it is fair, because eventually somebody can also be found not to be guilty of any offence to which he is being reproached. I think the issue is how fast can we deal with such cases or if there can be disciplinary actions which are likely to take shorter time because by the time a case is heard in Court and we know that so many cases are, unfortunately, being postponed for one reason or another, and that is where the problem lies.

MAURITIUS FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION – ALLEGED CASES OF MALPRACTICES

(No. B/549) 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 whether, in regard to the alleged fraudulent practices at the Mauritius Football Association in respect of the four Malagasy players who were transferred from clubs in Madagascar to the Cercle de Joachim Sports Club for the football season 2019-20, 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 by the Central Criminal Investigation Division thereinto.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to Parliamentary Question B/768 on 10 November 2020.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Commissioner of Police informed that he received a correspondence on 24 July 2020 from Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training regarding alleged cases of malpractices at the Mauritius Football Association. On Friday 31 July 2020, the matter was referred to the Central Criminal Investigation

Department for inquiry. In the course of investigation, two members of the Mauritius Football Association (MFA), namely the President and the Deputy General Secretary as well as the Treasurer of '*Cercle de Joachim Club Sportif*' were interviewed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, according to the Commissioner of Police, following information provided to Police to the fact that FIFA had already been informed of the allegations since 25 February 2020 by an unknown entity, a correspondence was sent to National Crime Bureau (NCB), Bern, on Tuesday 24 November 2020, through the National Central Bureau, Interpol, Port Louis for the purpose of the inquiry. On Monday 04 January 2021, the National Central Bureau, Bern, Switzerland replied, through an email, that the FIFA Disciplinary Committee had ruled out that –

- (a) the '*Cercle de Joachim Club Sportif*' is responsible for the infringement of the relevant provisions of the Regulation on the Status and Transfer of Players related to the mandatory use of Transfer Matching System for all international transfers of professional players and to the administrative procedure governing the transfer of professionals between Associations;
- (b) the Mauritius Football Association and the '*Cercle de Joachim Club Sportif*' should pay a fine to the tune of 10,000 Swiss Francs each, and
- (c) the Mauritius Football Association should be warned on its future conduct.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Commissioner of Police has further informed that the Central Criminal Investigation Department is investigating further into the case with a view to establishing any criminal offence which may have been committed.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, cela fait bientôt une année que l'enquête a été enclenchée au niveau du *CCID*. Le Premier ministre vient de dire que le Cercle de Joachim et la *MFA* ont été sanctionnés par la *FIFA*, et cela cause un tort immense à l'image de Maurice. De ce fait, a-t-il demandé à son ministre des Sports d'agir à cet effet, comme ils l'avaient fait dans le cas de Kaysee Teeroovengadum qui voulait effectuer son retour au sein de l'Association mauricienne de volley-ball après l'épisode de Gold Coast ?

The Prime Minister: Well, this is another issue, Mr Speaker, Sir, because the question is about an inquiry at the level of the Police. Now, whether a criminal offence has been disclosed or not, that is one thing. With regard to the issue of whether they have conformed to the Regulations of the Football Association, FIFA, I have a few questions which you, yourself, hon. Member, have asked, have put to my colleague, the Minister of

Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation. Of course, he has answered and he is looking into that and he will take appropriate measures if need be, if required. But I can answer at the level of the Police; I can say again that the inquiry is ongoing and, of course, if ever it discloses a criminal offence, the matter will be referred after inquiry to the DPP for appropriate action.

Mr Quirin: Peut-on savoir, M. le président, qui au niveau du *CCID* est l'enquêteur principal dans cette affaire ?

The Prime Minister: I shall verify. I do not have the name. But I can provide the name because there is no problem for me to provide the name.

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister tell us, after this incident with the Malagasy players, whether the Cercle de Joachim Sports Club has made requests for work permits for other foreign players?

The Prime Minister: On 30 December 2020, the Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training forwarded applications for e-work permits for five Guinean players to take employment as football players at the Cercle de Joachim Sports Club for the remaining of 2020-2021 football season ending 31 July 2021. And in the light of this situation of alleged malpractice with the Malagasy players and since the matters are still under investigation by the concerned authorities, I am informed that the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation did not recommend the applications for the work permits, and on 02 April, the applications were turned down. There has also been an appeal by the Cercle de Joachim Sports Club, but that also had been turned down. This is, in fact, proof of the action of my colleague, the hon. Minister, in the light of the sanction that has been taken by FIFA against the Club.

CCID - CYBERCRIME UNIT - INVESTIGATIONS

(No. B/550) 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 Cybercrime Unit of the Central Criminal Investigation Division, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of –

- (a) cases referred thereto for investigation since 2015 to 2020 on a yearly basis and since January 2021 to date, indicating the number of persons -

- (i) arrested;
- (ii) prosecuted, and
- (iii) convicted in connection therewith, and

(b) Police Officers attached thereto.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that cases are referred to the Cybercrime Unit of the Central Criminal Investigation Division by the Information and Communication Technologies Authority (ICTA), the Mauritian Cybercrime Online Reporting System (MAUCORS)/Computer Emergency Response Team of Mauritius (CERT-MU) and private individuals making complaints in Police Stations around the island. The Cybercrime Unit also carries out cyber patrol through random search on social media platforms to detect offensive and undesirable posts.

The MAUCORS, which was set up in March 2018, is a centralised cyber incident reporting system that connects the CERT-MU, the Cybercrime Unit of the Mauritius Police Force, the Data Protection Office and the Information and Communication Technologies Authority. The types of incidents reported thereto include online harassment, online fraud and scams, identity theft, cyber bullying and sextortion.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am also informed by the Commissioner of Police that the number of cases referred to the Cybercrime Unit for investigation for the period January 2015 to 10 June 2021 is 1,888, including 153 cases for period January 2021 to 10 June 2021.

I am tabling the number of cases for both the periods, as requested by the hon. Member, with details indicating the number of persons arrested, prosecuted and convicted.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that the Cybercrime Unit is manned by 22 Police Officers as follows –

- (i) 1 Assistant Superintendent of Police;
- (ii) 2 Inspectors of Police;
- (iii) 2 Police Sergeants;
- (iv) 15 Police Constables, and
- (v) 2 Woman Police Constables.

The Unit is under the supervision of a Deputy Commissioner of Police and the Police IT Unit provides them with technical support in the course of their investigations.

Mr Uteem: Thank you. The hon. Prime Minister referred to complaints being made at local Police Stations. Is he aware that, in fact, all complaints are directed to this Cybercrime Unit and this is causing a lot of problem because there is a backlog at the level of Cybercrime Unit? So, would the hon. Prime Minister consider taking up the matter with the Commissioner of Police so that local Police Stations henceforth be directed to record complaints relating to Cybercrime Offences?

The Prime Minister: The cases are recorded at the Police Station, but they are referred to this Unit because it is specialised in dealing with such kinds of cases for investigation. That is the process.

Mr Uteem: Is the hon. Prime Minister aware of the poor physical conditions in which the Cybercrime Unit operates at the Central CCID? I have had the opportunity of going there; they do not have air conditioning, it is a very small room, no flooring, lack of equipment. Would the hon. Prime Minister consider taking up the matter with the Commissioner of Police so that they be given a better working space?

The Prime Minister: In fact, I have taken it up, because this issue was also raised by hon. Lobine before in the House. I have been informed that the Cybercrime Unit, first of all, is based at the first floor of the CCID, which is located in the Line Barracks compound. And I am told that being given that the building housing the Cybercrime Unit is classified as historical building under the National Heritage Trust Fund, as such, no major infrastructure changes could be brought. But, nevertheless, I am informed that there has been some improvement. Some renovation works have been carried out. But I am pleased to inform the House that a new District Headquarters is actually on construction at the ex-Married Quarters of Abercrombie and will be completed soon and the following Units, that is, the Police Family Protection Unit, the SOCO, the CID Metro North, which are actually based at the IKS Building, will move to the new DHQ and, thereafter, arrangements are being made to relocate the Cybercrime Unit at the IKS Building.

Mr Speaker: Time is over by five minutes! The Table has been advised that PQs B/576, B/611, B/614, B/615, B/616 and B/639 have been withdrawn.

Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

BREAST CANCER – DETECTION & TREATMENT

(No. B/557) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to breast cancer, he will state –

- (a) the number of detected cases thereof over the past five years;
- (b) the facilities provided for the detection and treatment thereof, and
- (c) if tests BRCA1 and BRCA2 are available for genetic testing of women having strong family history thereof.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that according to the National Cancer Registry reports, there were 2809 cases of breast cancer which were detected from 2015 to 2019. Of the 2809 detected cases, 2745 cases were female and 64 were male. There were 483 female breast cancer cases and 10 male cases detected in 2015, 561 female cases and 19 male cases in 2016, 583 female cases and 7 male cases in 2017, 570 female cases and 16 male cases in 2018 and 548 female cases and 12 male cases in 2019. As regards the figures for the cases of 2020, same are being compiled.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the cervical cancer screening program is being carried out for early detection and treatment of married or sexually active women who are aged between 30 to 60 years according to International Guidelines. The screening of breast cancers is being carried out in Primary Health Care Centres and the Health Promotion Unit.

As regards mammography, the WHO has recommended organised, population based Mammography screening programmes for women aged between 50-69 years. The WHO has also suggested a screening interval of two years. It is estimated that around 4000 women are screened for breast and cervical cancers every year in Mauritius. The role of screening is of paramount importance to detect early breast cancers. The survival rate of early diagnosis of breast cancer is about 90%.

Mr Speaker, Sir, moreover, there are imaging facilities such as ultrasonography, which is available in all the regional hospitals and digital mammography which is available at Victoria and Dr. A. G. Jeetoo hospitals. Numerous studies have corroborated that conventional mammography is the only effective population-based strategy for early

detection that mitigates the risk of breast cancer specific mortality. According to the World Health Organization, so far, the only breast cancer screening method that has proved to be effective in organised population-based programmes is mammography screening.

Mr Speaker Sir, I am informed that the treatment modalities for breast cancer are surgery, chemotherapy, radiotherapy, hormonal therapy and targeted therapy. Surgery is carried out in the regional hospitals following which the patients are referred to the Department of Radiotherapy at Victoria Hospital for routine follow-up. Chemotherapy services are provided at Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital, Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital and SSRN Hospital. Radiotherapy is currently being provided in the Radiotherapy Department at Victoria Hospital by using 2-Dimensional Radiotherapy. Hormonal therapy is available in all regional hospitals by using Selective Estrogen Receptor Modulators and Aromatase Inhibitors.

Mr Speaker Sir, with regard to targeted therapy, 20% of all breast cancers are HER2-neu positive requiring Trastuzumab which is a monoclonal antibody used to treat breast cancer. Previously this drug was approved for only 6 months of use for premenopausal patients, whereas treatment is recommended for one year, as per international guidelines. However, since 2020, a new protocol has been set up including post-menopausal patients and selected metastatic cases and treatment duration has been extended to one year.

Mr Speaker Sir, the New Cancer Centre is expected to be fully operational by beginning of next year. The block at the New Cancer Centre will have state of the art technological equipment namely the linear accelerator with multi leaf collimator. It will also provide Nuclear Medicine facilities like PET scan along with a team of fully trained personnel. Conformal 3D radiotherapy will be soon available in the New Cancer Centre. Since February 2020, the inpatient service for palliative care services has been shifted to the New Cancer Centre and outpatient clinics have successfully been opened in four regional hospitals namely Victoria, Dr. A. G. Jeetoo, SSRN and Jawaharlal Nehru hospitals.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed that 5-10% of breast cancers are linked to an inherited gene mutation. About half of these breast cancers are linked to a BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene mutation, that is, the Breast Cancer genes 1 and 2. The BRCA gene test is a blood test that uses DNA analysis to identify mutations in BRCA1 and BRCA2. This test is normally offered to those who have likelihood to have inherited a

mutation based on personal or family history of breast or ovarian cancer. It can, however, determine mutations in prostate, pancreatic and skin tumours.

However, the introduction of this test is in the pipeline as the ION Torrent Next Generation sequencer, which has recently been purchased by my Ministry, will be used to conduct such tests with all the necessary reagents and consumables.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, hon. Minister. Early diagnosis undoubtedly decreases deaths from breast cancer and improve survival. Doesn't the Minister think it is high time that not only genetic testing of BRCA1, BRCA2 but also the new genetic testing such as TP53 and PALB which is Partner and Localiser of BRCA2, be introduced, particularly that there have been various studies in Mauritius that have shown there are clusters of families who have inheritably genetic predisposition to breast cancer?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member is totally right. This is why the Government is coming with the new Cancer Centre and in the new Cancer Centre, provisions have been made to have the equipment, the reagents and training of the staff so that all these tests can be done in the near future.

Ms Ramyad: Can the Minister inform the House whether the PET scan equipment has been procured and when will it be fully operational?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the procedures for procurement involving the different steps with our Consultant, the HSCC, are being carried out. Part of the equipment has already reached Mauritius. The commissioning is being carried out and once the building is ready, we can import the rest of the equipment because at the same time, we have to get the building ready so that these equipment can be installed and commissioned.

Mr Doolub: Thank you Mr Speaker, Sir. I have been apprised actually by one of my mandates of a waiting list for mammography patients. Can the hon. Minister inform the House as to how many patients are still on this waiting list and if, he can as well enlighten the House as to the number of mammographies being carried out in the five regional hospitals? Thank you.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, according to the records kept at the Ministry, so far –

- (a) Year 2018 - 1025 mammographies were carried out.
- (b) Year 2019 - 320 mammographies were carried out.
- (c) Year 2020 - 1295 mammographies were carried out.

Now, for the waiting list, at present, there are 67 patients awaiting mammography as at 31 May 2021.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Dr. Aumeer: Mastectomy and partial radical mastectomy which everybody of us here, has heard of relatives having such distressing body surgery in the advent to prevent the recurrence of breast cancer. Will the hon. Minister confirm whether he will enlist or he does have the services of plastic reconstructive surgery for the betterment of these women who already have suffered serious emotional downgrade following their breast surgery?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, at present there is no breast surgeon in Mauritius. Even an Expression of Interest was carried out but we did not get any candidate. The Ministry is doing needful. We have already arranged for a breast surgeon through the Edinburgh University and when everything will be finalised, we will have a breast surgeon who will specifically be dealing with the mastectomy and the reconstructive surgeries for mastectomy.

Mr Speaker: Next Question!

COVID-19 HOME SELF-TESTING KITS - IMPORTATION

(No. B/558) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the proposed importation of COVID-19 Home Self-Testing Kits, he will state if –

- (a) appropriate Regulations will be put in place so as to control the sale thereof in terms of quality and pricing, and
- (b) only registered medical suppliers with his Ministry will be allowed to import same.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, in order to enable the use of Covid-19 Home Self-Testing kits as an indicative tool for detection of Covid-19, the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection promulgated the Consumer Protection (Control of Imports) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 that allow for importation of Covid-19 Home Self-Testing kits by interested parties under stipulated conditions on 09 April 2021. Prospective importers submit their respective applications along with all relevant documents to the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection on the trade net portal.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection has to obtain the clearance of my Ministry before authorising the importation of COVID-19 Home Self-Testing Kits. A Standing Committee has been set up under the Chairpersonship of the Director General, Health Services to assess the applications received and make appropriate recommendations to the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection, which thereafter, issues authorisation to the successful applicants for importation of COVID-19 Home Self-Testing Kits.

In reply to part (a) of the question, the Standing Committee evaluates the quality of the product based on a set of evaluation criteria which include *inter alia*, the requirement for the product to be COVID-19 Antigen-based Test Kit with nasal, nasopharyngeal, saliva swab and approved by the WHO or Food and Drug Administration or the European Union respectively.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to part (b) of the question, the quarantine control of sale and use of COVID-19 Home Self-Testing Kit Regulation 2021 have been promulgated so as to control the sale and use of the COVID-19 Home Self-Testing Kits including analysis of the samples and reporting of the results. According to the provisions under the regulations, private health institutions, medical practitioners, wholesale and retail pharmacies and private laboratories and companies involved in the importation of laboratory reagents, which are duly registered with my Ministry are allowed to import the COVID-19 Home Self-Testing Kits.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you hon. Minister. Can the hon. Minister consider in the eventuality of having Home Self-Testing Kits in Mauritius, whether these Kits can be made available free to front liners and also to all those people in this country, who have been told they have serious contraindications and allergic reaction to vaccination in an attempt to curb COVID-19.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the goal is standard test for testing COVID-19 is the PCR test. Now, those who are not eligible to do the vaccination or who have a certificate where it is already stipulated that they are not eligible to do vaccination, the Ministry of Health and Wellness is providing those front liners free testing for PCR test and doing a PCR test, which is a gold standard one and doing a Home Self-Testing test is a different matter altogether. In the future, we may consider getting these tests available freely but it is only with time that we can tell which direction we should go.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQs B/605, B/626, B/627, B/628 and B/629 have been withdrawn.

Next question!

CROSS-BORDER TRAVEL - COVID-19 TEST CERTIFICATES

(No. B/559) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third 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 control and prevention of cross border transmission of diseases, he will state if, in anticipation of the re-opening of our borders, Mauritius has collaborated with the African Union and the Africa Centre in terms of technical support with PanaBIOS for the implementation of an online system for the authentication and verification of laboratory test certificates and vaccine certificates of incoming passengers.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to thank the hon. Member for giving me a chance to enlighten the House and the country at large on this issue. I wish also to inform the House that since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Mauritius has been working closely with the Africa Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, including through sharing of data, procurement of medical supplies and regular updates on the evolution of the pandemic across the continent.

In October 2020, with a view to promoting a common standard for health screening for cross-border travel purposes across the continent, the African Union officially launched the trusted travel platform as part of the overall trusted travel initiative.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the AU Africa CDC, trusted travel platform, was developed by PanaBIOS Consortium an Econet group, as a public-private partnership with Africa CDC with a view to supporting Member States in verifying COVID-19 test certificates for travellers and to help harmonise entry and exit screening across the continent. The platform digitises the entry and exit protocols of member states.

It also offers a turnkey compliance engine for national border authorities to automatically verify health credentials like laboratory test results through electronic interconnections among laboratories, airlines, public health authorities, other stakeholders and the Africa CDC Disease Control and Prevention.

We welcome this initiative of the African Union through the Africa CDC in collaboration with PanaBIOS as it is in line with Government policy of digitalisation of services to facilitate reopening of borders.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in April 2021, a joint public-private sector working group was set up under the Chairmanship of the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism, to formulate recommendation for the reopening of our borders and the re-launch of the Tourism Sector.

Subsequently, the joint public-private sector working groups set up three Sub-Committees to look into entry requirement and health protocols, air connectivity and destination marketing and to come up with recommendations. The respective Sub-Committees have set up relevant technical working groups to look into the different aspects of customer journey facilitation at the airport, digitalisation of the processes, simplifying or eliminating any duplication of request of information from travellers and collection of COVID-19 testing and vaccination information.

In addition, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation is chairing a Task Force to study and recommend the digital solution required for improving the customer experience at the airport in the context of the early and safe opening of our borders. Consultative meetings are currently on-going by the Task Force and work is in progress.

On its part, I am informed that the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness has been developing COVID LIMS based on an open source OpenELIS platform, both patient wise and passenger wise, with assistance from the UNDP. Our national database of more than 250,000 computer files created for test requested and results entry ultimately will need to be connected to the trusted travel platform offered free of charge by African Union after data protection and confidentiality regulations have been respected.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are leaving no stone unturned to facilitate the reopening of our borders with all necessary sanitary precautions.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you hon. Minister. Will your Ministry consider that each foreign vaccine certificate for foreign nationals coming in our country, hopefully after 15 July, bears a QR code that can be identified by the Mauritian authorities, similarly through our own vaccines certificates to avoid bogus certificates? And I have to inform the House that already bogus certificates are on sale in Mauritius.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have just informed the House, there is the Task Force which is working and studying the whole situation and recommending solutions required for improving the entry of passengers and I am sure that this matter will be looked into by the Sub-Committee and the working groups.

Mr Dhunoo: In his reply, the hon. Minister referred to a Task Force. Could the hon. Minister inform the House what are the objectives of this Task Force that he has just mentioned?

Mr Ganoo: Yes, I am informed that this Task Force which is being chaired by the Ministry of Information, Communication and Technology, as I said, has different objectives, multiple objectives in fact, namely –

- (a) to take stock of current process for clearing arriving passenger at immigration and healthcare counters at the SSR International Airport;
- (b) to take stock of the future IT systems (e.g. Advanced Passenger information System) (APIS) and the Public Health Passenger Locator Form (Locator Form) that could be envisaged;
- (c) to take stock of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) Collaborative Arrangement for the Prevention and Management of Public Health Events in Civil Aviation and Council Aviation Recovery Task Force Phase III Report;
- (d) to take stock of the International Air Transport Association (IATA) Travel Pass mobile app;
- (e) to identify the IT gaps in the current process as regard to collection of COVID-19 testing and vaccination information, and
- (f) to recommend the most appropriate digital solution in relation to the proposed re-opening of borders on a short-term solution as well as the long-term solution.

Dr. Aumeer: Can the hon. Minister inform us whether Government is considering to have mutual recognition of our vaccines certificate, irrespective of the type of vaccines that were inoculated to our population with countries whose nationals are visiting us, and to which we are going to allow entry because such actions have already been taken by some countries to recognise each other's Vaccine Green Passport? Thank you.

Mr Ganoo: I understand that this matter is being currently looked into by the different High-Powered Committee and the other Committees set up by Government, Mr Speaker, Sir.

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

At 12.59 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.32 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please, be seated! Hon. Mrs Tour!

SAINTE CROIX JUDO CLUB – REGIONAL TRAINING CENTRE - CONVERSION

(No. B/560) Mrs J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the Sainte Croix Judo Club, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Judo Federation, information as to where matters stand as to the conversion thereof into a regional training centre for the region of Port Louis, indicating the facilities, if any, that will be provided to ensure the optimization thereof.

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, Sir, in 2017, in a spirit to cast a wide net to create a sporting elite in certain disciplines, my Ministry set up regional training centres across the country, including Rodrigues. Appropriate coaching and training facilities, including costs for transport, meal, equipment and coaching fees are being provided to young promising athletes of selected regions to enable them to excel.

In this context, 4 regional training centres were set up for badminton at Rivière du Rempart, Bon Accueil, Souillac and Bambous and 7 for athletics at Rose Belle, Rose Hill, Bambous, Flacq, Belle Vue, Reduit, and Rodrigues, respectively.

For volleyball, 2 youth selections for the age categories of Under 18 and Under 20 were set up to regroup the best players and prepare them for regional and international competitions.

With regard to Judo, in January 2020, my Ministry in collaboration with the Mauritius Judo Federation had worked out a development plan for the setting up of 4 regional training centres across Mauritius. The first one was launched on 4 March 2020 at Mahebourg Youth Centre. However, due to the lockdown and the prevailing confinement, the development plan could not be implemented.

I am informed that the Saint Croix Judo Club is housed within a building put at its disposal by the Municipal Council of Port Louis. Once the sanitary conditions allow the opening of sports infrastructure, my Ministry in collaboration with the Mauritius Judo Federation will speed up the setting up of a regional judo training centre at Sainte Croix.

As is the case of other regional centres, my Ministry will incur all costs of equipment, including, tatamis and kimonos, transport, meal and coaching fees while the federation will assist in identifying a qualified coach to conduct training sessions. It is expected that, at least, 24 judokas comprising 12 girls and 12 boys will be trained. Thank you.

Mrs Tour: Le ministre peut-il nous dire comment les judokas bénéficieront de cette régionalisation?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, le but de *regional training centres* dans les différentes disciplines sportives vise à prendre les meilleurs jeunes d'une région, donc, en l'occurrence ici nous parlons de la région de Sainte Croix, de Port Louis ; de toute cette région autour de Sainte Croix. Bien sûr, cela va passer par les entraîneurs qui vont prendre les meilleurs et leur donner cette facilité d'entraînement, où, comme je l'ai dit, les équipements seront donnés par le ministère ; ils auront un transport et aussi un repas. Et dans l'espérance de créer de très bons judokas qui demain pourraient bénéficier d'un entraînement national par la DTN et éventuellement représenter le pays dans des compétitions internationales, régionales, et olympiques, pourquoi pas.

Mrs Tour: Le Centre de judo de Sainte Croix utilise en ce moment la salle de formation de Caritas ; c'est un arrangement temporaire. L'honorable ministre peut-il nous dire s'il y a une possibilité de trouver un centre ou un local pour les accommoder?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, en ce qu'il s'agit de l'espace pour tenir le *regional training centre*, nous allons bien sûr devoir travailler avec la fédération qui va devoir identifier un espace, et éventuellement, même les *MPs* de la région peuvent nous donner un coup de main pour identifier un espace où nous allons pouvoir tenir. Au fait, c'est un peu ce travail qui est supposé d'être fait. Malheureusement, à cause des conditions sanitaires, nous ne pouvions pas démarrer mais au ministère nous allons soutenir toute initiative visant à trouver un espace adéquat pour le *regional training centre*.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

LANDSLIDE SITES – REMEDIAL MEASURES

(No. B/561) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the landslide sites identified in the Japan international Cooperation Agency Report 2015, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Geotechnical Unit, details thereof, indicating the remedial measures taken in relation thereto.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member to coming forward with this question, which will allow me to shed light on some very important issues regarding hazard areas.

I am informed that, according to the Cyclone and Other Natural Disaster Scheme 2011-2012 prepared by the then Central Cyclone and other Natural Disaster Committee, 37 hazard areas were identified around the island and were earmarked for further investigations. Subsequently, following an agreement on technical cooperation between the Government of Japan and Government of Mauritius, assistance from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) was obtained for an initial period of 3 years to work on a landslide management project for Mauritius.

One of the main items of the scope of services of the JICA delegation pertains to the formulation of a landslide management plan to establish a Landslide Monitoring System. During that period, the experts of the JICA with the support of the Civil Engineering Section of my Ministry carried out investigations in the 37 identified sites with a view to determining the level of risk and designing appropriate countermeasure works on these sites. The investigation revealed that of the 37 sites, 6 were landslide prone areas, 7 were slope failures, 1 rockfall, 1 debris flow, 10 stream erosion, 4 damages to embankment, 5 damages to walls, 1 damage to houses and 2 related to caverns and cavities. The six landslide prone areas are namely –

- Chitrakoot;
- Vallée Pitot;
- Quatre Seours;
- La Butte;
- Camp Chapelon, and
- Candos Hill.

Of these, Chitrakoot, Vallée Pitot and Quatre Soeurs have been identified as critical sites affected by landslides.

In its final report of 2015, the JICA experts excluded La Butte, Camp Chapelon and Candos Hill from the list of landslide prone areas in view of the following –

- La Butte – countermeasure works have already been carried out and the soil had been stabilised;
- Camp Chapelon – the movement of soil was very slow and was not affecting surrounding houses;
- Candos Hill – the area is of a small scale, that is, 40 meters by 35 meters, and there was no houses on the side that need protection.

However, the report indicated that observations should be ongoing on these sites to monitor the soil behaviour.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed, that the landslide area at Chitrakoot is estimated to be around 1.8 square kilometres. At Vallée Pitot around 0.05 square kilometres, that is, around 4900 square meters and at Quatres Soeurs, around 0.16 square kilometres, that is, 160,000 square kilometres.

Appropriate equipment comprising extensometers, rain gauges and inclinometers have been installed to monitor the movement of the soil in Chitrakoot and Vallée des Prêtres and a rain gauge at Quatre Soeurs.

Furthermore, early warning and evacuation notices are issued during heavy rainfalls for the safety of the inhabitants at Chitrakoot and Vallée Pitot using information obtained from both the extensometer readings and the rainfall data from the meteorological services.

Mr Speaker, Sir, countermeasure works have also been implemented at Chitrakoot in 2 phases. Phase 1 comprise the construction of cut off drains and upgrading of existing rivulets to collect surface water, horizontal drainage system to remove subsurface water and construction of vehicular and pedestrian bridges. The works were completed in December 2014.

Subsequently, following renewed collaboration between JICA and the then Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport in 2016, the Civil Engineering Section of my Ministry designed the countermeasure works for Phase 2 of the project. These comprise of construction of retaining walls, open and French type drains and other horizontal drainage system and a bridge. The works were implemented by my Ministry and completed in October 2018.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that at Chitrakoot, out of 24 households at risk, 14 families were provided alternative accommodation. However, it appears that while some of the families have not moved away, others have rented their building. Regarding the 10 remaining families, negotiations are ongoing for their relocation.

In addition, the Chitrakoot Government School has been demolished in 2019 and the area converted into green space. With regard to Vallée Pitot which is a highly built-up area, there has been a lot of resistance from the 19 households which are at risk in that region and which have to be relocated in the first instance. Negotiations are on at the level of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre in this respect. I wish to assure the House that immediately after the relocation of these household, countermeasure works as appropriate will be initiated.

As for Quatre Soeurs, a total of 11 households were found to be at risk and all of them have been relocated. My Ministry has already demolished the houses. Thank you.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you very much hon. Minister for all the details.

However, my supplementaries would be more focused on the Constituency No. 4, whereby there is quite a list which forms part of the 37 areas. You have Temple Road, Crève Coeur, you have Congomah Village, and you have Les Mariannes and Eau Bouille also. You mentioned about works being done and, of course, regular surveys being carried out in regions like Quatre Soeurs and Chitrakoot also.

However, my colleagues and I, we went for a site visit in Blackburn Road, Congomah whereby we saw it could be soil erosion or landslide. But has your Ministry, your officers been there for any monitoring? Do you have any report so far?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, in Congomah, there is no landslide. Actually, my colleague is very right to say that it is soil erosion and this has caused in Congomah Village Council, for instance, stream erosion. There has been, I think it is family Leckraj, a wall damaged. At family Frederick, it is also a wall damage. All that is due to soil erosion. So, there is no risk of landslides in that particular region and my Ministry is working on this.

And in this respect, I wish to inform the House that a Steering Committee has been set up at the level of my Ministry to look into the issues pertaining to landslides and other related slope disaster management such as slope failures rockfall debris, stream erosion. The Committee will work in close collaboration with the Faculty of Engineering of the University of Mauritius. It will have the responsibility, among others, to prepare the Landslide

Management Plan which will include the responsibilities of every stakeholder involved, identify and map new regions affected by slope failures, formulate appropriate plans to address such disasters, advise on revision of planning policies, guidance and outline planning schemes.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, hon. Minister. And the inhabitants of constituency No. 4 would definitely welcome the Steering Committee. May I just request the hon. Minister to take into account that there could be some probable construction ongoing on some slope areas or on some landslide areas?

So, may I request the hon. Minister to make sure that such report from the Steering Committee be shared to other Local Authorities so that we can mitigate the impact of landslide or soil erosion? Thank you.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for very valuable suggestions. Obviously, we are working with the Local Council, with the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government who is already chairing a Committee that is looking into those issues and we will definitely - one of the reasons why the Land Drainage Authority has been co-opted in quite a few of other institutions now, so that they can give their views and bring remedial actions that need to be taken. And obviously, the Local Councils now do also have the map of all those natural water passage which has been given to them by the Land Drainage Authority. And they have also last week been trained by the Land Drainage Authority. And now on whenever they are giving those building permits, they have to take into consideration those hazard areas.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the Minister whether he is aware of a study carried out by JICA with regard to the region of Montreal, Morcellement Hermitage at Coromandel linked with landslide or soil erosion and where matters stand at the level of his Ministry with regard to Coromandel?

Mr Hurreeram: Out of these 37 sites, my hon. colleague Ameer Meea will be surprised to know that *sanla aussi mo ena*.

(Interruptions)

So, Morcellement Hermitage, Coromandel is being classified as a Class B. We have the Class A where it is serious and then we have Class B and Class C. Here, it is a Class B and there is no landslide issue, but it is a slope failure. This site also is under study, is being controlled and whenever it requires intervention or we have to build a structure, it will be done.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. In regard to the 19 families of Vallée Pitot which the hon. Minister just mentioned, nothing could be done in terms of remedial work because those families are not willing to move out. Can I ask him whether the families are supposed to move out permanently or temporarily while the remedial works is being done so that we also can communicate with them to help facilitate the matter once and for all?

Mr Hurreeram: My hon. colleague will appreciate that this is a landslide issue and we cannot know how the soil will behave. They will have to move permanently because this area needs to be under constant monitoring and we cannot take the risk of bringing them back in and out. It will not be responsible on our part.

So, I will request the hon. Member, he himself being an elected member from that Constituency, if he can give us a helping hand to negotiate with those families so that they can accept to move out as soon as possible so that we can get in and start the work.

Mr Speaker: The table has been advised that PQs B/562 and B/566 have been withdrawn. Hon. David!

NOTRE DAME – WOMEN EMPOWERMENT CENTRE

(No. B/562) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Women Empowerment Centre of Notre Dame, she will state where matters stand as to the proposed conversion thereof into a Relay Shelter for Girls.

(Withdrawn)

AIR MAURITIUS LTD – GOVERNMENT WAGE ASSISTANCE SCHEME

(No. B/563) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to Air Mauritius Ltd. (Administrators Appointed), he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the number of employees thereof who, since April 2020, benefitted under the Government Wage Assistance Scheme.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, comme je l'ai déjà indiqué dans ma réponse à la question parlementaire B/487, le gouvernement a, depuis mars 2020 jusqu'à ce jour, fourni une assistance financière à l'industrie du tourisme par le biais du *Wage Assistance Scheme* et du *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme*. Ainsi, une aide financière dans le cadre du *Wage Assistance Scheme* a été fournie aux employés éligibles d'Air Mauritius Ltd et d'Airmate Ltd.

En amont du mois de janvier 2021, l'allocation mensuelle sous le *Wage Assistance Scheme* a été versée à tous les employés touchant un salaire de base mensuel allant jusqu'à R 50,000 pour un montant maximum de R 25,000 par employé. A partir de janvier 2021, ce barème a été augmenté de R 375, ce qui représente la compensation salariale.

M. le président, le gouvernement à déboursé, par le biais de la *Mauritius Revenue Authority* et cela pour les 14 mois et demi allant de mars 2020 à mai 2021, un montant de R 420 millions pour payer les salaires de quelques 1200 employés éligibles d'*Air Mauritius Ltd* et un montant de R 181,6 millions pour payer les salaires de quelques 800 employés éligibles d'*Airmate Ltd* conformément à la demande faite par les administrateurs. Merci.

Mr David : Merci, M. le président. Dans ma compréhension de cette aide de l'État pour soutenir les salaires de nos entreprises, un employeur qui reçoit donc cette aide est appelé à d'une part maintenir l'employé en poste et à compléter ce salaire jusqu'à atteindre les 100%. Le ministre peut-il nous dire comment Air Mauritius a donc concilié le fait d'avoir perçu le *Government Wage Assistance Scheme* et le fait que plusieurs employés ont été forcés à temps partiel, voire même à avoir dû donc prendre des congés sans solde ? Comment est-ce que cette conciliation a été faite chez *Air Mauritius* ?

Dr. Padayachy : M. le président, par rapport à *Air Mauritius* qui est sous administration, nous avons, dès la demande de l'administrateur, mis en place tout un mécanisme d'aide pour aider la compagnie et par conséquent payer les salaires. La disposition est simple, c'est que selon la loi si nous sommes en train de payer le *Wage Assistance Scheme* pour un mois précis, la compagnie n'a pas le droit de licencier ce personnel.

Concernant les autres conditions de travail, je ne suis pas au courant de ce qui se passe nécessairement au niveau *d'Air Mauritius*. Si jamais il y a des éléments où ils ne sont pas conformes à la loi, à ce moment-là je demande à l'honorable membre de nous faire revenir des informations et on fera une enquête à ce sujet. Nous nous sommes en train de payer en fonction de la loi, M. le président. Merci.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr David : Le ministre peut-il nous dire si ce *Government Wage Assistance Scheme* sera donc versé à *Air Mauritius* tout le long de l'administration volontaire de cette société ?

Dr. Padayachy : M. le président, le *Wage Assistance Scheme* n'est pas payé par rapport à l'administration de la compagnie, c'est payé par rapport à la situation d'un secteur

d'activité. Donc, nous avons payé le *Wage Assistance Scheme* à *Air Mauritius* du fait que les frontières sont fermées et qu'ils sont en dessous, je crois de 20 % ou 25 % de l'activité commerciale dont ils sont habitués en général.

Donc, nous allons suivre l'évolution du secteur touristique et aussi suivre par rapport à l'ouverture annoncée des frontières et par conséquent, on viendra avec des mesures appropriées sur les salaires pour cette compagnie.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

BAIN DES DAMES – TANK FARM

(No. B/564) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to damages caused to the houses in Bain des Dames consequent to works carried out in connection with the Tank Farm located thereat, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board –

- (a) and table copy of the report submitted by Mega Design Ltd. in 2017 assessing same, and
- (b) information as to the number of meetings held with the occupiers/owners of the houses concerned therewith, indicating the quantum of compensation paid thereto, if any, and/or good done to damages caused, if any.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Central Electricity Board that in the context of the construction of a Tank Farm at Les Grandes Salines, Bain des Dames, representations were received from the nearby inhabitants about the development of defects in their buildings, which might have been caused by the transmission of vibration shocks.

Mega Design Consulting Engineers and Project Managers were subsequently appointed by the Central Electricity Board to make an assessment of the extent of such defects in 25 houses and to submit a report with cost estimate for their repairs.

Upon the submission of the report from the Mega Design in September 2017, the CEB approved to consider compensation to the eligible inhabitants, as recommended in the report subject to there being no further payment from the Central Electricity Board. Five meetings were held with the occupiers/owners of the houses along with their representatives between 2016 and 2019. Following a request made by one legal representative in May 2018 for an increase in the compensation, the Central Electricity Board agreed to an additional

amount of Rs10,000 to be paid to each eligible inhabitant over and above the consultants' assessment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, 25 houses were assessed and estimates of repairs have been submitted by the consultant in respect of 24 houses which had suffered damages. Nine owners/occupiers have accepted CEB's proposal and compensation amounting to Rs567, 392.83 has been disbursed accordingly. 10 have declined the quantum proposed, while five were not eligible.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of contractual implications involving third parties, it is not considered proper to table a copy of the Report from the Consultant Mega Design. However, the Central Electricity Board may consider sharing information of a generic nature regarding the contents of the Report upon request.

Mr David: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister mentioned that 24 houses suffered damages from the works related to this Tank Farm in Bain des Dames and yet, he mentioned as well in his answer that 5 families, 5 houses, were not eligible for the compensation. May I ask the hon. Minister to specify on which eligibility criteria were those 5 houses put aside?

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have a series of information with regard to the criteria that were used to assess whether the works that were carried out by the CEB had impacted on the housing units, that is the 24 housing units. This is in relation with vibration shock waves that were transmitted from the site of work and reaching those houses but also with regard to the state of the housing units, so with regard to the 5 that were not eligible, it is in relation to that their houses were in a bad state before the work had started on site by the Central Electricity Board and the report stated that in those cases, only minor issues were taken into consideration when they inspected the housing units.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to those housing units, the information that has been provided to me by the Central Electricity Board is that the root cause of the damage housing unit was due to inherent defects in the construction of the housing units related to inadequate concrete cover to the reinforcement in the concrete members, inadequate concrete strength and concrete-mix used for the prevailing aggressive coastal environment then, other issues were related to, that the building blocks were not rendered externally, allowing free movement of moisture through the infill cladding walls and also in some other cases, two or

three storey blocks have incomplete external staircases which are not filled with safety handrail thereby the defects in the housing units.

Mr David: M. le président, le fait de ne pas avoir accès au rapport d'analyse de *Mega Design* me pose un gros problème parce que j'ai visité moi-même plusieurs de ces maisons à Bain des Dames et je vois déjà les dommages qui sont visibles. Est-ce que le ministre peut me confirmer si une étude souterraine a été effectuée par *Mega Design* pour évaluer les dommages qui ne sont justement pas visibles à l'œil nu mais qui vont poser problème à ces maisons dans le temps et je rajoute aussi le fait que je ne suis pas sûr de trouver approprié le fait que ces familles aient été obligées de signer un document pour ne plus pouvoir demander des compensations au cours des prochaines années pendant lesquelles les dégâts vont fort probablement continuer à se propager en souterrain de ces maisons.

Mr Lesjongard: First of all, Mr Speaker, Sir, let me reply to the first part of the question, that is, why we cannot make that Report public? But, I have stated in my reply, the Central Electricity Board may consider sharing information of a generic nature regarding the contents of the Report. The reason being that there are personal information and there are also photos of the houses, whether it was outside or inside the houses, taken that is why we are not in a position to share the Report but if the hon. Member wants to consult the Report he can write to the Central Electricity Board and the CEB will give due consideration to his request. Now, I have stated that at the time the survey was carried out by *Mega Design*, there were houses which were already, let us say, affected not by the works that were carried out by the Central Electricity Board but because they were old houses but it is with the works that the Central Electricity Board carried out that the state of those houses deteriorated. Secondly, the amount that was proposed by the Central Electricity Board to the owners of those houses was agreed by both parties. So, that is why I said it was a final settlement between the CEB and the owners of those houses.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

CONSTITUENCY NO. 1 - FLOOD PRONE AREAS

(No. B/565) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to flood prone areas in Constituency No. 1, Grand River North West and Port Louis West, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Land Drainage Authority, information as to if a survey thereof has been carried out and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Land Drainage Authority that, as regard to Constituency No. 1, 13 flood prone areas have been identified as follows –

1. Canal Dayot;
2. Sable Noir;
3. Golden Road and Pointe aux Sables Road;
4. Cité Débarcadère, Pointe aux Sables;
5. Pigeon Street and surroundings;
6. Florinbunda Street and surroundings;
7. Ruisseau Créo Street;
8. Rivulet, St. Louis;
9. Canal Pendu;
10. Caserne and surroundings;
11. Motorway M2 at Bell Village;
12. Cité Richelieu, and
13. Dahlia Street, Pailles West.

From this list, the LDA has declared Richelieu as a high-risk area. With regard to survey, the LDA has appointed a Consultant, Suez Consulting, to undertake a study for a Land Drainage Master Plan for Mauritius. A survey has been conducted by the Consultant for 9 bridges and culverts in the region of Pointe aux Sables which shall be followed by hydraulic modelling to ascertain whether the bridges and culverts have adequate hydraulic capacity. Following the hydraulic modelling, recommendations shall be made by the Consultant to attenuate flooding in the above-mentioned regions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to highlight that the National Development Unit has, since 2016, completed 22 drain projects in Constituency No. 1 including the upgrading of works at Canal Dayot which was heavily impacted during heavy rainfalls and also the upgrading of Avenue Capitaine in Sorèze. Two drain projects are presently ongoing at Avenue Crecerelle, Petit Verger, Pointe aux Sables and Avenue Rolando, GRNW and laterals.

As regards Richelieu, the National Development Unit has appointed a consultant on 10 May 2021 to initiate a study on flooding mitigating measures. In addition, 17 new projects

have been identified and are in the pipeline for the implementation and will be financed under the COVID-19 Project Development Fund.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed by the City Council of Port Louis that it has completed 2 drain projects in Constituency No. 1 during this current Financial Year as follows –

- (i) construction of drain at Riverside, Pailles, and
- (ii) construction of drain at road, parallel to Avenue Peupliers, Pointe aux Sables.

The City Council will soon appoint a contractor for the construction of drains and resurfacing works at Alamanda Street, Pointe aux Sables.

Thank you.

Mr David: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have read in the annexes to the Budget 2021-2022 that the Land Drainage Authority is now as well taking care of the cleaning and maintenance of rivers and drains and that the Key Performance Indicator for this service of the LDA is the audit coverage of rivers and drains which are cleaned and maintained. May I ask from the hon. Minister, what is the percentage coverage of this KPI regarding Constituency No. 1 as regard to cleaning and maintaining of the existing drains?

Mr Hurreeram: I do not know, Mr Speaker, Sir, how the hon. Member thinks I can have an idea of what would be the percentage of this KPI regarding the land drainage. Already, the question does not pertain to that. If he comes with substantive question, I will answer.

Mr David: Okay. I thought that this would be an obvious relation to my initial question. Obviously, it is not. May I know from the hon. Minister whether there is already a time schedule related to the Rs343 m. which are mentioned in the Budget regarding the construction and upgrading of drains in Pailles, Plaine Lauzun and the other regions of Constituency No. 1?

Mr Hurreeram: Well, it is not even voted, we are still debating the Budget and the hon. Member may rest assured that myself and all the PPSs and in this case, Dr. the hon. Mrs Dorine Chukowry, we are on top of our game and we have a list of priorities already of what will be done and when. We have a master plan coming and this is about drainage; it is not about just coming and just digging anywhere and everywhere and making it happen. There is a study that needs to be done. *Les choses doivent être réglées en amont.* For instance, when

we are talking about Richelieu, the hon. Member will appreciate that this problem comes from what is happening in Chebec and in Chebec we have already the work. It may not be visible in Constituency No.1, but it will have a direct impact. So, we are having a holistic approach; we will stand guided by whoever expert advice of the LDA and we will proceed accordingly. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Woochit!

OVERSEAS TREATMENT SCHEME - THRESHOLD - REVIEW

(No. B/566) Mr R. Woochit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Overseas Treatment Scheme, he will state if consideration will be given for a review of the threshold of Rs50,000 as monthly family income for eligibility thereunder.

(Withdrawn)

COVID-19 – FISHING SECTOR – LOSSES & MEASURES TAKEN

(No. B/567) Mr R. Woochit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the fishing sector, he will state, since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and imposition of the lockdown periods, the –

- (a) estimated financial losses incurred;
- (b) measures taken to support the fishers and other operators thereof as at to date, and
- (c) number of job losses, category-wise, indicating the special schemes being considered, if any, to compensate same.

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the fishing sector in Mauritius, like any other sector of the economy has been affected by the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic.

The fishing sector itself includes, but is not limited to artisanal, semi-industrial and industrial fishing, fish mongers, fish breeding, aquaculture, and seafood processing, which employs several categories of workers.

However, with regard to part (a) of the question, in view of the structure thereof, I presume that the hon. Member is referring to estimated financial losses for fishers mainly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that three purse-seiners and one long liner engaged in the fishing of pelagic species, 34 semi-industrial fishing boats carry out offshore fishing to produce chilled fish and three vessels carry out industrial bank fishing to produce frozen ‘Capitaine’, also known as ‘La Perle’. These vessels employ around 450 fishers in total, of whom 200 are of Mauritian nationality. Moreover, 1,855 registered fishers and 475 applicant fishers are engaged in artisanal fishing.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as announced in the Budget Speech, fishers will be eligible to the following loan schemes from the DBM Ltd –

- (i) Rs100,000 interest free loan for cashflow issues, and
- (ii) a 0.5% COVID-19 Special Support Scheme of up to Rs1 m.

With regard to fishers facing difficulties in repaying long overdue loans, the DBM is coming up with an Amnesty Programme.

With regard to part (b) of the question, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Government came up with a number of measures to assist fishers and fishing operators during the lockdown periods –

- (i) a special allowance of Rs5,100 was paid monthly to registered artisanal fishers for the months of March 2020 and April 2020, representing an amount of around Rs18.5 m. However, for the period 01 to 14 May 2020, an amount of Rs2,550 was paid to 1,805 registered fishers, representing an amount of Rs4.6 m.;
- (ii) Rs4.8 m. were disbursed to industrial and semi-industrial fishing operators under the Government Wage Assistance Scheme in respect of 228 employees;
- (iii) during the confinement period, from 11 to 19 March 2021, a financial assistance of Rs1,700 (equivalent to 4 bad weather days’ allowance), representing a total of Rs2 m. was provided to 1,180 registered artisanal fishers, except obviously those 628 fishers who were already receiving the solidarity grant of Rs10,200 for the month of March of 2021 in connection with the wreckage of MV Wakashio;
- (iv) a financial assistance of Rs8,075 (equivalent to 19 bad weather days’ allowance) has been paid to 75 registered artisanal fishers residing in Riambel and Rivière des Galets during the period that these regions were declared a

Red Zone, that is, from 02 to 24 April 2021. A total amount of Rs605,625 was disbursed in that respect.

I also wish to inform the House that following the grounding of MV Wakashio, Government introduced an assistance scheme for those affected by the oil spill. Accordingly, as from August 2020, a monthly solidarity grant of Rs10,200 was paid to 631 fishers, 217 fish mongers and 290 applicants for fisher card so as to compensate them for the stoppage of sea activities in the affected regions.

Following the resumption of fishing activities in the off-lagoon as from 12 December 2020, representations were made by the fisher community of the affected regions to my Ministry with regard to the difficulties for them to obtain baits for their fishing activities. In this context, Government decided to continue paying the Solidarity Grant up to March 2021. An amount of approximately Rs47m. was accordingly disbursed. As at date, Mr Speaker, Sir, a total amount of Rs82 m. has been disbursed.

I am further informed that a claim of Rs134,000 per fisher has already been sent to the insurer for compensation in respect of the economic loss sustained by the fishers of the affected regions. As regards the 200 fishmongers in these affected regions, the claim has already been compiled and will be submitted to the insurer for compensation shortly.

Moreover, under the Economic Recovery Programme, 1,000 fishers are being enlisted to undertake coral culture, reef rehabilitation and fish breeding activities as alternative livelihoods. The project is being implemented jointly by the Mauritius Oceanography Institute and the Albion Fisheries Research Centre of my Ministry. An amount of more than Rs5.4 m. has been earmarked for this project over the period July to November 2021.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (c) of the question, as far as job losses are concerned, the Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training has informed my Ministry that for the period March 2020 up to April 2021, two complaints of job losses were reported by two bank fishers and the status of these cases are as follows –

- (i) one employee, employed by Reel Fish Ltd has been admitted in Workfare Programme and is benefiting from the Transition Unemployment Benefit, and
- (ii) the other employee, employed by a fishing vessel (Owner, Mr I.M.) is not eligible for Transition Unemployment Benefit. His claims of the termination dues are being processed for Court action.

Mr Woochit: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have only two additional questions –

- (i) following so many accidents, what steps are being taken by his Ministry to ensure safety of fishermen fishing in deep sea, and
- (ii) is there any risk assessment that has been done under the National Disaster risk Reduction and Management Unit for safety awareness of fishermen, and, if yes, when it was last done?

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is not related to the substantive question. If the hon. Member will come with a specific question... Anyway, in my address to the Budget Speech, I will announce all the measures taken as per the requests of the hon. Member.

Mr Woochit: The second question is very simple: what measures are being taken by his Ministry to make the availability of very high frequency radio or any other relevant communication system to fishermen in case of difficulties in deep sea fishing?

Mr Maudhoo: As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, this supplementary is not relevant to the main question that was for financial losses and support to the fishermen, but as I just said, I will announce all these issues in my speech in the evening.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

PAMPLEMOUSSES – MARKET FAIR – CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/568) Mr R. Woochit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the proposed construction and upgrading of the Pamplemousses market, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the District Council of Pamplemousses, information as to where matters stand, indicating the –

- (a) project cost thereof;
- (b) procurement method used for the award of the contract, indicating the name of the contractor, and
- (c) scheduled start and completion dates of work.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, in Budget 2019/20, the Government approved the project “Construction of the Market Fair at Pamplemousses” at an estimated cost of Rs66.5 m. following which the District Council of Pamplemousses proceeded with the

design and costing of the project with the assistance of a team of professionals consisting of an architect, a quantity surveyor, a structural engineer, a mechanical engineer and an electrical engineer.

However, subsequently the project has been revised to Rs106.2 m. in order to have a fully functional market fair. Therefore, the financial clearing and approval of Government had to be sought for the increase in the approved project value. The new project value has been included in the budget estimates 2021/22.

I am informed by the District Council of Pamplemousses that the detailed drawings and the bill of quantities are ready and presently the bidding documents are being prepared for submission to the Central Procurement Board for vetting.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the Procurement Method to be used would be an Open National Bidding and the bids would be invited through e-procurement by the Central Procurement Board. It is only upon successful bidding exercise that the name of the contractor would be known obviously.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (c) of the question, the successful bidder would be given 365 days to construct the market fair as from the date of mobilisation on site, which could be around November 2021.

Mr Woochit: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. There is a billboard adjacent to the said market, which has been fixed before General Elections 2019 concerning the upgrading awareness of the market. Today, we are already in 2021 and the tender has not been launched yet. Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister inform the House why this project has been dragged on for so many months?

Dr. Husnoo: I will explain, Mr Speaker, Sir. The initial project value was Rs66.5 m. and then the value of the project was changed to Rs106 m. So, once you have an increase of more, nearly 59%, I mean, you cannot go on with the project. You have to go back to Finance, you have to go back to Cabinet and then justify why that increase. Nearly 59%! And then what happen is that, before you go to Finance and Cabinet, you have to do the costing for that increase in value. You have to decide what caused all this increase in value, and then you go to Cabinet. That is why it has been taking a long time. But anyway, as I mentioned, it was approved in Cabinet on 21 May this year, 2021 approved in Cabinet and I think as you know, it is the budget. So, hopefully, it should be going now.

Mr Woochit: My last question is: is not there a plot of land adjacent to the market? Has your Ministry acquired this plot of land for additional parking?

Dr. Husnoo: I think that has been discussed by Minister Callichurn. I think we are considering getting that plot of land for parking eventually.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ittoo!

CONSTITUENCY NO. 16 - FLOODS

(No. B/569) Mr A. Ittoo (Third Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the floods that occurred in Constituency No. 16, Vacoas and Floréal, in April 2021, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Councils of Vacoas and Phoenix and Curepipe, respectively, information as to the –

- (a) number of complaints registered thereat;
- (b) remedial actions taken in relation thereto, indicating the amount of funds spent on drains and related works in each case as at to date, and
- (c) long-term remedial measures being envisaged.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Municipal Council of Vacoas/Phoenix that it has registered 34 complaints during the flooding event of April 2021, whilst 15 complaints were recorded by the Municipal Council of Curepipe. The complaints received at both Councils were principally water accumulation in the yards and the houses.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Municipal Council of Vacoas/Phoenix that regular cleaning and maintenance of the existing drains were carried out at those sites by the Council. Also, the services of a backhoe loader were hired to dig a trench to redirect accumulated water at Camp Belin No. 1 towards Rivière Rempart during the heavy rains of 27 and 28 April 2021.

On the other hand, the Municipal Council of Curepipe undertook the following remedial actions –

- (i) deployment of an excavator at Résidence L’Oiseau for removal of a slab and digging of an earth drain to evacuate water accumulation near the housing estates;
- (ii) cleaning of drain at La Mairée and Camp Rouillard, and
- (iii) reinstatement of concrete slabs on covered drains at Espitalier Noel Street, Mangalkhan.

All the works carried out by the Municipal Council of Curepipe did not imply extra cost. Additionally, a drain to the tune of Rs400,000 is being constructed along Lapeyrouse Street. The works are expected to be completed by the end of June 2021.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Road Development Authority that a new earth drain has been constructed at Upper La Marie to the tune of Rs400,000 to reduce the water level thereat. The RDA has also carried out localised cleaning of drains and levelling of slabs along John Kennedy Road, B65 near Tamarin Kovil and Vacoas-La Marie Road, B64 from La Marie to Diolle in Constituency No. 16, Vacoas and Floréal.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed that joint site visits were carried by the National Development Unit, the Land Drainage Authority, the Road Development Authority and the Municipal Council of Vacoas/Phoenix in all the affected regions on 06 May 2021. Most of the proposed solutions thereto would be construction of new drains or extension of existing drain networks.

The Municipal Council of Vacoas/Phoenix is currently completing surveys and also working on the specifications of the proposed drain projects. Amongst the various projects, extension of drains would be proposed at Kheerodhur Lane –Henrietta, Résidence EDC, Cyprus Lane and Camp Mumbhai No. 2. The Municipal Council of Vacoas/Phoenix also proposes to construct new drains at Camp Belin-Henrietta and Ligne Berthaud.

More so, on its part, the Municipal Council of Curepipe is proposing to construct new drains along Goolam Hossen Road, Lapeyrouse and Theodore Sauzier Street. Also, as per an established programme of works, regular cleaning of open drains, rivers and watercourses are effected by the Municipal Council of Curepipe. A flying team has also been set up to clear obstructions from drains during heavy rainfalls.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in addition, the Road Development Authority envisages to implement the following works early next financial year under its maintenance budget through its '*Framework Contract for Minor Works*' –

- (i) the construction of footpath and drains from Royal Snack Upper La Marie towards the existing bridge thereat;
- (ii) upgrading of the existing cross drain at Camp Benin No. 1 along Henrietta Cadwell Road B66, and
- (iii) cleaning of existing road network at Glen Park.

I am also informed by the Land Drainage Authority that the National Development Unit is undertaking a Solution Study for the region. The Land Drainage Authority has recommended that a holistic catchment-based approach be considered while designing the Solution Study as the affected regions fall within the same watershed. As you are aware, in the present Budget 2021-22 regarding flood management program, the Government has earmarked Rs172 m. for drainage work at Hermitage and Vacoas and an additional of Rs461 m. for the region of Glen Park, Henrietta, La Marie and Malakhan. These works will be spearheaded by LDA and NDU.

Thank you, Sir.

Mr Ittoo: Can the hon. Minister enlighten the House as to the frequency drains are cleaned and maintained in the constituency, in both the Municipal Council as to how they proceed before the rainy season and after the rainy season?

Dr. Husnoo: Normally, the drain cleaning is done according to the report of the inspector firstly, but usually before the rainy season. In fact, specifically I hold a meeting every time during the rainy season to discuss with all the local authorities about cleaning drains and we provide them extra money to make sure that the drains are cleaned.

Mr Ittoo: With regard to the Municipal Councils of Curepipe and Vacoas, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the drain works are in-house or sub-contracted, and is the hon. Minister satisfied with the way the work is being done?

Dr. Husnoo: No, actually some of the works which are done for cleaning our drains, some of them are in-house and sometimes when we do not have the equipment, we have to hire the equipment. I must say, as far as cleaning is concerned, as I mentioned earlier, I am trying to have regular meetings with the local authorities to look after cleaning of drains

because it is very important, we have been having this problem almost every year. I tend to have regular meetings but still, to be fair, I am not satisfied with the way things are going.

That is why, I think, with the reorganisation of management of drain under LDA, I think that is a positive change because what is happening, Mr Speaker, Sir, before we had drains which were looked after by local authorities and then we have some drains looked by RDA, some of the other drains looked by NDU. We do not have a kind of organised system to look after the drains properly. That is why, as mentioned in the budget, the LDA is going to oversee all these and, I think, that is going to be a better job. You can clean them and we can make sure that it works in a better way in the future.

Ms J. Bérenger: Merci M. le président. Le ministre peut-il nous dire qu'est-ce qui est en train d'être fait au niveau de la municipalité de Curepipe pour récupérer les R 90 m. qui étaient bloquées à la banque *Banyan Tree* et qui pourraient justement servir à financer des projets qui soulageraient les inondations dans la circonscription ?

Dr. Husnoo: There is no relation to the present question. Sorry, please.

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My last question would be: can the hon. Minister inform the House as to whether a Monitoring Committee will be set up involving the LDA and the RDA? What is the way forward? I think the inhabitants of both Curepipe and Vacoas have been very happy to hear about the above Rs170 m. for Curepipe and Rs461 m. for Vacoas to solve the problems of the drain and can we have more information as to how this is going to be monitored?

Dr. Husnoo: As I just mentioned earlier, Mr Speaker, Sir, now a lot of the drains are going to be managed by the Land Drainage Authority. It is going to be the apex body which is going to look after the drains which were managed by local authorities, NDU and RDA. I believe that is going to provide a better service for the management of drains, for the cleaning of the drains, for construction of drains and everything in the future.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

LAND DRAINAGE MASTER PLAN - IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/570) Mr A. Ittoo (Third Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the Land Drainage Master Plan, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Land Drainage Authority, information as to where matters stand as to the implementation thereof.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius has over the last ten years experienced a number of unprecedented flash floods which had inundated many localities like Port Louis, Fond du Sac, Cottage and Flacq, including the painful incident of 30 March 2013 that resulted in the death of 11 persons in Port Louis and the recent one being few weeks back where several regions were severely affected.

The detrimental impacts of climate change in terms of temperature rise, increase in rainfall in localised regions have taken innocent lives, and inundated properties and public utilities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Land Drainage Master Plan is, therefore intended to reduce the vulnerability of human health, economic activity and the environment in the context of climate change and uncertainty while providing an integrated approach for the design of land drainage infrastructures. The elaboration of an integrated Land Drainage Master Plan will, therefore, serve as a basis to develop a strategy and an Action Plan to be implemented by the authorities to reduce the population's vulnerability to heavy rainfall and flood events.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that Suez Consulting was appointed as Consultant on 16 January 2020 for the elaboration of a Land Drainage Master Plan for Mauritius. A first report was submitted on 18 February 2021. It covers the framework, the policy and the role of the different authorities involved in flood risk management, as well as the main recommendations that could be applied in each specific area for a better control on storm water risk Management.

The recommendations include objectives, detailed Action Plans and measures according to the following –

- (i) Distribution of roles and responsibilities, and mechanisms for actors' coordination;
- (ii) Knowledge of drainage systems and risks and maps of drainage capacity;
- (iii) Urban Planning policy recommendations, and
- (iv) Protection and risk reduction, need of local strategy at catchment scales.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the second and last report of the Land Drainage Master Plan is expected by the end of September 2021. It will, *inter alia*, consist of –

- (i) recommendations to achieve adequate levels of protection in the vulnerable areas based on detailed hydraulic studies specifying required main drainage infrastructures and drainage system, risk reduction solutions;
- (ii) existing situation description including hazard maps, assets exposed, primary and secondary drainage infrastructure and natural area with drainage function;
- (iii) Action Plans to improve drainage infrastructures, implementation for short term and middle term measures operation and control for drainage system and monitoring recovery measures.

The Land Drainage Authority will thereafter direct and monitor the relevant authorities to implement flood mitigation measures in order of priority.

Thank you.

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I would ask the hon. Minister, in the meantime that the Master Plan comes into action, how is the LDA proposing to work, to tackle existing drainage problems?

Mr Hurreeram: As it is already, Mr Speaker, Sir, last December, the Land Drainage Authority together with the Municipal Council and other Councils has devised maintenance and cleaning of drains around the island.

Secondly, the LDA is already in the presence of a DEM, that is, aerial imagery of the island, where the drainage paths are clearly located and this is being communicated to the Local Council so that they can henceforth, while giving permits to construct, take that into consideration so as they know where to construct, where not to construct.

Now, in the event that we have had few weeks ago regarding flooding a bit in the South West, so, the LDA have themselves taken some remedial measures meanwhile and these are being implemented by the NDU. So, for the comfort of my hon. colleague, rest assured, the LDA got a lot on its plate already because we want long term solutions. As I was saying earlier in my previous questions, it seems there is a tendency to believe that when it is flooding, you just come in and you dig. No, it is nothing as such. You need to know where the water is coming from, where it is going and at the end of the day, when you are canalising that water, you should make sure that it is going into a river, a rivulet that would take it eventually to the sea. So, we want to solve the problems *en amont comme j'ai envie de dire*.

Ms J. Bérenger: Merci M. le président. Le ministre a mentionné l'*aerial imagery*, fait par la compagnie AAM Géométrique, si je ne me trompe pas. Peut-il nous dire si cette étude va être rendue publique pour que les habitants sachent où il ne faut pas construire ?

Mr Hurreeram: No, Mr Speaker, Sir. I do not think anything and everything should be made public. The Local Authorities have a copy of what is there as natural drainage path and whenever there is a development that needs to be done, you need a building permit. So, you go to the Council and the Council will advise you whether you can build or you cannot build or if you have to build, what are the remedial measures to be taken.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

LAND DRAINAGE AUTHORITY - FLOOD PRONE AREAS

(No. B/571) Mr A. Ittoo (Third Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to flood prone areas, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Land Drainage Authority, information as to the number thereof identified since the setting up of the Authority to date, indicating the number thereof having been removed from the said list on the recommendation of the Authority.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Land Drainage Authority (LDA) that since its setting up in 2017, it has carried out numerous surveys in consultation with stakeholders concerned. Subsequently, as at date, it has identified 298 sites as being prone to water accumulation and flooding in Mauritius.

I am further informed that once flood prone areas are identified by the LDA, these are mapped on a Digital Elevation Model (DEM) which is a 3D graphical representation of the elevation data representing the topography. The LDA then attributes a Vulnerability Index to them. After the implementation of flood mitigation measures (drains) by relevant Authorities, the LDA analyses their overall effectiveness during heavy rainfall and, if necessary, the Vulnerability Index is reviewed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on the recommendation of the LDA, authorities have carried out multiple drainage works in flood prone areas. Moreover, under the PPO Directive 41, major drainage work projects are still under implementation in regions such as –

- (i) Canal Anglais and Port Louis;
- (ii) Cité Roma and Terre Rouge;

- (iii) Cottage;
- (iv) L'Amitié;
- (v) Fond du Sac;
- (vi) Bramsthan;
- (vii) Plaine Magnien;
- (viii) Mare Tabac;
- (ix) L'Escalier, and
- (x) Port Mathurin in Rodrigues, amongst others.

The hon. Member will agree that the efficacy of drain infrastructure cannot be gauged in a short lapse of time. Its overall performance need to be studied and assessed following several heavy rainfalls and over a period of time. Subsequently, the LDA will be in a better position to consider removing any flood prone area from the said list. Therefore, as at to date, no flood prone area has been removed from the list by LDA and today, Mr Speaker, Sir, with whatever we are observing in terms of climate change, we may need to observe the behaviour of those drains or whatever in terms of rainfall intensity we are having for the next 50 or maybe 100 years. So, the question of removing from the list will not be very much *prudent* at this stage.

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The Malakoff, La Marie catchment, has been declared as a high-risk flood prone area and I believe that the Consultant from the NDU has been working on the project since now, a few months. Can we know from the hon. Minister where matters stand?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, the drains projects works at Malakoff Road including a drain network from Cemetery Road to Malakoff has reached the detailed design stage under the consultancy of Benchmark Consulting Engineers Ltd. In the meantime, land acquisition procedures have been initiated at the level of the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning given that the alignment of the proposed drains lies to a considerable extent on private lands. The scope of works as detailed in the detailed design report comprised mainly of the following –

- i. upgrading of existing drain along Malakoff Avenue over almost 200 meters long;
- ii. construction of drain one meter by one meter along Malakoff Avenue to connect to the upgraded drain to discharge in the river, and
- iii. construction of new drain at Malakoff Off Road.

So, there is a long list of works that need to be done, I do not propose to go into detail here. Given the lengthy procedures to acquire land, the project will be implemented in two phases. Phase 1 comprises of a drain network in the residential zone. Bid documents are under preparation and design is being reviewed based on the views of the LDA. Bid documents are to be finalised by 18 June 2021. Bids are expected to be launched by mid-July 2021 at an estimated cost of Rs33 m.

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. During the last flood issues in April and following surveys with different officers of his Ministry, it has been noticed that there is a lot of illegal and irresponsible construction. Will the hon. Minister please inform the House whether the LDA has, as to date, taken any sanction with respect to individuals or institutions having tampered with river quarters?

Mr Hurreeram: My hon. colleague will appreciate that so far, the LDA has had an advisory role. Now, in this Budget, thanks to the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development and the hon. Prime Minister, whose sense of priority to give LDA the required mean to be able to solve the flooding problem, today, LDA, after we have voted this Budget, will also have enforcement powers. Therefore, like the hon. Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management just said, it will act as an apex body and will be able to enforce, for instance, there has been over the years, people have been constructing a bit all over the place, forget about natural drain, they have been building into the rivers and expect not to be flooded. So, this is what we are dealing with and we are trying to find solutions. This is why, for instance, when we are talking about Malakoff, this is why we are having to diverge now into private properties because the natural drainage path has already been constructed upon.

Ms J. Bérenger: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. We are talking about flood-prone areas; can we know from the hon. Minister what measures are being contemplated by the Land Drainage Authority before the next rainy season to make sure that the Legend Hill project on the slope of La Tourelle will not increase the flood risk for the inhabitants of the region which is situated in a flood prone area? Thank you.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think when you see the envelope that has been given to the LDA, to the NDU, I think *c'est sans précédent*. We have received more than Rs20 billion to be spent over the next three years to resolve the flooding problem and as I said in my speech yesterday, there is no dry feet policy.

People will need to understand that here we are dealing with calamities. We will be doing, we will be preparing what needs to be prepared, we will build the drains that need to be built, but at some point in time, for instance, if you have 400 millimetres water rain in Port Louis, we will have to think about evacuation.

There will not be any drain that you can build that men can make in Port-Louis to take 400 millimetres of water. So, there is so much that is being done and once the Budget is passed, we will have the funds and the works and I should take the opportunity once again to thank the team of PPS, who are doing a wonderful job across the island in all the Constituencies.

We have got the funds, we have the list of priorities and the LDA has already given 1,500 different drain projects that should be implemented. Obviously, the hon. Member will appreciate 1,500 drains, just like Rome was not built in a day; we will not build that in a day also. It will take the time that it takes. Regarding Legend Hill, I do not think this has any connection with the main question.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: M. le président, par rapport à ma question B/572 avec votre permission et cela afin d'éviter tout malentendu, je voudrais attirer votre attention et celle de la Chambre à l'effet qu'il n'y a aucun lien de parenté entre la famille de Madame V.Q. et moi, même si nous portons le même nom de famille.

NEW BORN BABY E.Q - ALLEGED MEDICAL NEGLIGENCE - STANDING COMMITTEE

(No. B/572) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the complaint lodged by Mrs V.Q. pertaining to an alleged case of medical negligence on her new born baby E.Q., he will state if same has been referred to the Standing Committee on Medical Negligence and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) dates of the meetings held in relation thereto, and
- (b) expected date of the submission of the report thereof.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Acting Regional Health Director of Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital, that on 16 February 2021 at 10 past 10, Mrs V.Q. registered a

complaint with the Complaint Officer with regards to an alleged case of medical negligence following the birth of her new-born.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to point out that at the level of all regional hospitals, there is an established complaint procedure whereby all complaints which are registered are internally processed and the Medical Superintendent forwards the complaint to the Medical Practitioners for their explanations and for their report. Once the report is submitted, the Regional Health Directors inform my Ministry accordingly and the case is immediately referred to the Medical Negligence Standing Committee.

Mrs V.Q. also made a declaration to the Police Post of the Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital on the same day and which was received from the Divisional Commander Southern Division by my Ministry on 22 February 2021, my Ministry acted immediately on the complaint and requested for a report from the Acting Regional Health Director on 05 March 2021.

The report was received at my Ministry on 24 March 2021. I am informed by the then Acting Regional Health Director, that, in view of the COVID-19 situation at the hospital at that time, dealing with renal dialysis patients at Souillac Hospital, there was a delay in submitting the report to my Ministry.

Upon reception of the report from the Regional Health Director of Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital, my Ministry referred the case to the Medical Negligence Standing Committee for an in-depth investigation on 04 May 2021.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Medical Negligence Standing Committee has already convoked the parents of the new born baby E. Q. for an interview on 21 May 2021. I wish to inform the House that all the medical and nursing staff involved in the case have already been heard. The set of interviews were scheduled on 26, 27, 31 May 2021 and the last interviews were held on 03 June 2021. The Medical Negligence Standing Committee is currently finalising its investigation and a report will be submitted in due course.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, l'honorable ministre conviendra que c'est quand même trois mois après que Madame V. Q. ait déposé sa plainte à l'hôpital de Rose Belle, à la Police de Rose Belle, c'est-à-dire, le 16 février, et ce n'est qu'au début du mois de mai que la plainte fut référée au *Medical Negligence Standing Committee*. De ce fait, l'honorable ministre est-il au courant que le *Regional Health Director* de l'hôpital de Rose Belle avait initié une enquête interne sans informer son ministère et cela dès réception de la plainte?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. In fact, this is the procedure. Once a complaint is received in a regional hospital, there is an inquiry conducted by the Regional Health Director, and then, the report of the inquiry together with the reports of the doctors or whoever is involved into the alleged medical case, all the documents are then conveyed to the Ministry. The Ministry then refers the case to the Medical Negligence Standing Committee.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, l'honorable ministre peut-il donner la garantie à la Chambre, qu'une fois l'enquête complétée, les conclusions seront rendues publiques et une copie déposée sur la table de l'Assemblée et cela afin d'éviter toute tentative de *cover-up*, je ne parle pas du ministre mais dans son ensemble ?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, the relatives are called once the report is ready. First, the relatives are informed about the report and then I will submit it to the House.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

NEW GEORGE V STADIUM – COMPETITIONS

(No. B/573) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the Report of the Commission Infrastructure du COJI 2019 on the football ground of the new George V Stadium, he will state the remedial measures taken by his Ministry in relation thereto, indicating if the stadium is available for competitions at regional and national levels in the present state thereof.

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, Sir, the mandate of the *Commission Infrastructure du COJI* was to determine the venues of the competitions for the Indian Ocean Islands Games 2019 and to ensure that these sites were readily available with all the necessary requirements.

The only comment pertaining to the new George V Stadium in the report of the *Commission Infrastructure du COJI* is that the new George V Stadium was affected by heavy rainfall during the Indian Ocean Islands Games and alternative competitions' sites were made available. The report makes no recommendations of the remedial works to be carried out.

However, it is to be noted that repairs have been carried out following damage caused to the football pitch by heavy rainfall during the Indian Ocean Islands Games 2019. The remedial works as recommended by the engineers for the project were as follows –

- (a) levelling of the pitch to allow runoff;
- (b) patching of damaged area, and

(c) weeding, mowing and fertilizing of the lawn.

The above remedial works were carried out and were completed in September 2020.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the new George V Stadium is operational, but it is currently closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you.

Mr Quirin: Merci, M. le président. Quand j'ai pris connaissance du rapport qui a été déposé le 11 août dernier en réponse à une de mes questions, B/571, j'étais moi-même étonné de voir qu'il n'y a rien par rapport à l'état de la pelouse, aucune recommandation et pourtant c'était un rapport fait par la Commission Infrastructure du COJI 2019. J'ai bien compris que des travaux ont été effectués: *levelling, patching, etc.* Mais, peut-on savoir de l'honorable ministre s'il y a vraiment eu une étude qui a été faite par un professionnel? Parce que nous savons tous les problèmes qui ont été occasionnés par le mauvais état de cette pelouse, tel que le changement de site pour la finale du tournoi de football lors des Jeux des Iles de 2019, donc pas mal d'inconvénients ont été causés et rien ne dit qu'après avoir effectué...

Mr Speaker: You made your point. Let the Minister reply.

Mr Quirin: ...tous ces travaux de *levelling and patching* que la pelouse sera vraiment praticable. De ce fait, est-ce qu'il y a eu une étude vraiment...

Mr Speaker: I stop you there.

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, la responsabilité au niveau de la rénovation du stade *New George V* – donc, dans le cadre des Jeux des Iles, il y avait des rénovations de plusieurs infrastructures et celle du stade *New George V* était sous la responsabilité de REHM Grinaker Co. Ltd et le consultant responsable de ces travaux était *JNA Architects Ltd*. Après les jeux, le fait que le *Defects Liability Period* n'était pas terminé, ce sont les mêmes consultants et les mêmes compagnies qui ont remédié à la situation *at zero cost* parce que nous étions encore dans la période de garantie.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, si je comprends bien, REHM Grinaker Co. Ltd a effectué les travaux de rénovation, il donne la garantie que la pelouse sera praticable dès que ce sera permis d'ouvrir à nouveau les stades et autres infrastructures?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, la pelouse est praticable mais je dois rappeler que la cause principale, c'était le *heavy rainfall*. Nous venons de parler de *heavy rainfall*, nous venons d'assister récemment aux *flashfloods*. Donc, nous sommes dans un cadre de changement climatique et si demain il y a tant et tant millimètres de pluies qui tombent à

Curepipe, ‘lakaz lapli’, malheureusement on ne pourra rien y faire. Aucune construction ne pourra rien y faire, il faudra s’adapter. Mon collègue l’a expliqué, le *Dry-Foot Policy*, ça n’existera plus avec le changement climatique. Mais dans le cas présent, la pelouse a été aménagée et est praticable. Donc, les *matchs* peuvent se jouer mais si la veille il y a de grosses pluies, nous ne pouvons rien y faire malheureusement.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Tour!

Mrs Tour: Le ministre pourrait-il nous dire s’il a des alternatives au cas où la pelouse ne serait pas praticable?

Mr Toussaint: Bon, je l’ai dit dans ma réponse, M. le président, que les réparations ont été faites et que le stade est opérationnel, sauf que pour le moment à cause de la pandémie les stades sont fermés. Néanmoins, on peut mettre à la disposition de la Fédération de football de Maurice plusieurs stades pour leurs compétitions: le stade Anjalay à Belle Vue, le stade Auguste Volaire à Flacq, le stade Germain Comarmond à Bambous. Le stade Harry Latour à Mahebourg; bientôt les rénovations, les *boundary walls*, etc. vont terminer et ce sera disponible et il y a aussi plusieurs terrains et stades au niveau des différentes *local authorities*, sans compter que la fédération elle-même a dans son enceinte plusieurs terrains de foot où les compétitions peuvent se faire. Donc, ce n’est pas les terrains de foot qui manquent dans le pays.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

LA VALETTE - INTEGRATED SOCIAL HOUSING PROJECT

(No. B/574) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the Integrated Social Housing Project at La Valette, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number of families having obtained their respective contract in relation to the housing units allocated thereto as at to date.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the National Empowerment Foundation that La Valette Integrated Social Housing Village project was developed in March 2008 at a project cost of Rs205 m. and was fully funded by Government.

It comprises 199 housing units, out of which 197 units are currently occupied.

The cost of one housing unit amounts to Rs442,000 and the total reimbursement costs by the beneficiary for one social housing unit is Rs273,600 over a period of 12 years.

According to a lease agreement, once the monthly instalment for the first three years paid, amounting to Rs36,000, the beneficiary may have the option to purchase the house provided he can settle the outstanding balance of Rs237,600.

I am further informed by the National Empowerment Foundation that as at date, out of 197 beneficiaries of the housing units at La Valette, 9 have settled the full purchase price of Rs273,600. 134 have paid the first three years rental amounting to Rs36,000, and the remaining 54 beneficiaries have not paid the first three years rental amounting, as I have just mentioned, to Rs36,000.

Moreover, the National Empowerment Foundation is finalising procedures for the sale of the housing units and the respective plots of land to the 9 beneficiaries who have so far settled the full amount. It is expected that the deed of sale be signed by the end of July 2021.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, peut-on savoir de l'honorable ministre si une enquête a été initiée au niveau de son ministère pour savoir pourquoi un certain nombre de familles n'arrivent pas à s'acquitter justement de leurs dettes et de pouvoir ainsi bénéficier de leur contrat ?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Good question, Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact an inquiry has been carried out by NEF. It appears that most of the beneficiaries are in financial difficulties. Well, if I may say, this project was flawed from the time it was set up in 2008. I cannot understand how come a contract has been signed with the beneficiaries knowing full well at that particular time that they were in financial difficulties and that they will not be in a position to pay the price of the said houses. Now, we are in a dilemma. Why? Because, as I have just mentioned, 9 of the beneficiaries have been able to pay; we need to find a solution which is just and fair to all the beneficiaries. So, we are being flexible. We are doing things in the best possible way. We fully understand the financial difficulties of those beneficiaries and we are giving them more time to settle the debt.

Mr Quirin: Je fais appel à la compréhension et au sens d'humanisme de la ministre face à cette situation déjà difficile, que nous savons tous des résidents de La Valette qui de surcroît en ce moment se retrouvent en zone rouge. Donc, je compte sur l'honorable ministre pour faire accélérer les choses de façon à ce que cette situation puisse vraiment se résoudre et trouver une solution de façon à ce que ces familles puissent devenir enfin propriétaires de leurs maisons.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Well, as I have just mentioned, Mr Speaker, Sir, Government is very much concerned about the present situation. We fully understand the difficulties of those beneficiaries. I must say also that the Cabinet took the decision to sell the land on which the housing units stand to the beneficiaries at a nominal price of only Rs2,000.

Moreover, NEF is presently in consultation with banking institutions to see to if the beneficiaries can benefit from a loan so that they can be in a position to repay the whole amount and then we can finalise the contracting sale.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC - RED ZONES - CRITERIA

(No. B/575) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the proclamation and deproclamation of a specific area as Red Zone amid the COVID-19 pandemic, he will state the criteria applicable therefor.

(Withdrawn)

VALLÉE PITOT - RED ZONE – ASSISTANCE SCHEMES - EXTENSION

(No. B/576) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the self-employed and small businesses impacted by the proclamation of Vallée Pitot as Red Zone and the consequential inability thereof to ensure their daily subsistence amid the COVID-19 pandemic, he will state if consideration will be given for an extension thereto of the eligibility to benefit under the Self-Employed Assistance and Wage Assistance Schemes, respectively, and, if so, indicate when same will be disbursed.

(Withdrawn)

VICTORIA URBAN TERMINAL - HAWKERS

(No. B/577) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the Victoria Urban Terminal, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal City Council of Port Louis, information as to the number of hawkers registered for accommodation thereat, indicating the number of stalls earmarked therefor.

(Withdrawn)

Mr Speaker: The Table is advised that PQ B/575, B/577, B/617, B/618, B/619 and B/620 have been withdrawn. Next question!

WMA - SANITARY PROTOCOLS

(No. B/578) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Wastewater Management Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the sanitary protocol put in place thereat prior to the recent detection of cases thereat.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that since the detection of COVID-19 in Mauritius in March last year, the Waste Management Authority has been adopting at its Head Office and its sub-offices, the sanitary protocols laid out in the respective circulars from the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative, and Institutional Reforms. These precautionary measures were further reinforced, with the detection of local cases in the community in March this year.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as far back as 17 March 2020, an awareness campaign on COVID-19 was carried out by the WMA Safety and Health Offices at the Head Office, sub-offices and Wastewater Treatment Plants. Staffs at all levels were informed about its mode of transmission and how they should protect themselves by maintaining proper hygiene conditions such as frequent washing of hands, the use of sanitizers, avoid touching of eyes and nose, and as well as by keeping, at least, one meter social distancing to prevent the spread of the disease. Circulars were also issued on not less than nine occasions to all employees in 2020 and 2021 to remind them of the need to take and to continue taking required precautions.

Moreover, regular visits by WMA Safety and Health Officers are carried out on WMA sites to ensure that sites are cleaned and that safety and health measures are being adhered to. I am informed by the WMA that the sanitary protocol since last year also covers the following measures –

1. Affixing of posters

Posters from the Ministry of Health and Wellness, containing information on the virus and sanitary measures that are to be observed to prevent risk of contamination, have been affixed on all WMA sites and at the Head Office to promote awareness.

Pamphlets issued by the Ministry of Health and Wellness, as well as the WMA have also been distributed to staffs;

2. Personal protective equipment and hygiene products

In addition to protective equipment, hygiene products such as face masks, disposable latex gloves, hand sanitizers, liquid soap, hand disinfectant, and eye protection spectacles are regularly provided to staffs. Moreover, an emergency safety kit containing at least three disposable overall, face masks, safety goggles, hand sanitizers and disposable gloves were provided to sections to deal with any suspected case of COVID-19 at the workplace.

3. Cleaning of offices and vehicles

Disinfection reagents such as alcohol and *eau de javel* are provided for cleaning of offices and vehicles. Cleaning activities are monitored by Supervising Officers, that is, officers from the Health and Safety Section, the Officers responsible for transport, and the Chief Working Inspector for the different sub-offices at regular intervals.

4. Affixing of safety signs

Safety signs demonstrating sanitary procedures to be observed at the workplace by staffs and visitors have been affixed at the Head Office, sub-offices, laboratory, and Treatment Plants. Floor marking stickers showing social distancing have also been affixed at the Head Office and sub-offices to guide visitors.

5. Safety visor screens

Safety visor screens have been affixed on receptionists' counters and customer care desks at the Head Office and sub-offices to prevent direct face-to-face interaction, between visitors, clients, and the personnel of WMA.

6. Control of temperature.

Infrared thermometers have been provided to all sub officers, treatment plants, laboratories and head office to control the temperature of visitors and staff prior to entering WMA premises. Details of visitors accessing WMA sites are recorded.

Mr Speaker, Sir, during the last three months that is in March, April and May 2021, WMA safety and health officers have conducted 55 site visits, including awareness campaign to inform employees of the importance of maintaining the appropriate sanitary measures to prevent the spread of the disease. It is to be highlighted that as at March 2021, 24% of the WMA staff were vaccinated...

An hon. Member: I have a point of order, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Lesjongard: ...against COVID-19. Efforts are being pursued...

Mr Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Mr Lesjongard: ...to encourage employees...

Mr Speaker: It is a fraudulent point of order.

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: ...at all levels to get themselves vaccinated. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Osman Mahomed: We are finishing soon. I have removed three questions to be able to ask this question. Mr Speaker, Sir, all that the hon. Minister has just said did not work because WMA became the super spreader of COVID-19 in Mauritius, confirmed by the Minister of Health himself.

At the peak, there were 150 people working at the WMA admitted to quarantine. Can I ask the hon. Minister since he mentioned that suspected case of COVID-19 at the workplace were detected, when in fact it is not. The patient zero at WMA went and informed management that he is not feeling well, and yet he was allowed to work and therefore he contaminated not only 150 people at the WMA but people across the island of Mauritius.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government has been dealing with this problem of COVID-19 for the past one year and we have not been excited so much as the hon. Member is excited today.

(Interruptions)

We have had so many cases for the past one year, you have put a question with regard to the sanitary protocol put in place, I have answered to them. Then, if you have other information, you come with a specific question, I will reply to the question. If you feel that that patient zero has infected so many people because the protocol has not been adhered to, give us the examples.

Mr Speaker: The Table is advised that PQs B/583, B/584, B/585, B/586 together with PQs B/579, B/580, and B/581 have been withdrawn. Time over!

MOTION**SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)**

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr A. Ganoo): 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.

Dr. Padayachy seconded.

Question put and agreed to

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

(4.20 p.m.)

MINOR E.P. – SEXUAL ABUSE

The Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare (Mrs K. Koonjoo-Shah): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I wish to make two statements. The first statement is with regard to an anonymous complaint received on hotline 113 of my Ministry on 11 May this year.

The case relates to minor E. P, 8 years old, which was referred to the CDU as an alleged case of sexual abuse by maternal cousins. According to the complainant, the minor suffers from visual and auditory impairment. The father was contacted to convey the minor to hospital but he did not cooperate. In view of the fact that the father was not willing to cooperate and having regard to the seriousness of the allegation, an Emergency Protection Order was applied for and issued in favour of the minor on the same day.

The minor was conveyed to Dr. A.G. Jeetoo Hospital for medical examination and support and she was admitted in ward 3.6. On the same day, the minor was seen by my Ministry's psychologist who observed that the minor might have an autistic condition.

A case of alleged 'Sexual intercourse with minor under 16', was reported at Bain Des Dames Police Station on 12 May 2021, an OB number 886/21 refers. Medical examination was to be conducted at the Dr A.G. Jeetoo Hospital by Police Medical Officer. But because of the sensitive nature of the case and due to the particular medical condition of the minor, the Police required the services of an interpreter to enable communication between the minor, the team of the Police and that of the medical staff. This endeavour took some time and

eventually the person most appropriate to communicate with the minor E.P was identified. The Loïs Lagesse Trust Fund was contacted to facilitate communication between the minor and professionals handling the case as the minor was a student at their Centre. The Loïs Lagesse Trust Fund Instructor informed that the minor was regular and also informed about their “rapport” with the child.

The Police Medical Examination conducted on 21 May 2021 revealed that the minor was not suffering from complete hearing or visual impairment. It was also gathered that the minor would be of an apprehensive nature and would refrain from responding to strangers. The Police Medical report also revealed no sign of sexual abuse.

The minor’s medical report obtained on the next day, that is, 22 May 2021, concludes that the child suffers from intellectual disability, which is also known as general learning disability. Child is also suffering from visual impairment due to microphthalmia, hypoplastic optic nerve, with delayed speech, audio impairment and motor retardation that requires physiotherapy.

During the assessment, it was also gathered that the minor was taken care of by her relatives namely her paternal and maternal aunts. The medical conditions of the child necessitating familiar people for her to communicate with, the minor was handed over to her father on 24 May 2021.

The issue of the minor being immobilised to her bed, was raised by officers of my Ministry during visit to the hospital ward. The staff of my Ministry was informed by medical personnel that minor due to her physical and intellectual impairment cannot define her surroundings and that if she is attracted to something, she would go straight to that object without realising if there was any kind of danger or obstacle in her way. Hence, the use of restraints at staggered moments during the day during her hospitalisation was undertaken by the hospital administration for her own safety. It is also to be noted that the child was kept in a specialised medical bed.

Conveying a child to hospital for medical examination depends on the nature of the complaint registered and would normally occur in cases where alert is about physical and sexual abuse necessitating medical examination and Police Medical Examination respectively. The decision to admit the child and the length of his/her stay rest on the sole discretion and judgement of the treating medical specialist. My Ministry cannot interfere in the nature of treatment administered during the child’s hospitalisation as the latter would be

in complete care and custody of the hospital administration. However, once the child is discharged, my Ministry is informed and action as appropriate for the taking over of the child is undertaken immediately.

Mr Speaker, Sir, during the enquiry it was gathered that the father was not aware that his daughter could speak and hear at all. Though the minor cannot express herself clearly, she can repeat everything she was taught and the same was confirmed by her instructor from the Loïs Lagesse Trust Fund. Since the minor's father continuously averred that the child is vocally and visually impaired as well as suffering from impaired hearing, the case has been referred to Autism Mauritius and a Medical Report on the minor's health status is awaited.

The Ministry of Health and Wellness has nevertheless established that the minor suffers from a clear cut autistic condition.

Meanwhile the Child Protection Services of my Ministry is making regular follow up visits and has also asked the Loïs Lagesse Trust Fund Instructor to provide regular Progress Report on the minor's status. It is worth noting that to decide matters in the best interests of the minor, a case conference was held on 28 May 2021 at the seat of my Ministry involving professionals from the Ombudsperson for Children's Office, the Probation and Aftercare Services, the Medical Social Worker, the Ministry of Health and Wellness, the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity, the Loïs Lagesse Trust Fund and the NGO Autisme Maurice.

MINORS B. - ALLEGED VIOLENCE AGAINST

The Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare (Mrs K. Koonjoo-Shah):

Mr Speaker, Sir, my second statement is in connection with an intervention which was effected on 15 May, this year, upon renewed alert of alleged violence on 3 minors B. An Emergency Protection Order (EPO) was sought and obtained to enable the Child Protection Team of my Ministry to arrange for medical examination of the minors in order to ascertain whether the minors had sustained injuries, both internal or external, especially that it was evoked that violence might have been perpetrated at the level of a Place of Safety under the purview of my Ministry.

I wish to point out that the biological mother has a case history of perpetrating violence on the said 3 minors at the level of my Ministry. A case of ill-treatment had already been lodged against her, previously. Therefore, upon repeated alert, an urgent revisiting of the case for verification was warranted.

On the same day, the District Magistrate on-call was solicited for the application of an EPO which was granted. The on-call team went to the house of Mrs B. which was found to be under lock and key. It was gathered from the neighbours that the mother, her new partner and the children had gone out since early morning. An entry was made at the Police Station and DB 1104/21 refers. The Police was requested to effect patrol and inform my Ministry whenever the family returned to its place of abode.

In the evening, the officers of my Ministry were informed by the Police that the parents and the children had returned home. The officers of the Child Protection Services of my Ministry went to the residence of the minors to query and ascertain the veracity of the allegations made.

In spite of explanations and counselling tendered to the mother, the latter showed much resistance to the conveyance of the minors to hospital for medical examination in view of ascertaining whether the allegation of injuries sustained at the place of safety was founded or not and also to ascertain whether medical care and support if the harm caused warranted such treatment. After counselling and psychological support, the mother and her partner agreed to convey the minors to the hospital for examination.

At the hospital, the minors were medically examined and the various procedures as per the established protocol with the hospital were undertaken.

The 3 minors and the mother as well as her partner were probed anew by the Psychologist of my Ministry as the latter displayed inability to manage anger and violence. Given that discussions went until late at night, the statement of the minors could not be recorded. Given that the minors were not admitted to the hospital and a medical report had not yet been furnished at that material time, they were taken to a place of safety to enable the Police to pursue with the recording of statement. Medical report to ascertain as to whether the minors have been harmed anew was awaited. It is to be noted that in cases where parents are deemed or suspected to be perpetrators of violence, recording of statement from children is not undertaken in their presence. Recording of statement is actually carried out through stepwise interviewing techniques by both the Police and Social Worker and often cannot be completed at one sitting.

Mr Speaker, Sir, at no point in time, was force used in the execution of the EPO. The CDU officers acted in good faith and in accordance with the provisions of the Child Protection Act.

Upon receipt of the Medical Report on 21 May in the afternoon which revealed that the scars were old healed ones, the EPO was lapsed on 22 May and the minors were handed over to their mother.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to reassure the House that my Ministry, in all cases and in these 2 specific cases, has acted in the best interests of those children as we always do. The interventions of my Ministry following complaints are not conducted haphazardly but in line with the provisions of the Child Protection Act and according to an established protocol. It is also noteworthy that my Ministry does not intervene on its own motion but rather following reported complaints.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to reassure the House, again, that the policy of this Government and that of my Ministry is always geared towards the best interests of the child.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Teeluck!

HADJ 2021 – INTERNATIONAL PILGRIMS

The Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage (Mr A. Teeluck): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I wish to make a statement regarding the holding of Hadj this year.

Hon. Members would recall that on 30 March 2021, following PQ B/89 from hon. Osman Mahomed, addressed to the hon. Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, the Minister informed the House that the issue of the organisation of Hadj 2021 would be the subject of discussions between the Ambassador of Mauritius to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Deputy Minister in charge of Hadj.

Moreover, on 18 May 2021, in my reply to PQ B/410 from hon. Farhad Aumeer, I informed the House that my Ministry was not in presence of any official correspondence from the Saudi Authorities as to the organisation of Hadj 2021. However, I had also reassured the House that my Ministry will continue to monitor the situation.

On 13 June 2021, my Ministry received an official correspondence from the Mauritian Embassy in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, informing that the Saudi Authorities have announced that, in view of the current COVID-19 pandemic, only citizens of Saudi Arabia and residents of the Kingdom, be it of any nationality, will be allowed to perform Hadj this year. The pilgrimage is expected to start in mid-July.

International pilgrims will not be allowed to enter the Kingdom as informed by the Saudi Authorities.

Moreover, the total number of pilgrims for this year's Hadj will be limited to 60,000 citizens and residents of the Kingdom.

We rest guided by the directives of the Saudi Authorities on this matter.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

PUBLIC BILL

Second Reading

THE APPROPRIATION (2021-2022) BILL

(NO. X OF 2021)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the second reading of the Appropriation (2021- 2022) Bill (No. X of the 2021).

Question again proposed.

Mr Speaker: Dr. the hon. Mrs Chukowry!

(4.26 p.m.)

Dr. Mrs D. Chukowry (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, yesterday I have listened attentively to all orators and I have come to the conclusion that orators of the Opposition are just playing their roles as Opposition.

Let me explain, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have read somewhere that it is understood that historically and constitutionally the Opposition has 3 roles –

1. to oppose the Government;
2. to criticise the Government, (this also we have seen during the presentations of all the previous Bills even though deep inside they must be confessing that this Government is doing well), and
3. to seek to replace the Government by any means. *Même si des fois ils doivent faire des alliances contre nature.* (Yesterday, hon. David has confessed what I am putting forward today).

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been elected because my Leader cares for the people of this country. My leader is a man of words and always keeps his promise. Above all else, he shows compassion and devotion in whatever he does.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been elected because my parents and myself were born in this Constituency. We understand the difficulties of the people because even today we are still walking in their moccasins. Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been elected because as a Rector, with 27 years of experience, I have been taking care of the poorest of the poor in my school. Mr Speaker, Sir, I have a humble and friendly advice for my colleague, hon. David, who wants to sit on this side of the House. There is a saying which dated back to 1930's and it goes, 'if you cannot beat them, join them.'

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Nou al en place nou zwen!*

Dr. Mrs Chukowry: We have to agree that it was no less than a colossal task to unfurl a financial blueprint in the midst of the hardship the country and the world indeed is facing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The overarching premise of better together translate in form, format and spirit, the endeavour of our Government to not only map out our financial and monetary projections amidst the unprecedented crisis, but to create a balancing act between compromise, resolve, resilience and a sound proactive usage of resources and assets.

Indeed, hats off to Dr. the hon. Padayachy, Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development for having taken bold, yet well thought and well-planned steps in simultaneously standing as the custodian of our future while ensuring that we reawaken an economy that has been unfortunately fragilised to some extent by the after effect of the COVID-19 pandemic. The essence of a Budget Speech formalises the means and ways that we need to have recourse to in a bid to safeguard the legacy of our countrymen. The efforts of a nation have to be rechanneled into productive ventures so that the path to the national vision and mission is carved and set for our future generation to step in our stead and move our engagement to newer heights. This Budget sums it all. Many of us will have to reconcile with the realisation that the measures enunciated in the 2021-2022 Budget Speech, however stringent or supportive they are, represent an investment that they will enable each sector of our economy to stay on tracks with respect to the pursue of our long-term financial goals. The effectiveness and efficiency of a Budget can be gauged against such benchmarks as relevance in addressing the country's vision, the ability to motivate each and every component of the

labour force to work towards financial consolidation and security, to provide the necessary fiscal incentives in projecting both a structure and flexibility and to garner national support through ownership for the people and by the people while never losing sight of the realistic attributes of the Budget fundamentals.

I must say that the functional timeline of this particular Budget has all the above-mentioned characteristics and clearly stands as a master stroke for our emancipation as an island State. The Budget underpins the need and necessity to restore confidence in our national investment portfolio to offset collateral deficits which were largely due to the backlash of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as making up for the lost time brought about by the unavoidable slowdown of economic activities while limiting the adverse effect of economic downturns. The Budget proposals have been tangibly aligned to the new normal which all of us will have to come to terms to and adapt judiciously and swiftly. The balancing act is an intelligent one wherein the weight has been more or less distributed in-between national and public expenditures while containing tax rates within reasonable yardsticks. This is, indeed, very commendable at a time where every cent counts.

Let me therefore start off on the philosophy behind the Taxation Regime underlined in the Budget Speech. At the heart of the fiscal agenda is the need to prioritise the fortification of the small and medium enterprise. Mr Speaker, Sir, the Government has taken a string of measures that largely suffice to demonstrate the Government's commitment in firmly strengthening the locus of our SMEs and the manufacturing sector at large. For example, the deferment of tax arrears, the setting up of the industrial financial institution to service the agro-industrial and manufacturing sectors, the reduction of yearly interest caps in respect of leasing equipment, modernisation scheme, a 10% decrease in registration tax on lease transfers of state-owned lands for hotels, the allocation of billion for the setting up of a modernisation and transformation fund; a reduction in tax rates for ventures in medical, pharmaceutical and biotechnology sectors and 5% three years' tax moratorium on the acquisition of machinery and plant establishment, amongst others.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the agricultural sector budget proposals do not lag behind, as testified by a series of measures to render the sector even more productive and dynamic –

- (i) A remuneration of Rs3,300 per tonne of sugar for bagasse destined to sugarcane planters under the Biomass Framework;

- (ii) revamping the ocean economy through the provision of Rs1,00,000 zero interest rate to fishermen;
- (iii) a COVID-19 Special Support Scheme;
- (iv) a significant increase of Bad Weather Allowance to fishermen, and also
- (v) the delivery of 500 additional fishermen cards prove beyond measure that our Government centralises the needs of our labour force through consistent empowerment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the tourism sector remains a considerable pillar of our socioeconomic development and it takes a lot of courage and planning to reopen our borders in a phased fashion while respecting the sanitary protocol in force to prevent any further onslaught of COVID-19. We are at a juncture wherein the global tourism sector has been fragilised to a large extent and it is *sine qua non* that we level up our engagement to reposition Mauritius as a preferred tourist destination. The Budget proposes to advertise our island as a tropical getaway could not have come at a more opportune time. The extension of the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme and Wages Assistance Scheme to September 2021 will continue to aid the domestic tourism sector in remaining afloat.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the usage of coal is being phased out and there is a clear accentuation on deriving energy from renewable sources. A sum Rs650 m. is being ringfenced for the production of electricity by means of photovoltaic panels atop State buildings and provision of solar water heaters to some 2,000 households. To further insite of the conversion to greener energy sources, the removal of excise duty on electric vans, an increase in subsidy quantum on electric buses offer a glimpse of the Government's particular focus in preserving the pristine quality of our environment.

M. le président, ce gouvernement, sous le leadership de notre Premier ministre, l'honorable Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, a toujours prôné une politique de proximité sans faille. Malgré la conjecture extrêmement difficile et monétairement complexe, le budget propose que la pension de vieillesse de R 9000 soit maintenue pour ceux âgés soixante plus . C'est notre façon de leur dire merci pour tous les efforts qu'ils ont fournis avec ardeur et pour le développement de notre île.

M. le président, la pauvreté bien que nous aurions tant voulu la faire disparaître, existe bel et bien dans certaines poches de notre société et notre combat continue donc. Le budget propose une augmentation de subsistance par famille passant R 9520 à R 10500 à partir du 01

juillet et aussi l'augmentation de l'allocation mensuelle pour les orphelins et les familles d'accueil passant de R 5250 à R 8000 our borders, the recruitment of educational psychologists, surveillance for both primary and secondary schools, the recruitment of additional support teachers for the early support program, the increase of a monthly per capital grant per children attending private free primary schools from Rs200 to Rs400, an increase in meal allowance for students attending special education needs schools, braille notes for secondary school students with severe visual impairments, all these are measures that have been put forward in this budget. These measures enunciated above are just a few of the proposal to enhance our education landscape and will render our stand as a knowledge-based country even more robust, appealing competitive and *avant-gardiste*.

Let me come to the final chapter of my delivery. My heart goes with the spirit of this Budget Speech in terms of the endeavour to offer a safer, better, and hence happier life to the citizens of Constituency No.1.

M. le ministre des Finances, les habitants de ma circonscription vous remercient d'avoir une pensée pour eux. Pendant ce moment difficile, ils sont soulagés d'entendre que R 345 millions seront allouer pour la construction des drains dans des régions telles que Pailles, Cité Richelieu, Pointe aux Sables, La Tour Koenig et aussi d'autres régions touchées par les récentes inondations telles que Cassis, Camp Firinga, Caudan, Pont Bourgeois, etc. La construction d'un centre de santé communautaire à Pointe aux Sables aussi bien que la construction d'un MUGA vont définitivement apporter un rayon de soleil dans leur vie. Je profite de cette occasion pour remercier le Premier ministre et le ministre des Finances pour avoir été à l'écoute des habitants de la circonscription numéro 1. Permettez-moi, M. le président, de saluer une initiative budgétaire certes ambitieuse mais qui requière de la compassion.

M. le président, une des priorités de ce gouvernement, c'est de veiller à ce que chaque famille dispose d'un logement. La construction de plus de 12000 logements sociaux qui débutera très bientôt, permettra un bon nombre de personnes de mener une vie convenable et pour cela, je fais totalement confiance à notre *Deputy Prime Minister*, l'honorable Obeegadoo. Tout le monde connaît son sérieux, son intelligence et surtout son dévouement dans ce qu'il entreprend.

M. le président, je vais rassurer les habitants de ma circonscription que je vais m'assurer personnellement que les projets annoncés dans le budget soient réalisés.

Concernant le jardin d'enfants de la Butte, j'ai tout fait pour que ce jardin d'enfants soit rénové dans les semaines à venir mais surtout pas parce que l'honorable David a posé une question au mois d'avril 2021.

En tant que « *zenfan la Butte* », comme on nous appelle affectueusement, c'était sur ma liste de priorités depuis mon premier jour en tant que PPS à travers la circonscription et aussi il y aura d'autres rénovations à travers la circonscription telles que le jardin d'enfants de Plaine Lauzun, de Résidence Sir Gaëtan Duval, à Pailles et parmi tant d'autres. Malheureusement, M. le président, COVID-19 a tout chamboulé.

To conclude, I wish to congratulate our hon. Prime Minister and also the Minister of Finance for bringing to the House this budget.

Thank you very much.

Mr Speaker: You want to start or after the break? So, let me break for tea for 30 minutes.

At 4.46 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.23 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please be seated! Hon. Ms Anquetil!

Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal): Je vous remercie, M. le président. Le budget 2021-2022 qui nous a été présenté le vendredi 11 juin porte sur 3R-Redressement, Renaissance et Résilience. Est-ce vrai ce qu'avance le ministre ? Après avoir décortiqué le document ligne par ligne et dans ses moindres détails, le constat est sans appel. Le budget ne se reposera pas plutôt sur 3I ? Irresponsable car l'avenir du pays est en danger. Inconscient : le gouvernement ignore les réalités des Mauriciens au quotidien et Incomplet : plus de la moitié de la population, c'est-à-dire les femmes, y ont été sacrifiées.

D'emblée, ce deuxième budget n'est pas sensible aux gens et ne contient pas d'approche féminine. De plus, il a été préparé dans une indifférence totale envers les femmes victimes de violence et les enfants maltraités de notre république. Clairement, le ministère de l'Égalité des Genres et du Bien-être de la Famille, est l'enfant pauvre de ce budget. L'histoire en témoigne sans conteste, que c'est le parti travailliste qui a été la première formation politique à promouvoir l'émancipation des femmes dans notre pays. Tous les autres gouvernements ont suivi.

C'est Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam qui a nommé pour la première fois, une femme, en l'occurrence, Madame Radha Poonoosamy, au poste de ministre de la Condition Féminine. C'est le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, Premier ministre, qui a introduit la première loi pour protéger les femmes victimes de violence et d'harcèlement, le *Sex Discrimination Bill*.

C'est encore le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, toujours Premier ministre, qui a apporté une transformation extraordinaire au ministère des droits des femmes qui devient le ministère de l'Égalité des genres, du Développement de l'enfant et du Bien-être de la famille. Il avait nommé Madame Sheila Bappoo à la tête de ce ministère. Et pendant longtemps la formation...

(Interruptions)

La vérité fait mal, je sais. Je vous comprends d'ailleurs !

Mr Speaker: Order, please !

Ms Anquetil: ... pendant longtemps la formation de nos policiers à l'étranger était exclusivement réservée aux hommes et c'est le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, Premier ministre, qui a stoppé ces pratiques sexistes.

M. le président, je vais maintenant vous révéler la face cachée du ministère de l'Égalité des Genres et du Bien-être de la famille. Le premier volet de mon intervention concerne le genre. Le constat est amer et déplorable. Le rapport selon le *Global Gender Gap Index* 2021 du *World Economic Forum*, classe Maurice 110^{ème} sur 156 pays. Il n'y a vraiment pas de quoi se réjouir. L'inégalité salariale et l'absence des femmes en politique en sont les principales causes. A ce rythme, il faudra plus d'un siècle pour obtenir la parité dans notre république.

Au ministère, rien n'a bougé. C'est la culture du statu quo. D'abord, le *Gender Equality Bill*, annoncé en grande fanfare par la ministre de tutelle dans sa tentative d'impressionner la galerie lors du discours programme. Après plus d'un an, c'est un *total flop*. Le projet de loi n'a pas bougé d'un iota et c'est à se demander si la ministre veut vraiment porter ce projet au Cabinet.

Il est un fait que la ministre est incapable de tenir ses promesses. Le *National Steering Committee on Gender Mainstreaming*, instauré en 2010 par le Parti Travailiste, qui est présidé par la ministre, doit se rencontrer sur une base trimestrielle. La question qui se

pose est de savoir combien de fois ce comité s'est réuni pour s'assurer que le genre imprègne toutes les politiques et tous les programmes du gouvernement.

Selon mes renseignements, la fréquence des réunions n'a pas été respectée et cela démontre clairement que ce ministère est en panne de *leadership* et malheureusement, c'est au détriment du genre. Tous les ministères ont reçu la somme de R 200,000 pour la mise en œuvre de projet spécifique pour réduire les écarts entre les sexes dans leurs secteurs respectifs. Question: comment les ministères ont-ils dépensé cette somme d'argent ? C'est très inquiétant de lire dans le *Estimates* de 2021/2022 à la page 420, sous l'item *key challenges*, que le *Gender Mainstreaming and implementation of sectoral gender policies are considered as low priority by Ministries/Departments*.

Dans la même foulée, la ministre pourrait-elle nous expliquer les raisons pour lesquelles le *New National Gender Policy* pour 2020/2030 aligné sur les objectifs de développement durable tarde à venir. Il n'a pas été encore finalisé et adopté alors que des consultations nationales ont eu lieu avec le secteur privé, les médias et la société civile.

Le deuxième volet de mon intervention concerne les femmes. Le directeur de l'Organisation Mondiale de la Santé a appelé tous les gouvernements à agir parce que je cite –

« Contrairement au COVID-19, les violences faites aux femmes ne peuvent être stoppé par un vaccin. »

M. le président, la violence domestique est un grave problème national qui dépasse le cadre politique. Nous sommes une Opposition sérieuse, exigeante et constructive et nous sommes prêts à apporter notre contribution afin de trouver des solutions durables car il y a urgence. Dans son budget de l'année dernière, le ministre des finances avait pris l'engagement de modifier la *Protection from Domestic Violence Act*, mais par rapport à ce qui avait été annoncé et ce qui a été réalisé, le constat est accablant. C'est la grande déception. Dans ce budget 2021/2022 au point 322, le ministre nous sert du réchauffé puisqu'il retourne avec cette mesure. Entre-temps, les femmes continuent à souffrir et la pandémie est venue aggraver et bouleverser davantage cette situation de violence.

Le ministère de l'égalité du genre et du bien-être de la famille se félicite d'avoir mise en place l'application, l'espoir. Il est regrettable que les femmes qui possèdent un portable basique ne puissent pas y accéder. Question: qu'a fait le ministère pour conscientiser chaque femme et chaque jeune fille qui possède un portable sophistiqué à télécharger cette application? On note que le *National Strategy and Action Plan* a été lancé en novembre 2020

pour l'élimination de la violence sexiste à ce jour, il semblerait que les comités se rencontrent mais il n'y a rien de concret.

La mise en exécution traîne toujours. Est-ce que la ministre a la capacité de mener à bon port ce projet? J'ai des doutes et c'est pour cela que je fais un appel pressant au Premier ministre pour un *close monitoring* car, si on compte sur la ministre, on risque d'attendre trop longtemps. M. le président, le cyber-harcèlement est une forme de violence assez récente qui se développe dans notre pays. Plusieurs femmes et jeunes filles en ont été victimes. On nous a annoncer que plusieurs enquêtes ont été initiées mais après, plus rien, c'est le silence absolu. Dans cette même assemblée, alors que nous sommes supposés de donner l'exemple en tant que représentant du peuple, un langage grossier a été utilisé mais seul une enquête révèlera l'identité de l'auteur et seul quelques privilégiés sauront combien de temps il faudra pour connaître la vérité.

I cannot ignore what Laura Schlessinger said and I quote –

“Language is our way of communicating what we want and who we are. By using bad language, we diminish the divine spark within us that defines our humanity.”

Je voudrais dire à la ministre de ne pas se servir du COVID-19 comme paravent pour la tenue de ses réunions, elle pourrait utiliser une plateforme digitale, c'est un sujet tellement sérieux qu'on ne peut pas rester les bras croisés et attendre.

M. le président, je souhaiterais faire quelques propositions constructives pour améliorer la situation des femmes. Je propose que nous nous inspirions de l'Inde pour implémenter des postes de police pour femmes, *Women Police Station*, pour mieux lutter et gérer toute forme de violence à l'encontre des femmes avec un personnel exclusivement féminin ayant reçu une formation spéciale.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order !

Ms Anquetil: Ces stations de police donneront plus de confiance aux femmes, elles se sentiront plus à l'aise pour dénoncer les violences dont elles ont été victimes. Elles se retrouveront côté à côté avec des personnes qui ont des histoires similaires contrairement au poste de police classique où elles se retrouveraient à côté des criminels et récidivistes notoires. Dans le budget 2021/2022, le gouvernement annonce la construction de 2 *police*

stations, je propose, qu'on saisit cette opportunité pour implanter notre première *Women Police Station* dans notre République, ce serait considéré d'historique.

Autre proposition, il y a un manque d'hébergement d'urgence avec un accompagnement de qualité pour les victimes qui se retrouvent avec leurs enfants en situation de grand danger. Il faudrait en effet créer une petite structure familiale, un vrai lieu en toute sécurité animé par des professionnels.

Ma troisième proposition serait de suivre l'exemple de la Nouvelle Zélande pour un *paid domestic violence leave*, aux victimes de violence domestique, n'excédant pas 7 jours, samedi et dimanche inclus. Le ministre du travail, qui je note est dans la salle, pourrait considérer de porter une nouvelle loi accordant des congés payés aux femmes ou aux hommes victimes de violence. Je propose également un projet pilote pour l'introduction du bracelet électronique, afin de repérer les agresseurs et ainsi sauver des vies. Dans un premier temps, le gouvernement pourrait au moins considérer ce dispositif à titre expérimental. Cela fait 10 ans que ces bracelets ont montré leur efficacité en Espagne.

M. le président, la COVID-19 a bouleversé la vie des femmes. Les entreprises dirigées par des femmes ont beaucoup souffert des impacts de la COVID-19. Les femmes pêcheurs, les marchandes ambulantes, les femmes planteuses entre autres ont aussi connues une grande vulnérabilité avec perte d'emploi ou de revenu. Quel avenir pour nos femmes entrepreneurs l'après-COVID-19? La souffrance économique de ces femmes a été tout simplement ignorée. Le ministère de l'égalité du genre et du bien-être de la famille n'a rien proposé de concret aux femmes contraintes de fermer leur business. C'est

franchement impensable qu'aucun plan de soutien et qu'aucun programme de formation visant à améliorer les compétences et les aptitudes de gestion des femmes entrepreneurs n'aient été élaborés. Uniquement, le gaspillage d'argent, la *MRA* devrait cesser d'enquiquiner les petits entrepreneurs avec leur soi-disant *assessment*. Le ministre des finances fait encore du copier-coller et propose, tout comme l'année dernière, un prêt de la DBM au taux préférentiel de 0,5 % par an. Il serait intéressant de savoir combien de femmes entrepreneurs en ont bénéficié, sachant que beaucoup d'entre elles, dont certaines de ma circonscription ont rencontré des difficultés pour y accéder. Le *National Women Entrepreneur Council* à Phœnix est un éléphant blanc et ne profite pas au maximum aux femmes entrepreneurs. Il est regrettable de noter que malgré mes interpellations au Parlement, le *Council* n'a toujours pas de président et de secrétaire. Cela démontre le manque de sérieux de la ministre envers

l'entrepreneuriat féminin. J'apprends aussi de mon collègue l'honorable Woochit que le *Triplet Women Empowerment Centre* est fermé depuis quelques années en raison d'un manque de ressources et, bien évidemment, de leadership.

M. le président, les femmes enceintes vivent actuellement dans une profonde angoisse. En effet, elles affichent une grande prudence vis-à-vis de la vaccination contre la COVID, car elles ne savent pas si elles peuvent se faire vacciner sans danger. Le ministère de la Santé doit assumer ses responsabilités et communiquer sur les recommandations en matière de ce vaccin aux femmes en situation de grossesse, d'autant plus que le vaccin n'est plus gratuit car nous devons maintenant payer R 2 par litre d'essence et de diesel.

Le troisième volet concerne les enfants. C'est une évidence que la protection des enfants dans notre pays n'est pas une priorité pour ce gouvernement. Le *Children Bill* voté en novembre 2020, approuvé par le Président de la République en décembre 2020 et publié dans le *Government Gazette* n'a toujours pas été proclamé plus de 6 mois après.

La maltraitance de nos enfants par nos institutions est extrêmement préoccupante. C'est inconcevable que depuis un moment les officiers de la *CDU* retirent des enfants de leur foyer sur un simple soupçon non avéré, sur un simple appel anonyme, par exemple, et sans avoir au préalable mené une enquête approfondie. La population a été témoin de cas troublants ces derniers temps. Aujourd'hui, nous avons atteint un stade où les abris sont surpeuplés. Le plus révoltant c'est que la mission principale de la *CDU* c'est de protéger les enfants. A l'heure actuelle, non seulement on ne les protège pas mais on agrave leur situation. Il n'y a pas de doute que la *CDU* est dépassée et à bout de souffle. N'est-il pas temps d'effectuer un audit pour identifier les dysfonctionnements dans ce département? C'est extrêmement inquiétant de mettre à la tête d'un département une personne hystérique ; qui fait de l'excès de zèle à la tête de ce département et surtout que ce département s'occupe des enfants vulnérables. La situation dans certains *shelters* laisse à désirer. Au lieu d'offrir un service de qualité, certains gérants ont trouvé un moyen pour faire du *business*.

Les travailleurs sociaux ont attiré l'attention sur les conditions extrêmement difficiles réservées à ces mineurs sans défense. C'est inacceptable que certains enfants cumulent 15 ans de placement, ou même jusqu'à 18 ans. Un drame ! Le drame c'est que beaucoup d'enfants placés ne rentrent pas chez eux. Je propose que dans les situations de délaissage parental, il faudrait plutôt privilégier une adoption car l'adoption est considérée comme un dispositif de protection de l'enfance.

Avant de clore sur les enfants, impossible de faire l'impasse sur l'ouverture partielle des crèches. Depuis hier, uniquement 16 sur 350 crèches ont été autorisées à ouvrir leurs portes. Je fais un appel pressant pour une réouverture de toutes les crèches et garderies à une date commune et non au compte-gouttes pour éviter toutes situations chaotiques. Je soutiens l'Association des *Private Pre-Primary School Managers* pour une aide financière exceptionnelle en faveur des crèches qui se sont retrouvées en difficulté pour fermeture prolongée suite à la COVID-19.

Je souhaiterais maintenant dire quelques mots sur ma circonscription. Beaucoup de personnes ont souffert des inondations à Vacoas-Floréal. J'ai pris bonne note des projets de drainage à Glenpark, Henrietta, La Marie, Malakoff et Eau Coulée. Je tiens à informer le vice-Premier ministre et ministre des Collectivités Locales que deux autres endroits ont été aussi touchés par ces inondations, je parle de Quentin et Rivière Sèche à Floréal. De ce fait, je lui demande de bien vouloir les rajouter sur sa liste des travaux, mais je note qu'il n'est pas là, en passant.

En ce qui concerne les cas d'expropriation des terres à l'Avenue Sivananda à Floréal pour les besoins du projet de Métro Express, plusieurs habitants sont toujours dans l'attente ; ils sont dans le flou car il n'y a rien de concret. A Vacoas- Floréal, on compte beaucoup de planteurs - le ministre n'est pas là.

Je saisiss l'occasion pour demander qu'une profonde réforme structurelle soit entreprise dans le secteur agricole pour diminuer l'importation et pour aller vers la sécurité alimentaire. Apportons notre soutien à l'économie locale en soutenant les producteurs locaux.

Une autre requête des planteurs, c'est d'avoir un *full-time Minister* qui pourrait consacrer plus de temps au secteur.

M. le président, pour conclure, je dirais que nous remettons en doute le leadership de la ministre de l'Egalité du genre et du bien-être de la famille qui a lamentablement échoué dans sa tâche.

An hon. Member : Shame!

Ms Anquetil : Vraisemblablement, elle n'a pas été capable de pousser efficacement ses dossiers à son collègue des Finances. Elle n'a pas su le convaincre de lui allouer les sommes nécessaires pour lutter contre la violence domestique, la maltraitance faite aux enfants, et la promotion du genre. Cette ministre est en décalage complet avec la situation des familles vulnérables du pays.

Je me pose une question : comment le Premier ministre peut-il tolérer une ministre aussi incompétente?

J'interpelle le Gouvernement, mais plus particulièrement le ministre des Finances à revoir son budget dans sa forme pour inclure les plus vulnérables de la société et je manquerai à mon devoir si je ne partage pas ce que Mahatma Gandhi a dit, et je cite –

« The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members ».

Je vous remercie M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

(5.46 p.m.)

Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. After listening to the hon. colleague on the other side of the House, from the Opposition *sérieuse*, I wonder if it's in their DNA to do the show. They come forward and say: '*c'est un budget amer et déplorable*'. Okay. We understand, yes!

(*Interruptions*)

This is what they have been doing ever since we started the debates.

(*Interruptions*)

You come forward with a quote from Mahatma Gandhi, but it is good also to know that Mahatma Gandhi was also for non-violence, '*ahinsa*'. So, violence, whether it is physical or whether it is with your words, and treating people in this Assembly as '*incompétents*', I don't think Mahatma Gandhi would be proud about this.

Mr Speaker, Sir, talking about female, talking about gender, but nobody comes forward, not a single word from that hon. Member about those girls who are now being given sanitary pads; those girls who, for the past few years, those women for the past few years were using cloth when they had their menses. But it is this Government, not a single word from that person who is actually fighting for gender; who is actually fighting for women equality. And how can we forget the microphone, the issue about the once Prime Minister who insulted a lady in public, treating her with a vulgar name. How can you forget about this and come here...

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(*Interruptions*)

Order!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: ... to give us lessons.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been in this Parliament for like 1½ year now. As a young Member, with all the backbenchers here, we have been given lessons. Put people first; know the history. And you know what I have done for this speech, I went back to history because why, we are about to write history. Unprecedented time needs unprecedented decisions.

This budget is a continuity of last year's budget, I will come into detail but I went to the library to know exactly what happened in the 70s when there were *zone franche*. What happened when we came forward with the Tourism Bill in 2002?

So, history shows like my hon. Colleague, Dr. Mrs Chukowry mentioned it, that the Opposition has 3 roles and one among which is to criticise. And I would like to share and to quote here the then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, hon. Paul Bérenger, who, during the debate, 04 June 2002, when they were presenting the Tourism Bill – it is good for us, young Members, to know the history. What he said was –

“In the Opposition, certain commentators will always find things that are going wrong but things that are going right are taken for granted.”

And that is immediately taken for granted. This is what the Opposition is doing. The Opposition today wants to make people believe that whatever we presented is all dark, it is bad, there is nothing for them. But I can tell you, I am here proud, proud to be part of this Government. Proud! Because, you know, the globe itself, the world is going through the pandemic. We have to change; we have to adapt. This budget is not only happening here in Mauritius where we are trying to help people but it is around the world. And to quote Dr. Minouche Shafik, the Head of the London School of Economics who said –

“The political turmoil we observe in many countries is only a foretaste of what awaits us if we do not rethink what we owe each other.”

It is from ‘The Economist’ of 06 March 2021.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have some countries who are ready to forsake their Welfare State, but, here, in Mauritius, we are doing everything to protect our Mauritian citizens. And, as I mentioned, today I feel proud, I feel proud of the measures which have been brought forward, bold and Herculean measures for the citizens of Mauritius.

I would like to congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance for presenting, under the guidance of the Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, a budget which cuts across all strata of our society. A budget which is in line with the philosophy of late and much regretted Sir Anerood Jugnauth. The underlying groups of which is the building and sustaining of an inclusive society where every single citizen irrespective of his/her socio-economic background, is not left behind.

Well, once again, Mr Speaker, Sir, this budget comes to prove beyond any doubt that this is a caring and compassionate Government which whilst strengthening and diversifying the main pillars of the economy, does not lose sight of those who have been for too long left on the periphery of development. Indeed through the measures announced in favour of poverty alleviation, this budget *fait la part belle aux plus pauvres et plus démunis de notre société*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, at the very outset, I did mention that it is a continuity of last year's budget and I would like to dwell on the title of the budget itself, 'Better Together' which to my mind deserves much attention as it is a continuity of last year's budget 'our new normal, the economy of life'. What we perceive as normal world and normal state of affairs, we had to adapt to new normal with time. We have had to organise ourselves as individuals; re-engineer ourselves as society, and develop a totally new look towards life and our common future.

As one nation, we have had to assess, adapt and innovate. As one nation, we stood together to support one another. Everyone, every single citizen has been doing his or her part, observing the sanitary protocols, businesses, the SMEs, the hotel industry have been doing their best to adapt and retain their workers. Our frontliners, the Healthcare System, policemen, refuse collectors, workers from supermarkets all displayed an unprecedented courage and dedication. Charitable institutions, NGOs, volunteers, even the media have stepped up showing support to those in need despite many difficulties.

2020/2021 has showed that our values as one people, one nation is still omnipresent. Values of unity, resilience, solidarity, fortitude. The values of respect, care and adaptability in action of working together.

We are standing as the whole of society to fight that invisible virus. And , very often, we, politicians, we tend to say that, yes the pandemic has affected all of us equally, which is not true at all. The impact has been the same on different groups within the society. Women and youths were hit fiercely. The closure of schools, nurseries, day care centres drove women's participation in the labour force down. Many have had to quit their job to be able to take care of their kids and the figures are there.

Our youths have paid and are still paying, a high price for the lockdown. We have had to adapt to a totally new form of schooling.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will take the time of the House to focus on 5 main areas mentioned in the budget, namely climate change, the Health Care System, the Social Security Integration, and the education. Which obviously, the Opposition will not tell you.

Mr Speaker, Sir, climate change is real. It is not a fashionable theme; it is real. Unlike COVID-19 which was a sudden and sharp shock, climate change is a gradual and intensifying threat year after year. Tackling and adapting to climate change needs global solutions and local actions. For too long, people of this country have been suffering no sooner that there were heavy rains. We still remember the child who was drowned in 2008 due to poor water drainage in Mont Gout. How can we forget those precious lives that were lost during the flooding of Caudan area in March 2013.

This is why, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am deeply pleased that this 2021/2022, budget has laid so much emphasis on a flood management program. Being a young elected Member of my constituency No. 4, which is a mountainous region, together with me, my colleagues Lesjongard and hon. Tour, we have had to assist people who have been victims of flooding very often.

Once there is a flash flood, there is heavy rain, we receive calls, people are at the station of Abercrombie waiting; there are children. So, for those who are trying to minimise this element in the budget, well, let me tell you, those people in Cité la Cure, in Ti Rodrigues, in Carreau Lalo, they are very grateful. Why? They have lost everything at one particular time, school materials, uniforms, their books, their furniture, everything got wasted, and it is real, it is not a political measure. We are here to save lives and not about profit.

Well, Mr Speaker, Sir, as mentioned before, we welcome this measure and this investment of an amount of Rs559 m. into the localities like I mentioned; Crève Coeur, Blackburn, Congomah, Chitrakoot, because those inhabitants were waiting for such projects to come their way.

Also, we are very pleased after the construction of a new Police Atation at Abercrombie, Sainte Croix, we rejoice that one will be constructed at Vallée des Prêtres as announced to the inhabitants by the Prime Minister himself.

Another laudable measure mentioned in the budget is the allocation of Rs250 m. for embellishment of beaches, cleaning of rivers and canals, rehabilitation of heritage and tourist sites, greening of towns and villages and upgrading of sewerage infrastructure because our Constituency needs this.

Well, in line with the Mauritius Vision 2013 launched in 2015 by late Sir Anerood Jugnauth, we are now laying strong and deep foundation for a green energy industry. The numerous measures proposed to implement this vision will pave the way towards the use of renewable and clean energy at a large and even dominant scale in the near future.

We are talking about this sector which has been announced by the hon. Minister of Finance. What we could hear the Opposition saying is that it will not work. They do not trust this, but history will prove that each time the Opposition mentioned anything with regard to new project, well, it was only *pour la gallerie* as we say. It happened, I will give you example.

Well, also as mentioned by hon. Dr. Padayachy in his speech, Mauritius has the potential of harnessing a variety of sources needed to produce its own energy, be it biomass, solar, wind or wave. We have three basic human resources and are making sure to develop and acquire the necessary expertise and means to do so. Well, I am confident that the Central Electricity Board under the able guidance of hon. Lesjongard, will transform the energy sector and decisively make of Green Mauritius a reality in the coming years. A reality that will serve as an example to other small developing states and even larger countries, a proof that where there is vision, focus, commitment, results soon follow.

As announced in the budget by the hon. Minister of Finance, the CEB will invest some Rs5.3 billion over the next three years from the setting up of ten gas insulated switchgear substation as well as the installation of a solar farm of ten megawatt capacity at

Tamarind Fall. CEB will also enable both companies and individuals to sell their surplus energy production to the board.

Another laudable measure in line with the protection of the environment is the removal of 5% excise duty on electric vans. Furthermore, owners of electric vehicles will be allowed to install a photovoltaic system not exceeding 10 kilowatts to provide for the charging of their own vehicles, as well as exporting the surplus to the grid. And also we appreciate the NTC will purchase 25 electric buses, all these to protect our environment. In the same vein, the preservation of the ecosystem remains a priority; the funding of Rs2.2 billion is being allocated to the National Environment Fund while some Rs1.2 billion will be invested for the rehabilitation and protection of our coastline.

Greening the country also means preserving its biodiversity and endangered landscape. This massive allocation is testimony to the commitment of this Government to make sure that our future generation inherits a preserved environment.

Well, Mr Speaker, Sir, a thriving democracy is characterised by an inclusive society, a society where the younger generation, the young one feels accepted and valued for his or her choices. This budget sets the base for a better today and a bright tomorrow for the young Mauritians. The creation of Youth Hubs to the amount of Rs165 m. has been welcomed by the young of this generation. Education is not only what is imparted and shared within the four walls of a classroom, learning by oneself to become a responsible citizen through the values of collective and individual sports is also crucial.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Rs32 m. of investment to convert outdoor centres into a National Outdoor Education and Recreation Centre is most welcome. The integration of *natation scolaire* in the School Curriculum has been welcomed, not only by parents and students, but also the academics.

Mr Speaker, Sir, quoting Liz Carter, President and CEO of the Scripps Howard Foundation who says –

“When you give a child a book, you give them a chance at success.”

And it goes without saying that cultivating the habit of reading will actually help the young one to invest for life and in a better life and might even grow as a better citizen, given that the books will take the child to new places, imaginations and dreams as well.

Well, studies show that the youth or the millennial, like we like to call ourselves, we do not like so much the jobs, so they prefer to chart their own path. For the most enterprising ones, they even dream of having their own start-ups. The allocation of 20% of spaces of the upcoming parks rent-free to start-ups for the first three years of operation is a measure that might help a future Mauritian who has some great entrepreneurial vision.

With your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall now highlight a few measures relating to the Health Care system. I would like to salute the courage and dedication by the health carers and the frontliners. Mr Speaker, Sir, during my radio days while I was hosting a show where people used to call about their problems together with hon. Gilbert Bablee. Every single day we used to have parents, we used to have mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, who used to call us up, and ask us for help to announce to the public that their children needs to go for an operation, they do not have the amount and we had to do crowd funding for them.

Well, I will say that today, I am proud. People often ask me: “Do you regret leaving the radio?” No, I am happy here because I am able to bring a change with an able Government. I am happy and I am proud that this Government has been changing the policies over the last few years.

Ever since this Government took place under the leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, we have been improving the healthcare system. Under the impetus of the Prime Minister, the amount provided to deserving patients overseas has been increased. Air ticket is also offered to the patient but also the one accompanying the patient, which comes as a relief for the family.

And now, I would like to heartily thank the Minister of Finance and hon. Dr. Jagutpal as well for reviewing the threshold for eligibility from Rs50,000 to Rs100,000 for those kids who have to go for abroad operations and I would like to say thank you on behalf of the parents. This measure, as I mentioned, comes as a relief to the parents who had to *remuer ciel et terre* as it helps to save the life of their children.

Another bold and historical measure I wish I would like to salute is the setting up of Day Care Wards for autistic children at the five regional hospitals and here, I would like to request hon. Jagutpal if he could name one of them. If possible one in Long Mountain, in the name of late Geraldine Aliphon, who has devoted her life supporting children with autism. Well, she was an inhabitant of my constituency from Crève Coeur.

Well, I shall now move on to the building about inclusive society, Mr Speaker, Sir. This Government has left no stone unturned in its fight against poverty. In view to support this mission, let me remind the House that it is this Government and this Prime Minister who, in his Budget 2016-2017, introduced the monthly subsistence allowance for a family of two adults and three children with a maximum threshold of Rs9,520.

I will again set on record the effort of this Government reviewing the SRM eligibility and as from the 01 July 2021, the maximum threshold will increase from Rs9,520 to Rs10,500. The monthly orphan pension will increase to Rs8,000 for those age up to 23 years old increasing the incontinence allowance from Rs900 to Rs1,500. On this side of this House, we keep the people at heart and as we mentioned we have some historical measures. Being mindful of the time Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like also to set on record that this Government is providing free sanitary towels to girls of Grade 6 to Grade 13 providing free optical glasses for those age up to 21 years, public beaches would be accessible to disabled and introduction of school material in braille shows the enthusiasm of this Government in leaving no stone unturned and in leaving no one behind.

I would, now, like to set another thing on record, it is like we are building the future of our children and building the future means investing in innovation and entrepreneur. With your permission, I would like to mention the name of a young lady who has inspired and who is still inspiring many among us. She is Devina Lobine where in 2020 she won the UNESCO prize for women and science in the young talents for her contribution in Alzheimer. So, therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have no doubt that Mauritius has a pool of researchers who shall be able to contribute further in different sectors, thus the 125 million earmarked will certainly be useful alongside with the Rs1 billion to the Mauritius Institute of Biotechnology for the setting up of local production.

Before concluding, I would like to share with my colleagues what I have been finding during my research. In 1970, 02 December, when there was the Export Processing Zone Bill which was discussed, one Member mentioned about this Bill, it was something that was *osé* as we say, it was challenging. So one Member mentioned that –

« M. le président toute zone franche est un très lourd fardeau pour ce pays parcequ'on doit donner par exemple des facilités pour les produits dans le pays »

Lourd! But, let me tell you that this *zone franche* where people were debating here in this Parliament saying no, we should not allow this, has enabled so many people, has enabled so many women to work and educate their children. I am a product of that and I am proud.

To conclude Mr Speaker, Sir, some doomsayers are doubting the resilience of the Mauritian nation. Well, our past has proven them wrong, so will our future. From a mono crop economy to becoming a preferred tourism destination, all the while achieving excellence in manufacturing. Our financial sector channels huge investment flows across the world. Mauritians are by essence resilient, would take each challenge that they face head-on and as a young Member of the Parliament, I trust our Mauritian population for forging the future together.

I thank you Mr Speaker, Sir for your attention and I commend the Bill to the House.

(6.11 p.m.)

Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): M. le président, vendredi dernier l'honorable ministre des Finances a cru vendre le rêve d'une île Maurice engagée dans la voie de la prospérité, de la croissance et du bonheur. Hélas, il n'y a pas une frange de la population qui ne souffre pas de l'incompétence de ce gouvernement. Le discours du ministre des Finances, que ce soit dans le ton ou dans la teneur tranche par rapport au vécu des Mauriciens. *Morisien, buku Morisiens, zot tire diab par lake.*

Au fond de chaque Mauricien, avec ce gouvernement d'en face et le budget présenté, sait pertinemment bien qu'il est nullement question de préparer le terrain pour sortir de la crise. Avec la frivolité de la gestion des affaires du pays, l'avenir de nos enfants est plus hypothéqué. Une simple question au ministre des Finances: quelles sont les possibilités d'emploi qui sont offertes aux jeunes qui viennent de prendre part aux examens de la *HSC*? Quel avenir professionnel pour ces jeunes diplômés qui vont fièrement participer à des *graduation ceremonies* après tant d'années de sacrifices encourues personnellement et par leurs parents?

Croyez-vous, sincèrement M. le président que *these young professionals will buy the bragging of the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development that we are setting the stage to emerge stronger*. Le 'non' de la rue est des plus catégorique. À l'heure où nous discutons et nous débattons dans cette Chambre du budget de l'État pour l'année financière 2021-2022, il y a là maintenant et tout de suite une urgence économique, financière et sociale sans précédent dans le pays. La population est dans l'angoisse, vit dans une grande

inquiétude à la suite des licenciements ou les menaces imminentes, de l'inactivité prolongée de leurs secteurs, de la réduction drastique de leur chiffre d'affaires, des perspectives sombres à l'horizon pour nos jeunes après leurs études universitaires. Alors que les ménages doivent ménager avec des ressources qui fondent comme de la neige face au rayon du soleil de la dévaluation à contre goutte de la monnaie nationale. Chaque famille mauricienne a une histoire à raconter. Certaines d'entre elles sont plus touchées que d'autres. Des courses au supermarché, à *laboutik*, au *ti bazar* du coin sont de plus en plus lourdes pour le portemonnaie. Les factures, les mensualités, les imprévus – un véritable casse-tête pour les foyers.

En ce qu'il s'agit des licenciements M. le président, il y a certains qui ont été exécutés sans aucune forme de reconnaissance envers des employés qui ont loyalement servi leurs entreprises pendant plus d'un quart de siècle. J'ai une pensée spéciale, cet après-midi, pour tous ces travailleurs et salariés dont le sort sont entre les mains du *Redundancy Board*. Je pense aussi à ces employés d'*Air Mauritius* compétents, dévoués et *smart* qui ont porté haut les couleurs de notre *national carrier* dans le ciel africain, européen et asiatique pendant presqu'un demi-siècle et qui se sont retrouvés hors-piste. Ils sont ni coupables ni responsables de cette situation et pourtant ce sont eux les victimes les plus durement touchées. Alors que le gouvernement ait assumé pleinement ses devoirs envers les fonctionnaires et des employés des corps para étatiques en congé forcé en raison de la fermeture des frontières ou du protocole sanitaire en vigueur dans les pays, le gouvernement n'aurait pas dû jouer à '*pas mwa, li sa*' dans le cas de MK. Notre Paille-en-Queue nationale a une patte cassée, des ailes déplumées et les vautours guettent, j'en sais M. le président, des vautours. Notre Paille-en-Queue n'a été victime de la grippe aviaire mais de l'avidité de certains courtiers sanguinaires. Paille en feu qui n'en finira pas, je l'espère, empaillé comme le dodo parce que le pays a besoin d'une *Air Mauritius* pour soutenir la relance de l'industrie touristique. *Air Mauritius* doit renaître de ses cendres rapidement.

Je le disais M. le président, une anxiété profonde mais aussi du sentiment de dépit et de dégoût face à autant de laisser-aller et à l'impunité dont bénéficient les proches et les copains et les copines. La dilapidation tolérée des biens publics et la dégradation insensée de nos bases financières et sociales. Une inquiétude profonde face à une dégradation des moeurs, des valeurs et de corruption endémique où le cosmétique est généreusement employé pour dissimuler un sens de l'éthique mort et enterré. Une inquiétude profonde face à un régime menaçant et tyrannique qui se retranche derrière une société de surveillance de l'espace ou du cyberspace et tout ça à nos frais.

Tout devient possible dans la République pour ce régime : le MV Wakashio qui pénètre dans nos eaux territoriales, ni vu, ni connu et provoque une marée noire ; une frontière passoire qui permet un trafic de drogue de milliards de roupies, des images de *Safe City* qui disparaissent à souhait ; une corruption rampante qui entraîne des morts et gangrène de nombreuses instances décisionnelles ; un climat d'opacité et une attitude de '*pena compte pou render à personne ; nou ki gouvernma*'. Au fil des mois, ce sentiment perdure et s'installe et le psychiatre de service de l'autre côté de la Chambre doit savoir que ce sentiment pénible prolongé n'est pas sans conséquence sur la qualité de vie de la population. Dans une telle situation, cependant, l'humain peut aussi saisir la réalité du monde ainsi que la sienne propre. L'humain améliore son sens de discernement, jauge mieux ses opportunités et ses faiblesses et se montre 'moins mouton' et ose à faire entendre sa voix. Et je le redis : 'moins mouton' et ose à faire entendre sa voix pour défendre ses droits et la population sait qu'elle peut défendre ses droits. Et ces voix, on les a beaucoup entendus ces derniers temps et derrière ce calme apparent de la population apparaît une grande colère, M. le président. Une colère grandissante !

Tristement, je constate que la prise en compte de cette urgence économique et sociale a été manifestement sous-estimée dans ce budget. D'abord, par l'absence d'un langage de vérité qu'exige de telles situations à la place de ce verbiage coloré et c'est ce qu'il manque le plus dans ce budget. Qui dit vrai, le FMI, la banque Mondiale ou la banque de Maurice ou le ministère des Finances ? Passer d'une décroissance de 5.4 % à une croissance de 9 % en une année, un déficit budgétaire annoncé de 5 %, alors que le déficit réel est de 9.7 % en incluant les dépenses encourues des *Special Funds* hors budget. Est-ce que ce sont les lourds investissements dans des secteurs improductifs qui vont permettre à l'économie de redémarrer ? Est-ce un *shopping list* géographiquement diversifié et une attribution massive des marchés pour les drains, des serviettes et un livre suffiront à rétablir la confiance de la population et du secteur privé ? Est-ce cela la relance ? Est-ce avec une augmentation de R 10 par jour pour un adulte et 50 sous par jour pour un enfant au seuil d'éligibilité du *SRM* qui fera reculer la pauvreté absolue ? Le *new normal* du précédent budget a cédé la place à un '*all normal*'.

Le ton, le contenu et la durée du discours du budget démontre que pour le ministre des Finances et le gouvernement, ce n'est rien de plus qu'un exercice de communication avec la distribution des friandises '*pou fer la bouche doux*', de communication ou de manipulation, d'abord des chiffres, des faits et ses effets et de l'opinion publique pour mieux faire avaler la

quinine de R 2 sur le litre d'essence pour payer les vaccins, alors que le gouvernement a déjà dépensé R 500 millions et reçu des milliers de vaccins en cadeau. 10 % de taxe sur le tabac et l'alcool ! Sans faire l'apologie des fumeurs, M. le président, je dirai simplement que des études, amplement démontrées, que la surtaxe sur la cigarette peut provoquer un léger repli de la demande. Mais le fardeau fiscal est beaucoup plus lourd pour ceux qui se trouvent au bas de l'échelle.

Pour les 11 milliards de roupies de plus, passant de 28 à 39 milliards de roupies que le gouvernement espère récolter avec la TVA, surtout des poches des consommateurs, qui sont ceux qui seront pénalisés ? À R 30 000 par tête d'habitant de la TVA, M. le président, un effort colossal, auquel la population ne peut consentir. Je me demande pendant combien de temps encore le gouvernement campera dans son '*denial mode*'. Ceux qui m'ont précédé de ce côté de la Chambre ont amplement démontré le vrai visage de ce budget. D'abord, en commençant par faire une bonne lecture de la chronologie des événements depuis 2015 ; une gouvernance de plus approximative depuis 2015, caractérisé par une gestion de '*trial by error*' ; des effets d'annonce, des furies vengeresses qui ont coûté plus de R 15 milliards aux contribuables. Les indicateurs étaient déjà au rouge avant la Covid-19 et maintenant la situation est plus difficile qu'elle aurait pu être parce que nous payons le prix de ce calfatage économique et financier. Ce n'est pas sans raison que le pays s'est retrouvé sur des listes grises, noires, et maintenant oranges, avec la présente situation sanitaire.

Maintenant, M. le président, la relance de l'économie se fera avec les 3R : Redressement, Renaissance, Résilience. Quel redressement, M. le président, alors qu'on ne voit partout que du rapiètement. Renaissance ! Les automobilistes, eux, ils ont entendu '*ré-essence p augmenter*', *pas renaissance*. Et de la résilience, M. le président, alors que c'est plutôt de la '*rozillience*', promettant un tableau '*rozi*' pour bientôt. Sortir plus fort de la crise avec une dette publique qui ne cessera – de l'aveu de l'honorable ministre – d'augmenter pour atteindre les R 500 milliards à la fin du présent mandat de cette législature, soit plus de R 400,000 par tête d'habitant, représentant une hausse de R 175,000 !

M. le président, je disais plus haut que dans une situation, l'humain saisit cependant mieux la réalité du monde, ainsi que la sienne, et qu'il améliore son sens de discernement et se montre 'moins mouton' et ose faire entendre sa voix. Et que dit cette voix de la population, que la frivolité de la gestion des affaires du pays exige un coup de balai, un coup de kärcher et d'un grand nettoyage à eau de Javel, pas du genre de la *National Environment Cleaning Authority* que présidera le PM, laissant sur la touche le ministre de l'Environnement et celui

des Collectivités locales. Ça c'est le rôle du ministre de l'Environnement et celui des Collectivités locales qui perdent jour après jour leur pouvoir. J'ai été maire et beaucoup d'entre nous, les honorables Nagalingum et Quirin de ce côté de la Chambre. Le bureau des Collectivités locales, le *Local Government* n'existe plus ; le bureau se trouve à Anquetil Building. M. le président, que dit la population : assez avec ces vols, ces détournements, ces fraudes systémiques au détriment des contribuables ; adresser une sévère mise en garde contre la corruption, les abus, le gaspillage des fonds publics. Je ne voulais pas en faire mention ; tout le monde le sait : le rapport du directeur de l'audit, année après année. Ce que nous disons au gouvernement : 'Prenez les sanctions et laissez les institutions fonctionner sans ingérence'. Je suis ici presque bientôt 40 ans, M. le président, au gouvernement ou dans l'Opposition et nous n'avons jamais vu autant d'ingérence, autant de dégradation dans les institutions de notre République. Institution après institution, il y a ingérence, il y a une dégradation. La population est très remontée contre l'inaction du gouvernement envers ces fraudeurs, ces corrompus et soi-disant gestionnaires qui dilapident les fonds publics. Cette inaction suscite des interrogations et le public commence à se demander qui tire réellement les ficelles et qui sont leurs complices. Sont-ils dans 'la cuisine' ou sont-ils ailleurs ? Faut-il le rappeler, M. le président, la corruption une fois qu'elle est incrustée, elle peut tout détruire. La corruption peut tout détruire. La hiérarchisation des priorités nationales ou régionales, les exercices de recrutement et de promotion, l'attribution des marchés, tout est faussé avec la corruption. On vient de m'informer, M. le président, que le président de la *LGSC* a été nommé. Il était à l'*ICTA*, celui qui a eu un coup de canif dans les rues de Port Louis, pour ne pas dire, il a été éjecté quelques années de cela par le Premier ministre d'alors d'*ICTA*. Vous m'enfreindrez à mentionner son nom.

LGSC, une institution qui est responsable de nomination, je crois autant d'ingérence sur les nominations. Et parfois, M. le président, cela entraîne la mort des ouvriers sur le chantier parce que l'inspecteur en charge de la vérification a préféré fermer l'œil sur le non-respect des *Health and Safety rules* et j'espère le ministre responsable de la *CWA*, ce qui s'est passé à Mare aux Vacoas, il y a eu beaucoup de négligence où quelqu'un a perdu - je sais qu'il y a une enquête - perdu la vie. Il y a eu mort.

En ce qu'il s'agit du gaspillage de fonds publics, je l'ai dit. Le directeur de l'Audit a dressé un abécédaire complet dans son dernier rapport. Les étudiants de Management de l'Université de Maurice, je leur ai dit chaque année d'aller étudier ce rapport dans un module aménagé. Réaction du gouvernement sur le report de l'audit : zéro ! *Kumadir dilo lor brede*

songe. Mais pourquoi ; qui profite ? C'est l'argent public. Le directeur de l'Audit, il y a des membres du gouvernement et il y a des membres de l'opposition. Qu'est-ce qu'on n'a pas demandé année après année. On change. Il y a un changement au niveau du *PAC*. L'honorable Uteem, je suis sûr, qui est responsable, très compétent année après année, il va venir avec des rapports mais il y aura des changements. Je me rappelle qu'il y avait une délégation des membres de *PAC* qui ont rencontré feu l'ancien Premier ministre, Sir Anerood Jugnauth avec Veda Baloomoody, mon ami qui était à la tête, membres du gouvernement et l'opposition vont demander un changement qui a été agréé, jamais, on a entendu qu'on allait amender les *Standing Orders* pour donner plus de pouvoir au *PAC*.

M. le président, dans le même souffle au chapitre de la fraude et de la corruption, je voudrais maintenant venir sur un sujet qui est une industrie des courses sur laquelle moi-même, mon ami, l'honorable Quirin ne me posait pas mal de questions. Je me rappelle avant 2014, alors dans l'Opposition, semaine après semaine, je venais avec des questions pour insister sur l'institution d'une commission d'enquête. Et il y a eu cette commission d'enquête. J'ai le rapport – *Commission of Inquiry on Horse Racing in Mauritius by Commissioners Parry, Gunn, etc.* Il ne faut pas oublier juste après les élections, ce rapport a été remis au gouvernement. Perdu. Un certain M. D. B., il a perdu de mémoire, il ne sait pas où est le rapport. *Perdi latet*. Voilà le rapport est là ! Moi j'ai une copie. Tellement nous avons posé des questions, on a eu finalement le rapport. Je ne sais pas comment c'est venu. J'ai eu ça de la Bibliothèque

M. le président, dans le budget, le ministre des Finances fait mention qu'il va amender dans le *Finance Bill*, des *measures*, il fait mention qu'il va venir amender le *GRA*, *Gambling Regulatory Authority*. Il va venir sûrement avec des amendements au *Finance Bill*. M. le président, moi-même et mon collègue nous a demandé pas mal de questions au Parlement. Aujourd'hui, je parlais du contrôle partisan de la *Gambling Regulatory Authority*. L'argent est voté dans le budget, ça tombe dans le budget, l'année dernière il y eu R 46 millions qui ont été votées pour le *Gambling Regulatory Authority*.

M. le président, la protection des intérêts des parieurs, ils sont les membres du public, sont devenus aujourd'hui le cadet de souci de cette instance, qui fait tout à son pouvoir, même plus pour protéger, promouvoir l'intérêt d'un magnat de jeux. Pour corser le tout, la *GRA* est devenue aujourd'hui s'ingère la gestion occurrence du club de la *MTC*. Comment expliquer qu'elle soit permise de revoir le handicap des chevaux engagés dans une course ? Ce n'est pas son rôle. Cet exercice avait été effectué par un panel qui s'y connaît en la

matière. Mais même s'il ne connaît pas la matière, la GRA a donné des directives pour pénaliser les concurrents d'un cheval et en particulier qui appartienne au magnat des paris.

M. le président, tout le monde reconnaît l'importance d'avoir une instance régulatrice. Je dirais même c'est capital mais que voit-on depuis quelques années ? La *GRA* ne se montre pas, surtout en 2014, à la hauteur des attentes. De plus, en lisant deux interviews récemment accordés par l'ancien *Head of Integrity and Compliance* de la *GRA*, on a eu l'idée du degré de pourrissement de la situation de cette instance régulatrice. A cet effet, on sait comment fonctionne ce *Board*, qui est à la tête du *Board* ? Un haut fonctionnaire du bureau de Premier ministre, un *Senior Adviser*, un certain M. D. B. du *Prime Minister's Office*.

M. le président, ce Monsieur D. B., il n'a pas mâché ses mots. Il a qualifié la *GRA* de cirque. Un certain D. B. comme maître d'œuvre et la prise en main de l'organisation de courses par un certain M. J. M. L. S., un grand magnat du jeu et principal bailleur de fonds. Aujourd'hui, qu'est-ce que j'ai appris ? Voilà j'ai un papier, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Do not mention names!

Mr Bhagwan: M. L. S., j'ai déjà un papier, M. le président. Il a eu un problème, il est allé à la police de Beau Bassin. Il est *Adviser* au *Prime Minister's Office*. Nous voulons savoir du gouvernement, est-ce que M. L. S. est un *Adviser* tout comme Dr. Joomaye, ancien transfuge comme *Adviser* au *Prime Minister's Office* ? Est-ce que J. M. L. S., grand magnat des Jeux et principal bailleur de fonds, propriétaire de SMS Pariaz, ça je peux le dire, est *Adviser* dans un OB 7292021, *Western Division*, la police. Il s'est présenté lui-même comme un *Adviser*. Le Premier ministre aura le temps de nous dire, de venir démentir. C'est dans le domaine public aujourd'hui, dans tous les journaux, sur tous les online M. M. L. S. il se présente comme un *Adviser*. M. le président, c'est le plus bailleur du fonds de SMS Pariaz, *marye pike*, tout le monde le sait qu'a été son rôle politique au sein du MSM.

M. le président, la *GRA* a tellement failli à sa tâche que nous pensons, nous de ce côté de la Chambre, il est temps de dissoudre le plus vite. J'ai demandé aux ministres, il y avait 4 questions aujourd'hui. Il faut revoir le *Board* de la *GRA*. Il faut mettre des gens intègres, des gens compétents, des gens qu'on puisse faire *due diligence*. J'ai demandé pas mal de questions, M. le président. C'est *on record*, depuis l'ancien Premier ministre depuis 2014, quel était le rôle de M. D. B, aujourd'hui le grand manitou qui roule la *GRA*, qui donne des directives à la *GRA*, minute par minute et jour après jour.

M. le président, un autre aspect sur lequel je voudrais m'attarder est le contrôle effectué en temps réel. M. le président, SMS Pariaz n'est pas connecté au serveur, on parle de budget de la *MRA*. Cela pour une raison qui en dit long sur les relations que je qualifierai d'incestueuses, qui existent entre certains dirigeants de la *GRA* et ceux de SMS Pariaz. En effet, M. le président, d'après ce qui m'a été donné de comprendre, c'est que le système de l'organisateur, des paris n'est pas compatible à celui des autorités. Dans un tel cas, il fallait suspendre la licence de SMS Pariaz jusqu'à que la compagnie fasse le nécessaire pour être connecté en temps réel avec la *Mauritius Revenue Authority*. Au lieu de prendre une telle mesure, on a laissé l'organisateur faire à sa guise, soit soumettre le nombre de paris effectués quelques jours plus tard laissant ainsi le temps à SMS Pariaz de manipuler les chiffres. Qui est plus, on se demande pourquoi les paris effectués séquentiellement. *Tou craz partou ! Tou kaz partou !* Est-ce pour permettre à l'organisateur de paris de déclarer un chiffre d'affaire moindre et se livrer à un exercice d'évasion fiscale ? Et sur ce chapitre, M. le président, comme on le dit si bien dans notre langage national : '*olie lisien bouze lake se lake ki p bouze lisien*'.

M. le président, le mal qui frappe l'industrie hippique ! Le monde des paris actuels a un nom ; le mal c'est Monsieur J.M.L.S. et il est en train de tout mettre en œuvre pour tout contrôler dans ce domaine pour faire le gouvernement perdre des millions, pour ne pas dire des millions et des millions de roupies, avec la complicité du Monsieur D.B., un membre du *Board* qui manipule le *Board* de la *GRA*.

M. le président, je faillirai à mon devoir si je ne mets pas en exergue la persécution que Monsieur J.M.G., le président de la *MTC* subit actuellement. Monsieur J.M.G n'est pas n'importe qui ; il a été à la tête d'une grande compagnie cotée en bourse. Il a présidé à la *MTC* en pas moins de six occasions. En mars dernier il a été élu administrateur, élu après les élections, et porté à la présidence. Malgré le fait qu'il fait la quasi-unanimité dans le monde des courses, il a été privé de son *Personal Management Licence* sous les directives de Monsieur D.B. Il a porté l'affaire en Cour. Sans vouloir présager le jugement qui sera prononcé, je pense que dans quelques jours cette application aurait dû passer comme une lettre à la poste, compte tenu de sa riche carrière, faite de contributions positives dans le monde sportif en général. Mais le grand péché de Monsieur J.M.G., sans omettre sa farouche détermination à protéger les acquis de son club et d'empêcher ...

Mr Speaker: You are going too much on the MTC and racing.

Mr Bhagwan: No, but this is Budget; millions of rupees from the GRA, I know Sir. GRA, public money...

Mr Speaker: Come to the Budget!

Mr Bhagwan: C'est une instance régulatrice. On nous demande de voter des lois ; voilà, c'est là dans l'annexe du budget...

Mr Speaker: Come back to the Budget.

Mr Bhagwan: *C'est une industrie.* I am coming back because it is public money and we are talking about institutions, Sir. This is an institution; GRA is an institution.

Mr Speaker: Come back!

Mr Bhagwan: I am not coming back, it's on track...

Mr Speaker: I am waiting for you.

Mr Bhagwan: *I am on track.* M. le président, je vais poser quelques questions. C'est clair que la *GRA* ne veut pas mettre de l'ordre là où le gouvernement perd des millions à un moment difficile et où les deniers publics se font rares. On parle de budget, d'argent, on parle de la *MRA*.

M. le président, comment expliquer que l'*interim report* de la commission d'enquête sur les courses soit disparu? Comment expliquer que Monsieur D.B. a tout fait pour chasser Madame R. à la *GRA* en tant que *CEO*? Comment se fait-il que le *Head of Integrity*, Monsieur P.B. a été poussé hors de la *GRA*, alors qu'il menait une série d'enquêtes pour protéger l'industrie des courses de ces mains invisibles qui tiraient les ficelles dans les coulisses ? Comment se fait-il que certains bookmakers, jugés dangereux pour l'industrie hippique, ont obtenu leurs licences de la *GRA*, alors que le club avait opposition veto ? Comment se fait-il que certains propriétaires, sur lesquels la *MRA* enquête toujours, ont eu leurs *PMLs* de la *GRA* alors que Monsieur J.M.G. attend toujours ? M. le président, comment se fait-il que le *SMS Pariaz* a le droit de faire de la publicité alors que les autres compagnies de *betting* n'en ont pas le droit ? M. le président, la liste est longue. Aujourd'hui, tout le monde le sait, la *GRA* est manipulée par Monsieur D.B. et Monsieur L.M.

M. le président, j'ai retiré mes questions parlementaires mais je vais revenir à la charge dans les semaines à venir si j'ai l'occasion. La *GRA* est complètement pourrie et il faut un changement. J'espère que le ministre des Finances – irresponsable - aura le courage

d'aller vers le Premier ministre pour demander un changement à la tête de la *GRA*. On va le juger de par ses actions.

M. le président, puisqu'il a été beaucoup question de l'argent des contribuables, des consommateurs, je vais parler des R 7 milliards dans le cadre du *Flood Management Programme* - de quoi inonder les contracteurs avec la construction de 1,500 drains. Et nous allons être ici présents pour poser des questions. M. le président, il faut certes investir dans la construction des drains, mais si pour chaque kilomètre construit il y a 3 kms existants qui sont modifiés, déviés, comblés, obstrués et non-entretenus, nous ne serons jamais à la fin du drain. Si le ministère de l'Environnement continue à octroyer des *EIA Licences*, avec la complicité de l'*EDB*, pour des développements sur les sites sensibles, si l'inspectorat des collectivités locales par manque d'effectif se trouve incapable d'assurer la conformité aux règles de l'urbanisme, ce dimensionnement des drains est fait en fonction de l'argent disponible, *be buku larzan pu fini dan drain*. Nous espérons qu'il y aura des normes et que les normes vont être respectées.

M. le président, j'ai eu l'occasion de parler sur le *Land Drainage Bill*. L'argent devient une denrée rare avec le dérèglement climatique et il faut plus penser à l'évacuer le plus rapidement coûte que coûte. Dépendant de la topographie de la région, des bassins de rétention temporaires peuvent être envisagés pour permettre un écoulement progressif des eaux pluviales vers les nappes et les cours d'eau. Ralentir le ruissellement des surfaces pour atténuer l'érosion du sol et la sédimentation des rivières du lagon. Il faut réfléchir plus sous l'angle de la gestion intégrée des ressources ; ce qui me pousse à réfléchir, M. le président, à l'avenir de l'industrie sucrière qui n'a pas été abordé sérieusement au cours de ces dernières années. Le rapport de la Banque mondiale soumis, il y a deux ans au gouvernement, reste une énigme. Un débat approfondi sur la question et les mesures appropriées sont nécessaires. L'industrie sucrière doit être protégée et adaptée aux défis des futurs marchés du sucre. Il n'y a pas de solution facile mais il faut un consensus national sur cette question.

Sur le secteur d'électricité, nous régurgitons des platiitudes et récitons des mantras sans conviction. L'énergie verte est la solution par excellence à notre enjeu climatique. Mais à quelle réalité sommes-nous confrontés ? La biomasse des cannes et l'hydroélectricité, le photovoltaïque et l'éolien contribuent à peine 5%. On parle de *wave energy* ; à l'époque où je suis entré au *CEB*, dans les années 70, on parlait de ce rapport de *l'ex-General Manager*, Monsieur Botte ; on parle toujours de ce rapport. Comment pourrait-on atteindre 60% des

renouvelables en huit ans ? Nous espérons que le ministre de l’Energie va venir nous éclairer sur ce dossier.

*Pour conclure M. le président, this Budget exercise is yet another missed opportunity to garner our national effort to address the challenges of a post COVID-19 era. This Budget is shrouded in opacity, devious subterfuge, fiscal toxicants and hidden charges on the consumers. The veil is being lifted in public and the GIS is unable to counter react. Wastage of public fund is a tax on the public and Government remains unresponsive. How could we expect taxpayers to pay whilst no attempt is made to address this issue? This *nonchalance* is interpreted as *laissez-faire* policies and impotency of a failing Government.*

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister Ramano!

(6.46 p.m.)

The Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change (Mr K. Ramano): M. le président, merci de me donner la possibilité d’intervenir sur les débats budgétaires.

M. le président, je tiens à féliciter mon collègue, *the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development*, l’honorable Dr. Renganaden Padayachy pour un budget que je qualifierai d’audacieux en la circonstance. Il s’agit de son deuxième budget qui a été présenté dans un contexte sans précédent. Nous reconnaissons tous que sa tâche a été monumentale.

Il ne faut pas oublier et il convient de le rappeler sans cesse que le monde entier est toujours à genoux avec la crise de la Covid-19. Cela a non seulement bouleversé nos vies, mais a mis notre modèle économique et social à l’épreuve. Le monde entier est confronté à des temps incertains car nous ne savons toujours pas combien de temps durera cette pandémie de la Covid-19.

Malgré ce contexte sombre, ce gouvernement bienveillant a donné la priorité au pays et à sa population, l’humain, M. le président. Nous sommes sur la bonne voie pour surmonter les défis découlant de la pandémie. Le leadership du Premier ministre, l’honorable Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, est essentiel dans cette bataille difficile contre la pandémie. Le gouvernement a intensifié ses efforts pour administrer le vaccin contre la Covid-19 à la population afin que le pays obtienne une immunité collective au plus tôt.

Dans un contexte aussi difficile, lorsque notre résilience est mise à l'épreuve, nous n'avons d'autre choix que de nous réinventer en tant que nation et en tant que pays. Maurice devra indéniablement subir une série de transformations pour recréer de la richesse tout en assurant un développement durable pour cette génération et nos générations futures.

M. le président, le budget 2021/2022, dont le thème est «*Accelerating Economic Recovery, Triggering Revival and Strengthening Resilience* » répond aux nouveaux espoirs, ambitions et besoins du pays et aussi répondre à l'appel de la population. Il s'agit d'un budget responsable, sous tous les angles, contenant des mesures audacieuses pour la relance de l'économie, favorisant une société inclusive, tout en assurant des bases solides pour une croissance durable à long terme. En fait, le ministre des Finances, a jeté les bases pour transformer les défis menaçants posés par la pandémie en opportunité.

En tant que ministre de l'Environnement, je suis très reconnaissant au ministre des Finances, d'avoir évité l'ébranlement des considérations environnementales au détriment de l'agenda social et économique. Malgré les énormes défis sur les fronts socio-économiques, ce budget témoigne de l'engagement indéfectible de ce gouvernement à relever les défis environnementaux de taille auxquels non seulement notre petite île est confrontée, mais que le monde entier doit relever.

Mr Speaker: No conversation there!

Mr Ramano: M. le président, avant de venir à la panoplie de mesures budgétaires proposées pour faire avancer notre programme prioritaire en matière de protection de l'environnement et de développement durable, permettez-moi de rendre hommage au très regretté honorable Sir Anerood Jugnauth, GCSK, KCMG, QC, PC qui, en tant que Premier ministre de l'époque, a été celui qui a établi les bases de la protection et de la gestion de l'environnement à Maurice. Il croyait en la bonne gouvernance environnementale et au développement durable et l'a orientée vers la bonne gouvernance environnementale avant même le *Rio Earth Summit* en 1992.

Les actions sous sa direction ont commencé par la mise en place du *National Environmental Committee* en 1987, suivie de la création d'un ministère dédié à l'environnement en 1989. C'est à nouveau sous sa direction visionnaire que le gouvernement a consacré en 1991 les principes fondamentaux et les dispositions pour la protection et la conservation de l'environnement dans *l'Environment Protection Act* de 1991. Il a laissé ses empreintes au ministère et on se souviendra de lui comme d'un leader visionnaire qui a

toujours placé la protection de l'environnement et le développement durable au premier plan du développement du pays.

M. le président, la crise du Covid-19 a secoué tous les sillages de la vie, dont toutes les conséquences ne sont pas encore connues. Au niveau national, nous nous remettons encore de l'épisode de la marée noire du MV Wakashio qui a touché les côtes sud-est de l'île. N'oublions pas les autres défis environnementaux de taille auxquels le pays est confronté, des problèmes locaux tels que la gestion des plastiques aux défis mondiaux tels que le changement climatique. Alors que le monde est sur le point de franchir la limite dangereuse d'une augmentation de 1,5 degré Celsius de la température moyenne mondiale, Maurice sera appelée à faire face aux impacts accentués du changement climatique.

Vous vous souviendrez également des *flash floods* qui ont touché principalement les régions du sud et du sud-est de l'île le 16 avril 2021, où nous avons enregistré plus de 400 mm de pluies sur une période de 24 heures. Comme illustration supplémentaire du degré de perturbation causé par le changement climatique, les perspectives hivernales publiées par les services météorologiques de Maurice précisent un cumul de pluies prévu de l'ordre de 630 mm pour cet hiver.

Tous ces épisodes donnent un signal clair que l'environnement est fragile et a plus que jamais besoin d'être protégé et conservé pour qu'il continue à fournir les ressources nécessaires pour soutenir l'humanité. Le contexte difficile actuel appelle à un besoin accru d'assurer une protection adéquate de l'environnement, en particulier afin de renforcer le développement durable en tant que modèle directeur démontrant une bonne gouvernance à travers le pays.

M. le président, les effets d'entraînement de ces catastrophes ont des implications de grande envergure, que ce soit d'un point de vue économique, social ou environnemental. Une telle situation nous offre également l'opportunité de reconstruire en mieux.

Cela me rappelle le proverbe japonais «Tomber sept fois, se relever huit», ce qui signifie que nous devons nous relever peu importe à quel point nous sommes renversés. C'est dans cette attitude que réside notre véritable force et résilience.

Pour pouvoir rebondir, nous devons nous concentrer sur une récupération verte. Selon la directrice exécutive du *United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)*, Mme Inger Andersen: “*Humanity is facing a pandemic, an economic crisis and an ecological breakdown - we cannot afford to lose on any front. Governments have a unique chance to put their*

countries on sustainable trajectories that prioritize economic opportunity, poverty reduction and planetary health at once.”

Nous devons, donc, dépenser judicieusement et durablement. Ce budget s'appuie sur les efforts qui ont été initiés l'année dernière pour soutenir une transition écologique à Maurice. En effet, ce budget consolide les bases d'une véritable relance verte pour un «*build back better*» afin de promouvoir le développement durable pour une Ile Maurice plus propre, plus verte et plus résiliente.

Ce budget 2021/2022 prévoit environ 33 milliards de roupies pour résoudre les principaux problèmes liés à l'environnement, tels que –

- (a) gestion des inondations ;
- (b) gestion des glissements de terrain ;
- (c) réhabilitation et protection des côtes ;
- (d) énergies renouvelables ;
- (e) construction de barrages et mise à niveau des réservoirs ;
- (f) *greening* de Maurice, et
- (g) l'économie circulaire.

Cela représente environ 20% du budget total du gouvernement de la République de Maurice. Ceci, en lui-même, est énorme dans le contexte d'un budget axé sur l'accélération de la reprise économique, le déclenchement de la relance et le renforcement de la résilience.

M. le président, pour mieux reconstruire Maurice, mon ministère travaille dans ce sens. D'un point de vue politique, mon ministère entreprend un examen des politiques et stratégies environnementales nationales à travers l'élaboration d'un *Masterplan* pour l'environnement dans la République de Maurice pour la prochaine décennie et nous procérons actuellement à un *review* en profondeur de l'*Environment Protection Act*.

C'est avec une grande satisfaction, je peux le dire, que nous avons progressé dans cette démarche. Permettez-moi de rappeler que lors des Assises de l'Environnement tenues en décembre 2019, l'honorable Premier ministre avait appelé le pays à s'engager dans une voie de développement qui vise une transition écologique à défaire. Depuis les Assises de l'Environnement, mon ministère a mené des discussions approfondies avec différentes parties prenantes et a dirigé une deuxième concertation nationale avec l'ensemble des parties

prenantes en décembre dernier. Nous prévoyons de finaliser le *Master plan* sur l'environnement, ainsi que la révision de *l'Environment Protection Act* d'ici août et septembre 2021.

Le budget 2021-2022 prévoit des fonds pour finaliser un certain nombre de mesures stratégiques en cours ainsi que de nouvelles mesures innovantes.

Permettez-moi d'énumérer les principaux items qui concernent explicitement mon ministère –

Le renforcement de la résilience et atténuation du changement climatique. En tant que petit État insulaire en développement, Maurice est en première ligne de la crise climatique mondiale actuelle. Vous vous souviendrez que Maurice est reconnue comme l'un des pays les plus vulnérables et les plus exposés de la planète. Les impacts du changement climatique s'aggravent d'année en année.

Selon les observations faites par l'Organisation Météorologique Mondiale l'année dernière, il est probable que l'augmentation de 1,5 degré Celsius du seuil de température mondiale soit atteinte dès 2024. Il est clair que, collectivement, les nations du monde entier sont actuellement sur la mauvaise voie pour atteindre les objectifs de l'Accord de Paris. La situation actuelle est plus que grave et à moins que la communauté internationale n'adopte de nouveaux modèles économiques, nous ne serons pas en mesure d'inverser les tendances dominantes, les moins développés et les Petits États Insulaires en Développement (PIED) étant les plus durement touchés, et ce malgré leur infime contribution à l'émission de gaz à effet de serre.

A Maurice, nous observons déjà une augmentation des impacts du changement climatique.

D'une part, l'île Maurice connaît des *flash floods* plus fréquents et plus sévères, alors que d'autre part, la pluviométrie annuelle moyenne a diminué de 104 mm au cours des 70 derniers années entre 1951 et 2020, avec une diminution d'environ 8% au cours des dernières décennies. Il est prévu que la réduction de la pluviométrie pourrait entraîner une baisse de la production agricole pouvant atteindre 25% d'ici 2050.

Une élévation accélérée du niveau de la mer de 5,6 millimètres par an a été enregistrée à Maurice, avec 9 millimètres à Rodrigues. Ces chiffres dépassent les moyennes mondiales de 3,3 millimètres par an, impactant ainsi nos plages. À certains endroits, l'érosion a réduit les plages jusqu'à 20 mètres au cours de la dernière décennie.

Pour cette raison, la lutte contre le changement climatique a été une priorité sur l'agenda du gouvernement. Ce budget prévoit R 2,2 milliards via le *National Environment and Climate Change special portfolio* pour soutenir les mesures d'adaptation telles que le drainage des terres, la protection et la réhabilitation des côtes, et le *disaster risk reduction and management*, entre autres. Des financements d'un montant d'environ R 28 milliards ont été accordés pour des mesures d'adaptation au changement climatique dans les secteurs d'infrastructures et de l'eau, y compris Rodrigues.

Pour soutenir nos objectifs d'atténuation du changement climatique, le gouvernement augmente son objectif initial de sources d'énergie verte de 40% à 60% d'ici 2030, tandis que l'utilisation du charbon sera totalement supprimée au cours de la même période. Ceci, en lui-même, est un changement majeur pour l'atténuation du changement climatique.

Quelques R 5,3 milliards ont été affectés à des mesures d'atténuation dans le secteur de l'énergie, en plus des R 2,4 milliards du secteur privé. En outre, plusieurs *incentives* et subventions sont fournies pour promouvoir les technologies d'énergie renouvelable, à savoir l'utilisation de la biomasse, de l'énergie éolienne et solaire. De plus, les subventions et *incentives* à l'importation de bus diesel sont progressivement supprimées, tandis que des *incentives* sont prévues pour les véhicules électriques et les bornes de recharge.

De plus, en ce qui concerne le *greening*, le verdissement, devoir public, R 50 millions ont été prévus pour l'embellissement des autoroutes M1 et M2 et la plantation d'arbres fruitiers sur les grands axes routiers des villes et villages dans le programme du *Clean Up Mauritius and Embellishment Programme*.

Ces mesures permettront à Maurice d'atteindre avec confiance la neutralité carbone d'ici 2070, avec l'élan d'atteindre raisonnablement cet objectif bien avant 2070.

M. le président, jamais un gouvernement n'a engagé autant de ressources pour soutenir notre programme de lutte locale contre le changement climatique et il est évident que le gouvernement met davantage l'accent sur l'adaptation.

Le point culminant de nos actions au cours de l'année écoulée a été, sans aucun doute, la promulgation du *Climate Change Act 2020*. Cette loi est la première du genre dans la région de l'océan Indien et parmi les rares au monde. Cette législation stratégique est entrée en vigueur le 22 avril 2021. Cette loi contribuera à la formulation des stratégies et Plans d'Action nationaux sur le changement climatique pour l'adaptation et l'atténuation du changement climatique, tandis qu'un Conseil interministériel sur le changement climatique

présidé par le Premier ministre dirigera le programme de lutte contre le changement climatique en établissant des objectifs, des cibles et des priorités nationales d'un point de vue plus élevé, avec une ambition plus élevée, M. le président.

Une autre étape importante est la révision du *Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC)*, qui est actuellement en cours de finalisation. La *NDC* révisée fournira un objectif plus ambitieux par rapport à la *NDC* actuelle, qui stipule une réduction de 30% des émissions de gaz à effet de serre d'ici 2030. À cet effet, 17 ateliers consultatifs avec le gouvernement, le secteur privé, les ONG et la société civile, y compris un *high level political dialogue* et un ministériel meeting ont eu lieu en février et mars 2021. La *NDC* mise à jour fournira l'orientation politique sur l'atténuation et l'adaptation au changement climatique pour la République de Maurice pour les prochains cinq ans. Les mesures de ce budget pour l'adaptation et l'atténuation permettront certainement une *NDC* plus ambitieuse, qui devrait être finalisée d'ici juillet 2021.

Pour suivre le progrès de l'implémentation de la *NDC*, cette année, le projet de *Capacity Building Initiative for Transparency Project* sera implanté. Quelque USD 1,2 millions ont été obtenus du *Global Environment Facility* par l'intermédiaire de l'*UNDP Country Office* pour aider à améliorer la qualité du '*national greenhouse gas inventory and reporting*'.

Une autre réalisation clé a été la finalisation du *Mauritius Resilience Strategy*, qui vise à renforcer la résilience climatique. Les principales recommandations de la stratégie sont de promouvoir des solutions basées sur la nature pour atténuer d'autres événements plus fréquents tels que les *flash floods* dans ces principaux outils de planification. Afin de renforcer les capacités des planificateurs, géomètres et cartographes des institutions gouvernementales et du secteur privé concernées sur le système d'information géographique et la cartographie des zones écologiquement sensibles, un programme de « *Training the Trainers* » d'un montant de R 1 million est prévu dans ce budget sur les nouvelles approches du renforcement de la résilience face au changement climatique.

De plus, en ce qui concerne le secteur de la réfrigération et de la climatisation, les réfrigérants actuellement utilisés, bien que respectueux de la couche d'ozone, sont responsables du réchauffement climatique. Pour résoudre ce problème et promouvoir des alternatives, ce budget va permettre la formulation d'un « *Hydro Fluoro Carbons Phase-down Management Plan* », qui abordera les questions pertinentes de transfert de technologie, de

renforcement des capacités et de mise en place de chaînes d'approvisionnement pour les réfrigérants naturels. Ceci est conforme à l'amendement de Kigali au protocole de Montréal sur la protection de la couche d'ozone, en octobre 2019.

M. le président, réhabilitation et protection de la zone côtière. Nos plages sont des atouts majeurs pour l'économie, le tourisme et les loisirs de la population. Avec l'avènement du changement climatique et l'accélération de l'élévation du niveau de la mer, le blanchissement des coraux et la dégradation du système récifal, nos plages sont confrontées à une érosion accentuée. Bien conscient de ce problème croissant, un programme continu de réhabilitation côtière est entrepris par mon ministère sur les sites érodés prioritaires de manière intégrée pour sauvegarder nos atouts naturels au profit de nos citoyens et de l'industrie du tourisme. Au cours des cinq dernières années, des ressources substantielles ont été injectées pour la réhabilitation des côtes érodées avec environ 6,5 km réhabilités.

Pour l'exercice 2021/2022, un montant de R 245,4 millions au total a été affecté à la lutte contre l'érosion côtière pour les projets en cours et futurs suivants –

- (i) Des services de conseil en cours et des travaux de protection côtière sont entrepris aux Bois des Amourettes, de Petit Sable à Bamboo Virieux, de Bamboo Virieux à Anse Jonchée, de Pointe aux Feuilles à Grand Sable et à Providence. De plus, des services de *consultancy* sont en cours à Deux Frères *Waterfront*.
- (ii) Le remplacement des filaos par des plantes endémiques, plus adaptées à la zone côtière se poursuit sur 3 plages publiques, à savoir, Flic en Flac, Belle Mare et Le Morne.
- (iii) Compte tenu des impacts du changement climatique tels que les événements météorologiques extrêmes et plus fort l'élévation du niveau de la mer, la performance et l'efficacité des travaux de protection côtière doivent être surveillés et évalués. Dans ce cadre, un consultant sera recruté pour réaliser une évaluation indépendante de la performance et de l'efficacité des travaux de protection du littoral qui a été réalisé par mon ministère.
- (iv) M. le président, de nouveaux services de *consultancy* sont prévus pour la période 2021-2024 pour traiter une série de 17 sites touchés. Ceux-ci comprennent –
 - (a) Trou Aux Biches, près de la station de débarquement de poissons;
 - (b) Albion, devant le *Albion Fisheries Research Centre* ;

- (c) la plage publique de la Preneuse ;
- (d) La Mivoie, Rivière Noire ;
- (e) Le Morne face à l'accès à la montagne Trou Chenille ;
- (f) la plage publique de la Prairie ;
- (g) Bel Ombre à côté du monument de Trevassa ;
- (h) Pointe des Lascars près du Barachois ;
- (i) à Riambel ;
- (j) Rivière des Galets près de la plateforme Cavadee ;
- (k) la Plage publique de Saint-Félix à proximité du cimetière ;
- (l) la plage publique de Blue Bay ;
- (m) Pointe d'Esny près de Pointe Jérôme, Preskil ;
- (n) Pointe des Régates à Mahebourg ;
- (o) Bois Des Amourettes ;
- (p) Poste de Flacq sur l'ancien site du débarquement, et
- (q) la région de Flic en Flac.

Des services de *consultancy* sont également recherchés pour les travaux de réhabilitation du littoral de la Rivière des Créoles et du Vieux Grand Port suite à la marée noire du MV Wakashio.

Les services d'un cabinet de conseil international sont en cours de recrutement pour réaliser une évaluation de l'impact environnemental et socio-économique après la marée noire du MV Wakashio. Un financement à la hauteur de R 35 millions lui a été affecté.

À la lumière des leçons tirées de la marée noire du MV Wakashio et de l'augmentation du trafic maritime, en autres, il est impératif de revoir le Plan national d'urgence en cas de déversement de pétrole, qui date de février 2003. En mai 2021, l'UNDP Country Office a bénéficié des services d'un expert international en cas de déversement d'hydrocarbures, pendant une période de 2 mois, pour aider mon ministère à revoir le plan tout en prenant également en considération les îles d'Agalega, le St Brandon, le port de Port-Louis et Rodrigues.

M. le président, un *Beach Management Plan* est en voie d'implémentation sur 4 plages –

- la plage de Mont Choisy ;
- Flic en Flac ;

- Belle Mare, et
- La prairie.

La *Beach Authority* propose comme projet pilote de fournir l'accès aussi aux autrement capables. Et nous prévoyons aussi l'aménagement des bureaux auxiliaires mobile sur différentes plages publiques comme assistance. Le stockage du matériel se fera dans un stockage mobile. L'objectif est de mettre à disposition des équipements indispensables pour permettre aux autrement capables de profiter pleinement de la plage et du lagon.

La *Beach Authority* initiera le projet en étroite collaboration avec le ministère de la Sécurité sociale et aussi les différents ONG et le *Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Board*.

M. le président, permettez-moi d'aborder un autre aspect du budget concernant le ministère de l'Environnement qui est le *greening* de l'économie. La Chambre conviendra que le développement durable exige qu'une l'attention soit portée aux pratiques de consommation et de production qui placent l'efficacité des ressources et la réduction des déchets au centre de la conduite des affaires, ainsi que dans la manière dont nous nous comportons dans notre vie quotidienne. Ainsi aujourd'hui les produits biologiques l'éco-étiquetage, la production plus propre et les crédits carbone sont les nouveaux termes que le secteur des entreprises doit adopter, tandis que les consommateurs doivent être conscients qu'une transition écologique ne peut être réalisée que si notre état d'esprit et notre mode de vie sont transformés.

Ce budget a tracé la voie à suivre pour traduire l'économie verte et la consommation et la production durables en actions concrètes grâce à des dispositions relatives à la conservation et à l'efficacité de l'eau et de l'énergie. En fait, mon ministère n'a ménagé aucun effort pour créer un environnement propice à notre transition vers une économie verte conformément aux objectifs de développement durable. Au cours des dernières années, mon ministère a mis en place plusieurs *Successful Schemes* tels que le *Rainwater Harvesting Scheme* où au cours de la dernière année financière plus de 60 écoles et institutions religieuse ont bénéficié d'une subvention pour acquérir le *Rainwater Harvesting System*.

Ce budget, avec une allocation de R 10,4 millions pour financer l'installation de récupérateurs d'eau de pluie dans 100 écoles, 10 hôpitaux, 10 fermes agricoles et pépinières et 10 marchés renforcera l'objectif de ce dispositif qui est de promouvoir une utilisation de nos ressources efficiente.

De même avec une provision de R 20 millions pour couvrir le *Solar Water Heater Scheme* ciblant 200 ménages avec une dotation de R 50 millions pour l'installation de panneaux solaires photovoltaïques sur les toits des bâtiments publics par le biais de la Banque de développement de Maurice. Nos efforts nationaux vers les économies d'énergie seront améliorés.

Mon ministère est également activement engagé dans les initiatives visant à l'écologisation des secteurs de la fabrication du tourisme et de l'agriculture à travers le projet *SWITCH Africa Green*. Les activités de renforcement des capacités pour améliorer la compréhension de la consommation et de la production durable et l'économie verte sont menées avec les secteurs manufacturiers et touristiques pour l'écologisation de leurs *value chains*.

Pour l'année financière 2021/2022, plus de R 2 millions ont été reçues sous forme de subventions de l'Union européenne pour aider à sensibiliser les parties prenantes aux objectifs de l'économie verte. L'Assemblée nationale aujourd'hui conviendra toutefois que l'intégration de la durabilité dans notre économie nécessite des actions continues et ambitieuses. C'est pourquoi le gouvernement doit montrer l'exemple pour montrer que lorsqu'il y a la volonté, il existe un moyen de changer le paradigme d'un développement durable.

Ce budget prévoit une provision de 3 millions pour inciter des actions vers le *greening* du secteur public. A cet égard, mon ministère, en collaboration avec le ministère de la Fonction publique, entame actuellement une stratégie, un plan d'action et une charte pour mettre en œuvre ce projet. Avec cette initiative, nous visons à réduire notre empreinte carbone grâce à des modes de consommation durable en matière de papier, d'énergie et d'eau.

Afin de mettre en œuvre les différentes mesures vertes qui sont au cœur de ce budget, mon ministère sera également un acteur important en collaboration avec tous les organismes impliqués dans le *greening* de l'économie. Mon ministère vise à faire en sorte que tous les groupes ciblés, y compris la population dans son ensemble, soient pleinement conscients de l'importance et les impacts de l'adoption des pratiques et de consommation et de production durable pour une économie verte.

M. le président, c'est également un grand plaisir pour moi d'informer la Chambre que la République de Maurice a été nommée membre de '*l'inter-governmental Board of the United Nations Environment Programme 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production*'. A cet égard, Maurice représentera la région africaine au

niveau mondial, régional et sous-régional sur la consommation et la production durables. Permettez-moi de souligner en outre que c'est la première fois qu'un petit état insulaire en développement est nommé membre d'un conseil d'administration de si haut niveau.

Comme la Chambre le sait, le PEID ont des caractéristiques inhérentes qui rendent leur cas particulier en ce qui concerne le passage à une consommation et une production durable. En tant que membre du conseil d'administration, Maurice aura une opportunité accrue de plaider pour une considération spéciale pour le cas des PEID.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Last warning!

Mr Ramano : En particulier en ce qui concerne l'objectif de développement durable 12 – *Le Sustainable Development 12* qui concerne « Assurer une consommation et une production responsables ». Mon ministère travaille actuellement sur une feuille de route pour s'assurer que nous honorons nos obligations internationales.

M. le président, permettez-moi d'aborder ici l'item qui concerne l'économie circulaire. L'Économie circulaire, M. le président, est un aspect important de ce présent budget. La pandémie du Covid-19 doit tous nous inciter à repenser à nos modes de consommation et de production en vue de développer notre résilience et de faire durer nos ressources plus longtemps.

La consommation et la production responsables, en ces temps d'épreuves nécessitent un changement de comportement de la part de nous tous, consommateurs et producteurs. Il faut refuser ce dont nous n'avons pas besoin, réduire ce dont nous avons besoin, réutiliser ce que nous consommons et recycler ce que nous ne pouvons pas refuser, réduire et réutiliser.

Pour que le recyclage décolle vraiment, le passage d'une approche linéaire « *take-make-waste* » à une approche circulaire dans laquelle tous les déchets générés sont considérés comme des ressources. Le réflexe « *take-make-waste* » est malheureusement tellement ancré dans nos habitudes que nous observons une augmentation annuelle moyenne de 2% de notre production de déchets sur la dernière décennie et dont environ 97% mis à la décharge à Mare Chicose. En 2020, la quantité totale de déchets solides éliminés à la décharge de Mare Chicose a dépassé les 500 000 tonnes et nous prévoyons que ce chiffre dépassera les 600 000 tonnes d'ici 2030 dans un scénario de *statu quo*. Ce n'est clairement pas durable, M. le président. À cet égard, mon ministère s'est fixé un objectif très ambitieux de réacheminement des déchets de 70% de la mise en décharge d'ici 2030.

M. le président, ce voyage commence par un changement complet de notre état d'esprit, passant de la simple élimination des déchets à l'évitement, la prévention, la réutilisation et le recyclage des déchets. Cela, en soi, exige de l'innovation et de l'audace dans la façon dont nous faisons les choses. Les consommateurs font des choix importants chaque jour et nous devons tous travailler ensemble pour assurer son succès. Les déchets ne doivent plus être considérés comme des objets sans valeur mais doivent être considérés comme des ressources ayant des valeurs naturelles. Des infrastructures de gestion des déchets devront être mises en place, associées à des instruments juridiques et politiques appropriés afin de nous aider à atteindre notre objectif ambitieux.

Ce gouvernement a déjà manifesté son engagement en ce sens depuis le dernier budget avec plusieurs mesures budgétaires et des dispositions prises pour des projets en lien avec la récupération et le recyclage des ressources. Je voudrais, ici, informer la Chambre de certains des développements majeurs réalisés dans le secteur des déchets solides depuis le dernier budget. Tout d'abord, mon ministère a déjà mis en place une première déchetterie au sein de la station de transfert de La Chaumière qui est opérationnel depuis novembre 2020. Nous avons depuis signé des protocoles d'accord avec 6 recycleurs/exportateurs/ferrailleurs pour la collecte et le recyclage éventuel de déchets plastiques, déchets de papier, déchets métalliques, huiles usagées, bouteilles en PET et même les déchets de bois. Depuis l'exploitation de la déchetterie à La Chaumière, ce sont au total 25 tonnes de déchets qui ont été collectées pour être recyclées. Une autre installation similaire a été construite à la station de transfert de La Laura et nous prévoyons que cette installation sera opérationnelle dans les prochains jours. Je voudrais encourager les ménages de cette partie de l'île à tirer avantage de cette installation pour l'élimination de leurs déchets. Nous prévoyons également la construction d'autres centres de ce type aux stations de transfert de Roche Bois, de Poudre d'Or et aussi à la Brasserie. Je me réjouis que des dispositions aient été prises à cet égard dans le budget de 2021/2022.

M. le président, un instrument stratégique que nous utilisons est le concept de l'*Extended Producer Responsibility* (EPR), la Responsabilité Élargie des Producteurs (REP). Cela est une approche de stratégie environnementale dans laquelle la responsabilité d'un fabricant/importateur pour un produit particulier ne se limite pas au processus de production ou d'importation mais s'étend à l'étape 'post-consumer' du produit, qui inclut la reprise, la réutilisation ou le recyclage et le traitement final. Le principe de la Responsabilité Élargie des Producteurs est également un instrument économique important pour la mise en œuvre de

l'économie circulaire. Nous commençons par les déchets électroniques car ils représentent un problème majeur à Maurice compte tenu de leur nature dangereuse, avec moins de 5% des 8 000 tonnes de déchets électroniques générés chaque année qui sont mis à la décharge de Mare Chicose. Mon ministère, à travers un groupe de travail technique, a déjà rédigé les éléments clés d'une proposition de réglementation EPR pour les équipements électriques et électroniques et cela en collaboration avec les organisations patronales telles que *Business Mauritius* et encore la Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie et aussi le *SME Mauritius* et la *Mauritius Exports Association*. Nous prévoyons que le règlement sera bientôt finalisé par le State Law Office, à la suite de quoi le 1^{er} système de la Responsabilité Élargie des Producteurs sera opérationnel à Maurice. Grâce à ce système, nous prévoyons une quantité considérable de déchets électroniques qui sera collectée, démantelée et recyclée localement ou exportée pour le recyclage, et cela a été si bien mentionné dans l'annexe du Discours Budget. Ce système de la Responsabilité Élargie des Producteurs résoudra non seulement le problème des déchets électroniques à Maurice, mais stimulera également l'industrie du recyclage et créera des emplois verts.

M. le président, nous avons récemment achevé la phase 2 de notre *Solid Waste Management Strategy* et nous engagerons bientôt dans les procédures d'approvisionnement pour la mise en place et l'exploitation d'usines de compostage et d'unités de tri sur la base d'un partenariat public-privé. Je suis heureux de constater que des dispositions ont été prises à cet égard dans le budget pour l'exercice 2021/2022. Avec la mise en place d'usines de compostage et d'unités de tri, on peut s'attendre à ce qu'une quantité importante de déchets soit détournée du centre d'enfouissement de Mare Chicose à moyen et long terme. Nous estimons actuellement qu'environ 55% de nos déchets solides sont de nature organique et peuvent être efficacement compostés ou digérés en anaérobiose, tandis qu'environ 40% sont constitués de matières recyclables pouvant être récupérées.

Cette évolution vers un modèle d'économie circulaire doit se traduire par un véritable cadre législatif. Actuellement, il n'y a pas de législation dédiée à Maurice qui traite de la gestion des déchets solides de manière holistique. Des réglementations pour des flux de déchets spécifiques figurent dans le *Local Government Act* ou encore dans l'*Environment Protection Act*, tandis que des dispositions générales sur la gestion des déchets solides sont également prises en vertu de ces deux lois. Dans ce contexte, mon ministère a l'intention d'élaborer un *Integrated Waste Management Act* en vue de fournir une orientation stratégique et des orientations vers des pratiques durables de gestion des déchets solides et dangereux

conformément au concept d'économie circulaire. Ce nouveau cadre législatif aidera le ministère à adopter une approche intégrée pour la gestion saine de toutes les formes de flux de déchets couvrant les déchets solides jusqu'aux déchets dangereux. La législation s'inspirera également des meilleures pratiques régionales et internationales en matière de gestion des déchets.

M. le président, il est à noter aussi que R 2,5 millions ont été alloués au *National Environment and Climate Change Fund* pour l'acquisition d'un service de *consultancy* pour rédiger le *Integrated Waste Management Act*.

M. le président, une économie circulaire dans la gestion des déchets solides ne peut être mise en œuvre sans un système de collecte des déchets efficace et efficient. Avec l'intention du gouvernement de récupérer et de recycler les ressources, il est à noter qu'une provision de R 235 millions a été faite sous le *National Environment and Climate Change Fund* pour l'acquisition de camions compacteurs et autres bennes basculantes par les autorités locales tandis que 18 millions ont été alloués pour l'acquisition des *roll-on/roll-off lorries* pour la collecte des déchets encombrants.

M. le président, dans l'attente de l'implémentation des gestions des déchets plus durables tels que le compostage et le recyclage, nous devons nous assurer que les déchets générés sont correctement gérés. Dans ce contexte, nous procédons à un *Vertical Expansion* de la décharge de Mare Chicose pour prévoir une capacité d'élimination d'au moins 10 ans. Ce qui nous laisse amplement le temps de mettre en place les autres technologies de gestion durable des déchets.

En plus des mesures susmentionnées, nous envisageons l'installation d'éco-poubelles à des endroits stratégiques à travers l'île dans le but de collecter les bouteilles en PET et les canettes en aluminium pour un éventuel recyclage.

M. le président, mon ministère envisage également une étude de faisabilité pour un parc de ferraille pour les véhicules inutilisables. Une telle installation permettra à la collecte, la dévolution et le démantèlement de véhicules inutilisables avec des matières recyclables collectées pour un éventuel recyclage. Sur la base d'une mesure budgétaire existante, mon ministère met également en œuvre un projet de recyclage de pneus usagés qui abordera le problème croissant de la production des pneus usagés à Maurice.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne la gestion des déchets chimiques dangereux nous devons veiller à ce que ce flux de déchets complexe soit gérer de manière sûre et rationnelle

compte tenu de ses impacts potentiels sur la santé humaine de l'environnement. M. le président c'est dans ce cadre que nous disposons depuis 2017 d'une installation de stockage provisoire le *Interim Hazardous Waste Facility*, à la Chaumière. Cette installation a permis d'analyser, de collecter, de stocker et d'exporter rapidement des déchets chimiques dangereux tels que des acides, des alcalis, des déchets de métaux lourds et des pesticides.

M. le président, depuis son exploitation en 2017, plus de 400 tonnes de déchets dangereux ont été collectées dans les divers locaux tandis que plus de 200 tonnes de déchets dangereux ont été exportés vers des installations d'élimination. M. le président, l'importance d'avoir une telle installation a été encore démontrée lors de l'épisode malheureux du naufrage MV Wakashio le 6 août 2020. L'installation de stockage provisoire de déchets dangereux a permis la réception, la manipulation et le stockage en toute sécurité d'environ 2,714 tonnes de *HFO contaminated waste* résultant de la marée noire du MV Wakashio.

Mr Speaker, Sir, given the conditions in which the waste were received at the facility, that is, mixed solid and liquid waste, in open-top drums without cover, leaking big bags of HFO and their voluminous quantities, these wastes had to be sorted, regrouped, transferred and repackaged into appropriate UN approved containers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, notwithstanding the operation of this facility, my Ministry is revising the regulations pertaining to the management of hazardous wastes. The amendment to the current Environment Protection (Standards for Hazardous wastes) Regulations 2001 will further define the obligation of stakeholders in the hazardous wastes management chain and also ensure the domestication of the proviso of Trans-boundary Movements of Hazardous Waste under the Basel Convention. M. le président, disposé d'un système intégré et durable de gestions des déchets solides et dangereux est primordial. En tant que gouvernement responsable, nous conduisons ce changement vers un système de gestion d'une façon durable et aussi axée sur la récupération et le recyclage de ressources.

M. le président, faire de Maurice une île sans plastique comme la Chambre le sait le gouvernement mène une lutte sans compromis contre la pollution plastique depuis de nombreuses années. Si le plastique a offert de nombreuses avantages à l'humanité, il s'est révélé au fil du temps être à l'origine de nombreux défis environnementaux. Selon le rapport 2016 des Nations Unies sur l'environnement, les micros plastiques contiennent des produits chimiques dangereux qui persistent dans l'environnement, s'accumulent chez les humains et la faune à travers la chaîne alimentaire causant de graves problèmes de santé.

Les plastiques sous forme de sac, de contenant de nourriture emportée et de bouteilles se retrouvent dans nos cours d'eaux, nos océans et dans l'environnement. M. le président, conformément à l'objectif du gouvernement de transformer Maurice en un pays sans plastique dans les plus brefs délais, mon ministère a interdit plusieurs catégories de produits en plastique à usage unique. Des sacs en plastique par le biais de la promulgation de *l'Environment Protection (Control of Single Use Plastic Products) Regulations 2020* ou encore le *Environment Protection (Banning of Plastic Bags) Regulations 2020*. Depuis l'entrée en vigueur de ces réglementations, respectivement, le 15 janvier 2021 et le 1^{er} mars 2021, une application soutenue par des opérations de répressions est menée sur toute l'île par les agents de mon ministère en collaboration avec la Police de l'Environnement et les collectivités locales. Au 31 mai 2021, 1,515 points de vente ont été inspectés. Par la suite, 84 contraventions ont été constatées, environ 28,000 produits plastiques à usage unique et environ 1,800 sacs plastiques interdits ont été saisis. La Chambre constatera aussi que mon ministère n'a pas limité son champ d'action aux seules mesures d'exécution. Les alternatives telles que des produits écologiques et durables sont en parallèles promues. Ces alternatives comprennent des sacs en jute, des sacs en tissu, des sacs et contenants à base de plantes.

M. le président, au-delà de la promotion des alternatives, mon ministère a mené une série de campagnes de sensibilisation au niveau du port, de l'aéroport, des autorités locales et des centres commerciaux. Il me fait grand plaisir d'annoncer que ces mesures combinées ont eu des résultats positifs. En effet, un changement positif dans le comportement du public a été constaté ces derniers temps notamment en ce qui concerne l'utilisation accrue de sacs écologiques durables.

M. le président, faire de Maurice une île sans plastique est une bataille fastidieuse qui nécessitera une action collaborative mais également de la part du secteur privé et de tous les acteurs de la société. Dans cette optique, des partenariats public-privé devront être développé notamment en vue de développer le potentiel de réutilisation de la biomasse du pays de mettre en œuvre le concept de responsabilité élargie des producteurs et aussi d'analyse du cycle de vie des produits. À cette fin, mon ministère élabore une feuille de route nationale pour opérationnaliser la politique sans plastique d'ici 2030.

M. le président, je souhaite informer l'Assemblée nationale aujourd'hui que par l'intermédiaire du *National Environmental Laboratory* a jusqu'à présent effectué plus de 570 tests sur les produits plastiques. M. le président, il est à souligner que le présent Budget prévoit des dotations supplémentaires à la hauteur de R 17,5 millions pour les *on-site testing*

dans les marchés et les zones portuaires. De plus, la recherche locale sur les alternatives au plastique ainsi que sur le niveau de micro plastique dans notre environnement y compris les plans d'eaux et les lagons est essentiel pour permettre la formulation des politiques futures.

L'océan, M. le président, est attaqué par les modes de consommation et de production non durable qui cause de tels problèmes sur terre. M. le président, une somme d'environ R 7,3 millions a été fourni au ministère de l'Économie bleue, des ressources marines, de la pêche et de la navigation comme instrument de gestion pour limiter l'impact de la pollution plastique sur la vie marine.

M. le président, comme la Chambre le sait, mon ministère a initié un programme de *Greening Mauritius* depuis l'année dernière. L'objectif de ce programme est essentiellement orienté vers la contribution et l'augmentation des puits de carbone à travers le concept de foresterie linéaire le long de l'autoroute. À cet effet, un *Master Plan* au coup de R 425 millions est en cours de finalisation.

M. le président, une première phase sera implémentée à partir de cette année financière avec la collaboration d'un partenariat public-privé, prenant du rond-point de l'aéroport de Plaisance, jusqu'au rond-point de Grand Baie, La Croisette. M. le président, ce projet sera axé sur la création des espaces verts et aussi bien sûr avec la plantation d'arbres endémique et fruitiers.

M. le président, c'est dans cet objectif qu'une phase pilote *de greening of towns and villages* sera implémenté à partir de cette année financière dans deux villes principales, notamment Quatre Bornes et Vacoas. L'objectif de cette mesure est d'améliorer la sécurité alimentaire, tout en renforçant la résilience, en responsabilisant les habitants dans la multiplication et en stimulant la production d'arbres fruitiers adaptés localement.

M. le président, nous savons tous que les impacts de la pollution environnementale peuvent entraîner de graves risques pour la santé. Il est devenu de plus en plus important de comprendre l'environnement naturel et de le protéger de tout effet négatif de l'activité humaine. Dans l'optique de fournir au public et aux touristes des informations vitales sur l'environnement, ce budget a alloué R 60 millions pour le suivi environnemental des différents supports afin qu'à terme, nous puissions développer un indice de qualité environnementale.

L'an dernier, des fonds ont été accordés pour la mise en place d'un indice de la qualité de l'air, l'*Air Quality Index*. Cette année, la portée de la surveillance environnementale est

étendue à la surveillance des eaux de surface et souterraines. Dans le même ordre d'idée, mon ministère entreprendra un service de *consultancy* pour l'établissement d'un indice de qualité des eaux du lagon. Cette initiative contribuera à donner un aperçu instantané de la qualité de l'eau de nos plages en classant la qualité de l'eau de plage et contribuera à améliorer la visibilité de Maurice en tant que '*leading and sustainable island destination*'.

Dans la même lancée, il est rappelé que l'indice de qualité de l'air comprendra l'extension du réseau existant des stations de qualité de l'air de 3 à 6 et l'installation de '*Internet of Things sensors*' à 4 emplacements. La priorité sera donnée à des régions, telle que La Tour Koenig pour les '*Internet of Things sensors*'. En ce qui concerne la surveillance à la suite de la marée noire du MV Wakashio, le gouvernement a affecté R 76 millions à la mise en œuvre du plan intégré de surveillance de l'environnement, qui consiste en une surveillance complète pour identifier les impacts à moyen et long terme de cette « catastrophe » sur notre milieu marin. Ce programme de surveillance est une activité multipartite impliquant différentes agences gouvernementales, tels que *the National Environmental Laboratory, the Albion Fisheries Research Centre, the Mauritius Oceanography Institute, a National Parks and Conservation Service* ainsi que des organisations non gouvernementales. Ce programme est actuellement en cours.

M. le président, ce présent budget a prévu aussi une somme de R 10 millions pour l'unité d'analyse des résidus de pesticides au *National Environment Laboratory* de mon ministère.

M. le président, l'application de la législation environnementale est l'un des moyens auquel ce gouvernement veille à ce que nos concitoyens bénéficient d'une Ile Maurice plus propre, plus verte et plus sûre. A cet effet, divers mécanismes d'exécution ont été mis en place pour permettre une coopération maximale entre les différentes agences d'exécution et les autorités locales ainsi qu'une meilleure collaboration de la Police de l'Environnement.

M. le président, mon ministère ne ménage aucun effort pour traiter rapidement les plaintes environnementales du public et je dois dire que de juillet 2020 à mai 2021, un total de 8,437 plaintes ont été traitées par le ministère de l'Environnement et la Police de l'Environnement. Au total, 2,273 contraventions ont été émises par la Police de l'Environnement. Cela comprend aussi 1,239 pour les déchets illégaux et le déversement.

M. le président, depuis le Cabinet de la semaine dernière, et cela a été *gazetted* depuis samedi dernier, nous avons alourdi les peines en ce qui concerne le *littering* et aussi le *illegal*

dumping, et des pénalités sont prévues de l'ordre de R 3,000, R 5,000 et R 25,000. R 3,000 pour le *littering* sur les *roads and pavements*, R 5,000 sur des pollutions dans les cours d'eaux, les plages, les différentes réserves de forêt. M. le président, nous prévoyons aussi des *fixed penalties* pour le *illegal dumping*, des *fixed penalties* de R 25,000.

M. le président, nous souhaitons avant tout qu'il y ait un changement de comportement de la part du public pour que nous puissions venir de l'avant avec un programme qui donnera toute son importance à la protection et aussi à la propreté.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne les véhicules fumigènes, ce budget a prévu l'acquisition de 15 fumimètres portables pour faciliter le contrôle des émissions des véhicules. Cette mesure contribuera à améliorer la qualité de l'air ambiant pour les usagers de la route et la population en général. Les compteurs de fumée portable achetée seront distribués aux organismes d'application respectifs, notamment le *Traffic Branch*, la *National Land Transport Authority*, le *Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development*, ainsi qu'à toutes les unités de la Police de l'Environnement à travers l'île et aussi bien à l'île Rodrigues, M le président. Dans ce même esprit, une plate-forme sera mise en place pour rendre compte régulièrement du nombre de tests d'opacité effectués et de non-conformité des contraventions enregistrées.

M. le président, nous sommes confiant que la gestion des déchets, quel que soit le type de déchet, se fera bien sûr en conformité avec les engagements que nous avons pris dans les Conventions internationales, notamment la Convention de Stockholm sur les polluants organiques persistants et la Convention de Bâle sur le contrôle des mouvements transfrontières. M le président, à cet égard, mon ministère se lancera depuis 2022 dans un projet intitulé, '*Implementing Sustainable Low and Non-Chemical Development in SIDS*.' Ce projet, d'une valeur totale de R 4,5 millions sera implémenté.

M. le président, ce budget a annoncé aussi l'utilisation du charbon qui sera totalement éliminé d'ici 2030, 60 % de notre pays obtenant ses besoins énergétiques à partir des sources vertes. M. le président, je dois dire que pour répondre à cette préoccupation mondiale, le conseil d'administration du programme des Nations Unies pour l'environnement a élaboré le traité international, connu sous le nom de Convention de Minamata sur le Mercure, est entré en vigueur en 2017. L'objectif de la Convention est de protéger la santé humaine et l'environnement contre les émissions anthropiques et les rejets de mercure et de composés du mercure.

M. le président, ce vaste projet de la protection de l'environnement ne pourra se faire sans une véritable politique d'inculquer avant tout une culture environnementale dans la société mauricienne, M. le président. C'est avant tout dans cette optique que nous avons entamé depuis décembre 2019 les Assises de l'Environnement. Il y a eu plusieurs consultations avec les différentes parties prenantes. Les campagnes de sensibilisation sont accentuées dans les différentes écoles, avec les différentes ONG. M. le président, je n'ai aucun doute avec la mise en application de ces mesures ambitieuses pour la protection de l'environnement. Je n'ai aucun doute que nous atteindrons un nouveau palier dans cette politique de la protection de l'environnement.

Je terminerai ici, M. le président, pour dire qu'un Observatoire de l'Environnement sera mis en place et à cet effet une somme de R 2 millions a été prévue, et là, nous comptons sur une collaboration accentuée avec l'Université de Maurice et une *Science-to-Policy Platform* sera créé à cet effet, M. le président.

M. le président, en conclusion, je dirais, c'est vrai que les défis qui se présentent à nous avec la pandémie du COVID-19 posent avant tout un défi économique. Mais ce défi économique ne pourra être contrôlé sans une véritable politique environnementale et c'est ce à quoi s'attelle ce présent gouvernement.

Sur ce, je vous remercie, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: I suspend the Sitting for one hour!

At 7.47 p.m. the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 8.55 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Please be seated!

Hon. Doolub!

Mr R. Doolub (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): M. le président, avec la Covid-19, malheureusement nous subissons et nous continuerons très probablement à subir pour quelque temps encore à la fois une crise sanitaire que le confinement et autres mesures prises par ce gouvernement a aidé à maîtriser et une crise économique qui risque d'aggraver si des mesures appropriées et au combien nécessaires ne sont pas prises rapidement. A ceux qui seraient enclins à m'accuser de pessimisme, je réponds d'emblée que la crise a certes généré naturellement des craintes mais aussi de l'espérance. Comme nous le répète la campagne d'affichage actuellement en cours à travers le

pays, *nou combat pencor fini*. Le budget 2021-2022 nous fournit des munitions pour sortir victorieux sur tous les fronts, y compris celui de l'économie.

Une chose est cependant sûre dans cette situation inédite, nous puissions notre force de notre capacité à rester lucide car seule la lucidité nous permettra de relever un défi complexe pour éviter de tomber dans une grave crise sociale.

Après la santé publique, c'est au tour de l'économie de revenir au premier plan. Le débat actuel porte essentiellement sur comment sortir de cette situation de crise de manière ordonnée et retrouver une normalité sociale et économique sans compromettre les premiers succès de lutte contre le Covid-19, entreprise par ce gouvernement.

Pour gérer la crise, le gouvernement a rapidement pris l'an dernier des mesures importantes afin de soutenir généreusement l'économie, essentiellement là où une intervention immédiate était nécessaire pour faire face à la crise. Il s'agit maintenant de repartir des risques au sein de la société en revigorant le principe de l'auto-responsabilité au niveau des individus mais aussi des entreprises parce que la crise a également relevé le fait que la collaboration entre les différents acteurs pourrait être améliorée dans certains domaines et qu'un modèle de réussite doit constamment être perfectionné et adapté aux nouvelles conditions.

Cette situation inédite à laquelle nous sommes tous confrontés nous offre cependant l'opportunité de sortir renforcés de la crise, d'établir de nouveau modèle de vie et de travail à moyen et long terme, de remédier aux faiblesses mises en évidence et ainsi de mieux réagir aux défis futurs. Certains veulent une relance rapide, *business as usual*, sans rien changer au système et à ces défauts mis en évidence dans les causes et les conséquences de la pandémie.

D'autres observent que la résilience de l'économie est aussi importante que sa productivité et sa compétitivité. Ils plaident pour que les moyens alloués à la relance servent à mettre en œuvre l'indispensable transition juste qui nous permettra d'éviter de retarder ou d'atténuer les effets de crises futures. On a beaucoup parlé de relance, de reprise et de résilience depuis vendredi dernier pour résumer en trois mots le Budget 2021-22.

Ce budget, M. le président, a surtout été conçu pour accompagner, orienter et soutenir. Le Budget 2021-22 vient armer le pays pour lui permettre de relever les défis à court, moyen et long terme. Qu'ils concernent notre système d'approvisionnement en denrées alimentaires, le financement plus que jamais nécessaire de secteur de la santé, la relance du secteur du tourisme et de l'hôtellerie, la protection de l'environnement ou encore la dynamisation du

secteur de PME mauriciennes qui, il est bon de rappeler, sont, à ce jour environs 125,000. Elles emploient plus de 55% de la main-d'œuvre du pays et leur contribution au PIB est d'à peu près 40%. Je souhaite saluer l'ensemble des mesures prévues dans le budget en faveur des PMEs qui sont et qui seront un des moteurs les plus significatifs de la croissance de notre pays. Parlons-en justement, le choc sur le PIB de notre pays a été plutôt ressenti en 2020. Notre économie a subi une compression de R 498,3 milliards en 2019 à 428,2 milliards en 2020, soit une réduction d'environ 14,1% alors que certaines institutions craignent de leur côté une réduction additionnelle du PIB de 15% d'ici décembre 2021.

En 2 ans, notre potentiel annuel de valeur ajoutée aura dégringolé de l'ordre de R 134 milliards indépendamment de la volonté du gouvernement. Derrière la réalité glacée de ces statistiques, quoi faire devant ce constat peu réjouissant. Guérir les plaies vite pour mieux rebondir. C'est précisément ce qu'a réussi le ministre des Finances qui a tiré les leçons de la crise pour bâtir son Budget 2021-2022 qui marquera la sortie de la pandémie malgré les difficultés engendrées par celle-ci. Je l'affirme, le budget national 2021-2022 est résolument courageux, social et inventif. Avec des investissements publics de R 190 milliards sur 5 ans, il mise sur un rebond rapide de l'économie dès cette année.

Avant la fin de l'année en réalité avec la réouverture de nos frontières aux touristes dès le mois de juillet prochain. Mais au-delà de la réponse à l'urgence, le budget prépare également l'après crise. L'urgent c'est d'éviter un effondrement de l'économie et c'est justement en l'évitant qu'on prépare le futur.

L'État a imposé des mesures sanitaires nécessaires et il vient maintenant en contrepartie aider ceux qui sont les plus touchés par ces mesures à travers des plans de relance assez ambitieux pour garantir une croissance de moyen terme et confirmer qu'il est possible de concilier objectif budgétaire et objectif d'emploi.

M. le président, d'autres auront sans doute l'occasion de parler des chiffres mais moi, je voudrais aujourd'hui surtout inviter mes collègues de la Chambre, du moins ceux qui ont vraiment l'intérêt du pays et non ceux qui le disent uniquement, à une réflexion plus profonde sur les problèmes auxquels nous sommes tous confrontés et mettre en lumière la performance absolument remarquable du ministre des Finances pour remettre notre pays sur la voie de la croissance et du progrès tout en protégeant les citoyens les plus vulnérables de notre pays.

M. le président, les crises périodiques mettent en évidence la vulnérabilité des familles pauvres, leurs moyens de subsistance et la fragilité des emplois précaires. La crise

économique actuelle, l'instabilité des prix, la sécurité alimentaire et le changement climatique et les défis permanents qui nous devrons relever, font ressortir la nécessité pour les pouvoirs publics de prendre des mesures plus efficaces pour remédier aux difficultés auxquelles se heurtent concrètement les travailleurs, femmes et hommes et leur permettre de tirer parmi les possibilités qui s'offrent à eux. On ne le répètera jamais assez, c'est l'emploi productif et le travail décent qui sont les principales voies de sortie de la pauvreté. L'existence d'un marché du travail dynamique et des conditions propices à la création d'entreprise à l'échelon national est essentiel pour accroître les possibilités d'emploi. Je ne féliciterai jamais assez le ministre des Finances pour avoir su mettre en place les structures qui donne à notre pays l'assise nécessaire au redressement de l'activité économique, amélioreront la création d'entreprise, boosteront le secteur de la construction des travaux publics grâce notamment aux R 11,7 milliards prévues pour la gestion nationale des inondations et la mise en chantier d'environ 1500 projets de canalisation dans plusieurs régions du pays au cours des 3 prochaines années, renforceront la résistance à la crise et permettront de remédier à la véritable détresse matérielle que connaissent de nombreux compatriotes dont l'employabilité sera renforcée à terme.

La protection sociale, M. le président, a pour effet de réduire directement la pauvreté et aide à rendre la croissance plus favorable aux pauvres. Elle permet d'apporter une assistance aux plus démunis et au plus vulnérables en période de récession, et concourt à préserver la cohésion sociale et la stabilité. Le gouvernement a démontré depuis un an combien il a su protéger les plus vulnérables de notre pays notamment à travers le *Wage Assistance Scheme* et les aides aux entreprises de divers secteurs.

Agriculture, logement, soutien aux PME, énergie verte, formation professionnelle, infrastructures, les mesures prises cette année se renforcent mutuellement et favorisent l'instauration d'une croissance dont les premiers bénéficiaires seront les plus démunis pour qui un train de mesures, dont entre autres, R 845 millions allouées aux ONG pour soutenir des projets visant à combattre la pauvreté, a été élaboré pour améliorer la situation et faire effectivement reculer la pauvreté.

Dans ma circonscription Mahebourg/Plaine Magnien, par exemple, nombreux sont ceux qui ont été affectés par les grosses pluies d'avril dernier. Mon collègue, le ministre Hurreeram, le ministre Toussaint et moi-même, avec le support non-négligeable du ministre des Finances, ne sommes pas restés indifférents à ces problèmes. Je suis heureux que le Budget 2021-22 ait prévu une somme de R 594 millions pour des projets de construction de

drains, notamment à Petit Bel Air, Grand Bel Air, Mahebourg, Mare Tabac, Plaine Magnien et Trois Boutiques. Le centre de jeunesse de Pointe Jérôme sera modernisé, un *outdoor and recreation centre* sera construit pour les habitants de la région. Des logements sociaux seront bientôt livrés à Mare Tabac et à Mare d'Albert tandis que la construction de nouveaux logements débutera bientôt à Plein Bois.

M. le président, des emplois de meilleure qualité et plus productifs font croître le revenu, donnent aux travailleurs la possibilité d'effectuer les dépenses à caractère social et facilitent le financement de la protection sociale. Cette dernière permet alors d'améliorer la productivité et l'employabilité des pauvres et de stabiliser et d'augmenter leurs revenus.

Je souhaite maintenant mettre en lumière certaines mesures qui ont pour but d'accompagner les plus démunis dans leurs aspirations à une vie meilleure. Se loger, M. le président, est d'abord un besoin essentiel, celui d'avoir un toit pour être à l'abri dans des conditions normales de confort et de salubrité. L'accès à un logement de qualité et adapter à ses besoins, là où les personnes souhaitent habiter. Des logements plus grands pour les familles, plus appropriés pour nos aînés, des habitations pour personnes seules où ayant des besoins particuliers, est un enjeu extrêmement important pour des dizaines de milliers de citoyens.

Avec les mesures énoncées pour construire 12,000 maisons, rajouter au mesures d'accompagnement dans ce budget pour entre autre rembourser 5% du coût d'achat ou de construction, le gouvernement confirme sa volonté de permettre aux Mauriciens d'avoir accès à un logement de qualité, qu'ils soient surtout les propriétaires et qu'ils y vivent avec fierté. Je m'en voudrais de ne pas aussi mentionner une des décisions les plus audacieuses de ce budget.

M. le président, je fais allusion à la transformation de notre secteur énergétique en abandonnant les énergies fossiles, tout importé au profit des énergies vertes qui devraient représenter 60% de notre énergie d'ici 2030. Pour aider à atteindre cet objectif, le ministre des Finances introduit une compensation équitable de R 3, 300 par tonne de sucre aux planteurs de cannes pour l'apport énergétique que représente la bagasse. Cela permettra non seulement d'encourager la poursuite de la production de la canne mais aussi de réduire les pertes subies par l'industrie de la canne en raison de la chute du prix du sucre sur le marché mondial. D'une pierre deux coups.

Cette crise, M. le président, nous a aussi rappelé combien il est important de prendre soin de sa santé. Selon l'OMS, les maladies chroniques sont la première cause de mortalité mondiale et pèsent de plus en plus lourdement sur le système de santé. Le développement économique et le bien-être d'une grande partie de la population, en particulier, chez les personnes âgées de 50 ans et plus.

L'activité physique est un déterminant majeur de l'état de santé des individus et des populations à tous les âges de la vie. Elle contribue à améliorer l'état de santé et ses bienfaits constituent un réel apport, permettant aux personnes de mieux vivre avec la maladie et mieux supporter les traitements. La santé nous coûte chaque année plusieurs milliards de roupies.

M. le président, chacun sait que la pratique régulière d'une activité sportive parviendra à alléger ce fardeau qui pèse sur nos services de santé et je ne peux que féliciter mon collègue, le ministre des Finances pour avoir dégager les ressources financières nécessaires pour la construction d'infrastructures sportives malgré la marge de manœuvre relativement étroite qui est la sienne. Il a jugé important et nécessaire de continuer à investir dans les infrastructures, favorisant la pratique sportive qu'il nous faut cependant inculquer aux jeunes Mauriciens dès leur plus jeune âge. Les mesures annoncées pour permettre par exemple aux enfants du primaire d'apprendre à nager est un très grand premier pas dans la bonne direction.

Je salut par ailleurs l'ouverture imminente d'un complexe MUGA à Beau Vallon et la construction du Blue Bay Arena qui accueillera les compétitions lors des prochains Jeux des îles de l'Océan Indien au coût de Rs12 m. Je profite de l'occasion pour faire une requête au ministre de l'Éducation pour qu'elle considère la possibilité d'inclure la pratique sportive dans le curriculum scolaire en faisant de celle-ci une matière à part entière qui compterait dans la comptabilisation des points à la fin du cursus scolaire.

De nombreuses études menées dans ce sens dans le monde ont confirmé que pratiquer une activité physique régulière dans le cadre scolaire augmente les performances des enfants à qui le sport transmet par ailleurs des valeurs de tolérance, de respect, d'honnêteté, d'honneur ou encore de courage, tout en développant plus particulièrement l'esprit d'équipe, la solidarité, la coopération ainsi que le goût de l'effort. Non-seulement parviendrons-nous à pousser les enfants à faire du sport mais aussi à faire bon usage des ressources humaines tant qu'infrastructurelles, trop souvent sous-utilisées dans certaines institutions. Tout, dans le budget 2021-2022, M. le président, assure l'articulation entre les stratégies de survie à court

terme et celles qui visent à plus long terme à renforcer la croissance et à faire reculer la pauvreté.

M. le président, je souhaiterai terminer avec ce rappel indispensable pour que l'économie ne demeure pas enfermée dans la prison des colonnes de chiffres, des tableaux d'Excel, des courbes et des camemberts. La croissance économique mesure l'augmentation des richesses produites dans un pays. Ces richesses sont évaluées par le PIB qui comprend principalement les valeurs ajoutées des entreprises et les coûts de fonctionnement des administrations. Le PIB est avant tout un indicateur quantitatif et non pas qualitatif, comme pour le développement. Hors, le développement d'un pays se rapproche mieux de la notion de bien-être pour les individus. Il mesure la qualité de vie par les indicateurs plus sociaux que la seule richesse matérielle.

L'indicateur de développement humain comme développé par le prix Nobel Amartya Sen, par exemple, prend en compte la santé ou l'éducation. D'autres indicateurs tentent avec plus ou moins le succès de mesurer le bien-être comme indicateur de pauvreté humaine, l'indice de santé sociale ou le Bonheur National Brut qui a contribué entre autres à la célébrité du Bhoutan sur le plan mondiale. La croissance économique, M. le président, est une condition nécessaire au développement mais elle n'est pas toujours suffisante. Les richesses matérielles sont certes utiles au bien-être car elles permettront d'augmenter des dépenses publiques et privées pour améliorer les conditions de vie mais le bien-être ne se mesure pas qu'en termes matériels. Le bien-être qui est une notion complexe, M. le président, sa définition est différente d'une personne à l'autre mais elle fait généralement intervenir les concepts de prospérité, de santé et de bonheur. Le bien-être n'est pas chiffrable avec précision, il existe certes des indicateurs numériques du bien-être. On peut faire valoir que le bien-être générale, dans l'ensemble d'une société, a probablement augmenté ou diminué si un indicateur ou un ensemble d'indicateurs évoluent dans une certaine direction, mais la population ne se sente-elle plus épanouie, optimiste et en un mot, plus heureuse. Joie, plaisir, créativité, inspiration, légèreté, ouverture, douceur sont intensément liées au bonheur. A des émotions positives, à la capacité d'être optimiste et à se représenter dans le passé, le présent et le futur dans une perspective positive et cela dans bien des secteurs du quotidien, travail, passion, relation, activité.

En dépit du complexe de cassandre dont l'opposition se fera une spécialité au cours des semaines à venir en se faisant prophète du malheur, le budget 2021-2022 contient avant tout, M. le président, tous les ingrédients pour redonner aux Mauriciens cet indispensable

aspiration au bien-être et au bonheur auquel ils ont droit et que seul le gouvernement du jour avec un Leader, ensemble et uni, comme une équipe leur redonnera.

Je vous remercie, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Osman Mahomed!

(9.16 p.m.)

Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I have read the comments made in and out of the House from MPs from both sides of the House on this year's Budget titled: Better Together, *Mieux Ensemble*. And I must say what surprised me the most is the manner the fresh and young MPs on the other side of the House, Government's side, have been very much impressed by this budget and this state of mind has, in fact, been very well captured by ION News which has interviewed all the young MPs. I read with a lot of interest what hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy who spoke earlier said. *Elle se dit très satisfaite et a même remercié le Premier ministre et le ministre des Finances pour avoir initié une rencontre avec les députés, ce qui est une première dit-elle.*

Well, I hope they are also allowed to voice out to their leaders, the many flaws contained in this budget because at least then, it seems that they have the ears of the rulers.

The first issue I would like to highlight to them and to you as well, hon. Deputy Speaker, Sir, being yourself a young and fresh MP, is the drug problem. According to *Rapport ENAC, Maurice est le premier consommateur de drogues synthétiques d'Afrique Australe.*

The Budget purports to tackle this problem at paragraph 331 and the two foremost propositions are –

- a) Recruit 4,000 Police officers.
- b) Promote 1,457 Police officers to the rank of Police Sergeants.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, currently Mauritius has the highest number of police officers per capita in the world and yet it is not able to combat drug trafficking and related drug offences. It is just highly questionable, whether the recruitment of more police officers, more civil service jobs, will not lead to what economics would term as the law of diminishing returns? Furthermore, I am equally baffled by how the promotion of Police Officers is deemed a budgetary measure. Are you not surprised, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir?

Synthetic drug is not a societal problem today but it is a heart-breaking one. I am not aware how many in this House have ever visited the Brown Sequard Mental Hospital, where young synthetic drug addicts are being admitted but I have done so once to visit a young boy who was on synthetic drugs. When I did so, I met with a mother of another young man from my Constituency, in tears, whose synthetic drug addict son was pleading with her to take him home. The son was also a father and his wife had left him. Now this mother, hard as it can be, was trying to explain to his son why she was not able to take him home because of the havocs he creates at home.

Official figures have it that in 2013, there were 5 cases of synthetic drug admission at Brown Sequard Mental Hospital and in 2019, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, would you believe it, 1,099 cases! So, from 5 cases in 2013 to 1,099 cases in 2019 and these are not my figures, this is a screenshot I have taken from MBC 1 last year and this year, I looked up again but they did not broadcast so I could have the updated figure for 2020 but I could not get it. I think someone must have *brosse latet* of the MBC people. So, it is an increase of 220 times, meaning 22,000%.

I wonder whether the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development and the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness are aware of this problem. I stayed up until the end of yesterday's Sitting to listen to the speech of the hon. Minister because I was preparing my speech and it was a very long speech, in which he even spoke about guns and plates and which was a source of a temporary suspension. He did not have a single word on the very high proportion of admission in psychiatric ward at Brown Sequard Mental Hospital in 2019, at the material time, 80% admission were due to synthetic drug. I wonder how much the figure is today.

The victims are just dumped in the same ward as the mentally-ill patients instead of working out on a real solution for that problem at hand. I was hoping the hon. Minister, himself, a professional Psychiatrist, would have told us about his plans for them. When one listens to the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, one has the impression that the problem does not exist. It was in fact swept under the carpet. The fundamental question is: when will there be a dedicated Drug Rehabilitation Ward and accompanying professional staff so that synthetic drug victims no longer have to lead the trauma of having ever been admitted to a mental hospital? This Budget exercise does not address *ce mal de la société*, which is synthetic drugs and which concerns thousands of youngsters, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our own labour force.

The second issue I would like to address today is the social housing problem, paragraphs 49 to 53 of the Budget Speech, 5 very short paragraphs, but essentially to repeat what was already announced last year, 12,000 housing units.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have always used the word ‘sustainable social housing’ because it has to be inclusive to take full consideration of the economic, social and environmental landscapes. The three main factors to be considered are that the houses must be comfortable, affordable and expandable. The houses have to be comfortable in the first stage of acquisition at an affordable price so that the buyer can pass the financial qualification test and gets allocated a house but with enough land on the side, so that the family can expand the house as the family's affordability increases in the course of time. This is what we call climbing the social ladder.

I have had lengthy discussions in Parliament on this subject, having even questioned the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism at Adjournment time and yet again, at paragraph 51, the target is 12,000 housing unit but this time, by 2024. This is what paragraph 51 of the Budget Speech states: 12,000 housing units by 2024, meaning in three years' time.

I was previously Managing Director of the NHDC and as such, I do receive information here and there. The latest one I have received is a governance issue. It would appear that the Central Procurement Board has at some point, emitted doubts, whether to continue with the first tender exercise of the new Social Living Development Ltd. which is a Request for Proposal for the appointment of a Project Management Consultant in construction. The apparent reason for this is that purportedly, there has been interference at the level of the CPB by one of the board members of the New Social Living Development Ltd. but this is the information I have received. I hope the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism will correct me if I am wrong and I should hope that I am wrong.

Let us admit if that was a start of a process of what the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism was himself, full of praise, of having this important venture *chapeauté* by a new subsidiary company on to which I had expressed a lot of reserve here in this very august Assembly. It would appear that the Adviser at the PMO, whom the hon. Bhagwan affectionately, rather mentioned just now, Mr M.L.S has been attending meetings on the housing sector and all that does not sound good, does it?

No wonder *l'Express* made the following title of an interview of mine – *La NSLD sera un festival de contrats en perspective*. If our gentleman, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism does not clarify on these matters by denying the same, I will definitely say that I was correct in saying what I said.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on another note, Occupation Permit, Work Permit and Residence Permit are matters which I see have been very well canvassed in the Budget Speech and lengthily in its Annexes, for example, B.14. of the Annex (g) –

“The validity of the Occupation Permit for professional will be extended 3 to 10 years in line with investors, self-employed, and retired non-citizens.”

Annex (h) –

“Non-citizens holding an Occupation Permit as a Professional will be given the flexibility to switch job without having to submit a new application provided the minimum criteria are met.”

Now, paragraph 228 of the Budget Speech states that –

“International students enrolled in a recognised educational institution in Mauritius will benefit automatically from –

- (a) 20-hours per week Work Permit, and
- (b) 10 year renewable Young Professional Occupation Permit upon graduation.”

Correct me if I am wrong but to be eligible for a Professional Occupational Permit, an expat professional needs only to earn a minimum monthly salary of Rs60,000 and for an expat professional in the sector of ICT, BPO, Pharmaceutical, Manufacturing and Food Processing, the monthly basic salary is set to only a minimum of Rs30,000. These matters concerning Occupational Permit have been lengthy canvassed in both Budget Speech and Annex. I think it must indeed be an important strategy of this Government.

This Government’s ambition to open the country even further to foreigners and thus adopts what it calls an ‘openness strategy’. I wish the same strategy was being deployed when it comes to other matters at hand. However, my fear is in the great zeal to open further our country that they forget that the current unemployment rate is very high, especially with the ongoing repercussions of COVID-19 on the economy. We have heard the figures: 1,000 unemployed people this year in this country.

For many years now, our professionals and graduates are unable to find an employment in our labour market and have had to take up work for which they are overqualified and, thus, underpaid, while expats are being hugely paid in our parastatals. Many of our graduates and professionals with expertise have remained abroad because they are unable to find work in their home country whilst their competence and expertise are being valued in other countries. I am a professional, but allow me to say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you are also a young professional so you would surely agree with me that with this Government, there is a tough reality being faced by many of our professional with competence and expertise in going times.

Indeed, what a shame! But rest assured, I am not against opening up the economy to foreign expertise per se, but it should not be at the expense of the existing supply and surely not to have Mauritian people being discriminated in their own country. And I am here referring to Paragraph 251 of the Budget Speech which states, I quote –

“In addition, a privilege club scheme will be implemented providing a range of incentives to Occupation Permit holders and retirees, ranging from privilege access to hotels, golf courses, restaurants, private medical institutions, amongst others.

In this regard, I also take note of Paragraph 295 of the Budget Speech, which states –

“The Medical Council Act and Dental Council Act will be amended to facilitate registration of foreign practitioners.”

If foreign doctors of caliber come to work here, then what will happen to our young medical practitioners? Let my concern about this potential discrimination against the graduates and professionals of this country be on record. Yet, I would also request this Government to be very prudent in its strategic approach and policy that only the required foreign expertise is sought or I hope not the so-called ‘openness strategy’ is yet another ruse of this Government to try to win the next general elections with the votes of our Commonwealth occupation permit holders.

Mr Speaker, Sir, more than ever and for a better together, *mieux ensemble*, this Government should see to it that people with competence and expertise are in the right bus and in the right seat. Who does not remember the previous Rs1 million per month CEO of the Economic Development Board, whose contract was terminated by this Government itself or the famous CEB consultant, recruited for CEB fiber net, being paid hugely and in U.S dollars by the CEB and as for the Utility Regulatory Authority, the regulator, it has two expats CEO

so far, *deux oiseaux rares*, even though the URA has only been empowered for CEB matters since December 2020 but not at all for CWA and Wastewater Management Authority. Yet, with regard to my previous interventions, it appears that there is confusion whether in effect the regulator is, in fact, functional and operational for CEB matters and can look into its mandate accordingly. I trust the Minister of Public Utilities who himself was a previous employee of the CEB to provide qualification on this matter once and for all. Did we lack the local expertise? This is my question. Or, there is a lack of transparency in the manner high-profile jobs are presently being advertised as recruitment is being made through private recruitment agencies and not in newspapers or the entities' own website as it used to be. On the side-line so far, I have not also seen any open advertisement for the post of a new Human Resource Manager for the CEB.

Sticking to my point, let me finish on this issue by requesting that instead of seeking to open our country further, the task at hand is to allow our graduates, professionals, professionals with competence and expertise in the relevant field to be in the right bus at the right seat so that we can all grow together. This is what 'Better Together' should mean. Thus, an equitable and transparent recruitment process is fundamental.

I would like now to touch on renewable energy, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, being given that much has been said about the Government's new set objective of 60% of renewable energy share by 2030.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the *bilan* of *Maurice Ile Durable* is very clear. At page 56 of the *Maurice Ile Durable* Policy Strategy and Action Plan – I am holding a copy in my hand, it is available online, I have even tabled it in the National Assembly Library and it is approved for implementation by the Labour Party at a material time – there is a list of Government approved projects that would have brought our renewable energy share to 20% in 2015. This is black on white. In January 2015, the MSM led Government dismantled the *Maurice Ile Durable* Commission, which I was chairing.

In the past, the actual Prime Minister has said: *kot monn fote*. I would like to ask the same question tonight: *kot la Commission Maurice Ile Durable in fote*? What was wrong with *Maurice Ile Durable*? Was it because it was set up under the vision of Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam or was it because I was at the head of it? This Government could have changed its name. Instead you could have called it something else. Why throw the baby with the bathwater? And you know, what the direct consequence of this political vendetta is, Mr

Deputy Speaker, Sir? The share of renewable energy under this Government from 2015 to date has only increased by 3.9 %. 3.9% over a period of 7 years! So, under this Government, now, they want to have an ambition of 60% by 2035. Now, you know, the figure that I have just mentioned is published by the Central Statistics Office, but one would want to know, why is it that the share of renewable energy has increased by a meagre 3.9% in 7 years, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and the reasons are clear: first, lack of political will; second, and very importantly, mismanagement of projects and the deceased Plaine Sophie Wind Farm project of 29.4 megawatt in 2019, which was commenced well before the 2014 General Elections is but a concrete example of project mismanagement. Hansard can confirm how many Parliamentary Questions I have asked on this subject in the past. And thirdly, we have non-performing institutions.

The Mauritius Renewable Energy Agency which was set up with high hopes over the years has become one of those agencies and as a Board Member appointed by the Speaker, as per Section 7 (1) of the Mauritius Renewable Energy Act, I have written to highlight on this lack of drive and sense of priorities in meeting the objects and functions as it should be as per the MARENA Act, which is a good Act but unfortunately, those implementing it are not doing it the right way. On several occasions, I have drawn attention and even last week before the representation of the Budget, I have officially written to the Chairman of the Board.

The important question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is how a setup which has produced only 3.9% of additional renewable energy onto the Mauritian grid in 7 years would now be able to introduce an increment of 36.1%, which is the difference between the percentage they want to achieve and the current one over the next 9 years, so as to meet the new target of 60% in 2030? It is impossible! And I think the Government ought to be more serious on casting of such unreasonable objectives otherwise, the international community will laugh at Mauritius. Our current commitment at the international level is 35% which I am confident Mauritius could have reasonably achieved together with the CEB should the Labour Party have won the elections together with the MMM in 2014.

The long-term energy strategy of Mauritius 2009-2025 provides a structured path of how 35% would have been achieved by 2025 in line with *Maurice Île Durable* vision. And it is here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in this document which is available online and it goes as follows –

“In 2025: Bagasse: 17%; Hydro: 2%; Waste-to-energy: 4%; Wind: 8%; Solar Photovoltaic: 2%; Geothermal: 2%.”

Clear! My question tonight is on what structured plan did the Government base itself – I would like to ask the Minister of Finance, he is here, he has arrived – to arrive at this objective of 60% renewable energy by 2030? I would really like to hear from him on which plan did he base himself to arrive at this figure? Surely not the Arundo donax plant, which the Minister of Agro-Industry has mentioned yesterday in his speech because this plant has been talked about in this country for more than 10 years now and *il n'a jamais décollé*.

I would now like to touch a few words on the Metro Express Project. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I fail to understand why the Government has decided to go ahead with the extension of the metro line from Rose Hill to Réduit Campus through Ébène, when already Metro is operating at a loss. I will not dwell again on the figures like I did before, on the why also of the 83% increase in the price per kilometre between the previous contract and this one. I think that has been canvassed sufficiently in PQs. That is, Rs18.8 billion for 26 kilometres from Port Louis to Curepipe and Rs4.5 billion from Rose Hill to Réduit. But I would like to ask a simple question as follows based information that I have gathered personally on the field. This new line Rose Hill to Réduit is already very well served by public buses and one can catch a bus at peak time, every 5 minutes. Buses at the Rose Hill bus terminal going to Bagatelle, to Port Louis, St Pierre, to the east, to the north, and even to the south, they drop by at Réduit Campus because this is a line where there are lots of travellers at peak time.

So, that being the case, what sense does it make to construct a Metro line there? Was there a study that recommended that this line be constructed or was it constructed just like that? How will this bus line survive? If you take the client base and you put it in the Metro? This client base is substantial for the bus company.

Another question is whether the cost of Rs4.5 billion includes the cost of more trams to be purchased and, if not, will the purchase of additional trams be additional cost to the Rs4.5 billion? If trams are included, then how many of them? I would really appreciate if the hon. Minister of Light Rail could provide us with some clarification on this because there is a suspicion that there is a need to have additional trams on the original line in order to palliate the lesser than needed number of trams operating there at the moment, purportedly made

lower so as to bring the price to Rs18.8 billion in 2015. Now, these are the questions. I hope we get some replies.

Before ending, I would like to say a few words on the final verdict of the Betamax claim. Yesterday, hon. Shakeel Mohamed has made a long list of those people who sit in Parliament and who are responsible for the fact that Mauritius, already on its knees, will have to pay a hefty Rs5.7 billion in damages and that person, he forgot to mention, is - I would mention it today - is the then Minister responsible for the State Trading Corporation; whom we have seen him stand in Parliament here in so many PQs and PNQs, at the material time, Mr Ashit Gungah.

How can the history of this country forget about this man? You know, his main point of attack against our Labour Party candidates, in Constituency No. 6, in the last electoral campaign, according to my colleague, Dr. Mahend Gungapersad who is a direct victim of this, has been the fact that the STC, under his ministership, could rid this country of the Betamax deal. This is what his pride and claim was in the last general election. Will you confirm? Well, I wonder what he has to say today.

History should never forget about this man. Like many other orators...

(Interruptions)

Like many other orators before me have quoted Sir Anerood Jugnauth, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will do the same by quoting a very short line from Sir Anerood Jugnauth's speech of 17 June 2017 on the Appropriation Bill, exactly 4 years ago, in the same context. And I quote –

“If it, meaning Betamax, has to be paid, it will be paid.”

But the unfortunate matter is that the claim has increased by billions meanwhile from 2017 because of the addition of interest claims and the incredible depreciation of the Mauritian rupee against the US dollar.

On this note, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I shall end here by saying that I have not heard much about the sustainability of our public finances in the Budget Speech. It is only when you read through the documents, then you see the severity of the problem. I just hope one day we do not become a member of the HIPC Club. You know what the HIPC Club is? The heavily – the Minister of Finance will know – the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries.

Since the Labour Party has stopped managing the affairs of this country, Mauritius is no longer...

(*Interruptions*)

...Mauritius is no longer a first league player in Africa. And I am very sad for my country.

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Thank you. Hon. Maudhoo!

(9.46 p.m.)

The Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping (Mr S. Maudhoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I heard hon. David talking of coming on this side of the House, so, I think he is sharing the dream. *J'espère que ce n'est pas un cauchemar pour vous.*

Alors, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to start today's address by quoting late Sir Anerood Jugnauth during the swearing-in ceremony as Prime Minister back in 1982 –

“It is by forging all different traditions, cultures and languages together, by giving them the respective values, by taking them together that we can build a multi-Mauritian culture, but is not at the cost of one over the other that we can do that.”

Late Sir Anerood often underscored his public address with the need to safeguard national unity. He used to say –

«*Le développement économique d'un pays repose sur l'unité nationale.*»

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Maudhoo: And it is this philosophy that will always guide us and this Government to bolster national unity, economic development and progress.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on behalf of my wife, my children, inhabitants of my constituency and myself, I would like to express our deepest and heartfelt sympathy to Lady Sarojini Jugnauth, our Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, his wife and his

daughters, and also to Shalini Malhotra, her husband and her children for the loss of a husband, a father, a father-in-law and grandfather.

It was late Sir Anerood Jugnauth, as the longest serving Prime Minister of this country, who set up a strong foundation and built the Republic of Mauritius.

The hard work accomplished with great devotion and patriotism will remain engraved forever in our memory and give us inspiration throughout our lives. His son, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth is following in his footsteps and paving his way in the same direction and with the same enthusiasm to make the Republic of Mauritius a force to reckon with for good governance and excellent quality of life.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Prime Minister's vision, his avowed philosophy for a shining, bright Mauritius is embedded in what I consider the historic, game changing, revolutionary Budget 2021-22, so dexterously presented by my competent colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, Dr. Renganaden Padayachy.

We are all aware of the damage that the pandemic has caused here and worldwide. Needless to remind you all, how the pandemic has been negatively impacting on our social and economic life.

This budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has been presented in the wake of two successive waves of the COVID-19 pandemic, when the world economy is witnessing an unprecedented "economic contraction".

By and large, people outside, and in my constituency, have favourably welcomed the budget proposals. They do recognise Government's effort to rebuild our economy and brave the challenges and storms created by COVID-19, and that too during two successive waves.

No doubt, the Government has, and is taking, bold measures to minimise the effects of the pandemic. Hats off to my colleague, the Minister of Finance, who, with his expertise in financial matters, has successfully and skillfully navigated the rough seas with the support of the hon. Prime Minister till now.

As we are all aware, with the closure of the borders, our income from foreign investment has nosedived in billions and yet, from the savings that we had in the country for rainy days, the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, with the support from a caring hon. Prime Minister, has been able to alleviate the suffering of thousands of daily wage earners by providing a subsistence allowance.

Unfortunately, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, some Members on the other side of the floor failed to appreciate Government's efforts. They continue to find faults in everything, and

engage themselves in puerile comments, hollow allegations that I qualify as unpatriotic and ungrateful.

The Budget 2021-22, I am told, has sent a wave of fear among the rank and file of the Opposition camp - when I heard what the Leader of the Opposition was saying on the budget - within and outside this House. They know this Government means business and is devoted to beat the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and to take the country to new heights.

Personally, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I consider the 2021-22 Budget, as I said earlier historic, a game-changer and revolutionary. It is so ably crafted with immense opportunities for all sectors of the economy to reverse the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I qualify the budget as the 'Padayachic Theory' based on three 'R's Recovery, Revival, Resilience, to leave behind the sour taste of the pandemic and take the country towards our dream ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Maudhoo: For a second economic miracle.

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: Unparliamentary *sa!*

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

An hon. Member: *Mwa si mo dir sa!*

The Deputy Speaker: Nobody is taking a point of order. Let him continue!

Mr Maudhoo: M. le président, il y a aussi des économistes autoproclamés, des comptables dépassés, aux idées dépassées, mais avides de publicité médiatique, qui ne cessent de se demander ce que fera l'honorable ministre des Finances, pour réaliser son budget.

Je dirais à ces gens-là ceci: « ce n'est pas votre problème, c'est le nôtre ». Le ministre sait ce qu'il a à faire. Il n'a pas besoin de conseils obsolètes et dépassés comme on a tant entendu de l'autre côté de la Chambre. Il est suffisamment compétent pour traverser des moments difficiles. Il ne fait pas de promesses creuses. Il fait des promesses qui peuvent être tenues. Oui, ce gouvernement fait des promesses, des promesses qu'il peut tenir et qu'il a toujours gardées.

Ce gouvernement, M. le président, est guidé par la philosophie tracée par notre mentor, SAJ, et si habilement suivie par ce gouvernement sous la direction forte, transparente et responsable de l'honorable Premier ministre Pravind Kumar Jugnauth. La philosophie de ce gouvernement et celle de son Premier ministre a toujours été et sera toujours, je le dis *Pran Jaye, Par Vachan Na Jaye*, qui signifie ‘Nous tiendrons nos promesses au détriment de nos vies’.

SAJ nous a montré à tous comment relever les défis, comment rassembler nos idées et comment protéger les personnes vulnérables de la société, comment promouvoir l'égalité, la paix et la justice, comment se concentrer sur le développement inclusif et comment amener notre pays vers de nouveaux horizons.

C'est pourquoi je dis, M. le président, nous n'avons pas besoin des idées creuses et obsolètes pour aller de l'avant. Nous avons un gouvernement visionnaire avec un exécutif uni dirigé par un Premier ministre compétent qui, comme feu Sir Anerood Jugnauth, est inspiré par l'idée de transformer notre pays pour notre peuple et notre postérité.

However, Deputy Speaker, Sir, to translate our vision and ambition into reality, to achieve what we have in mind, we need the support and sacrifice from each and every citizen of this country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the collaboration of people in the Civil Service is vital for the realization of the budget proposals. They are the people who can make Government plans and ambition. We need proactive Civil Servants to build a country *où il fait bon vivre*. I am making an appeal to the Head of the Civil Service to carry out the task and speed up with the implementation of all projects in the Government Programme announced in the Budget Speech 2021-22.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I join the Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Obeegadoo, in his statement made on radio last week that the population has had enough of hearing the Opposition just claiming that everything is wrong with any budget that this Government presents. They offer no analysis; they do not acknowledge the vision we have. The only analysis they have to offer is that ‘everything is bad’.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will now turn to my Ministry. It is clear that the budget presented by the hon. Minister of Finance recognises the ongoing contribution of the Fisheries Sector to the economy of our country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the measures announced in this budget have been made with the clear intention of building and maintaining a stronger future for us all. And it does so by

adequately compensating and recognising the contribution of those who assist in building a stronger future. After various representations from fishers and fisher associations and in line with the retirement age, the hon. Minister of Finance has ensured that every fisher aged 65 and above can opt to receive a lump sum of Rs52,500 when they return their fisherman registration card or transfer it to their kin.

This measure ensures a sound and responsible continuity for the artisanal fishing sector as all the returned cards will mean that a new fisher will be registered. However, these retired fishers may still practice fishing as a recreational activity.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. David considers the lump sum as “*dérisoire*”. However, **Mr Speaker, Sir**, when the Labour Party was in power from 2005 to 2014, *narien pane fer pou nou bane peser papa*.

(*Interruptions*)

An hon. Member: *To ti Adviser lerla.*

Mr Maudhoo: *Non, non, non.*

(*Interruptions*)

Jamais! 2005-2010!

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Maudhoo: *Je n'étais même pas là !*

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order! Order!

Mr Maudhoo: *Alors la aussi zot koz menti.*

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker Sir...

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Maudhoo: *Kan nou Gouvernmen pe fer, dimoun li koz ou.*

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Maudhoo: *On les laisse parler et on va continuer à prendre des décisions pour le bien-être de nos pêcheurs.*

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Maudhoo: Our artisanal fishers represent the most vulnerable segment of this sector, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the contribution of our fishers who risk the perils of the sea to bring food to our table.

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mohamed!

(*Interruptions*)

Order! You said it yourself last time, okay?

Mr Maudhoo: Over the last year, artisanal fishing alone has produced some 750 tonnes of fish. Government is well-aware of the adverse impacts of climate change leading to frequent disruptions of fishing activities and the lack of income on non-fishing days. During the last year, about Rs82 m. has been paid to eligible registered artisanal fishers as Bad Weather Allowance.

Furthermore, the Fishermen Welfare Fund has provided financial assistance of more than Rs1 m. through several schemes to eligible fishers and their families.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I applaud my colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, in his understanding of the reality of how those who operate in the fisheries sector are affected by adverse weather conditions.

Again, I had the opportunity to listen to the intervention of the hon. David and I wish to put on record when the Labour Party was in power from 2005 to 2014, the fisher community received a yearly increase of Rs7, Rs15, Rs10 and Rs9 respectively for the Bad Weather Allowance. This is what I consider as *pas dérisoire, plus que dérisoire*, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

With the coming into power of the present Government in December 2014, the Bad Weather Allowance to eligible fishers was increased considerably. This caring Government,

under the able leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, has increased the Bad Weather Allowance to the amount to Rs475 in 2021.

This Budget also recognises those specific needs of different categories of players in fisheries and how they could benefit from assistance so that our economy can grow. Even for some it may be symbolical but for me, it is something great proposed by my colleague – an annual financial assistance to the tune of Rs2,500 for the purchase of hooks will be provided to all artisanal fishers under this Budget.

I take this opportunity to announce that this week and next week, my Ministry will distribute raincoats to all registered fishers *pour braver l'hiver* under the EU Sectorial Program.

Moreover, with a view to diverting fishing efforts from the already overexploited lagoons and increase catch for the fishers, my Ministry is continuously providing training to fishers to encourage them to fish around Fishing Aggregating Devices placed off-lagoon. My Ministry is looking into using new FAD technologies which would improve the fishing effort of fishers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in this context, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme, a new pilot project has been initiated to set up advanced FADs around Mauritius and to improve post-harvest processing of fish. Through this project, green and sustainable technologies, such as solar panels and rainwater harvesting systems, will be installed at a few fish landing stations around the island to modernise the post-harvest processing of fishers.

Yet, we have heard from the Leader of the Opposition that this Budget was about *fausse promesse, fausse projet*. I say it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that what is *faux* are his own intentions and misinterpretations.

Provision has also been made in this budget for the training of some 500 applicant fishers who will eventually be registered as artisanal fishers. With these additional 500 fishermen cards, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it means the livelihoods of 500 families will be enhanced. The ripple effect of this measure alone will help to strengthen our economy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, presently, we have some 467 fishers who are above 65 years. In the event that these fishers will be opting for the lump sum, my Ministry will be able to issue, over and above the 500 Fishermen Cards, additional Fishermen Cards to young

aspiring fishers. This will be an ongoing policy which will inject new blood in the fishing sector.

It is to be noted, that again between 2005 and 2014, that is, ten years, only 289 Fishermen cards were issued when the Labour Party was in power. This is what I would term again *plus que "dérisoire"*, using the same exact word used by hon. David.

This training will be carried out jointly by the Fisheries Training and Extension Centre and the Mauritius Maritime Training Academy of my Ministry. The course will include modules relating to safety at sea, fishing techniques, communication, mounting of gears, outboard engines and practical at sea.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this morning I had a PQ and I think I just want to answer to your question. Fishing is one of the risky professions in the world. The safety and security of fishers at sea are an integral part of fisheries management and it is essential to address these issues.

As at date, only two boat passages are delimited by navigational aids. With the present budgetary measures, my Ministry will install navigational aids at 22 sites around the island. This will benefit not only the fishers but also pleasure craft operators, especially during trips performed at night and will reduce the risks of accidents and loss of life at sea.

In addition, my Ministry has received five Automatic Identification System (AIS) which can be worn on their hand, should they fall in the water, they would be able to activate their Mayday button. On the activation of the Mayday, search and rescue operations can be started to rescue the fisher as his position would be immediately known. My Ministry has worked with the ICTA and Exact Earth and trial on this new device will start shortly.

Furthermore, several complaints have been received at my Ministry concerning the inability of fishers to pay back their loans at the DBM for purchase of their boats. Many fisher families have also approached my Ministry over the last two years to convey the difficulties they are facing to repay the loans of deceased kins who were fishers.

I would like to point out that Government is very much conscious of such difficulty and this is why the Budget has made provisions for an amnesty programme to alleviate their suffering.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with a view to encourage outer-reef and bank fishing, financial support in the form of a grant of up to 50%, up to a maximum of

Rs4 m. are being allocated to fishermen cooperative societies to enable them to acquire semi-industrial fishing vessels less than 24 metres in length.

Four fishermen cooperative societies have already benefitted from the semi-industrial grant scheme. As at date, two semi-industrial fishing boat have been acquired and the project has been impeded due to COVID-19 pandemic and the inherent shortcomings in the current scheme.

Accordingly, the scheme is being reviewed to increase its effectiveness. As from the next financial year, beneficiaries will be provided with a lease for the purchase of fishing boat, through the Industrial Financial Institution (IFI), at an annual interest rate of 2.5% for acquisition of a Semi-Industrial Fishing Vessel up to a maximum of Rs10 m.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the amendment brought to the Fisheries and Marine Resources Act to enable the registration of fibreglass fishing vessels 24 metres and above will definitely boost the fishing industry.

This measure was being long awaited by many stakeholders in the fishing sector. Since the announcement of this measure, local companies have shown keen interest for catch of both demersal and pelagic fish on such fishing vessels.

Oui, je dirais que c'est une mesure phare qui va sans aucun doute dynamiser le secteur de la pêche.

Worldwide, most fishing nations are using fibreglass fishing vessels as –

1. they are less costly;
2. they are easy to maintain, and
3. they require less fuel consumption.

And mostly, they touch port at better interval thus encouraging fishers to join the sector. This amendment is a great initiative to enhance our local fishing fleet capacity to increase local fish production thereby reducing the import of fish and fish products.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this budget is about attracting investment, making investment in our country easier, and thereby creating wealth for all, rather than for the few. The idea, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is not only to generate wealth but to sustain and increase wealth for us all.

While the Opposition is focused on depicting a very bleak picture, this Budget is dedicated on re-inventing a stronger economy for the Republic of Mauritius. We, on this side

of the House, are not only seizing opportunities, but also creating opportunities at this *tournant de l'histoire*.

This Budget puts strong foundations for our much needed *Relance*. It takes bold and courageous steps for this *Relance* to take place. This Budget has been prepared in extremely challenging circumstances.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is also responsible for protection, preservation and rehabilitation of marine ecosystems with a view to building resilience against climate change. In this respect, my Ministry has started sea grass and coral restoration projects to mitigate the negative impacts of climate change and coastal erosion.

Furthermore, my Ministry, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme, has secured a grant for the regional project “Restoring Marine Ecosystem Services by Rehabilitating Coral Reefs to Meet a Changing Climate Future” for the Republic of Mauritius and Republic of Seychelles to the tune of around USD 9 million to be undertaken for a period of 6 years starting from 2020.

The Project would benefit Mauritius through coral restoration activities as well as capacity building programmes and knowledge exchange for the region.

In the same vein, my Ministry has implemented a second octopus closure from 15 January to 15 March for the enhancement of the octopus stocks by allowing juvenile octopus to grow in size and bring a better yield to fishers. This measure will also ensure better conservation and management of octopus stocks.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, mangroves are renowned to offer protection against erosion. Additionally, mangroves are thriving breeding and nursery grounds for many species of fish. Importantly, mangroves also carry out critical sequestration of carbon from the atmosphere. Mangroves act as a break wave against natural calamities such as cyclones and tsunamis. Recognising the essential role of mangroves, this Government is committed to continue mangrove plantation on the South Eastern and Western coast of the island with a view to protecting the shores. The new proposed area in the Western region for mangrove plantation is 15,000 square metres, whereby a total of 15,000 propagules would be planted.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, aquaculture is one of the clusters identified to develop the Blue Economy in Mauritius. *La Ferme Marine de Mahébourg* is the main aquaculture farm operating on a large-scale basis. It has increased its production over 10 years from 300 tonnes to 3,200 tonnes. Presently, it is operating at five sites and has been allocated three more sites.

With the expansion of the production in the three additional sites, it is expected that the total aquaculture production will maintain the increasing trend.

Government Departments, private sector and NGOs have worked together for an aquaculture framework and 4 off-lagoon sites have been earmarked in the north.

Projects for aquaculture development in these regions will be assessed, and all going well, sites will be allocated to potential investors for large scale off-lagoon aquaculture farming.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is also responsible for the monitoring of licensed fishing vessels. Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, known as IUU fishing, leads to unwarranted decrease in the stock of fish species which jeopardizes our fishing industry. Our vast EEZ needs the much-required surveillance.

In this respect, my Ministry is closely collaborating with the National Coast Guard and has also sought the assistance of friendly countries such as Japan and India for access to satellite imagery and the possibility of intervention.

The Mauritius Oceanography Institute (MOI) is involved in the acquisition of oceanographic data, addressing global issues such as climate change and marine pollution, modelling of coastal and oceanic processes, exploration and mapping of resources in the near shore and oceanic waters, and the implementation of projects in emerging sectors such as biotechnology and renewable energy, amongst others.

The MOI, through its research projects, would provide scientific evidence for the environmental and societal benefits to Government for the development of the circular economy. The MOI would hence develop tools and methods to help various stakeholders reaching their circular economy ambitions in the Blue Economy sector.

Projects, currently being implemented as well as planned, will assist in achieving some of the set goals of the Government Programme 2020-2024 and also contributing towards the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals, including the SDG 14 on 'Life Below Water'.

Again, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Shipping Division of my Ministry is the specialised arm responsible for maritime security, prevention of pollution of the maritime environment from ships, development of Mauritius shipping sector and maritime training and education for the maritime industry.

Shipping plays a vital role in the national economy of a country and is also an integral part of the global economy. It is a network of specialised vessels, the ports they visit, and transportation infrastructure from factories to terminals, to distribution centres and to markets. For many commodities and trade routes, there is no direct substitute for waterborne commerce. As there is an increase in the number of vessels plying our waters, Mauritius should be proactive to all risks involved and ready to prevent any major ecological disasters.

Mauritius is a member of the International Maritime Organization and has acceded to major IMO Conventions regarding vessels' safety, protection of marine environment, improving human factor and promoting safety of life, and safe construction of ships such as SOLAS, MARPOL, STCW and other conventions and codes.

With regard to the remarks made by the hon. Leader of the Opposition yesterday on the innocent passage, maybe he is not aware that my Ministry has already published "Areas To Be Avoided" in our seas in the light of the unfortunate grounding of the MV Wakashio.

This notice has been issued to all shipping operators and the IMO has been requested to inform all its members accordingly. We are now preparing our submission to the Maritime Safety Committee of the IMO for making the "Areas To Be Avoided" mandatory.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one of the main actors of the Shipping industry is the seafarer. For centuries, seafarers have been leaving their homes and their families to earn their living. They are often away for nine to twelve months at a time. Seafarers ensure that the essential items and commodities on which our lives depend arrive safely at our homes. In fact, seafarers connect the world.

My Ministry is responsible for providing welfare facilities to eligible seafarers, both local and foreign, in Mauritius. To this end, the Seafarers' Welfare Fund has disbursed more than Rs3 m. as financial assistance to seafarers and seafarer associations over the last financial year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am glad to inform the House that the Seafarers' Welfare Fund will shortly sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the Mauritius Sailors' Home Society to improve the welfare of seafarers in Mauritius. I wish to place on record my gratitude to the Diocese of Port Louis for their continued collaboration and support in this endeavour.

The Seafarers' Welfare Fund will be set at the Trevessa House in the Port Area and will be equipped with several equipment for sports, leisure and recreational activities for the welfare of the seafarers.

I am also informed the Seafarers' Welfare Fund is purchasing a 15-seater minibus which will be provided to seafarers and seafarers' associations to enable them to enjoy outdoor trips as part of welfare activities.

Furthermore, the MMTA, that is, the Mauritius Maritime Training Academy is reinventing itself to adapt to the new requirements of the workforce in the shipping industry. These courses include, amongst others, the following –

- Guidelines for the conduct of Bridging Course for Existing Electrical Officers to Electro-Technical Officers;
- Guidelines for the conduct of Pre-Sea Training Course for General Purpose (GP) Ratings;
- Guidelines for the Conduct of courses for –
 - a. Ratings Forming Part of Navigational (RFPNW);
 - b. Ratings Forming Part of Engineering Watch (RFPEW);
 - c. Able Seafarers Deck, amongst others.

These courses are conducted on a demand basis for the benefit of seafarers and potential seafarers to allow them to secure employment onboard cargo and fishing vessels which have attractive pay packages.

M. le président, sur le plan politique, je tiens à remercier le ministre des Finances pour avoir injecter plusieurs millions de roupies dans ma circonscription, Flacq/Bon Accueil. Parmi tant d'autres projets à la *NDU*, un montant de R 401 millions a été alloué pour la construction de drains dans la circonscription, en commençant par les zones à risque d'inondations, notamment à Centre de Flacq, Poste de Flacq et Queen Victoria.

M. le président, concernant le développement communautaire, un projet de MUGA verra le jour dans ma circonscription et sur le plan de la santé publique, bien sûr, Constance Flacq sera prochainement doté d'un nouvel hôpital. Belle Mare sera aussi dotée d'un *Regional Outdoor Education and Recreation Centre*.

Aussi, des infrastructures seront revues à la plage publique de Belle Mare pour la rendre plus accessible aux personnes autrement capables, et je remercie mon collègue

Alors, M. le président, I congratulate the Minister of Finance for his vision, for the concrete steps taken to create a strong Mauritius in a post-pandemic world. I would like to

conclude on a note as I love to do it, on a note in Bhojpuri this time from Dr. Ancharaz of Laventure, an eminent Professor in Indian philosophy. I quote –

“Eissan aadmi bhi ha jo log apan dookh se utna dookhi naye holan sa jetna dusar ke sookh se dookhi holan sa.”

Ce que signifie, M. le président, il y a des gens qui sont plus affligés par le succès des autres que par leurs propres échecs.

This says it all when we listen to Members of the Opposition who have still not digested their electoral defeat. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much.

Hon. R. Duval!

(10.19 p.m.)

Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): M. le président, au moment où je m'adresse à la Chambre, plusieurs aspects auront été abordé et décortiqué. On a jonglé ces derniers jours avec des chiffres par millions, voire des milliards. Un exercice budgétaire qui s'est tenu sans ressources financières disponibles et là où l'honorable ministre des Finances a omis de préciser d'où viennent les ressources pour financer ces multiples mesures annoncées vendredi dernier.

M. le président, quelle audace de parler de budget de relance ! C'est un budget en tout point mièvre, du déjà vu, sans imagination, sans vision pour le long terme, sans idées innovatrices et aussi, M. le président, le média flatteur financier des deniers publics a voulu nous faire croire à un *new business model*, un nouveau écosystème, un nouveau écosystème circulaire, on fait un tour de magie du ministre des Finances. Hélas ! Encore une fois, M. le président, on a eu droit à un budget canular. Le peuple ne risque pas de l'oublier si tôt.

M. le président, le ministre des Finances nous disait que notre pays est *COVID-free*, unique, un modèle même pour les plus avancés, ça c'était en 2020 comme il aime si bien le dire.

Aujourd'hui, le ton a changé du ministre des Finances. Il nous informe que notre économie est fragile, vulnérable, impuissant face aux forces extérieures, mais, M. le président, à qui la faute ? À la pandémie ? Non, M. le président. Elle a été comme une manne tombée du ciel pour certains membres de ce gouvernement. Les contribuables n'ont pas oublié les multiples scandales autour de l'achat des produits médicaux et les fameux

respirateurs artificiels. D'autres qui ont même mené à la démission de l'un des vôtres. M. le président, avec une contraction de notre économie en dessous du niveau pré-pandémie, la fermeture de nos frontières et le verrouillage récurrent la morosité planante au-dessus du monde des affaires et face au ralentissement de l'économie mondiale, ce gouvernement, pour cacher son incompétence et son manque de préparation, s'est servi de cette pandémie en brossant un tableau sombre, créant ainsi une atmosphère peu reluisante pour les affaires. Résultat, M. le président, des milliers de personnes se sont retrouvées sans emplois et les petites et moyennes entreprises en détresse.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will say it in so many words, the Minister of Finance with conniving handmaiden, the Bank of Mauritius and his lapdog, the Economic Development Board has been tasked in his budget to stir the country out of trouble, get the economy back on track and secure the livelihood of all the affected Mauritians who voted for them to live a better life.

Before the budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, they were finding green shoots here and there. They were trying to build up confidence and managing public perception positively in spite of the number of scandals emerging day after day, spending public money by millions and billions.

Mais, M. le président, qu'en est-il pour ces secteurs prometteurs et émergeant dont a fait état à maintes reprises ceux qui dirigent les beaux discours au ministère des Finances ? Comment disent-ils ? Parmi les secteurs avec un potentiel de croissance, nous retrouvons notamment l'économie circulaire, nutraceutiques, le gaz liquéfié, la biotechnologie, l'économie océanique, l'informatique, les centres de données de la *Fintech*.

Au-delà de leur bluff, M. le président et beaux discours, nous avons toutes les raisons de nous inquiéter davantage pour notre économie qui est mal menée, dépouillée de par leur incompétence grotesque et mentalité corrompue pour certains. Je répète bien, pour certains. Il y a une preuve la plus concrète pour démontrer que c'est bien le Budget 2021-2022 totalement dépassé à côté de la plaque, voire son boussole. Je suis navré de le dire qu'avec un tel budget, M. le président, cela dépendra pendant quelques années encore, difficile et pénible surtout pour la population avant que nos principaux indicateurs économiques ne trouvent leur niveau de pré-pandémique.

M. le président, le déclin économique dans tous les secteurs tant au niveau des affaires, de l'exportation, de la production locale, de nos *SMEs*, du déficit budgétaire, du taux

d'inflation, du taux de change, de nos réserves de devises étrangères et j'en passe. M. le président, tout est au rouge et le pays va à la dérive avec aucun capitaine à bord et encore moins de monnaie financière.

Statistics Mauritius nous prévient déjà que la reprise prendra beaucoup de temps, s'agissant des secteurs qui sont dans le rouge et en extrême difficulté. Dans le court terme, il y a aussi espoir d'une reprise qui ramènera la *PRB* à son niveau d'avant la pandémie. Alors pourquoi tous ces matraquages autour de notre résilience, M. le président ? Est-ce que ce budget et l'équipe dirigeante ont la capacité de redresser notre économie ? Et au moins de faire retrouver le même niveau d'avant la pandémie. Ont-ils la capacité de faire face à d'autres difficultés liées à la pandémie qui pourrait durer encore longtemps ?

M. le président, malheureusement avec un tel budget au lieu d'une gestion économique, nous avons eu droit à une irresponsabilité économique.

C'est pourquoi, je le dis, le peuple a perdu tout espoir d'un avenir et de nombreux citoyens cherchent aujourd'hui à immigrer en masse. Ces citoyens constatent aussi que le pays plonge de plus en plus vers la récession, M. le président.

L'honorable Xavier Duval a très bien expliqué dans son intervention de ces 100,000 chômeurs qui sont déjà là et le ministre des Finances avait parlé de ça, lui aussi, depuis un bon moment. La dépréciation de plus en plus rapide de la roupie, le taux d'inflation qui augmente, entraînant une baisse de pouvoir d'achat, la dette publique qui ne cesse de grimper, l'épuisement des réserves de la Banque Centrale et le déficit budgétaire.

M. le président, nous nous dirigeons vers une stagnation des activités économiques pour encore bien longtemps. Au niveau de la consommation, M. le président, j'en ai fait état récemment sur les réseaux sociaux des prix des denrées de base qui ont pris l'ascenseur et cette hausse perdure, M. le président. L'indice des prix de la consommation a grimpé de 106.1 point en décembre dernier à 108.5 point en mars de cette année. Ce sont surtout les produits à grande consommation comme les grains secs, le riz, le beurre, l'huile de cuisson, le poulet, qui ont subi une hausse conséquente, y compris ceux des médicaments. N'en parlons pas, M. le président. Ils ont augmenté de 7% à 20% dans nos pharmacies. Sans oublier le prix de l'essence qui est passé de Rs40 à Rs50.

M. le président, le peuple souffre ! Nos citoyens doivent aujourd'hui contribuer à Rs2 par litre d'essence pour un vaccin que le ministre de la Santé a dit gratuit. Quelle ironie, M. le président !

En passant, M. le président, les pays de la G7 ont exprimé leurs intentions d'offrir aux pays de l'hémisphère sud un milliard de doses de vaccins et je me demande pourquoi le gouvernement Mauricien n'a pas fait des demandes pour en obtenir. Mais vous savez pourquoi, M. le président ? Parce que nous sommes mis à dos avec des pays amis tels que les Etats Unis, la Grande Bretagne, avec des déclarations incohérentes au plus haut sommet de l'État. Au lieu de régler les différends diplomatiquement et améliorer notre diplomatie économique, le gouvernement fait le contraire. Nous voyons donc les résultats aujourd'hui, M. le président.

M. le président, ma préoccupation demeure aussi pour ces quelques 1500 pêcheurs qui ne sont pas régularisés. Les gens de la mer qui pratiquent un métier à risque mais qui n'arrivent - pour que les pêcheurs de bénéficier une fois pour tout d'un plan de pension. Il est grand temps que le ministre vienne de l'avant avec un plan de pension pour les pêcheurs pour qu'ils n'aient plus à soucier de leur avenir et de l'avenir de leur famille.

M. le président, ma circonscription, vous le savez a été particulièrement affectée par la marée noire et les pêcheurs, skippers et autres opérateurs touristiques m'ont fait une requête, c'est-à-dire que la région du sud sud-est, très touchée par le naufrage du Wakashio, soit décrétée région exceptionnellement affectée par la marée noire.

Je me fais, M. le président, leur porte-parole, aujourd'hui au sein de cet Assemblée. Je fais aussi un appel pressant au ministre concerné pour que la reprise des activités économiques et sociales se fasse dans les plus brefs délais. Par conséquence, je demande à qui le droit de mettre en place un *tailor-made package économique and social plan* surtout pour les régions affectées par le déversement d'huile.

M. le président, je voudrais parler d'un secteur qui intéresse beaucoup les Mauriciens et qui directement et indirectement, pèse plus de R 6 milliards en terme de chiffre d'affaires donc plus de R 650 millions sont reversées au gouvernement sous forme de taxe. Je parle bien évidemment de l'industrie hippique qui existe depuis plus de 200 ans. Une industrie, M. le président, qui en temps normale, emploie plus de 2 000 personnes et touche 4 000 familles, ce qui est équivalent à une enveloppe totale de rétribution de plus de R 2 milliards. C'est pour vous dire tout le poids que cette industrie représente et qui contribue presque à 2.8% de notre PIB.

M. le président, cette industrie est mise à mal bien souvent par les décisions et les actions les plus incongrues que les autres. Pourquoi, M. le président, veut-on tuer la poule

aux œufs d'or, pourquoi ? Pourquoi, M. le président, l'État à travers la *GRA*, s'en prend ouvertement aux dirigeants du *Mauritius Turf Club* ? Pourquoi la *GRA* ne veut pas donner au président, comme l'a dit précédemment l'honorable Bhagwan, M. Jean Michelle Giraud, son *Personal Management License (PML)* pour avoir été un membre actif de cette industrie pendant plus de 30 à 40 ans en tant que propriétaire, nominateur, entraîneur d'une écurie ? Comme un amoureux de la race équine, je trouve cette démarche, M. le président, de la *GRA*, abjecte et révoltante.

M. le président, dans le débat, lors de la présentation de la *GRA Act*, il fut surtout question de la création de la *Gambling Regulatory Authority* et qui est motivé pour assainir le sport hippique, qui est devenu au fil des années une industrie qui nourrit, comme je l'ai dit précédemment, indirectement et directement, 4 000 familles.

Toutefois, M. le président, force est de constater qu'aujourd'hui, la *GRA* n'a jamais rempli son rôle correctement. Au fait, M. le président, elle est venue jeter la confusion et le désordre dans cette industrie avec une politique partisane. Personne, M. le président, ne dira le contraire à l'effet que rien ne va plus dans cette industrie et tout turfiste avisé vous le dira. La *GRA* n'est aujourd'hui qu'un outil de plus entre les mains du pouvoir, M. le président. Au lieu d'agir comme un partenaire avisé et averti du monde hippique, la *GRA* agit comme une Police d'un état autocrate. M. le président, tous les changements apportés au *GRA Act* depuis quelques années, ne sont jamais innocents. Ces changements ont été effectués en toute connaissance de cause. Comme par exemple, l'interdiction des *bookmakers* d'opérer *off course*. Une décision, M. le président, irréfléchie qui a permis une prolifération des *bookmakers* clandestins et des paris illégaux à travers le pays. Ce qui est de toute évidence contre bien sûr les intérêts de l'État et du *Mauritius Turf Club*.

M. le président, les dernières mesures proposées vendredi dernier en vue de la présentation finale du *Finance Bill*, viennent confirmer les réelles intentions de la *GRA* et de l'État qui consistent à mettre à genoux le *Mauritius Turf Club* et prendre contrôle de l'industrie épique pour faire la pluie et le beau temps.

Comment peut-on, M. le président, parler d'assainissement des courses hippiques alors que l'Etat n'a fait que pomper d'énormes revenus du monde hippique sans y investir un seul sou pendant de nombreuses années.

M. le président, il y a des problèmes urgents à régler en faveur des mauriciens notamment les jockeys qui font fonctionner cette industrie et là le ministre des Finances sait-

t-il, par exemple, qu'un apprenti jockey ne gagne que R 120 pour la monte d'un cheval à l'entraînement ? Sait-t-il aussi que les jockeys mauriciens doivent payer R 5 000 par mois pour une assurance qui ne rapportera qu'un million de roupies en cas de décès ? C'est de ça que, M. le président, la *GRA* devrait s'occuper.

M. le président, il est temps que ces problèmes soient mises sur une table de discussion et l'Etat doit, par exemple, investir de l'argent des courses pour la création d'un *Jockey's Academy*. Des champions tel que Karis Teetan, sans oublier feu Nooresh Juglall, mort dans des conditions tragiques au Champs de Mars, peuvent être formés. Il y a le potentiel, M. le président.

M. le président, il n'y a pas que des jockeys qui peuvent être formé dans cette académie mais aussi des palefreniers, des maréchaux-ferrants et toutes ces autres formes de métiers liés au cheval. Il faut, M. le président, que cet argent des courses revienne au courses. Pourtant des années, les différents présidents qui se sont succédés à la tête du *Mauritius Turf Club* a réclamé corps et âme un *helping hand* de l'État, face à la montée vertigineuse des paris illégaux dans le pays et aussi donner une nouvelle réorientation à cette industrie.

M. le président, l'État, encore moins depuis fort longtemps, n'a jamais jugé utile de remettre sur la table une partie de ses revenus pour aider cette industrie. Pourtant, chaque année comme le cas pour l'année financière 2021-2022, où le *betting tax* est passé de 12 à 14%.

M. le président, à qui profite le crime quand les bookmakers *d'off-course*, sont interdits d'opérer? À qui profite le crime quand un opérateur n'est pas relié en temps réel au serveur de la *GRA*? À qui profite le crime quand les reçus délivrés pour le *remote control betting* ne sont pas numérotés? À qui profite le crime quand les côtes affichées à la télévision sont *tax excluded* contrairement aux deux *Tote* existants?

M. le président, il y a quelques semaines, le *Mauritius Turf Club* avait écrit au ministère des Finances pour lui informer et lui formuler dix propositions dans le but d'assainir et d'aider l'industrie des courses à se remettre sur orbite. C'est sans surprise, aucune d'elle n'a été retenue par l'honorable ministre des Finances. C'est dommage pour ces *ti dimun* qui se réveille à deux heures du matin, trois heures du matin. Je parle de palefreniers, d'employés. Je n'ai rien à gagner là-bas moi avec ces gens-là. Je ne suis pas aux courses. Les *ti dimun* qui se réveillent à trois heures du matin afin que les courses soient un événement, à la fois nationale et touristique, chaque samedi.

M. le président, si les recommandations auraient été appliquées, nous sommes convaincus que cela aurait aidé le gouvernement à gagner un peu plus d'argent et surtout donner une bouffée d'air frais à l'industrie hippique qui aujourd'hui est à la merci d'un seul et unique financier.

M. le président, à toutes fins utiles, je dirais que les courses est une industrie qui contribue beaucoup à l'économie mauricienne et qu'à ce titre, elle mérite toutes les considérations de l'État.

Je terminerais sur cette note, M. le président. Je crains pour l'avenir de mon pays et je suis sceptique quant à la portée des mesures annoncées. Un tel exercice budgétaire ne permettra certainement pas à la relance de notre économie.

M. le président, notre pays a besoin de bien mieux que faire face à ce *new normal*.

J'en ai terminé, M. le président. Je vous remercie.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Kind reminder to everybody; wear your mask. Wear your mask, hon. Ehsan Juman. Thank you.

Hon. Vikram Hurdoyal!

(10.45 p.m.)

The Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms (Mr T. Hurdoyal): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

I avail myself of this opportunity to pay warm homage to Sir Anerood Jugnauth, the former Prime Minister and President of the Republic of Mauritius who has been the architect of Modern Mauritius.

M. le président, je n'ai aucun doute que feu Sir Anerood Jugnauth restera une source d'inspiration pour les dirigeants à venir et les jeunes de notre pays.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like on behalf of my family and my own name to convey our sincere, condolence to Lady Sarojini Jugnauth who has always provided an unflinching support to late Sir Anerood Jugnauth, the hon. Prime Minister and the whole Jugnauth family.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would also like to congratulate the hon. Prime Minister for his able leadership and wisdom in inspiring this Government to work for a just more inclusive prosperous and modern society where everyone will have equal opportunities.

In the same breath, I would like to convey my thanks and appreciation to my colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development for presenting the second Budget of *l'Alliance Morisien*.

This Budget lays the foundation of a new economic architecture for long-term resilience and revival of all Industries. It provides all the ingredients for the economic recovery of Mauritius in the post COVID-19 era.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have noted some remarks from hon. Duval, talking about *tout est rouge*, c'est vrai, il y a un certain moment tout été rouge et quand vous ajoutez rouge et bleu et vous aurez mauve. Et c'est ça, ce qu'ils ont fait dans le passé parce qu'ils voient que rouge et d'autres il a fait mention que le peuple n'oublierait pas ce budget mais je vous dirais que c'est vrai le peuple *will not forget this Budget because this is a social Budget and this will always be a Budget that will be remembered for*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the 2021-2021 budget is widely recognised as a forward-looking one which meets the expectation of the different segments of the society. The budget debriefing published by most of the economic actors have expressed their satisfaction to the different measures announced in this Budget and welcomed the re-opening of the Mauritian borders in phases.

The workers, the business community, the youth, students and children have been given a fair share. In brief, he has proposed a no-tax budget that contains a host of measures to alleviate the hardship of the weaker section of the population and enhance the resilience of the economy in the face of new challenges.

Allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to quote what American Politician Mary Landrieu, had to say about a budget. I quote –

“A budget should reflect the values and priorities of our nation and its people.”

In short, as rightly pointed out by the Prime Minister –

“*c enn bidze de relance apre Covid et enmemtan enn bidze pu continier soutenir bann plus vulnerabl*”.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Budget has placed emphasis on stimulating the economy through a number of expansionary macroeconomic policies to boost public infrastructure, SME development and promote social welfare.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to public infrastructure, the Budget has made provision some Rs65 billion for infrastructural development across the country and these include construction of drains, Social Housing Units, Community Development Projects, Land and Transport Projects and other major infrastructural projects.

These infrastructural projects will greatly contribute to propel Mauritius to the next level of development and building the infrastructure of tomorrow in a bid to transform Mauritius into a modern city-state. Moreover, these construction projects will generate jobs for the Mauritians and give a boost to construction and the economy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, SME development is the bedrock of our economic structure and employs more than 50 per cent of the Mauritian workforce. It is also one of the engines of our economic growth and contributes around 40% of the country's GDP. This Government has always stood by the side of small and medium enterprises in this difficult time.

In the last Budget, this Government assisted SMEs through the Wage Assistance Scheme and the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme to enable them to maintain employment and continue their business activities. In this Budget, we are again taking a series of measures to give a boost to SME development. I have no doubt that these measures will go a long way in promoting the SME sector and generate jobs for our youth.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in spite of the present economic recession, Government is sustaining the welfare state and providing necessary protection to the vulnerable groups of our society through its different welfare schemes and projects.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, during the Budget Speech, 3 laudable measures retained my attention. For first time in the history of Mauritius, all Mauritians buying a house, apartment or land to construct a house will benefit from a refund of 5% of the cost of the property up to a maximum of Rs500,000. This will also apply to those contracting a home loan. This extraordinary measure will encourage the youth to become owners of a house.

In addition, the increase in the income threshold for eligibility for assistance for overseas treatment from Rs50,000 to Rs100,000 will give access to more Mauritian families to benefit from overseas treatment.

Lastly, the exemption to MITD exam fees for children on the Social Register of Mauritius is another example of this Government's consideration towards the vulnerable groups. These are much-appreciated measures that have been warmly welcome by the citizens of Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the increase in the budget of Social Security, Education, and Health, clearly demonstrate the pledge this Government made to the nation to consolidate our Welfare State and to protect the most vulnerable groups of our Mauritian society.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to address the issue of unemployment, this Budget has made provision for training and re-skilling of some 10 thousand individuals over the next financial year, namely through schemes and programmes such as National Training and Reskilling Schemes, the National Apprentice Programme, the SME Graduate Schemes and the Youth Employment Programme, among others.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government has always had a special consideration for the needs, interest and hopes of our youth. To this effect, this Budget makes provision for the setting of youth hubs, Outdoor Education Programme as well as several sports and recreational facilities.

M. le président, les mesures prises dans un contexte international extrêmement difficile démontre clairement la volonté de ce gouvernement de promouvoir le bien-être et l'épanouissement de nos compatriotes tout en assurant la relance économique du pays et en consolidant notre état providence.

M. le président, nous avons le devoir de poursuivre le combat mené par feu Sir Anerood Jugnauth en ce qui concerne la souveraineté des Chagos. Ainsi, je note avec satisfaction que des fonds seront décaissés pour sensibiliser le monde entier au détachement illégal des Chagos de la République de Maurice ainsi que pour l'organisation d'un voyage aux Chagos.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, former United States Senator Tim Wirth stated, I quote –

“Energy is essential for development, and sustainable energy is essential for sustainable development.”

Sustainable development has long been a major objective for this Government, and the creation of a Green Energy Industry will help to reduce the country's dependency on fossil fuel, eradicate the use of coal by 2030, thus reducing our country's carbon emission.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like on behalf of my constituents of Constituency No. 10 and on my own name to express my gratitude to my colleague the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, for the consideration given to them in this

Budget. Many of my constituents have even personally contacted me to express their gratitude to the Government for the consideration given to Constituency No. 10.

- The construction of a Community Health Centre at Trou d'Eau Douce will provide better health services to the inhabitants of the region. This measure has been well acclaimed by the inhabitants because there is no health centre for the time being and medical services are currently being provided in a Community Centre which is very congested.
- Moreover, the Mini-Traffic Centre earmarked for Bel Air Rivièrè Sèche, which will be annexed to the new market and Mediclinic that is currently under construction, will alleviate traffic problems, connect the south to the east, facilitate flow of tourists and generate economic activities for the people in the region.
- The extension of the motorway M4 from Forbach to Bel Air Rivièrè Sèche will link the east with the north and transform Bel Air Rivièrè Sèche into a vibrant village.
- The feasibility study for the construction of the road linking Dubreuil and Montagne Blanche will ease the flow of traffic by providing a shorter route to access the eastern region.
- In addition, the amount of Rs569 m. earmarked for drain construction over the next three years for Montagne Blanche, Médine Camp de Masque, Melrose, Clémencia, Bramsthan and Bel Air Rivièrè Sèche will help to mitigate the adverse impacts of flash floods and cyclones in the region.

M. le président, je dois avouer que la Circonscription No.10 n'a jamais obtenu autant de considération dans le passé et les habitants de la circonscription sont extrêmement reconnaissants envers le Premier ministre ainsi que le ministre des Finances, de la Planification Économique et du Développement.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I shall now refer to my Ministry. My Ministry has the mandate to equip the public service with the right skills and people to drive Government business and provide a quality service to the public.

In this context, the Human Resource Management Division deals with appointment, promotion, posting and retirement of public officers as well as succession planning across the public service to ensure that the different Ministries and Departments have the necessary human resources at all times for timely delivery of public services. This Division also

processes the scheme of service of all grades which are the basis for recruitment in the public sector. Since the publication of the PRB Report in 2016, my Ministry has prescribed 602 schemes of service and 109 for last year alone.

The Employment Relations Unit, which operates under the aegis of that Division, is responsible for promoting harmonious employment relations within the public service by adopting a consensual approach through dialogue, consultation, negotiation and conciliation.

To this end, regular meetings are held with Federation of Trade Unions to sort out issues and reach consensus on disputes and discuss HR matters that are of concern to them.

Last year, my Ministry held 14 meetings with the Federations and addressed 106 representations from different Federations and Unions. Personally, I meet the presidents of the different Federations on a regular basis to obtain their views on HR matters and industrial relations in the public sector. The Conciliation Service of my Ministry has resolved 9 disputes over the past two years.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this budget has provided for the filling of 4,450 vacancies in the public service to make sure Ministries and Departments have the required capacity to deliver according to their mandate. My Ministry will act as an active facilitator to ensure vacancies are promptly filled through streamlining of the processes involved in the prescription of the scheme of service.

A Standing Committee comprising of all relevant stakeholders will be set up under the chair of the supervising officer of my Ministry to hold live consultations and trash out issues delaying the finalisation of those schemes. Already, working sessions are being held with the Public Service Commission and relevant line Ministries to speed up that process.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, training is more than ever a necessity than a matter of choice, particularly in today's business environment where innovative and disruptive technologies are fast changing the world of work. To this end, a full- fledged Human Resource Development Division has been set up within my Ministry to look after skill upgrading, capacity building and enhancement of competencies of all public officers to enable them to perform their duties efficiently and effectively.

Training of public officers is conducted both face to face and online by the Civil Service College Mauritius. Last year, in spite of the COVID-19 lockdown, around 10,000 public officers of different grades were provided work-oriented training by the Civil Service College Mauritius to keep them abreast of new techniques, technologies and skills.

Additionally, my Ministry organised in-house training for 1300 public officers in safety and health, alcohol, substance abuse at the workplace, and gender-based violence. A total of 1300 manual grade employees have been provided training over the past two years and it is planned to train an additional 1000 manual workers in the next financial year.

Ministries and Departments also organise customised training courses with the assistance of the Civil Service College Mauritius for their staff to equip them with latest skills, knowledge and techniques that would enable them to perform their duties more professionally. Some 2300 public officers have followed customised training courses at the Civil Service College during this financial year. It is planned to mount focus training programmes for some 4,000 public officers in the next financial year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the normal channel of delivering courses to public officers. As a matter of fact, nowadays all training courses, workshops and seminars are being conducted online and to this effect, my Ministry has requested all Ministries and Departments to set up appropriate infrastructure and to be equipped with modern IT facilities. My Ministry has introduced in March this year a scheme to encourage public officers to follow online courses at their own choice and at their own pace from the Civil Service College Mauritius or any other training institutions. The cost of the training up to a maximum of Rs3,000 per course is refunded by my Ministry.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in all, around 11,500 public officers have been provided with training in Financial Year 2020-2021 which is well beyond the target of 8,000 set out in the budget 2020-2021. For the next financial year, we are targeting to train some 15,000 public officers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the safety and health of public officers rank high on the agenda of this Government. This is why an Occupational Safety and Health Division has been set up under my Ministry to ensure that public officers operate in a safe and healthy work environment which conforms with international norms and standards. For the past financial year, around 8,000 safety audits have been carried out in different Ministries and Departments, 1100 risk assessments have been conducted, and 535 fire drills have been effected.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as announced at paragraph 172 of the Government Programme, my Ministry has introduced an Occupational Safety and Health Management System in the public service in September last year. The Occupational Safety and Health

Management System is a framework that enables an organisation to systematically control its safety and health risks, reduce the potential for incidents, facilitate compliance with safety and health legislation and continually improve its Occupational Safety and Health performance. As at date, the OSH Management System is being implemented at 19 Ministries and Departments covering 45 worksites.

In addition, the OSH Division of my Ministry is also working closely with the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service to ensure that buildings housing public officers are covered with Fire Certificate and meet all the fire safety requirements. We are also working with hospitals and the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service to develop a fire evacuation plan for hospitals.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are going a step further as far as the occupational health of public officers are concerned and we shall shortly come up with a scheme to provide psychological support to public officers in distress.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the pandemic has forced the Government to adopt new technologies to ensure business continuity. The development of new apps for online application and delivery of Work Access Permits, online teaching at primary and secondary school levels and hearing of Court cases via videoconferencing during the confinement period have paved the way for greater use of digital technology for delivery of services online.

The Public Sector Business Transformation Bureau, which operates under the aegis of my Ministry, is currently implementing several projects geared towards the transformation of the public service and the improvement of the quality of public service delivery.

As at June 2021, 321 Business Transformation Initiatives were being implemented across the public service. Some 1,900 public officers have been trained on the Public Sector Business Transformation Strategy.

In addition, 16 whole-of-Government projects similar to the Treasury Accounting Systems are currently under implementation.

The Bureau was assigned the responsibility to monitor the implementation of three Key Performance Indicators adopted by Government in respect of the e-procurement, training and good governance to accelerate the process of transformation across the public service and promote integrity.

I am happy to report to the House that almost all the Ministries and Departments have already embarked on the e-Procurement system, and as from next year, all procurement will, as far as possible, be carried out online. Regarding Corruption Risk Assessment, 70% of Ministries and Departments have already completed at least one assessment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the years to come, the Public Sector Business Transformation Bureau will be called upon to be more proactive and come up with initiatives that will have meaningful impact on the way Government business is carried out and public service is delivered.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, recognising that training of public officers is a pre-requisite for excellence in public service delivery, my Ministry will construct a state of the art Civil Service College on an extent of more than 9 acres of land in the heart of Le Réduit Triangle, with financial assistance from the Government of India.

The concept and architectural design of the college have already been finalised and tenders have been floated in May 2021 and the closing date is 12 July 2021. The contract for construction of the college is expected to be awarded in September this year and work will start in October.

The college will comprise an Academic Block of 3,720 square metres and an Auditorium of 1,120 square metres. The classrooms will be designed and equipped with modern facilities and IT equipment to facilitate online training with overseas training institutions, webinars, videoconferencing as well as interactive coaching. If everything goes well, the college will hopefully be inaugurated by mid-2023. I hope hon. Uteem listened to it. Yesterday, he mentioned that the Civil Service College had been mentioned several times in the Budget Speech. Hopefully, this will be materialised soon.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to remind the House that the construction of the Civil Service College has been on the table for many years as I said. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is only when this Government took Office, under the leadership of the hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, that the Civil Service College Mauritius project was materialised.

I must also remind the House that it is upon the personal intervention of our hon. Prime Minister during a State visit in India in 2017 that the Government of India has provided a grant to the tune of USD 4.7 m. for the college.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is currently developing a new Human Resource Management system, commonly known as e-HR, using open-source technology and an in-

house development team. The system will focus on the digitalisation of only the core HR functionalities being used at the level of Ministries and Departments, namely Leave Management, Performance Management System, Scheme of Service, Employee Benefits and Training. Public officers, on the other hand, could obtain information on their leaves and other benefits by the click of a mouse.

The e-HR system will in the first phase be implemented on a pilot basis at the level of my Ministry and the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation.

Following the outcome of this pilot project, the system will be rolled out to 10 other Ministries and Departments in the second phase covering 27% of public officers.

The e-HR will cover all the remaining Ministries and Departments in the third phase. The first phase of the project will be completed by December this year, the second phase by July next year and the third phase by July 2023.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, COVID-19 pandemic has drastically altered the world of work and ushered rapidly the culture of work from home, among others, as a means to mitigate the transmission of this deadly virus among the population.

With a view to ensuring minimum business continuity and agility in Public Service delivery in time of crisis, Government has come up in March this year with a Work-from-Home protocol with the technical assistance from the UNDP. The Work-from-Home protocol is applicable across all public institutions in general where such pattern of work is possible and under certain specific conditions. It is subject to discussion and agreement by all parties concerned.

According to information compiled by my Ministry, out of 14,000 officers engaged in non-essential sectors, excluding those in the education sector, 2,214 public officers in 42 Ministries and Departments were working from home during the last confinement period compared to 220 officers in 2020 when the same scheme was first introduced on a pilot basis. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the work-from-home culture is now part of the new normal and will sooner or later become the new norm in Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since 2006, my Ministry is implementing the Public Service Excellence Award aimed at promoting a performance oriented, responsive, customer friendly and accountable Public Service. The Public Service Excellence Award is running in its 14th year and has so far attracted some 500 public organisations.

Following proposals from various stakeholders, Government has agreed to create three categories of awards this year –

- The first category will be opened to Ministries and Departments other than Disciplined Forces.
- The second category will concern only Disciplined Forces.
- The third category will cater for Local Authorities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this new formula, with the participation of local authorities, small sections and divisions with special awards, will not only encourage greater participation from public organisations of different sizes and categories, but also provide opportunities for Government to recognise and reward the efforts of public officers who have gone the extra mile to either resolve a problem or enhance the quality of public service.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as announced in last year's budget, my Ministry introduced a Sandbox Framework in March this year to facilitate the adoption of emerging and innovative technologies in Ministries and Departments to improve the quality of service delivery and respond to the evolving needs and exigencies of an ever-demanding public.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Sandbox Framework could be leveraged to improve the quality of life of our citizens in various ways. For example, the development of QR Codes with an online payment system for payment of fixed penalties which currently have to be paid at the cash office of respective District Courts could spare the public from long queues and unnecessary hurdles.

At the level of my Ministry, two priority projects have been identified for implementation under the Sandbox Framework, namely –

- First, the development of a Collaborative Platform and Document Management System for the Scheme of Service Unit of my Ministry.
- Second, the development of an AI-based chatbot for the forthcoming PRB Report, Human Resource Management Manual and Staff List.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have no doubt that the Sandbox framework will be a game changer in the adoption of new and emerging technologies in the public service in the years to come.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the COVID-19 pandemic has taken the world by surprise and disrupted all systems and paralysed Government machinery.

Consequently, Government worldwide had to come up with alternatives to ensure business continuity. In Mauritius, my Ministry, the technical and financial assistance of the UNDP, has come up with a Business Continuity Plan Model for Mauritius which could be activated in times of crisis. The main objectives were –

- (1) to minimise the impact of a disruption to the service delivery system within and across the various Ministries and to the public, and
- (2) to devise a flexible working arrangement that would ensure continuity in Government business

The Consultant has already submitted its report and recommendation to Government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House, that as part of an extension of support to Government in the context of the implementation of the Business Continuity Plan, the United Nations Development Program has agreed to provide technical and financial assistance to the tune of USD450,000 for the implementation of 3 digitalisation projects in view of the importance in the operation of the Government's machinery. These include –

- (1) the implementation of an Electronic Document Management System on a pilot basis at the level of my Ministry prior to its replication in all Ministries and Departments;
- (2) implementation of a Parliamentary Electronic Document Management System with Electronic Voting Facilities to enable the Parliament to sit and conduct business even in times of crisis, and
- (3) automation of the Data Capture Process at the Registrar General's Department to facilitate processing and recording of documents electronically.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to seize this opportunity to convey the thanks of Government to UNDP for its precious support.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is implementing the Enhancement of Work Environment Programme since 2011 to fund safety and health projects in Ministries and Departments with a view to uplifting safety and health standards at work places. For Financial Year 2020-2021, my Ministry funded 177 projects to the tune of Rs4 million to improve the working environment of public officers. My Ministry is reviewing the framework of this programme to cater also for projects relating to greening of the Public Sector which is in line with the second pillar of our strategy to promote a green energy

industry. As a matter of fact, as from the next financial year, my Ministry will also consider financing projects for Ministries and Departments relating to –

- Solar water heaters;
- Solar panels for electricity generation;
- Rainwater harvesting;
- Recycling processes and tools;
- Sensors to control lights in office, and
- Energy saving bulbs

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, over the past years, the Public Officers Welfare Council, which falls under the purview of my Ministry, has been providing popular welfare activities to all Public Officers, such as the *Kermesse*, Football tournament, Tours abroad, stay in hotels, Zumba classes among others. Due to prevailing sanitary conditions, the Council has already started revisiting its whole welfare strategy and in the past weeks, it is leveraging on online technology to carry out its activities such as online speaking competition. A new calendar of activities has already been worked out to ensure that the Public Officers and their families are provided with opportunities to spend quality recreation time together.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the United Nations has declared 23 June as the Public Service Day to –

- (a) recognise the value and virtue of the public service to the community;
- (b) highlight the contribution of public service in the development process;
- (c) recognise the work of public servants, and
- (d) encourage young people to pursue careers in the public sector.

The MSM Government has always recognised the contribution made by public officers in the socio-economic development of this country and the shaping of modern Mauritius. It is the first time that a Government has made provision in the budget for the organisation of an event to celebrate the UN Public Service Day and honour the contribution of public officers who are loyally serving the Nation.

I thank the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Public Officers are the backbone of the Government Machinery. Let us pay homage to late Sir Anerood Jugnauth who has always recognised their exceptional contribution to the development of the country. In his speech on the occasion of Labour Day on 01 May 1984, he explicitly vouched the professional work of Public Officers. I quote what he said –

“In contrast to services in some other quarters, a Government employee has an additional trait which I shall call: the vocation, for which no price can be paid”.

Hence, as a recognition of the effort of our dedicated Public Officers, we are making provisions in this budget for the implementation of the recommendations of the PRB Report in spite of the current economic difficulties.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this budget is about alleviating poverty, preserving jobs, stimulating investments, unlocking the potential of our SMEs, re-dynamising all our industries, protecting the most vulnerable groups and enhancing the resilience of the economy to face the new challenges ahead. Every common man recognises that there could have been no better budget at a time when COVID-19 has severely hit the world economic and healthcare systems.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, many Mauritians were expecting that the 2021-2022 Budget would have introduced a set of austerity measures in view of the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on public finance. Fortunately, this is not the case. All social benefits have been maintained and enhanced without any increase in VAT.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the 2021-2022 Budget contains a host of bold and proactive measures to accelerate economic recovery and prepare Mauritius to rise back stronger than before in the post-COVID-19 era. This Government has gone the extra mile in whatever we did and we will continue to do so.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to conclude, allow me to quote Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi. I quote –

“Our vision and commitment is towards the country’s progress, its place in the world, and the happiness of its people”.

This is what we are doing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in this budget. As the theme of the budget clearly states, we will be better together.

Thank you all for your attention.

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

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

The Deputy Prime Minister seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Wednesday 16 June at 11.30 a.m.

The Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security (Mr M. Gobin) seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned. Adjournment Matters! Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

MATTERS RAISED

(11:26 p.m.)

ABERCROMBIE, SAINTE CROIX - TAXI OPERATORS

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. Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade with regard to the taxi operators of Abercrombie Station, around Abercrombie, Sainte Croix, ...

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Let's hear it! Come on!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: ... several letters to certain of my colleagues, were requesting for a shelter where they can actually rest while waiting for passengers. Could the hon. Minister look into the matter? Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Minister! *Allez-y!*

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr A. Ganoo): I have taken note of the

requests made by the hon. Member, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir and I will report to the House as earliest as possible.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much! Hon. Ritesh Ramful!

(11:26 p.m.)

MAHEBOURG/ BEL AIR/ ST HUBERT - BUS SERVICE

Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I also have a request concerning the hon. Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade. I have received representations from my constituents concerning the bus route from Mahebourg passing through Grand Bel Air to St Hubert. Unfortunately, I do not have the route number, but then I have been told that this route is not being served adequately. There is a lack of buses serving that route and also buses are not respecting their timetable. Can I call upon the hon. Minister to look into the matter, especially in July, students will go back to school if that particular route can be served properly? Thank you.

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

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr A. Ganoo): Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have taken note of the request made by the hon. Member. I will certainly look into the matter.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

VALLEE PITOT – RED ZONE

Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): M. le président, ce soir je m'adresse au vice-Premier ministre et Ministre des Collectivités locales concernant la région de Vallée Pitot. Durant la période où Vallée Pitot étaient décrété zone rouge, la municipalité de Port Louis n'a pas pu assurer un service adéquat dans la région. Ainsi les jardins et parcs n'ont pas été entretenus et plusieurs ampoules brûlées dans des lampadaires n'ont pas été remplacées. Donc, je fais un appel au vice-Premier ministre, s'il peut parler à la municipalité de Port Louis pour que priorité soit donné à la zone de Vallée Pitot.

Merci.

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

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it was rather difficult during the lockdown. We were trying to provide some service, but obviously there was the difficulty to get through the red zone and all that. I will look into it and try to solve it out.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Mrs Joanne Tour!

(1) VERDUN ROAD – ACCIDENTS

(2) BOIS PIGNOLET-VALTON - LIGHTINGS

Mrs J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Merci, M. le président de séance. Ma requête s'adresse à l'honorable Alan Ganoo concernant plusieurs accidents survenus sur le tronçon de la route Verdun à hauteur de Valton. Depuis 2018 à ce jour, il y a eu 69 accidents au total. Je demanderais donc au ministre s'il pourrait voir auprès de la TMRSU si une étude peut être faite afin d'établir les causes des accidents et d'y remédier.

Dans la foulée, je voudrais aussi faire appel au ministre car les usagers de la route déplorent le manque de lumière sur le tronçon de Bois Pignolet jusqu'au rond-point de Valton, c'est le *blackout* total. Merci.

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

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 firstly for having given me notice of this issue, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In fact, this section of the motorway entry in the Northern direction at Valton consists of a long descending grade which favours vehicles to reach high speed and in the process, trucks/bus' brakes can overheat and fail through extensive use. The Member is right; several road crashes have occurred along this segment of Motorway M3, where trucks overshoot at the existing roundabout. An arrestor bed has already been provided by the RDA when Motorway M3 was under construction to slow down and stop heavy vehicles when proceeding towards the North that encountered braking problems when descending the steeps at Valton.

The existing arrestor bed is about 200 metres long, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, filled with sand and gravel and is designed to accommodate large trucks and the safety device, of course, allows the trucks' momentum to be absorbed in a controlled and relatively harmless

way, allowing the driver to stop the vehicle safely. But, as rightly requested by the hon. Member, to further improve road safety along this segment of the Motorway M3, the TMRSU has also set up a speed zone of 80 km/hr thereat and a speed camera has also been installed to deter speeding. The TMRSU has also decided to carry out a communication exercise targeting particularly truck drivers who use this segment of motorway of the arrestor bed which is found there, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Nevertheless, in a spite of all the measures taken, I will certainly take up the matter again with TMRSU to see if we can improve the situation at this dangerous area.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Osman Mahomed!

EID-UL-ADAH – LIVE CATTLE – COST

Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Thank you. I would like to address the hon. Dr. Anwar Husnoo, Vice-Prime Minister tonight, in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee studying costing and price to be fixed for live cattle for Eid-Ul-Adah 2021. He was the chairman last year, I believe this year as well. So, recently the price of beef has increased by Rs10 per pound which is Rs20 per kilo, very high, and no one knows the basis of this, whether it has been approved by Government and the costing leading to that kind of increase; there is a fear that for Eid-Ul-Adah this year, the same amount will be passed on to the...

The Deputy Speaker: Make your request, hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: I understand you want him to review the price? Make your request!

Mr Osman Mahomed: My request to the hon. Minister is to look into the aspect of costing as soon as possible so that people in Mauritius are fixed for Eid-Ul-Adah and also to question that costing.

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

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am aware of the increase in price of beef which went up about two weeks ago. Many different reasons have been given for that, but, obviously, we are going to have a meeting soon to try to sort out this price. I mean, the increase in the first place and to see how we can come to an agreement with the importer

Socovia and Agro-Boss so that we can solve that problem. We have a meeting every year. I think we will have a meeting next week also. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Adil Ameer Meea!

ROCHE BOIS MOTORWAY - ILLEGAL ROAD RACING

Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East):

The issue I am raising tonight is addressed to the hon. Prime Minister and I am sure the hon. Deputy Prime Minister will take good note and transmit the message. On 11 May this year, I raised the issue of illegal road racing at Roche Bois motorway through a PQ B/294. The hon. Prime Minister informed the House of a series of measures...

The Deputy Speaker: No! No! No request!

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we still have ten minutes to go and I am the last intervener. According to Standing Orders, I am allowed to make my point.

(Interruptions)

Mr Ameer Meea: No, I am being very nice. I am allowed to take my point.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea, do not argue with me!

Mr Ameer Meea: I am not arguing with you, it is my right.

The Deputy Speaker: I am ordering you out!

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: You are very unfair!

The Deputy Speaker: I am ordering you out.

(Interruptions)

Mr Ameer Meea: Learn

The Deputy Speaker: You don't comment! Out!

Mr Ameer Meea: We still have 15 minutes.

The Deputy Speaker: Out!

Mr Ameer Meea: I am not taking the time....

The Deputy Speaker: Out! You are wrong! Hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger, go on!

MORCELLEMENT LE MANGUIER, HENRIETTA – LIGHTING

Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal): *Pa fer pareil ek mwa.* Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Ma requête s'adresse au ministre des Collectivités locales et concerne les habitants du Morcellement Le Manguier à Henrietta. J'aimerais lui demander de porter attention à ce morcellement car les habitants craignent pour leur sécurité étant donné qu'il n'y a aucune lumière ; 11 lampadaires ont été installés dernièrement mais aucun d'entre eux n'est fonctionnel. Il n'y a également aucun trottoir et ils ont beaucoup de difficulté à recevoir leur courrier, étant donné que les rues ne bénéficient d'aucun nom.

Merci de bien vouloir y porter attention.

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

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will look into the problem.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Anybody else? Have a good night!

At 11.35 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Wednesday 16 June 2021 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

BORDERS – REOPENING

(No. B/551) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to our borders, he will state where matters stand as to the proposed reopening thereof.

Reply: Right at the outset, it must be emphasised that Government is fully conscious of the need to re-open borders as this would serve as a much needed catalyst for the economy to adapt to the new normal. Allowing international travel to resume would greatly contribute to alleviate the hardships of the tourism and hospitality sectors as well as those of other sectors.

However, it is to be borne in mind that such a decision could not be taken in a rash manner without careful consideration of all parameters, such as the local situation as well as the epidemiological situation worldwide due to COVID-19 pandemic. The associated potential risks also had to be assessed and mitigating measures identified. The border restrictions in place in other countries also had to be taken into consideration.

We know that some countries have closed their borders to foreign nationals, whereas some others have imposed limitations based on –

- (a) whether they appear on a red, amber or green list;
- (b) proof of vaccination and PCR tests carried out prior to boarding aircraft, and
- (c) insurance subscription for the duration of their travel and stay overseas.

Furthermore, some countries are authorising entry of foreign nationals on the conditions that they conform to –

- (a) mandatory quarantine at designated places;
- (b) compulsory self-home isolation;
- (c) temperature checks and PCR test on arrival, and
- (d) the wearing of protective masks and keeping of social distancing in all indoor areas and public places.

In the same vein, prior to the resumption of some passenger flights in October 2020, Mauritius had also put in place various stringent sanitary protocols which had been worked out by the Ministry of Health and Wellness, in collaboration with the airport authorities and in accordance with the guidelines issued by the World Health Organisation, as well as with international best practices.

Following the closure of our borders on 19 March 2020, only cargo flights and cargo ships were allowed entry under strict sanitary conditions. Thereafter, decisions were taken by the High-Level Committee which I Chair for a gradual easing of travel restrictions in a phased manner.

The first phase concerned hardship cases comprising returning medical cases, Mauritian citizens holding valid return tickets issued on or before 20 March 2020, Mauritian students holding scholarships and other Mauritians unable to afford quarantine. These persons were granted free quarantine facilities. Thereafter, Mauritians stranded abroad and Residence or Occupation permit holders were provided the opportunity to return to Mauritius.

During the second phase which started beginning of October 2020, commercial flights were made available to Mauritians and Non-Mauritians willing to undergo mandatory quarantine in a State designated quarantine facility. Bookings were made through the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority Digital Platform by prospective passengers.

Strict sanitary precautions were put in place for incoming passengers, including mandatory PCR tests 5 to 7 days prior to embarking for Mauritius and 14-day quarantine in Government designated hotels with PCR tests on arrival and on days 7 and 14. Following the resurgence of local cases, incoming passengers completing the 14-day quarantine are required to self-isolate for another period of 7 days followed by a PCR test.

Throughout the easing of travel restrictions, the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide has always been constantly monitored and decisions, as appropriate, have been promptly taken to address emerging threats. Thus, in January 2021, when variants of the virus were identified in the UK and South Africa, persons having been physically present in those two countries for the last 14 days prior to arrival in Mauritius were not allowed entry in the country. This restriction was subsequently extended to Japan and Brazil. Currently, any person having been physically present in South Africa, Reunion Island, Mayotte Island or Brazil within the last 15 days preceding arrival in Mauritius, are not allowed entry or transit

in the country save for exceptional cases as may be approved on a case to case basis, subject to strict compliance with special sanitary conditions imposed by the Ministry of Health and Wellness and 14 days' quarantine in a State designated quarantine facility followed by 7 days' self-isolation.

The issue of re-opening of borders has, therefore, been a priority on the agenda of Government since last year. As far back as July 2020, a Committee was set up under the Chair of the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning and Minister of Tourism with the main objective to look into the re-opening of borders in phases. The Committee, which comprises public sector representatives, submits a progress report on a regular basis to the High-Level Committee which I chair.

In April 2021, a Joint Working Group has been set up under the Chair of the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning and Minister of Tourism, comprising both public and private stakeholders, to brainstorm and formulate recommendations for a planned and phased re-opening of borders and re-launching of the tourism sector. This Joint Working Group held its first meeting on 15 April 2021 and set up three sub-committees to look into destination marketing, air-connectivity, and entry requirements and health protocols, and come up with specific recommendations.

The Joint Working Group took note that a key consideration for re-opening of borders remains the vaccination of the population. The national vaccination campaign started on 26 January 2021 and the Senior Chief Executive of the Ministry of Health and Wellness has informed that, as at 09 June 2021, some 321,686 persons have already received their first dose of the vaccine, that is, 25.7% and 218,124 have received both the first and second dose, representing 17.4%. It is expected that the target of 60% of the population, which is the lowest threshold for herd immunity as defined by the World Health Organisation, will be reached by end of September 2021.

On the international front, most countries of the world are stepping up their vaccination effort. It is to be noted that in our main tourist markets, vaccination is progressing rapidly.

Taking all these developments into consideration, the Joint Working Group has recommended the re-opening of our borders in two phases, namely Phase 1 with Resort

Holidays starting on 15 July 2021 and Phase 2 with full re-opening, after reaching herd immunity, as from 01 October 2021.

With regard to the air-connectivity aspects, during Phase 1, only duly authorised commercial passenger flights will be able to operate. Direct flights between Mauritius and our main tourism markets will be favoured. Charter and special flights from growing, emerging as well as traditional markets will be encouraged. Requests for operation of business jets and cruise ships will be given due consideration in view of their business potential.

It is to be highlighted that all throughout this phase of the re-opening, there will be strict compliance with the appropriate sanitary protocols established by the Ministry of Health and Wellness. Different protocols will be applied to vaccinated and unvaccinated travellers. However, both vaccinated and unvaccinated travellers will have to observe quarantine requirements.

Phase 2 will be implemented subject to a successful implementation of Phase 1 and favourable COVID-19 situation in Mauritius and in countries of embarkation at the relevant time.

Furthermore, in order to regain our former market share, appropriate budgetary provisions have been made to fund an intensive marketing campaign for the destination re-launch as announced in the Budget Speech 2021/2022 by the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development.

To conclude, I would like to give the assurance that our borders will be re-opened within a robust framework which will ensure safe travelling conditions for our visitors as well as protection of our local population from risks of transmission of the virus.

(No. B/552) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to drug trafficking, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of Police Officers who are presently suspended for alleged involvement therein since 2015.

(Withdrawn)

POLICE OFFICERS - CONTRACT

(No. B/553) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Police Officers, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof who are on contract, indicating in each case the salary and other benefits drawn.

(Withdrawn)

INDEPENDENT POLICE COMPLAINT COMMISSION - COMPLAINTS - NUMBER

(No. B/554) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Independent Police Complaint Commission, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the number of complaints received thereat, indicating the number thereof -

- (a) completed, and
- (b) presently under investigation.

(Withdrawn)

**INFORMATION COMMUNICATION SERVICE - OFFENCE - REPORTED
CASES**

(No. B/555) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the offence of any person using an information communication service which is likely to cause or causes annoyance, humiliation, inconvenience, distress or anxiety to any other person, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases thereof, indicating the number thereof prosecuted.

(Withdrawn)

**CITIZENS SUPPORT PORTAL - REQUESTS/COMPLAINTS REGISTERED
- MECHANISM & OUTCOME**

(No. B/556) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Citizens Support Portal, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Citizens Support Unit, information as to the number of requests/complaints registered since the launching thereof to date, indicating the –

- (a) rate of successful resolution thereof, and
- (b) mechanism put in place for the –
 - (i) timely and diligent resolution thereof, and
 - (ii) monitoring and evaluation thereof.

(Withdrawn)

CHILDREN - REMOVAL FROM FAMILIES - JANUARY 2019–15 JUNE 2021

(No. B/579) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to children, she will state the number thereof removed from their families since 2019 to date, indicating the –

- (a) reasons therefor, and
- (b) number of shelters therefor currently registered with her Ministry, indicating the number thereof operating
 - (i) with a license, and
 - (ii) without a license.

(Withdrawn)

CHILD ABUSE - REMOVAL FROM FAMILIES - PROTOCOL

(No. B/580) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to children victims of abuse, she will state if her Ministry has put in place a protocol with the Police Force and the Ministry of Health and Wellness, respectively, for the removal of children from their families and, if so, give details thereof and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

CHILDREN VICTIMS OF ABUSE – MEDICAL FILES

(No. B/581) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to children victims of abuse, he will state if it is the practice for the medical files of the parents thereof to be communicated to third parties and, if so, on what terms and conditions.

(Withdrawn)

ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT - DISCUSSIONS

(No. B/582) Mr J. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the Israel and Palestine conflict, he will state the discussions he has had with his international counterparts thereon.

Reply: The Israeli-Palestine conflict is an issue which I have been following closely since I was entrusted with the portfolio of Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade in February this year. Following the launch of rockets by Hamas and Israeli bombardments of Gaza in May, my Ministry has closely been monitoring the situation while our Missions abroad participated in efforts to bring about a cessation of hostilities and a return to normalcy. The House will be aware that on 21 May 2021, a ceasefire came into force in Israel and in the Gaza strip after Egypt and Qatar brokered an agreement between Israel and Hamas.

The international community has welcomed the ceasefire agreement and called for resumption of dialogue between the two parties. The Secretary-General of the United Nations stated that the key priorities are to work with the UN to develop a package for the swift reconstruction and recovery that supports Palestine. He also called on the necessity for both Israel and Palestine to start a serious dialogue to address the root causes of the conflict.

Upon my instruction, our Mission in New York participated in consultations within the Africa Group and the Non-Aligned Movement in preparation of the meeting of the United Nations General Assembly held on 20 May 2021. Both the African Group and the Non-Aligned Movement issued a statement on behalf of all of their respective members during the meeting.

The Africa Group called upon the United Nations General Assembly, the Security Council, the quartet of the Middle East and the Secretary-General of the United Nations to resolutely commit to relaunch the peace process to find a just and lasting solution to the conflict that would establish a sovereign Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

The Non-Aligned Movement reaffirmed its strong support and solidarity with Palestine and its commitment to continue supporting the Palestinian people in their quest to achieve their inalienable rights, including their right to return and their right to self-determination, freedom and independence in their State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Likewise, our Mission in Geneva also participated in the work of the Africa Group and the Non-Aligned Movement which led to the issue of statements on behalf of their members at the Special Session of the Human Rights Council held in Geneva on 27 May 2021 to adopt a resolution entitled ‘Ensuring respect for international human rights law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and in Israel’.

The African Union's statement welcomed the ceasefire agreement and underscored the necessity of establishing a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Human Rights Council established an International Commission of Inquiry to investigate violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel.

On 27 May 2021, in a letter addressed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine, I expressed our heartfelt condolences for the loss of innocent lives occasioned by the recent spiral of violence. I also expressed our solidarity with the Palestinian people in their legitimate aspiration to live in an independent, sovereign and viable Palestinian State, and our commitment to a two-state solution, with Israel and Palestine existing side by side.

The House will recall that my Ministry had issued a communiqué explaining our solidarity with the Palestinian people and supported a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

I would like to inform that I took the opportunity of a meeting with the High Commissioner of Pakistan to raise the issue of the situation in Gaza and to inform of our position, drawing attention to the Communiqué issued by my Ministry on 12 May 2021.

In another meeting I had with the Ambassador of Egypt to Mauritius on 02 June 2021, I commended Egypt's role in the mediation of the ceasefire between the Israeli and Hamas which took effect on 21 May 2021. I also took up this important issue with the Consul General of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia when he called on me on Monday 14 June 2021. He informed me that he had transmitted the stand of Mauritius to the Saudi authorities and that Mauritius and Saudi Arabia share the view on the urgent need for a just and peaceful solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

My Ministry is continuing to monitor the situation in Palestine and our Missions abroad, particularly in New York and Geneva, will continue to participate in efforts towards a just and peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

**MAURITIUS TURF CLUB SPORTS AND LEISURE - BETS -
GAMBLING REGULATORY AUTHORITY/MAURITIUS REVENUE
AUTHORITY**

(No. B/583) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)
asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to bets placed via remote control, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Gambling Regulatory Authority/Mauritius Revenue Authority, information as to if they are

sequentially numbered and, if not, why not, indicating if it has been informed by the Mauritius Turf Club Sports and Leisure that one operator is operating contrary to approved procedures and regulations and, if so, indicate the action initiated thereon.

(Withdrawn)

GAMBLING REGULATORY AUTHORITY – BETTING OPERATORS

(No. B/584) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the betting operators, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Gambling Regulatory Authority, information as to if they are connected to the server of the Mauritius Revenue Authority in real time.

(Withdrawn)

GAMBLING REGULATORY AUTHORITY – BOARD MEMBER

(No. B/585) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Gambling Regulatory Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to since when Mr D. B.³ is a member of the Board thereof, indicating the –

- (a) remuneration drawn therefor, and
- (b) number of sub committees thereof of which he is a member.

(Withdrawn)

GAMBLING REGULATORY AUTHORITY – BETTING OPERATORS

(No. B/586) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the recent allegations made by Mr P. B.⁴, the ex-Head of Integrity of the Gambling Regulatory Authority against Mr D. B.⁵ Board Member of the GRA in regard to two betting operators, he will state if the matter will be referred to the Central Criminal Investigation Division.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS REVENUE AUTHORITY – REVENUE COLLECTIBLE DEBTS - ARREARS

(No. B/587) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in

regard to the Mauritius Revenue Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the present amount of arrears on revenue collectible debts.

Reply: J'ai été informé par la *Mauritius Revenue Authority* qu'au 31 décembre 2020, les arriérés de recettes de la *MRA* pour les créances recouvrables s'élevaient à 9,5 milliards de roupies.

**SIR SEEWOOSAGUR RAMGOOLAM BOTANICAL GARDEN TRUST - MR
S. S., CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER – HARASSMENT**

(No. B/588) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to Mr S. S., Chief Executive Officer of the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Botanical Garden Trust, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) the date and terms and conditions of appointment thereof, including the salaries and other benefits drawn, and
- (b) if any allegation of harassment has been filed against him and, if so, indicate the nature and outcome thereof.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that Mr S. S. was appointed Chief Executive of the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Botanic Garden Trust on 15 December 2020 for a period of one year as per terms and conditions laid down in the PRB Report and determined by the Board.

Mr S is drawing a salary of Rs77,175 and is entitled to 100 % duty exemption for the purchase of a car with engine capacity of up to 1500 cc or a car allowance of Rs3,865 in lieu thereof. Mr S is also entitled to a monthly travelling allowance of Rs11,500 both for attending duty and for official travelling.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that my Ministry is in presence of 3 correspondences from lady officers of the SSRBG whereby –

- (i) two allegations of harassment were reported by one Management Support Officer (Mrs Seegoolam) on 17 May and one Botanist (Mrs Balmokune) on 10 June 2021 respectively,

(ii) one precautionary measure lodged against the CEO by another lady Management Support Officer (Mrs Sooklall), who is also the Secretary to the Board of the SSR Botanic Garden Trust on 02 June 2021.

I am informed that Police enquiry is ongoing following the precautionary measure lodged. Concurrently, copies of all the complaints have been handed over to the Chairperson of the Board for seeking the explanations of the CEO and referring to the Board subsequently.

I understand that the Board will keep my Ministry informed of developments.

SOUILLAC DIALYSIS CENTRE – GENERAL MAINTENANCE EXERCISE
(No. B/589) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Souillac Dialysis Centre, he will state the date of the last general maintenance exercise carried out on the dialysis equipment thereat and table the water analysis reports thereof, if any.

Reply: The Dialysis Unit at Souillac Hospital is operational since March 2012, where a total number of 76 patients are undergoing dialysis treatment presently. The Unit is equipped with 16 Dialysis machines and one Water Treatment Plant, all of the make Fresenius along with one Dialysis machine kept on standby.

The equipment were commissioned in April 2012 and were under warranty for a period of 2 years, that is, from March 2012 up to March 2014, following which the equipment is serviced and maintained by the supplier Messr Chem Tech, through a Maintenance Contract which is renewable yearly. The contract was last renewed on 15 April 2021 for one additional year. The general maintenance exercise for all equipment was last carried out between 27 to 31 May 2021.

As regards the dialysis water, regular analysis of same is done as per international protocols, that is –

- for Bacteriology every month, by the Central Health Laboratory, Victoria Hospital, and
- Bio-Chemical analysis every month by the Government Analyst Division, Réduit.

The latest water analysis reports dates back to 12 May 2021 and are all within normal limits.

The Water Analysis Reports, as requested by the hon. Member, are being placed on the Table of the National Assembly.

MINISTRY OF YOUTH & SPORTS – RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

(No. B/590) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to Recreation, he will state the –

- (a) budget allocated thereto, and
- (b) activities organised as at to date.

Reply: In Financial Year 2020/2021, no budget was allocated under my Ministry's Vote for Recreation.

However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and national lockdowns, several activities were either cancelled, or held virtually. Hence, savings were identified and the following recreation activities were organised –

- (i) Celebration of Music Day (21 June 2020);
- (ii) *Zenes Montre To Talan Depi Lakaz* (15 June to 27 August 2020);
- (iii) World Walking Day (04 October 2020);
- (iv) Summer Holiday Camps (07 to 18 December 2020);
- (v) Street Dance Battle (28 November to 19 December 2020), and
- (vi) Organisation of Regatta Competition and Cultural Programme in collaboration with the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority for the *Festival Kiltir Ek Langaz Kreol Morisien* (13 December 2020).

I wish to inform the House that in addition to the above, two recreation activities are currently ongoing, namely *Zenes Montre To Talan Depi Lakaz Version 3.0* (23 April to 12 August 2021) and an Online FIFA 2021 Inter-Region Competition (10 June to 11 July 2021).

I wish to point out that an amount of Rs12 m. has been provided in the Estimates 2021/2022 for the organisation of recreational activities.

WIND FARM PROJECT – IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/591) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the implementation of the Wind Farm Project at Plaine Sophie, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to where matters stand.

Reply: I had informed the House, on 28 July 2020, in reply to PQ B/425, that the CEB had decided to initiate action to terminate the Energy Supply and Purchase Agreement

(the ESPA) with the Consortium Suzlon-Padgreen Co. Ltd and legal advice was sought accordingly.

A Notice of Intended Termination was accordingly issued to the Consortium in line with the provisions of the ESPA in October 2020.

Given the decision of the Security Trustee not to step in to cure the Consortium's Default within the period provided in the ESPA, the CEB has issued the Notice of Termination in November 2020.

As announced by the Minister of Finance in his Budget Speech, the setting up of a Wind Farm project is still on the agenda. CEB is currently in the process of finalising the bidding document for same.

VIRTUAL ASSETS SERVICE PROVIDERS - REGULATION

(No. B/592) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance whether, in regard to virtual assets service providers, he will state the measures taken for the regulation thereof.

Reply: Virtual Asset Service Providers (VASPs) is a relatively new line of business which is starting to scale up and professionalise within the financial services industry. This trend presents opportunities for traditional asset managers and investors. However, as this whole new business segment matures, it will undoubtedly disrupt the economic landscape and needs to be regulated in the same way as other traditional non-banking financial business activities.

The FATF defines Virtual Asset Service Provider as any natural or legal person who conducts business in one or more of the following activities or operations for or on behalf of another natural or legal person, namely -

- (i) exchange between virtual assets and fiat currencies;
- (ii) exchange between one or more forms of virtual assets;
- (iii) transfer of virtual assets;
- (iv) safekeeping and/or administration of virtual assets or instruments enabling control over the virtual assets, and
- (v) participation in and provision of financial services related to an issuer's offer and/or sale of a virtual asset.

The FATF requires that VASPs be regulated for AML/CFT purposes in line with revised FATF Standards, and be subject to effective system of supervision. Understanding the risk arising from the virtual assets activities is a pre-condition to adopting the regulatory framework. With a view to regulating this line of business, my Ministry has obtained the technical assistance of the World Bank and is conducting a National Risk Assessment relating to Virtual Asset and Virtual Asset Service Providers with a view to identifying any Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing risks that the country might face from their operations or activities.

A draft Bill on Virtual Asset Business is currently under preparation. It is expected that the Bill will be introduced during the course of this year in the National Assembly. This new piece of legislation will mark another important milestone and position our jurisdiction as a competitive Fintech Hub. The Bill will, *inter alia*, address fundamental aspects such as the technical requirements, governance structures, risk management and information disclosure issues for virtual asset service providers; the protection of the interests of clients of virtual asset service providers, and compliance with FATF Standards on anti-money laundering and combatting the financing of terrorism and activities related to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

This new piece of legislation will set the legal parameters for regulating the VA and VASPs business.

In fact, once the risk assessment of the VA and the VASPs is completed and the Virtual Asset Business Bill is finalised, my Ministry will submit an application for re-rating of Recommendation 15 to the ESAAMLG Secretariat for consideration at the ESAAMLG Task Force Senior Official's Meetings. The aim is to become compliant with all the 40 Recommendations of the FATF.

I, however, wish to highlight that in view of the high-risk nature of investments in Digital Assets (including Cryptocurrencies), the FSC has, whilst urging all prospective investors to fully ascertain the related risks prior to committing any funds to such investments, expressly cautioned retail investors that such investments may not be suitable for them.

The FSC has also set up the regulatory framework for the Custodian Services (Digital Asset) License as from 01 March 2019. In June 2020, it has also issued a first series and supplemental Guidance Notes in relation to Securities Token Offerings (STOs) to clarify on the regulatory treatment of Securities Tokens.

The FSC considers that ‘Securities Tokens’ are ‘securities’ as defined in the Securities Act 2005, represented in digital format. Hence, any token displaying the characteristics of ‘securities’ is being regulated under the Securities Laws in Mauritius and is hence already subject to all preventive measures under the FIAMLA and FIAML Regulations. These Guidance Notes have also provided for the licensing requirements of STO trading platforms.

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU HOSPITAL – RENAL TRANSPLANT UNIT (NEW)

(No. B/593) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the proposed construction of a Renal Transplant Unit at the Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: As the House may be aware, Mauritius has a high prevalence of diabetes, hypertension and obesity, which are all major causes of Chronic Kidney Disease. It is estimated that around 10% of the population has chronic kidney disease. Presently, we have 1,550 patients on dialysis. This number has been increasing for the past years and is expected to further increase in the coming years.

With the ever-increasing number of dialysis cases, the associated costs have also increased annually. Thus, Government decided to construct a new full-fledged renal transplant unit at Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital to eliminate the issue of kidney impairment and enable more patients to have a dialysis free life.

This project has been entrusted to a consultancy firm, Hospital Services Consultancy Corporation (HSCC) (India) Ltd, which had been appointed under the G to G Agreement with the Government of Republic of India. The latter has submitted the preliminary design and cost estimate for the Renal Transplant Unit.

In parallel, the Government of India offered financing under a grant to the tune of USD 10 Million. A Letter of Exchange has been signed with the Government of India on 22 February 2021 for the implementation of the project.

Financial clearance has been sought for the project. It is expected that tender will be launched before December 2021. The duration of construction works is around 18 months as from award of contract.

LEGEND HILL PROJECT - ENVIRONMENT IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(No. B/594) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the Legend Hill Project, he will state if the conditions to the Environment Impact Assessment Licence are being respected and, if not, indicate if a stop order is being considered.

Reply: The Legend Hill Project is a Property Development Scheme consisting of the construction of 29 apartments, 23 villas and a commercial complex on an extent of 9Ha6649m² or 22A90P at La Tourelle du Tamarin by Iconic View Ltd. Following application made by the proponent for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) on 15 January 2019, the EIA Licence was granted on 02 September 2019 by the then Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development in accordance with Part IV of the Environment Protection Act (EPA), subject to a set of 48 conditions. Works on site consequently started on 12 June 2020 and the project is currently at implementation phase.

Out of the 48 conditions imposed in the EIA Licence which apply to various stages of the project -

- 8 conditions apply to the post-construction phase;
- 11 conditions pertain both to construction and post construction phases;
- 10 conditions relate to the construction phase;
- 3 conditions are applicable prior to start of works and during construction phase;
- 7 conditions apply prior to start of works, and
- 9 conditions concern all phases of the project.

I am informed that the proponent has complied with the conditions that need to be respected prior to start of works on site, especially in terms of the following -

- (i) approval of its Environmental Monitoring Plan by my Ministry on 19 March 2020;

- (ii) Building and Land Use Permits from the Local Authority on 02 March 2020 for infrastructural works; on 13 March 2020 for development of villas and apartments and technical areas; and on 22 January 2021 for the clubhouse;
- (iii) authorisation to use access during construction phase within the gated residential *morcellement* of Plantation Marguery from the Syndic on 23 December 2019, and
- (iv) submission of a Drainage Impact Assessment on 22 November 2019.

These mentioned approvals, permits and Drainage Impact Assessment are subject to conditions and are closely being monitored by relevant authorities, including my Ministry, the District Council of Black River, the Land Drainage Authority and the Geotechnical Unit of the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development.

I am made to understand that progress of works on site is around 35% and that construction works are scheduled to be completed in January 2022. Works that have been completed include construction of energy absorption fence along jogging track, construction of cut-off drain and masonry drain, slope excavation, including platform levels for villas and construction of triple culvert. In line with the Environmental Monitoring Plan approved by my Ministry in March 2020, the Environment Consultant of the promoter carried out self-monitoring and has, so far, submitted three Quarterly Monitoring Reports covering the period July 2020 to March 2021 to all relevant authorities.

Moreover, several independent site inspections have been carried out by officers of my Ministry and other authorities, including the Geotechnical Unit of the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development, the Land Drainage Authority, the Water Resources Unit of the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities, the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning, the Ministry of Health and Wellness as well as the District Council of Black River. In fact, officers of the Geotechnical Unit of the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development carried out site inspections on 19 February 2021 and 15 April 2021 and have comforted my Ministry that stability checks remain ongoing as the works proceed at each stage. Confirmation has been also given to the fact that countermeasures are progressively being implemented as and when the excavation of the slopes is being completed.

I have been reassured that, as at now, for conditions applicable for works that have been carried out so far, no major non-compliance has been observed or reported. However, following the recent heavy rainfalls in April this year, the representatives of the District Council of Black River carried out a site inspection and shortcomings with regard to the drain works were observed. The Council subsequently requested the proponent to carry out remedial measures. A follow-up site inspection was thereafter conducted on 10 June 2021 by representatives of the Local Authority and it was confirmed that the proposed measures had been complied with by the promoter.

Following the grant of the EIA Licence in September 2019, no appeal was lodged at the Environment and Land Use Appeal Tribunal against the decision of the Minister. However, the project has been subject to criticisms by some inhabitants of Black River and Tamarin and same were even reported in the press. My Ministry, in collaboration with other relevant authorities, is closely monitoring the project to ensure compliance with the conditions of the EIA Licence. A Technical Committee involving all public bodies concerned has been set up at the level of my Ministry for this purpose.

Under section 73 of the Environment Protection Act, a Stop Order is issued when an activity is carried out without the relevant Licence or Permit issued under the Act. Hence, the question of issuing a Stop Order to the promoter does not even arise.

However, the Minister is empowered under section 24 of the EPA to revoke an EIA Licence or amend its conditions in circumstances reasonably justifying such revocation or amendment of the conditions following the grant of the said Licence. It is to be emphasised that non-compliance with EIA conditions is a serious offence under the EPA.

My Ministry, in collaboration with relevant authorities, is closely monitoring the project. In case of non-compliance with conditions of the EIA Licence, my Ministry would act on the basis of provisions laid down in section 24 of the EPA.

**RUE L'ÉGLISE & BEAUGARD GOVERNMENT SCHOOL, PORT LOUIS –
REMOVAL OF ANCIENT STONE SLABS**

(No. B/595) Ms J.Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to the recent removal of ancient stone slabs at Rue L'Église and in the vicinity of Beaugard Government School, in Port

Louis, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Heritage Fund, information as to if inquiries have been initiated thereinto, indicating the outcome thereof.

Reply: In regard to the recent removal of ancient stone slabs at Rue L'Eglise and in the vicinity of Beaugard Government School, in Port Louis, I am informed by the National Heritage Fund (NHF) that on 01 June 2021, a complaint was received from one Mr A.S regarding this theft.

A site visit was immediately carried out thereat where it was found that about five (5) meters of stone pavements had been removed at the back of Hennessy Court.

Since these ancient pavements are not listed as National Heritage under the NHF Act 2003 but fall under the jurisdiction and responsibility of the Municipal Council of Port Louis (MCPL) as for all the pavements in the city of Port Louis, the matter was referred to the MCPL immediately for action.

I am also informed by the Municipal City Council of Port Louis that a site visit was also carried out by them on 03 June 2021 wherein it was found that some stone slabs were indeed missing.

The matter was referred to the Police and a case of theft of ancient stones was accordingly filed.

An enquiry is currently underway. Action as appropriate will be taken by the Police once the enquiry is completed.

I am informed by the MCCPL that to prevent further thefts of ancient stones, the Police department has been requested to effect regular patrols in the city of Port Louis.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT UNIT – PROFESSIONALS - TRAINING

(No. B/596) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Child Development Unit, she will state –

- (a) the reason why an autistic and blind child under the supervision thereof is staying at hospital, indicating if there are certified professionals at her Ministry/at the hospital to take care of that child, and

(b) if the said staff of her Ministry benefitted from continuous training and, if so, indicate -

- (i) the date of the last training,
- (ii) by whom, and
- (iii) the frequency of the trainings.

Reply: With regard to the specific case of an autistic child who was admitted to the hospital, I wish to inform the House that the case was reported as an alleged case of sexual abuse by siblings. As part of the protocol of intervention by the CDU for cases pertaining to violence due to sexual /physical assault, a complete medical examination is warranted and carried out by the Ministry of Health to conclude on the medico-legal aspects of the case.

Given that this particular child was suffering from a developmental disorder with communication difficulties, the medical personnel had to involve a multidisciplinary team for the complete diagnostic of the child and provision of support as appropriate.

As far as her admission and stay at the hospital are concerned, that was decided by the treating doctor due to her medical condition. The minor was discharged after ensuring that all diagnostic assessments were completed and the medical needs of the child were met.

I wish to inform the House that the Ministry of Health and Wellness has a centralised mental health institution [BSMHCC] and a psychiatric unit based at all regional hospitals comprising certified professionals such as psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, psychiatric nurses and the medical social workers who provide treatment to children with special needs when hospitalised. Paediatricians are also based at regional hospitals to conduct developmental assessments in such cases. Follow up is done at the level of the Ministry of Health and Wellness.

My Ministry does not have the mandate to cater for the health issues of children with special needs as medical professionals and psychiatrists are recruited only at the level of Ministry of Health and Wellness. The Special Education Needs Sector at the level of the Ministry of Education caters for the educational needs of children in such situations.

As regards part (b) of the question, there is regular training dispensed to staff of my Ministry from professionals in the field of child care and protection. From 2010 to 2014, five (5) training workshops have been organised on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) for 118 participants. In 2015-2017, 104 participants received training on CSEC, Child Labour and Trafficking in Persons by a local Consultant and another Consultant from the United States. In 2020, the CDU organised a 5-day intensive training on CSEC at the National Women Development Centre at Phoenix. 120 participants attended, including representatives from the Police Department and the Judiciary.

CHAMAREL – ROAD B104 – DEFORESTATION

(No. B/597) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the roadside deforestation taking place on road B104 at Chamarel, he will state –

- (a) the actions taken to mitigate the negative impacts thereof on the environment;
- (b) the actions that will be taken for the rehabilitation of the ecosystems thereat, and
- (c) if environmental monitoring is being done onsite and by whom.

Reply: The Baie du Cap-Chamarel-Case Noyale (B104) Road is characterised by a narrow two-lane single carriageway with an average width of 5.8m, necking down to 4.8m at some places. The route has several dangerous bends with steep mountain cuttings on one side and deep ravines on the other side. The condition of the road pavement structure and underlying geotechnical support have deteriorated over the years, especially over an approximate 1.4 km stretch which has been temporarily converted into one lane.

I am informed that Route B104 being a major link between the Western Coast and the Central Plateau, the Road Development Authority (RDA) hired the services of Lux Consult Ltd in March 2018 and subsequently awarded the contract for rehabilitation works to Sinohydro Corporation Ltd in November last year. Works, which started in January this year, are expected to be completed by April 2022.

The upgrading of road is not a scheduled undertaking requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment Licence as per Part B of the Fifth Schedule of the Environment Protection Act. However, as part of its assignment in respect of Road B104, Lux Consult Ltd prepared

an Environmental Impact Assessment Report. The said report highlights the need to preserve endemic trees located close to the road and recommends measures to avoid direct or indirect damage to those trees during site preparation and construction. It further recommends the need to seek authorisation from the Forestry Service of the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security in relation to the felling down of trees.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am made to understand that the rehabilitation works are being carried out in line with the Environmental Impact Assessment Report of Lux Consult Ltd. Sinohydro Corporation Ltd is, accordingly, required to implement all the necessary measures stipulated in the report to mitigate negative impacts on the environment. Moreover, in line with provisions laid down in its contract, hydroseeding will be carried out by Sinohydro Corporation Ltd on the cut slopes to regenerate vegetation.

Mitigation measures specified in the Environmental Monitoring Plan include dust suppression measures, storage and disposal of waste/used oil in line with the requirements of my Ministry as well as regular spraying of water to prevent air pollution, and soil management plan detailing measures to be undertaken to minimise effects of wind and water erosion.

I am informed that, following several surveys and site inspections carried out by the Conservator of Forest and Forest Officers of the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security, on 28 May 2021, the RDA obtained authorisation from the Forestry Service to fell down trees found on the proposed realignment and where slope stabilisation works are required along B104 road at Chamarel. However, the RDA has been requested to ensure the careful uprooting of all endemic trees that would be affected and their re-transplantation. Sinohydro Corporation Ltd has, accordingly, started translocating the plants from the site to State Land Beemanique over an area of 2 ha as from 07 June 2021. The translocation of specific plants is being monitored by the Forest Officers on a daily basis. On the other hand, the contractor has been enjoined to spare a maximum number of plants on site.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the Forestry Service has requested the RDA to cause thrice the number of exotic trees that will be felled down to be planted and to maintain them for at least two years or until they are well established. The Forestry Service will provide about 600 endemic/native plants for landscaping after completion of site works.

Inasmuch as environmental monitoring is concerned, in line with provisions laid down in Section 13 and the Fourth Schedule of the Environment Protection Act, enforcing agencies have the obligation to monitor environmental parameters within their respective sphere of responsibility.

I am also informed by the RDA that the EIA Report includes the need for the preparation of an Environment Monitoring Plan by the contractor. The said Monitoring Plan has already been prepared and submitted to the RDA. The contractor had initiated action for the recruitment of an Environmental Engineer from China, but the enlistment exercise did not materialise in view of the COVID-19 pandemic. Sinohydro Corporation Ltd is currently in the process of hiring the services of an Environmental Engineer locally for the monitoring of all environmental issues along with the RDA.

COVID-19 – RESUMPTION OF SCHOOLS – 05 JULY 2021

(No. B/598) 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 resumption of schools scheduled for 05 July 2021, she will state if same will be maintained in the light of the recent evolution of the COVID-19 situation in Mauritius.

Reply: The reply is in the affirmative.

ACADEMIES CREATION - PEDAGOGICAL RATIONALE

(No. B/599) 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 creation of twelve Academies, she will state the pedagogical rationale thereof.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that the introduction of Academies is one of the fundamental thrust areas of the Nine Years of Continuous Basic Education (NYCBE) reform announced in the Government Programme 2015-2019.

A clear and uncluttered understanding of the education transformation agenda will highlight that the philosophy that animates the NYCBE reform rests on the foundation of providing equitable learning opportunities for all. If we want to produce well rounded, future-ready and service-oriented citizens, it is paramount that no learner be left behind.

The reform, it will be evident accordingly, makes ample space for learning inclusiveness for less academically inclined pupils. But it hinges as well on the necessity to create chances and opportunities for those who are academically gifted and talented. That is what equity genuinely stands for. No system in the world today deliberately seeks to undermine the forging-ahead nature of those students who have the potential to reach excellent performance standards. Nor should we, in the Republic of Mauritius.

There had been a near-universal outcry against the former CPE-driven system that had been exacting a heavy toll on pupils at the young age of 11/12. Indeed, the intense competition for seats in National Colleges had not only negatively impacted the young minds but had also skewed the very teaching and learning process.

The setting up of Academies admitting students only as from Grade 10 has thus been animated by the necessity to offer an option, a choice to learners (and their parents) while substantially pushing further their zeal to a time when the learners are better able to psychologically and pedagogically cope with it.

In addition, the Academies are called upon to sustain a “growth” mindset among the students through the provision of an education that is socially and culturally as well as economically responsive. And this they will do through a new model of management and community support, the modalities of which we have already worked upon.

As well, one of the central objectives is for Academies to be test beds for curricular and pedagogic innovation so that best practices can mushroom and subsequently be shared for the benefit of the whole system, including Regional schools.

Obviously, Academies are not yet Centres of Excellence in specialised domains for post-basic education. We do not create Centres of Excellence, we can only give them the means and the motivation to help them grow and move up to that status.

MEDICAL PRODUCTS - PURCHASE - 2020-2021

(No. B/600) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the purchase of medical products for 2020-2021, he will state the quantity thereof imported category-wise, indicating in each case, the quantity thereof which were found to be defective and had to be disposed of, indicating the monetary value thereof.

Reply: Medical products comprise medicines & drugs, medical disposables, personal protective equipment, biomedical equipment, reagents and laboratory wares for testing, amongst others. A copy of the requested information is being placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

With regard to the second part of the question, I am informed that from 2020 to 2021, no medical product imported was deemed to be defective, which had to be disposed of.

CONSTITUENCY NO. 6 - ROADS – RESURFACING

(No. B/601) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the roads in Constituency No. 6, Grand Baie and Poudre d'Or requiring resurfacing, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Rivière du Rempart and Pamplemousses District Councils, respectively, information as to if consideration is being given thereto and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) budget earmarked, and
- (b) roads earmarked therefor, indicating the expected start and completion dates thereof.

Reply: Constituency No. 6, Grand Baie and Poudre d'Or is serviced by both the District Councils of Rivière du Rempart and Pamplemousses.

I am informed by the District Council of Rivière du Rempart that an amount of Rs1.6 m. has been allocated for resurfacing of roads in Constituency No. 6 as follows –

- (i) Part of Swaraj Road, Petit Raffray - Rs900,000, and
- (ii) Tulsidas Road, Roche Terre - Rs400,000.

These two projects have already been completed on 30 April 2021.

The District Council of Rivière du Rempart is also undertaking the resurfacing work at School Lane, Roche Terre for an amount of Rs300,000. Works which have already started on 01 June 2021 are expected to be completed by 30 June 2021.

With regard to the District Council of Pamplemousses, I am informed that the resurfacing of roads in the region of Fond du Sac at the following sites are expected to start on 01 July 2021 and completed by 31 July 2021 –

- (i) Gerberra Road;
- (ii) Tagore Road;
- (iii) Seeneevassen Link Road, and
- (iv) Roshni Road/Link Road.

WETLAND BILL - INTRODUCTION

(No. B/602) 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 Wetland Bill, he will state the expected date of introduction thereof in the Assembly.

Reply: As the House may be aware, the UNDP/Global Environment Facility is presently funding the “Mainstreaming Biodiversity in the Management of the Coastal Zone of the Republic of Mauritius” under the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping. One of the components of the project relates to the drafting of a Wetland Bill.

Accordingly, a Consultant was recruited by the UNDP to review the first draft of the Wetland Bill in consultation with the National Ramsar Committee which falls under the aegis of my Ministry.

The contract started in November 2018 and ended on February 2020. The Consultant had carried out a first mission in Mauritius in April 2019 and had several working sessions with Government departments and other stakeholders to undertake a Gap Analysis and review of the legal and institutional framework.

A first draft of the Wetland Bill was submitted by the UNDP Consultant on 21 October 2019 for comments and views. Working sessions had been held by the National Parks and Conservation Service and a consultation workshop with Government departments and other relevant stakeholders (NGOs) was held by the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping.

A revised and consolidated version of the draft Wetland Bill was subsequently submitted by the Consultant on 08 January 2020 and referred to my Ministry.

I am informed by the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping that the contract of the Consultant has been extended to enable him to complete the assignment which has been hampered again amid the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, and subsequent flight restrictions which are still in force.

The contract eventually expired in September 2020 and the Consultant was not able to complete the assignment.

UNDP has again included the finalisation of the Wetland Bill in its annual work plan of 2021 and will consider awarding the contract to the same Consultant to ensure we get a standard process and accelerate the assignment in Quarter 3 of 2021.

The associated flight restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic might further delay the delivery of this activity.

HERMITAGE FOOTBALL GROUND - UPGRADING & RENOVATION

(No. B/603) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the Hermitage football ground, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Vacoas and Phoenix, information as to the expected completion date of the upgrading and renovation works being carried out thereat, indicating the –

- (a) name of the contractor;
- (b) date of award of contract, and
- (c) project cost and quantum paid as at to date.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix that the project of upgrading and renovation works at the Hermitage Football ground consisted of the following –

- (i) levelling and turfing, and
- (ii) lighting.

The works were expected to be completed on 15 August 2018. However, due to poor workmanship by the contractor, the contract was terminated on 25 September 2019.

Subsequently, on 14 March 2020, the outstanding works were entrusted to the in-house labour of the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix and an amount of Rs325,000 was incurred to meet the cost of materials such as top soil, unwashed rocksand and fertilizer and payment of overtime to employees. These works were finally completed on 30 August 2020.

However, the commissioning of the lighting system has not yet been effected due to the fact that there was a need to extend the distribution network of Central Electricity Board to the site, for which the latter had on 20 August 2019 claimed an amount of Rs468,905.

The Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix has requested the Central Electricity Board to review the cost estimate for the extension of its distribution network. The Central Electricity Board has, on 08 May 2021 requested the Council to effect a non-refundable fee of Rs3,000 to revise the cost estimate. The payment of the fee has been made on 10 May 2021.

Once, the distribution network is extended by the Central Electricity Board and electricity is supplied to the site, the lighting system would be commissioned and thereafter the project would become operational.

With regard to parts (a), (b) and (c) of the question, I am informed that –

- (a) the name of the contractor was MGM Enterprise Ltd,
- (b) the contract was awarded on 02 May 2018, and
- (c) the project cost was Rs2,777,280 inclusive of VAT and the quantum paid as at date to the contractor is Rs1,840,270.

VACOAS - URBAN TERMINAL – START & COMPLETION DATES

(No. B/604) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the construction, development and operation of a modern Urban Terminal at Vacoas, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Vacoas and Phoenix, information as to the -

- (a) expected start and completion dates thereof, and
- (b) financing mode thereof.

Reply: The Request for Proposals for the development and operation of a modern Urban Terminal at Vacoas was launched on 29 October 2020 and the closing date was on 26 February 2021. The proposals received are currently at evaluation stage and upon selection of a potential promoter, the start and completion dates for the development may be established.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the cost of the development would have to be fully borne by the prospective promoter. According to the terms and conditions of the

Request for Proposals, the potential promoters are required to fully design, build, finance, manage, maintain and operate the whole development.

NEW TEACHING HOSPITAL - FLACQ

(No. B/605) Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the construction of a New Teaching Hospital in Flacq, he will state the scope of work thereof, indicating the –

- (a) estimated cost;
- (b) name of the bidders,
- (c) start and completion dates, and
- (d) work progress thereof.

(Withdrawn)

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SHELTERS/RESIDENTIAL CARE INSTITUTIONS – MANAGEMENT SERVICES – FACT-FINDING COMMITTEE REPORT

(No. B/606) 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 2015 Report of the Fact-Finding Committee on the Residential Care Institutions/Shelters for Children, presided by Mr Denis Vellien, she will state if consideration will be given for the implementation of the recommendations contained therein and, if so, indicate when and, if not, why not?

Reply: A Fact-Finding Committee (FFC) was set up in 2015, following several complaints received on the Management Services of Shelters/RCIs for children. The FFC, which was chaired by Mr H. D. Vellien (Chairperson of the ICT Appeal Tribunal) had as members Mr C. Grenade (Accountant) and Ms K. Rajiah (Psychologist), published its report on 05 November 2015.

Following the report, an implementation plan was worked out in May 2016. Most of the recommendations proposed in the report have already been implemented successfully by my Ministry.

I wish to inform the House that as at date –

- all of the 13 recommendations with respect to shortcomings identified by the Committee, have been addressed, and
- 17 recommendations regarding reforms which were also made by the Committee are being implemented.

I wish to inform the House that my Ministry has been working with the National Social Inclusion Foundation (NSIF) and the Mauritius Institute of Education for the development of a National Programme to harmonise service delivery in shelters for children, to ensure better coordination of monitoring as well as greater transparency and accountability of funds disbursed for the running of shelters, including a training programme for caregivers dealing with children with disabilities.

To that effect, a new audit exercise of the Residential Care Institutions for children, victims of violence, abuse and neglect, has been approved by the Board of Directors of the NSIF. My Ministry and the NSIF are currently finalising the Terms of Reference of the audit exercise and the cost will be borne by the NSIF.

SHELTERS - REGISTERED - FOSTER FAMILIES

(No. B/607) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to children, she will state the number thereof –

- (a) in each shelter registered with her Ministry, indicating if they are all duly licensed therefor, and
- (b) entrusted to foster families registered with her Ministry.

Reply: There are currently 21 Shelters/ Residential Care Institutions working in collaboration with my Ministry for the protection and welfare of children victims of violence, abuse and neglect. Out of which, 17 are run by NGOs and the remaining 4 are Government-owned shelters.

As from 15 June 2021, out of 17 shelters run by NGOs, 8 have been successfully registered under the Child Protection (Place of Safety for the Welfare and Protection of Children) Regulations 2019. The remaining 9 shelters are in the process of application for registration.

As at date, 95 children are occupying the 4 Government-owned shelters and 502 children are residing in the other 17 shelters run by NGOs. Attached herewith is a list of children accommodated in all shelters.

As regards part (b), as at date, there are 83 children (47 males and 36 females) who have been entrusted to 70 foster families registered with my Ministry.

Periodic Review of Placement in Shelters as at 04.06.2021

SN	Name of Shelters	No of Residents	No of Boys	No of Girls	Remarks
Government Owned					
1	La Marguerite	25	25	-	Accommodates boys only.
2	La Cigogne	15	5	10	Accommodates boys and girls.
3	L'Oasis	28	2	26	Accommodates victims of sexual abuse only.
4	L'Oiseau du Paradis	27	13	14	Accommodates babies up to 5 years and boys from 5 years to 17 years.
Non-Government Owned					
5	Creche Coeur Immaculée de Marie	29	16	13	Accommodates boys and girls.
6	World light Kids Villa	23	12	11	Accommodates boys and girls.
7	Association des Amis de Don Bosco	32	18	14	Accommodates boys and girls.
8	Etoile du Berger	24	14	10	Accommodates boys and girls.
9	CEDEM	34	-	34	Accommodates girls only.
10	Women and Children in Distress Trust Fund	30	4	26	Accommodates girls only. The shelter is exceptionally accommodating 4 boys.
11	Foyer Monseigneur Leen	22	-	22	Accommodates girls only.

12	Havre D'Avenir	18	-	18	Accommodates girls only.
13	Gayasing Ashram	15	-	15	Accommodates girls only.
14	Fondation pour l'Enfant Terre de Paix	35	31	4	Accommodates boys and girls.
15	Association pour les Handicapés de Malherbes	34	24	10	Accommodates boys and girls.
16	SOS Children's Village, Beau Bassin	44	27	17	Accommodates boys and girls.
17	SOS Children's Village, Bambous	49	21	28	Accommodates boys and girls.
18	Association pour l'accueil des femmes et des enfants en difficulté (AFED)	39	21	18	Accommodates boys and girls.
19	Foyer Pere Laval	35	35	-	Accommodates boys only.
20	ARISE	12		12	Accommodates girls only
21	Pure Mind Haven	27	8	19	Accommodates girls only. The shelter is exceptionally accommodating 6 boys.
Total		597	274	323	

	Govt Owned	NGOs	Total
Number of Shelters	4	17	21
Total Number of Residents	95	502	597

**METRO EXPRESS PROJECT – FUNDS INJECTED AS AT 15 JUNE 2021 –
FINANCIAL SITUATION**

(No. B/608) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the Metro Express Project, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Metro Express Limited, information as to the quantum of funds injected therein and advanced by Government thereto, respectively, as at to date, indicating the present financial situation of the company.

Reply: The Metro Express Ltd is a start-up company which embarked onto a novelty project of railway in Mauritius. Railway is a highly capital-intensive project involving high initial costs, mainly in infrastructural work, safety and security issues. At par with international railway companies, initial investments are warranted and the Government of Mauritius, being the sole shareholder of Metro Express Ltd, is investing in this national project with a view to increase shareholder value and returns to the whole nation.

I wish to inform the House that MEL is a forward looking, innovative and financially stable company. The company is managing its budgetary allocation efficiently and within its budget set by the Government. With its full operation, the company will generate positive cash flow and operate well above its break-even point after completion of Phase 2, that is, in the full operation of the 26 km of railway from Curepipe to Port Louis as previously stated on several occasions and recently in PQ B/486. This will be achieved with a good revenue expansion strategy with fare and non-fare revenue, thus achieving scale and scope economies with the Metro Express project.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted and is expected to continue to impact on global economies, across all sectors and industries, without any exception. Obviously, Metro Express Ltd (MEL), and all the players in the local transport sector, were not spared and this pandemic has impacted on their financial situation. After full resumption of all economic sectors following the national lockdown, the ridership of MEL is expected to be back to normal, as initially forecasted.

As stated earlier, given the project is not completed yet and MEL is a start-up, the operation expenses of MEL are funded from a combination of fare revenue from ridership, non-fare revenue from advertising and loan from Government of Mauritius of the order of Rs600 m. received so far, which will be reimbursed once MEL will be in full operation. For Financial Year 2021/22, MEL has been provided with an additional loan of Rs300 m.

MEL will break even at full operations from Port Louis to Curepipe. Actually, MEL is able to meet all its operating expenses through its revenue generated and the Government support provided by means of a loan which will be reimbursed after the grace period of 3 years.

I would like to emphasise that the current cost of the Metro Express Project being implemented by this Government is actually only Rs18.8 Billion for 26 km. 50% was financed by a grant from the Government of India and the remaining 50% from a Line of Credit from Exim Bank with a favourable interest rate. Therefore, this 26 km light rail system is in fact costing this Government only Rs18.8 Billion, which is far much less costly than the estimated total cost of Rs37 Billion with an annual subsidy of up to Rs800 m. for its operations, from the former Government.

METRO EXPRESS PROJECT – PHASE 2A – PORT LOUIS-QUATRE BORNES –OPERATIONAL DATE

(No. B/609) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the Metro Express Project, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Metro Express Ltd., information as to where matters stand as to the implementation of Phase 2A thereof, indicating the expected date of operationalisation of the Port Louis-Quatre Bornes line and if the fare thereof has been finalised.

Reply: The Metro Express project has already changed the mobility and lifestyle of our citizens from Rose Hill to Port Louis. Now, the project is coming to Quatre Bornes and people are eagerly awaiting for this modern, safe, clean, reliable and rapid mode of transport.

This new line from Rose Hill to Quatre Bornes will not only capture commuters from Vieux Quatre Bornes, Belle Rose, Sodnac, La Louise, Residence Kennedy and in the vicinity of Quatre Bornes but will provide all commuters plying through Quatre Bornes to take the Metro Express from Quatre Bornes to Port Louis.

Moreover, the Quatre Bornes Light Rail Station will be a major transport hub which will integrate all modes of transport such as buses, taxis, pedestrians and with drop-off points and improved infrastructure.

Indeed, there is a large footpath with street lights connecting Quatre Bornes to Rose Hill which will enable the public to walk conveniently and safely along this stretch.

With regard to part (a) of the question, the Phase 2A from Rose Hill to Quatre Bornes, of 2.65 km railway track consist of 2 Light Rail Stations, namely Belle Rose Station and Quatre Bornes Central Station, and 3 road-rail level crossings at Boundary Road, Remy Ollier and Belle Rose Avenue.

As part of the project delivery, several tests have been undertaken by Larsen & Toubro Ltd (L&T) under the supervision of RITES Limited and the Singaporean Cooperation Enterprise (SCE) and in collaboration with Metro Express Ltd (MEL).

Furthermore, trials runs are being performed in collaboration with Singapore Mass Rapid Transit to test the new system in terms of functionality, integration and safety with Phase 1 systems in the presence and coordination with external agencies such as the Mauritius Police Force, Mauritius Fire and Rescue Services and the SAMU.

With the implementation of the Metro Express project from Rose Hill to Quatre Bornes, existing amenities such as drains, roads, traffic signaling systems, road networks and so on, have been reviewed and improved, accordingly.

The journey time from Rose Hill to Quatre Bornes will be 6-7 minutes and the total journey time from Quatre Bornes to Port Louis will be around 27 minutes. This will tremendously improve the mobility of the commuters from Quatre Bornes to Port Louis.

Hence, the Phase 2A is practically complete and is expected to be fully operational by end of June 2021.

The Phase 2A of the Metro Express Project follows the alignment of the ex-railway track from Rose Hill to Quatre Bornes along the Gerard Bruneau Promenade. As we have previously constructed the new recreational leisure park at Ebene, in view to make up for the loss of the Promenade Roland Armand, the Government has identified 2 plots of land along Farquhar Street to replace the Promenade by two parks.

With regard to part (b) of the Question, I wish to inform the House that in line with section 14 of the National Land Transport Authority Act, the Fare Review Committee was requested to advise on the fare to be charged from Port Louis to Quatre Bornes.

As fixing of fares is a highly complex exercise as there is need to reconcile the affordability of the fares with the financial sustainability of the light rail system, the Fare Review Committee met on several occasions in order to determine the appropriate light rail fare in respect of Phase 2A.

Once the fares are approved, the public will be informed of the applicable light rail fare from Port Louis to Quatre Bornes.

NATIONAL TRANSPORT CORPORATION - FINANCIAL SITUATION

(No. B/610) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the National Transport Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the financial situation thereof, indicating the total debts thereof accrued as at to date.

Reply: I am informed by the National Transport Corporation (NTC) that the total debt accrued as at 10 June 2021 in respect of loan contracted from the Government is Rs494.6 m. comprising Rs154.0 m. as principal amount to which an interest amount of Rs340.6 m. has been accrued as interest.

I am further informed that the NTC's current cash flow situation does not allow for the repayment of its outstanding loan. However, an amount of Rs10,000 is being paid on a monthly basis by the NTC as consideration for interest accrued on loan since January 2000.

CONSTITUENCY NO. 12 – ROOF SLABS - APPLICATIONS - JAN 2019 TO 15 JUNE 2021

(No. B/611) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the Casting of Roof Slabs Scheme, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Housing Development Company Ltd., information as to the number of applications received from inhabitants of Constituency No. 12, Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien to benefit thereunder, since January 2019 to date, indicating the number thereof approved.

(Withdrawn)

CHEMIN GRENIER – INCINERATOR - COMPLETION DATE

(No. B/612) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to a request made by the inhabitants of Chemin Grenier for the construction of an incinerator in the locality since 2012, he will state if due consideration has been given thereto and, if so, indicate -

- (a) when, and
- (b) the completion date of the project.

Reply: I am informed by the District Council of Savanne that a request was received from the inhabitants of Chemin Grenier in 2012 for the construction of an incinerator for funeral facilities in that locality.

However, the request was not approved by the Government at that time in view of unavailability of suitable land for the project.

When this Government came into office in 2015, with a view to improving incineration facilities to bereaved families, we decided to modernize and upgrade the existing network of incinerators and install 16 additional units. The sites for the construction thereof was decided on various criteria, such as availability of land, access to these sites and lack of such facilities in the surrounding regions.

Based on these criteria, it was decided to construct an incinerator at Camp Gopal, Chamouny, to serve the nearby villages, including Chemin Grenier which is within walking distance therefrom.

In this context, following a bidding exercise carried out through the EXIM Bank of India under the Indian Line of Credit, a contract was signed on 26 July 2019 between my Ministry and Kanta Electricals India Ltd for the supply, installation, testing and commissioning of 16 units of incinerator equipment for the sum of USD2,256,000.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the District Council of Savanne that the project for Camp Gopal, Chamouny is nearing completion and will be commissioned upon return of the technical team of Kanta Electricals (India) Ltd in the next quarter.

I am further informed that there has not been any disruption in the service provided to the inhabitants of Chemin Grenier as they availed of the existing services of traditional pyres at the Cremation Ground of Camp Gopal.

CHILDREN SUFFERING FROM AUTISM & OTHER FORMS OF SIMILAR VULNERABLE CONDITIONS – PLACES OF SAFETY

(No. B/613) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to children suffering from autism and other forms of similar vulnerable conditions, she will state the mechanism

put in place, if any, for the placement thereof in places of safety and, if so, indicate if the said places are equipped to appropriately cater therefor.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that my Ministry does not cater for children suffering from autism and other forms of similar vulnerable conditions if they are not at risk in their home environment.

However, if a child suffering from autism and other forms of similar vulnerable conditions and is at risk in its home environment, there is a mechanism for the placement of such children in places of safety as follows –

1. The child protection multidisciplinary team of my Ministry, after assessment of the case at hand, decides on the type of placement and support system warranted by the case;
2. A case conference involving professionals and external stakeholders inclusive of relevant NGO's is also carried out to ascertain expert advice so as to enable enlistment of appropriate and adequate support and services to the victims through a full-fledged care plan which is drawn thereafter and reviewed on a regular basis, and
3. The roles and responsibilities of each and every professional and stakeholder are well defined in the care plan to avoid duplication of services and involvement of an overload of professionals in the dispensation of care to the victims.

I also wish to inform the House that at present there is one shelter run by a Non-Governmental Organisation (*Association Pour Les Handicapés De Malherbes*), where children with developmental disorders or handicap are placed if they are believed to be at risk of harm in their familial environment. These children have their follow up with both medical and mental health professionals on a regular basis. The NGO also has a specialised school with special needs teachers and carers with a curriculum adapted to their educational needs.

COVID-19 - PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTIONS - NURSING STAFF

(No. B/614) Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the nursing staff working in public health institutions, he will state the number thereof –

- (a) currently employed, indicating the –
 - (i) optimal patient-nurse ratio, and
 - (ii) current patient-nurse ratio;
- (b) additionally required amid the resurgence of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- (c) having been tested COVID-19 positive;
- (d) currently in quarantine, and
- (e) safety protocol put in place in respect of those working at quarantine centres and with COVID-19 positive patients at the ENT Hospital.

(Withdrawn)

COVID-19 POSITIVE PATIENTS – MEDICAL FOLLOW-UP/MONITORING

(No. B/615) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the COVID-19 positive patients, he will state the number thereof having recovered as at to date, indicating the medical follow-up/monitoring offered thereto, if any, and for what duration.

(Withdrawn)

CHILD TRAFFICKING - REPORTED CASES - JANUARY 2015 JUNE 2021

(No. B/616) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to child trafficking, she will state the –

- (a) number of reported cases thereof since January 2015 to date, indicating the number of convictions secured in connection therewith;
- (b) measures taken to combat/prevent same, and

(c) protection afforded and care provided to victims thereof.

(Withdrawn)

SUGARCANE SECTOR – WORLD BANK REPORT

(No. B/617) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the Reimbursable Advisory Services Agreement signed between the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security and the World Bank in the context of the study on the viability of the sugarcane sector in Mauritius, he will state if the World Bank has submitted its report in relation thereto and, if so, indicate the recommendations contained therein.

(Withdrawn)

HORSE RACING - MONEY LAUNDERING - COMMISSION OF INQUIRY REPORT

(No. B/618) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to horse racing, he will state the measures taken to combat money laundering in relation thereto, following the recommendations contained in the Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Horse Racing in Mauritius which was set up in September 2014.

(Withdrawn)

MIC - IMF RECOMMENDATION

(No. B/619) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the recommendation based on the preliminary findings of the International Monetary Fund staff expressed in the recent End-of-Mission press release to the effect that the central bank should relinquish ownership of the Mauritius Investment Corporation Ltd. and that the financing thereof should be provided through the budgetary process, he will state if consideration is being given thereto.

(Withdrawn)

EU - HIGH-RISK COUNTRIES - REVISED LIST

(No. B/620) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance whether, in regard to the inclusion of Mauritius by the European Union on its revised list of high-risk countries allegedly having strategic deficiencies in their anti-money laundering and counter terrorist financing frameworks (AML-CFT Framework) since 01 October 2020, he will state if an assessment of the impact thereof on the economy has been carried out, indicating the quantum of loss of revenue to the financial services sector.

(Withdrawn)

MALAYSIA - EMBASSY – MAURITIUS

(No. B/621) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to Malaysia, he will state if his Ministry is in presence of a request for the opening of an Embassy thereof in Mauritius and, if so, indicate if consideration will be given thereto.

Reply: My Ministry is not in presence of an official request from the Government of Malaysia to open an Embassy in Mauritius.

REGIONAL HOSPITALS – SAMU AMBULANCES – HOTLINE

(No. B/622) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the regional hospitals, he will state the number of SAMU ambulances attached thereto in each case, indicating the telephone line number on which they can be reached on a 24-hour basis.

Reply: I am informed that two SAMU ambulances are attached to each of the five Regional Hospitals. One SAMU ambulance is operational on a 24-hour basis in each Regional Hospital while the second SAMU ambulance runs from 09 00 hours to 16 00 hours on weekdays and from 09 00 hours to noon on Saturdays.

At Dr. Bruno Cheong Hospital, the second ambulance is exceptionally operational up to 22 00 hours on weekdays to cater for Secondary inter-hospital transfers regarding CT scans, MRIs, Interventional cardiac and Neurosurgical cases.

All the SAMU ambulances are reachable through the Hotline 114, in the Control Room at Victoria Hospital where a triage of life-threatening cases is done by the “*Médecin*

Régulateur" on duty after a rapid history taking about the case. The SAMU team covering that particular region is sent immediately.

The other requests for ambulance are channelled to the Transport Section of the nearest hospital and a regular ambulance is sent from there depending on availability at that given time.

**REGISTRAR-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT - SERVICES -
DECENTRALISATION**

(No. B/623) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Registrar-General's Department, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the measures that will be taken to address the long waiting time for transfer/registration of properties/motor vehicles, indicating if the decentralisation of the services thereof will be envisaged.

Reply: Le *Registrar-General* m'a informé qu'à la suite de la levée partielle du confinement national, le temps d'attente pour l'enregistrement des documents a été rallongé.

Cela est dû au fait que la période de confinement a entraîné un certain retard, qui s'ajoute aux transactions normales.

Par ailleurs, le processus d'enregistrement des documents prend plus de temps en raison de l'application stricte de mesures sanitaires, y compris des dispositions de distanciation sociale, ce qui a limité l'accès du public au département.

J'ai également été informé qu'à partir du 03 mai 2021, le département a été appelé à enregistrer les motocyclettes électriques existantes et nouvellement achetées. Cela a exercé une pression supplémentaire sur les services du département.

J'ai en outre été informé que le département du *Registrar-General* a déjà pris un certain nombre de mesures pour minimiser le temps d'attente.

A partir du 24 mai 2021, un système d'ordre alphabétique a été introduit pour les services de guichet.

Ce département encourage la soumission en ligne des documents afin d'éviter les files d'attente et le temps d'attente en présentiel. A cet égard, les actes relatifs au transfert de biens immobiliers par les notaires, les documents des banques et autres institutions financières ainsi que les actes de vente pour l'immatriculation par les concessionnaires automobiles sont soumis en ligne.

Le *Registrar-General* a également décidé d'accorder un accès à distance pour effectuer des recherches en ligne et de permettre les paiements par voie électronique au moyen de cartes de débit et de crédit.

Le département s'est aussi engagé dans un processus de digitalisation par le biais d'une automatisation intelligente des processus.

Afin de réduire davantage le temps d'attente, j'ai été informé que le département du *Registrar-General* est en train de développer, en collaboration avec le *National Land Transport Authority* un guichet unique digital pour un système d'enregistrement et transfert en ligne des véhicules à moteur. Cette plateforme s'appuiera sur des fonctions d'automatisation intelligente des processus, de sorte qu'aucune présence physique ne soit requise. Cette dernière devrait être opérationnelle d'ici mars 2022.

En outre, le département est en train de finaliser le système de paiement par débit direct afin de faciliter les paiements en masse et les paiements d'un important montant en ligne.

M1, M2 & M3 MOTORWAYS - TRAFFIC SIGNS

(No. B/624) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the M1, M2 & M3 Motorways and classified roads, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to if conspicuous signage to indicate the direction of regions will be installed at each roundabout/intersection thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Road Development Authority (RDA) that for all new road projects under its purview, the RDA makes provision of traffic signs as approved by the Traffic Management Road Safety Unit (TMRSU) under the Road Traffic Act. The RDA, thereafter, ensures the maintenance and upkeep of these traffic signs along main roads and Motorways.

With regard to conspicuous signage to indicate direction at roundabouts and intersections, I am informed by the RDA that this is done in accordance with the requirements of the TMRSU.

I am informed by the TMRSU that it works in close collaboration with the RDA and Local Authorities in the provision of standardised, consistent and appropriate route signage along Motorways M1, M2, M3 and other classified roads. In this respect, with a view to

upgrading directional traffic signage along classified roads, the TMRSU has worked out a Standard Design Guide with emphasis on colour coding, font size and types, panel, reflectorized sheet specifications and placement, among others, which has been shared with the RDA for needful.

I am further informed by the TMRSU that recently, along Motorway (M2) from Riche Terre to Roche Bois, new directional signs have been installed. In addition, the TMRSU has embarked on a project to upgrade and review the traffic signage along M1 and M2, which will be implemented in phases in Financial Year 2021/2022. The first phase of the project, starting from Grand Bay to Port Louis along M2 will cost around Rs35 m.

SELF-EMPLOYED ASSISTANCE SCHEME - TOURISM SECTOR - APPLICATIONS RECEIVED

(No. B/625) Mr M. Yeung Sik Yuen (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the self-employed businesses of the tourism sector, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Revenue Authority, information as to the number of applications received therefrom to benefit under the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme, category-wise, as at to date.

Reply: Le *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme* (SEAS) est entré en vigueur en mars 2020 afin d'apporter un soutien financier aux travailleurs indépendants qui n'ont pu opérer pendant la période de confinement et couvre-feu entraîné par la Covid-19.

En juin 2020, alors que les frontières étaient toujours fermées aux touristes, le *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme* a été étendu de manière continue aux opérateurs exerçant des activités touristiques.

Avec le deuxième confinement, l'aide financière dans le cadre du *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme* a continué à être fournie aux opérateurs de l'industrie du tourisme et l'allocation mensuelle payable sous ce régime était de 5,287 roupies.

Le gouvernement a donc décidé d'accorder une aide mensuelle aux travailleurs indépendants du secteur du tourisme à Maurice et à Rodrigues pour le mois de mars 2021.

Le paiement est en cours pour les travailleurs indépendants engagés dans le secteur du tourisme à Maurice depuis avril 2021 jusqu'à présent et une aide pour un mois complet leur est versée.

En plus de cela, le gouvernement a décidé d'accorder un soutien financier supplémentaire sous la forme d'une subvention unique de 10,000 roupies à tous les travailleurs indépendants éligibles, y compris dans le secteur du tourisme.

Au cours du second confinement qui a débuté le 10 mars 2021, 2,995 travailleurs indépendants du secteur du tourisme ont reçu un montant de 29,95 millions de roupies, représentant la subvention unique de 10,000 roupies.

2,995 indépendants éligibles du secteur du tourisme ont reçu un montant de 176,63 millions de roupies pour les mois de juin 2020 à mai 2021.

Le nombre de demandes reçues depuis la mise en place du *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme* en ce qui concerne le secteur du tourisme, est présenté par catégorie.

The information is being placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL INTEGRATION, SOCIAL SECURITY AND NATIONAL SOLIDARITY - ASSISTIVE DEVICES - BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/626) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the provision of assistive devices by her Ministry, she will give the list of beneficiaries thereof since July 2020 to date, indicating the number of pending applications therefor.

(Withdrawn)

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL INTEGRATION, SOCIAL SECURITY AND NATIONAL SOLIDARITY - CASH GRANTS

(No. B/627) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the decision of Government for the provision by her Ministry of cash grants in lieu of the provision of assistive devices, she will state if the prices thereof will be regulated and, if so, indicate the expected date of implementation of the said decision.

(Withdrawn)

ROSE HILL, REMONO STREET – TAXI OWNERS - REPRESENTATIONS

(No. B/628) 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 Remono Street, in Rose Hill, he will state if his Ministry is in presence of representations from taxi owners in relation to the interdiction without prior notice of parking thereof at the taxi base which was located thereat until recently and, if so, indicate if appropriate remedial measures will be taken in relation thereto to the satisfaction of the said taxi operators.

(Withdrawn)

BANK OF MAURITIUS - BANYAN TREE BANK - ADMINISTRATION

(No. B/629) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the decision of the Bank of Mauritius to put the Banyan Tree Bank under administration, he will state if an action plan/task force has been put in place for the refund of the capital amounting to Rs2.4 billion injected by members of the public therein and, if so, indicate –

- (a) when same will be implemented, and
- (b) source of funding thereof.

(Withdrawn)

ONLINE STUDIES - DIGITAL TABLETS & VIRTUAL CLASSES

(No. B/630) 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 online studies, she will state the measures taken to –

- (a) ensure that all students concerned are equipped with appropriate digital tablets with internet connections, and
- (b) ascertain that the students do really attend these virtual classes.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that, some 542 students of Grades 10 to 13 from eligible households are being provided with tablets by the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity and through the National Empowerment Foundation. The distribution of the tablets started on Thursday 10 June 2021 and will be completed this week. I am also informed that, following the announcement last year of the measure for the provision of free Broadband Internet facilities, some 5,600 families in Mauritius have already been connected and are benefitting from such facilities. This exercise is ongoing.

In addition, there is a special loan scheme implemented by the Development Bank of Mauritius for financing up to 100% the cost of Computers, Laptops, Printers and individual internet connections at an interest rate of 3% per annum. As at date, around 100 applicants have benefitted from the loan scheme.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the House may wish to note that arrangements have been made for the provision of credentials on Microsoft Teams Platform to all Educators and Students from Grades 10 to 13 of State and Private Secondary Schools.

Furthermore, the responsibility to ensure that students attend the virtual classes lies with Heads of Schools.

At the time of the virtual classes, the Educators will have to take the attendance of students and report to the Rectors on a weekly basis. The Rectors and administration of the schools are responsible, for their part, to inform parents of students who are not attending the online classes.

Overall, the Quality Assurance and Inspection Division of the Ministry and the PSEA will provide relevant support.

This being said, if ever some learners miss out the remotely-transacted learning, we will have to rely upon on the perspicacity and discernment of class teachers who would gauge the necessity for catch-up classes for those specific students.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC - FISHERS (REGISTERED) – ACTIVITIES

(No. B/631) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to fishers, he will state if consideration will be given for a review of the decision of limiting the number thereof to go at sea in alphabetical order and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

Reply: Following the second national lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic with effect from 10 March 2021, arrangements were made by my Ministry to allow registered fishers to carry out fishing activities as from 11 March 2021.

A first Communiqué was issued on 11 March 2021, including the time of operation and the general rule of alphabetical order to limit the number of fishers operating at Fish Landing Stations to enable fishers to observe all sanitary measures.

However, a second Communiqué was issued on the following day, that is, on 17 March 2021 to inform the fishermen community that the condition of alphabetical order had been waived.

With your permission, I would like to inform the House that for the period during which the general rule of sanitary measures was applicable, my Ministry made necessary arrangements to provide financial assistance of Rs1,700 (for the 4 fishing days involved at the rate of Rs425/- per day; equivalent to Bad Weather Allowance) during the confinement period from 11 to the 19 March 2021, 1,180 registered artisanal fishers excluding those who have already benefitted from the Solidarity Grant of Rs10,200 for the month of March 2021. The total amount disbursed is Rs2,006,000.

FLIC-EN-FLAC – NEW ACCESS ROAD PROJECT

(No. B/632) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the New Access Road project to link Flic-en-Flac to Beaux Songes, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to the expected start and completion dates thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Road Development Authority (RDA) that the New Access Road to Flic-en-Flac is a major infrastructure project which will link Flic-en-Flac to Beaux Songes, bypassing the Flic-en-Flac Road and Beaux Songes village, thus providing an alternative route to Flic-en-Flac coastal village.

This project would be mutually beneficial to both the public and the Medine Smart City. In line with the cost sharing policy devised by Government for road projects relating to Smart City projects, there is an agreement that Medine Ltd will contribute 50 per cent of the project from Pierrefonds to Cascavelle in kind, that is, in the form of land. Furthermore, the design of the project is currently being undertaken by the Consultant of Medine Ltd under the supervision of the RDA. The project will thereafter be implemented by the RDA.

Medine Ltd had initially proposed an alignment for the construction of Flic-en-Flac Bypass from Pierrefonds to Xavier, comprising a total project length of approximately 5.6 km which would have separated Xavier Village into two zones as well as the construction of a viaduct over Cascavelle Road.

In March 2021, Medine Ltd has proposed an alternative alignment, which bypasses Xavier Village and connects to a grade-separated interchange at the junction with Black River Road and Flic-en-Flac Road, near Cascavelle Mall. The new alignment offers several advantages, including the following –

- (i) it will provide a higher level of service to road users entering and leaving Flic-en-Flac;

- (ii) it will eliminate the need to construct a third junction with Black River Road within the Cascavelle traffic influence zone, and
- (iii) it will avoid potential road safety issues at Xavier Village.

The construction of the Flic-en-Flac Bypass will consist of the following three main segments –

- (i) Segment 1 consists of 5.2 km long link from the new roundabout near the end of La Vigie-La Brasserie-Beaux Songes Link Road at Pierrefonds, to the new grade-separated interchange at the junction with Black River Road and Flic-en-Flac Road (B34), near Cascavelle Mall. This segment will be subject to the cost sharing mechanism between Government and Medine Ltd;
- (ii) Segment 2 consists of 3.6 km long Uniciti Main Road from the junction with Black River Road (A3) to the junctions with Avenue des Crecerelles and Avenue Radar. It will be funded and implemented by Medine Ltd, and
- (iii) Segment 3 consists of two existing roads, namely Avenue Radar and Avenue des Crecerelles, from the junction with Uniciti Main Road to the junctions with Flic-en-Flac Road (B34), near the beachfront, which shall be upgraded by the RDA.

In respect to the first segment, a draft Memorandum of Understanding, detailing the cost sharing mechanism between the RDA and Medine Ltd has been prepared and technical discussions are ongoing with a view to finalising same.

I am informed that the proposed timeline for implementing the project from Pierrefonds to Cascavelle will be as follows –

- (i) expected prequalification of Contractors: July 2021;
- (ii) expected start of the works: April 2022, and
- (iii) expected completion of the works: April 2024.

CONSTITUENCY NO. 17 – FLOOD PRONE AREAS – SURVEY

(No. B/633) Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to flood prone areas in Constituency No. 17, Curepipe and Midlands, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Land Drainage Authority, information as to if a survey thereof has been carried out and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

Reply: I am informed that the Land Drainage Authority has undertaken a survey and identified 16 flood prone areas in Constituency No. 17 as follows –

- (i) Morc. Domah, near Telegu Temple, 16ème Mille;
- (ii) Morc. Soobany, 16ème Mille;
- (iii) Coriolis Road, Midlands;
- (iv) Cité St Luc, Curepipe;
- (v) NHDC Jasmin, Curepipe;
- (vi) Dr. Bour Lane, Camp Bombaye, Curepipe;
- (vii) La Rue Couvent, Curepipe;
- (viii) Pope Henessy St, Curepipe;
- (ix) Camp le Juge, Curepipe;
- (x) Cité Atlee, Curepipe;
- (xi) Louis de Rochecouste St, Curepipe;
- (xii) Rue Lees, Curepipe;
- (xiii) Giquel St, Curepipe;
- (xiv) Henri Robert St, Curepipe;
- (xv) Morc. Belluguet, Curepipe, and
- (xvi) Morc. Devoyenne, Curepipe.

To attenuate flooding issues faced in Constituency No. 17, the following projects have been earmarked under the Flood Management Programme announced in the Budget Speech Financial Year 2021/2022, namely –

- (i) 39 projects by the National Development Unit to the tune of Rs386 m.;
- (ii) 37 projects by the local authorities, namely Municipal Council of Curepipe and the District Council of Moka to the tune of Rs41 m.;
- (iii) flood mitigating measures related to classified road by the Road Development Authority to the tune of Rs25 m., and
- (iv) works order for the reconstruction of the Atlee Bridge was issued on 13 May 2021 by the Road Development Authority for a contract value of Rs11.3 m. As at date, 20% has been completed.

The Land Drainage Authority has devised a maintenance plan for all local authorities, including the Municipal Council of Curepipe. The Council was requested in the Coordination and Maintenance Committees carried out at the level of the Land Drainage Authority to strictly adhere to the devised maintenance schedule and to ensure cleanliness of drains, rivers and watercourses.

The Municipal Council of Curepipe has cleaned 2.5 km and 4.65 km of drains in the months of July and August, respectively.

LA BRASSERIE – FOOTBALL GROUND

(No. B/634) Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the implementation of a football playground project in La Brasserie by the National Development Unit, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: I am informed that GIBB (Mauritius) Ltd was appointed on 26 July 2018 as Consultant for the study, design and supervision of the construction of the Football Ground at La Brasserie by the National Development Unit. The Detailed Design Report which was submitted in September 2019 has been finalised. A plot of land of 9,416m² (2A23P) has been made available to the National Development Unit by the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning for this project.

The scope of works consists of the following –

- (i) soil investigation, including percolation test;
- (ii) construction of boundary wall/fencing;
- (iii) provision of drainage system;
- (iv) levelling and turfing of ground;
- (iv) provision of water supply and water points for irrigation purposes, and
- (v) construction of access road.

This project was put forward by hon. S. Toussaint, the then Parliamentary Private Secretary of Constituency No. 17 Curepipe/Midlands and is long overdue. However, it could not be implemented earlier due to the lockdown as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The project is estimated to cost Rs45.7 m. The NDU will proceed with the bidding exercise once funding is made available.

COVID-19 VACCINES – EFFICACY

(No. B/635) Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the COVID-19 vaccines which are available on the market, he will state if the Government of Mauritius is taking into consideration the estimated efficacy thereof prior to the procurement thereof for the National Vaccination Programme.

Reply: In January 2021, Government's approval was obtained for a National Vaccination and Deployment Plan which was prepared in consultation with the World Health Organisation, the Attorney General's Office and the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development.

The National Vaccination and Deployment Plan provides for the setting up of a COVID-19 Vaccination Committee.

The Terms of Reference of the Committee are to –

- (i) make recommendations on vaccine policy, and
- (ii) advise on all scientific and technical topics related to vaccines and immunisation.

The Committee meets on a weekly basis to advise the Ministry on strategies to plan for the introduction of COVID-19 vaccines.

The objectives of the Committee are to –

- recommend on choice of vaccines, safety and effectiveness of data, immunogenicity data on vaccines candidates and constantly review and update on vaccines, and
- to oversee on priority groups to receive on vaccination.

Moreover, the Trade and Therapeutics Committee and the Pharmacy Board of my Ministry have the role of providing the national regulatory approval for each vaccine prior to procurement of same for the National Vaccination Programme.

Based on the recommendations of the COVID-19 Vaccination Committee and regulatory approval from the Trade and Therapeutics Committee and the Pharmacy Board respectively, decisions are taken in respect of the procurement of the vaccines that are currently available on the global market for the purpose of the National Vaccination Programme.

**BANK OF MAURITIUS – ADVERTISEMENT – COMMUNICATION
CONSULTANT**

(No. B/636) Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Bank of Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to if the post of Communication Consultant thereat has been advertised.

Reply: Conformément à l'article 25 de la Bank of Mauritius Act 2004, la Banque de Maurice est habilitée à engager tout consultant ou toute autre personne dûment qualifiée pour fournir les services que la Banque juge appropriés, selon les termes et conditions d'engagement déterminés par le Conseil d'administration.

La Banque de Maurice m'a informé qu'il n'y a pas de poste de consultant en communication dans l'*establishment* de la Banque de Maurice.

Cependant, il existe une unité de communication dirigée par M. F.C, *Chief-Communications*, employé sur une base contractuelle depuis avril 2016. Il est assisté d'un *Communication Officer*.

LANDMARK DEAL - GLOBAL MINIMUM CORPORATION TAX RATE

(No. B/637) Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, he will state if he has been apprised that the G7 Ministers have agreed a landmark deal to create a global minimum corporation tax rate of at least 15% and to stop big companies avoiding tax in countries where they do business.

Reply: J'ai été informé que des discussions sur l'adoption d'un impôt minimum mondial sur les multinationales sont à l'ordre du jour de l'OCDE à travers le Cadre inclusif BEPS (*Base Erosion and Profit Shifting*) et cela depuis 2019. Le Cadre inclusif devait aboutir

à un consensus entre les pays membres, sur l'impôt minimum, en décembre 2020. Cela ne s'est pas produit, les travaux ayant été retardés en raison de la pandémie de la Covid-19.

Lors de la réunion du G7 qui s'est tenue à Londres les 4 et 5 juin 2021, la proposition d'un impôt minimum mondial d'au moins 15% pour les multinationales a été reprise.

Cette proposition a été intégrée dans les travaux du cadre inclusif BEPS pour des discussions et un accord sur les questions techniques. Le cadre inclusif devrait par la suite élaborer les projets de législation, les lignes directrices et les autres règles nécessaires à la mise en œuvre prévue pour 2023.

Mon ministère suit de près l'évolution de cette proposition. Nous avons mis en place un groupe de travail technique, présidé par le *Deputy Solicitor General*, pour examiner cette dernière et faire des recommandations au Gouvernement.

Le groupe de travail est composé de hauts fonctionnaires de mon ministère, du ministère des Services financiers et de la Bonne gouvernance, de la *Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA)*, de la *Financial Services Commission (FSC)*, de l'*Economic Development Board* et de parties prenantes du secteur, à savoir des représentants de *Mauritius Finance* et de la *Mauritius Bankers Association*.

Enfin, en tant que membre du *BEPS Inclusive Framework*, Maurice participe activement aux discussions techniques sur le sujet au niveau international.

COVID-19 – RED ZONE – CRITERIA

(No. B/638) Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the declaration of an area as Health Hazardous or Red Zone amid the COVID-19 pandemic, he will state when the criteria therefor were established.

Reply: The House is well aware that the High-Level Committee meets on a daily basis to assess the prevailing COVID-19 situation in the country. With a view of preventing the spread of COVID-19 in Mauritius, stringent measures have been implemented, amongst which include the declaration of a specific area as Red Zone. A Red Zone is a geographically demarcated area where incidence of cases of a contagious disease is high.

There is for the purpose of this measure, a set number of criteria to determine as to whether a specific area must be declared as a Red Zone, which include –

- (i) identification of more than one cluster of cases in one agglomeration, and/or
- (ii) identification through random testing or flu clinics of more than 3 cases related to each other in one agglomeration.

Similarly, in respect of removal of a specific region as Red Zone, decision is taken based upon the following criteria –

- (i) no new cluster or new random case of the disease diagnosed for past 14 days since identification of last community case in the agglomeration;
- (ii) cases diagnosed in quarantined contacts or contact tracing of positive cases outside the Red Zone are not considered as a limiting factor to lift the Red Zone.

Accordingly, under Section 3 of the Quarantine Act 2020, appropriate regulations are made for –

- (i) localised temporary restrictions of movement within a specific area for a specific period of time, in the case a specific region has been declared as a Red Zone;
- (ii) localised temporary restrictions of movement within a specific area for a specific period of time, in the case decision is maintained for a specific region to remain as a Red Zone for a specified period of time, and
- (iii) removal of a specific region as Red Zone where risk of further spread of the disease has been mitigated.

The regulations are, thereafter, gazetted to inform the public at large of the decision being taken in respect of the declaration or removal of a specific region as Red Zone.

QUARANTINE CENTRES - NUMBER OF PERSONS - COST

(No. B/639) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the quarantine centres, he will state the number of persons placed thereat since March 2021 to date, indicating the cost incurred in relation thereto in each case.

(Withdrawn)

**NATIONAL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT COMPANY COMPLEX &
COMMERCIAL CENTRE – DRUG PROLIFERATION & BURGLARY**

(No. A/51) 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 National Housing Development Company Complex and Commercial Centre found at La Tour Koenig, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the incidence of drug proliferation and burglary thereat, indicating the remedial actions taken or to be taken in relation thereto.

Reply: The National Housing Development Company (NHDC) Complex and the Commercial Centre fall within the policing jurisdiction of Metropolitan Division (South) and the station area of La Tour Koenig Police Station.

La Tour Koenig Commercial Centre, commonly known as “Sheridan” consists of a supermarket, shops, a hardware store and a mini market among other outlets. It is at a distance of 100 metres from La Tour Koenig Police Station.

The Commercial Centre is mostly visited by locals, including residents of NHDC flats of the vicinity and by few youngsters of the locality who use the locus as a meeting place and hang out in the area.

The region of La Tour Koenig and its vicinity are mainly covered by seven Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit (ADSU) teams based in Port Louis. However, irrespective of their normal areas of responsibilities, other ADSU Units do operate islandwide, depending on the information/intelligence gathered or obtained. The Metropolitan ADSU teams are commanded by an officer of the rank of Sergeant/Inspector. They are supervised by a Chief Inspector and overseen by an Assistant Superintendent of Police/Superintendent of Police. All ADSU Teams are under the overall command of DCP ADSU.

The ADSU has not received major complaints as to proliferation of drugs in La Tour Koenig NHDC Complex as such. Nevertheless, Metropolitan ADSU teams have carried out several operations in the neighbourhood, leading to the detection of 12 drug cases, including one case in the Commercial Area in year 2020 and five cases in year 2021, including two cases in NHDC Complex.

Notwithstanding the number of arrests effected in La Tour Koenig area, no incident related to drug has been reported to ADSU. However, ADSU Field Intelligence Officers keep collecting information on the ground with regard to the suspicious movement of drug peddlers and other miscreants, associated with illicit activities.

The following measures have been taken by ADSU to fight against proliferation of drugs in the region of La Tour Koenig –

(a) Repression/Enforcement Measures

- (i) identification of drug peddlers through intelligence gathering to disrupt the supply of illicit drugs;
- (ii) drug mapping to locate ‘Areas of Concern’ where drug activities are being carried out and drug addicts tend to loiter;
- (iii) profiling of ‘Persons of Interest’ through discreet surveillance to identify their role and involvement in the drug nexus;
- (iv) arresting drug offenders (Consumers and Traffickers) and ensuring their successful prosecution;
- (v) addressing crime generators (prostitution, larceny, etc.) often linked to drugs;
- (vi) conducting targeted operations in hot spots in adjoining areas. Since the past few months, the ADSU is conducting regular crackdown operations islandwide including the region of La Tour Koenig/Pointe aux Sables/Cite Vallijee. More operations are under way, and
- (vii) additional resources in terms of vehicles and manpower have been provided to ADSU to increase its operational effectiveness. ADSU personnel have also been provided with training and sophisticated equipment to enhance their operational capabilities.

(b) Sensitisation/Awareness Measures

The Education Cell of the ADSU, with the support of ADSU Field Units and the Crime Prevention Unit of the Force are actively engaged in carrying out sensitisation and awareness campaigns, in Educational Institutions, Youth Forums, Private Companies and Socio Cultural Groups on the ill-effects of drugs and its legal implications.

It must be mentioned that on a daily basis from 0600 hrs to 0700 hrs, Methadone dispensing is carried out to about 150 Methadone patients within the precincts of La Tour Koenig Police Station. These Methadone patients used to loiter in the vicinity of NHDC Complex and Commercial Centre, after their daily dose thus creating the perception of illicit drug trafficking.

The distribution of methadone is carried out under Police supervision with a view to preserving law and order, preventing illegal activities and providing protection to the personnel of the Ministry of Health and Wellness.

The Police has initiated the following actions to address the climate of insecurity resulting from the presence of Methadone patients –

- (i) maintaining a permanent and demonstrative Police presence in the affected areas;
- (ii) clearing of bushy land in the vicinity of NHDC complex with the assistance of relevant authorities;
- (iii) close monitoring of the situation on the ground through Safe City cameras, and
- (iv) targeted crackdown operations to chase Methadone patients and to arrest offenders.

It must also be pointed out that there has not been any upsurge in cases of larceny besides the few cases reported within La Tour Koenig region that have been perpetrated by inhabitants.

**METRO EXPRESS LIMITED – WRAPPING OF TRAINS –
REVENUE GENERATED, ETC.**

(No. A/52) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the Metro Express Limited, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the cost of wrapping of the trains, indicating -

- (a) the revenue generated from the advertising, and
- (b) if tenders were launched therefor.

Reply: Around the world it is common practice to generate revenue through advertising on railway or transport network, namely, in Paris, London, Sydney, New York, and so on. Advertising panels are placed on the metro platforms, in the train or outside the train, as train wraps. A similar concept has been introduced in Metro Express as many people use the metro to travel on a daily basis. The same principle is equally applied in the bus transport industry where, companies are invited to advertise their brands on buses.

Metro Express Limited (MEL) is the operator of the Metro Express, and is also responsible for maintaining the rail infrastructure and assets during its operating term. To enhance the financial sustainability of the Metro Express, as is the case for all railway operators, MEL has established a strategy to maximise its revenue both in terms of fare and non-fare revenue. Accordingly, MEL developed an Advertising Business Line as one of its non-fare revenue sources.

Given that MEL is a start-up company, it is not equipped with the facilities and expertise in the advertising business. Hence, as recommended by Singapore Cooperation Enterprise, MEL decided to use the services of an advertising agency to implement an advertising and non-fare revenue strategy. MEL entered into a strategic partnership agreement with Alliance Media to generate non-fare revenue.

With regard to part (a) of the question, Alliance Media is a private company and free to define its commercial and pricing strategies based on the market and the clients' demands. Moreover, the cost of wrapping of trains is also based on the market and understandably is confidential information between Alliance Media and its clients. The partnership with Alliance Media has already shown that it has the potential to become the largest contributors to MEL's non-fare revenue generation. I am informed that the total revenue generated from advertising as at date is Rs4.3 m.

With regard to part (b) of the question, Alliance Media was selected based on a competitive bidding exercise launched by MEL as an Advertising Partner to operate and manage the Advertising business of MEL. Alliance Media is widely recognised as a Pan-

African Leader in outdoor and airport advertising and have one of the widest coverages on the African continent. It has also a very good experience and knowledge of the Mauritian market.

As per the contract, Alliance Media is responsible to promote and sell the advertising spaces on the Metro corridor and make the necessary arrangements to place the advertising content at appropriate locations.